

# 2167 COLUMBIA AVENUE – MORRISON & BRYENTON GROCERS



## Heritage Register – Building

- 1) **Historical Name:** Morrison & Bryenton Grocers
- 2) **Common Name:** Conservative Building/Salvation Army
- 3) **Address:** 2167 Columbia Avenue
- 4) **Date of Construction:** 1899
- 5) **Design, Style, Architecture, Architect:** Boomtown

## STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

### Description:

Morrison & Bryenton Grocers is a two-storey, wood-framed, false-fronted commercial building located on the south side of Columbia Avenue in the historic downtown of Rossland.

### Heritage Value:

Morrison & Bryenton Grocers is valued as an example of a surviving early commercial building with apartments above. Dozens of

these buildings once filled Rossland's main street. Its two-storey, wood-frame Boomtown (or Western) style, with false front and street level business space, represents an aesthetic and design characteristic of the early mining era in Rossland. This is similar to other mining towns in BC and North America.

The first business in the building, a grocery store, as well as the first few resident families in the upper storey apartments, represent a typical economic, professional and social scenario that would have existed in dozens of other similar buildings in early Rossland. There was a relatively fast, regular turnover in occupancy for both the street-level businesses and the residential tenants.

Constructed in 1899, this building is valued for its associations with Rossland's early mining development and boom period. Its original owners, Howard Sylvester Wallace and Charles Staynor Wallis, built it as an income generating property. The building stands as a monument to the success that was possible for the financially, economically, and socially astute citizens of a frontier boom town in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. H.S. Wallace, who came to Rossland in 1895, was a player in the establishment of the city and became Rossland's second mayor in 1898. He also ran a series of successful department stores that served miners and their families. This allowed him to speculate in real estate and develop his wealth through buildings such as this one.

This historic place is also valued for its association with the political governance of the West Kootenay region, and, in particular, with the Conservative Party between the years 1913 and 1923. Robert F. Green, a "staunch Conservative," was the owner of the building during those years.

Another significant aspect of this building's history lies in its use as the Rossland Salvation Army from 1923-1968. The presence of the Salvation Army in Rossland as early as 1896 is reflective of the mission of this religious group to provide guidance, services, and salvation to people who may have been likely to stray from a path of righteousness. This reality was evident in frontier boom towns in the late nineteenth century. The ongoing presence of the Salvation Army in Rossland, until its disbandment in 1968, indicates a sense

of steadfastness and commitment to the spiritual and physical growth of the city, even during its years of decline. The 45 years that this building served as a centre of hope, faith, and service for the community are a key aspect of its heritage values.

### **Character-Defining Elements:**

- Original location on Columbia Avenue in Rossland's historic downtown and main commercial street.
- Continuous commercial and residential use since 1899.
- Boomtown commercial building design as reflected in its two-storey height, false-fronted facade, wood frame construction, full lot coverage from street to alley and commercial storefront with a recessed entry at street level.
- Gable roof.
- Three window openings on the upper facade storey (now slightly smaller than the original openings).
- Distinguishable design of the false-front parapet with a central peak that matches the profile of the gable roof behind it.
- Evidence of wood siding throughout.
- Historic window and door openings on all four façades.

## **HISTORY**

This building is linked to many historic figures. From 1899 to 1902, the store was occupied by Morrison & Bryenton Grocers, with clerk Isaac Petch and employee Miss Lake. "Miss Lake" was likely the Nellie Lake that was famous for being the paramour of the forger, Walter B. Collins. Collins was captured in a Morrison property when he snuck into Rossland to visit Nellie Lake. In April 1902, she arrived from England searching for her beau. Low on funds she accepted Morrison's offer of a job and housing. In addition to groceries, Morrison and Bryenton acted as a mail distribution point and the clerk there was able to identify Collins as the one collecting Graham's mail (Graham was Collins' alias). Their love story and courtroom antics provided fodder for the area newspapers. Collins' capture was the precipitous event that led to Alex Stewart's future as a policeman. Ex-patrolman Stewart had

already finished his last night shift, after being fired earlier in the day, when he spotted Collins sneaking into town. Stewart was promptly rehired and promoted to number one patrolman.

From 1913 to 1923, Robert Green and Lorne Argyle Campbell owned this building. Robert Green was the first mayor of Kaslo from 1893-1897, MLA for Slocan and Kaslo from 1898-1907, appointed Minister of Mines, Education and Lands and Works for BC in 1903, elected as the Member of Parliament (MP) for Kootenay in 1912, and West Kootenay in 1917, and appointed to the Canadian Senate in 1921. Oral histories indicate the building was used as the Conservative Party's political regional headquarters during Green's ownership.

Lorne Argyle Campbell was elected as the Conservative Member of the Provincial Parliament (MPP) for Rossland in 1912, Minister of Mines for British Columbia in 1915, and served the community as a politician until 1920. Campbell was also the president and General Manager of the West Kootenay Power & Light Company. He was considered the strategic leader behind the massive industrial development of this region of British Columbia. The connection of this building with both Campbell and Green, highly significant figures in Rossland's and Canada's history, is an affirmation of the solidity of status that this building had in Rossland's early years. This place is a reminder of the strategic and prominent political status that Rossland held in the region.