

1854 COLUMBIA AVENUE – KAMLOOPS MINING & DEVELOPMENT COMPANY



Heritage Register – Building

- 1) **Historical Name:** Kamloops Mining & Development Company
- 2) **Common Name:** C.C. Woodhouse Assay Office
- 3) **Address:** 1854 Columbia Avenue
- 4) **Date of Construction:** 1895
- 5) **Design, Style, Architecture, Architect:** Victorian Commercial

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

Description:

The Kamloops Mining & Development Company is a three storey, gable-roofed building located on the western edge of the Columbia Avenue commercial district. The building sits on the north side of the street and is distinguished by its projecting bays on the second and third storeys and the evidence of former commercial space on the ground floor.

Heritage Value:

Constructed in 1895 for the Kamloops Mining & Development Company (KMD), this building survives as a reminder of the important administrative, economic, and executive position that Rossland held at the end of the nineteenth century. Its location near the US border and its seemingly unending richness of ore-laden geology made Rossland the ideal place for the headquarters of the KMD; the company transferred its business to Rossland from Kamloops in 1895, and its headquarters in 1897. The early presence of this international mining company (which also had contemporary offices in Republic, Washington) is a testament to the high value of the mining assays in Rossland at that time.

This historic place is also valued for its role as an early "supporting business" for the mining activity on Red Mountain—providing local assessment work and professional mining expertise for claim owners and those interested in investment in hard rock mining. As such, it is also a reminder of the technical aspects of mining development in the late nineteenth century. One of the uses of this building as the "assay office," the place where ore was scientifically analyzed for its precious metal content, reflects the importance of educated professionals such as mining engineers in ensuring that mines could be established, grow and prosper in the boom town. In particular, the building holds significance as the place of business of Charles C. Woodhouse, a mining engineer and assayer from Washington State, who was celebrated as the "best known mining engineer on the Coast". Woodhouse was also one of the founding members of the KMD.

Further heritage value lies in the physical location of the building at the western end of Columbia Avenue. Once part of a contiguous grouping of commercial buildings on this block, the KMD Building stands testament to the extent of Rossland's main street and commercial downtown during the boom town era. It is valued as one of the only two surviving buildings (along with the Lemon Block) which mark Rossland's earliest commercial development on the western edge of town. Constructed in 1895, this historic place and the Lemon Block survive today as Rossland's oldest buildings.

Its design is also of importance, as it does not fit the typical false-fronted design of most other commercial buildings from this era. Its gable roof and decorative windows on the upper two stories are distinctive features which set this place apart from its contemporaries both in the past and now.

Since the 1930s, the upper storey offices have been used as apartments. In recent decades, the ground floor commercial space has been converted to residential use. This evolution reflects the typical adaptation Rossland's built environment has made to changes in the local economy over time.

Character-Defining Elements:

- Location on western edge of the commercial district of Columbia Avenue.
- Evidence of commercial use in its ground floor storefront.
- Dual commercial and residential use for most of its history.
- Infrastructure related to its original assay use, such as an underground vault behind the building.
- Its unique Victorian commercial design with a three-storey, gable-roofed form with ground level storefront.
- Its protruding square bay on the third storey.
- Bay windows on its second storey.
- Victorian proportioned (vertical/narrow) window openings where they survive.
- Evidence of the building's evolution over time to accommodate changes to the grade of Columbia Avenue.

HISTORY

In 1895, the Kamloops Mining & Development (KMD) Company was incorporated by Harold E. Forster, Charles C. Woodhouse, and Fred M. Wells, of Kamloops, and Harry Symons, Q.C. of Calgary. It held the usual powers of a mining company and had capital of \$30,000 in \$100 shares. Its headquarters were in Kamloops. Harold Ernest Forster was a miner and rancher. Charles C. Woodhouse, Jr. was an engineer and mining assayer. Fred M. Wells

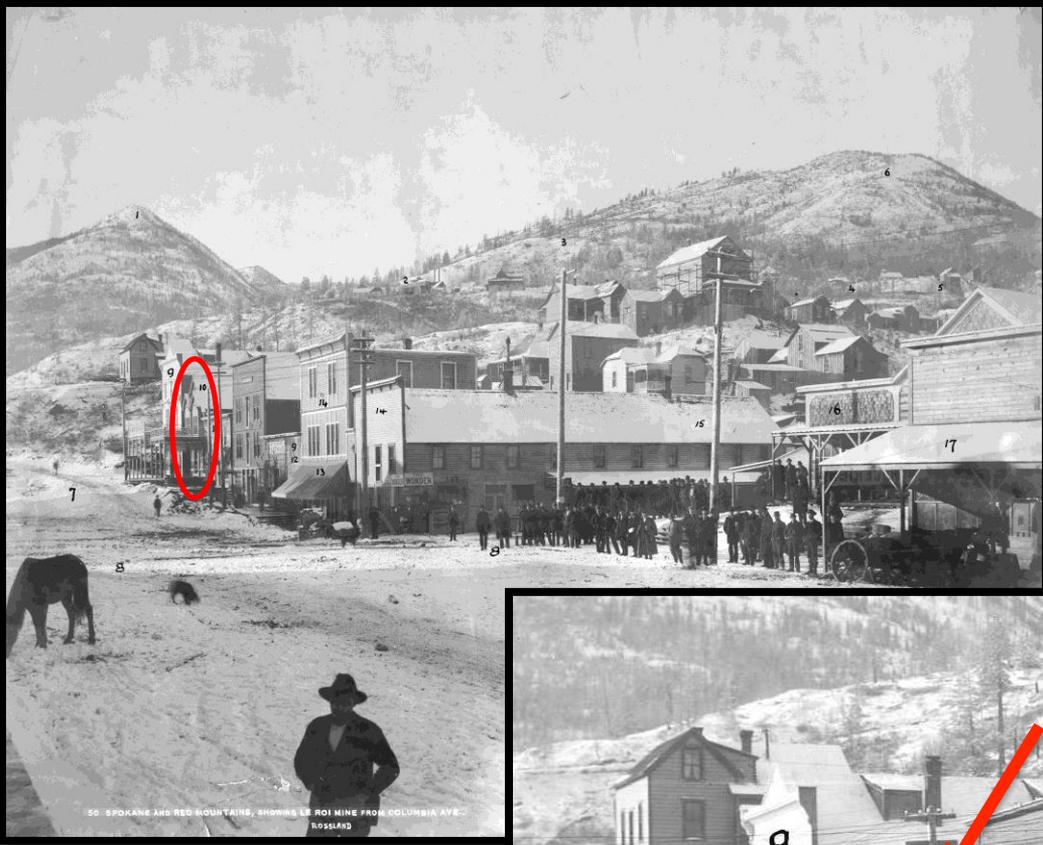
was a mine examiner and Harry Symons was an attorney from Calgary.

In February 1896, a newspaper article indicated that KMD had "headquarters and a well-equipped assay office" in Rossland but it was unclear as to the location.

In 1897, Mrs. McCue of Kaslo purchased the property based on the 1898 Tax Assessment Roll. In July 1897, it was announced that KMD would move its offices and headquarters to Rossland. We know from the 1899 Tax Assessment Roll that KMD purchased the land and erected a building worth \$1000. The fire insurance map of 1897 shows a 2 ½ storey building with a bridge leading to an underground vault at the back of the building.

From 1902 -1916, Harold E. Forster is listed as the owner of the building. In 1916, Andrew M. Johnson of Pasco, Washington, purchased the building. In that year, he married Marguerite K. Gray. Mr. Johnson moved to Rossland and opened a cigar manufacturing plant in the building. In the following years, the Tax Assessment Rolls show joint ownership with Andrew Johnson and Marguerite Gray-Johnson but by 1924, it was solely in the name of Marguerite K. Gray-Johnson.

In 1948 Mrs. Margaret Babcock acquired the building and made some substantial improvements which were reflected in the \$1,500 assessment of the building in the 1949 Tax Assessment Roll. It appears that the building served as a rooming house for a number of years and was later converted into separate apartments when boarding houses were no longer considered fashionable.



50. SPOKANE AND RED MOUNTAINS, SHOWING LE ROI MINE FROM COLUMBIA AVE. - ROSSLAND

CVA A31877 (detail). c. Late 1890s.
Building noted as "10"

Note elaborate portico with verandah above, wooden boardwalk with stairs leading east, and entry on what is now the second floor of the building (relative to grade of Columbia). Also note gable detailing on upper storey.

Source: Vancouver Archives



