

Heritage Planner's Statement of Significance

Description of Historic Place

The Stovel Block is made up of two related, but separate, structures. The Edwardian-style commercial buildings are located on the southeast corner of 97 Street NW and 103A Avenue NW in Downtown Edmonton. Construction on the buildings began in 1910 and was completed by 1912. The main building, located directly on the corner, is a three-storey structure of brick construction. The smaller annex building to the immediate south is also of brick construction, but only two storeys in height. It is possible that the annex building was constructed slightly earlier than the three-storey building.

Heritage Value

The Stovel Block is architecturally significant as a somewhat rare surviving example of a commercial block built in the Edwardian style in Downtown Edmonton. The Stovel Block was typical of this style, which utilized simpler design approaches for buildings, compared to those of the Victorian era.

The three-storey building is built on a rectangular plan, with the front facade on 97 Street being slightly narrower than the sides. The building has a flat roof, with a shallow parapet. The parapet level originally had decorative brick dentilation detailing with a matching arched pediment with 'Stovel Block 1910' inscribed on the west elevation. Portions of the parapet have been replaced with concrete block.

The west elevation features four window openings on the second and third floors, with stone lintels and sills. The windows would likely have originally been single-hung in style. A pressed metal cornice runs along the top of the ground floor across the width of the west elevation. The storefronts are largely original in layout, and include two entrances onto 97 Street, although they have been modified.

A third entrance at street level on the west elevation is surrounded in brick, and leads to the apartments above.

The north elevation features six window openings on the second and third floors, again with stone lintels and sills. Similar to the west elevation, the original windows would have likely have been single-hung in style. An original metal fire escape has been removed and replaced with small balconettes. The storefront windows wrap around the corner of the building, but have been covered up.

There is also a small single window on the ground floor near the rear of the building.

The east elevation features six window openings on the second and third floors, with brick lintels and sills, instead of stone as is found on the north and west elevations. An “Army & Navy” painted ghost sign features prominently at the top corner of the wall.

The two-storey annex building is also constructed on a rectangular plan, with the narrow front facade facing 97 Street. The building has a flat roof, with a shallow parapet. A brick cornice runs along the length of the facade featuring corbelling details and a row of dentilation below. The west elevation features two window openings on the upper floor, with stone lintels and sills, similar to the main building. The original windows would likely have been single-hung in style. It appears that a pressed metal cornice likely ran along the top of the ground floor across the width of the west elevation, but it has been removed to accommodate a modern awning. The storefront on the ground level remains largely original in design and materials. The east elevation features three window openings, each with brick lintels and sills.

The Stovel Block is also valued as an early example of commercial architecture in the original part of Downtown Edmonton. Between 1909 and 1911, a variety of building permits were issued for the two buildings, mainly on behalf of Mary Stovel. No architect appears to have been involved, but builders involved included William Slyman (foundation work) and the last name Van Buskirk (for the building itself). Typical of the real estate and building boom in Edmonton leading up to the First World War, commercial buildings often expressed a vernacular architecture, being constructed by local contractors or family members, who were often doing that work outside of their normal day-to-day activities. The Stovel Block was no exception.

Little is known of William Slyman, who undertook the foundation work on the building. The building firm Beals, Hoar & Beals appears to have been the main contractor, with construction overseen by brothers James and Oswald Van Buskirk, both employees of the firm.

The company was owned by Colin (father) and Ray (son) Beals, and Robert Hoar. Colin Beals was born in Prince Edward Island in 1861. At the time of his death in 1942, the *Edmonton Bulletin* referred to him as one of Edmonton’s “best known pioneers”. He arrived in Edmonton in 1891, and worked as a blacksmith until 1898, when he founded the construction business. He was a charter member and the last survivor of the original three trustees of First Baptist Church, which was founded in 1892. He was the first choir conductor at First Baptist, and organized and conducted the Edmonton Fire Brigade Band, which

claimed to be the first brass band in Edmonton. He ran unsuccessfully for Edmonton City Council in 1912. Colin brought his son, Ray, into the business at an unknown point in time.

Robert Hoar, the other associate of the firm, came west from Ontario in 1902, using his resources from his implement and construction company to purchase a lot and build a home in the new subdivision of Groat Estate. Hoar died in 1964; his wife, Carolyn, who passed away in 1967, was well known in music circles in Edmonton, and was president of the Canadian Handicraft Guild for a time, according to her obituary in the Edmonton Journal.

The Stovel Block is also valued for its associations with the Stovel family, who were active in the burgeoning commercial industry in Edmonton in the early 1900s. James Stovel was noted as being one of the first two hardware merchants in Edmonton. The first recorded reference to James Stovel appears in 1904, when he was listed as operating a business devoted to “hardware and sporting goods” on Jasper Avenue. Stovel continued his hardware business activities for several years. While James managed the hardware store, his wife Mary took a direct role in obtaining the required permits and overseeing the Stovel Block project itself. Mary took ownership of the property and managed the tenants over the years, including retail businesses on the main floor, and apartments on the second and third floors. The first retail tenants in 1912 appear to have been the Royal Bank of Canada and Aitken & Fulton, who provided “men’s furnishings”.

The Stovel Block is further valued as an early building in the original Boyle Street district on 97 Street (originally known as Namayo Avenue). Boyle Street was the original name of 103A Avenue, and the area is one of the oldest neighbourhoods in Edmonton. It is likely named after John Boyle, an early resident of Edmonton, who arrived in the city in 1896, where he worked as a lawyer. Boyle was elected to the provincial legislature in 1905, and remained until his retirement in 1926, after roles as Minister of Education, King’s Counsel, and Attorney General.

The rectangular blocks and straight streets of the neighbourhood have existed since 1892, conforming to the layout of the original Edmonton settlement, which had been subdivided on the basis of townships and river lots. The Hudson’s Bay Reserve, located north of Fort Edmonton, forced the emerging town of Edmonton to spread eastward and away from the Fort. Consequently, Edmonton’s early commercial district was located along Jasper Avenue and 97 Street. The location of the Stovel Block at 97 Street and 103A Avenue was in the centre of a bustling Edmonton at the time, during the boom years before the outbreak of the First World War.

Character-defining Elements:

The character-defining elements of the 1910 Stovel Block include:

Three-storey building:

- form, scale and massing
- Edwardian-style commercial design
- location at the southeast corner of 97 Street NW and 103A Avenue NW
- rectangular plan
- brick construction
- flat roof
- shallow parapet
- decorative brick cornice with dentilation pattern (original has been removed, but will be reinstated)
- original window openings on upper floors on west and north elevations, with stone lintels and sills
- original window opening on ground floor of north elevation
- original window openings on upper floors on east elevation, with brick lintels and sills
- original storefront configuration on 97 Street, with two retail entrances and one entrance to the upper floor apartments
- original storefront window extending onto north elevation
- metal cornice running above ground floor storefronts
- “Army & Navy” painted ghost sign on east elevation

Two-storey annex:

- form, scale and massing
- Edwardian-style commercial design
- location at the southeast corner of 97 Street NW and 103A Avenue NW
- rectangular plan
- brick construction
- flat roof
- shallow parapet
- decorative brick cornice with corbelling and dentilation below
- original window openings on upper floors on west elevation, with stone lintels and sills
- original window openings on upper floors on east elevation, with brick lintels and sills
- original storefront configuration on 97 Street, with one retail entrance