

KANNGIESSER BUILDING

4923 50 AVENUE

Original Owner: Andrew Urquhart

Other names of building:

Urquhart Block

Jack Kanngiesser Ltd.

Kanngiesser Store, The

Date of Construction: 1907

HS 49656



Photo: North Elevation, May 2016

STATEMENT OF INTEGRITY

The Urquhart Block is largely unchanged from its original exterior design. The building received restorations as part of the Alberta Main Street Project in 1990, restoring exterior design features that had been covered over the years. The structure itself was deemed sound at this time and all the restoration work was done according to Provincial heritage guidelines, returning the building to its original facade, revealing transoms, removing stucco and repairing brickwork, wooden window frames and decorative elements. Historically accurate materials were used whenever possible. The Urquhart Block was designated as a Provincial Historical Resource in 2007.

DESCRIPTION OF HISTORIC PLACE

The Urquhart Block is a two-storey building situated on three lots in the central business district of the City of Lacombe. Built in 1907, the structure features a rare polygonal footprint within a triangular block that provides it with two virtually identical street frontages. The building is faced with tan cement brick, differentiating it from the neighbouring buildings. The Urquhart Block is otherwise typical of early commercial buildings constructed in the province, reflecting classical traditions in western architecture of three part design that traditionally corresponded with the base, shaft and capital of classically-styled columns.



Photo: North Elevation, 1908
Lacombe & District Historical Society

HERITAGE VALUE OF HISTORIC PLACE

The Urquhart Block was built following the major downtown fire that occurred in Lacombe in 1906, opening up the flat-iron block commercial area for re-development in economic boom time. It was the first building constructed following the fire that led to the call for all businesses in the downtown core to be similarly faced and/or built out of brick or stone. Developer Andrew Urquhart was an influential homesteader who arrived in Lacombe in 1896.

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He operated an early post office in the area and served on the Lacombe Town Council, the Board of Trade, and the Hospital and School District Boards. Urquhart developed the unique triangular commercial building with storefronts facing both of Lacombe's major thoroughfares, Highway 12 (50th Avenue) and what would later be known as Highway 2A. Urquhart operated his business, "The A. Urquhart & Company Limited Department Store," out of the building until 1914, selling groceries, dry goods and hardware.

The building was owned by David Calder and Alfred Lundy from 1914 until 1945 and by Jack Lawrence of Red Deer from 1945 until 1957.

In 1954, John Richard (Jack) Kanngiesser purchased the department store business operating out of the Urquhart building, and in 1957 he purchased the building itself. His son, Jack Kanngiesser Jr. remains the owner of the building at the time of designation, though he no longer runs the business therein. From its construction until 2010, the building housed a commercial department store business of one form or another, selling, in the early years, everything from farm implements to women's undergarments.

The building is typical of Alberta's early commercial design, featuring the division of the façade into a main floor with recessed entrances, large display windows surmounted by transoms and bulkheads; a second storey separated from the first by sign bands and featuring the symmetrical arrangement of multi-paned windows and crowning cornices surmounted by parapets and a central pediment.

The heritage value of the Urquhart Block lies in its representation of early Albertan commercial architecture, in its shape and design unique to Lacombe and to Lacombe's downtown core, and in its association with influential entrepreneurs and early and enduring commercial efforts in Lacombe.



Photo: Southeast Elevation, circa 1908
Lacombe & District Historical Society

CHARACTER-DEFINING ELEMENTS

Key elements that define the heritage character of the Urquhart Block include:

- its location in Lacombe's historic downtown;
- tan cement brick joined by red mortar on the main facades and red brick on the less-visible side walls;
- original chimney;
- dual street frontages, included recessed entryways, large display windows surmounted by transoms, bulkheads, typical sign bands framed on the top and bottom by projecting brick string courses, second storey arched lintels with keystones and windows, projecting string courses below and on top of crowning cornices and parapets, upper cornices with decorative concave brackets and parapets with central pediments;
- fenestration pattern and style, including original three-paneled windows in the second storey.