



# CHURCHILL WIRE CENTRE

10003 - 102 AVENUE

## Description of Historic Place

The Churchill Wire Centre is a two-and-one-half storey granite and terrazzo clad structure with basement, raised main floor and a four-storey addition to the west located on a prominent corner lot in Edmonton's civic district.

## Heritage Value

The Churchill Wire Centre, constructed in 1947, is significant because it is an excellent and rare surviving local example of the Stripped Classicism style of architecture, a subset of the Moderne style. Its human scale, geometric and subtle classical references and early use of prefabricated exterior components helped influence the design of successive commercial and civic structures surrounding Churchill Square. Its modernistic styling is also symbolic of the changing attitudes towards new technologies and non-traditional design that became the hallmark of later twentieth century architecture.

The Churchill Wire Centre is also significant because of its association with Edmonton's former city architect, Maxwell Dewar, who oversaw the design of this building. He designed several civic buildings during Edmonton's period of rapid growth after WWII, when oil was discovered at Leduc in 1947. Dewar also planned the civic development around adjacent Sir Winston Churchill Square.



The Churchill Wire Centre is also significant because of its original function as an urban industrial building. It had an open plan interior and tall ceilings to accommodate bulky long-distance switching equipment on the upper floor. The sculptural program includes a figure above the main entrance, reminiscent of the Greek god Mercury, holding cables and lightning bolts. Two telephone booths flanking the main interior staircase are also reminders of the building's original function. The Churchill Wire Centre is also significant because it played a central role in the history of Edmonton's former municipal telephone company, Edmonton Telephones. The company experienced significant growth in the 1940s, necessitating the addition of a larger headquarters to its 1922 Municipal Telephone System building on an adjacent lot to the west. A four-storey addition in 1958, extending the north façade of the earlier portion to the sidewalk, provided yet more room. The Churchill Wire Centre continued in operation until 1984.

## Character Defining Elements

The building's Stripped Classicism design and its historical function and context are exemplified in elements such as its:

- form, scale and massing;
- high visibility from Churchill Square;
- angled orientation of the main entrance toward Churchill Square;
- entrance foyer leading to the main staircase, with a vaulted ceiling and travertine marble panels;
- glass block windows arranged in paired vertical bays inset slightly from the façade;
- black metal spandrels with chevron motifs;
- polished black granite and cast terrazzo exterior panels;
- pilasters separating the paired windows;
- fluted column-like pilasters aside the main entrance;
- stylised dentils above the second floor windows;
- "TELEPHONE BUILDING" engraved sign below the east roofline;
- Mercury-like anaglyph above the corner entrance.

