

Statement of Cultural Heritage Value or Interest

156 Argyle Street North (“Preston Carnegie Library”)

Description of Historic Place

The property known municipally as 156 Argyle Street North is located at the intersection of Duke Street and Argyle Street North, within downtown Preston. The property contains a two-and-a-half storey red brick structure purpose-built as a public library with funds donated from the Carnegie Foundation in 1909. The property’s heritage designation is reserved to the structure and does not extend to any landscape features.

Summary of Cultural Heritage Value

The former Preston Carnegie Library exhibits physical/design value, historical/associative value, and contextual value. The property contains a two-and-a-half storey Beaux-Arts civic building designed in 1909 by William Edward Binning (1851-1928) and with funds donated by philanthropist Andrew Carnegie (1835-1919).

Built in the Beaux-Arts Classical style, the building features a large projecting frontispiece, a monumental semi-elliptical pediment with inset bas-relief decorative designs, concrete pilasters with Ionic capitals, decorative wall sconce lights, stained glass, and eyebrow windows permitting sunlight into the attic storey.

The former Preston Carnegie Library is the successor of the first library in Preston created by local notary Otto Julius Klotz (1852-1923) in 1871 within the Mechanics’ Institute. Originally located in the Fireman’s Hall on King Street it was moved to the local Oddfellow’s Hall in 1887 and by 1895 it was renamed as the Preston Public Library. On February 13, 1909, a \$12,000 award was received from the Carnegie Foundation. Binning was commissioned to design the new library and it was opened in 1910.

Description of Heritage Attributes

The character-defining heritage attributes of the property include the following:

- Exterior features of the building:
 - Siting of the building at the corner of Duke Street and Argyle Street North, directly facing Preston’s Central Park.
 - Standardized rectangular plan with projecting front and rear sections.
 - All four exterior elevations designed in the Beaux-Arts Classical style, composed of brick and laid in running bond.
 - Hipped roof with eyebrow dormers located in the centre of the roof.
 - Front (south) façade:
 - Three-bay façade defined by matching sets of adjoining windows on upper and lower floors.
 - Large, rectangular casement windows set upon lug sills and topped by rough cut stone lintels.

- Rough cut, six course stone apron.
- Pyramidal stone steps at main entrance.
- Projecting frontispiece section capped with monumental semi-elliptical pediment underscored by heavy cornice brackets and overhanging soffit.
- Classical bas-relief decorative design with shield inset within pediment.
- Concrete pilasters (cut in four sections) topped with Ionic capitals. The pilaster bases are set on rough cut stone block foundation.
- Decorative tubular wall sconce lights in Art Deco-inspired style found on pilasters flanking the main entrance.
- Entrance doors with large transom window topped with rough cut keystone, trapezoidal flanking stones, and flared brick Jack arch header.
- Horizontal window located above main entrance with three divided lights and decorative stained glass.
- Projecting cornice with heavy bracketing.
- Paired, three-course quoins projecting on corners.
- Side (east and west) elevations (matching):
 - Four-bay wall with lower-level casement windows and upper-level casement windows.
 - All windows topped with rough-cut stone lintels and underscored by lug sills.
 - Rough cut, six course stone apron.
 - Projecting cornice with heavy bracketing.
 - Three-course projecting quoins.
 - Projecting chimney base sections with central stone voussoir feature set on horizontal stones.
 - Eyebrow dormers in centre of roof.
- Rear (north) elevation
 - Projecting rear brick section with aligned upper floor windows and a gabled roof dormer.
 - Three-course projecting quoins.
 - Rough cut, six course stone apron.
- Interior features of the building:
 - Swinging main hall entrance doors with brass fixtures.
 - Decorative press tin ceiling with fixtures throughout main floor hall and basement.
 - Two brick fireplaces on north and south ends of main floor hall with central voussoir arches.
 - Wooden staircase balustrade to upper floor with square newel posts.