



GEM THEATRE

9680-9686

JASPER AVENUE

Description of Historic Place

The Gem Theatre consists of a one-storey Edwardian-era purpose-built movie theatre renovated in a late Moderne Style. It is located mid-block on the north side of Jasper Avenue between 97th and 96th Streets in the Boyle community.

Heritage Value

The Gem Theatre is significant because of its association with the Goodridge family who were important and influential in Edmonton for over 80 years. James Goodridge owned most of the properties in the Jasper East Block and was responsible for the commercialization of Edmonton's original 'downtown'. His son, Leonard Goodridge, was responsible for the development of the 1912 Goodridge Block west of his father's Hub Hotel and Gem Theatre.

The Gem Theatre represents one of Edmonton's oldest surviving purpose-built motion picture theatres. Constructed by Jules Allen, he and his brother, Jay Allen, were two of the earliest showmen to open purpose-built movie theatres in Canada. The Allens' first theatre was built in Brantford Ontario in 1906, and by 1911 they had built their first luxury theatre, the Allen Theatre in Calgary. The Gem Theatre remained an active cinema until the 1970s when multi-screen theatres were introduced.

The Gem Theatre is valued as representative of a typical early



cinema. Cinemas across North America began appearing in the Edwardian era and quickly became popular. Originally designed in the Classical Revival style, the later Moderne entry façade and marquee are an indication of the status and popularity achieved by the movie companies and theatres. The modern styling shows the desire of production companies and theatre operators to appear contemporary while adapting with technologies that were emerging at the time. Elements of the interior still survive including some ornamental plaster work.

The Theatre is further valued for its association with architects Magoon and MacDonald, who designed the building. Magoon and MacDonald were a successful firm that were responsible for a large number of commercial structures in Edmonton's rapidly expanding historical core. This building was completed soon after forming their partnership and is representative of their early work in the Jasper East Block area.

Character Defining Elements

The Edwardian-era architecture and subsequent renovations in the Modène style are expressed in character defining elements such as:

- form scale and massing;
- location on Jasper Avenue;
- asymmetrically-composed façade;
- remaining elements of Classical Revival styling;
- the Modène-style façade alterations including projecting canopy and vertical marquee;
- sandstone pilasters with decorative capitals and pediment over the west entrance;
- stucco finish of the Modène renovations;
- pressed-metal upper cornice;
- ornate plaster work in the lobby and theatre.

