

# 1990 COLUMBIA AVENUE–HUNTER BROTHERS STORE



## Heritage Register – Building

- 1) **Historical Name:** Hunter Brothers Store
- 2) **Common Name:**
- 3) **Address:** 1990 Columbia Avenue
- 4) **Date of Construction:** c. 1902
- 5) **Design, Style, Architecture, Architect:**

## STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

### Description:

Hunter Brothers' Store is a single storey, brick building with a full basement on the northwest corner of Columbia Avenue and Washington Street. It is a large building with a 60-foot frontage on Columbia Avenue and it extends up Washington Street for 115 feet. Today, there are a number of exterior entrances to the different shops in the building and related signage is painted on the various shop windows. A canopy extends across the front of the building on Columbia Avenue and over the exterior entrances on Washington Street.

### Heritage Value:

This building occupied by the Hunter Brothers was the largest, single retail space of any store ever built in Rossland. It is

one of two brick commercial buildings built in the early days of Rossland that still exists today. The City adopted a by-law requiring brick construction, shortly after the disastrous fire of August 1902 that destroyed all the commercial wooden buildings on the first block of Spokane Street.

This store is the second edition of the Hunter Brothers Store. The first was built in 1895 on Columbia Avenue but on the south side and further west. It was also a commodious building which included importing, wholesaling, and retail business.

The building was originally occupied by both the Royal Bank (western corner) as well as the Hunter Brothers General Store according to the 1912 and 1938 insurance maps. Hunter Brothers' Ltd. served the community's needs as a mercantile (department) store, with groceries, clothing and hardware until 1952. At that time, it was purchased by the T. Eaton Company which continued this traditional use of the store for a short time. The SuperValu grocery store purchased the store from Eaton's and remained there until 1957 when it was sold to Ferraro's Foods. Ferraro's Foods built a new store on the south side of Columbia and moved to that location on January 25, 2004. In mid-2005, Rossland Pro Hardware, owned by John Greene, moved from Washington Street to this location until 2013. Starting in 2014, the interior space was divided into separate retail stores with their own street access on Columbia Avenue and Washington Street as well as the alley (Rossland Beer Company). The basement also had 22 self-storage units added.

### **Character Defining Elements:**

- Location and footprint.
- Dental detailing below roof line.
- Brick construction material.
- A Heritage Plaque beside the front entrance identifies this building as an important heritage building in Rossland.

## **HISTORY**

### **1ST HUNTER BROTHERS STORE—established 1895**

According to Harold Kingsmill in his 1897 "*First History of Rossland, B.C.*," the Hunter brothers, James and Robert, experienced general merchants, came to Rossland in February of 1895 from Washington State. Upon their arrival they were so impressed with the business activity that they purchased a lot on the south side of

Columbia Avenue and started construction of their store. It was two-stories in height, with a basement and occupying all of the 30 foot by 100 foot lot (located where the swimming pool was eventually built at 1869 Columbia Avenue).

As described by Harold Kingsmill:

*"The stock carried by Hunter Brothers is almost as diverse as are the needs of the community. That it is especially full and complete in all that pertains to miners' supplies might be expected, but we may add that being agents for giant powder, Goodwin candles, Canton and Black Diamond steel, and other specialties of the miner, this firm sells both to dealers and to miners all over this and adjoining districts. The firm is also agent for McClary's stoves and ranges... The stock includes, as well, a full line of plumbers' supplies and steam fittings. Hunter Brothers have a completely equipped tin and sheet metal shop, where tinware, sheet ironware and galvanized iron pipe and other mining supplies are manufactured both to order and for the stock. The firm has also a commodious warehouse on the Red Mountain track and is able to receive and ship goods in quantities."*

One of the archival photos shows the location of the store on Columbia Avenue. A panorama picture, looking east and probably taken from the rock bluff, (c.1899), shows the length of Columbia Avenue and the dense concentration of commercial buildings on either side. Atop one of the buildings on the south side of the main street is a huge sign, perpendicular to the street, and seemingly extending the full length of the building: HUNTER BROS. BIG STORE.



1<sup>st</sup> Hunter Brothers Store on Columbia Ave on right c. 1899

## 2<sup>nd</sup> HUNTER BROTHERS STORE—established 1907

Hunter Brother's second store was opened on the northwest corner of Columbia Avenue and Washington Street. The Hunter brothers retired in 1907 and formed a new company known as Hunter Bros. Ltd., under the general management of W. G. Ternan, who had been with the firm since 1897. A note in the 1938 issue of the *Rossland Miner* says that there were four departments, each with a manager; Ernest Morrison (1899), James Hunter Jr. (1912), Henry Singer (1919) and Thomas Supple (1923). Richie Mann, a Rossland old timer, shared some memories of the Hunter Brothers Store:

*“There was an entrance to the store from Washington Street, closer to the back of the building. The grocery section was in the north-eastern section of the building. Hardware was in the southwest corner, clothing in the southeast corner. There was a large RCA Victor Dog on the top of a shelf which stood between the hardware and the clothing sections. There were wires (like clotheslines) with small cans attached to transfer money back and forth from the different departments to the office.”*

Archival pictures show the name “Hunter Bros. Ltd.” across the front of the building and for a number of years, large signage on

the roof at the south east corner of the building. At some point, an extension was built on the back of the building measuring 15 feet by 90 feet. Hunter Bros. Ltd. closed as Rossland's largest mercantile store in 1959.



Hunter Brothers Store c. 1910