



Fairfield Block

1601 Douglas Street, Victoria, British Columbia, V8W, Canada

FORMALLY RECOGNIZED: 1995/01/19, Listed on the Canadian Register: 2005/11/15

CONSTRUCTION DATE: 1912/01/01

LISTED ON THE CANADIAN REGISTER: 2005/11/15

DESCRIPTION OF HISTORIC PLACE

The Fairfield Block is a large, three storey Commercial Style tan and cream coloured brick building prominently located on the northeast corner of Douglas and Cormorant Streets in the commercial core of downtown Victoria.

HERITAGE VALUE

The Fairfield Block possesses heritage value as a solid example of the type of large-scale commercial building constructed in Victoria during the prosperous years prior to the First World War. Constructed in 1912 for local businessmen Mr. Grant and Arthur Lineham, who was the manager of the B.C. Light and Power Company and a city alderman, this building - which is one of the few surviving works of architect H.S. Griffith - is representative of the substantial real estate speculation associated with commercial wealth that occurred in Victoria during the boom period between 1908 and 1913.

This building is valued for its handsome Edwardian detailing, articulated by tan brickwork and cream coloured terra cotta ornamentation, which reinforces the heritage character of the commercial streetscape of North Douglas Street. In partnership with nearby buildings of similar vintage such as the Hudson's Bay Company Department Store (1914) and Hotel Douglas (1911), it

is a good representation of the larger scale commercial buildings which transformed the City from a Victorian supply town to a modern Edwardian urban centre.

Source: City of Victoria Planning and Development Dept.

CHARACTER-DEFINING ELEMENTS

The character defining elements of the Fairfield Block include:

- Its prominent corner location.
- Its bulk, and the size of its large floor plate.
- The relationship and sense of continuity with other historic commercial buildings in the area, such as the Hudson's Bay Company Department Store and the Hotel Douglas.
- The commercial use of the building, in particular the variety of storefronts at street level.
- The Commercial Style architectural elements relevant to its 1912 construction, including the brick cladding, terra cotta decorative elements, prominent cornice, and grid-like fenestration pattern.
- Paired double-hung wooden sash windows in the upper storeys.
- Interior elements which support the heritage character of its original design by architect Griffith.
- Construction methods used in its 1912 design.
- The integrity of the building envelope, which identifies it as a 1912 commercial building.

HISTORICAL INFORMATION

THEME - CATEGORY AND TYPE

Developing Economies

Trade and Commerce

FUNCTION - CATEGORY AND TYPE

CURRENT

Commerce / Commercial Services

Shop or Wholesale Establishment

Commerce / Commercial Services

Office or Office Building

ARCHITECT / DESIGNER: H. S. Griffith

BUILDER: n/a



Figure 1 1601-1605 Douglas Street, Fairfield Block. Date, 1961. C



1601-1605 Douglas Street, Fairfield Block. Date between 1959-1974. City of Victoria Archives





Henry Sandham Griffith (1865-1943) was an architect who left a definite legacy in Victoria's architectural history. His resume also includes numerous commissions in Manitoba, Saskatchewan and Vancouver, B.C. Here is [a partial list of his projects](#). Here is [a partial list of his projects in Manitoba](#).

Henry Sandham Griffith was born in Oxfordshire, England. He trained as an architect from 1882 to 1885 with a firm at Reading and as a draughtsman in 1886 at London. He came to [Winnipeg](#) in the spring of 1887 and took employment in the engineer's office of the [Northern Pacific Railway](#), and later in the [Land Titles Office](#). In 1893 he began to practice as an architect in Winnipeg, designing [a number of commercial and residential buildings](#).

His surviving Victoria projects date between 1909 and 1915.

Here are some of his surviving extant buildings in Victoria, listed in chronological order of construction:

- [1413-1421 Government Street](#), currently the Plaza Hotel, built in 1910-11 for the Westholme Lumber Company.

- [919 Douglas Street](#), now the Strathcona Hotel, built in 1911
- [1601-1609 Douglas Street](#), the Fairfield Block, built in 1912.



The Plaza Hotel, [1413-1421 Government Street](#), originally built by Henry Sandham Griffiths in 1910 for the Westholme Lumber Co.



Strathcona Hotel, [919 Douglas Street](#). Designed by Henry S. Griffith in 1911.

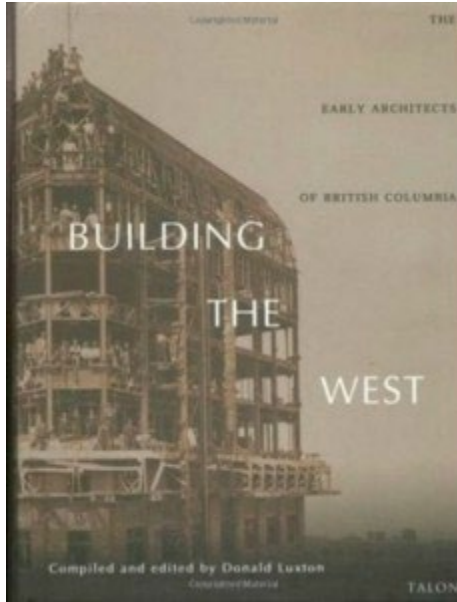


Fairfield Block, [1601-1609 Douglas Street](#). Built in 1912 by architect Henry S. Griffith for Grant and Lineham

For more information on Henry Sandham Griffith, see:

- [Biographical Dictionary of Architects In Canada](#)
- [Manitoba Historical Society](#)
- [The Griffith](#) – Abstract Developments

For more information on Henry Sandham Griffith and other 19th and early 20th century B.C. architects, we recommend [Building The West: The Early Architects Of British Columbia](#), edited by Don Luxton.



Book cover, [Building The West: Early Architects of British Columbia](#), edited by Donald Luxton