

HISTORICAL WALKING TOUR

1. Saint Patrick's Roman Catholic Church

238 2nd Ave N.E.

Medicine Hat's most prominent landmark is St. Pat's Church. The church with its 170 foot gothic tower, is said to be one of the finest examples of Gothic Revival architecture in all of North America. Its design was inspired by the medieval cathedrals in Europe.



The construction of the church in 1912, called for challenging and novel building methods and resulted in a triumph of engineering-science for the time. This task necessitated a continuous pouring of concrete, from the bottom of the foundation to the top of the highest cross. This was achieved by a large motor-driven concrete mixer connected to a tower elevator. The concrete was hoisted by drum-and-cable and delivered to any part of the wall by large conveyor pipes. In 1912, all of this was achieved without the benefit of modern transit mix or concrete pumps.

In 1932, a false ceiling of wood was installed in the church because of the extraordinary height of the Gothic interior, and consequent heating costs.

The magnificent, round rose windows on the east and west sides of the church were imported from France and were installed as recently as 1955. The new copper roof is part of a restoration program which started 1979, as are the solid oak doors gracing the entry.

The construction and maintenance of such a large church is ongoing, and a credit to the parish which has been committed to this project since 1912.

2. The Provincial Courthouse

460 1st St. SE



The Medicine Hat Courthouse represents a distinctly unique design for courthouses in Alberta. The symmetry, the pairs of classical columns, the textural contrast using brick and stone, and the elaborate carved stone entrance are some of the highlights. Inside, the foyer and winding stairway feature marble walls and steps, and an ornate brass and oak banister. A large, leaded glass, arched window half-way up the stairs floods the area with warm light and illuminates the ceramic mosaic tile floor of the foyer. The Courthouse, which is a designated Provincial Historic Resource, has been completely restored and occupies an important standing among buildings of this type in the Province.

3. The Ewart / Duggan Home

443 1st St. SE



This fine Victorian home is the oldest brick residence still standing in Alberta. The residence was built in 1887, by John Ewart, an early pioneer and businessman, for himself and his future bride. A quotation from the Weekly Times in 1887 reads, "John Ewart has commenced the erection of his house in the Western part of the city, and work will be pushed until it is completed. Mr. Ewart intends making this one of the finest residences in Medicine Hat".

Note the "Ginger-Bread" decorative wooden trim on the second story porch, and the massive corbelled brick chimney. The Sisson family (descended from early settlers) recently purchased the home as a donation to complement the new Esplanade arts centre.

4. The Kerr / Wallace Home

360 1st St. SE

Location 4 leads off a parade of prestigious, turn-of-the-century homes that continue west along First Street, once known as "The Esplanade".

The Kerr / Wallace house, built in 1910, is a classic residence with a circular, two story, bell-shaped tower, and widow's walk on the roof; both charming reminders of another era. The house was originally built by the Kerr's and soon became home to the family of Joe Hewitt of Hewitt Hardware (Black's Hardware). Joe's daughter Mary, and Stewart Wallace lived there until 1973. The house and terrace riverfront garden, once featured in *Better Homes & Gardens*, was renowned for stylish parties. It has been host to many famous persons such as John David Eaton and Eaton's sports rep Gordie Howe. Mrs. Wallace, a pioneer in women's hockey at the U of A, will never forget the Gordie Howe visit. The Wallace family was so honored they had him autograph his chair and have saved it as a family treasure.



5. St. John's Presbyterian Church

504 2nd St. SE

In 1884, a wood church was constructed on the site to replace the tents that served churchgoers prior to that time. Since the Reverend Herald was also the Chairman of the school board, it also served as the town's school. In 1902 it was rebuilt in brick. From the turn of the century to the 1st World War, the Reverend Morrow was known for his Sunday night service. The subject was what City Council had done last Monday night and what they'd better be doing tomorrow night! Apparently parishioners had to be there early to get a good seat.



An excerpt from *The Medicine Hat Weekly News* of September 25, 1902 best describes St. John's Church:

"The building is constructed of Medicine Hat sandstone and brick, the stone walls being 24 inches thick, and the brick walls, 18 inches thick. The pews are made of ashwood and pew ends of solid oak with seating accommodations for 450 people. The windows are of cathedral lead glass. There is a tower 72 feet high at the southwest corner. The furnishings were provided by the Ladies' Aid, and the church and furnishings will cost about \$15,000.00". Those were the good old days. This church with its corbelled brick tower and slender sham buttresses is the oldest church building in Medicine Hat and adds a nostalgic contrast to the modern buildings on Second Street. You can hear the wonderful bells chime each day at 12:30pm & 9pm.

6. The Canadian Bank of Commerce

577 2nd St. SE

The former Bank of Commerce, now a Provincial designated Historic Resource, was built in 1907 to serve the rapidly expanding banking needs of the community. The double Corinthian columns on either side of the doorway, and the wide stone band topping the building, are fine examples of classical detailing favored by most banks of this vintage.



7. The Cypress Club

218 6th Avenue. SE

Immediately south of the Historic Bank of Commerce building is a square, two story building with a relatively plain exterior. In 2003 the Cypress Club celebrated 100 years of association. Except for minor interior alterations, the building today is as it was designed and erected in 1907. Its location was just a few steps removed from the most important intersection in the town, which was occupied by the City Hall, Post Office, Bank of Commerce and the *Medicine Hat Weekly News*. In the boom year, 1910, the Club was instrumental in saving the city's name. The "boomers" wished to change "Medicine Hat" to something more genteel like Gastown or Smithville. But they reckoned with the diehards in the club. At an informal meeting, these diehards discussed and cussed the proposal and decided to enlist the aid of the famed

Rudyard Kipling. A letter to Kipling evinced a lengthy reply frothing with distaste the notion of renaming the city. Kipling is quoted as writing "What should a city be rechristened that has sold its name? ...Judasville?" The city kept its name.

8. Fifth Avenue Memorial United Church

476 4th St. SE

First known as Fifth Avenue
Methodist, and later as Fifth
Avenue United, this church

with its elevated turrets, local brick and Bedford sandstone inlays, was constructed in 1912. Previously, when Medicine Hat was just a tent and shack town, the parishioners sat on wooden planks nailed to kegs, and their church was the Canadian Pacific Railroad Depot.



The cornerstone of this church is an Indiana stone, weighing almost a ton, with the inscription "Fifth Avenue Methodist Church" laid by W.H. Bridgeman in 1912. As part of the ceremony each of the children of the Sunday School laid a brick.

In June 1931, the congregation gathered to celebrate a festive occasion - the burning of the mortgage. One month later, tragedy struck; the church was gutted by fire! Miraculously, the wonderful Gothic stained-glass windows, which had been made in Quebec, were relatively undamaged even though the roof collapsed.

As testimony to the tenacity of the congregation, rebuilding started immediately, and on November 15, 1931, just 5 short months later, the church was re-opened. The original balconies were not replaced, but the red brick, stained glass windows, and three manual casavant pipe organ remain.

9. St. Barnabas Anglican Church

635 4th St. SE

St. Barnabas Church was built in 1912 on three lots purchased from the C.P.R. in 1888, replacing the original wooden church. The structure is of local brick and the Bedford sandstone trimming has been used for accents and capping on the turrets and parapets. The windows have been designed with distinctive Gothic tracery. The three centre panels on the west window date back to 1886 and were moved here from the original church. The window as you see today, has recently been renovated and was dedicated in 1983. The two vertical, outside windows on the new addition were dedicated by the families of two young men who lost their lives in a blizzard in 1892. The chimes first chimed on Coronation Day in 1953 and continue to ring for Sunday service and funerals. They were dedicated to the men and women who died in the world wars.



10. Citadel Building

4th St. SE

In September 1899, Brigadier Southal unfurled the flag of "Blood and Fire" and opened the Medicine Hat Corps to "the Glory of God and the Salvation of Souls". In 1913 the city granted fifteen hundred dollars for the construction of a new Salvation Army Citadel. The old wooden hall was taken down and replaced with a large brick building. In 1965 the Citadel was remodeled but later sold when the Salvation Army moved to Stratton Way in 1983. Currently it houses offices.

11. CPR Station

402 North Railway St. SE

Building of the railway was the catalyst to the development of Medicine Hat. Construction of the railway line began in 1883. The steel bridge was completed in 1884 with one span which could swing to allow steamers to move up and down the river. This unique station, actually the second to be built, was erected in 1905. (The original is



featured in our header). Note the gently sloping hip roof with multiple dormers, the large wooden brackets under the wide eaves and the octagonal towers facing the tracks, making it one of the finest examples of railroad architecture from the early 1900's. During the regime of Supt. J.N. Niblock, the garden was tastfully laid out on the North side of the railway, including a bear-pen for "Nancy" the grizzly bear. Today you can visit the tea-room that replaced the passenger area terminal.

12. Merchants Bank & Hargrave / Sisson Block

600 Block of 2nd St. SE



The building next to the lane at location 9 is truly one of the earliest landmarks in Downtown Medicine Hat. It was built in 1898 for the Merchant's Bank.

An excerpt from the Medicine Hat News in 1931 reads: "The laying of the corner stone which was a red-letter event in the annals of the Town, was done by Mrs. James Hargrave and the first lease was signed with a little mother-of-pearl and gold pen which she treasures, its gold nib never having been dipped in ink since that memorable occasion".

The building on the corner of this block was built in 1901 and was one of the first permanent structures on South Railway Street. The first Lands Office was located here as was a department store under the partnership of Tom Hargrave and Dan Sissons. A succession of merchants followed including J.K. Drinnan, Spencer and Todd, and Todd and Company.

13. Imperial Bank

200 Block of 6th Avenue SE

Built in 1913 by William T. Williams, the original tenants were the imperial bank on one side and F.C. Lowes and Co., a real estate insurance and financial agent on the other side.

OTHER POINTS OF INTEREST DOWNTOWN

The Esplanade

401 First Street S.E.

The Esplanade Arts and Heritage Centre is for everyone. Whether you're an art lover, a cultural enthusiast, or someone who can appreciate the beauty of an architecturally stunning facility – the Esplanade is for you. Medicine Hat is proud to bring together the disciplines of visual art, performance art, and cultural heritage under one roof.

The Esplanade opened in October of 2005 and features a 700 seat theatre with a seven story fly tower, a smaller studio of 140 seat capacity, a permanent Museum Exhibition on the history of Medicine Hat, a temporary museum, and art gallery for in-house and traveling museum exhibits, a Discovery Centre, the Archives, a café and giftshop.

City Hall

580 First Street S.E.

City Hall connects the naturally beautiful landscape of the South Saskatchewan River Valley with the city's downtown core. With its unique architectural form, this building provides many outdoor spaces for public enjoyment. The Ceremonial Plaza which contains a fountain and clock tower is just one of many.

Construction of City Hall was a major Centennial Project for Medicine Hat. The architects received the Governor General's Medal for Architectural Design for the innovative and progressive design which utilizes the shapes and colours of the river valley.

A special run of 200,000 "Centennial" bricks was commissioned for City Hall. The brick is similar to those used in the early construction in downtown Medicine Hat. There is a total of 2,950 square metres of exterior glass, which not only affords visitors the marvelous view from inside as well as out, but also stands alone as an icon of the city.

Visit the City Clerk's office, (2nd floor) to take a guided or self-guided tour of City Hall inside and out. Learn about the building's unique design, see the historical displays from Medicine Hat Museum and Art Gallery.

Public Library
414 1st St. S.E.

First established in 1915, our Medicine Hat Public Library is an accessible, welcoming environment that provides a wide variety of services. Located on the northeast corner of 1st Street SE and River Road, within historic downtown, the Medicine Hat Public Library is ideally situated for locals and visitors alike. With its large collection of books, videos, CDs, DVDs, and books-on-tape, the Library is the city's major information and literary resource. Free internet access is available to all library visitors. Patrons can also enjoy hundreds of CDs and books-on-tape at several listening stations.

Giant Chess Set
Between Library and Courthouse

Enjoy a life-size game of chess! Opened in 2006, this unique outdoor set allows visitors to play a game of chess with life-size wood pieces. Call (403) 866 – CHESS for more information.

Hours of Operation:

June/July

10 A.M. to 8 P.M.

Monday – Friday

9 A.M. to 8:30 P.M.

Weekends and Holidays

August

11:30 A.M. to 7:30 P.M.

Monday – Friday

10 A.M. to 8 P.M.

Weekends and Holidays