

**288 Reid Street  
Willis-Harper Hardware and Furniture Store – 1946**



Corner Elevation



Rear Elevation



Rear and South Elevation

**Description**

Willis-Harper Hardware and Furniture Store is a large two storey commercial building constructed in 1946 which is prominently located on the southeast corner of Reid Street and Barlow Avenue in Downtown Quesnel. The historic place includes the building and the property it occupies.

**Heritage Value**

Willis-Harper Hardware and Furniture Store is located in Downtown Quesnel which is the commercial and administrative center of the city. Over the years, the building has expanded vertically and horizontally to accommodate business growth. While not in its original form, the building is a physical reminder of the people and businesses that shaped the development of Quesnel. The building is the anchor for commerce on Reid Street.

William and Dorothy Willis, Lloyd and Mary Harper, and Ron and Pat Mattison were the original partners in this very successful business venture that began in 1946. The owners were merchandising pioneers who envisioned a new commercial area in Quesnel. Since the early days of Quesnel, Front Street had been the center of commerce and trade. Even though Reid Street is located only one block east of Front Street, many believed the business would not succeed since Reid Street was considered too remote at the time. However, the business did prosper to become known as 'Willis-Harper' and synonymous with shopping in Quesnel. The store lived up to its motto 'Willis-Harper, first with the best', by providing residents with the latest products. It offered shoppers with lively advertisements featuring anecdotes, cartoons, and jokes among the sale items.

Since 1946, the various owners of the store have sponsored many local organizations and events. A community bulletin board was proudly displayed at the entrance for many years. Several Quesnel residents have worked at the store and most residents have shopped at Willis-Harper at one time or another. It was the first business to offer coupons, called the 'Willis-Harper Buck', that were available in many different denominations. Even though the store has changed hands over time, the original Willis-Harper Hardware and Furniture Store sign continues to be proudly displayed on the corner and rear of the building. The Willis and Harper families are recognized for their contribution to the development of the community with streets named in their honour.

### **Character-Defining Elements**

The character-defining elements of Willis-Harper Hardware and Furniture Store include:

- its prominent location with original 1946 store sign located at the corner and rear of the building;
- two storey wood frame construction with stucco exterior;
- a flat roof of tar and gravel;
- a south wall made of concrete block;
- a canopy on the corner of the building;
- a half storey addition in 1968;
- its original form even though it has been renovated over the years to accommodate business growth.