

Gravelbourg Saskatchewan and Western Elevator Company Grain Elevator

Statement of Significance

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Description of Historic Place

The Saskatchewan and Western Elevator Company elevator occupies a 0.14 hectare lot on the Canadian National Railway siding on 7th Avenue, east of Main Street on the north side of the town of Gravelbourg. The site consists of a grain elevator of wood crib construction built in 1915.

Heritage Value

The heritage value of the Saskatchewan and Western Elevator Company elevator lies in its status as an example of grain elevators that were built during the expansion in the grain-handling industry between 1900 and 1930. When the Saskatchewan and Western Elevator Company elevator was built in 1915, a total of eight companies operated nine separate elevators in Gravelbourg. The town remained an important grain handling point for several decades. The structure is also the only remaining elevator built by Saskatchewan and Western Elevator Company in Saskatchewan and is one of the few remaining elevators built prior to the 1920s.

The heritage value of the elevator also lies in its form and design. The building exemplifies the ‘medium-height standard planⁱ’, design. From 1905 to 1925, this design was commonly built with minor variations by many grain companies during the industry’s period of expansion between the years 1900 to 1930ⁱⁱ. The structure features a sloping shoulder roof topped with a centred cupola. The Saskatchewan and Western Elevator Company elevator had a capacity of 25,000 bushels (680 tonnes) held in 15 bins and was covered in cedar siding.

Character Defining Elements

The heritage value of the Saskatchewan and Western Elevator Company elevator lies in the following character-defining elements:

- Elements that reflect the grain elevator form and design typical of “medium height standard plan” elevators constructed between 1905 and the 1920s. Elements include: a rectangular design with sloped-shoulder gable roof topped by a cupola; the elevator’s wood-crib construction consisting of dimensional lumber stacked and nailed on its side, strong timber lintels above the crib walls, exposed structural members visible in the work floor; semi-hoppered wood bins braced at regular intervals by wooden cross-brace supports- a feature found in older elevators; its wood framed cupola enclosing mechanical equipment. Other elements reflecting the form and design typical of this era are: minimum fenestration, with two small windows with plain sashes in the cupola; the loading dock and rail car loading spout beside the railway tracks
- Elements that reflect the early technology of elevator’s grain handling equipment including: the revolving gerber spout in the cupola which distributed grain through steel spout receptacles in the cupola floor and carried by piping into 11 bins; wood bins and chutes; various slide valves;

the garner funnel and wooden hopper scale over the back pit on the work floor; the ornate Fairbanks scale with characteristic pedestal legs; the wheel and equipment for controlling the gerber spout distributor; the steel frame counter-weighted manlift system.

- Those elements associated with the Saskatchewan and Western Elevator Company, namely: the location of the elevator on its original site; the original cedar siding on the exterior of the elevator and the dome-shaped roof vent.

Additional Notes:

The Saskatchewan and Western Elevator Company was later taken over by the Topper Grain Company in 1922, which in turn was taken over by the Federal Grain Co. in 1929. Reliance Grain appears to have temporarily operated the structure in 1939-40 and in 1945-46. It then reverted to the control of the Federal Grain Company which sold the elevator to the Searle Grain Co. Ltd. in 1950. The elevator was sold back to the Federal Grain Company in 1967 and was ultimately taken over by the Saskatchewan Wheat Pool in 1972.

The elevator occupies its original location in the town of Gravelbourg and has been a prominent sight at the end of Main Street for decades. The elevator is regarded as a distinguishing landmark that commemorates the agricultural heritage of the town of Gravelbourg.

ⁱ Everett's work identifies six major styles in elevator design and their associated years of construction. Between the years 1880-1910, the "Pyramidal Roof" design, Hybrid Plan with Offset Roof" design and "Squat Standard Plan" were constructed. Between 1905-1925, the "Medium Height Standard Plan" elevators were constructed and between 1910 to 1965, "Tall Standard Plan Elevators" were constructed. Most elevators built after 1950 were of the "Tall Modern" design. See Everitt, John. A Study of Grain Elevators in Manitoba. Province of Manitoba, Historic Resources Branch 1992.

ⁱⁱ Fulton's work identifies 4 stages in the development of the modern grain handling system. The grain handling system went through four general periods as follows: a period of genesis between 1876 and 1900; a period of expansion between 1900 to 1930; a period of maturity between 1930-1970; and a period of attrition between 1970 to the present. See Fulton, Gordon. "Framework and Criteria for the Evaluation of Country Grain Elevators" Government of Canada, Historical Services Branch 1995.