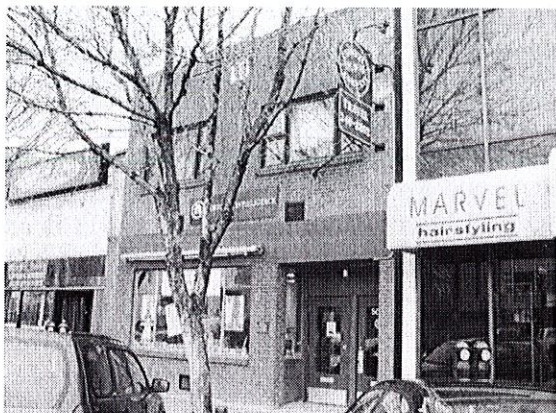


Wadson Block

5018 Ross Street



Description of the Historic Place

The Wadson Block is a two-storey brick clad commercial building with a flat roof and offset recessed front entrance. It is located on Ross Street, a busy commercial thoroughfare in downtown Red Deer.

Heritage Value

The Wadson Block is significant for its association with John and Mary Konopaki, and for its modern design.

The 1948 Wadson Block is significant for its association with John and Mary Konopaki, the owners of the Peacock Inn restaurant that was located in this building for twenty-two years. During the Second World War, John enlisted in the army and was sent to A-20 Training Camp in Red Deer. Mary worked at the Club Café on Ross Street, as did John once he was discharged from the army. In 1947 the couple decided to go into business for themselves. After a failed attempt to buy the Club Café, they arranged the financing of a new building with a local business man, Ed Wadson. The Wadson Block was built for an estimated \$17,000 by Red Deer Construction and in return for which, the Konopakis paid 10% of their sales to Wadson as rent. The restaurant was named the Peacock Inn, and a large neon peacock was installed on the front of the building to attract customers. The Peacock Inn was very popular, and was included on the Duncan Hines list of recommended restaurants of North America. In the mid 1950s Colonel Harland Sanders, of Kentucky Fried Chicken fame, visited the restaurant and expressed interest in converting the restaurant into a Kentucky Fried Chicken outlet, but the kitchen proved to be too small for the proposed franchise. The Peacock Inn was the first of many businesses operated by the Konopakis in Red Deer, including the Holiday Inn banquet hall, the Peacock Inn drive-in on Gaetz Avenue, and seven KFC restaurants in Red Deer. In 1970 the original Peacock Inn at 5018 Ross Street closed due to changes in consumer traffic, and the well-known neon peacock was removed from the front façade. John and Mary Konopaki made a tremendous contribution to the commercial development of Red Deer over their many years as successful members of the business community.

Statements of Significance for the Downtown Red Deer Legacy Year Project

The Wadson Block is significant for its simple modern design. With a flat roof and very few embellishments, this building typifies the modernist idea of form following function. During the 1940s many commercial blocks similar to the Wadson Block were erected in Alberta. These modern commercial blocks characteristically used the main floor as commercial space and the second floor as residential or office space. John and Mary Konopaki made their home in the suite on the second floor of this building. The Wadson Block is a significant contributing resource to Red Deer's downtown core, which is an eclectic mix of built heritage reflecting Red Deer's history. The simple modern building was recognized as contributing to the downtown Red Deer streetscape when it received exterior rehabilitation as part of Red Deer's Alberta Main Street project.

Character Defining Elements

The character defining elements as expressed in the form, massing, and materials of the 1948 two-storey Wadson Block include:

- The flat roof and parapet
- The common bond red brick cladding
- The offset, recessed front entrance with two entrances
- The cast stone window sill beneath the storefront window on the first storey
- The rowlock brick sills beneath the second storey windows
- The soldier course stringcourse above the windows on the second storey
- The central cast stone date stone on the second storey which reads "WADSON BLOCK 1947"
- The louvered vents above and below the storefront
- The pattern, style and construction of all original window and door openings