

1402-1406 Douglas Street Porter Block



Statement of Significance

Description of Historic Place

The Porter Block is a handsome two-storey brick and stone commercial building located at the northwest corner of Douglas and Johnson Streets. It is distinguishable by its rusticated stonework, decorative multicoloured brickwork, and balustraded cornice.

Heritage Value

The Porter Block, constructed in 1900, is valued as one of the finest reflections of the change in architectural stylistic expression which occurred in Victoria at the turn of the twentieth century. The work of architect W. Ridgeway Wilson, it is an excellent example of the simple and balanced designs, incorporating spacious interiors and articulated by refined masonry and stonework, which would classify the Edwardian era. This historic place is important to Victoria's Old Town District because of its strong physical presence, prominent corner location, and distinctive style, which contribute to the diversity of the historic commercial streetscape. Grounded by a sense of solidity and poise, this commercial block is a significant reflection of both its original owner, Robert J. Porter, who was a successful businessman and former City alderman and mayor, and of the continued development of Douglas Street as Victoria grew from a nineteenth century supply town to a modern commercial city.

Character-Defining Elements

The character-defining elements of the Porter Block include:

- Its solid massing, anchored to the ground by rusticated stone piers.
- Its two-storey form.
- Its rusticated stonework, seen in such elements as voussoirs, and lintels.
- Its decorative unglazed terra cotta blocks, scrolls and balustrade.
- Its name plaque identifying it as the "Porter Block", also made of unglazed terra cotta.
- All surviving elements relevant to its 1900 design by architect Ridgeway, including paired upper-storey double-hung and transom wooden sash windows.
- Interior elements which support the character of its original design.
- Transom windows on the commercial storefront.
- The integrity of the building envelope.