

2196 Columbia Avenue – Montreal Hotel



Montreal Hotel 2021

Heritage Register - Building

- 1) **Historical Name:** Montreal Hotel
- 2) **Common Name:** O.K. Store
- 3) **Address:** 2196 Columbia Avenue
- 4) **Date of Construction:** 1896
- 5) **Design, Style, Architecture, Architect:**

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

Description:

The Montreal Hotel is located on the northwest corner of Columbia Avenue and St. Paul Street in Rossland, British Columbia. It is a wooden two storey structure with a modified false front facade. An enclosed set of stairs on the west side of the building lead up to an open porch running the length of the second floor. This historic place includes the building on its footprint with an address of 2196 Columbia Avenue.

Heritage Value:

The Montreal Hotel is valued as a landmark building that has always defined the eastern edge of the downtown commercial area. It is the first historic building one sees when entering Rossland from the south on Highway 3B.

The Montreal Hotel is valued as being representative of the many smaller hotels built in Rossland in the late 1890s during the boom years of rapid mine development, construction and population growth. It had 9 bedrooms, seven of which were in the attic, a City Licence to operate a bar-room (saloon) and identified space for a kitchen and dining area. The Montreal Hotel had one “closet” on its premises, also typical of all the smaller hotels.

The Montreal Hotel is an example of a common characteristic of Rossland’s downtown buildings in that its use has changed many times over the years, reflecting changing needs and perceived business opportunities. Many long-time Rossland residents identify the Montreal Hotel as the O. K. Store. In the 1930’s this building became part of the chain of stores throughout the interior used for distribution and sale of fruit from the Okanagan. That business is long gone but that name for the building persists through a number of different business ventures since.

Character Defining Elements:

- Located at the entrance to the historic downtown.
- False front, vernacular style.
- Original clapboard siding.
- Enclosed stairway on the outside of the building.
- Wooden canopy across the front of the building extending out to the edge of the sidewalk and supported by wooden pillars.
- Plaque by the front entrance identifies it as one of Rossland’s significant historic buildings.

HISTORY

The Montreal Hotel, on the northwest corner of Columbia Avenue and St. Paul Street was Rossland’s smallest hotel on record, built in the boomtown era of the Rossland mining camp. It was constructed in 1896 at the eastern edge of the downtown and just one block above where the Columbia and Western Railway Station was being built in that same year. Its footprint was only 24’ by 31’ but its false front facade, a style common in Rossland, along with the placement of the second storey windows, creates the illusion of a larger building.

In 1898 there were 40 hotels in Rossland and the population of the newly incorporated city was over 7,000 people. A scant three years earlier, the population had increased dramatically to 3,000 from just 350 in the winter months of 1894/5. Rossland’s “boom town years” reflect both rapid construction and population growth.

Accommodation for the influx of workers was definitely a problem. There were a number of large boarding houses built in Rossland but undoubtedly, many of the smaller hotels housed new arrivals, at least temporarily. The hotels often had a dining room, and the bar-room provided a place for entertainment and socializing.

The February 1, 1898 License Inspector's Report on the Hotels of Rossland provides the following information about the Montreal Hotel:

- two storey building, 24' by 31'
- lot and building owner - Mr. Morin
- license holder - Mr. Morin
- bar-room 15' by 24'
- two club rooms and a storeroom
- one closet
- one sitting room
- dining room 10' by 17' and a kitchen "adjoining"
- 2 bedrooms on the first floor
- 7 bedrooms in the attic, varying in size from 8' by 10' to 9' by 11' and with a height of 7'6"
- Remarks: Bedrooms poorly furnished, Bar-rooms cheaply fitted, closet filthy

The license for the Montreal Hotel was not a hotel license, rather a retail liquor license so its bar-room would have been known as a saloon.

Mr. Morin sold his establishment to Mr. Rumball in 1900. In 1902, Joe Couture owned and operated the hotel. Unfortunately, little is known about the fate of the Montreal Hotel until the 1930's when it was transformed into the Okanagan Fruit Store, part of a chain of stores in the Interior of B.C., selling fruit from the Okanagan. The Okanagan was later abbreviated to the O.K. Store.

After it stopped being a fruit store, it became a popular convenience store. The Montreal Hotel building has had many owners and has frequently undergone internal renovations. The exterior of the building has never been altered with the exception of a few paint jobs over the years. The second floor was converted to apartments.



Montreal Hotel (building on NW corner of Columbia and St. Paul) c. 1910