

Statement of Significance

December 2017



Creston Grain Elevators

215 and 235 Northwest Blvd ~ Creston BC

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Statement Of Significance

Creston grain elevators :: 215 and 235 Northwest Blvd, Creston BC.



Description of Historic Place

The Creston Grain Elevators are two side by side wood-frame vertical agricultural structures with gable roofs, approximately six storeys high. They sit on two urban lots on Northwest Boulevard near the intersection with Pine Street in downtown Creston, BC.

Heritage Values of the Historic Place

Acclaimed landmarks on Creston's downtown skyline, the town's pair of wood grain elevators are valued as significant historic sites, as iconic symbols of Creston and the Creston Valley's agricultural heritage.

Additionally, the Creston elevators hold provincial and national significance, representing half of the last four¹ surviving wood grain elevators in BC which had at least twenty four still standing in the 1950s. They are increasingly rare surviving representations of a historic agricultural building that is considered the emblem of the Canadian grain industry, a structure which has all but vanished in the last few decades all over the country. In their survival as a pair, and on such an accessible, visible location in the heart of downtown Creston - their value is higher than the majority of other surviving elevators which are often isolated examples in remote locations.

Built in 1935 (white elevator - Midland & Pacific) and 1936 (red elevator - Alberta Wheat Pool), the elevators are tied to the historic reclamation efforts of the Creston Flats along the Kootenay River around the turn of the 20th century to establish agricultural lands, and specifically to the diversion of the Goat River in 1934-35, the intervention which finally kept the flats safe from floods. They are directly associated with the first significant yield of grain off the Flats in 1935 which brought an economic and development boom to Creston.

The elevators stand testament to the struggles and resilience of the local grain industry as it faced the obstacles of the Canadian Wheat Board's restrictive quota policies. The elevators functioned busily as shipping depots for grain (wheat, barley, oats and rye) until 1971 when in

¹ The other two wood grain elevators still standing in BC are in Dawson Creek (816 Alaska Ave.) and in Fort St. John (6708 Elevator Rd.)

light of these restrictive policies, farming in the area shifted to non-grain crops. That year, the Pacific and Midland elevator was sold to private ownership - ceasing to handle public grain - and 10 years later in 1982, the Alberta Wheat Pool elevator closed as well.

Their design, following a standard plan for square elevators and featuring traditional 2 x 6 wood crib construction, is valued as an excellent illustration of the 1920-30s Prairie Country Elevator Plan 'Standard Tall', the vernacular model erected in the two grain growing areas of BC - the Creston Valley and the Peace Region. Their intact interior mechanisms - headworks and 'leg' with belt and cups, gerber, bindicator, distributing spouts and pipes, storage bins, hopper scale, grain pits and motors provide rare insight into the workings of grain distribution from farms to rail in Canada from the 1890s to the 1980s.

Even though in the last four decades they have no longer functioned as public grain elevators, were minimally used for storage and finally vacated, the local community has mobilized to protect them from demolition whenever a threat was raised. Their importance to the community and to visitors alike is also evident in that they continue to be the most photographed, illustrated and painted landmarks in the Creston Valley.

Character Defining Elements

- Original location at the foot of Pine Street between Northwest Boulevard and the Canadian Pacific Railway tracks overlooking the Creston Valley Flats
- Industrial/agricultural form, massing and design as per the 'Standard Tall' elevator plan introduced by the United Grain Growers Ltd. in 1917 and defined by:
- Five-storey wood-crib-wall structure (40' x 40' footprint) topped by a two-storey ballon-frame cupola (20' x 40' footprint). The wood-crib-wall construction, as evident on the interior, consists of 2x6 members laid flat and spiked together on the lower bin walls and 2x4 members laid flat and spiked together on the upper bin walls.
- Narrow shiplap siding on the exterior
- Flared siding at the base over the concrete foundation
- Cedar shingle roofs
- Minimal eaves with stacked fascia boards on the Red elevator and an angled fascia board on the White elevator
- Monitor style roof (a general front gable roof form featuring a significant drop between the upper roof and the lower planes)
- Wood-frame delivery bay (driveway) with shed roof on the street facing elevations
- Sliding doors at each end of the driveways
- Original window openings with original window assemblies on the Red Elevator
- Original window openings found on the White elevator with original openings and assemblies on the driveway
- Trackside folding loading platform and sliding door
- Extant internal mechanisms for the operation of the elevators including:
 - headworks and 'leg' with vertical conveyor belt and cups, rope pull man-lift, bin levers, gerber, bindicator, distributing spouts and pipes, storage bins, hopper scale, grain pits and motors

Current Photographs



front view



rear view

Current photographs - Red elevator (215 Northwest Blvd)

front and west side



rear and east side



Internal structure and mechanisms for the operation of the red elevator







Current photographs - White elevator (235 Northwest Blvd)

front and east side



west side

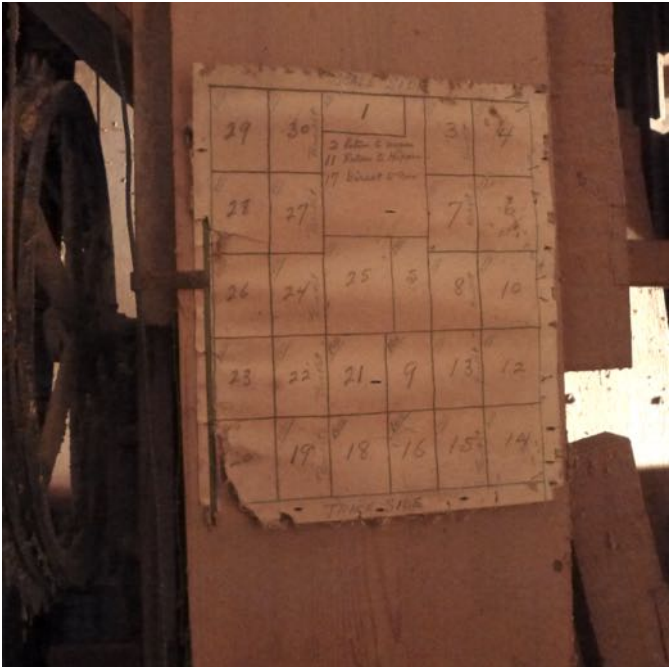


rear and east side



Internal structure and mechanisms for the operation of the white elevator

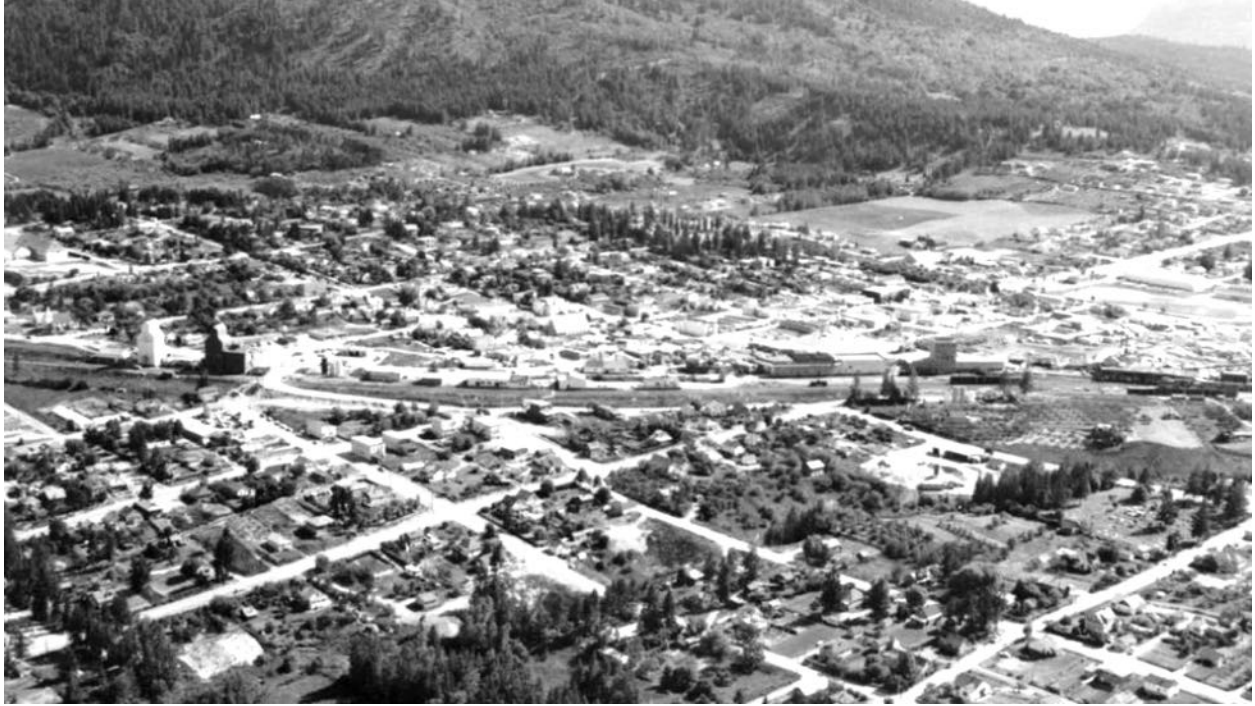




Archival Photographs



One of the elevators under construction. Creston Museum



Archival aerial view of the Creston Flats. BC Archives 193501-001



Downtown Creston in November 1946. Creston Museum



With red elevator annex built in 1940, demolished in 1997. Creston Museum



Creston Museum



Creston Museum



Creston Museum

Research Resources

Creston Museum & Archives. A History of Creston's Downtown Grain Elevators - pamphlet

Creston Museum & Archives. Album of captioned photos
[http://www.creston.museum.bc.ca/index.php?
module=photoalbum&PHPWS_Album_op=view&PHPWS_Album_id=8](http://www.creston.museum.bc.ca/index.php?module=photoalbum&PHPWS_Album_op=view&PHPWS_Album_id=8)

Government of Manitoba. A History of Grain Elevators in Manitoba
Part 2: The Architecture of Grain Elevators [https://www.gov.mb.ca/chc/hrb/internal_reports/
pdfs/Grain_Elevators_architecture.pdf](https://www.gov.mb.ca/chc/hrb/internal_reports/pdfs/Grain_Elevators_architecture.pdf)

Griffith Surveys. March 2008. Verticality Assessment of Creston Grain Elevators.

Ketchum, Milo S. 1919. The Design of Walls, Bins, and Grain Elevators.
Engineering News Pub. Co.

Pearson, Jim A. 2007. Vanishing Sentinels: The Remaining Grain Elevators of Alberta and
British Columbia

Nelson Engineering Inc. April 2008. Peripheral Structural Review/Report

Interview with owner Ray Gauthier Nov 21-22, 2017 and Nov 30, 2017

Interview with Kunze Gallery owners Dirk and Sandy Kunze Nov 21-22, 2017

Interview with Scott Jolliffe, Calgary - expert on Prairie Grain elevators. December 1, 2017

Site visits November 21 and 22, 2017

Interview with staff at Viterra, Fort St. John. June 14, 2018

Creston Grain Elevators



Legend

- Electoral Areas
- Cadastre
- Civic Address

Map Scale:

1:2,257



Date:
August 7, 2020

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Source: Esri, Maxar, GeoEye, Earthstar Geographics, CNES/Airbus DS, USDA, USGS, AeroGRID, IGN, and the