

2003 Second Avenue - Bellevue Hotel



Bellevue Hotel 2009

Heritage Register - Building

- 1) **Historical Name:** Bellevue Hotel
- 2) **Common Name:** Orwell Hotel, The Flying Steam Shovel
- 3) **Address:** 2003 Second Avenue
- 4) **Date of Construction:** 1897
- 5) **Design, Style, Architecture, Architect:**

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

Description:

The Bellevue Hotel is a substantial, flat-roofed, frame building located on the southeast corner of Second Avenue and Washington Street, always having marked the northern limits of the downtown commercial area of Rossland, British Columbia. Viewed from the north, it has a two storey appearance with no visible basement but from the south and west, due to the

steeply sloping lots, the Bellevue Hotel appears to have more than three full floors. The main entrance is on the north side and there are exterior, covered stairs leading up to an entrance on the west side of the building.

Heritage Value:

The Bellevue Hotel is valued as the only hotel, built in Rossland during the boom years of the gold mining era that is still operating as a hotel today. In the late 1890's hotels were the most common type of building in the Downtown, and there were over forty of them in the City.

The Bellevue Hotel is valued as a visual reminder of the significant role played by all the hotels in the initial development of the community as collectively they offered beds, often places to eat and always a bar-room for drinking and socializing.

The Bellevue Hotel is representative of the "finer" hotels in early Rossland and its original structure provides the context for what documentation refers to as quality services, fittings and furnishings. The Bellevue Hotel met the Fire Escape Regulations with several staircases between the floors and all the rooms had a window for "fresh air". In 1897 a dancing pavilion adjoined the Bellevue Hotel, "offering a place of entertainment and recreation for guests of the house and others seeking an evening's amusement."

The Bellevue Hotel has changed ownership and names over the years. For decades it was called the Orwell and most recently it is known as The Flying Steam Shovel. Today, a retail shop operates from the southwest corner of the lowest floor.

Character Defining Elements:

- Location atop the Washington Street hill
- Original size and shape of building
- The original, repetitive, size and placement of windows on the top floor
- Signage identifying the building as a hotel
- A plaque by the entrance identifies the hotel as a significant Rossland heritage building.

HISTORY

The Bellevue Hotel is the only remaining hotel still operating in Rossland that was built during the boom years of the Rossland Mining Camp. It was constructed in the spring of 1897 on the southeast corner of the intersection of Washington Street and Second Avenue. The property and building owner was W. H. Bell who also held the hotel license.

The following article on the Bellevue appeared in the 1897 publication, "First History of Rossland, B. C." - one of four hotels worthy of special mention.

"Among Rossland's many excellent hostelries, there is none more worthily popular with the traveling public than the Hotel Bellevue. The Bellevue is most conveniently located at the corner of Washington Street and Second Avenue less than a block and a half from the Red

Mountain depot. The site is one of the most elevated occupied by any hotel building in Rossland, and commands an excellent view of the camp and surrounding country.

The Bellevue was built and opened to the public by W. H. Bell, the present owner and proprietor, in the spring of this year (1897). The building is a substantial, two storey structure, containing besides the office, dining room and bar room, some thirty odd guest rooms. Mr. Bell has spared no expense in furnishing his hotel, and every room is fitted with new and attractive furniture and carpets. There are no inside rooms, all being light and airy, and commanding an unobstructed view from the windows. The house is fitted throughout with modern conveniences, including electric lights, hot and cold baths, electric bells, etc., etc.

Comfort of guests is the first law of the management of the Bellevue. Mr. Bell is his own manager, and conducts his hotel with a view of giving the best accommodations to be had in the city. The dining room is presided over by courteous and attentive waiters, the culinary department is in the hands of an experienced chef and the table is in itself a compliment to the caterer. The bar is one of the best in the city, and over it are served the best drinks and fine imported cigars.

The Bellevue is conducted on both the American and European plans. A free bus meets all incoming and departing trains, baggage, mail and telegrams of guests receive careful attention, rooms are reserved when ordered by telegraph, and every courtesy and convenience extended to the public by first-class hotels elsewhere is here observed.....

As proprietor of the Bellevue, W. H. Bell has one of the best and most popular hostelries of Rossland, and his house is a resort for mining men, business men and commercial travelers. It is interesting to note that Mr. Bell has just built a dancing pavilion adjoining the hotel, and it will add no little to the popularity of the Bellevue, as offering a place of entertainment and recreation for guests of the house and others seeking an evening's amusement."

The February 2, 1898 Report of the License Inspector gives the following information about the Bellevue Hotel:

- size of building - 36'X100'
- Bar-room - 15'6"X27', height 11'
- One club room - adjoining bar-room
- Office and sitting area - 16'6"X27'
- Dining room - 22'X40' - kitchen adjoining
- 8 bedrooms on the ground (main) floor
- Parlor on the first floor - 12'X20' and 19 bedrooms

Remarks by the Inspector tell the reader that the bar-room was neatly fitted up and clean. Also that the dining room was in use and that the bedrooms were well furnished and in good order. Note was made of two (water) closets on the ground floor and that there were none on the bedroom floor.

In 1898, the City's Licensing Bylaw stated that to get a Hotel License there had to be 30 rooms, an operating dining room and the Fire Escape Regulations had to be met. The Bellevue Hotel did meet the requirements (two stairways connected the bedroom floor to the ground

floor) and its Hotel License cost \$100 which was paid every six months. There were 40 hotels in Rossland in 1898 but many did not meet the Licensing requirements and instead paid \$300 every six months to operate their bar-rooms which were also called saloons.

The Bellevue Hotel has had many name changes over the years. For a short time (1899 to 1901), it was called the C. P. R., when the railway station was built just across the street but this was a problem because this hotel was not one of the grand hotels the C. P. R. Company had built across Canada! In 1901 the name reverted to the Bellevue Hotel and remained so until 1903 when the hotel was sold to Nelson W. MacLeod who renamed the hotel, The Orwell.

The hotel enjoyed a favored location in Rossland, across from the C. P. R. Station and one block away from the Red Mountain Railway Station. Ed Vipond, a retired C. P. R., employee remembered after getting off the afternoon train, "It is said that some of the regular customers had their personal beer steins on the premises to quicken the time when they would slake their thirst."

In 1922 Agnes Holmes (from Alberta) bought the Orwell Hotel and she is remembered for her hospitable nature, known by many as Aunty Holmes. She was assisted with the hotel's operation by a close relative, Joe Grafton and together they provided a popular destination for diners and drinkers alike.

The most recent and current name for this historic hotel is the Flying Steam Shovel (c. 1992). This name reflects the endeavors of a Rossland inventor who constructed a flying machine with similarities to the modern day helicopter and who staged its first and only trial run off the top of a nearby building.