



MASSEY FERGUSON BUILDING

10616 - 103 AVENUE NW

CITY OF EDMONTON HISTORIC RESOURCE MANAGEMENT PROGRAM

Edmonton

DESCRIPTION OF HISTORICAL PLACE

The Massey Ferguson Building is a two-storey warehouse structure located at the northwest corner of 103 Avenue and 106 Street in Downtown Edmonton. Built in 1947 in the International style, the building features masonry cladding, large storefront glazing and upper windows. The design of the structure reinforces a strong horizontal presence along the avenue, with minimal ornamentation. A larger, one-storey addition to the north of the 1947 structure, constructed in circa 1953, is intended to be demolished as part of future development on the site.

HERITAGE VALUE

The Massey Ferguson Building is valued for its association with commercial development in the Downtown area of Edmonton in the post-Second World War era.

The land that Edmonton was developed on was used by Indigenous peoples for millennia, as the North Saskatchewan River Valley and ravine systems were a source of shelter, travel, trade, materials, and food. In 1670 the British crown gave the Hudson's Bay Company a charter to trade in Rupert's Land, the

enormous area that drained into Hudson Bay and in the late 18th century the company established a trading post along the North Saskatchewan called Edmonton House or Fort Edmonton. The company sold Rupert's Land to the Dominion of Canada in 1870. In 1876, the Canadian government signed Treaty 6 with Indigenous leaders in what is now Saskatchewan and the following year Indigenous chiefs in the Edmonton region signed adhesions to the treaty. River lots were established stretching north to Rat Creek (where 111 Avenue NW now runs east of 97 Street NW) and it was here that Edmonton's northern boundary was established when it became a town in 1892.

While the townsite of Edmonton was originally established in the Boyle Street area in the vicinity of today's 97 Street and Jasper Avenue, the opening of the Hudson's Bay Company Reserve lands to the west of this area helped to facilitate significant growth. The area north of Jasper Avenue was surveyed and lands put up for sale starting in 1912. With the arrival of the Canadian Northern Railway in Edmonton in 1905 and the Grand Trunk Pacific Railway in 1909, the demand for commercial and warehousing lands became more important. The area west of 103 Street and south of 104 Avenue became the primary area for this type of development, being centrally





located and with easy access to rail infrastructure. More than two dozen warehouses were constructed in this area between 1909 and 1914, several of which are still present today, including the Phillips Building, the Great Western Saddlery Building, the H.V. Shaw Building and the Canadian Consolidated Rubber Company Building. The concentration of these warehouse structures, many of them constructed of brick, resulted in the area being known as the Warehouse District.

In the immediate years following the Second World War, the Edmonton area experienced economic growth. Even before the discovery of oil near Leduc in 1947, new consumer spending and post-war optimism spurred significant development in Edmonton and a demand for additional commercial and warehouse space. In July 1946, Building Permit 2634 was issued to the Canadian Massey Harris Company for the construction of a “wholesale warehouse.” At the time, the Massey Harris Company was the largest agricultural equipment manufacturer in the British Empire, and with the significant growth in the Edmonton area, and increased demand for food production, the company developed a new two-storey showroom for its products in the Downtown. In 1953, the company would merge with the Ferguson Company of Ireland to become the Massey Harris Ferguson Company, which was shortened to the Massey Ferguson Company in 1958. The Downtown Edmonton building was used as the main showroom and distribution centre for the region. A one-storey addition was added to the showroom space in circa 1953. In 1970, the building was repurposed as the main showroom and warehouse for the Healy Ford dealership.

The Massey Ferguson Building is significant for its International style influences. Modern architecture began taking root in the 1930s in Edmonton, with designs emerging in both the residential and non-residential sectors. The tremendous growth in Edmonton after the Second World War, with Edmonton’s population doubling between 1945 and 1948, saw both a demand for new commercial space, but also an influx of architects eager to play a role in the development boom.

Modern architecture, including the International style, features consistent design elements such as: flat roofs; horizontal window openings; minimal ornamentation; robust building materials; and the expression of structure. The Massey Ferguson Building was one of the earliest examples of Modern commercial buildings in Edmonton.

Designed by Edmonton architects Blakey and Blakey, the Massey Ferguson Building is significant for its direct reference to the seminal 1929 Villa Savoye designed by Le Corbusier outside Paris. Using the language of the International Style of architecture, the Massey Ferguson Building incorporates an asymmetrical composition with a podium-on-columns design. The continuous ground floor glazing and long, framed horizontal windows on the second storey take advantage of the building structure being separated from the exterior walls. The podium-on-columns composition was popular at the time because it allowed a completely open ground floor for the display of equipment and vehicles. Office space was located above the main floor showroom. The building is clad in red brick with Tyndall stone





trims, and features a deep, projecting eave on the south, west and east elevations that serves as a form of canopy. A surface-mounted flagpole at the west end completes the asymmetrical composition.

The Massey Ferguson Building is further valued for its association with the architectural practice of Blakey and Blakey, a prominent and influential practice at this time in Edmonton.

Richard Palin Blakey (1879 – 1963) was born in Sunderland, England. He began his career in 1895, and emigrated to Canada in 1907, joining the Alberta Department of Public Works in 1908. He was appointed Provincial Architect in 1911, and took direct responsibility for the design of all provincial government buildings until 1925. His work included the completion of the design and construction of the Provincial Legislature Building, which was begun under the previous Provincial Architect, Allan Jeffers, in 1909.

His brother, William George Blakey (1885 – 1975), was also born in Sunderland, England, and received his architectural training from the same schools as Richard. William also emigrated to Canada in 1907, and worked with Richard in the Alberta Department of Public Works until 1909. At that time, he joined the architectural practice of the influential Edmonton architect, Roland Lines. During the First World War, William would serve overseas with the Canadian Corps of Engineers. He returned to Edmonton in 1919 to continue his practice.

In 1925, Richard and William formed an architectural practice together, which lasted until 1928, when William decided to start his own independent practice. In 1947, with the post-Second World War development boom in full swing, the brothers re-formed their partnership, and created designs for several Modern buildings in Edmonton, including the Massey Ferguson Building. Between them, many significant historic buildings are still present in Edmonton, including: Government House; the Provincial Land Titles Building; Christ Church Anglican Church; Central Masonic Temple; Ansgar Lutheran Church; and the Garneau Theatre. William also designed the

Stewart Residence in Glenora, as well as his own residence, the Blakey Residence, in the Capital Hill area of Glenora – both are designated Municipal Historic Resources.

CHARACTER DEFINING ELEMENTS

Key character-defining elements of the west, south and east elevations of the Massey Ferguson Building include:

- + International style design influences, with little ornamentation;
- + Two-storey massing;
- + Strong horizontal form;
- + Flat roof with parapet;
- + Masonry cladding;
- + Floor to ceiling storefront glazing with aluminium mullions elevated above the adjacent sidewalk on west, south and east elevations;
- + Central main entrance;
- + Long, horizontal ribbon window on south elevation on second floor, with four-paned windows;
- + Four individual punched windows, each with four panes, on the east elevation;
- + Two individual punched windows, each with four panes, on the west elevation;
- + Tyndall stone trim, sills and lintels on all second floor windows;
- + Projecting eave/canopy above ground floor on west, south and east elevations;
- + Offset, surface-mounted flagpole on west end of south elevation; and
- + Concrete parking along sidewalk level.

Designated as a Municipal Historic Resource through Bylaw 21243 in September 2025.

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