

728 McLean Street Cowan House – 1914



Front Elevation



Roofline with Turret



North Elevation

Description

Cowan House is an eclectic two storey wood frame house built in 1914 located atop a hill on the northeast corner of McLean Street and Bowron Avenue in North Quesnel, BC. The historic place includes the building and the parcel of land it occupies.

Heritage Value

Cowan House is located in North Quesnel which is an older residential neighbourhood in the city. Over the years, major renovations have occurred, however the house supports the other buildings on the street that have experienced change. While not in its original form, the house is a physical reminder of the people who shaped the development of Quesnel.

The house is named for John and Nina Cowan who built this house. John and Nina Cowan came to Quesnel from Ontario to purchase the Reid Estate holdings company from John's Aunt. John became known locally as 'Jack'. When he bought the James Reid Estate General Merchants business, he renamed it Cowan Supply Company. Unfortunately, his business was one of the eight buildings on Front Street that was destroyed in the fire of 1916. Luckily, most of Jack's stock was saved during the fire. He moved his business to an empty store down the street. In 1923, this building also caught fire when a bucket of tar being heated on the stove exploded.

Jack had a brick building constructed on the old Cowan Supply Company property. Jack installed a light and water plant in his new store. Jack then made a business arrangement with the other merchants in town where he would sell hardware items only if the other stores sold everything but hardware products. Once the other merchants agreed to Jack's proposal, he renamed his store Cowan Hardware. Jack was also an undertaker, and in the winter, he used a homemade plough to clear the snow from the streets as a community service. When Jack retired he sold the hardware store to Dave Smith who then changed the store name to D. H. Smith Hardware.

Character-Defining Elements

The character-defining elements of Cowan House include:

- an eclectic addition to the street;
- a grand two storey wood frame building that has seen many changes over the years starting in 1932;
- its many unique architectural items including a covered porch, central entrance with pediment, a turret, interesting roof line, and fretwork along the eaves;
- siting on a large raised corner lot.