

3.0 STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

THE DUCK'S BUILDING 1324 BROAD STREET, VICTORIA, BC

Description of the Historic Place

The Duck's Building is a three-storey Victorian-era masonry commercial building, distinguished by its patterned brickwork, stone trim, round-arched window openings and decorative cornice. It is located mid-block on the east side of Broad Street, between Johnson and View Streets, in Victoria's Old Town District.

Heritage Value of the Historic Place

The Duck's Building is significant for its representation of the continuing growth of the city's gateway economy during the late Victorian era, its association with local entrepreneur and politician Simeon Duck, as a superior example of the Romanesque Revival style, and as a surviving example of the work of prominent architect William Tuff Whiteway.

The Duck's Building represents a time when downtown Victoria was expanding due to its booming economy. The announcement of the land grant to the Esquimalt and Nanaimo Railway in 1883, and its completion in 1888, sparked a construction boom in Victoria of stores, hotels and commercial properties. This elaborate structure indicates the extent to which the economy was prospering, and although it was completed right at the time of local recession, it demonstrated the flexible ways in which commercial properties could be used; it originally accommodated a variety of uses, including stores, offices, hotel and bar services, and a brothel.

The Duck's Building was constructed in 1892 for Simeon Duck, a successful early local entrepreneur, MLA, and former Minister of Finance for British Columbia. Duck owned two city lots at the corner of Johnson and Broad Streets; the development of Duck's Carriage Factory in 1874, the 1884 First Duck's Building to the east and the adjacent 1892 Duck's Building to the south, represent patterns of real estate speculation and development common in Victoria in the late nineteenth century, which ebbed and flowed with the economy. This building is representative of the multi-functionality of Victoria's commercial district in the late nineteenth century. Bold decoration and architectural styling make the Duck's Building a dominant presence within Broad Street's narrow streetscape.

The Duck's Building is a significant surviving example of the work of prominent B.C. architect, W.T. Whiteway (1856-1940), and is a superior example of the Romanesque Revival style. Whiteway travelled widely in the pursuit of commissions, and notably in 1896-97 designed an almost identical building on the other side of the country, the Gordon & Keith Building in Halifax, which still exists. The Duck's Building is characteristic of the Romanesque style adapted to commercial usage. Stylistic embellishments on the front façade include round-headed windows, rock-faced sandstone detailing, and patterned and corbelled brickwork with a central pediment above the main entry.

Character-Defining Elements

The heritage character-defining elements of the Duck's Building include its:

- location on Broad Street, in Victoria's Old Town District;
- continuous commercial and retail use;
- commercial form, scale and massing, as expressed in its three-storey cubic massing, symmetrical rectangular plan and flat roof, set flush to the front and side property lines; irregular bay spacing with two entries to the upper floors; and raised rear portion that accommodated an assembly hall;
- design elements of the Romanesque Revival style, such as rock-faced masonry piers at street level; rock-faced stone lintels; round-arched windows on the top floor; decorations above the main entry with patterned fret work and a triangular pediment; corbelled cornice detailing, decorative name and date-plates with 'DUCK'S BUILDING' and "A.D. 1892;" and patterned brickwork on the rear facade;
- masonry construction, including: structural front, side and rear brick walls; timber internal frame; parged window sills; and cast-iron storefront columns;
- symmetrical fenestration including: rectangular storefront openings; and round-arched and rectangular double-hung 1-over-1 wooden sash windows with upper-sash horns on the front and rear facades; and
- the contiguous relationship of its rear wall with the 1874 stone wall of the Duck's Carriage Factory to the north.