

1973 COLUMBIA AVENUE – BURNS BLOCK



Heritage Register – Building

- 1) **Historical Name:** Burns Block
- 2) **Common Name:** Associate Medical Clinic
- 3) **Address:** 1973 Columbia Avenue
- 4) **Date of Construction:** 1905
- 5) **Design, Style, Architecture, Architect:**

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

Description:

The Burns Block is a brick two-storey building on the south side of Columbia Avenue in downtown Rossland. A sign, “Associate Medical Clinic,” extends across the front of the building, between the first and second floors. The two windows on the top floor facing Columbia Avenue are partially fronted with grill work. The entrances to the main floor and to the top floor are side by side, under a recessed portion of the front facade.

Heritage Value:

The Burns Block, constructed in 1905, is one of the few brick buildings built in the downtown area after the city by-law of 1902 was enacted requiring all commercial buildings to be constructed of brick. The by-law came about because of the disastrous fire of August 25, 1902, that destroyed all the wooden commercial buildings along Spokane Street between Columbia and First Avenues.

This building was built by Pat Burns. He established a string of commercial meat markets in many West Kootenay communities and mining camps of the 1890s, supplied with meat from his Alberta ranches and his local slaughterhouses. He went on to found the Burns Meat Packing Company, a firm that was well known throughout Western Canada in the 20th century. From 1905 to 1977, the Burns Block contained a butcher shop. Since 1977 the main floor of the Burns Block has been the Associate Medical Clinic with residential use on the top floor.

Character Defining Elements:

- Original location and footprint.
- Brick construction—visible under layers of paint.
- Heritage Plaque beside entrance, identifying this building as one of Rossland’s significant heritage buildings.



Burns Block (right of Hotel Allan)

HISTORY

The Burns Block, on the south side of Columbia Avenue, was built in 1905 by Pat Burns, a successful businessman in the Kootenays with interests in the distribution and sale of meat. Today this building stands alone as fire in 1978 destroyed the Allan Hotel on its east side. The buildings on its west side are gone, explaining the unrelieved side walls we see today. Windows have been added on the west wall.

Pat Burns' first business outlet in Rossland in 1896 was on Spokane Street between Columbia and First Avenues. This is where the concentration of businesses was in the early days of the mining camp. On August 25, 1902, a huge fire destroyed all the buildings on either side of this portion of Spokane Street and the businesses affected either relocated to new premises or went out of business. The manager of the Kootenay operations of P. Burns & Co., came to Rossland in September of 1902 and stated that he intended to build, but on a more centrally located site. The city by-law said that all new buildings had to be made of brick and the firm's representative said that this would be done.

The Tax Assessment Rolls indicate that the Burns Block was purchased in 1905 and a building constructed in that year (30 feet by 66 feet). The building was assessed at \$3,500 (half of its value for taxation purposes) and the property at \$3,080.

Advertisements in the *Rossland Miner* newspaper show the extent of the Burns business:

P. Burns & Co.

Wholesale Markets

Rossland, Nelson, Trail, Sandon, Revelstoke
Greenwood, Grand Forks and Vancouver

Retail Markets

Rossland, Trail, Nelson, Ymir, Kaslo, Sandon,
New Denver, Silverton, Cascade City, Grand Forks,
Greenwood, Phoenix, Midway, Camp McKinney,
Revelstoke, Ferguson and Vancouver
Fish, Game and Poultry in Season,
Sausages of all kinds
Wm. Donald, Manager Rossland Branch

The Burns & Co. butcher shop employed different butcher/managers over the years of its operation. In 1944, when Jim Wright, the latest manager, left to open his own store, "Wright's Meat Market" across the street, Mr. Burns sold the Burns building and business to Joe Bielli, the owner of the next door Allan Hotel. In that year Bielli went into business with Harold Elmes and the name of the meat business became the Butcheteria. The Elmes family lived upstairs in the building. Mr. Elmes served as Rossland's mayor and alderman for many years. It was said that the building served as City Hall as Elmes both lived and worked at this address.

In 1977, the Medical Associates Clinic bought the building and it has served as a clinic ever since, with apartments above.



P. Burns Butcher Shop interior c.1910