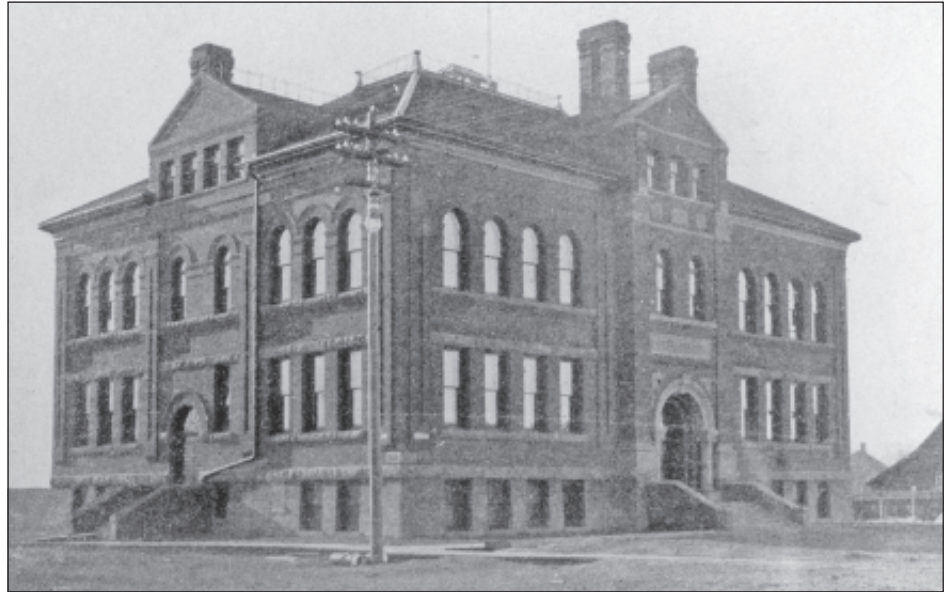


BUILDING HERITAGE

A Newsletter Celebrating the Register of Historic Resources in Edmonton

Edmonton: The Capital City

For over 90 years, Edmonton's skyline has been dominated by the sandstone dome of the Legislature Building perched on the bluff above the glittering waters of the North Saskatchewan River. For nearly a century Edmonton has proudly proclaimed itself to be Alberta's capital and while the city has grown and matured, its role as a capital city has remained constant. Throughout the city there are many historic buildings, from the Legislature to the Rutherford House and beyond, which harken back to the founding days of our city as well as our province. These buildings, with their myriad styles and functions, serve well to demonstrate our province's roots as well as to give context to Edmonton and Alberta's formative years.



McKAY AVENUE SCHOOL

One of the oldest buildings in the city, McKay Avenue School has played two important roles: the first public school in the city to be built outside of Fort Edmonton as well as housing the first two sessions of the Alberta Legislative Assembly.

The original school, which is still on the property, is a timber building constructed in 1881. The second school, a brick Romanesque-revival structure, was completed in two phases with the eastern two-thirds completed in 1905 and the western third added in 1912. The building took its name from William Morrison MacKay, a surgeon for the Hudson's Bay Company from 1864 until 1898. Due to a typographical mistake, the marker stone was labeled McKay and has remained so ever since.

When first built, McKay School was one of the largest brick buildings in the newly incorporated City of Edmonton.

McKay Avenue School c. 1905
10425-99 Avenue

Photo credit: City of Edmonton Archives

It confirmed that the site of the former fur trade post was becoming one of the province's major cities. From 1905 to 1907 the Legislative Assembly of Alberta rented the third-floor auditorium for use as its legislative chamber. Many important decisions were made there, including naming Edmonton as the provincial capital as well as the passage of the act founding the University of Alberta. For the next 70 years McKay Avenue School continued to be one of the major schools in downtown Edmonton. By 1978, enrolment had fallen to such levels that it was no longer viable to keep the school open. However, in 1981, to celebrate its centennial, the Edmonton Public School Board decided to convert Edmonton's first school into an archives and museum, a mission that it fulfills to this day.



Legislature Building with Fort Edmonton in foreground c. 1910
10800 - 97 Avenue

Photo credit: City of Edmonton Archives

LEGISLATURE BUILDING

Less than ten years after its creation, the Legislative Assembly of Alberta found a permanent home on the site of the former Fort Edmonton. The new building cost a then enormous sum of \$4,000,000 (more than three times over budget), but was soon admired as one of the finest capitols in North America.

Like many of the legislative buildings being built across Canada and the United States at the turn of the century, the Alberta Legislature is a wonderful example of the Beaux-Arts style of architecture, which had emerged in France during the 1880s and became a favourite style in North America, especially for government buildings.

The most noticeable feature of the legislature is the massive dome which rises over the interior rotunda. A second dome sheathed in copper sits atop the assembly chamber in the south-wing of the building. The building is t-shaped with the east- and west-wings meeting with the south wing in the dramatic rotunda fronted by a massive portico which faces the north grounds. The exterior is clad in sandstone from Calgary and sits on a base of Vancouver granite, while the interior is faced in marble imported from Pennsylvania, Quebec and Italy.

The site for the legislature was chosen in 1907. It was constructed just

above the old Fort Edmonton, which had become dilapidated and was demolished in 1911. The building is intended to be used by all Albertans and not just their elected officials. By 1983, under the direction of the Lougheed government, almost \$70 million was spent on the upgrading and landscaping of the legislature grounds creating one of the most used parks in the city.



Rutherford House c. 1914 • 11153 Saskatchewan Drive

Photo credit: City of Edmonton Archives

The red-brick house is built in a modified Jacobean style with large bay windows, parapets, a large pitched roof and a wide, white porch covered by a balcony. The interior is done in wood paneling as well as masonry with a large sun porch off the west side. In 1970, under threat of demolition by the expanding university, Rutherford House was declared a provincial historic site and restored to its 1915 condition, becoming one of the most beloved historic places in the city.

GOVERNMENT HOUSE

Built in conjunction with the legislature, Government House was designed and built to showcase the prestige of the new province as well as to lend dignity to its recently founded political institutions. Constructed as the official residence of the Lieutenant Governor, Government House, built in the Glenora neighbourhood, was one of the largest residences in the city, complete with a commanding view of the North Saskatchewan River.

Designed in a modified Jacobean style, and made of sandstone quarried in Calgary, Government House was built to accommodate all kinds of state occasions, including balls, large state dinners and cabinet installations. Stonemasons from Scotland were engaged to complete the elaborate stonework on the exterior. The interior was lined with rich woods such as mahogany as well as elaborate furnishings.

The mansion served as the official residence of the Lieutenant-Governor of Alberta from its completion in 1913 to 1938. By 1925 many members of the Legislative Assembly voiced concerns about the expense of maintaining the vice-regal residence. Finally, in 1938, after almost a decade of economic depression as well as a public feud between Lieutenant-Governor John Campbell Brown and Premier William Aberhart, funding for the maintenance of Government House was removed and the Lieutenant-Governor was forced to find other lodgings.

Over the next 40 years, Government House played a variety of roles: from 1942-1944 it was leased to North West



(Above)
Government House
 12845-102 Avenue
Photo credit: City of Edmonton Archives



(Left)
Royal Alberta Museum
 12845-102 Avenue
Photo credit: City of Edmonton Planning and Development

Airlines; from 1944-1950 it served as a convalescent hospital for the Department of Defence; and in 1950 it was converted into a home for disabled veterans. In 1964, the house was returned to the provincial government in a deal that helped finance the Provincial Museum of Alberta. At that time, the province determined that, due to lack privacy, the site was no longer suitable for a residence. Consequently, Government House was restored but converted for use as a conference centre as well as for other state occasions and official events. Government House remains today one of the most active government centres holding events such as the Lieutenant-Governor's New Year's Levee and the 2005 Royal Visit.

ROYAL ALBERTA MUSEUM

Through much of its history, Alberta was one of the few provinces

to have neither an official museum policy nor an official provincial museum. However, by the early 1960's, Alberta was caught up in the spirit of the centennial that was sweeping the country and which led to the largest museum building spree in Canadian history. Working with funds provided by the Federal Government's Centennial fund, preparations were made for a world-class museum, to be built in Edmonton, devoted to the exposition and dissemination of Alberta's history to its population.

After an exhaustive search, the site of Government House in Glenora was selected as the location for the new museum. The proposed building, which was to house both the new provincial museum and provincial archives, was to be quite large at almost 250,000 square feet. However, many

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conscious decisions were taken in order to give it a more intimate scale and appearance. Architects from the provincial department of Public Works, under the direction of Raymond O. Harrison, opted not to build a single mass structure but rather broke the building up into four connected sections: the large 2-storey Exhibit Hall, a smaller Public Facilities Block, a Working Facilities Block and the Archives that forms a separate L-shaped block to the west. The modern international styled building is faced with Tyndall Stone from Manitoba. The buildings rectangular vertical and horizontal lines and edges are emphasised by the smooth Tyndall stone and the areas in between have been filled with rough Tyndall stone in vertical configurations or window openings. The principal blank southern wall incorporates a native petroglyph carved into the stone.

Currently, the museum has outgrown its present facilities and recently the Provincial Government announced a plan for a “new and renewed” museum with over \$150,000,000 in funding to expand the facility. In May 2005 the first step towards this goal were taken when during the Centennial visit of Her Majesty, Queen Elizabeth II, the museum was officially renamed the Royal Alberta Museum. According to the project timetable, the architectural concept for the renewed museum will be revealed in September 2005 with the estimated completion of the project coming in 2009-2010.

All of these buildings have in some way contributed to the history of Edmonton’s development as the provincial capital. They all are reflective of the era from which they were produced, from their architectural styles to the materials used in their construction, but even today their relevance is evident, either as functional government buildings, such as the Legislature, or, like Rutherford House, as museums and historic sites, which remind us of our roots.



Prince of Wales Armouries c. 1915 • 10440-108 Avenue


Photo credit: City of Edmonton Archives

CITY OF EDMONTON ARCHIVES

The City of Edmonton Archives is a public research facility housing civic government and private records which document Edmonton’s history. Established in 1971, the Archives is administered by the Community Services department. It houses archival materials including paper records, oral history tapes, photographs, film, video recordings, computer records, correspondence, diaries, and personal histories.

When researching your house or historic building, visit the Archives, Mon, Tues, Thurs, Fri: 8:30 a.m.-4:30 p.m., or Wed: 8:30 a.m.-8:00 p.m. at the Prince of Wales Armouries, 10440-108 Avenue, or call 496-8711 for more information or try our website at <http://archivesphotos.edmonton.ca/>.

■ Scott Scambler, Heritage Planning Assistant

<h3>HISTORIC RESOURCES REVIEW PANEL - 2005</h3> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Robert Thirlwell, Chair • Linda Affolder • Joe Friedel • Ken Tingley • David Murray • Dorothy Field • Leslee Greenaway • Johanne Yakula • Kim Christie-Milley • Robert Geldart/David Holdsworth <p><i>This newsletter is produced in partnership with the Edmonton Historical Board and the City of Edmonton Planning and Development Department</i></p>	<h3>WE WOULD LIKE TO HEAR FROM YOU!</h3> <p>Please send your responses to: The Heritage Planner City of Edmonton Planning and Development Department 5th Floor, 10250-101 Street NW Edmonton, AB T5J 3P4 or visit our website at: www.edmonton.ca and go to Infrastructure and Planning - Historic Resources</p> 
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