

Site Name: **MONARCH THEATRE**

Date of Construction: 1911

Address: 609 – 613 2nd Street SE

Original Owners: Thomas V. Ready and William B. Finlay (Monarch Amusement Company)

Architect: William T. Williams (1911); Unknown (1935); Unknown, (1940-41)

Contractors: Arthur P. Burns, Morton Fulton, and George S. Worthy (1911); Duncan Morrison (1935);

Unknown (1940-1941)

Neighbourhood: Downtown

Legal: 1491;14;3;4

ATS: 7-SE-31-12-5-W4M



Description of Historic Place

The Monarch Theatre is a two-storey Streamline Moderne-style building located on the south side of 2nd Street SE in Medicine Hat's historic commercial downtown. Connected to buildings of similar scale and vintage, the Monarch Theatre is distinctive for its boxed massing, smooth stucco surfaces, and vertical towers flanking a recessed entry. The front façade possesses speed lines extending the width of the theatre. The entry to the theatre comprises the west structural bay and the adjacent building to the east forms the east structural bay. The latter features a crenelated parapet and reeded glass block window. The west structural bay is dominated by a distinctive steel marquee with "Monarch" sign lettering and vertical box "Monarch" sign installed on the east vertical tower.

Heritage Value of Historic Place

The Monarch Theatre is highly valued as the pre-eminent social and entertainment hub and the oldest continuously running purpose-built movie theatre in Medicine Hat. Built in 1911 as a motion picture theatre and amusement house, the first of its kind in Medicine Hat and Canada, the theatre featured a movie auditorium in the west structural bay with a pool and billiards room and tobacco shop in the east structural bay. The amusement house and theatre was first owned by the partnership of William B. Finlay

(1883-1957) and Thomas V. Ready (1883-1958) of the Monarch Amusement Company; with Finlay operating the theatre and Ready managing the adjacent billiards room and tobacco shop. In 1924, the newly formed Monarch Theatre Company, with Joseph H. Yuill (1897-1971) as its general manager, purchased the Monarch Theatre from the Monarch Amusement Company following William B. Finlay's departure to Vancouver, British Columbia, in 1923. Yuill's company would also purchase Medicine Hat's Roxy and Empress theatres before selling all their theatre assets to Famous Players Canadian Corporation in 1944. Famous Players maintained ownership of the Monarch Theatre until Landmark Cinemas acquired the theatre in 1985. The theatre has also benefited from several long-term managers throughout its history that have aided in its continued operation including: Leo A. Maher (circa 1925 to 1950); Fred G. Tickell (1950 to 1971); and Dale Reimer and Richard Ward in the latter part of the 20th century.

The Monarch Theatre, originally designed in the elegant Beaux Arts style by prominent local architect, William T. Williams, and built by local builders, Morton Fulton, and George S. Worthy, with Arthur P. Burns excavating the basement, was the largest and most extravagant theatre in Medicine Hat, exemplifying the growth and sophistication of the city during the Edwardian boom period. Williams' dramatic arched terracotta tile entryway with recessed doors was complemented by the work of interior designers Thomas Reynolds and William Stewart. Reynolds and Stewart encapsulated an atmosphere of exotic luxury through their design of a spacious lobby and richly decorated auditorium with distinctive plasterwork, coloured painted ceiling, electric lights, and luxurious 'opera chairs.' The 560-seat theatre opened December 21, 1911, premiering with a Mutt and Jeff film. The original 34 by 78 metre auditorium showed two movies daily with a matinee each afternoon. Initially, silent films were accompanied by a four-piece orchestra, until 'talkies' were introduced through the addition of an RCA Photophone in 1929.

The Monarch Theatre is further significant for its refined Streamline Moderne-style, the result of a substantially renovation and expansion in 1935 and 1941, respectively. In the summer of 1935, a Streamline Moderne façade replaced the original arched Beaux Arts entryway. Contractor Duncan Morrison (1870-1953) introduced numerous innovations into the redesign of the theatre, including the addition of smooth stucco clad walls with crisp vertical towers flanking a central recessed glass door entryway. The base of the towers were faced with black vitrolite tile and detailed with California stucco. Morrison also installed a large steel marquee, the latest in theatre technology and design, over the front entry. The interior of the building was refurbished with new men and women's washrooms, and a redesigned ticket office on the east side of the lobby. The interior was renovated in an Art Deco design with Moorish detailing, which was applied to emulate opulence and grandeur with ornate light fixtures, stenciled plaster trim, curved details, and a sage green, black, and sea foam colour palette. A dramatic curved iron staircase leading to a new ladies' powder room on the second storey is still visible today. In 1940 to 1941, the auditorium was expanded into the adjacent billiards room and cigar shop, with seating capacity increased to 670. The Mac's Cigar Store, a long-term tenant (1933-1993) situated in the east structural bay, front façade was also remodeled in a Streamline Moderne-style with the addition of smooth stucco cladding and a central reeded glass block window.

The Monarch Theatre is also of social value as an important icon of Medicine Hat's entertainment history and an early example of community-driven historic preservation and commemoration. Over its 100 history, audiences have been entertained with movies by some of the world's most famous actors, evolving from silent films accompanied by a live orchestra, to 'talkies', to colour films, to Cinemascope, to the current digital film technology. Due to the development of large-scale, multi-theatre complexes in the 1990s, the popularity of the Monarch Theatre waned, resulting in its temporary closure in 2007. Through the collective effort of the City of Medicine Hat and concerned citizens, the theatre was purchased by the City Centre Development Agency, an arms length agency of the city, in 2009. That same year, the Friends of the Monarch Society was formed whose principal role has been the conservation, interpretation, and promotion of this unique historic resource.

The Monarch Theatre is an important landmark in the City of Medicine Hat due to its distinctive Streamline Moderne-style and prominent location on the south side of 2nd Street SE in Medicine Hat's downtown core.

Character-Defining Elements

The key elements that define the heritage character of the Monarch Theatre include, but are not limited to its:

- location on the south side of 2nd Street SE, connected to contemporaneous commercial buildings in Medicine Hat's historic downtown core;
- close setback to the street;
- form, scale, and massing as expressed by its: two-storey rectangular plan with flat roof with brick parapet; two (east and west) structural bays;
- masonry construction details including: concrete foundation; hollow brick tile and brick construction using brick from Alberta Clay Products; steel roof beams added in 1941; exterior stucco cladding on front façade;
- elements of original 1911 building including: red pressed brick walls in common bond on south, east and west elevations; segmental arched and circular window openings (now enclosed) in rear façade;
- Streamline Moderne-style elements from 1935 exterior renovation of west structural bay including: smooth stucco cladding; strong vertical stylized towers flanking a central portion with horizontal banding and speed lines below; recessed central entryway;
- Streamline Moderne-style elements from 1941 exterior renovation of east structural bay including: smooth stucco cladding; crenelated parapet; central window opening with reeded glass blocks;
- fenestration such as: fenestration opening at second storey on west structural bay; window opening on east structural bay; triple entryway wooden doors with full height lights (from 1935 renovation);
- additional elements including: steel marquee with curved corners anchored to the front facade; recessed movie poster cabinets on either side of front entry;
- Art Deco interior features from 1935 and 1941 renovations including: plaster trim with stenciled detailing; curved corners and archways; original Art Deco door hardware; steel curved open balustrade to basement (access to men's washroom); steel curved open balustrade to second storey (access to women's washroom); steel open balustrade to second storey projector room and office space with linoleum floor; six-paneled wooden doors; 1935 men's urinals with wall-hung tank; auditorium theatre from 1941 addition with: sloped floors, Donnacona wall acoustic panels (added in 1950s), central curved stage with curtains and wooden flooring, flanked by identical double wooden multi-light doors with Art Deco inspired decorative painted plasterwork above; decorative plasterwork on walls and columns behind movie screen; and
- additional mechanical elements such as: steam heater and radiators from 1911 building.



Monarch Theatre, 1913, showing original terracotta tile arched entryway (west structural bay) and adjacent billiards room and cigar shop (east structural bay) (Esplanade Archives, 0350-1-0065).



Monarch Theatre, 1914, showing original terracotta tile arched entryway (Esplanade Archives).



Monarch Theatre architectural plans by William T. Williams, circa 1911 (Esplanade Archives, 00340023).



Monarch Theatre, west structural bay, circa late 1930s, before Mac's Cigar Store was renovated in 1941 (Esplanade Archives, 0442-0931).



Monarch Theatre, west structural bay, circa 1948, showing original window above marquee (Esplanade Archives).



Monarch Theatre, east structural bay, showing 1941 exterior renovation, photo circa 1970 (Esplanade Archives, 5194A-07).



Monarch Theatre, showing readograph sign installed in 1956, photo circa 1962 (Esplanade Archives, 0873-0026).



Monarch Theatre front entryway doors (Donald Luxton & Associates, 2014).



Monarch Theatre marquee and new vertical box sign (Donald Luxton & Associates, 2014).



Monarch Theatre detail of vertical tower and damage to stucco cladding (Donald Luxton & Associates, 2014).



Monarch Theatre 1911 brick rear façade with enclosed segmental arched windows (enclosed post-1970s), which originally had 2-over-2 single-hung windows (Donald Luxton & Associates, 2014).



Monarch Theatre rear brick façade with infilled original circular window opening (enclosed post-1970s) (Donald Luxton & Associates, 2014).



Interior ticket office with stenciled plaster trim from 1935 renovation (Donald Luxton & Associates, 2014).



Art Deco hardware from 1935 renovation (Donald Luxton & Associates, 2014).



Interior steel balustrade to men's washroom added in 1935 (Donald Luxton & Associates, 2014).



Six paneled wooden door in basement (Donald Luxton & Associates, 2014).



Men's urinals with wall-hung tank (Donald Luxton & Associates, 2014).



Basement showing masonry structural columns and wooden beams (Donald Luxton & Associates, 2014).



Curved steel stairway (balustrade enclosed) to women's powder room (Donald Luxton & Associates, 2014).



Curved doorway in women's powder room (Donald Luxton & Associates, 2014).



Theatre auditorium with twin double doors flanking a central stage from 1941 renovation. Note Donnacona acoustic panels on sidewalls (Donald Luxton & Associates, 2014).



Art Deco detailing in plasterwork above double wooden doorway from 1941 renovation (Donald Luxton & Associates, 2014).



Ornate plasterwork at rear of theatre behind movie screen from 1941 renovation (Donald Luxton & Associates, 2014).



Swamp cooler mounted behind movie screen, circa 1936 (Donald Luxton & Associates, 2014).

Statement of Integrity

Property Name & Address	Monarch Theatre 609 – 613 2 nd Street SE
Value Summary	This site is significant because... Theme/Activity/Cultural Practice/ Event ☒ Yes ☐ No The Monarch Theatre is highly valued as the pre-eminent social and entertainment hub and the oldest continuously running purpose-built movie theatre in Medicine Hat (Theme Value – All the World is a Stage). The Monarch Theatre is also of social value as an important icon of Medicine Hat’s entertainment history and an early example of community-driven historic preservation and commemoration (Theme Value – Spirit of Medicine Hat). Institution/Person ☐ Yes ☒ No Design/Style/Construction ☒ Yes ☐ No The Monarch Theatre is further significant for its refined Streamline Moderne-style, the result of a substantial renovation and expansion in 1935 and 1941, respectively (Theme Value – Built in Medicine Hat). Information Potential ☐ Yes ☒ No Landmark/Symbolic Value ☒ Yes ☐ No The Monarch Theatre is an important landmark in the City of Medicine Hat due to its distinctive Streamline Moderne-style and prominent location on the south side of 2nd Street SE in Medicine Hat’s downtown core (Landmark Value).
Period of Significance	1906 to 1913 Pre- First World War, Age of Optimism
Chronology of Alterations	1930 Original movie screen replaced 1934 New deluxe opera seats added in centre row – covered with jacquard velour 1935 Front façade of west structural bay renovated to Streamline Moderne-style 1936 Installation of swamp cooler 1940-1941 Theatre expanded into rear of east structural bay and front façade of east structural bay renovated to match Streamline Moderne-style of west structural bay. Circa 1950s Donnacona panels installed 1956 Readograph sign installed on front façade pre-1984 Circular windows infilled on rear façade 1986 New projection and sound equipment (Xevon lighting, Kelmar Amps and Altect speakers, new 14’x28’ screen) installed 1986 Seating reconfigured and reduced to 500 seats 1988 Art Deco (square) sconces removed and theatre walls covered with burlap curtains 1989 Alberta Main Street program – Monarch Theatre updated 1993 Handicap bathrooms installed 1993 New movie screens installed by King Cinema 1999 Plywood sheets glued to sanded hardwood floors and new seats installed – seating reduced from 500 to 410

	1999 Façade painted and marquee refurbished and painted 2014 New digital projection equipment installed
Aspects of Integrity	Location ☒ Yes ☐ No ☐ Not Applicable The location of the building on 2nd Street SE has not changed. Design ☒ Yes ☐ No ☐ Not Applicable The overall design of the exterior of the building has not been altered since its 1935 and 1940/1941 renovation, except for the removal of the east structural bay storefront. Environment ☒ Yes ☐ No ☐ Not Applicable The building continues to be located in Medicine Hat's historic commercial downtown. Materials ☒ Yes ☐ No ☐ Not Applicable The authentic materials of the building remain intact, except for the east structural bay fenestration. Workmanship ☒ Yes ☐ No ☐ Not Applicable The building's high quality workmanship is evident in its detailing and current condition. Feeling ☒ Yes ☐ No ☐ Not Applicable The feeling of the building has not changed. The building continues to convey strong historical aesthetic. Association ☒ Yes ☐ No ☐ Not Applicable The association of the building has not changed.
	The <u>Monarch Theatre</u> maintains all the aspects of integrity necessary for it to convey its significance/heritage value. Exterior – West Structural Bay The west structural bay (theatre entry) was significantly altered from its original Beaux Arts form in 1935, when the bay was renovated to a Streamline Moderne-style. Overall, the Streamline Moderne detailing of the west structural bay, including its horizontal banding, speed lines, and vertical towers, is highly intact. The smooth stucco clad front façade is in fair condition, although multiple horizontal cracks are evident at the steel brackets anchoring the marquee to the building and at the upper extreme of the vertical towers that flank the front entry. The cracks should be further assessed and repaired with attention paid to those on the vertical towers. The stucco wall above the marquee is weathered and stained and possesses evidence of past signage and penetrations that have not been sympathetically patched. The stucco below the marquee is of a coarser composition and darker colour than the rest of the bay and appears to have been recently done. The Monarch Theatre was a component of the Alberta Main Street program (1989), with the exterior of both structural bays likely re-stuccoed at that time. The stucco finish below the marquee should be restored to match the 1935 finish. The original black vitrolite tile installed at the base of the stucco wall has been replaced with black stone in a nearly identical location to the original tile. The location of the movie

	poster display cabinets, on the either side of the front entry, has been maintained. The three single panel doors with single light glass insert that provide access to the theatre's lobby, are original to the 1935 renovation and have retained their original hardware on the interior. The theatre's marquee has been altered from the time it was installed in 1935. The marquee's form and placement has been maintained; however, the soffits, which originally contained multiple rows of exposed light bulbs, has been replaced with metal soffits with recessed lighting. The entire marquee, including the stepped wing walls on the top of the marquee, has been encapsulated in metal cladding and the 1935 neon tubing was removed. In 1956, a large readograph sign was installed above the original marquee perpendicular to the front façade of the west structural bay. The sign has since been removed; however, the footprint of the sign is still visible and the stucco wall should be restored. The original "Monarch" signage on the front of the marquee has been replaced with a box sign. An additional illuminated box sign has been installed perpendicular to the front façade on the eastern vertical tower. The original 8-over-8 wooden-sash single-hung window, centrally positioned above the marquee, has been removed and a partial door and stair installed to provide access to the top of the marquee. Exterior – East Structural Bay In 1940-1941, the east structural bay, formerly the cigar shop and pool hall, was renovated and the theatre expanded into the space with the cigar shop retained at the front of the building. The front façade of the bay was renovated to match the Streamline Moderne-style of the west structural bay. The 1941 storefront, with central entry and large windows on either side of the door, has been infilled, likely when the last tenant left in 1993. Following the infill, the storefront wall was covered in stucco of a coarser consistency then the original stucco and speed lines were extend across the east structural bay to mirror those present on the adjacent west structural bay. The stucco below the east structural bay speed lines has also been painted in contrast to the original stucco above. The stucco wall above the speed lines is in poor condition with numerous cracks radiating horizontally and vertically. The stucco on the speed lines also exhibits cracking and a vent has been installed in the lowermost speed line. The large centrally position window with reeded glass block is in situ and in good condition; however, the earlier detailing around the window has been painted over. The crenulated parapet has been retained and is in reasonable condition with some cracks present. The paint on the east structural bay above the speed lines has begun to fail. Should the restoration and rehabilitation of the front façade by undertaken, the façade should be returned to its 1935 and 1940/1941 form. Rear Façade – West and East Structural Bay The rear façade of both structural bays is composed of red pressed brick in common bond with flat topped parapet at the east and west extents of the façade. The brick is in poor condition with significant areas of deterioration at the base of the wall, around penetrations (doors and conduits), and around gutters and rainwater leaders. The deterioration includes missing, cracked, and spalled brick, past unsympathetic repointing, and mortar loss,
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	which is substantial in some areas due to water egress issues. The rear façade also possesses multiple stepped cracks, particularly near the top of the wall. Missing or significantly damaged brick should be replaced in-kind with compatible brick and the wall repointed to address mortar loss. The original wooden bargeboard is extensively damaged and sections are no longer anchored to the building. The soffits and brick wall show signs of repetitive water saturation, likely due to the configuration of the gutters. A more efficient roof drainage system should be installed to mitigate further deterioration of the brick façade. The existing rainwater leaders current outflow point is at the base of the wall and should be altered to carry rain and melt water further from the building's foundation. The brick parapet also exhibits mortar loss and asphalt sheeting has been installed on the inside face and over the top of the parapet. A number of original windows have been infilled since the building was constructed. Past conduit penetrations should be patched and redundant cables removed. Interior Aspects of the interior detailing, Art Deco design with Moorish accents, from the 1935 and 1940/1941 renovations are in situ and in good condition. The lobby is largely intact with box office still situated within the front vestibule. The lobby's curved walls, curved metal balustrades leading to the basement and box office, doors and hardware, and radiators are original and in good condition. The lobby has been altered with the installation of new flooring, a drop ceiling, light fixtures, concession stand, and code related elements. Portions of the original wooden floor, specifically in the corridor to the theatre, have been retained; however, the floor is heavily worn and requires restoration. The placement of a large projector in this corridor should be assessed as the floor has begun to bend due to the weight of the projector. The theatre is in good condition with aspects of its historic fabric intact. The original wooden floors have been covered in plywood and new seats installed. The curved staircase, with later enclosed curved metal balustrade, providing access to the women's powder room has been retained. The Art Deco wall sconces in the theatre have been removed, as has the wall curtains due to fire safety issues. The double swinging multi-light wooden doors on either side of the stage with decorative painted plaster above have been retained and are in good condition. The position of the stage position has not been altered and its original wood floor with trap doors to the basement is intact; but exhibiting signs of heavy wear. Behind the film screen is situated a swamp cooler used historically to cool the theatre during the summer months. The wooden framing supporting the swamp cooler and adjacent wooden elements exhibit signs of moisture damage and a complete assessment of all wooden framing should be undertaken to determine its present condition. Components of the theatre's 1940/1941 detailed plasterwork including column with ornamented capital are still evident behind the film screen. These components are in poor condition and efforts should be undertaken to preserve these unique and rare elements. The original lathe and plaster ceiling above the stage is also evident; however, large portions of the plaster are missing. The box office and women's powder room retain aspects of their 1935
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	historic fabric. The box office and projection room maintain their original placement and maintain their paneled wooden doors and decorative plasterwork. The women's washroom retains its curved walls and doorways, wooden trim, and wall mounted sinks. The basement has been renovated multiple times and is current being used primarily for storage. Evidence of the original men's washroom is still present and a number of wooden paneled doors have retained their original hardware. Overall, it is recommended that a conservation plan be established to ensure this unique, high-value resource is maintained and to mitigate any further deterioration.
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	Site Number	Category A
	Community District Downtown	
	Designation	

Site Name(s): Monarch Theatre										
Municipal Address: 609 – 613 2 nd Street SE			Date of Construction:	1911						
Consultant(s): Donald Luxton & Associates Inc.			Evaluation Date:	<table border="1"> <tr> <td>Y</td> <td>M</td> <td>D</td> </tr> <tr> <td>14</td> <td>06</td> <td>10</td> </tr> </table>	Y	M	D	14	06	10
Y	M	D								
14	06	10								
Heritage Committee: Heritage Resources Committee			<table border="1"> <tr> <td>TOTAL</td> </tr> <tr> <td>75</td> </tr> </table>		TOTAL	75				
TOTAL										
75										
Heritage Planner: Chris Reddy										

History (H)	E	VG	G	F	P	(H) SCORE
H.1 Associations/Patterns		X			20	30
H.2 Age		X			10	
Comments: H.1 The Monarch Theatre was Medicine Hat's first purpose-built movie theatre and is Canada's oldest continuously operated movie theatre. The Monarch Theatre opened on December 21, 1911, showing two movies a night and an afternoon matinee. The 560-seat venue was connected with to an adjacent cigar shop and pool hall. Still in operation today, it remains a tangible link to Medicine Hat's storied cinematic history. H.2 Constructed in 1911.						

Architecture (A)	E	VG	G	F	P	(A) SCORE
A.1 Style/Type/Design	X				40	30
A.2 Designer/Builder	X				20	
A.3 Construction Technology			X		5	
A.4 Interior Details				X	2	
A.5 Alterations			X		-10	
Comments: A.1 The extant Monarch Theatre is a rare expression of a Streamline Moderne-style movie theatre in Medicine Hat. Originally designed in the Beaux Arts style, the theatre was extensively renovated in 1935 and 1940/1941 to reflect the popular Modern architectural style of the period. Art Deco detailing was added to the interior in the 1935 and 1940/1941 renovations. A.2 Architect – William T. Williams (1911), Unknown (1935 and 1940/1941), Contractor – A.P Burns and M. Fulton (1911), Duncan Morrison, contractor (1935); Unknown (1940/1941) A.3 The building is constructed of brick with a stucco exterior on the front façade. A.4 The interior has been extensively renovated (1935, 1941, 1950s, late 1980s, 1990s); however, elements of its former Art Deco design are still evident. A.5 In 1935, the exterior of the west structural bay was renovated to a Streamline Moderne-style. The theatre was expanded into the building to the east in 1940/1941, increasing the theatre's capacity to 670 seats. At the same time, the exterior of the east structural bay was renovated to match the Streamline Moderne-style of the west structural bay's 1935 renovation.						

Urban Context (C)	E	VG	G	F	P		(C) SCORE
C.1 Landmark/Character		X				10	15
C.2 Streetscape/Landscape			X			5	
Comments: C.1 The Monarch Theatre’s unique detailing makes it highly recognizable landmark in Medicine Hat’s downtown commercial core. C.2 The building’s historic aesthetic contributes significantly to the streetscape.							