

# 1841 COLUMBIA AVENUE – LEMON BLOCK



## Heritage Register – Building

- 1) **Historical Name:** Lemon Block
- 2) **Common Name:** Gipman Apartments
- 3) **Address:** 1841 Columbia Avenue
- 4) **Date of Construction:** 1895
- 5) **Design, Style, Architecture, Architect:**

## STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

### Description:

The Lemon Block is located at the western end of Rossland's downtown core. It is on the south side of Columbia Avenue, west of Spokane Street, and across Hwy 3B from the Rock Bluff. The Lemon Block is a substantial, two-storey building with a pitched roof and stuccoed façade. The building footprint is 30 feet by 100 feet. Two bay windows on the second floor facing Columbia Avenue, are the most defining characteristic.

## **Heritage Value:**

The Lemon Block is the oldest remaining heritage building in Rossland's historic downtown core. It was built by R. E. Lemon in 1895 at the western end of Columbia Avenue where the road to Northport, Washington, started. As noted in "*The First History of Rossland, B.C.*," written by Harold Kingsmill in 1897, this was the first lath and plaster building in Rossland. The building was originally used by Mr. Lemon for the sale of mining supplies.

The Lemon Block played a role in the famous battle of banks to be the first in Rossland. Both the Bank of British North America and the Bank of Montreal set up business in Rossland in April of 1896 in rented premises. The Bank of Montreal opened for business in the Lemon Block on Monday, April 4<sup>th</sup> and The Bank of British North America had opened two days earlier on Saturday, April 2<sup>nd</sup> in a barber/bath shop on Columbia Avenue.

The Insurance Map of Rossland, July 1987, labels the Lemon Block as the premises of an undertaker but also notes that dynamite was stored in the basement. We know that Bob Lemon was not a certified mortician in Rossland so perhaps the building was sold or yet another rental opportunity was pursued by the owner. The fact that dynamite was stored in the basement, suggests that the original purpose of the building was maintained—a mining supply business.

Over the following years, the Lemon Block was home to a number of businesses and perhaps family accommodation on the second floor, suggested by the curtains at the windows in early photographs.

At some point in Rossland's history the Lemon Block ceased being a commercial building with living accommodations on the second floor and became simply an apartment building. Many Rosslanders have known this building for many years as the Gipman Apartments.

## **Character Defining Elements:**

- Original location and footprint.
- Two original bay windows on the second floor.
- First lath and plaster building in Rossland.
- A Heritage Plaque beside the front entrance identifies this building as an important heritage building in Rossland.

## HISTORY

1894 and 1895 were the beginning years of more permanent types of business construction than found in Sour Dough Alley. The Ross Thompson town site became a legal entity in 1894. Lots were for sale for \$30 apiece from the Township Company. The news coming from the evaluation of mining exploratory work pointed to extensive and high-grade deposits of gold in Red Mountain. The Rossland mining camp was turning into the town of Rossland. From "*The First History of Rossland, B.C.*" written by Harold Kingsmill, published in 1897,

*"About the same time too (spring 1895), 'Bob' Lemon the irrepressible one of the pioneer merchants of Nelson, Three Forks and other places in the upper country, arrived in town and bought the lot to the west of the War Eagle Hotel and commenced the erection of one of the very first lath and plastered buildings in the town. On the completion of the building, Mr. Lemon moved in one of the most complete stocks of mining supplies ever seen in the country, bringing it from his store at Three Forks, a town which upon the birth of Sandon as the natural supply point of the mines of Carpenter Creek, on the Slocan, was rapidly becoming deserted."*



Lemon Block c.1895