

## 710 Legion Drive Pacific Great Eastern Railway Station – 1921



East and Rear Elevation



West Elevation



West and Front Elevation

### Description

The Pacific Great Eastern Railway Station is a two storey building constructed in 1921 that continues to be used as a railway station located on Legion Drive at the entrance of Downtown Quesnel, BC. The historic place is confined to the building footprint.

### Heritage Value

The Pacific Great Eastern Railway Station is located in Downtown Quesnel which is the commercial and administrative center of the city. Architecturally, the building gives no indication about its original construction date because of renovations, however it is certainly like no other building on the street and continues to have a relationship with the railway. While not in its original form, the railway station is a physical reminder of the role that transportation played in the development of Quesnel.

The concept of a railway in the Cariboo began in 1891. The Pacific Great Eastern Railway was the product of many failed attempts to build a rail line to Quesnel. One proposal was to have a line from Vancouver to Alaska with branches in Barkerville and Quesnel. Rumours of graft, misuse of funds, and political manoeuvring plagued the construction efforts. Many promises were made during elections that failed to materialize.

During WWI, the clearing and grading of the route was slow. The Northern Construction Company was later hired to build the rail. From 1914 to 1920 the construction of the railway required hundreds of men with shovels, as well as horses and mules harnessed to scrapers. There was very little machinery to speed along the process. Along the way, the men would live in work-crew camps. It is believed that the highest railway bridge in the province is located along this line at Deep Creek.

The Pacific Great Eastern Railway ceremoniously arrived in Quesnel on July 30, 1921. Since the cost to operate the line was high, only fully loaded trains were allowed to operate. Fraud and lawsuits continued to surround the railway for many years. In 1949, steam trains were replaced by diesel. In 1952, the railway expanded north with the first train arriving in Prince George four years later in 1956. That same year Pacific Great Eastern Railway was renamed British Columbia Railway.

### **Character-Defining Elements**

The character-defining elements of the Pacific Great Eastern Railway Station include:

- a typical style of a two storey railway building with covered entrances on both sides;
- one of only two remaining stations of its generation still being used for its original railway purposes;
- the railway's 'Standard No. 3' design that represented a public and private partnership;
- designed by the public railway corporation with construction completed by a private contracting company;
- a rectangular shaped structure with gable roof, cross gable, central chimney, and narrow siding slats;
- half timbers on three gables;
- a single storey on the north end for baggage built in 1951;
- curved bracket supports on the original canopy veranda;
- its prominent location at the entrance to Downtown Quesnel.