

Brandon, Manitoba
Federal Building
1039 Princess Street

HERITAGE CHARACTER STATEMENT

The Federal Building, in Brandon was constructed in 1930, to the designs of W.H. Shillinglaw, architect and engineer. Originally the building served as the post office and also provided space for other government services. In 1957 a large extension was built to the rear (north) and additional federal departments were also accommodated. The post office vacated the premises in 1991. It is the property of Public Works Canada. See FHBRO Report 89-1 07.

Reasons for Designation

The Federal Building was designated Recognized because of its historical associations, its architectural significance and its importance within its urban setting.

The construction of this building reflects the expansion and consolidation of federal services in Canadian towns through the construction of purpose-built offices. By erecting a large stone building, the federal government reinforced its presence in the community while benefiting the economy at the onset of the Depression.

Architecturally, the impressive two-storey stone-and-brick building is a good example of the Beaux-Arts Classicism used for major public institutions at this time. The materials used on the exterior, and the standards of workmanship are of superior quality.

In contrast to standard procedures of the time, the Federal Building was not designed by the Chief Architect's Office of the Department of Public Works. A local architect and civil engineer, Walter Henderson Shillinglaw, designed the building. It is one of the finest examples of his work.

The building is located on a corner in the geographical and business centre of the city, and reinforces the character of the surrounding area. It is a prominent building because of its high public use, and its impressive architectural contribution to the streetscape.

Character Defining Elements

The heritage character of the Federal Building resides in the building's monumental quality, the detailing of its facades and fenestration, its massing, the quality of its construction materials, and the landmark importance of the building in its urban environment.

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Brandon, Manitoba
Federal Building (Continued)

The design on the main (south) facade is symmetrical and has classical detailing. The two-storey facade has two side projecting entryways accentuated by pediments supported by Doric styled columns. The string course at the base and the entablature give a strong horizontal emphasis. The scale, proportion, and arrangement of these elements on the original south and west facades are integral to the Beaux-Arts formality and monumentality of this building and should be respected.

The Tyndall limestone exterior is a high quality building material and contributes greatly to the character of the building. The low relief stone decoration is concentrated around the central pediment and pilasters, the columned end pavilions, and the window surrounds which on the second storey have pediments and on the ground floor have keystones. These elements are integral to the stately and impressive appearance of the building, and should be conserved and restored as required. When upgrading is required for the existing windows, research should be undertaken to find windows compatible with the original intentions of the design.

The interior layout of the rectangular plan is functionally designed with both front entrances leading to the public postal lobby situated behind the principal facade. The eastern entrance also provides access to the second floor. The original second floor plan with living quarters and offices has had changes including some partitions and ceilings. The finishing materials are typical for the building type, and many fittings still remain. It would be important to maintain these components in future uses.

The Federal Building had an unsympathetic two-storey extension attached to the rear (north) in 1957. The addition greatly increases the floor area, but it has a 1950s character which detracts from the original building. An access ramp was sensitively added along the western facade in 1981.

The building is oriented to Princess Street and the principal access points of the main facade remain as originally designed. The building is sited in the vicinity of other buildings which have played a prominent role in Brandon's economic and social development. They are all two-storey structures and the Federal Building is sympathetic in scale, materials and design to these neighbours.

The impressive limestone facing and detailing significantly supports its role as a landmark. This quality must be retained by maintaining the high level of good repair of this building.