

# 2070 COLUMBIA AVENUE – STEEN & COMPANY WHOLESALE LIQUORS AND CIGARS



## Heritage Register – Building

- 1) **Historical Names:** Steen & Company Wholesale Liquors and Cigars
- 2) **Common Names:** Kathleen Apartments
- 3) **Addresses:** 2070 Washington Street
- 4) **Date of Construction:** 1897
- 5) **Design, Style, Architecture, Architect:** Frontier Style

## STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

### Description:

Steen & Company Wholesale Liquors and Cigars is a two-and-a half-storey, wood-framed, flat-roofed, commercial building with two street level storefronts built in 1897. It is part of a grouping of five 1890s buildings located on the eastern side of Washington Street between Columbia Avenue and First Avenue in the historic downtown.

## **Heritage Value:**

Steen & Company Wholesale Liquors and Cigars is valued as part of Rossland's oldest, intact, commercial streetscape. Together with its contiguous neighbours on both sides, it comprises the only surviving group of first-generation commercial buildings in Rossland's historic downtown. It is remarkable that these wood-framed buildings survived a series of devastating fires that decimated all other contemporary buildings in the surrounding blocks prior to 1929.

Purpose-built in 1897 to support this business, it reflects the type of commercial buildings that were erected, seemingly overnight, in order to support the mining and population boom in Rossland in the 1890s. The high ceilings, impressive storefront, and upper floor with central balcony and decorative cornice, as visible in archival photographs, speak to the status of its original owners. The Rossland Warehouse and Transfer Company and the US Consulate also operated out of this location, which further reflects the driving force of supply-based business on the growth of the city at that time.

This building also holds heritage value for its longstanding use as the Silver Grill (also known as Sammy's in honour of its proprietor, Sammy Low) Chinese restaurant. The short-term ownership of the building in the late 1920s by three persons of Chinese origin, and its subsequent use as a Chinese restaurant for decades thereafter, speaks to the early and ongoing presence of a Chinese-Canadian community in Rossland.

Additional significance is attributed to the buildings early use as the first United States Consular Agency in Rossland (c.1898-1900). The presence of such an agency in 1898 is a strong illustration of the strategic geographic and economic ties the city had with the United States during the mining boom period.

The evolution of this commercial building from a warehouse/office to a more diverse range of purposes, starting in the early 1900s, reflects the shifting patterns of the natural, resource-based, economy on young settlements in the interior of British Columbia. While unable to sustain its original warehouse-type use for an extended period of time, this building has maintained relevant uses over the decades.

In the mid-twentieth century, as was typical for former boom-towns, an effort to modernize resulted in significant alterations to the building. The façade was stripped-down, stucco cladding added, and a new storefront was constructed to align with

the buildings on either side. The building currently has a Yoga Studio and an Art Studio on street level and residential apartments on the top two floors (Kathleen Apartments).

**Character-Defining Elements:**

- Commercial use since 1897.
- Residential use since at least the 1910s.
- Its situation on its lot, and its relationship to the sidewalk, street, and back alley.
- Its attached relationship to the other buildings within this historic grouping.
- Its two-and-a-half-storey massing, with flat roof and rectilinear façade.
- Its wood-frame construction.
- Its mixed use, with storefronts at street level and residential units in upper floors.
- Evidence of its early use as a warehouse, including its basement and any surviving relevant interior, spatial, configurations dating to the time of its construction.
- Evidence of its original design and façade elements, including:
  - High ceilings and remnants of the original storefront.
  - Details of the decorative, stepped pediment along the cornice line.
  - Window and door openings.
  - Evidence of the original balcony.
- Association of the place with the Silver Grill Restaurant.



Washington Street, 1900.  
Note facade with upper balcony, tall storefront, and pediment.