

Attachment D: Statement of Significance

1129 Wharf Street / 15 Bastion Square

Other Names: Wilson & Proctor Building
Darcy's Wharf Street Pub



Statement of Significance

Description of Historic Place

This historic place is a two-storey nineteenth-century commercial building facing the Inner Harbour waterway on a sloped lot at the corner of Wharf Street and Bastion Square, an historic plaza in the heart of the Old Town District.

Heritage Value

1129 Wharf Street / 15 Bastion Square is valued as an integral part one of the finest early commercial streetscapes in Victoria, which contributes significantly to the history and heritage of the Inner Harbour Precinct.

Constructed during the boom years of Victoria's free port era, this building preserves the architectural continuity of the street, an area which was the location of many of the most successful commercial enterprises in Victoria between 1858 and 1892. Cast-iron columns, made by the San Francisco foundries of P. Donohue, and sharing the same mould as those of the Rithet Building to the south, reflect new technology and burgeoning trade links with the United States along the west coast of North America. The additive composition of this building, which started as a one-storey structure and subsequently received a second-storey addition, is typical of buildings of this vintage on Wharf Street and reinforces the prosperity of Victoria's role as the centre of trade and commerce in British Columbia in the late nineteenth century.

The location of this one-time warehouse building at the corner of Wharf Street and Bastion Square is also significant; in the late nineteenth century this area would have been the nexus between shipping in the Inner Harbour and commercial endeavours on land. Once owned by prominent businessman and politician R.P. Rithet, as was its neighbour at 1117-1125 Wharf Street, this building is a testament to the prosperity of Victoria's commercial elite in the late nineteenth century. The significance of the relationship of this building to Bastion Square continues to be relevant today, as it embodies the success of downtown revitalization and rehabilitation in preserving Victoria's unique heritage character and historic streetscapes.

The iconographic symbolism on this building is also an important part of its heritage value. The caduceus, the astrological symbol of commerce, is found above the capital of each cast-iron column on the street front façade. This iconography is emblematic of the belief in the power of successful business to spur Victoria's growth even in its earliest days.

Character-Defining Elements

The character-defining elements of 1129 Wharf Street/ 15 Bastion Square include:

- open views between the building and the Inner Harbour waterway.
- its location, marking the western entrance to Bastion Square.
- its prominent corner location at Wharf Street and Bastion Square, accentuated by an angled corner entrance.
- the contribution it makes to the continuity of the commercial streetscape on the eastern side of Wharf Street.
- its situation on and physical relationship to its sloped lot.
- its two-storey scale and form in relation to the streetscape.
- architectural elements which uphold its original warehouse context and embody its original functional relationship to the shipping industry, including the cast-iron storefront columns, sparse upper-storey decoration, and historic doorways and windows on its primary and secondary facades.
- original wooden-sash divided windows.
- evidence of its different phases of construction, seen in such physical elements as construction materials and styles, and in design elements such as windows.
- the caduceus symbol located above each cast iron column on the storefront.
- its relationship to 1117-1125 Wharf Street to the south, seen in identical stylistic elements such as cast iron columns and decorative iconography, and in its association with former owner R. P. Rithet.