

Greene Block / Holmes Drugs

5001 Ross Street



Description of the Historic Place

The Greene Block/Holmes Drugs is a two-storey commercial building with two sandstone primary façades, a flat roof, arched windows with stone voussoirs and keystones and an ornate pressed metal entablature. It is located on the southwest corner of Ross (50th) Street and Gaetz (50th) Avenue, traditionally the geographic centre of downtown Red Deer's commercial district.

Heritage Value

The Greene Block/Holmes Drugs is significant for its association with George Wellington Greene, its association with the theme of early commercial development in Red Deer, its landmark status, and its commercial Richardson Romanesque design influences.

The Greene Block/Holmes Drugs is significant because of its association with its namesake and builder, George Wellington Greene. Greene arrived in Red Deer in 1891, and was the first solicitor in the community. He helped to found the Red Deer Board of Trade, and served on the board of the Red Deer Public School District. After Red Deer was incorporated as a Village, Greene was involved with the ratepayers' meetings and in 1898 served as overseer of the Village. Greene was also involved with the Red Deer Agricultural Society, the Red Deer Memorial Hospital Board, and the local Canadian Club. He helped organize the incorporation of Red Deer as a Town, and was appointed solicitor for the Town of Red Deer in 1901. He held this position until he left Red Deer in 1915 to take up his new appointment as a judge in Medicine Hat.

The Greene Block/Holmes Drugs is significant for its association with the theme of early commercial development in Red Deer. Built in 1901 by contractors Hallgren and Reinholt for George Greene, this commercial building was a noteworthy addition to the growing community. After incorporation as a Town in 1901, Council meetings were held on the second floor of the Greene Block until more permanent accommodations were

constructed. The Merchant's Bank occupied this building for a single year in 1902, before moving to the nearby Michener Block. Greene leased the main floor to the Canadian Bank of Commerce in 1903. After Greene left Red Deer in 1915 a variety of owners and tenants occupied the building, but the large bank vault remained in the basement. In 1928, well-known optometrists Drs. Snell and Dodds purchased the building. In 1941, Ron Holmes began operating Holmes Drugs on the main floor, where it would remain for many years.

The Greene Block/Holmes Drugs is significant for its landmark status. The building was constructed at the commercial centre of the town of Red Deer, on the corner of Ross Street and Gaetz Avenue, the latter of which served as part of the Calgary-Edmonton Highway prior to its redirection in the 1960s. With its impressive sandstone construction and ornate detailing, the Greene Block provided the burgeoning community with a sense of permanence and style. Auspicious in both design and location, the Greene Block has been a well-known feature in downtown Red Deer since its construction over one hundred years ago.

The Greene Block/Holmes Drugs is significant for its commercial Richardson Romanesque style. Elements of the Richardson Romanesque style visible in this building include the heavy massing, the round arched window openings with wide voussoirs, and the rough sandstone on the primary façades taken from the nearby Moore quarry. The square tower on the corner is also an element of the Richardson Romanesque style, and along with the classically inspired pressed metal entablature, contributes to the architectural presence of this building. The Greene Block/Holmes Drugs was recognized as contributing to the downtown Red Deer streetscape when it received exterior rehabilitations, including the reconstruction of the corner entrance, as part of Red Deer's Alberta Main Street project.

Character Defining Elements

The character defining elements as expressed in the form, massing, and materials of the 1901 two-storey Greene Block/Holmes Drugs include:

- The flat roof
- The two primary façades
- The front walls built of sandstone, and the rear walls built of brick
- The ornate metal entablature with dentils, and decorated cornice, frieze, and architrave
- The square tower on the corner of the building
- The sandstone foundation
- The stone voussoirs with keystones and arched labels around the window and door openings
- The brick chimney
- The pattern, style and construction of all wooden windows, especially the windows on the second floor above the front entrance, which are composed of two large panes of glass, angled together and connected by a muntin