

228 Front Street Quesnel Hotel – 1914



North and Front Elevation



Rear and North Elevation



Front Elevation of Saloon

Description

Quesnel Hotel is an important two-and-a-half storey landmark building constructed in 1914 located on the east side of Front Street in Downtown Quesnel, BC. The historic place includes the building and the parcel of land it occupies.

Heritage Value

Quesnel Hotel is located in Downtown Quesnel which is the commercial and administrative center of the city. Over the years, major renovations have occurred, however the building supports the other commercial businesses on the street that have experienced change. While not in its original form or location, the building is a physical reminder of the people and events that shaped the development of Quesnel. Hotels were the social centers of Quesnel and considered important places of business. Local people used the saloon, dining room, dance hall, display rooms, and the lavish bedrooms on many occasions. A hotel has been on this property since the 1860s.

The Occidental hotel was the original hotel on this site built in 1910 by Ed Kepner. Unfortunately, the hotel was completely destroyed in the fire of 1916. The fire broke out around midnight in the Empress Theatre located in the Cariboo Hotel. Eight buildings were lost including the two hotels and the Northern Crown Bank.

William Thomas Ewing purchased the lots from Ed Kepner. William came to Quesnel from Ontario. He had many business ventures in Quesnel including a butcher shop on Reid Street which he later moved to Carson Avenue. He married Charlotte Armstrong of Ontario and together they became prominent members of Quesnel society. William was a member of the Freemasons, Charlotte was the first president of the Hospital Auxiliary, and they both were active in the Presbyterian Church. In 1919, he purchased the Anglican Boarding School that was built by the Norwood Brothers in 1914. William moved the school to Front Street in 1922 and renovated the structure to hotel standards. William died in 1925 of pneumonia shortly after the building opened as the British-American Hotel. The Ewing family is recognized for their contribution to the development of the community with a street named in their honour.

After William Ewing's death in 1925, the building was leased by Grace Stanton and Dora Homan for five years. Grace and Dora came to Quesnel in 1910 to work at the Occidental Hotel. After the fire, they purchased an empty house and converted it into a rooming and boarding house. They ran this business until they leased the British-American Hotel. When the hotel was sold to Percy Elsey, Grace and Dora went back to their boarding house which was known as 'Stanhome

Lodge'. Grace died in 1941 and Dora in 1964. The Stanhome Lodge was demolished during the construction of the Moffat Bridge.

In 1930, Percy Elsey purchased the building and renamed it the Quesnel Hotel. He hired John Lindbergh to add a beer parlour to the south end of the building in 1933. Percy Elsey sold the hotel to J. D. Pearson and Robert Laughton. J. D. was known as 'Smoky'. The new gold rush in Wells in the early 1930s brought increased business to the hotel. To accommodate the additional visitors, the beer parlour and restaurant were expanded, and new rooms were made available in the basement of the hotel. Smoky later sold the hotel to his son-in-law, Arnie Hassel-Gren.

Character-Defining Elements

The character-defining elements of the Quesnel Hotel include:

- this location has been home to a major hotel since the 1860s;
- originally built as a boarding school in 1914 that was relocated and renovated in 1922 to become the Quesnel Hotel and renovated several times since then;
- a fine example of a smaller hotel by today's standards with all the character and charm of an older establishment;
- two-and-a-half storey square wood frame structure with six dormers;
- the façade has a projection entrance way with several six-over-six windows, flower boxes, and eave;
- features a stucco exterior with a Mansard style roof.