

## STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

Site Name: **MONTREAL STREET SCHOOL**

Date of Construction: 1905

Address: 861 4 Street SE (formally Montreal Street)

Original Owners: Medicine Hat School Board

Architect: George G. Kerr

Contractors: R.A. Green

Neighbourhood: River Flats

Legal: 0112279;29;41

Historic Legal: 1491;29;10-20

ATS: 9-NE-31-12-5-W4



### Description of Historic Place

Montreal Street School is a two and one-half storey masonry school situated on a large corner lot in the River Flats neighbourhood in the City of Medicine Hat. The Romanesque Revival-style historic school features a hipped roof with front gabled projections detailed with scroll cut modillions, symmetrical banked window openings, and sandstone decorative elements. Two one-storey masonry additions are present on the east and west sides of the main building. The school now operates as St. Louis School, a Roman Catholic school.

### Heritage Value of Historic Place

Built in 1904-1905, Montreal Street School is highly valued as the oldest extant school in the City of Medicine Hat. Constructed as the City's second school after Toronto Street School (1888), as part of Medicine Hat School District #76, the elementary school was built to meet the needs for the influx of families moving into the River Flats and surrounding areas. River Flats established itself as a working class community at the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, in close proximity to clay and milling operations. With growing pressure on the only school in town, Toronto Street School, a temporary wooden-frame cottage school

was built on the current site, constructed by contractor H.C. Yuill. Cottage schools, originally conceived by Alberta Public Works, were built as temporary and cost effective, and could be resold as residential units when their educational use became redundant. The Montreal Street Cottage School, with seven teachers, was utilized until the masonry school opened in 1905. A tender to demolish or remove the cottage school was issued in the 1960s. Plans to build a new masonry school on the same site were solidified by the school trustees by 1904. The two storey school, which opened April 10, 1905, was constructed with two identical floor plans consisting of four classrooms per floor separated by a central corridor, with washrooms, separate boys and girls recreation spaces and janitors quarters in the raised, full-height basement. The school was constructed with the latest comforts and amenities including electric lights, steam heating, and telephone. Only the first storey interior fittings were completed for its opening, with two additional classrooms on the second storey completed by August that same year by contractors, Brown & Preston. The final two classrooms on the second floor were completed in 1909 by J.E. Lussier. With the rapid expansion of Medicine Hat during the first decade of the 1900s, Montreal Street School was at capacity within a year of its construction and by 1910, two rooms were fitted out in the attic for additional classroom space. The school remained at capacity until Elm Street School in River Flats was opened in 1912. A gymnasium addition was added to the west side of the building in 1963, designed by Calgary-based architects, J. Stevenson & Associates. The school operated as a public school until 1997 when it was closed due to low enrolment; it was rededicated as St. Louis School, a Roman Catholic school, in 2001.

Montreal Street School is further valued as a superb and rare example of the Romanesque Revival style in the City of Medicine Hat, built using locally sourced materials. Inspired by Medieval architecture, the Romanesque Revival style channels heavy and rustic masonry composition with strong articulation of materials, almost fortress-like in its execution. The school was designed by local architect and contractor, George G. Kerr, who had opened an office in Medicine Hat in 1904 and who designed many high-end homes and churches in Medicine Hat during his career. Contractor, R.A. Green constructed the building using local Medicine Hat Brick from the Purmal brickyard. The school displays this rustic form through its textured appearance achieved through the use of multi-coloured light brick walls and rough-cut sandstone foundation and detailing. Delicate arched windows at the gable peaks, and elegant scroll cut brackets under the eaves, balance out the rustic design. The school's symmetrical form is emphasized through its regular banked window openings and mirrored gable peaks and projections on each façade of the school. Its commanding massing instills a sense of permanency and civic pride, essential for the early development of educational buildings in the City.

Montreal Street School is further valued as a landmark in the community, due to its over 115-year presence in the neighbourhood, and its remarkable craftsmanship and Romanesque Revival design.

### **Character-Defining Elements**

The key elements that define the heritage character of the Montreal Street School include, but are not limited to its:

- location on a corner block at 4 Street and Ash Avenue SE in the River Flats neighbourhood in the City of Medicine Hat;
- narrow setback from the street in a residential context;
- landscaping features such as: open field at rear of school;
- form, scale, and massing as expressed by its: two and one-half storey height with full-height raised basement; rectangular plan, hipped roof with front gabled dormers on north and south facades and front gabled projections on east and west facades;
- masonry construction including: fieldstone foundation; sandstone blocks at foundation and detailing; multi-coloured red pressed brick with recessed red mortar;
- Romanesque Revival-style details including: variety of rusticated textures of masonry; symmetrical form; regular fenestration with banked windows; narrow closed eaves with decorative modillions; brick pilasters on all facades; corbelled brick roof cornice; sandstone

- stringcourse and sill banding above and below window openings; gable peaks detailed with bargeboards; arched windows openings with voussoir with sandstone keystones, and cornice banding with brick corbelling on north and south gable and circular brick detailing on east and west facades; wooden cupola with dome-shaped roof and finial;
- fenestration such as: paired rectangular single assembly window openings on the first and second floors on each facade; sets of three arched window openings at gable peaks on all facades;
  - additional elements including: substantial corbelled brick chimneys on east and west sides of building; concrete cornerstone stating "1904; and
  - original interior elements including: wooden trim and wooden newel post and balustrade.

## Additional Images



Oblique view of Montreal Street School showing one storey addition, June 2015 (DLA)



Oblique view facing east , June 2015 (DLA)



Oblique view of building facing northwest, June 2015 (DLA)



South façade of building, June 2015 (DLA)



East gable showing brick detailing and arched windows, June 2015 (DLA)



Area of sandstone and mortar repair and sandstone replacement at northeast corner of building. Note efflorescence where sandstone meets concrete pad, June 2015 (DLA)



Cracking of sandstone from new window installation, June 2015 (DLA)



Front façade – full replacement of sandstone with concrete (parged), June 2015 (DLA)



Western addition, June 2015 (DLA)



Cupola, June 2015 (DLA)



Cornerstone, June 2015 (DLA)



Southeast corner of school showing anthropomorphic damage and unsympathetic repairs to sandstone, June 2015 (DLA)



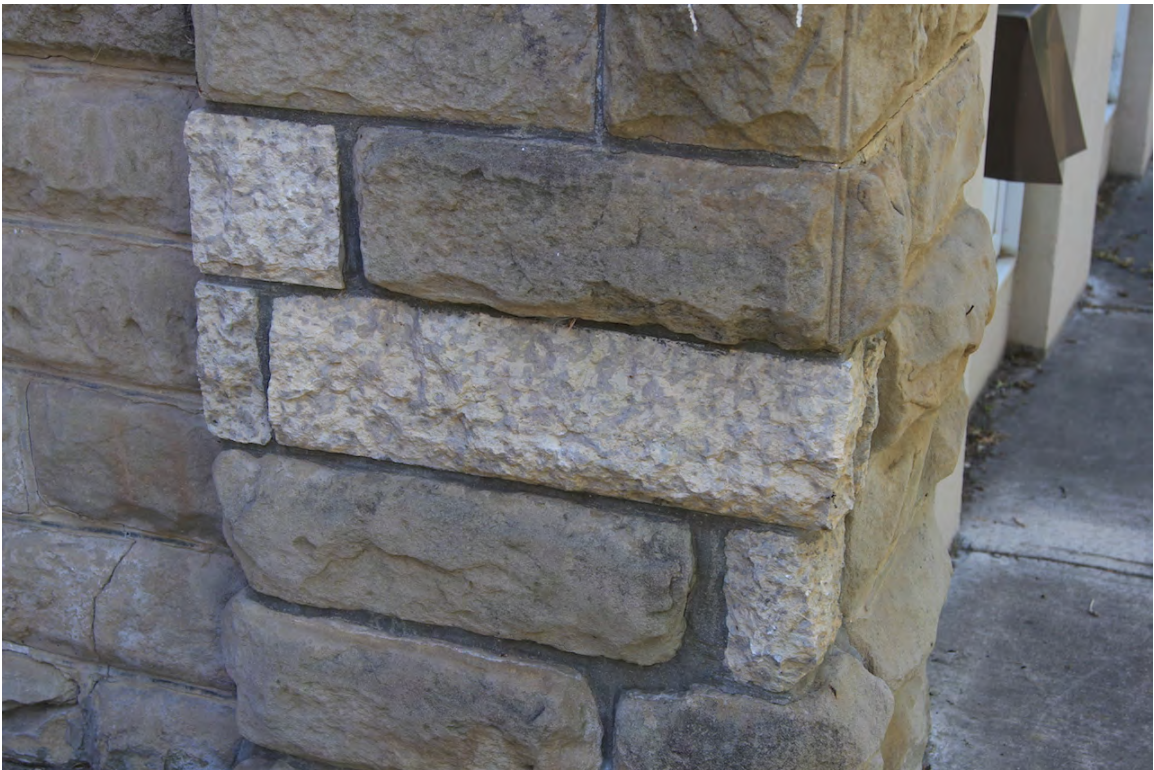
Hipped dormer on southwest side of main roof, June 2015 (DLA)



One storey addition on west side of school, June 2015 (DLA)



South façade showing sandstone replaced by brick, June 2015 (DLA)

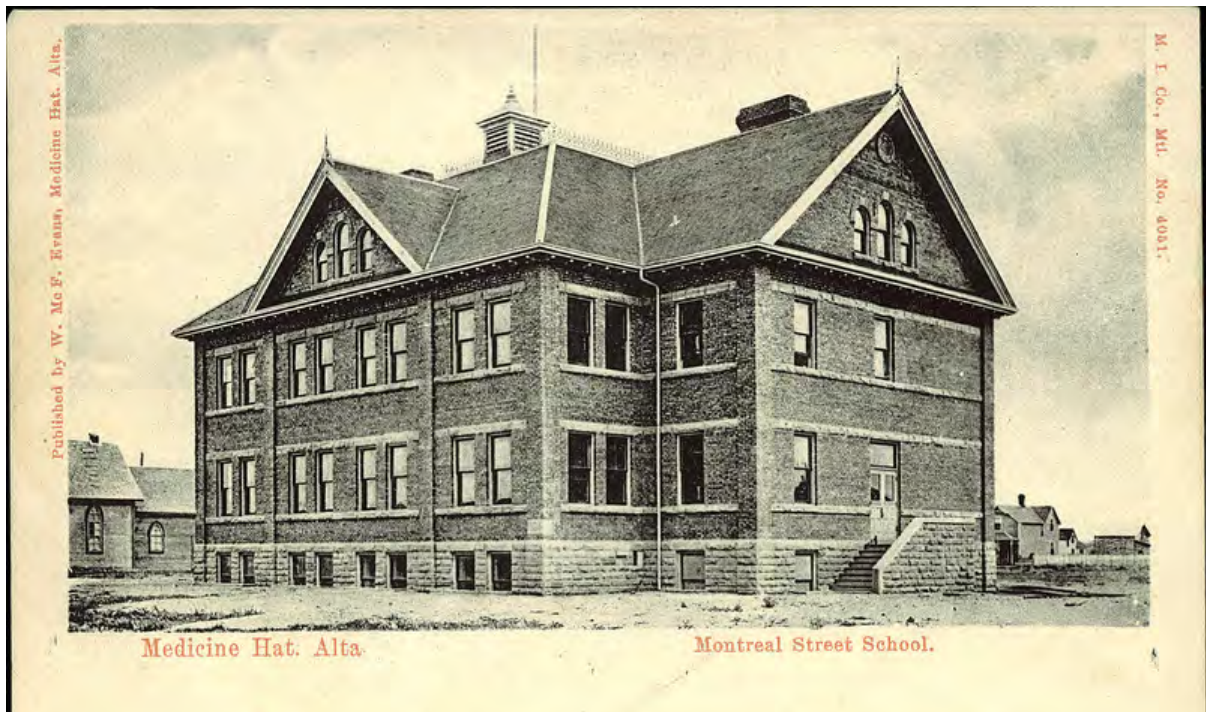


Unsympathetic replacement of sandstone with tyndall stone, June 2015 (DLA)

Historic Images



Montreal Street School, circa 1900s (Provincial Archives, PC010779)




Montreal Street School, 1906 (Provincial Archives, PC10775)

### Statement of Integrity

<b>Property Name &amp; Address</b>	Montreal Street School 861 4 Street SE
<b>Value Summary</b>	<p>This site is significant because.....</p> <p><b>Theme/Activity/Cultural Practice/ Event</b> <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No  Built in 1904, Montreal Street School is highly valued as the oldest extant school in the City of Medicine Hat. Constructed as city's second school after Toronto Street School (1888) as part of Medicine Hat School District #76, the school was built to meet the needs for the influx of families moving into the River Flats area to work at the countless clay and gas-based industries (clay production, greenhouses, and mills) developing south of the River Flat neighbourhood. <b>(Theme Value – Education in Medicine Hat).</b></p> <p><b>Institution/Person</b> <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No</p> <p><b>Design/Style/Construction</b> <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No  Montreal Street School is further valued as a superb and rare example of the Romanesque Revival style in the City of Medicine Hat, built using locally sourced materials. Inspired by Medieval architecture, the Romanesque Revival style channels heavy and rustic masonry composition with strong articulation of materials, almost fortress-like in its execution. <b>(Theme Value – Built in Medicine Hat).</b></p> <p><b>Information Potential</b> <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No</p> <p><b>Landmark/Symbolic Value</b> <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No  Montreal Street School is further valued as a landmark in the community, due to its over 115-year presence in the neighbourhood, and its remarkable craftsmanship and design.</p>
<b>Period of Significance</b>	1885-1905 Railway Era/Early Settlement
<b>Chronology of Alterations</b>	1905 – two classrooms on second storey fitted out 1907 – Sandstone replaced with brick at front and rear facades due to damage to sandstone 1909 – Fitting out two remaining classrooms on second storey 1910 – two classrooms fitted out in attic 1963 – Gymnasium addition completed 1964 – Montreal Street Cottage School removed from property 1968 – Alterations to basement windows 1973 – interior renovations 1981 – interior renovations 1998 – renovations to interior to convert to daycare 2001 – Renovations to school to convert to St. Louis School and eastern one storey addition
<b>Aspects of Integrity</b>	<p><b>Location</b> <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Not Applicable  The location of Montreal Street School has not changed.</p> <p><b>Design</b> <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Not Applicable  The design of the building has not changed substantially apart from additions to the east and west facades.</p>

	<p><b>Environment</b> <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Not Applicable The building continues to be situated in the residential neighbourhood of River Flats.</p> <p><b>Materials</b> <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Not Applicable Materials, for the most part, are intact and in good condition. The windows have been replaced with vinyl windows; however, the openings have remained the same. Sandstone on the south façade at the watertable, has been replaced with brick. The walls at the first storey on the east and west facades have been compromised with the one-storey additions.</p> <p><b>Workmanship</b> <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Not Applicable The workmanship is evident in the high quality materials, and construction.</p> <p><b>Feeling</b> <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Not Applicable The school continues to convey a strong historical aesthetic.</p> <p><b>Association</b> <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Not Applicable The association of the building has not been altered – it continues to function as a school.</p>
<p><b>Statement of Integrity</b></p>	<p>The <u>Montreal Street School</u> maintains all the aspects of integrity necessary for it to convey its significance/heritage value.</p> <p>Montreal Street School is in excellent condition, considering its over 110-year vintage. The most significant change to the school was with the addition of one storey buildings on either side of the east and west facades. The original Boys and Girls entryways were situated on these facades, and they have since been removed. The original east and west façade doors were raised, with concrete and sandstone stairway access.</p> <p>The windows and frames, originally single-hung wooden sash, were replaced with vinyl windows sometime in the last 10 years. The openings were retained. The basement window openings have been infilled from their original size in a 1968 renovation. The double doors on the southeast side of the building have been replaced with new aluminum doors.</p> <p>The sandstone at the foundation level is in good to fair condition, depending on the area. Some areas like the front and rear watertable, were completely replaced (with brick at the rear and concrete parging at the front). This replacement was completed early in the building's history in 1907-08 when it was discovered that the contractor did not connect the sandstone facing to the interior structural system – and that this was causing a great deal of stress and cracking on the sandstone facing. As a result, the facing on the north and south facades was replaced with brick. Areas of deterioration have been patched and replaced in-kind. This is a good approach for heritage repairs.</p> <p>At the southeast corner of the building, the sandstone has been heavily impacted by anthropomorphic damage (children carving into sandstone). Cracking of sandstone is evident at the northeast corner of the school and</p>

	<p>should be monitored.</p> <p>The brick is generally in good condition apart from some cracking where the windows were replaced with new. Some of the brick corbelling is damaged where water has infiltrated from the closed cornice.</p> <p>The cedar shingle roof is in excellent condition and has been recently replaced.</p> <p>The roof originally had a cast iron decorative cresting surrounding the cupola and finals that have been removed. It would be of interest to re-instate these should a future restoration on the roof occur.</p> <p>The brick capstone on the chimneys has been replaced with new brick that does not match the original brick on the east chimney only. There is some staining on the north side of the chimneys that should be monitored for build-up.</p> <p>A small hipped roof dormer was added to the west side of the roof (south façade) some time after construction.</p>
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	Site Number	Category A
	Community District River Flats	
	Designation Municipal Historic Resource	

<b>Site Name(s):</b> Montreal Street School			
<b>Municipal Address:</b> 861 4 <sup>th</sup> Street SE		Date of Construction:	1905
<b>Consultant(s):</b> Donald Luxton & Associates Inc.		Evaluation Date:	Y 15 M 06 D 22
<b>Heritage Committee:</b> Heritage Resources Committee			
<b>Heritage Planner:</b>			
			TOTAL
			84

History (H)	E	VG	G	F	P	(H) SCORE
H.1 Associations/Patterns	X					40
H.2 Age	X					20
Comments: H.1 Montreal Street School is the oldest extant school in the City of Medicine Hat. H.2 Constructed in 1904-1905.						

Architecture (A)	E	VG	G	F	P	(A) SCORE
A.1 Style/Type/Design		X				20
A.2 Designer/Builder			X			5
A.3 Construction Technology			X			5
A.4 Interior Details			X			4
A.5 Alterations			X			-10
Comments: A.1 The building is a rare example of Romanesque Revival style school in Medicine Hat. A.2 Architect: George G. Kerr, J. Stevenson & Associates (1963 gymnasium), Contractor: R. A. Green (masonry) Brown & Preston (classrooms), J. E. Lussier (classrooms) A.3 Rough cut sandstone watertable, sills, lintels, keystones and loaded bear multi-coloured red brick walls. A.4 Wooden trim, newel post, balustrade. A.5 One-storey addition to east and west façades, windows replaced, some basement windows infilled, doors replaced, hipped roof dormer added.						

Urban Context (C)	E	VG	G	F	P	(C) SCORE
C.1 Landmark/Character		X				10
C.2 Streetscape/Landscape		X				10
Comments: C.1 Montreal Street School is a key landmark in the community of River Flats and Medicine Hat on a whole. C.2 The school contributes to the historic aesthetic of the neighbourhood.						