

2190 COLUMBIA AVENUE – MONTREAL HOTEL



Heritage Register – Building

- 1) **Historical Name:** Montreal Hotel
- 2) **Common Name:** O.K. Store
- 3) **Address:** 2190 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. 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 leads up to an open porch running the length of the second floor.

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 nine 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 "water closet" on its premises which was typical of the smaller hotels.

The Montreal Hotel is characteristic of Rossland's downtown buildings whose uses have changed many times over the years, reflecting current needs and business opportunities. Many long-time Rossland residents identify the Montreal Hotel as the O. K. Store. In the 1930s 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 locals continue to use that name for the building.

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.



Montreal Hotel c. 1910

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 & Western Railway Station was being built that year. Its footprint was only 24 feet by 31 feet 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 the winter months of 1894/5, the population increased dramatically from 350 to 3,000. By 1898, there were 40 hotels in Rossland and the population of the newly incorporated city was over 7,000. Rossland's "boom town years" reflect both rapid construction and population growth.

Accommodations for the influx of workers was definitely a problem. There were a number of large boarding houses 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 feet by 31 feet
- lot and building owner – Mr. Morin
- license holder – Mr. Morin
- bar-room 15 feet by 24 feet
- two club rooms and a storeroom
- one water closet
- one sitting room
- dining room 10 feet by 17 feet and a kitchen “adjoining”
- two bedrooms on the first floor
- seven bedrooms in the attic, varying in size from 8 feet by 10 feet to 9 feet by 11 feet, and with a height of 7 feet 6 inches
- Remarks: “Bedrooms poorly furnished, Bar-room cheaply fitted, water 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 1930s when it was transformed into the Okanagan Fruit Store, part of a chain of stores in the interior of BC. 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.