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## FEDERAL HERITAGE BUILDINGS REVIEW OFFICE

### BUILDING REPORT 88-12

**TITLE:** Nineteen Dawson buildings: (1) Dawson Daily News, (2) Telegraph Annex, (3) K.T.M. Building, (4) Bank of British North America, (5) B.Y.N. Ticket Office, (6) Robert Service Cabin, (7) Customs House, (8) Macaulay House, (9) Black Residence, (10) Commanding Officer's Residence, (11) St. Andrew's Manse, (12) St. Andrew's Church, (13) Ruby's Place, (14) Third Avenue Hotel Complex, (15) Harrington's Store, (16) Mme. Tremblay's Store, (17) N.C. Company Warehouse, (18) Bigg's Blacksmith Shop, (19) West's Boiler Shop,

**SOURCE:** Joan Mattie, Architectural History Branch

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### INTRODUCTION

The nineteen Dawson buildings in this FHBRO submission are owned by Environment Canada - Canadian Parks Service (CPS) as part of Klondike National Historic Sites (KNHS) (Figure 2). Only one dates to the height of the 1897-98 Klondike Gold Rush - the N.C. Company Warehouse (No. 17), while the rest date to the period immediately after. These include: a newspaper office (No. 1), a telegraph office (No. 2), two stores (Nos. 15 and 16), a bank (No. 4), a river-side ticket office (No. 5), a warehouse (Nos. 3), a blacksmith shop (No. 18), a boiler shop (No. 19), a derelict complex that once included a hotel and a photographer's studio (No. 14), a church and manse (Nos. 11 and 12), a residence which is one of four extant N.W.M.P. buildings (No. 17), three

other residences (Nos. 7, 8, and 9), a log cabin (No. 6), and a brothel (No. 13).

The beginnings of KNHS as a collection of national historic sites go back to 1959. In November of that year the Historic Sites and Monuments Board of Canada (HSMBC) met in Dawson and concluded that the entire city and the nearby gold fields were of national historic significance.<sup>1</sup> It recommended that Dawson City be regarded as an historical complex and studied as such. It also recommended acquisition of one property - the Palace Grande Theatre - by the Department of Indian and Northern Affairs (then the administering Department of CPS).

The area to be studied was the scene of a sensational event in Canadian history when as many as 30,000 people "stampeded" to the Klondike in search of gold following discovery of the precious metal there in 1896. Dawson as the supply and service centre of the region burgeoned into a sizeable city of tents and hastily constructed log buildings of all types. Life then was lived in extremes of hardship, sudden wealth, and high-spirited revelry - the stuff of Klondike legends that persist to this day.

Disastrous and widespread fires in the winters of 1897-98 and 1898-99 wiped out much of this early development. Dawson quickly rebuilt, however - this time with more substantial frame structures and a better infrastructure of municipal services, suitable to the city's status as capital of the newly created Yukon Territory. By 1900 it was purported to be the largest Canadian settlement west of Winnipeg<sup>2</sup> and was priding itself on its "metropolitan" appearance (Figure 3) - an amazing phenomenon considering the city's remote northern location (Figure 1) and the mercurial rise to this position.

Ten years later, Dawson was in obvious decline and would soon be further reduced in population and commercial activity. The descent was not precipitous, however. Corporate mining replaced

that done by individuals and although fewer people and services were needed in the region, gold production remained fairly high until the outbreak of World War I in 1914. Other periodic revivals of interest in prospecting and reworking old claims have occurred since then, so that Dawson never became a ghost town, although much of it had the appearance of such. The poignant sight of abandoned and derelict buildings, however, actually enhanced the growing economic resource of tourism, seminal in the 1920s and increasing in importance each decade after that.

By 1967, historians had uncovered enough information about artifacts and buildings to give further direction to the Board's consideration of the site. At its June, 1967 meeting - again held in Dawson - the HSMBC identified eighteen buildings which merited recognition as national historic sites and put them on two lists. "List A" included 14 buildings that were clearly of national historic importance and should be acquired and preserved; "List B" contained buildings that were also significant in some way and should have their "present status ensured" by the Minister.<sup>3</sup> Of the 14 buildings on the "A" list, five are included in this FHBRO submission (Nos. 1, 3, 6, 13, and 18); one from the "B" list is also examined (No. 4). Later, a "C" list was also developed by National Historic Parks and Sites (NHPS), CPS, for additional buildings:

. . . either for environmental protection purposes because they were under threat, or to preserve the historical aspects of streetscapes in which the Branch now has a considerable investment as a result of its acquisition of the buildings in Lists A and B, or for administrative reasons.<sup>4</sup>

Three buildings from the original list developed with these guidelines are now up for FHBRO review (Nos. 5, 10, and 15); the rest have been acquired and brought forward under the same guiding principles. These are among KNHS's assets of 32 historic buildings in Dawson and another 47 at nearby Bear Creek.

In 1977 Parks Canada (CPS) produced a sizeable and complex Master



Development Plan which advocated extensive restorations and historic interpretations of buildings and sites.<sup>5</sup> Unfortunately, fiscal restraint at the end of the decade made implementation of the plan unfeasible. In light of this, CPS has since had to think more in terms of a stabilization programme, and in some cases, developmental agreements with other parties, particularly with regard to the "B" and "C" list buildings. Most of the buildings in this FHBRO submission are now managed with this CPS restraint in mind - some structures being stabilized in their current condition, and others being adapted for use by commercial enterprises and other government agencies.

In 1986, NHPS approved a set of historical themes to clarify the commemorative base for CPS activities in Dawson and the gold fields and to give direction to KNHS development.<sup>6</sup> In order of priority, these are:

Theme 1 The Story of the Gold Rush

- (a) The exploitation of the gold fields by stampedeers, mostly small entrepreneurs using labour-intensive methods and small-scale machinery.
- (b) Dawson as the point at which thousands of stampedeers stopped enroute to the creeks; as a destination for those who intended to "mine the miners"; as the supply and service centre of the gold fields during the Rush.

- Theme 2
- (a) Development of the gold fields, including related mining technology, the consolidation of claims and the era of corporate operations.
  - (b) The development of Dawson as a supply, service and distribution centre; its development as a territorial capital.
  - (c) The larger impact of the gold rush on Canada, including the popular imagination, the evolving concept of the North, and the economic results.

Of all the buildings in this FHBRO submission, only one falls

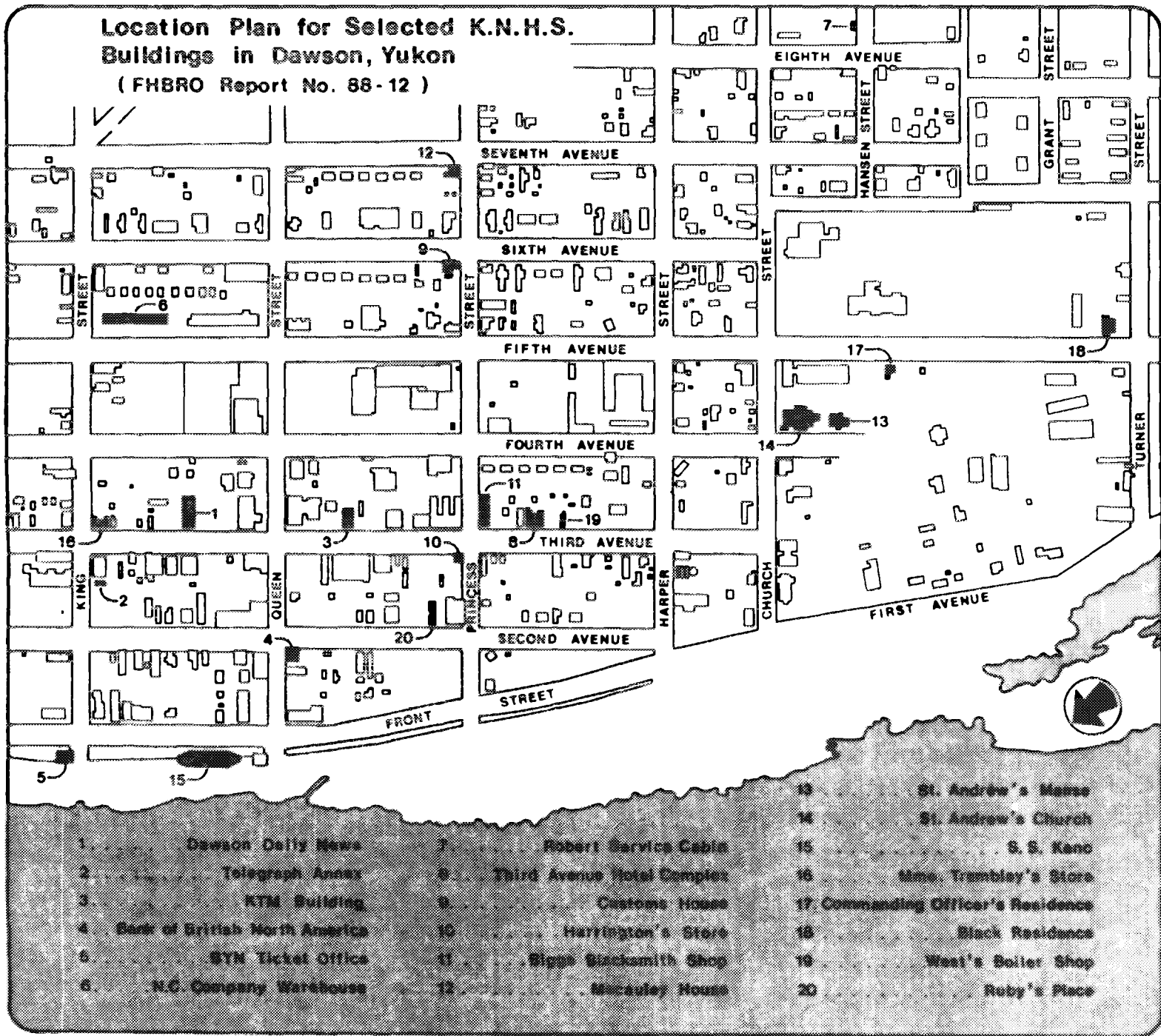
under Theme 1 (the N.C. Company Warehouse). Most of the rest come under Theme 2(b), either directly or indirectly. These are the newspaper office, the telegraph office, the stores, the bank, and others - all the types of supply and service businesses and institutions that one would find in almost any Canadian community at the turn of the century. In Dawson, however, they each have unique and particularly interesting historical associations because of their role in this remarkable one-time capital of the Yukon and to the world-famous Klondike gold rush. The Robert Service cabin is the only one to be considered under Theme 2(c), as Service's poetry has contributed so much to the Canadian and international image of Dawson City and the Klondike. The B.Y.N. Ticket Office ties into another theme identified by NHPS in 1967 as warranting special treatment: "The History of Transportation in the Yukon."<sup>7</sup>

#### Endnotes

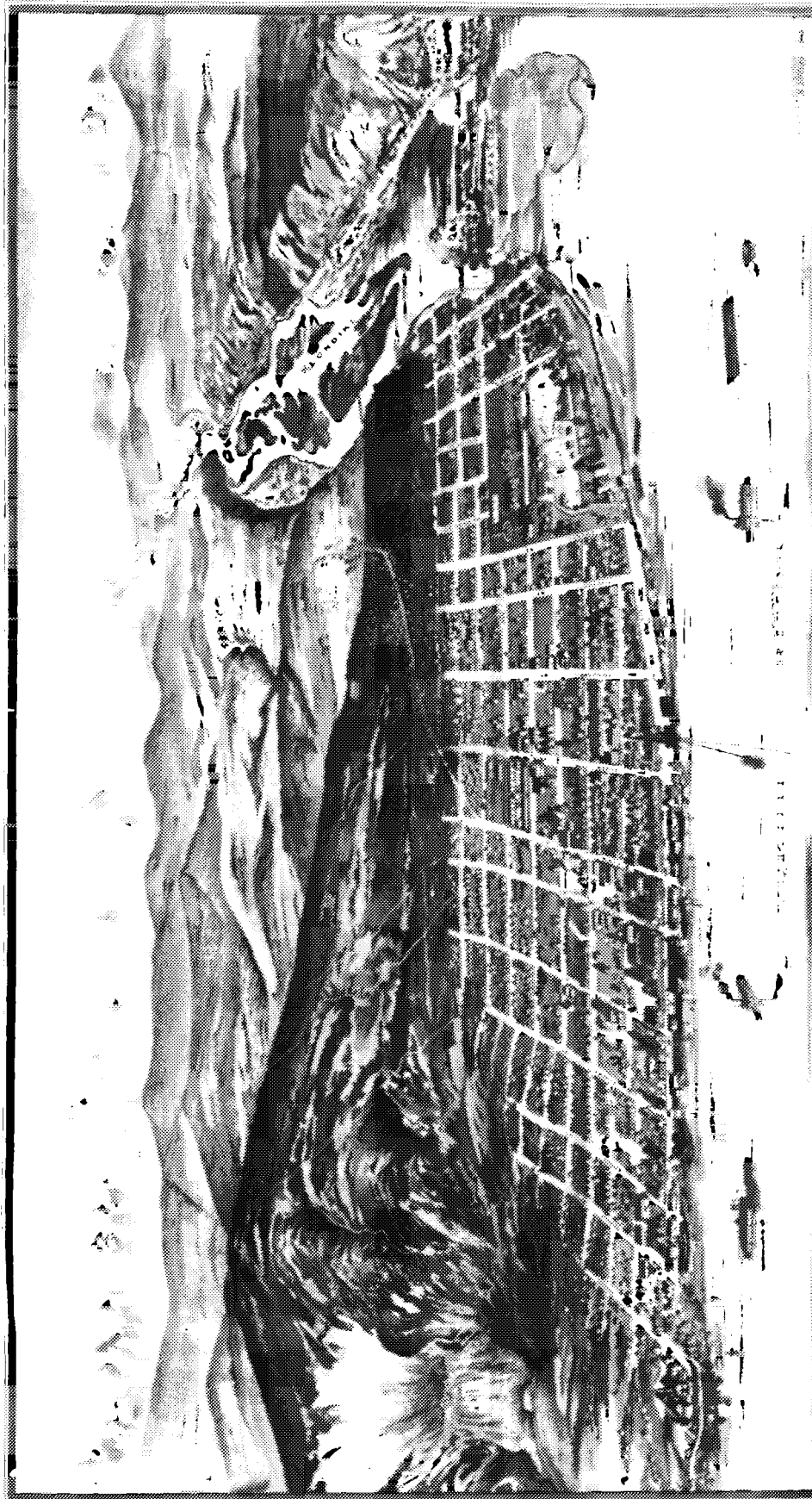
- 1 "Background to and Status of Dawson City, Klondike and Gold Rush-Related National Historic Sites," for review by Historic Sites and Monuments Board of Canada, November, 1987 [hereafter cited as HSMB - Nov., 1987], Section I, p. 1.
- 2 Hal Guest, Dawson City, San Francisco of the North, or Boomtown in a Bog: A Literature Review. Manuscript Report Number 241 (Ottawa: Parks Canada, 1978), p. 1.
- 3 "Status Report Dawson City Buildings," Secretary's Report, HSMBC, November, 1973, Appendix A, p. 28.
- 4 Ibid., p. 28.
- 5 Klondike National Historic Sites Master Plan Preview (Ottawa: Canadian Parks Service, 1977). Mention of the plan and its implementation difficulties is included in HSMB - Nov., 1987, Section I, pp. 4-5.
- 6 These are listed in "Klondike Gold Rush Sites. Themes and Objectives," National Historic Parks and Sites, 21 July 1986, pp. 6-7.
- 7 Ibid., p. 7. See also HSMB - Nov., 1987. So far, resources spent on the development of this theme have primarily gone toward restoration and interpretation of the S.S. Klondike at Whitehorse and toward development of Chilkoot Trail National Historic Park.

A map of the Yukon Territory and surrounding regions in Canada. The map shows the Yukon Territory, Northwest Territories, British Columbia, Alberta, and parts of the United States (Alaska and Idaho). Key features include the Yukon River, the Stikine Mountains, the Rocky Mountains, and the Pacific Ocean. Major cities like Whitehorse, Yellowknife, and Vancouver are marked. The map is oriented with North at the top.

- 6:6



- 2 Location plan for twenty of the twenty-two structures in FHBRO submission from Klondike National Historic Sites, Environment Canada - Canadian Parks Service, 1988. (CIHB, EC-CPS, 1988.)



Birdseye View of Dawson, Yukon Ter., 1903.

*The Yukon Council.*

## 1. DAWSON DAILY NEWS

123 Third Ave.

Dawson, Yukon

### INTRODUCTION

The Dawson Daily News (DDN) is a 40' x 100' wooden structure built as a warehouse in 1901 but converted to a newspaper plant in 1910 (Figure 1). From this date until 1954 it was home to Dawson's surviving daily newspaper - an institution that had chronicled and helped shape the community in which it had been active since 1899. When acquired by KNHS in 1972 it was a veritable "gold mine" of early print machinery and period furnishings. KNHS partially restored the building and hoped to return the old printing plant back to operation, but fiscal cut-backs have eliminated that possibility for the time being. The current proposal is to have a private printer lease the building and produce a small paper of some sort. CPS may install an interpretive exhibit in the front office area and perhaps run the old drum cylinder press or the platen press for public viewing in the back. Some further restorations and modifications of the building will have to be made to accommodate these plans.

### HISTORICAL ASSOCIATIONS

#### Thematic

Having housed one of the service industries that made Dawson the supply and service centre of the Klondike, The Dawson Daily News building ties into NHPS' Theme 2(b), formulated for developing an historical interpretation programme at KNHS ("The development of Dawson as a supply, service and distribution centre . . ."). One of the originals on HSMBC's "List A", i.e. a building to be

acquired and preserved as part of KNHS, it has the status of a National Historic Site, important for the role it played in Dawson's life and for the way it represents journalism in the Klondike. Furthermore, it has associative historical value in that it represents the growth of newspaper publishing as a potentially lucrative business in the first part of the twentieth century - a phenomenon that saw a few great fortunes assembled, and many small ventures begun as well.

International journalism did much to create the stampede to Dawson and the Klondike gold fields in 1897-98, and to engender that spirit of myth and romance still associated with the region and the era.<sup>1</sup> Journalism within Dawson itself played a different role. It helped satisfy the great hunger for news from the "outside", and kept inhabitants informed of local developments. By its blatant boosterism, it was also used to promote a sense of community and a spirit of confidence as Dawson entered its more stable phase of development, beginning around 1899.

An additional feature of Dawson's several newspaper plants was the capability of the press machinery to handle the considerable demand for job printing of all types, including business advertising, posters, and government publications (e.g. sessional papers, council debates, voters lists, and publicly-distributed regulations of various sorts).

By 1909 the Dawson Daily News proved to be the city's surviving newspaper in a field that at one time (1899-1903) had included two other dailies - the raucous and contentious Klondike Nuggett and the Yukon Sun. Other weekly or bi-weekly papers came and went in subsequent years as well, but none had the printing facilities, the solid financial base, and the professional acumen that kept the News running as a business until 1954, well past the prime of the town itself.<sup>2</sup>

Like its rivals, the News was conceived and run as an

entrepreneurial venture, initially with good results. Established in 1899 by experienced newspapermen, Richard Roediger and William McIntyre from Tacoma, Washington, and William and Henry Steel from Pennsylvania, it was well-endowed from the start. MacIntyre had sold his Tacoma News before coming north, and the three other partners must have contributed considerable capital of their own judging by the substantial printing plant with which the News opened. Combined information from contemporary reports in the San José News and the Seattle Post-Intelligencer reveals that it was "extensive and thoroughly up to date," consisting of one power cylinder press, two power job presses, a Thorne typesetting machine, "boiler and engine, paper and card cutters, a complete assortment of metal, job and newspaper type, as well as over 100 different styles of large wood type, typewriters, a safe, and complete office fixtures."<sup>3</sup>

The only major asset the paper lacked was a building. At first, space was rented in a two-storey log structure at the corner of Third Ave. and Fourth (Duke) St. In a twenty-fifth anniversary edition of the News, that building was described in retrospect as having "cracks so wide that it was almost impossible to keep from freezing."<sup>4</sup> More hospitable quarters were secured by 1901 when the News moved into a two-storey frame warehouse at 311 King Street owned by Roediger.<sup>5</sup> Shortly after, the paper added new equipment to its plant and increased the size of its staff to twenty.

By 1908, Dawson was visibly going downhill, having lost a substantial portion of its population and business revenue. Wanting out like so many others, Roediger and McIntyre sold their newspaper interests to a consortium of six Dawson purchasers, most of whom were News employees.<sup>6</sup> The News building on King St. was not part of the deal, however, and Roediger hung on to it until his death in 1913 in Washington state.

The new proprietors, wishing to own rather than rent the building



out of which they published, cast about for new premises. By this time, they had their choice of many empty Dawson structures, and in 1910 settled on the present building, then a warehouse, on Third Avenue. Necessary modifications were made and business continued - actually flourishing for a few years until 1914, partly due to streamlined management and good semi-automated equipment that did not require a great deal of maintenance, nor a large staff to run it. World War I dealt a devastating blow to the town, however, and thus to the newspaper, as young men left in droves, and working capital dried up. Later, by 1923, radio was available to the average citizen, eliminating the monopoly that the paper previously had on national and world news funnelled to the north through telegraphic service. In 1924, the News became a tri-weekly village paper and was largely a one-man operation. It limped along in this manner until 1946 when the energetic young Helmer Samuelson bought it for \$1.00.<sup>7</sup> For a time, he breathed new life into the operation, but withdrawal of the territorial capital to Whitehorse in 1953 was the paper's death knell, signalling the loss of government printing contracts, without which it could not survive. After a short valiant effort to do so, the paper ceased publication in 1954.

Serving again as a warehouse for a few years, the News building entered a new phase of use as a recognized historical artifact in 1961 when it opened to the public as a "museum of print shop relics."<sup>8</sup> CPS acquired the building and substantial contents in 1972, including many back issues of the News.

#### Person/Event

The last two editors of the News had living quarters in this building, in the tiny windowless mezzanine room above the business office (Room 2-06, Figure 7).<sup>9</sup> The first, Harold Malstrom,<sup>10</sup> was part of the consortium that acquired the structure in 1910, two years after it had bought the paper from its original publisher. A native of Tacoma, Washington where he worked on the Tacoma News, he had come to Dawson in 1901 as the

first linotype operator. As other specialized staff was eliminated, he became familiar with all operations and trades involved in newspaper publishing, including writing and editing. In 1924, he bought out the other members of the consortium and carried on single-handedly until 1946 when he sold the News to Helmer Samuelson for \$1.00.<sup>11</sup> His life as sole proprietor and jack-of-all trades must have been a hard one with battles against great odds and set-backs that included a serious fire in 1940, and a flood in 1944. Samuelson similarly struggled on until 1954, even as the hovel-like mezzanine apartment in which he lived fell into an increasingly decrepit condition.

#### Local Development

This building is tied in with two phases of development along Third Avenue. Its initial construction and use as a warehouse in 1901 coincides with the street's growth as a freighting district catering to the needs of miners working the nearby gold fields.<sup>12</sup> Until only one year previous to this time, construction along the east side of Third (which was a permafrost bog) was not practicable because of poor drainage. Partial improvement of the problem saw a few warehouses go up in 1900 (e.g. the K.T.M. Building between Queen and Princess - see Report No. 3 within this submission) and more in 1901. Additional improvements such as street leveling and electric lighting induced a number of other mining supply and service businesses to relocate here by 1902. These included stage lines, machine-shops, blacksmiths, leathersmiths, and inexpensive rooming houses.

By 1904, Third Avenue had become even more varied in its commercial activities with warehouses and tradesmen's shops interspersed with retail stores, saloons, hotels, and at least one photographer's studio. Although the building under review was bought in this year by Stanley Searce (a wholesale and commission merchant) and the building continued as a warehouse, its acquisition and reuse by the News in 1910 was in keeping with this changed character of the street - that of a mixed

neighbourhood. By this time, however, more and more buildings were becoming vacant. It was a trend that accelerated over the next several decades.

## ARCHITECTURE

### Aesthetic Design

This building is a good example of a false-fronted warehouse adapted to a more public use. Such buildings are fairly common throughout the west; they were certainly so in Dawson in 1910 when this structure was converted to a newspaper plant by the Dawson Daily News. Exterior alterations at that time had relatively little effect on the façade's original aesthetic appearance. The only major change appears to have been the conversion of off-centre double doors to a large window with transom above. The slightly asymmetrical position of this feature and that of three other front doors and a small window are reflective of the building's original function - not its aesthetic design.

Conscious aesthetic choices were minimal but they include retention of the gable peak in the front wall which extends above the roof behind. Suggesting a rudimentary pediment, the contrivance was repeated in a number of other Dawson commercial buildings, including the K.T.M. Building in the next block to the south (see Report No. 3 within this submission). Paintwork is the only other major aesthetic element and it is confined to the façade as well, all other walls of the building being left to weather naturally. Framing around the edges and around door and window openings has been coloured in a dark red to contrast with the yellow ochre of the wall clapboards. In "ghosted" lettering typical of turn-of-the-century printing, the newspaper firm's name is prominently painted directly onto these boards. All work is, of course, a CPS restoration based on historical research.

This boomtown type of building gives an immediate impression of more sophisticated architecture than further inspection reveals. Side and rear views expose the News building's true character - that of a roughly clad simple structure with no other aesthetic intentions at all. Although built as a warehouse, it is fairly typical of other small town newspaper plants in western Canada, some slightly more or less pretentious than the Dawson example.

The Glenboro Gazette building at Glenboro, Manitoba (Figure 14) is quite close in spirit with its similarly peaked false-front facade. Modern windows, asbestos siding, and contemporary signage devalue the building's heritage interest, however, unlike the historically correct features restored in the News building. The Arcola Star Standard newspaper office at Arcola, Saskatchewan is an even simpler and smaller comparable example (Figure 13). The Times building at Lloydminster, Saskatchewan (Figure 15), on the other hand, has more architectural ornament, although it is no larger, and perhaps no better constructed. Embellishments include corner pilasters; a round-headed treatment of the front entrance, complete with simulated keystone; a false gable that echoes the rounded arch over the doorway below, and a suggested cornice with very small brackets - all built of wood.

In spite of Dawson's nickname "Paris of the north" and its "metropolitan airs"<sup>15</sup> the above-mentioned small town prairie newspaper offices are, after all, the closest kin - not the stone and brick prestigious buildings erected by newspapers in more established (but not necessarily much larger) centres such as Nelson, British Columbia. A fine one was erected there for the Nelson Daily News in 1900 with currently fashionable Romanesque Revival features (Figure 16). This and other substantial newspaper plants of the early 20th century do not diminish the value of the News building, for of its type, it is still a good example.

### Functional Design

Considering that it was not purpose-built, the Dawson Daily News building was well-designed to serve the needs of a publishing plant. This is not particularly remarkable, however, as the greatest requirement was simply for a large open room in which to house a print shop (Figures 5, 6). Dawson had a number of buildings that satisfied this requirement, made possible by the use of queen post roof trusses that could span considerable breadths without interior bearing walls underneath. Typically, each truss (of which the News building shows good examples) is comprised of a heavy wooden tie beam on which two strong but narrow iron rods are set vertically, one on each side.<sup>16</sup>

There was also the requirement of a large storage area for the voluminous paper stock the company had to maintain throughout the winter when the main supply routes were cut off. An office was needed too, as well as a public business area. All were easily accommodated into the existing warehouse bought in 1910 by the six individuals who had purchased the News two years earlier.

Adaptations to the building included the partial removal of an off-centre divider, the conversion of front and rear double doors to a large front window and single rear door (openings previously used for horse and wagon entry and exit), and the creation a new business office.<sup>17</sup> The former warehouse office remained to serve as the new editorial office. Appropriate circulation routes by means of new interior doors were created. Within the print shop, many specialized electrical fittings were installed such as pulleys, line shafts and lighting fixtures. Much of this remains to give good evidence of the placement and functioning of the machinery. On the south side of the building, a small lean-to was added for the etching section of the plant (see dotted-line appendage in Figure 8 and lean-to shed at left in Figure 10). Presumably this was located out of the way because of the fire hazard when lead plates were melted for recycling in the printing process. The location of the southern property line, just inches

away from the back portion of the south wall, has prevented CPS from restoring this feature. Elsewhere in the plant, the fire hazard was reduced by corrugated iron on the roof and asbestos paper applied to interior wall surfaces (visible as hanging fragments in Figures 3 and 4). These measures apparently helped contain the spread of fire in 1940 when the rear paper storage area was destroyed (since restored by CPS).

The owners were well pleased with the results when they described their new domicile in the paper's 18 March 1910 edition:

DAWSON NEWS IS IN ITS NEW HOME

Permanently Squared Away in Most Elegant  
Newspaper Quarters in North

The News has in its new home the largest, most conveniently arranged and comfortable newspaper office north of Vancouver . . . . It is 40 x 100 feet and as remodelled has large and well lighted press rooms, job printing apartments, bindery quarters, Mergenthaler linotype section, paper print storage room, fancy stationery sample and stock rooms, and neat business and editorial rooms, to say nothing of the luxurious private boudoir of the omnipresent devil.<sup>18</sup>

The last remark was a facetious one that referred to the curious mezzanine room with a low ceiling, located above the business office.

While the News building may have functioned well in its day, the ravages of time, permafrost, and continuing problems with drainage have meant a good deal of restoration work for CPS. After being boarded up for many years, two exterior doorways were restored (see Figures 9 and 1 for before and after appearance). The original post and mudsill foundation was badly rotted and has since been replaced with a system of steel jacks and wooden cribs, positioned on pads set on a new gravel bed under the building. Rain and melt water now flow freely underneath toward a sewer.<sup>19</sup> The cribs and jacks of the foundation are hidden by

long low insulating boxes at the building's sides, built according to historical precedents known for other Dawson structures of this date. A new floor and new insulation have brought the building close to the point of being useable again.

#### Craftsmanship and Materials

Workmanship in this building was adequate but not notable. Built as an ordinary warehouse and adapted for use as a newspaper plant following Dawson's economic prime, the structure was never intended to be anything more than a utilitarian shell. Its importance has resided more in the commodities and equipment it housed rather than in the building itself.

### **ENVIRONMENT**

#### Site

The Dawson Daily News building comes within inches of covering its entire legal lot. Butting directly against the Third Avenue boardwalk is the façade, allowing the current exhibits in the front windows to be easily viewed by pedestrians. This relationship to the street is historically accurate for the newspaper period of use. Earlier, when used as a warehouse, its large front double doors gave access to horse-drawn wagons bringing freight from the docks along Front Street. A 1901 account in the American Journal of Industry described that provision, as well as the building's siting some distance away from neighbouring ones for reasons of fire protection:

. . . A driveway runs through the entire building in which seven teams may unload or load at one time. The building is protected from fire by a corrugated iron roof and the nearest building on either side is 65 feet distant.<sup>20</sup>

Whether or not the warehouse owners then had title to the

adjacent land has not been determined. In any case, it is still undeveloped - a vacant lot to the north and a parking lot to the south (Figure 1). It is not, however, owned by KNHS as part of the News building's property. This has caused a problem in recreating the etching plant, as called for in the historical interpretation proposal (Figure 8).

### Setting

The News building on Third Avenue is a key historical structure in Dawson's downtown core, forming a link between two heritage areas with buildings owned by KNHS. A half block to the north and west is the much-visited Palace Grande Theatre, Mme. Tremblay's Store, and the Post Office, all at or near the corner of Third Avenue and King Street; to the south is the concentration of historic buildings near the corner of Third Avenue and Princess Street. In between these two clusters, Third Avenue is comprised of vacant lots, some run-down structures, some relatively new ones, some privately restored or reconstructed ones, and CPS' K.T.M. Building (Report No. 3). The News' immediate neighbour to the south is a propane plant with trucks, campers and motorhomes coming and going as tanks are filled. Beyond this, at the corner of Third and Queen, is Klondike Motors, another business attracting a lot of noisy, dust-producing vehicular traffic (Figures 1, 11, 12). This area is thus one of mixed aesthetic and heritage character, within which the Dawson Daily News fits comfortably. It remains to be seen whether or not a 14-unit apartment complex soon to be erected between the News building and Mme. Tremblay's will be as compatible. When construction starts, some small and derelict but historically interesting stores - one of which belonged to the well-known Ezra Meeker - will be lost.

### Landmark

The News building is a familiar landmark in the Dawson townsite, well-marked on tourist maps and verbally interpreted on guided tours by KNHS employees. Its relatively high profile when opened



as a museum of "print shop relics" in 1961 has subsided in recent years by not being open to the public, but this should change in due time.

## Endnotes

- 1 Hal Guest, Dawson City, San Francisco of the North, or Boomtown in a Bog: A Literature Review, Manuscript Report No. 241 (Ottawa: Canadian Parks Service, 1978), pp. 10-27.
- 2 This summary description of the News and the following details are based on a thorough report of same prepared by Canadian Parks Service as part of its ongoing research on KNHS buildings. See R.C. Stuart and W.A. Waiser, The Dawson News Publishing Company, 1899-1954 [publication in progress; draft manuscript was consulted]. Stuart had access to extensive archival records held by KNHS pertaining to the history of the News, the buildings it occupied, and the milieu in which it operated. They also researched the voluminous back issues of the News as well as those of the Klondike Nugget and the Yukon Sun; they conducted interviews with knowledgeable informants and consulted many secondary publications covering early twentieth century journalism and printing.
- 3 Stuart and Waiser, op. cit., p. 18.
- 4 Ibid., p. 16.
- 5 Ibid., p. 27.
- 6 Ibid., p. 39.
- 7 Ibid., p. 72.
- 8 Ibid., p. 88.
- 9 Since then, a number of other bound copies of the News have come to light, some of which have been purchased by Parks. In fact, a complete set of the newspaper's production has now been located as individual volumes in various places, and Glenbow Alberta Institute in Calgary has had them microfilmed - an invaluable resource in the study of not only this building and its history, but other Dawson ones as well.
- 10 Malstrom's birth and death dates have not been researched but the dates of his involvement with Dawson Daily News are 1901-46. Stuart and Waiser, op. cit., p. 122.
- 11 Samuelson's News involvement dates are ca. 1920s-1954., Ibid.
- 12 A good discussion of the development of Third Ave. is found in Richard G. Stuart, Dawson City: Three Structural Histories, Manuscript Report No. 383 (Ottawa: Canadian Parks Service, 1980), pp. 87-92. See also Margaret Archibald,

"Red Feather Saloon," FHBRO Report No. 86-88.

- 13 A great many of these are illustrated and described in Ronald Woodall and T.H. Watkins, Taken by the Wind. Vanishing Architecture of the West (Don Mills: General Publishing Co. Ltd., 1977).
- 14 "Rejected Courses of Action." Unpublished manuscript on file with Ken Elder, Architecture and Engineering Services, Public Works Canada, Dedicated Unit, Environment Canada - Canadian Parks Service.
- 15 These terms attached to Dawson in its early years are illuminated in Margaret Archibald, "Grubstake to Grocery Store: Supplying the Klondike, 1897-1907," pp. 53-66, Canadian Historic Sites, Occasional Papers in Archaeology and History No. 26 (Ottawa: Canadian Parks Service, 1981).
- 16 Information supplied by Ken Elder, restoration architect of Dawson Daily News, AES, PWC, DU, EC-CPS.
- 17 Stuart, op. cit., pp. 41-45.
- 18 Cited in Stuart, op. cit., p. 42.
- 19 Interview with Ken Elder, AES, PWC, DU, EC-CPS, 28 Sept. 1988.
- 20 "Dawson, Yukon Territory, The Golden City in the Land of the Midnight Sun. The Mining and Commercial Metropolis of the North," American Journal of Industry, October, 1901. This quote supplied by Ken Elder, AES, PWC, DU, EC-CPS.
- 21 This building is to be erected by the Yukon Territorial government. Information supplied by Al Fisk, Superintendent, KNHS, EC-CPS, 27 July 1988.



- 1 Dawson Daily News, 123 Third Ave., Dawson, Yukon; constructed in 1901 as a warehouse; converted to newspaper plant in 1910; aerial view from southwest. (Joan Mattie, Architectural History Branch, Environment Canada - Canadian Parks Service [hereafter cited as J. Mattie, AHB, EC-CPS], 1988.))



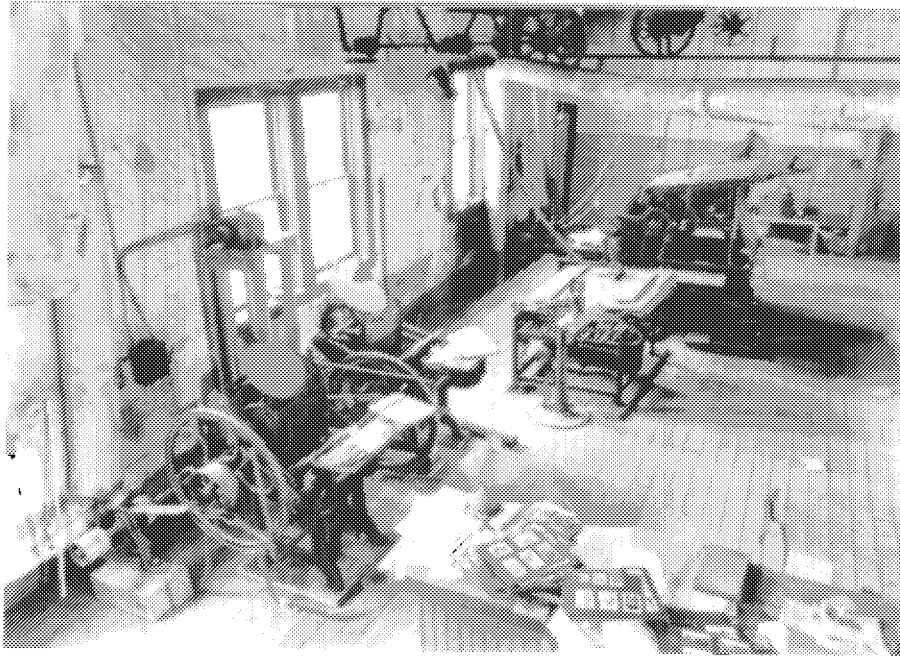
- 2 Dawson Daily News; facade. (Klondike National Historic Site, Environment Canada - Canadian Parks Service [hereafter cited as KNHS, EC-CPS], 1987.))



- 3 Dawson Daily News; interior view from print shop area toward front offices and stairs leading to mezzanine room. (J. Mattie, AHB, EC-CPS, 1988.)



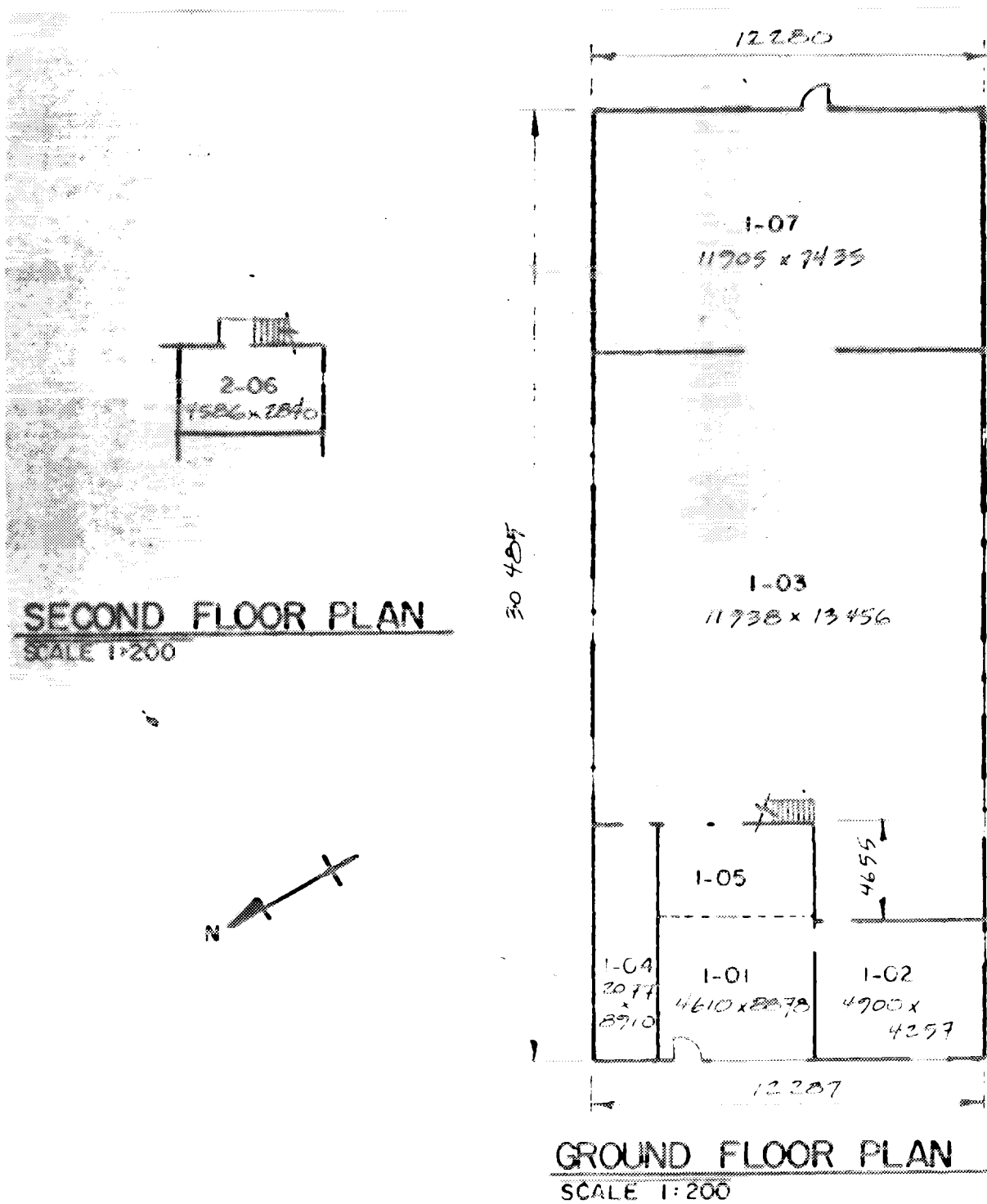
- 4 Dawson Daily News; interior view, print shop. (J. Mattie, AHB, EC-CPS, 1988.)



- 5     Printing press area of Dawson Daily News before removal of artifacts by KNHS. (Chris Grant Photo Volumes, Architecture and Engineering Services, Public Works Canada, Dedicated Unit, Environment Canada, Canadian Parks Service [hereafter cited as C. Grant, AES, PWC, DU, EC-CPS], 1970.)



- 6     Typesetting area of Dawson Daily News before removal of artifacts by KNHS. (C. Grant, AES, PWC, DU, EC-CPS, 1970.)



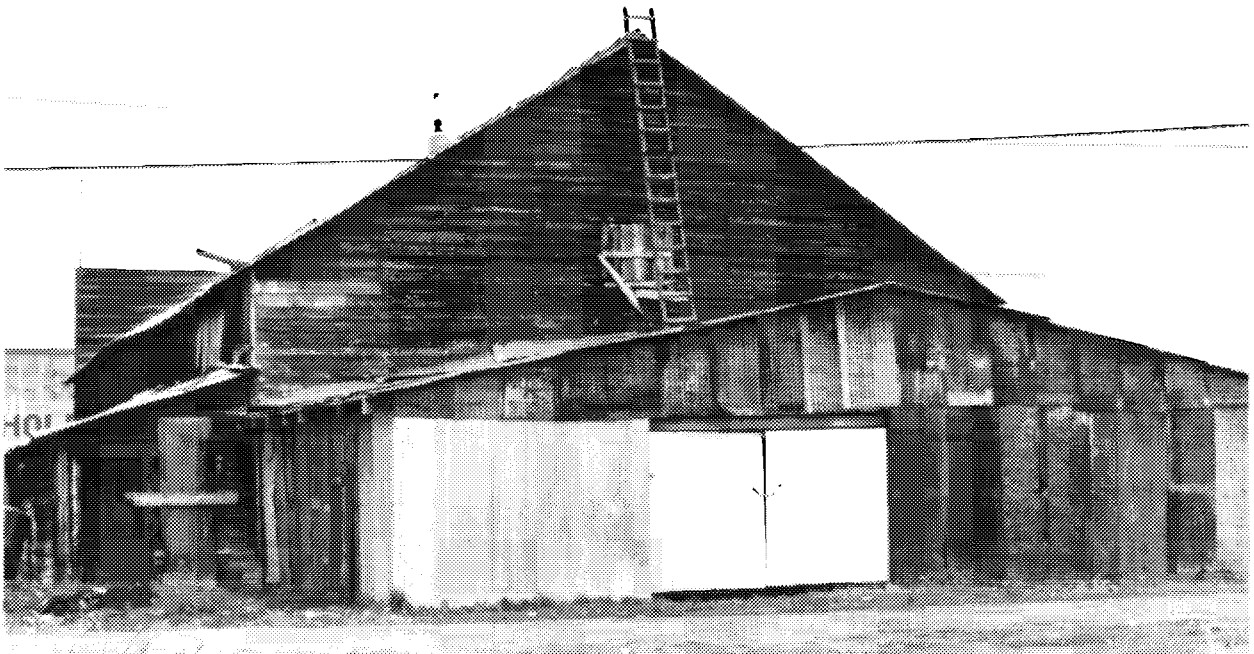
- 7 Dawson Daily News; ground floor plan and plan of mezzanine room above 1-05. (KNHS, EC-CPS, 1987.)







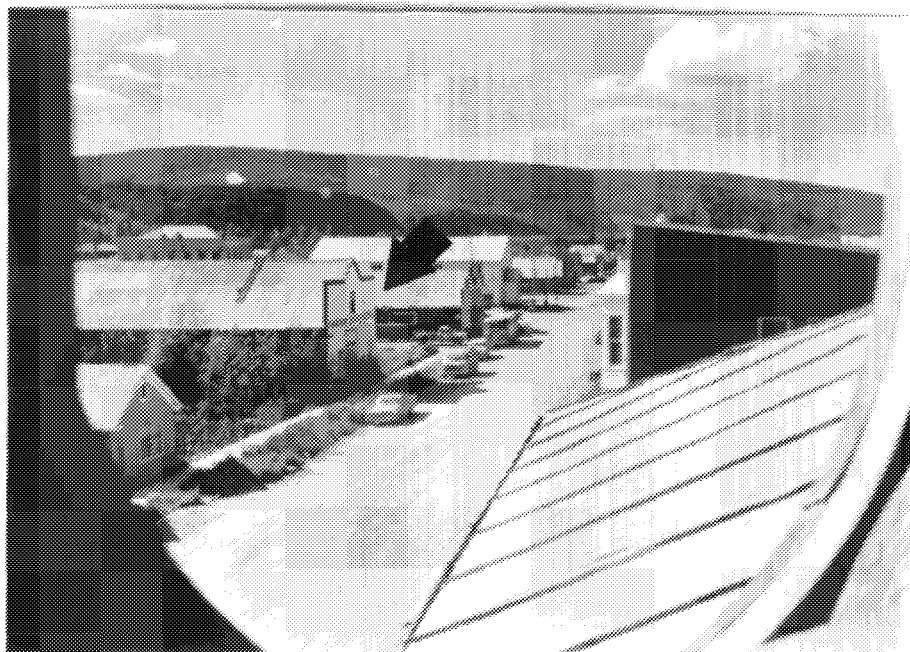
9 Dawson Daily News before restoration of the facade.  
(Canadian Inventory of Historic Buildings, Environment  
Canada - Canadian Parks Service [hereafter cited as CIHB,  
EC-CPS], 1973.)



10 Dawson Daily News before restoration of the rear portion.  
(CIHB, EC-CPS, 1973.)



- 11 Third Ave. looking north from Queen St. From left: Midnight Sun Hotel complex; Caley's Store (sloped roof); Post Office barely visible at next corner where King St. intersects Third Ave. Across street at this corner is Mme. Tremblay's Store (sloped roof); Dawson Daily News (arrow); Klondike Motors (far right). (J. Mattie, AHB, EC-CPS, 1988.)



- 12 Third Ave., looking south from Post Office tower. Arrow points to Dawson Daily News. Above it and to the left is the Carnegie library; Klondike Motors is farther down the street to the right. Large white building beyond is the government liquor store. Oriel window of Caley's store is visible beyond the Post Office roof. (C. Grant, AES, PWC, DU, EC-CPS, 1970.)

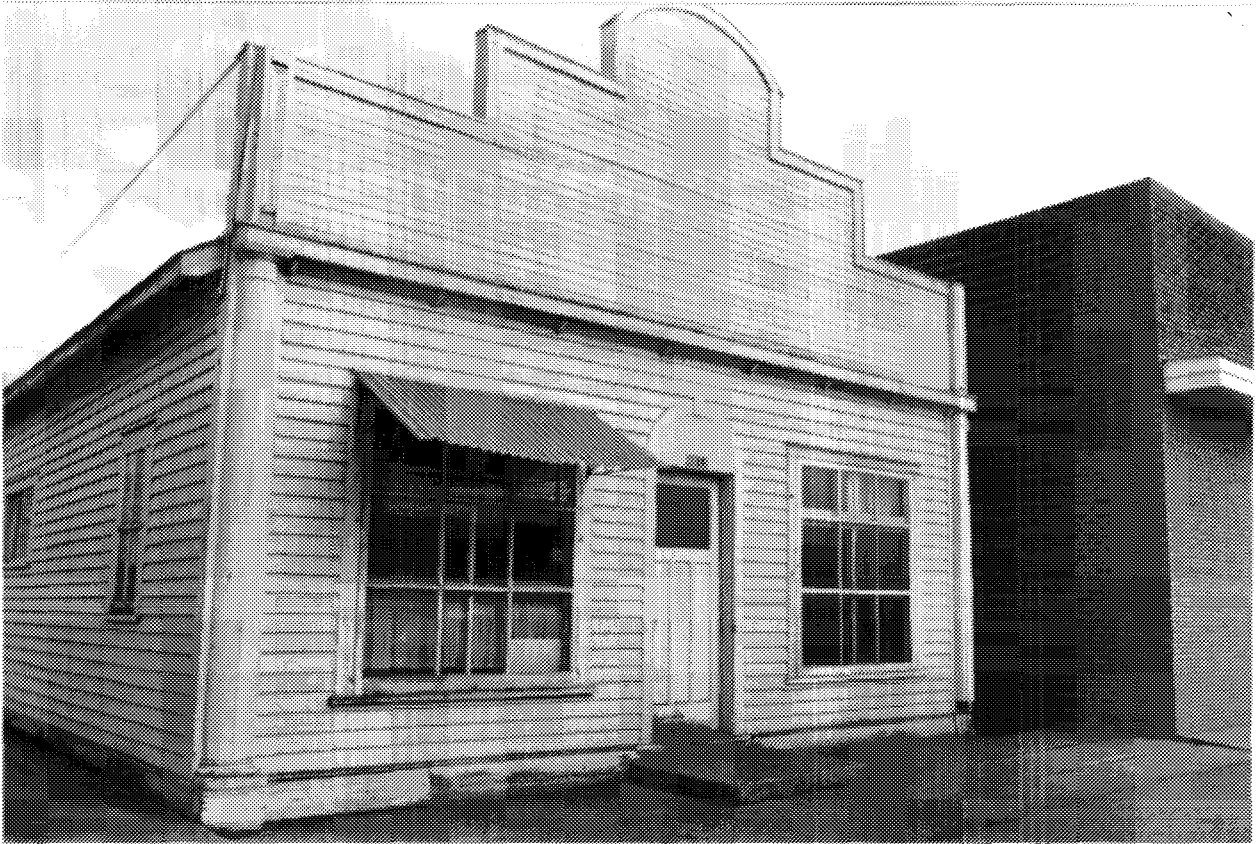


13 Arcola Star Standard, Arcola, Saskatchewan; constructed ca. 1903. (CIHB, EC-CPS, 1973.)



14 Glenboro Gazette, Glenboro, Manitoba; constructed ca. 1892. (CIHB, AHB, EC-CPS, 1973.)





15 The Times, 4815 - 49th Ave., Lloydminster, Saskatchewan;  
constructed ca. 1910. (CIHB, EC-CPS, 1974.)



16 Nelson Daily News, 266 Baker St., Nelson, British Columbia;  
constructed in 1900. (CIHB, EC-CPS, 1972.)

## 2. TELEGRAPH ANNEX

King St. at Third Ave.

Dawson, Yukon

### INTRODUCTION

The Telegraph Annex is an appendage of Dawson's old Post Office (Figures 3-6). This latter was built in 1900 as the first of four major public buildings designed by federal Department of Public Works architect Thomas Fuller (evaluated as a Classified building following FHBRO Report 87-67). While the Annex's ground floor is contemporary with the main building, the second storey was not added until shortly before Fuller left Dawson in 1902, having been resident here since July, 1899. Fuller had used part of the single storey Annex as his own architectural offices while the other three projects were in progress. Meanwhile, telegraphic service in and out of Dawson was being improved and becoming heavily used. Initially available along a short line strung out to the gold fields and to the NWMP customs post on the Alaska border, the service was expanded as soon as possible to link up with the North American network (Figure 1). Messages were first relayed from a small Fuller-designed building on the Government Reserve at the south end of town; then from a room of the Post Office when it opened; and after 1902, from the expanded Annex. Currently vacant, as it has been for many years, the Annex may soon become functionally integrated with the main building if KNHS is successful in its proposal to attract Dawson postal service back to this location.

## HISTORICAL ASSOCIATIONS

### Thematic

By virtue of the communications service it provided and the fact that it was a government building, the Telegraph Annex ties into both aspects of NHPS's Theme 2(b) for developing an historical interpretation programme at Dawson: "The development of Dawson as a supply, service and distribution centre" and "its development as a territorial capital." Being an addition to the Post Office, the Annex might also be considered as having the same status as the main building, i.e. a National Historic Site because of the Post Office's placement on HSMBC's original List "A" (historic Dawson buildings to be acquired and preserved).

Dawson received telegraph service for the first time in 1899 when lines were run out to the gold fields and to the NWMP customs post at White Pass on the Alaska border.<sup>1</sup> Americans continued the line over to Skagway, and from here, transcribed copies were carried by steamship to southern ports such as Vancouver. There they would again be put onto the telegraph network. Imperfect as it was (the steamship portion being the weak link), the system brought Dawson into much closer contact with the rest of Canada and the world.

Illustrating the importance placed on telegraph service here is the fact that the federal government had its architect Thomas Fuller design a telegraph office before any other buildings.<sup>2</sup> Located on the Government Reserve, this still extant structure (since moved to Seventh Ave. and renovated as a dwelling) also served as living quarters and a base for most of the newly arrived DPW staff. It was not intended to be one of the more prestigious buildings for long-term government use, however. These, including the Post Office to which the Telegraph Annex under review is attached, were built during the next two years.

During the Post Office's course of construction over the winter

of 1899-1900, work was also progressing on an ambitious extension of telegraph lines south to Lake Bennett and beyond. This was to connect at Ashcroft, British Columbia with the main trans-Canada line running east and west alongside the C.P.R. railroad tracks. J.B. Charleson, then Superintendent of Public Works in the north, was overseeing the job which included the building of a new link between the Dawson-to-Bennett Lake line and the remains of an earlier line built in 1866 running north from New Westminister to Hazelton. This latter had been the venture of an American company whose goal was to establish a telegraph route to Europe by way of the Bering Strait. The success of the Atlantic cable installation later in 1866, however, brought that project to a halt.<sup>3</sup> In the interim (between 1866 and 1900) the line had not been maintained north of Quesnel, and had fallen into a state of disrepair. Charleson and his crew worked to put it back in order; the entire job including new and repair work was completed in 1901 (Figure 1).<sup>4</sup>

By this time, Dawson's telegraph office had relocated from the small building on the Government Reserve to the ground floor of the new Post Office. Here it operated for almost two years before moving next door into the expanded annex. First built as a modest single-storey addition to house the Customs examining warehouse as well as Fuller's own architectural office,<sup>5</sup> the annex was given a second storey in 1902 just before the telegraph service moved in, and made to look more substantial and compatible in design with the Post Office. Service continued here until 1918 when it moved into the Administration Building for reasons of economy.

Apart from its connection to the nationally significant history of Dawson, and to NHPS's Theme 2(b), the Telegraph Annex is important in its own right as part of Canada's communications history. One of the few extant telegraph offices in the country, it illustrates the effect that telegraphed communications had in many areas of life.<sup>6</sup> When introduced in southern Canada in 1846,

the telegraph began to break down barriers to efficient communication between regions - much more so than postal service, which was available only along cumbersome transportation routes. Because of this it gave Canadian communities a new national and world outlook as news from afar was gathered and relayed almost as soon as it happened. In the process, newspapers became much more prominent, and some became part of syndicates that exerted enormous influence on the shape of Canada's economic, social and political institutions. There was a centralization of decision-making when telegraph service was put in place, and centralization of other systems of delivery too. Mail order houses flourished to a greater degree, partly because of the fast service provided by telegraphed orders. Banking, stock market trading, and raw material production were all influenced by the immediacy of telegraph communication and the finely-tuned coordination it offered. Other areas of endeavour were touched, such as surveying and mapping. With the telegraphing of time signals, precise positioning of prime meridians and international boundaries was made possible. Law enforcement benefitted when criminals could no longer travel faster than the word of their crimes. In the social arena, there was an incalculable impact on personal communication with telegrams serving as the frequent medium by which families and friends kept in touch.

Most of these impacts began to be evident in Dawson as soon as telegraph service was put in place. For example, centralized authority in the Department of Public Works was more easily wielded through telegraphed messages sent back and forth between Chief Architect David Ewart in Ottawa and Thomas Fuller in Dawson; the banks received reports on world money markets; stockholders in Dawson mining companies were kept apprised of activities in the goldfields; orders for commodities were placed by Dawson merchants; and national and international events were telegraphed to the Dawson Daily News. These vital communications and many more were sent and received in the Telegraph Annex, in operation from 1902 to 1918.



While Canada had many small companies involved in telegraph operation during the early years, consolidation throughout the 1880s produced three giants which handled almost all business.<sup>7</sup> The largest was the Montreal-based Great Northwestern Telegraph Company; then the C.P.R. which, because of its railway charter, had the trans-Canadian lines; and lastly, the smaller Dominion Telegraph Service, an agency of the federal Department of Public Works which established and operated the more remote and less profitable lines. Most of these latter were in western Canada, including the line from the CPR station at Ashcroft, British Columbia, north to Dawson - a distance of over 1,000 miles. In a large sign worded "Dom. Telegraph Service" (Figure 11), the Telegraph Annex at Dawson announced its affiliation to this particular government-run business.

As in most communities, the Dawson telegraph office was an important and busy place. Few comparable examples elsewhere have survived. In settled areas, telegraph offices were often housed in multi-purpose buildings since converted to other uses, or built as insubstantial structures in remote regions, now fallen into decay with disuse.

#### Person/Event

The only known person of significance directly associated with this building was Thomas Fuller who used part of the original single storey annex for his own architectural offices.

#### Local Development

Together with the adjacent Post Office, the Telegraph Annex represents Dawson's coming of age. It is illustrative of the federal government's intentions to support the long-range development of the city in making it the capital of the Yukon and in providing it with suitably imposing buildings. Furthermore, it illustrates the connection of Dawson to telegraph lines and cables that extended around the world. No longer was the fabled

city such a remote frontier or the boisterous mining encampment it had been only two or three years previous. At that time, tents and log cabins housed people and services, and streets were sometimes impassable because of mud. During the next few years, buildings with roughly milled boomtown fronts sprang up in the business district which was approximately bounded by First (Front) and Third Avenues, and York and Harper Streets. Most of these, however, were wiped out in huge fires in the winters of 1897-98 and 1898-99. By 1900 the town was emerging in another guise with more substantial business blocks and better housing. These and the governmental buildings (including the Telegraph Annex) spurred the town into further development, so that by 1902 it could boast additional civilized amenities such as more and wider sidewalks, some macadamized streets, electric street lights, and a few telephones (Figures 15, 16).<sup>8</sup>

## ARCHITECTURE

### Aesthetic Design

The Telegraph Annex is complementary to rather than integral with the adjacent Post Office (Figures 3 to 6). Its stepped back position on King Street adds to the lively massing of forms that make up this complex, including the Post Office's projecting corner tower and its main two-storey hipped roof block. It is endowed with some of the same architectural details such as cladding, colour, window framing, corner framing, and interior walls and ceilings done in tongue-and-groove Douglas fir. Yet it does suffer in comparison to the main building. Clearly meant to be subservient to this handsome structure, the Annex lacks the classical treatment of the Post Office's doorways, the pedimented treatment of the windows on the ground floor, and of course, the distinguished corner tower. Furthermore, its recessed siting means that it even disappears from sight when viewed from some angles (see Figures 15 and 16). Its windows are not aligned with those of the Post Office, and the roof form is quite different.

More properly, the building should be compared with others closer to its type - the false-fronted boom town buildings ubiquitous in western Canadian and American towns at the turn of the century. Of this type, it is an excellent example. Its false front extending above the gabled roof behind is an especially fine one, with a generously moulded cornice. Dentil moulding is part of this and is repeated in the lower cornice that extends around the building's three exposed sides (best seen in Figures 5, 6). This horizontal line is further echoed in the slight overhang above the centre door flanked by two windows. Framing at the corners of these latter elements meets the overhang in small corbels, and the doorway's side framing has been fluted, suggestive of pilasters. When opened as a telegraph office in 1902, the space immediately above the overhang was crowned by a prominent sign that was apparently a good-sized board with its own framing. Announcing "Dom. Telegraph Service", it was a more sophisticated sign than that of the Dawson Daily News (see Report No. 1, Figure 2) where letters were painted directly onto the facade's clapboards.

There was no distinctive architectural type per se for telegraph offices across Canada. Those owned and operated by the CPR were usually located in a separate room off the railway station waiting room and advertised by a sign on the outside of the building (Figure 22). Telegraph companies operating in urban areas were often located within good and prominently sited office buildings, as was the case at 140 Notre Dame Street in Montreal - a three-storey stone building with mansard roof and Renaissance-inspired detailing (e.g. Figure 21). Government telegraph offices (most often in small western towns) were usually rented spaces in hotels, stores, and dwellings and other privately-owned buildings. Such was the case at Peace River, Alberta (Figure 19). The house-like cable office at North Sydney, Nova Scotia is reported to have been purpose-built in 1873<sup>9</sup> (Figure 20). In remote areas, telegraph offices were often purpose-built too, but

usually no more than a basic log structure which also provided living quarters for the telegraph operator. One such example was at Pike River, B.C., constructed from unpeeled logs in 1900, probably under J.B. Charlson's direction (Figure 17). Another typical one but with squared logs was at Big Salmon, Yukon, built about the same time (Figure 17).

#### Functional Design

The Annex's extant layout (Figure 2) gives a good idea of the functioning of Dawson's telegraph service after 1902 although it also gives rise to certain questions. Some of them can perhaps be answered by comparison with other stations including Dawson's earlier one in the Post Office. For transmitting purposes, messages here were taken from the public through a wicket at one end of the postal screen, then put on a dumb waiter and sent upstairs to a dispatcher.<sup>10</sup> The reverse would hold for messages received. The typical dispatcher's equipment is visible in a photograph taken at another station, illustrated and described in The Electric Telegraph in Canada, 1846-1902:

The operator sits at a desk with a pad of message forms and works the key to send a message. Spare keys and relays are on the shelf before him. The wire connection through the switchboard to the line enters the office from the wall in front of the operator. A clock and a pile of ledger books to record the times and cost of messages complete the scene.<sup>11</sup>

Also in the room with the dispatcher (or nearby) would be a large many-celled battery that would boost the telegraph line's electrical impulses.

When Dawson telegraph service was operated out of the Post Office in the 1900-02 period, water for maintaining the battery's charge was supplied from a tank in the attic, as described in the Supplementary Estimates of Canada tabled in the Ottawa parliamentary sitting of 1902:

Water used for 600 cell telegraph battery stored

in 700 gallon tank in attic filled four times a year by a hose connected with the hydrant.<sup>12</sup>

Fuller was most concerned that the building maintain its heat so the water in this tank and in the battery would not freeze:

The night watchman is absolutely to attend to the fires during the night so as to keep them going steadily, otherwise the telegraph battery jars would freeze. As these jars could not be replaced at Dawson while navigation remains closed, if they were to be broken by frost at such a time the damage to the lines would be irreparable.<sup>13</sup>

With this evidence of the former telegraph operation in the Post Office, it is possible to speculate about that in the Annex after 1902. Direct access to the public area was provided through a central door opening onto a rather wide platform outdoors (Figures 5, 14). This was formed in the recess created by the Annex's stepped-back position from the main building, and must have served as a gathering place for Dawson residents come here to send and receive messages and to await the latest news. Latrines were conveniently located for them and for staff between the Post Office and Annex, with both exterior and interior doors provided. Inside the Annex, the extant counter is probably the original one over which business was done (Figures 7, 8). The dispatcher, his telegraph equipment, and the large battery were likely located in the two rooms upstairs,<sup>14</sup> reached by way of the staircase off to one side (Plan, Figure 2; staircase, Figure 7; upstairs rooms, Figures 9, 10). The old water tank in the Post Office attic probably remained in place but with a new hook-up to service the relocated equipment. At least this would seem to be the case considering the limited space that the attic in the Annex had little room to house it and running water was not available until 1911.<sup>15</sup> The cupola-like structure on the Annex roof (Figure 4) was apparently the point at which the wires came into the building. Several wire insulators are still attached to it on the exterior.<sup>16</sup>

Structurally, the Annex fared better than the Post Office. The

latter was Fuller's first major building in Dawson and it was probably erected on the most difficult site. A deep layer of substance which he called "frozen muck" (reduced to almost nothing of substance when melted) overlaid the more stable permafrost underneath.<sup>17</sup> The mudsill foundations were laid into the permafrost and posts on top of this supported the building above.<sup>18</sup> The depth of foundations proved to be inadequate, however, and the building soon began to sink in the middle. In October 1902, this prompted Fuller to introduce additional braced beams underneath, as well as to take other measures in arresting the process. It was at this time that the Annex was expanded and the new foundation system extended under it as well.<sup>19</sup> Later, the Post Office continued to have problems with sagging and it became unusable. The Annex remained reasonably straight and was occupied intermittently from the time the telegraph service was moved out of it in 1918, until 1970 when acquired by KNHS. CPS has since done very little work on it except for maintenance, and some foundation stabilization in 1974.<sup>20</sup>

#### Craftsmanship and Materials

Although it lacks some of the architectural detailing of the Post Office, the Annex was built to the same quality of workmanship, i.e. the best available in Dawson. Good milled and seasoned lumber for this building was ordered from British Columbia and delivered over the recently completed White Pass and Yukon Route railway (thence by steamboat to Dawson), and is evident on the exterior clapboards painted grey. Several fine details that were probably machine-produced and ordered by catalogue can be noted: the delicate dentil mouldings of the cornices, the small corbels under the front overhang, the narrow fluted pilasters flanking the entrance, the newell post with acanthus leaf motif (Figure 7), and the scrollworked brackets at the tops of interior posts in the ground floor (Figure 8). There are good door and window mouldings throughout. All features are virtually intact and in good near-original condition.

### Designer

Thomas W. Fuller (1865-1951) was the son of the architect who designed the original centre block of the Parliament buildings in Ottawa. Both father and son rose to the position of Chief Architect in the Department of Public Works. For T.W. Fuller, this came only after long years of service in the department in which he had begun lengthy training in 1885 during his father's tenure as Chief.<sup>21</sup>

Being sent to Dawson in 1899 by succeeding Chief Architect David Ewart represented a big break for the younger Fuller. Here in the new Yukon territorial capital, he was on his own to design and supervise construction of four prominent governmental buildings, with only limited advice provided in telegraph messages and letters by Ewart. Archival correspondence from those days reveals the incredibly difficult problems Fuller faced including the need for rapid building in the short northern season, untried construction methods for permafrost conditions, poor local materials, and unpredictable availability and pricing of better quality imported materials.<sup>22</sup> Pricing was so unpredictable in fact that potential contractors were unwilling to give firm bids on tenders, and Fuller himself acquired the added responsibility of supervising day labour to see the buildings completed.

Compared to the more prestigious Post Office, Administration Building, Court House and Commissioner's Residence Fuller designed in Dawson, the Telegraph Annex is but a minor work. Nevertheless, other lifetime examples that can be directly attributed to him are so rare (due to anonymity of design in the DPW) that this building is of considerable importance in illuminating his career.

## ENVIRONMENT

### Site

The Telegraph Annex and Post Office occupy all but the southerly eight feet in width of the lot at the corner of King Street and Third Avenue. The unoccupied portion was acquired on the recommendation of Fuller in 1901 to provide some insurance against the spread of fire<sup>23</sup> - a grave concern in Dawson in view of two conflagrations that had virtually wiped out the business district in the winters of 1897-98 and 1898-99. The ground floor of the Annex is contemporary with the main building, while the second storey addition and conversion to a telegraph office came about in 1902. This expansion and change to a new function did not alter the site configuration significantly, but it did have considerable impact on the building's relationship to the street. Although still set back some 3.2 metres from the boardwalk, the Annex was accorded a new prominence both in visibility and in use. Visibility has increased even more with the disappearance of the neighbouring buildings west along King Street, leaving a weed-filled vacant lot (Figure 4).

### Setting

The Telegraph Annex contributes to the current historical character of Dawson by being a fine example of the false front architecture that was typical of the city's heyday. Furthermore, it is attached to one of KNHS's most historically pivotal and architecturally prominent buildings - the Post Office (Figure 3). Strategically located for KNHS's purposes, the Annex is only a short distance from the Information Centre, directly across from the reconstructed Palace Grand Theatre, and across from Mme. Tremblay's store on Third Avenue (see INTRODUCTION, Figure 3). This area was one of the three clusters that the 1977 Master Development Plan recommended be developed for historical interpretation. It is currently interpreted at a modest level by guided tours and printed maps.



Landmark

It may be that the Telegraph Annex is not well known for its important role in telegraphic communications in the north. It is not currently open to the public and does not display its original "Dom. Telegraph Service" (Figure 11) sign above its front entrance. The building itself is a landmark, however, in conjunction with the Post Office to which it is attached. This latter is perhaps the most symbolic of all buildings in the Klondike, being pictured on the covers of brochures and almost always appearing in publications about Dawson. By association then, it has a conspicuous identity for those who have read about or visited Dawson, and for those living in the community.

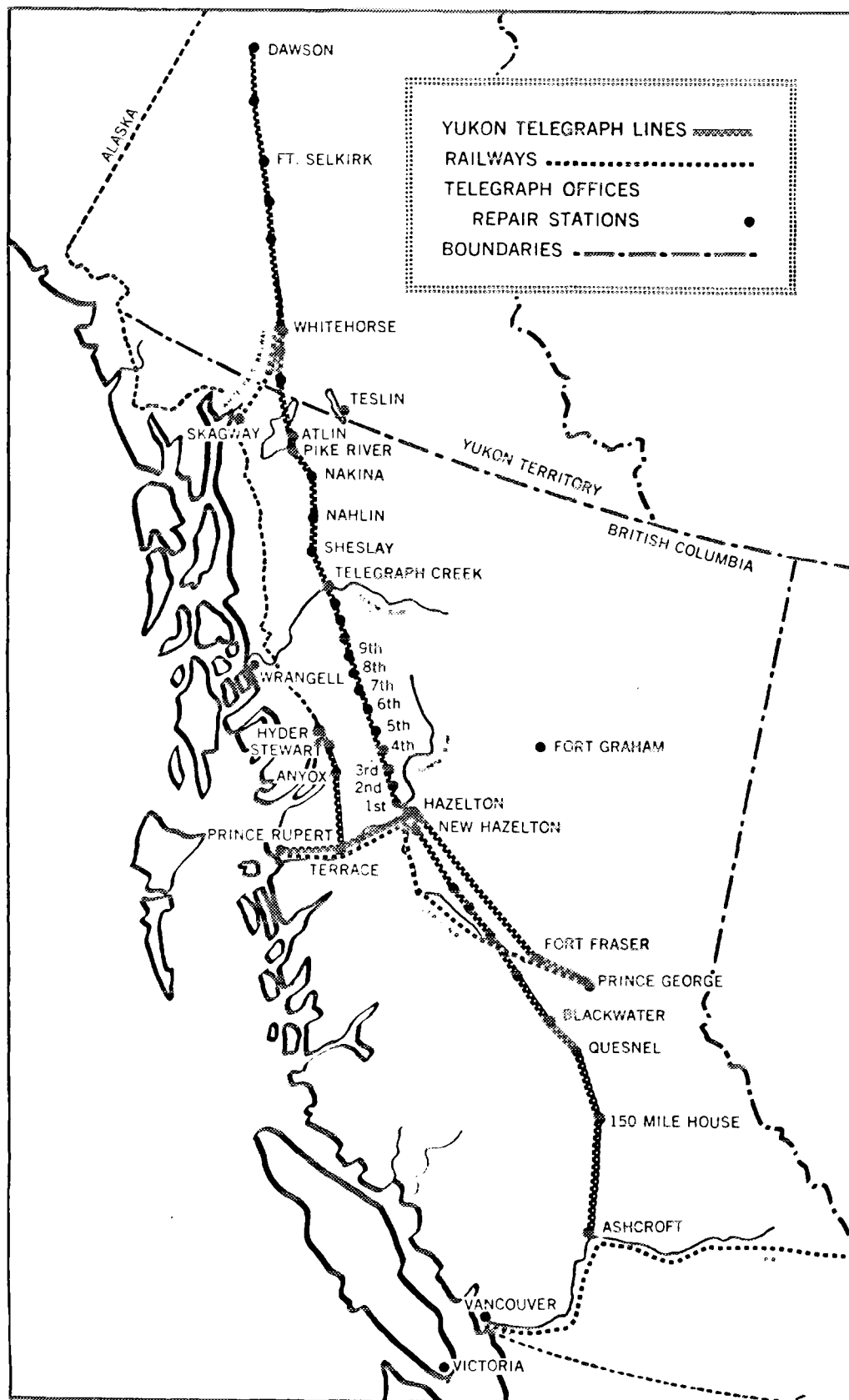
## Endnotes

- 1 D. R. Richeson, The Electric Telegraph in Canada, 1846-1902, Canada's Visual History, Volume 52 (Ottawa: National Museum of Man, 1981), p. 8.
- 2 Margaret Archibald, "Dawson Telegraph Station: Historical Notes." Unpublished manuscript on file, AHB, EC-CPS, numbered C8400/D61-1.
- 3 Richeson, op. cit., p. 3.
- 4 Ibid., p. 8. See also Guy Lawrence, 40 Years on the Yukon Telegraph (Vancouver: Mitchell Press Ltd.), 1965.
- 5 Hal Guest, A History of the Dawson Post Office With Some Comment on the Klondike Mail Service, 1897-1924. Microfiche Report No. 326 (Ottawa: Canadian Parks Service, 1986), p. 13.
- 6 This paragraph is based on analysis in Richeson, op. cit., pp. 1, 5-6.
- 7 Ibid., p. 4.
- 8 See Margaret Archibald, "Grubstake to Grocery Store: Supplying the Klondike, 1897-1907," pp. 53-66, Canadian Historic Sites, Occasional Papers in Archaeology and History, No. 26 (Ottawa: Canadian Parks Service, 1981).
- 9 This information recorded on CIHB photo card for the building (Geocode 02250001200180).
- 10 Guest, op. cit, p. 12.
- 11 Richeson, op. cit., p. 14.
- 12 National Archives (hereafter cited as NA), RG11, Volume 3282, Supplementary Estimates of Canada for the Fiscal Year Ending 30th June 1902, p. 10.
- 13 Ibid.
- 14 This is based on architect Fuller's description of the telegraph quarters in the Post Office. He mentioned "a large battery room" in addition to the telegraph operator's room. See T.W. Fuller, "Dawson Public Buildings," Dawson Daily News, Golden Clean-Up Edition, 9 March 1902.
- 15 J. Dalibard, Chief Restoration Architect, KNHS, "Dawson City, Old Post Office Building Restoration Studies: Interim Feasibility Report," 24 August 1974, p. 5. (Unpublished report on file, Architectural and Engineering Services,

Public Works Canada, Dedicated Unit, Environment Canada - Canadian Parks Service).

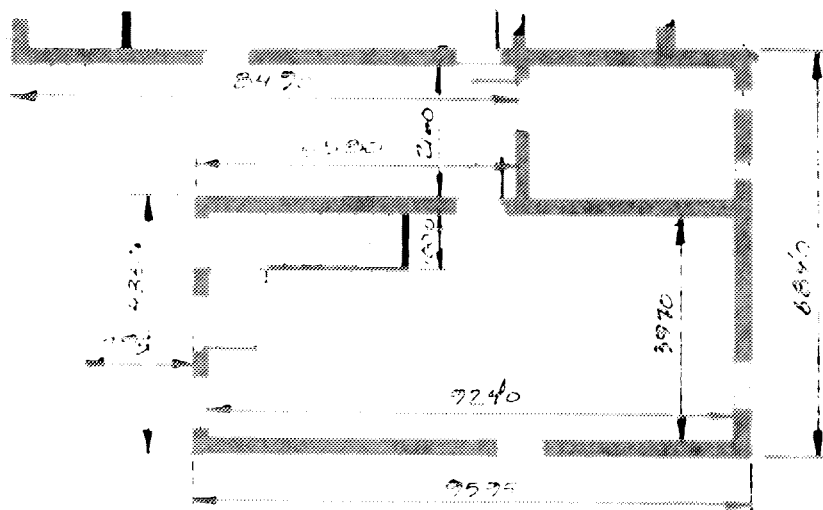
- 16 This observed in site visit, 27 July 1988, in company with Guy Masson, current restoration architect for KNHS. Masson also helped with the analysis of the Telegraph Office's functional design.
- 17 NA, RG11, Volume 1437, File 238341, Fuller to Ewart, 13 August 1899.
- 18 For detailed description of Dawson foundations adapted to permafrost conditions, see Functional Design section, FHBRO Report No. 86-88.
- 19 Dalibard, op. cit., p. 4.
- 20 Information supplied in telephone conversation with KNHS Heritage Recorder, Robie Van Rumpt, 29 September 1988.
- 21 Margaret Archibald, "Training and Supervising the Branch Architect," By Federal Design: The Chief Architect's Branch of the Department of Public Works, 1881-1914 (Ottawa: Parks Canada, 1983), pp. 13-21.
- 22 See NA, RG11, Volume 1437, File 238341.
- 23 Ibid., File 238231, Fuller to Ewart, 11 January 1902.

# TELEGRAPH ANNEX, DAWSON, YUKON



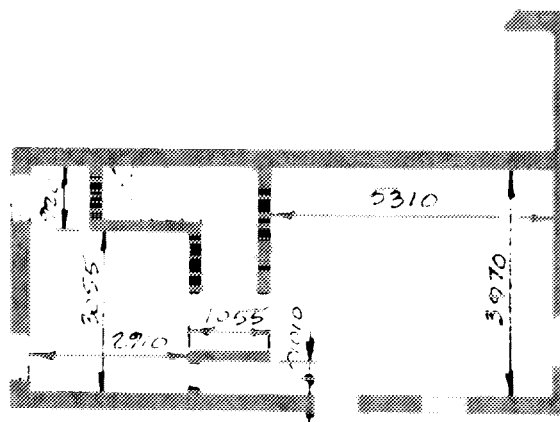
1 Map showing route of telegraph lines from Ashcroft, British Columbia to Dawson, Yukon; line completed in 1901. (Guy Lawrence, 40 Years on the Yukon Telegraph, Vancouver: Mitchell Press Ltd., 1965.)

TELEGRAPH ANNEX, DAWSON, YUKON



ANNEX GROUND FLOOR PLAN

scale = 1/25

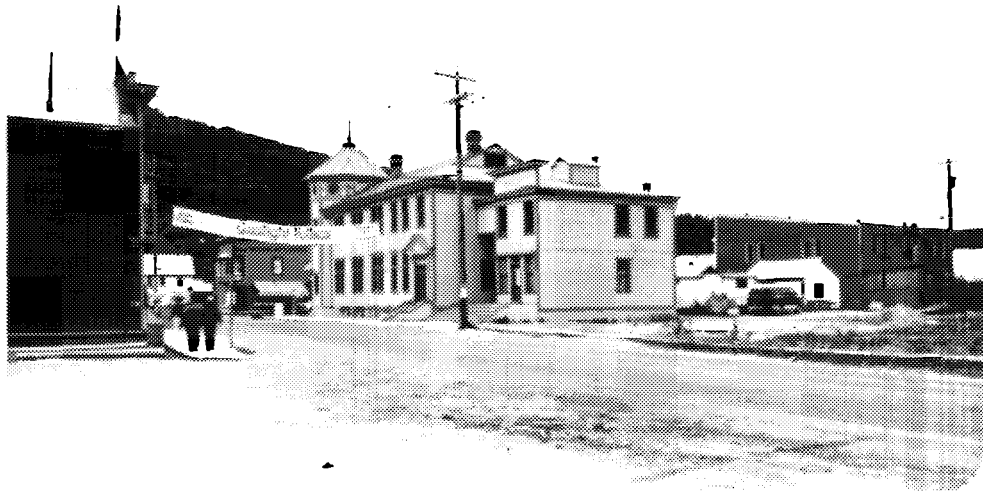


ANNEX SECOND FLOOR PLAN

scale = 1/25

- 2 Floor plans of Telegraph Annex. (KNHS, EC-CPS, 1987.)

TELEGRAPH ANNEX, DAWSON, YUKON



- 3 Telegraph Annex attached to Post Office, cor. King St. and Third Ave., Dawson, Yukon; ground floor constructed in 1900 (concurrent with Post Office), T.W. Fuller, architect; second storey added in 1902. Note also Palace Grande Theatre (far left); Mme. Tremblay's store (left of Post Office tower); back of Caley's store (right). (KNHS, EC-CPS, 1987.)

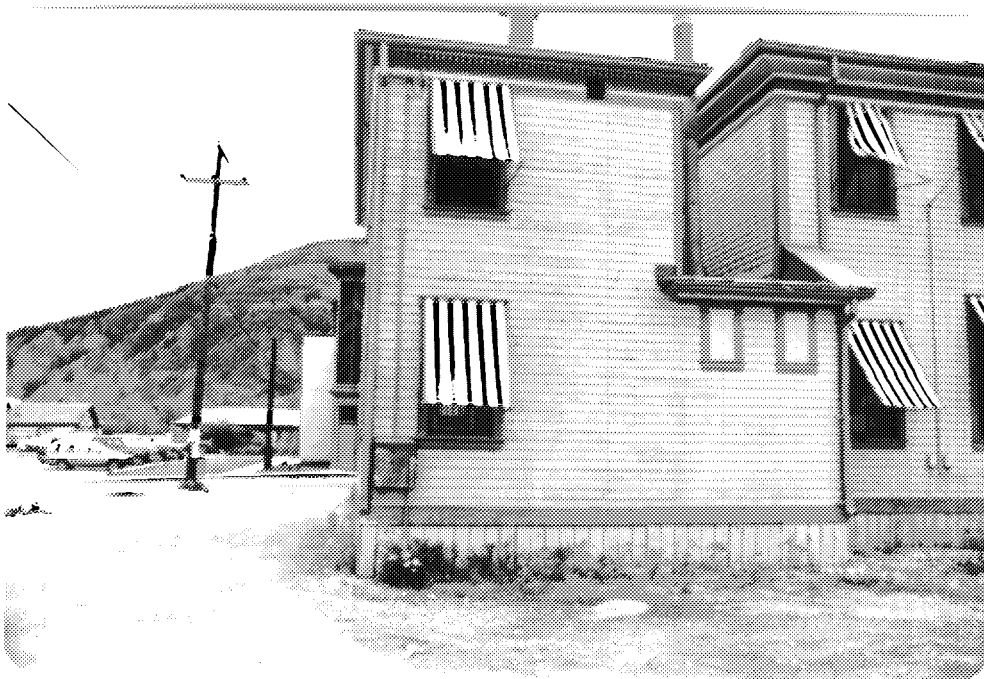


- 4 Rear view of Telegraph Annex and Post Office from Second Ave. (J. Mattie, AHB, EC-CPS, 1988.)

TELEGRAPH ANNEX, DAWSON, YUKON

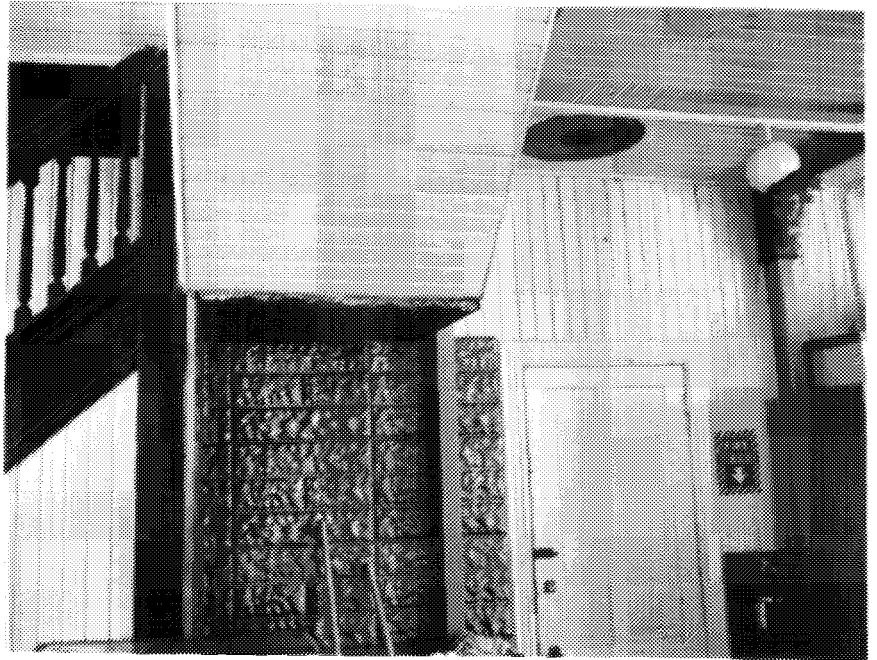


5 Telegraph Annex; facade. (KNHS, EC-CPS, 1987.)

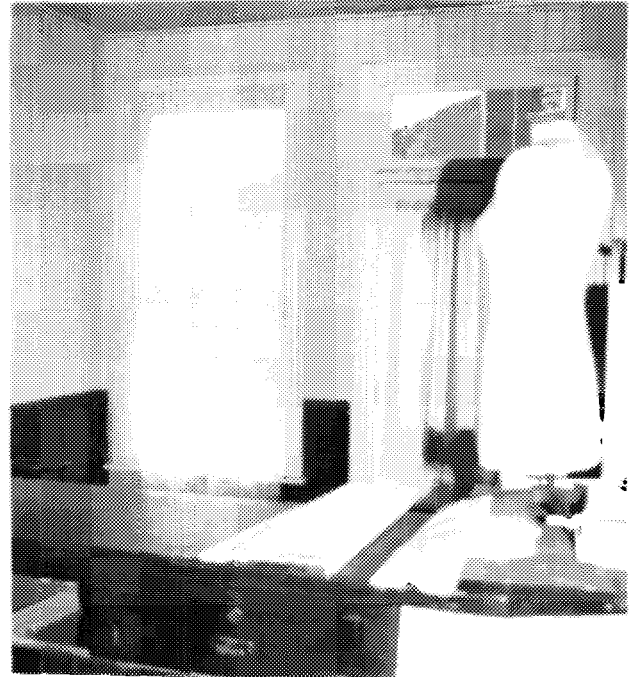
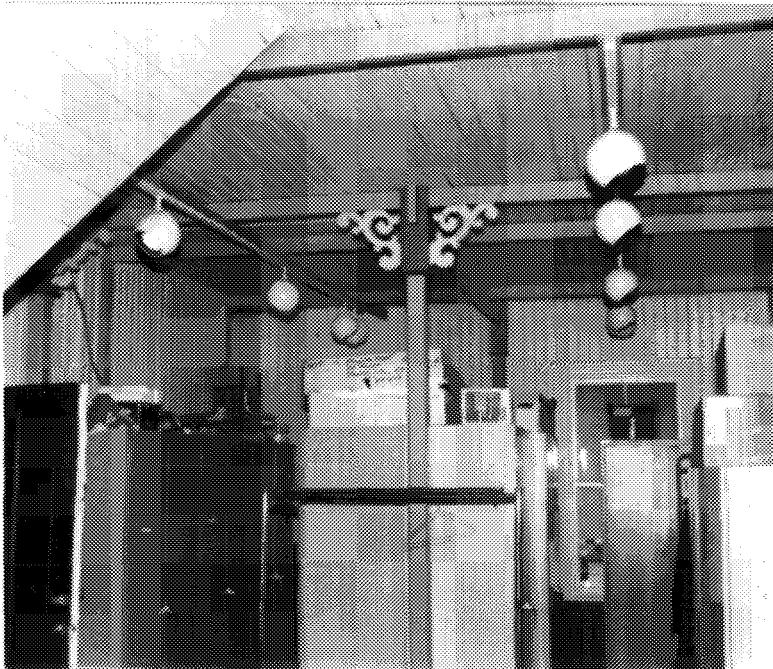


6 Telegraph Annex; rear view. (KNHS, EC-CPS, 1987.)

TELEGRAPH ANNEX, DAWSON, YUKON



- 7 Telegraph Annex; ground floor interior view looking toward front window and stairs (left); partial view of stairs, pressed tin wall cladding in stove area, and doorway leading to Post Office (right). (J. Mattie, AHB, EC-CPS, 1988.)



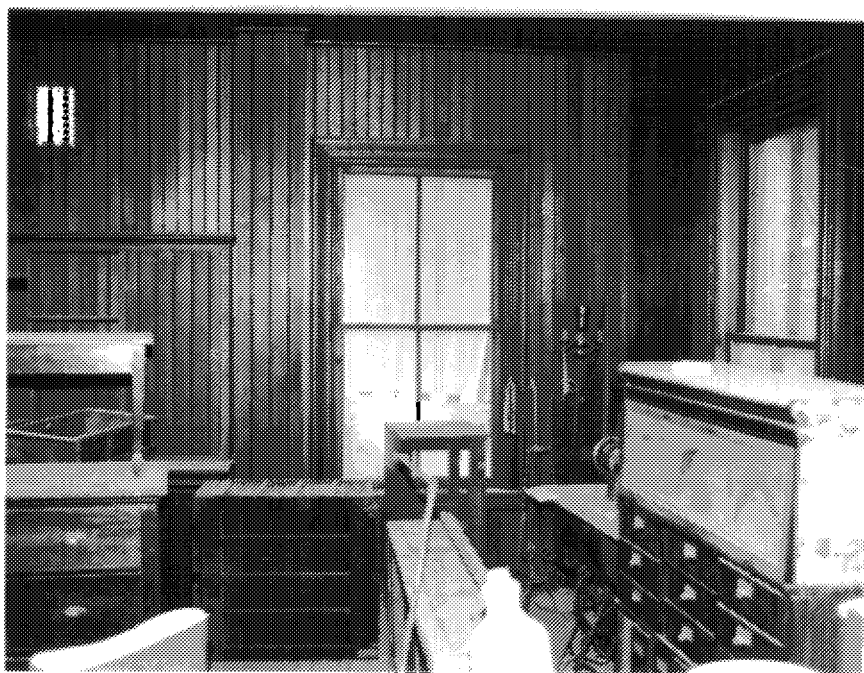
- 8 Telegraph Annex; ground floor interior view toward rear (left); ground floor view toward front (right). (Ken Elder, AES, PWC, DU-CPS 1982.)



TELEGRAPH ANNEX, DAWSON, YUKON



9 Telegraph Annex; second floor interior view toward front of building. (K. Elder, AES, PWC, DU-CPS, 1982.)



10 Telegraph Annex; second floor interior view toward rear of building. (K. Elder, AES, PWC, DU-CPS, 1982.)

TELEGRAPH ANNEX, DAWSON, YUKON



11 Telegraph Annex attached to Post Office, ca. 1902. (NA/AN PA100456.)



12 Post Office and Telegraph Annex (left); King St. stores and offices (right), ca. 1902. (NA/AN PA100370.)

TELEGRAPH ANNEX, DAWSON, YUKON



13 Post Office under construction, July 1900. (NA/AN, PA17155.)



14 Telegraph Annex and Post Office, ca. 1920. (Dawson Photo Collection, HRB, EC-CPS.)



15 King St. looking west toward Front Street and Yukon River, Dawson, Yukon, ca. 1902; Post Office is on left hand side; Telegraph Annex beside it is not visible because of its stepped back position. (Dawson Photo Collection, HRB, EC-CPS.)





16 King St. looking east from Second Ave., June 1904. Telegraph Annex cannot be seen because of its recessed position behind the Post Office (centre). (Dawson Photo Collection, HRB, EC-CPS.)



17 Big Salmon telegraph station, Yukon, 1907; built ca. 1901.  
(NA/AN PA-39995.)

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18 Dominion Government Telegraph Office, Pike River, British Columbia; built ca. 1900. On the telegraph line between Atlin and Quesnelle, B.C. (NA/AN - PA118708.)



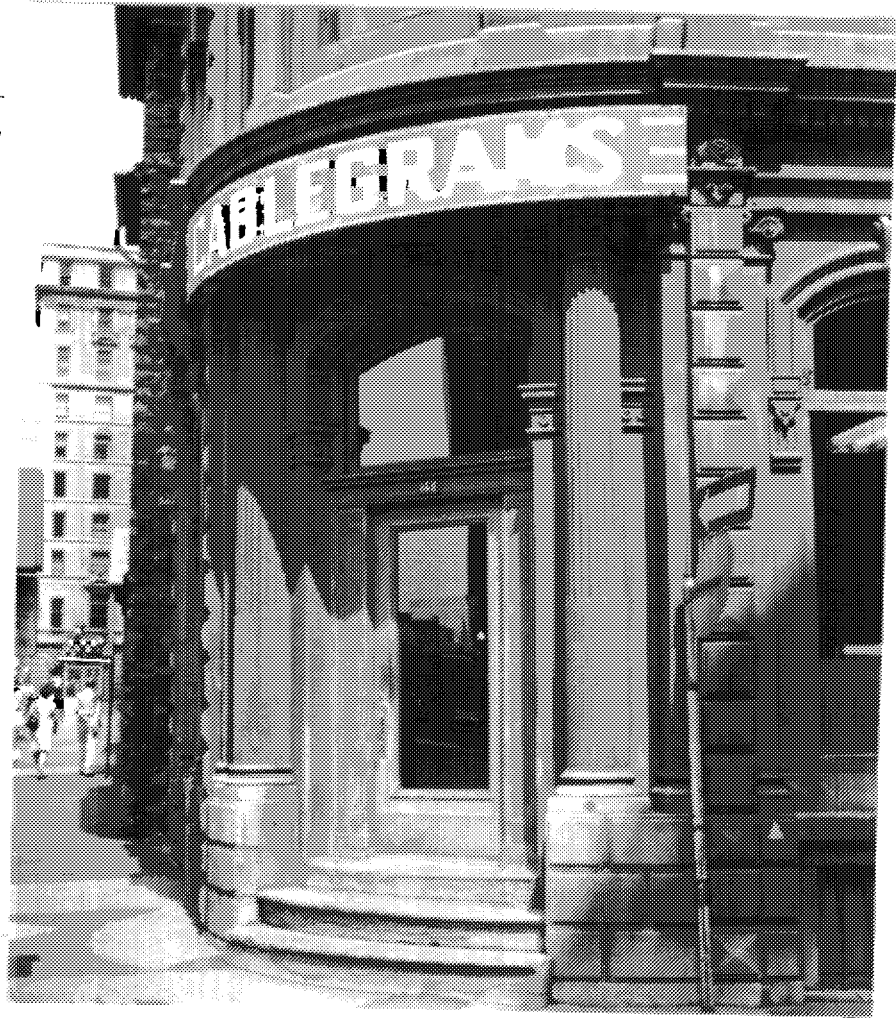
19 Dominion Telegraph House, Peace River, Alberta; constructed ca. 1916. (CIHB, EC-CPS 1976.)



20 The old cable office, North Sydney, N.S.; apparently purpose-built in 1873. (CIHB, EC- CPS, 1972.)



- 21 Former office of Anglo-American Telegraph Co., 140 Notre Dame W., Montreal, Québec; constructed ca. 1875. (CIHB, EC-CPS, 1970.)



- 22 Canadian National Telegraph and Cable Office, Otterville, Ontario; constructed ca. 1876 for Port Dover & Lake Huron Railroad. (Canadian National, 1967. [copy on file with CIHB, EC-CPS].)



### **3. K.T.M. BUILDING**

Third Ave. north of Princess  
Dawson, Yukon

#### **INTRODUCTION**

The K.T.M. Building is a false-fronted storey-and-a-half structure (9.7m x 19.4m) with corrugated iron cladding on its sides and roof (Figures 1, 3). Probably constructed in 1899, it was in poor condition when Parks began restoration in 1979. So many components had to be replaced, in fact, that very little of the original fabric remains. During renovations, cases for window displays oriented to pedestrians on the street were created in the front room, formerly a shop front. Behind this, a large space was fitted with shelving and climate controls for KNHS artifact storage. Current plans call for a more public use of the building - something reasonably compatible with its long-term use as a warehouse of the K.T.M. Company. For this association with one of the Klondike's most important mining service businesses, the building was put on HSMBC's high-priority "A" List in 1967 and thus has the status of a National Historic Site. The FHBRO board, however, may want to consider if this largely reconstructed building is in effect less than 40 years old and not eligible for evaluation.

#### **HISTORICAL ASSOCIATIONS**

##### Thematic

Being illustrative of Dawson's position as a supply, service and distribution centre for the Klondike, the K.T.M. Building is strongly linked to NHPS' Theme 2(b) developed for an historical interpretation programme at KNHS. The Klondike Thawing Machine Company, after which the building is named, was one of many firms

that serviced the mining operations around Dawson. It had been operating here since 1900 at least,<sup>1</sup> supplying dredge buckets, steam shovels, and other mechanical parts used in commercial mining of the Klondike gold fields. It was also one of the first to supply permafrost thawing machines, hence its proud reference to that equipment in its name.<sup>2</sup> Such mechanized products were needed as gold mining became more sophisticated and done on a larger scale, increasingly by companies rather than by individuals using labour-intensive methods.<sup>3</sup>

As Klondike mining operations consolidated, so too did supply businesses of all types in Dawson. The K.T.M. Company was one that survived this process for a long time, absorbing the inventories and real estate holdings of other companies which found it more and more difficult to compete in a town with a shrinking market.

The K.T.M. Building of this report illustrates that consolidation and elimination process. It was probably built as a warehouse and possibly a stable early in the spring of 1899 by Henry Honnen who advertised himself in the 1901 directory as:

H.H. Honnen  
Freighter and Contractor  
Facilities for moving all kinds of  
MINING MACHINERY<sup>4</sup>

Honnen seems to have used several names for his business including "Dawson Transfer and Freight Co." - listed in the 1903 directory, but earlier evident in a 1900 photograph of the street (Figure 12). This occupation of the building did not last long, for later in 1903 it was serving as a warehouse for M. Rosenthal & Co., a grocery wholesaler. Rosenthal apparently went bankrupt in 1908 and the building became inactive until the following year when Y. Oakda, a carpenter, moved in. By 1911 Oakda was operating a machine shop here. Ownership of the building in this and the following two years is unclear, but by December 1913, the building was definitely in the hands of the K.T.M. Company.<sup>5</sup>

By this date, the K.T.M. had bought out several other firms, including R.S. Hildebrand's hardware store and J.T. Rosman's company that sold "General Hardware, Granitewear, Crockery and Ammunition." It had also acquired some building supplies for resale and a Ford car dealership. When it purchased the warehouse of this report (directly across the street from its main retail outlet), it was a general store that could quite rightly advertise itself as the "Store That Sells Most Everything." Even more products were added during and after World War I (an extremely difficult time for most other Dawson businesses), including Massey Harris and John Deere implements, and a line of domestic appliances. The KTM building, by then called the No. 4 Warehouse, would have housed many if not all of these products. Perhaps some direct sales were carried on here as well, as the building did have a storefront, probably installed in the Rosenthal grocery period.

The K.T.M.'s demise came some time in the 1920s when its owner, George Frederick Johnson, left for California. His inventory of goods was eventually bought in 1931, and his No. 4 Warehouse in 1935 by M.H. Jones of the Dawson Hardware Co. - another long-term survivor of Dawson's boom and bust days.<sup>6</sup> KNHS acquired it in 1970, refurbished it in 1979, and is now using it for artifact storage. While the warehouse was not the most important building owned by the K.T.M., it is now the only one left associated with this prominent fixture in Dawson's business and mining community for many years. Significant not only in Dawson's history, the company can also be considered more broadly as one of many that contributed to the exploitation of primary resources in Canada.

#### Person/Event

George Frederick Johnson, also known as "K.T.M." Johnson, is the person most recently associated with this building, having purchased it in 1913. As the proprietor of "The Store That Sells Most Everything" and a supplier of equipment used in the Klondike

gold fields, he would have been well known not just in Dawson but in the creek settlements of Bear Creek, Granville, and other gold mining camps some distance away. Johnson had been in Dawson since 1900 at least, and only left in the 1920s after poor economic conditions forced him to sell his assets. According to his 1938 obituary in the Dawson Daily News, he retired to Berkeley, California, and then to Pasadena.<sup>7</sup>

### Local Development

This warehouse is illustrative of two consecutive phases in Dawson's history. The first relates to the original use of the building as a warehouse/stable, the second to the building's use as a grocery and then a thriving general store.

In the earlier phase which covers the period from the spring of 1899 to approximately the fall of 1900, Dawson's downtown core was concentrated along the river on Front Street and one street back on Second. There were some buildings on the east side of Third, but beyond that, the land was a muskeg swamp and there was little further development until ground conditions were better toward the hill. Here the shacks of the miners and other individuals sprang up, soon to be joined by more substantial housing. Drainage of the swampy area was improved in the summer of 1899, and by 1900 a sewer system had been installed, thus making the land beyond Third Ave. much more attractive for building.<sup>8</sup> It was still considered to be somewhat out of the way, however, and not prime real estate.

Quite likely anticipating the improvement of this area, the K.T.M. warehouse was one of the first to appear on the west side of Third in the spring of 1899, as indicated by contemporary photographs (Figure 12). Soon this street was filled with other warehouses, stables, and mining supply businesses that gave Third Avenue its distinctive character at that time. The street itself became the main route to the gold-rich creeks with teams of horses and wagons loading up supplies from the warehouses and

wholesalers located along it.

Although Third Avenue continued as a major thoroughfare, its character had changed by 1904 (Figure 13). By then, more varied types of merchants had been attracted by upgraded services including boardwalks, electric street lights, and a firm gravel surface on the roadway. Besides, with all the land used up on the two streets closest to the river, and the new post office built at the corner of King Street and Third Avenue, this part of town did not seem so remote anymore. Some inexpensive hotels were erected and machine shops and stores opened for business. Merchants also took over some of the old warehouses, as did M. Rosenthal in what was to become the K.T.M. building. Both early and later uses of this building, then, directly contributed to the character of Third Avenue in its two phases.

## **ARCHITECTURE**

### Aesthetic Design

This building underwent a number of changes in its historic period and the resulting aesthetic qualities - now reconstructed - came about more by accident than by pre-determined design. Its origin in 1899 as a utilitarian warehouse is evident from the side and rear views, but the facade has been reworked to present a more attractive appearance to the street. Around 1903 it was given a false front with part of the roof's gable exposed,<sup>9</sup> perhaps to give the suggestion of a classical pediment (Figures 1, 13). The asymetrically positioned windows and doors have been highlighted by trim painted in a contrasting colour, and the sign and awning (correct recreations for the historical K.T.M. period) add to its lively appearance.

As a building that evolved and became a vernacular interpretation of boomtown architecture, it was a good example, comparable in spirit to the Dawson Daily News building down the street (see

Figures 1, 2; Report No. 1). Such buildings were ubiquitous in western towns and cities at the turn of the century, although most have disappeared from urbanized areas such as Vancouver (Figure 15). Some even had fine qualities of detail and proportion as in the Telegraph Annex on King Street (Figure 1; Report No. 2) and the Times newspaper building at Lloydminster, Saskatchewan (Figure 15; Report No. 1). Other purpose-built stores in Dawson had more of these latter qualities as well, including M.A. Hammell's Family Grocery. It was a building of similar front outline to the K.T.M. Building, but with details of panelling below the generously sized and symmetrically placed display windows, and a fine retractable awning (Figure 14). Even more sophisticated were Dawson's numerous two-storeyed false-fronted stores with oriel windows and other ostentatious features. Parks' foremost example of this type is Winaut's Store on Second Ave. (FHBRO Report No. 86-90). A lesser example is Harrington's Store at the corner of Third Ave. and Princess St. (Report No. 10 within this FHBRO submission).

While the K.T.M. Building is visually appealing, the structure is more an accurate reconstruction of boomtown architecture than a restoration of the type. It therefore is not as authentically representative as examples which have more historic fabric intact, as in the Dawson Daily News (Report No. 1 within this submission).

#### Functional Design

As a warehouse type, this building cannot compete in functional quality with the large example still extant on Fifth Avenue, originally owned by the N.C. Company (see Report No. 6 within this submission). Rather, it is a better example of a converted building, similar to the Dawson Daily News (Report No. 1) but with less historical fabric intact.

It is thought that the building's main transformation from an open warehouse to a building that also had a storefront occurred

in 1903 when it was leased and subsequently bought by M. Rosenthal who advertised:

M. Rosenthal & Co.  
Wholesale  
Groceries, Hay and Grain and  
all sorts of PRODUCE  
Goods stored and sold on commission<sup>10</sup>

Groceries were likely displayed in the windows and a sampling of produce set out on the boardwalk under the awning as was the common practice in Dawson at the time. A partition separated the public business area in front from the large storage area to the rear (Figure 2). Access to this latter space was by way of north side doors (Figure 5), evidently large enough for wagons to load and unload. Heating was apparently done with wood-fueled stoves and heaters, and there was electric lighting.

The false front with horizontal wood siding was in place by 1904. By 1905, fire inspection reports indicated that the vertical boards on the north and south sides were covered in corrugated iron (compare Figures 3 and 4). This material found favour in Dawson, presumably for its low cost, ease of handling, fire retardant qualities, and effectiveness against the weather. The K.T.M. Company seems to have done little to change the building except to have its own sign painted on the façade.

Structurally, the building was typical in its balloon framing, similar to that in other small- to medium-sized warehouses located along Third Avenue around 1900 and later (log construction no longer being the only option as before). Wall sills simply rested on the surface of the ground - the reason for subsequent rotting.<sup>11</sup>

In the 1970s, when Parks temporarily moved the K.T.M. Building next door (Figure 9) to prepare a gravel bed for a new foundation on the original site, it was found that not only had extensive rotting occurred in the lower extremities, but most other parts

of the building were cracked and extremely brittle from long exposure to Dawson's harsh dry climate. The rear section was considered unsalvageable, and was not replaced when the building was moved back to its site. Although Parks had hoped to retain a good deal of the framing and façade cladding at least, new material almost completely took the place of old, and only a few original studs remain in place. More recently, the open area behind the front shop area has been insulated for climate control and fitted with shelving for Parks artifact storage. There are no major partitions in this space, making it potentially useable for any number of purposes.

#### Craftsmanship and Materials

With Parks' remodellings and earlier renovations carried out on the building, there is virtually no original workmanship visibly remaining. As Richard G. Stuart has pointed out in his report, Three Structural Histories:

In the absence of extant recordings, virtually nothing about building techniques or technology can be determined. The fact that this was constructed early in Dawson's history when materials were scarce and of low quality, yet has survived suggests some craftsmanship on the part of the builders but little else can be inferred.<sup>12</sup>

Elsewhere, Stuart's remarks that its survival was due to "chance" and to "association with the K.T.M. Co." are perhaps more accurate, for little out of the ordinary in the way of craftsmanship and materials can be detected from available evidence of this building.

#### **ENVIRONMENT**

##### Site

The building's site relationship is fairly close to the original, although there have been some changes. It was probably the first and only structure on this property. Earliest photographs dating to the spring of 1899 show it isolated on the east side of Third



Avenue in the block between Queen and Princess. By 1900, according to Figure 12, there was a small heated log shed attached to the north side (now gone). Other evidence suggests there was fencing, presumably to contain the horses owned by Henry Honnen and his Dawson Transfer and Storage Co.<sup>13</sup> In a photograph of 1901, several other small sheds had been erected within the compound but these too disappeared as more substantial buildings were subsequently built nearby.<sup>14</sup> By 1904, the boomtown façade was in place and the west part of the building became a shop front oriented to the boardwalk by means of display windows and two sets of doors - one double and one single. Orientation to Third Avenue before this time appears to have been through a front door no bigger than the current double ones. This could have been used for the conveyance of bulk materials to waiting wagons.

The current relationship of the façade to the street is much like it was after 1904, i.e. a shopfront with display windows to catch the eye of passing pedestrians. There is now more exposure to the flanking sides than in the 1904 period, however, due to loss of neighbouring buildings (compare Figures 11 and 13). In fact, this aspect of the site integrity is closer to the 1900 period (Figure 12). A large parking lot that includes part of the property recently vacated by the town's fire department makes the north side much more visible. The south side is in full view of patrons staying at the neighbouring Eldorado Hotel. Thus, although there have been changes in the building's site and immediate environment, aspects of the building's character from both the 1900 and the 1904 periods have been retained.

### Setting

The K.T.M. Building reinforces the present character of the area with which it is associated. There are a number of restored or renovated historical buildings nearby, including KNHS's Harrington's Store at the northwest corner of Princess and Third, the Red Feather Saloon at the southwest corner of this

intersection, and others further south on Third. In fact, the K.T.M. is within one of the three clusters of development proposed in the 1977 KNHS Master Plan.<sup>15</sup> Privately owned heritage buildings in the immediate vicinity amplify the area's character as well, including the Westminster Hotel directly across the street. During renovations and expansions of this 1901 hotel, the K.T.M.'s main store (built in 1904 to replace an earlier one destroyed by fire) was incorporated and now serves as a cabaret bar.<sup>16</sup> Neighbouring buildings on the same side of Third are not as compatible. Parking lots on either side of the K.T.M. are bordered on the south by a two-storey hotel, of fairly recent design and vintage, and on the north by the former firehall. The alignment of all these structures is not uniform, with street set-backs of varying distances.

#### Landmark

This building is familiar to Dawson residents, being on a major thoroughfare and across the street from a popular bar. Most visitors to Dawson are probably familiar with it too, as it is on the route of Parks' guided tours and is clearly marked as a place of interest on tourist maps. Awareness of the building would be heightened if it were open to the public and this is currently being planned by KNHS.

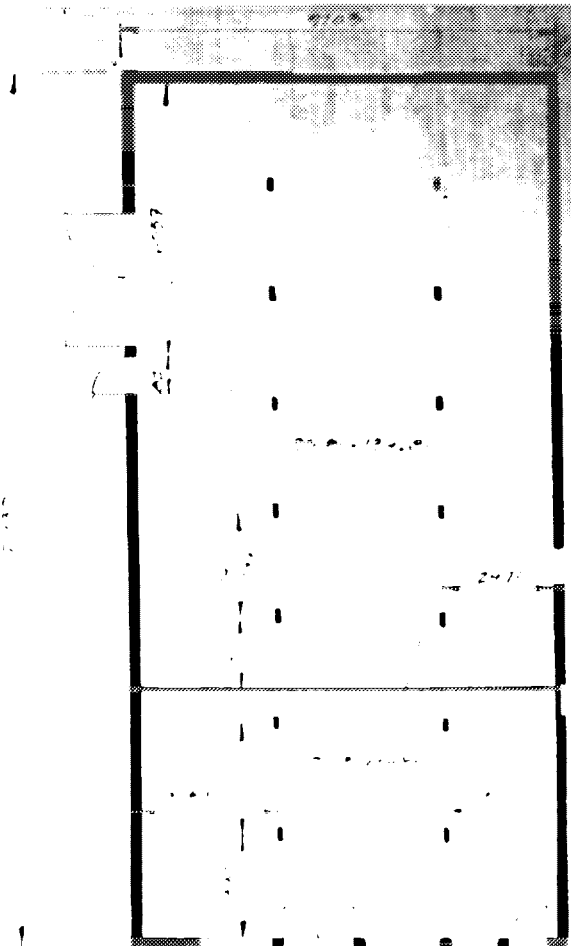
Endnotes

- 1 Richard G. Stuart, Dawson City: Three Structural Histories, Microfiche Report No. 383 (Ottawa: Canadian Parks Service, 1980), p. 96.
- 2 See Norman R. Ball, "The Development of Permafrost Thawing Techniques in the Placer Gold Fields of the Klondike," Research Bulletin No. 25 (Ottawa: Canadian Parks Service, 1975).
- 3 Staff Report, "The Development of Gold Dredging Operations in the Yukon," Historic Sites and Monuments Board of Canada, Agenda Paper 1967-15, pp. 125-26.
- 4 Cited in Stuart, op. cit., p. 90.
- 5 Ibid., p. 96.
- 6 Ibid., p. 98.
- 7 Ibid.
- 8 Margaret Archibald, "Grubstake to Grocery Store: Supplying the Klondike, 1897-1907," pp. 53-66, Canadian Historic Sites, Occasional Papers in Archaeology and History, No. 26 (Ottawa: Canadian Parks Service, 1981).
- 9 Stuart, op. cit., p. 93.
- 10 Ibid.
- 11 This and the following information in this paragraph were supplied by Robie Van Rump, KNHS Heritage Recorder, KNHS, during site visit, 29 July 1988.
- 12 Stuart, op. cit., p. 86.
- 13 Ibid., p. 89.
- 14 Ibid.
- 15 Klondike National Historic Sites Master Plan Preview (Ottawa: Canadian Parks Service, 1977), p. 8.
- 16 S. Anderson, "Summary Record Report, K.T.M., Dawson City, Yukon Territory," Architecture and Engineering Services, Public Works Canada, Dedicated Unit, Environment Canada - Canadian Parks Service, 1971, p. 1.

K.T.M. BUILDING, DAWSON, YUKON



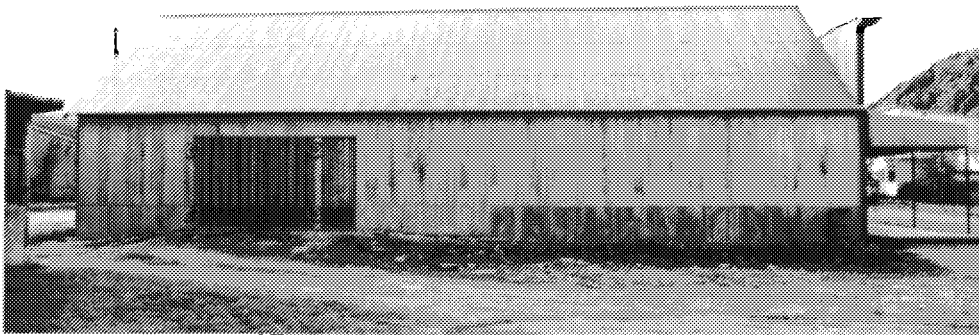
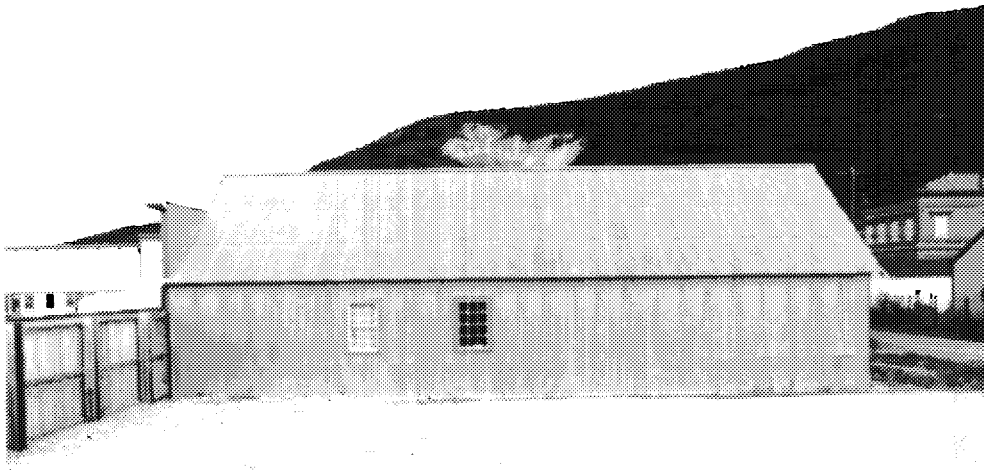
- 1 K.T.M. Building, Third Ave. north of Princess, Dawson, Yukon; constructed in 1899 as a warehouse for H.H. Honnen; shopfront spaces were probably installed in 1903 while occupied by M. Rosenthal, wholesale grocer; signage probably in place by 1913 under ownership of the K.T.M. Co. (KNHS, EC-CPS, 1987.)



GROUND FLOOR PLAN

- 2 Floor plan of K.T.M. Building. (KNHS, EC-CPS, 1987.)

K.T.M. BUILDING, DAWSON, YUKON

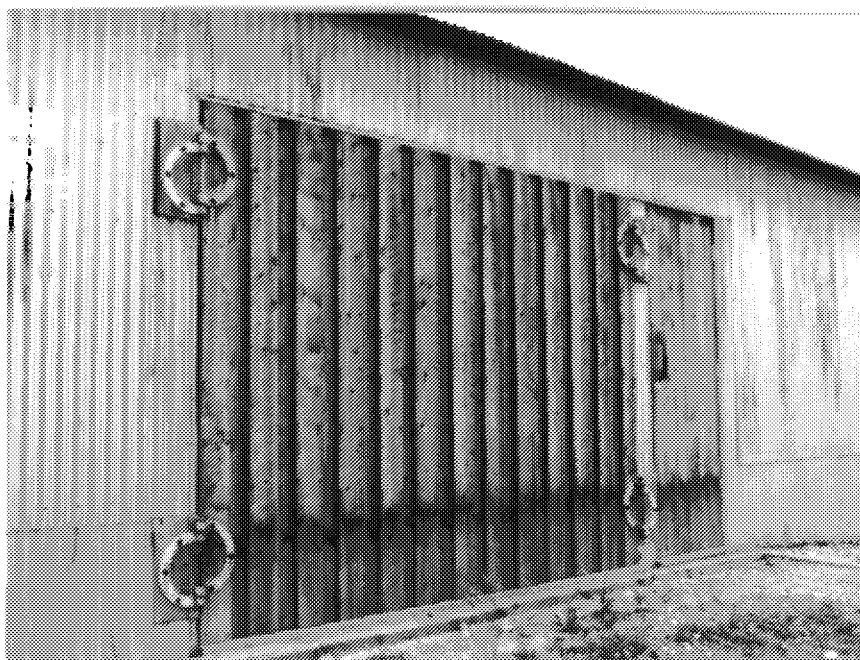


- 3 Three views of K.T.M. Building: north side and façade fronting Third Ave. between Queen and Princess streets (top); south side from parking lot of Eldorado Hotel (middle); north side from former fire hall (bottom). (KNHS, EC-CPS, 1987.)

K.T.M. BUILDING, DAWSON, YUKON

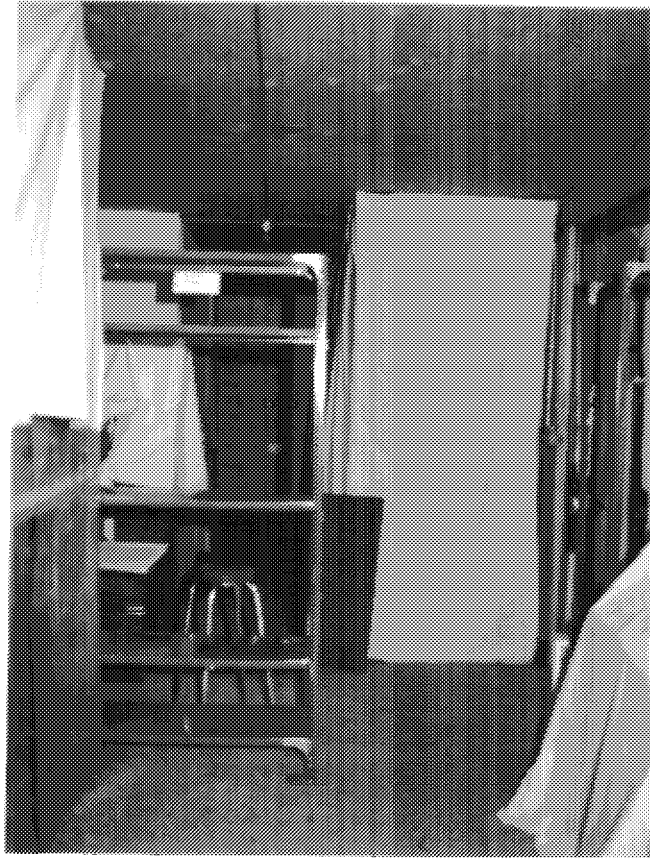


4 Rear view of K.T.M. Building. (KNHS, EC-CPS, 1987.)



5 North side door of K.T.M. Building. (J. Mattie, AHB, EC-CPS, 1988.)

K.T.M. BUILDING, DAWSON, YUKON



- 6 K.T.M. Building; interior view from rear of back room. Space is fitted with shelving for KNHS artifact storage. (KNHS, EC-CPS, 1988.)

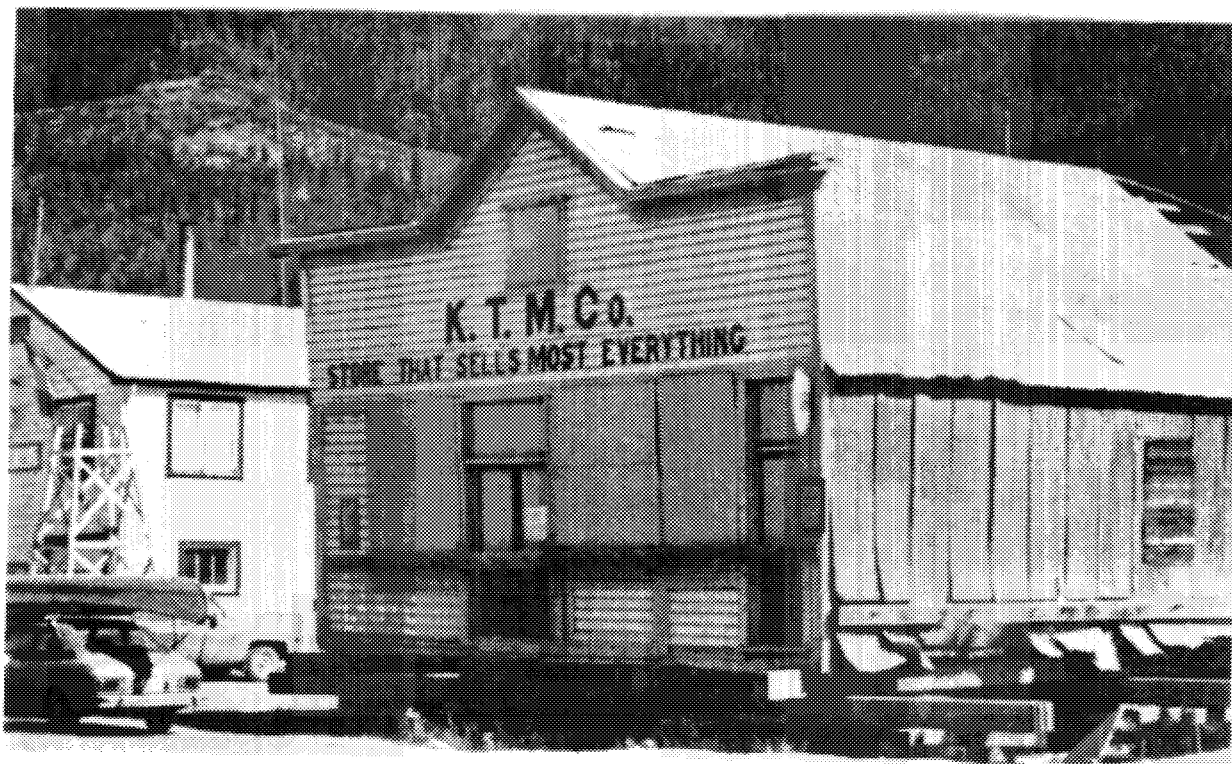


- 7 K.T.M. Building; interior view of front room. Note cases for front window displays (right). (KNHS, EC-CPS, 1988.)





8 K.T.M. Building ca. 1960. (Dawson Photo Collection, HRB, EC-CPS.)



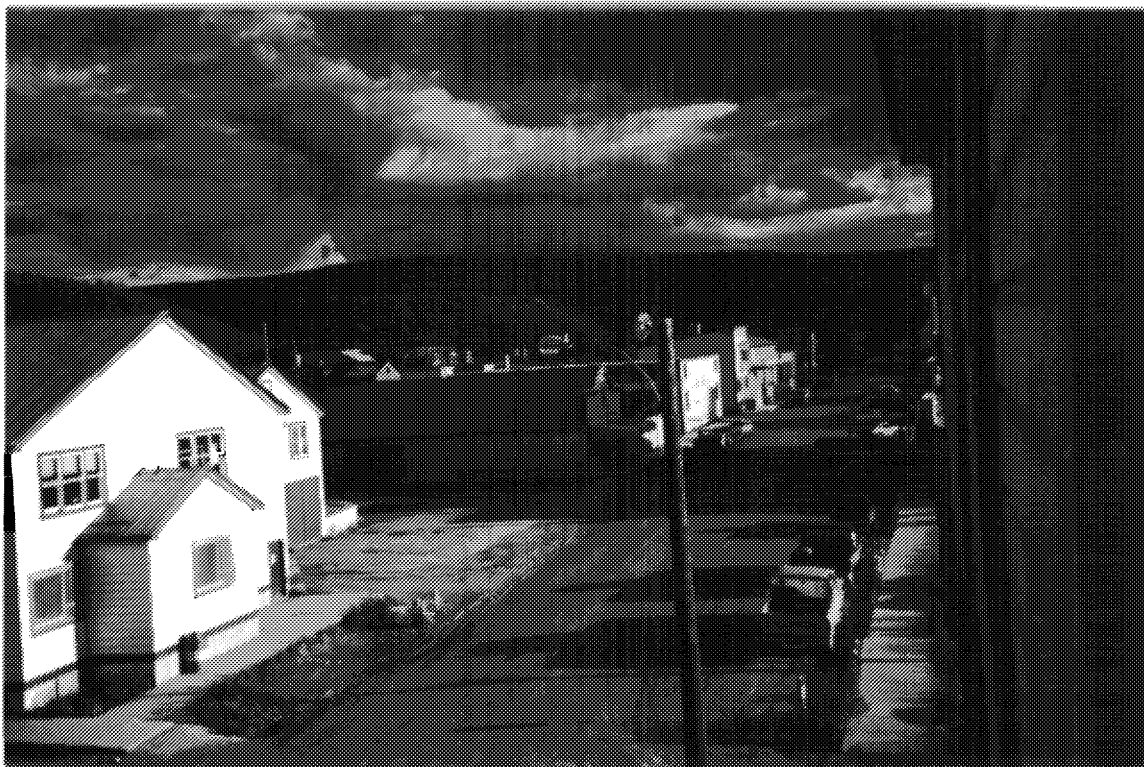
9 K.T.M. Building, ca. 1976. Structure has been lifted off original site and temporarily placed on adjacent lot in preparation for new foundation and restoration work. (Stan Cohen, The Streets Were Paved With Gold. Missoula Montana: Pictorial Histories Publishing Co., 1977, p. 117.)



K.T.M. BUILDING, DAWSON, YUKON



10 K.T.M. Building (left); west side of Third Ave. (right).  
(J. Mattie, AHB, EC-CPS, 1988.)



11 Third Ave. south from Queen St. From left: government  
liquor store, former fire hall, K.T.M. Building, Eldorado  
Hotel. (J. Mattie, AHB, EC-CPS, 1988.)

K.T.M. BUILDING, DAWSON, YUKON



- 12 Third Ave. south from Queen St., 1900. K.T.M. Building is the one at left with "Dawson Transfer and Storage Co." sign. (NA/AN - PA17145.)



- 13 Third Ave. south from Queen St., probably summer 1904. Arrow points to K.T.M. Building; core of galleried three-storey building on right survives as part of the refurbished Westminster Hotel (see Figure 10). (Dawson Photo Collection, HRB, EC-CPS.)



14 M.A. Hammell Family Grocery, possibly on Second Ave. between King and Queen Sts., ca. 1904. (Dawson Photo Collection, HRB, EC-CPS.)



15 Stores on Dupont St., Vancouver, British Columbia, 1904. (Vancouver's First Century. A City Album. 1860-1960. Vancouver: J.J. Douglas, 1977, p. 58.)

#### **4. BANK OF BRITISH NORTH AMERICA**

Queen St. at Second Ave.

Dawson, Yukon

#### **INTRODUCTION**

This classically pedimented wooden building is a national historic site that represents banking in the Klondike (Figures 1-4). Banking here was an extremely important institution for it embodied a number of functions crucial to the development of the Yukon economy. This included purchasing and marketing the gold bought directly from Klondike miners; ensuring use of a Canadian currency in a territory so overwhelmingly populated by Americans; and advancing credit to Dawson merchants who had to acquire huge quantities of goods to last the winter months.

When the HSMBC's first-choice Bank of Commerce on Front St. proved to be unavailable for commemorative purposes, the Bank of B.N.A. was acquired to fill the "A" List gap. Restoration and reconstruction were undertaken in 1980 and some parts of the building were remodeled for modern use. Currently, the upstairs serves as housing for KNHS summer staff; the ground floor may soon be leased to the Northwest Territories, Ministry of Tourism for summer promotions. While the interior is now in excellent condition, the exterior cladding of corrugated iron will have to be replaced because of poor paint adhesion. A new product, similar in appearance but with a baked-on finish, will probably be tried.

#### **HISTORICAL ASSOCIATIONS**

##### Thematic

Through its important service of banking, the Bank of British North America relates to NHPS's Theme 2 (b), developed for

historical interpretation at KNHS, i.e., "The development of Dawson as a supply, service and distribution centre . . .". Banking done in Dawson was significant not only to local account holders, but to international money brokers, and to all those engaged in moving gold from the Klondike to world markets.

The imperatives of an international monetary system based on the gold standard were responsible for much of the Yukon's early economic development. Gold reserves for backing the issue of monetary notes were needed in expanded quantities in the prosperous late-1890s, making banks - particularly those in the United States - the prime market of the newly-discovered Klondike gold.<sup>1</sup>

The Bank of British North America acted as a broker in this market as well as a prime purchaser of gold to build up its own reserves. It was one of two banks that directly did business in Dawson, the other one being the Bank of Commerce. The former had the majority of the mining and commercial accounts and was housed in the relatively modest building of this report. The latter was favoured with the government account and was housed in a more prestigious building a short distance away. Both were linked to major policies in Canadian banking that had enormous impact on the general economic shaping of the country and on Dawson in particular.

Unlike American banks which tended to be regionalized, Canadian banks were federally chartered, controlled with fairly stringent regulations, and centralized in eastern Canada. Branches were established across the country by the 1890s, but only after careful evaluation of their potential stability. Even then, profits were not used to reinvest in local projects as in the American model, but were channeled back to head offices, primarily in Toronto and Montreal.<sup>2</sup>

The earliest banking done in the Klondike did begin along the

lines of the American system, with some of the large U.S.-based trading companies advancing credit to prospectors and miners, and accepting gold dust as currency.<sup>3</sup> Profits supported increased commodity and real estate holdings, and thus the volume of business done. Concern about this and other evidences of an overly-strong American presence in Dawson led the federal government to encourage the involvement of Canadian banks. The Bank of Montreal, which in effect was acting as the government's banker elsewhere in Canada, was not interested, however, its policy being:

. . . to establish strategic branches in the most important centres and to avoid, if possible, the unnecessary opening of branches in boom towns that would soon prove unprofitable when business conditions settled down to normal.<sup>4</sup>

The Toronto-based Bank of Commerce, on the other hand, was less cautious and was prepared to go north providing certain conditions were met, such as police protection in the transport of gold shipments. An agreement was worked out in February 1898, valid for one year.<sup>5</sup>

Meanwhile, the Bank of British North America had its eye on the Klondike and was preparing to take advantage of what it saw as a good opportunity there. Something of an anomaly within the Canadian banking community, it was chartered in Britain but had been in Canada since the early 1840s before some of the later banking patterns were in place.<sup>6</sup> By the 1890s it had expanded westward as far as British Columbia, and down throughout the United States to California. A dynamic institution, it was finely tuned to local conditions wherever it went, even though ultimately controlled by directors in London. Before arriving in Dawson in May 1898, just ahead of the Bank of Commerce, it had lined up assurances of patronage by a number of large companies doing business there.

For a long time, there was enough commercial activity and profit

margin for both banks, albeit with reduced staff in later years. Having secure financial bases elsewhere, they were not as subject to the vagaries of Dawson's mining industry as other businesses and were thus able to weather times of adversity, including substantial loss of population by 1904, and declining gold production, especially after 1914.<sup>7</sup> Although the Dawson Bank of B.N.A. was taken over by the Bank of Montreal in 1919, little changed in its operations at the time. E.O. Finlaison had become manager in 1907 and remained in that position under the new ownership until 1937. The bank eventually closed in 1968, leaving the entire field open to the Bank of Commerce which still continues to do business in Dawson.

In the early years, the two banks had performed three main functions. Paramount was the assaying of gold - a process whereby gold dust and nuggets were melted, formed into bricks and tested for purity.<sup>8</sup> Canadian bank notes were issued to the miners in exchange for the metal, thus helping to establish Canadian sovereignty in this territory so full of Americans and so close to the Alaska boundary. Other Canadian benefits were limited, however, as most of the gold was destined to be brokered in the U.S. market, the expanding economy in that country producing an almost insatiable demand for gold reserves. Being a branch of a bank whose head office was elsewhere, the Bank of B.N.A. (and similarly, the Bank of Commerce) showed little concern over the effect this was having on Dawson. It soon became apparent that the region's wealth was not remaining to develop secondary industries and long-term investment but was being moved as quickly as possible to outside markets. Dawson, which once aspired to the status of a major urban centre, was reduced to a mere producer of a commodity.<sup>9</sup>

The collection of government revenues was the second major function of the banks in Dawson - part of the arrangement in the granting of rights to operate here. When exchanging gold for currency at the banks, miners were required to pay a government

royalty. Initially it was set at 20 per cent of the gold's value, but was reduced to five per cent by 1901.<sup>10</sup> The royalty was replaced by a two-and-a-half per cent export tax in 1902, for by this time, other taxes that supported the affairs of territorial government were in place to ease the burden previously placed directly on the miner.

Standard financial service was the third main banking function, including the usual drafting of money orders and the advancement of loans. This was extremely important to Dawson merchants who had to acquire extraordinarily large inventories during the summer shipping season to last throughout the winter months. Although there was a good deal of complaint about the high interest charged (24 per cent in 1898), a federal investigation between 1902 and 1905 proved that rates were not excessive considering the banks' above-average expenses of operating under northern conditions.

All these functions and services were carried out in the Bank of B.N.A. that now remains as a key historical building at KNHS. In its earlier years, it was the place where Klondike miners brought their raw gold, had it weighed and assayed, and were reimbursed in widely negotiable monetary notes. At the same time, they paid the taxes that contributed to the funding of Yukon government services, and they conducted their usual banking affairs, as did other local residents. Except for the manager, staff lived upstairs. These were often experienced personnel from the B.N.A.'s other branches in England and Scotland. They are acknowledged to have raised the general quality of banking in Canada, not only in work done for this specific branch, but in other locations throughout the country as they eventually changed jobs and employers.

The building is the second one erected for the B.N.A. Bank in Dawson, not counting earlier temporary quarters used less than two months - initially in a front room of the "Victoria Hotel"



(Figure 16), and then in a frame and canvas tent. By July of 1898, the bank was able to move into a purpose-designed building on the same site as the one now extant. Erected by local entrepreneur Alex McDonald and leased to the bank, it was a two-storey log structure with an angled main entrance facing the corner of Second and Queen (Figure 17). Fire destroyed it in April 1899 but McDonald ensured a swift rebuilding and the present well-constructed frame building was completed by July 1899. The B.N.A. secured ownership in 1910 following McDonald's death. After the Bank of Montreal vacated the building in 1968, it was only four years until acquisition by CPS. There had been significant alterations throughout the years, but enough original fabric and evidence remained for Parks to do a restoration of known components and a reasonably accurate reconstruction of the less well documented ones (primarily in the interior). It now illustrates the early historic period of the B.N.A. Bank as it functioned in Dawson.

#### Person/Event

Alex McDonald, (? - 1909) often called "King of the Klondike"<sup>11</sup> in his day, is closely associated with this building. He was the original owner and had his own office in it from which he directed his numerous enterprises (Figures 7, 8). Once an unlettered day-labourer from Nova Scotia, he struck it immensely rich in the Klondike gold fields and went on to buy and develop property with avengence in and around Dawson. As Pierre Berton has written of this unlikely mining magnate:

His contempt for gold was quite genuine, for it was not nuggets McDonald desired. His mania for property was still unsatisfied. It was to him what champagne, dog-teams and dancing-girls were to his fellow claim-owners. He could not stop buying, but roamed further and further from the Klondike, amassing more and more claims, turning down offers of millions for what he had, always accumulating land.<sup>12</sup>

Anecdotes of McDonald's social gaffes abound, but he managed to obtain an audience with the pope, was made a Knight of St.

Gregory, was the guest of honour at countless important functions, and was called upon to be the official Dawson spokesperson on several occasions.

McDonald eventually over-extended himself in accumulated properties that plummeted in value as Dawson's fortunes crumbled. He died almost penniless in 1909. Shortly after, the B.N.A. Bank acquired title to the building it had previously only rented from him and expanded its banking area into his former office area. Parks has since restored the room and commemorated the man by hanging a reproduction of his shingle outside in accordance with its original position shown in historical photographs (see Figures 12, 18 and 19).

#### Local Development

The present Bank of B.N.A. is illustrative of the change that downtown Dawson went through following the widespread fire of April 1899. One hundred and twenty-six buildings were wiped out in this disastrous conflagration, including the earlier B.N.A. bank (Figure 17).<sup>13</sup> This had been a log structure erected in haste as were almost all the others, typifying the insubstantial boomtown that was Dawson until this time. In the rebuilding that followed, the city showed a new maturity. Structures were better built - usually frame with clapboard siding - and many had touches of elegance such as oriel windows, impressive cornices, and doorways with decorative mouldings. New municipal services were soon put in place as well, including macadamized roads, electric street lighting, and a proper sewage system.<sup>14</sup> Amendments were also made in several municipal ordinances including those pertaining to fire protection and sidewalk widths. The Bank of B.N.A. was among the first to assume its place in this more sophisticated environment. Sited at the corner of Second Avenue and Queen Street, it was in the middle of the rebuilt business district. Its basically classical appearance well suited the image of solidity and permanence the city was trying to project and it was at least the equal, if not

better in quality than new neighbouring buildings such as the Hotel Cecil across the street, (lost to another fire in 1904), and the business blocks to the west along Queen (Figures 22 and 23). Today it is one of only a handful left in this part of town from the 1899-1904 era that was Dawson's heyday.

## ARCHITECTURE

### Aesthetic Design

The Bank of B.N.A. exhibits some features of the Classical Revival style but it falls short of being a well-developed example. It does have the characteristic pediment-like gable with the central oculus ventilator that was popular at the turn of the century, and there is symmetry in the upper part of the facade (Figure 1). Otherwise, the building's exterior is more utilitarian in concept than a statement of style. Certain functional components do contribute to the aesthetic appeal, however. The two-storey corner verandah and the corner entrance are the most prominent of these; they add interest to the main mass of the building which is relatively unadorned. The chance to continue the classical theme in the verandah and entrance was abrogated in favour of simple moulded double doors with rectangular transom, and curious verandah posts, chamfered toward the point where one might expect there would be maximum thickness and strength - about five feet above the sidewalk level (see Figure 12). The effect of lightness contrasts to the building's otherwise ponderous proportions. The whole aesthetic design suggests that no architect was involved, and indeed one has not yet been found to have been associated with the planning of this building.<sup>15</sup>

Interior aesthetics are more notable, but the good quality of this is due more to fine craftsmanship and materials than to intellectualized design. It must be acknowledged too that this is reproduction work based on Parks' research. Now, as formerly, the warm rich tones of oiled wood predominate, the material

having been used for the wainscoting, ceiling, and a strikingly beautiful banking counter (Figures 5, 6). When illuminated, pendant electric light fixtures with dark green shades add highlights to the wood's glowing surfaces. Above the wainscoting, a light-coloured wallpaper has been applied - partially conforming to some of the changes effected under bank manager W. A. Hutchings in 1937.<sup>16</sup> The high grille of the original banking counter was removed at that time as well. The 1930s style renovations were not generally appreciated by customers, however, according to Hutchings:

To most of them, the old premises represented the true rock of finance, integrity, mystery and tradition. As one old-timer disappointingly said, "My, my it just looks like a cheap grocery store." Such sentiment was common. While some of the ladies congratulated me on my artistry, I felt such things were spoken with some reservations.<sup>17</sup>

Hutchings's belated assessment of the value of the bank's former traditional appearance was quite correct. It was an appearance that financial institutions generally cultivated during the 19th and first few decades of the 20th centuries. Banks were then among the most prominent and aesthetically pleasing buildings in small towns and urban centres. Their conservative classical detailing and sombre interiors finished with expensive materials symbolized the dependability of fiscal management within the walls of the institution.

A limiting factor in the B.N.A. Bank's aesthetic design was the restrictive choice of materials due to northern conditions of permafrost. This insubstantial ground condition would not support brick and stone - the materials that contributed so much to the visual quality of more imposing banks in the south. These often had fully developed classical features and were designed by some of the best architects available. Examples can be seen in Figures 24 and 27 where pilasters, arches, cornices, quoins and balustrades are evident, and both buildings are well-ordered compositions suggesting responsible conservatism and permanence.

Design restrictions due to lack of prestigious materials did not inhibit certain other minor banks from achieving some of these same qualities, however. At Champion, Alberta (Figure 25), for example, a wooden bank was built exhibiting symmetry, good proportions, and details handled with restraint. The effect is one of dignity and permanence in spite of the humble materials used. The B.N.A. Bank's rival in Dawson (the Canadian Bank of Commerce) also managed to overcome restrictions of location and materials by its choice of a pressed metal covering for its building on Front Street (Figure 26). Deeply moulded into components suggesting such features as stone pilasters, quoins, window pediments, and finials, the cladding contributed greatly to the aesthetic interest of a building which already had basic good proportions and scale. This is perhaps not too surprising considering it was architect-designed for an institution that put up many fine banks across the country.<sup>18</sup>

The B.N.A. Bank's differing style of management with head offices in London and far-flung branches sensitive to regional conditions probably influenced the type of building it would occupy in Dawson. Instead of erecting its own structure according to a national policy, it consulted with local entrepreneur Alex McDonald to provide working quarters. Certainly the results were adequate, if not outstanding.

#### Functional Design

The original functional design of the bank was obliterated in later renovations. Parks has been able to substantially recreate it, however, through study of a few early photographs, archaeological investigation,<sup>19</sup> reminiscences of former employees, and comparative analysis of contemporary banks.<sup>20</sup> Based on this, the small annex to the south was put back (visible on the building's exterior in Figures 20, 21). Here was a melting furnace of fire brick, sufficiently hot to liquefy gold at 1063° for assaying purposes. The banking services area was the largest room (Figure 9). It had a corner access from the

street and a long right-angled counter that separated the public area from the working spaces behind (Figures 5, 6). The gold cage was located at the south end of this counter, strategically located away from the space used for general banking, yet close to the assay room and to the room-sized vault.

Adjacent to the banking area and accessible through two interior doors was Alex McDonald's office (Figures 7, 8). A long narrow space with further access to the street, it was subdivided at one end for use of a law firm which advised McDonald on his many business transactions. Both law firm and McDonald had signs on the building's exterior to advertise their presence.

None of these spaces now functions as such due to Parks' fiscal restraint. The vault door has only been indicated with a wooden version and there is no assay furnace in the annex. Instead, it has been divided up to provide storage and plumbing facilities (see Figure 15). Alex McDonald's office, once eliminated in the expansion of the banking room in 1911, has also been put back into place, along with its divider to create another inner office. The entire ground floor then, has been restored in such a manner as to suggest its historical functions, while offering good and flexibly useable space for potential new tenants, especially tenants that are oriented to public service (see Figure 9 for current plan).

Upstairs, the building has been totally modernized as comfortable living quarters for Parks staff (Figure 10) - a function almost identical to that when used as housing for bank employees. Parks staff now enjoy recreational use of a relatively private wooden deck to the rear of the building in the picket-fenced back yard. Bank employees once enjoyed a similar but more public use of the corner balcony facing Second Avenue and Queen Street.

Structurally, the building is well-built - an example of balloon framing construction that included several points of diagonal

bracing to distribute loads and ensure rigidity (Figure 18). Originally the superstructure rested on a post and mudsill foundation. Widely used as an adaptation to the conditions of permafrost in Dawson in the post-goldrush era (see FHBRO No. 87-88 for detailed discussion), this foundation type has since been replaced in most KNHS buildings. Poor drainage in the downtown area had caused pooling under this and other buildings, with the result that foundation posts were rotted. Parks' solution to the problem was to raise the building, lay a new gravel surface underneath, and install a system of wooden cribs and steel jacks to support outer walls and interior floor joists.<sup>21</sup> A crawl space between ground and floor allows for ventilation, as was the case in the former system.

The building's original cladding of painted corrugated iron over asbestos building paper weathered the harsh extremes of Dawson's climate for many years. It was also a fire protective measure which likely paid off when a 1904 fire razed businesses across the street but did not spread to this building.<sup>22</sup> Replaced in later times (probably late 1960s) by aluminum siding on the lower level, and grooved plywood in the upper (Figures 14, 15), the corrugated iron was reinstalled by Parks in the restoration work of 1980. Also brought back were the exterior metal shutters which formerly functioned as window insulators. The pressed metal in the gable may have originally been chosen primarily for its decorative value, but it also functioned as a protection from weather and has remained in good condition.

#### Craftsmanship and Materials

This building appears to have enjoyed a good level of craftsmanship, although almost nothing remains of the original work. When Parks began restoration, most wooden components were found to be too brittle to save, and others had disappeared entirely. Wainscoting, mouldings and ceiling boards were all replaced on the interior.<sup>23</sup> The magnificent banking counter, resplendent with columns, finials, and deep mouldings, is a

reproduction but it gives a good idea of the quality of the original. On the exterior, the verandah was long gone and had to be completely reconstructed (see Figures 14, 15). The mass-produced corrugated iron cladding placed horizontally (rather than vertically as in most other Dawson buildings) has all been replaced too. Presumably the original did not require a great degree of craftsmanship to install, nor did the decorative pressed tin in the gables - one of the few original materials left visible in the building.

## **ENVIRONMENT**

### Site

The building's historical relationship to the street has been restored by KNHS. This has involved considerable work including the restoration of historically correct window and door openings, a replacement of the building's corrugated iron cladding, a replacement of the prominent corner verandah that was removed in the 1920s, a replacement of the rear annex, and a widening of the sidewalk on the building's sides facing Second and Queen. The back yard, which is exposed along the Second Avenue side, has changed from part of the historically important period - a period that went through several phases. A 1901 bird's eye view of Dawson shows two small gable-roofed structures in this space<sup>24</sup> and a segment of a photograph from around that period confirms some sort of building here (Figure 21). Shortly before and after this time the back lot was apparently vacant. It is now a well-kept picket fenced yard, and a ground level wooden deck abutting the building has been built for use of CPS summer personnel living upstairs. This new feature equipped with a picnic table is visible from Second Avenue but is not prominent and does not detract from the building's historical quality.

### Setting

The Bank of B.N.A. is a key building in establishing the historical character of downtown Dawson. By its early banking



associations and visual character it strongly contributes to the city's image as the scene of the Klondike gold rush and the prosperous development that followed. It is well sited at the corner of Second Avenue and Queen Street in the middle of the business district but in an area where most other buildings are not as compatible with this image. Many are newer substandard constructions or severely altered older ones (Figure 13). KNHS and the city administration are therefore quite dependent on this building (and a few others nearby such as Winaut's store, visible in Figure 11) to provide a link to clusters of additional historic sites to the east and west, along Third Avenue and Front Street. The bank's prominent flagstaff topped by a Union Jack (an exotic touch to American tourists) makes the building more noticeable from these other streets.

#### Landmark

Second Avenue is not as heavily travelled as adjacent Third Avenue and Front Street (east and west of Second respectively) so the building may not be as conspicuous a landmark as others in those locations. It is, however, interpreted as an important historic site in the visitors tour conducted by KNHS guides. It also has good signage making those people not on tours aware of its presence. Local residents and visitors do frequent the immediate area for other reasons, attracted by its small stores, ice cream stand (next door to the bank on Second), hotels, restaurants and bars.

#### Endnotes

- 1 Richard Stuart, The Bank of British North America, Dawson, Yukon, 1898-1968. A Use and Structural History, Manuscript Report No. 324 (Ottawa: Canadian Parks Service, 1979), pp. 37-38. See also Appendix C, "Gold Reserves Held by Monetary Authorities in Selected Countries," p. 85.
- 2 Ibid., p. 3.
- 3 Ibid. See also Margaret Archibald, "Grubstake to Grocery Store: Supplying the Klondike, 1897-1907," Canadian Historic Sites, Occasional Papers in Archaeology and History, No. 26 (Ottawa: Canadian Parks Service, 1981), pp. 8-33.

- 4 Stuart, op. cit., p. 5.
- 5 Edward F. Bush, Banking in the Klondike. 1898-1968,  
Manuscript Report No. 118 (Ottawa: Canadian Parks Service,  
1973), p. 6.
- 6 Stuart, op. cit., p. 5.
- 7 Ibid., Appendix B, "Value of Yukon Gold Production,  
1898-1925," p. 84.
- 8 Ibid., pp. 44-47.
- 9 Ibid., p. 39.
- 10 Ibid., p. 41.
- 11 Pierre Berton, Klondike. The Life and Death of the Last  
Great Gold Rush (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart Ltd.,  
1958), p. 83.
- 12 Ibid., p. 402.
- 13 Stuart, op. cit., p. 12.
- 14 See Archibald, op. cit., "Metropolitan Airs" - Dawson from  
1899 to 1903," pp. 53-66.
- 15 Former CPS historian Margaret Carter differs in this  
assessment, citing the fact that four architects are known  
to have been in Dawson in 1899, "any one of whom would have  
been capable of doing the job." See Margaret Carter, Bank  
of British North America, Dawson, Y.T., Banking Room  
Interior Study, 1900-1920, Microfiche Report Series 338  
(Ottawa: Canadian Parks Service Service, 1986), p. 13.
- 16 Stuart, op. cit., pp. 65-67. See also Carter, op. cit., pp.  
33-34.
- 17 Cited in Stuart, op. cit., p. 65.
- 18 The bank was probably designed by W.P. Skillings of Seattle,  
Washington, although there is a possibility that Robert  
Moncrieff was responsible. CIHB, EC-CPS documentation cites  
Moncrieff as the architect, whereas Carter, op. cit. p. 13  
credits Skillings.
- 19 Brian D. Ross and Tom M. Naughten, Entrepreneurs and  
Undertakers: Archaeological Investigations at Three Historic  
Businesses in Dawson City, Yukon. Microfiche Report Series  
339 (Ottawa: Canadian Parks Service, 1986).
- 20 Most of the historical analysis was based on the work of

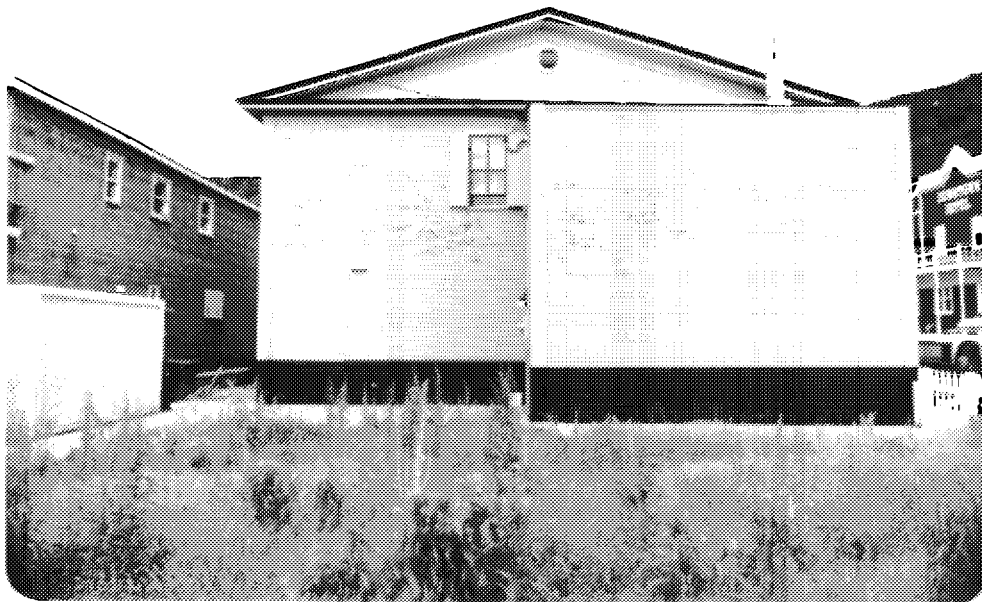
Richard Stuart (op. cit.) and Margaret Carter (op. cit.).

- 21 Information supplied in site visit with Robie Van Rumpt, Heritage Recorder, KNHS, 29 July 1988.
- 22 See photograph of devastated area taken 23 September 1904, illustrated in Stuart, op. cit., p. 175.
- 23 Information gathered by Van Rumpt and conveyed in telephone conversation, 5 October 1988.
- 24 See Figure No. 4 in first INTRODUCTION section of this FHBRO submission.

BANK OF BRITISH NORTH AMERICA, DAWSON, YUKON



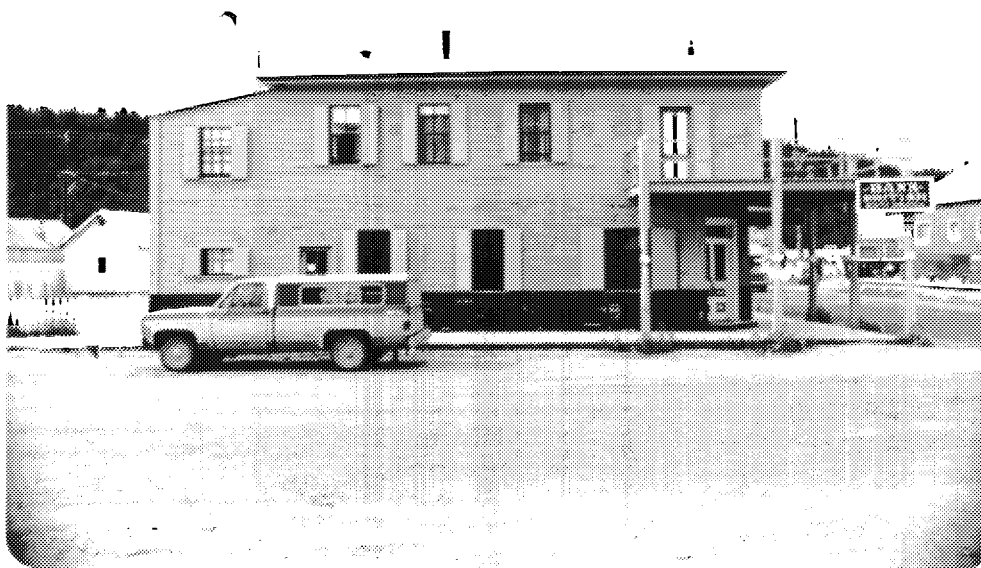
1 Bank of British North America, cor. Queen St. and Second Ave., Dawson, Yukon; constructed in 1900; view from Queen St. (KNHS, EC-CPS, 1987.)



2 Rear view of Bank of B.N.A. (KNHS, EC-CPS, 1987.)



3 Queen St. side of Bank of B.N.A. (left); Cassiar building constructed late 1950s (right). (J. Mattie, AHB, EC-CPS, 1988.)

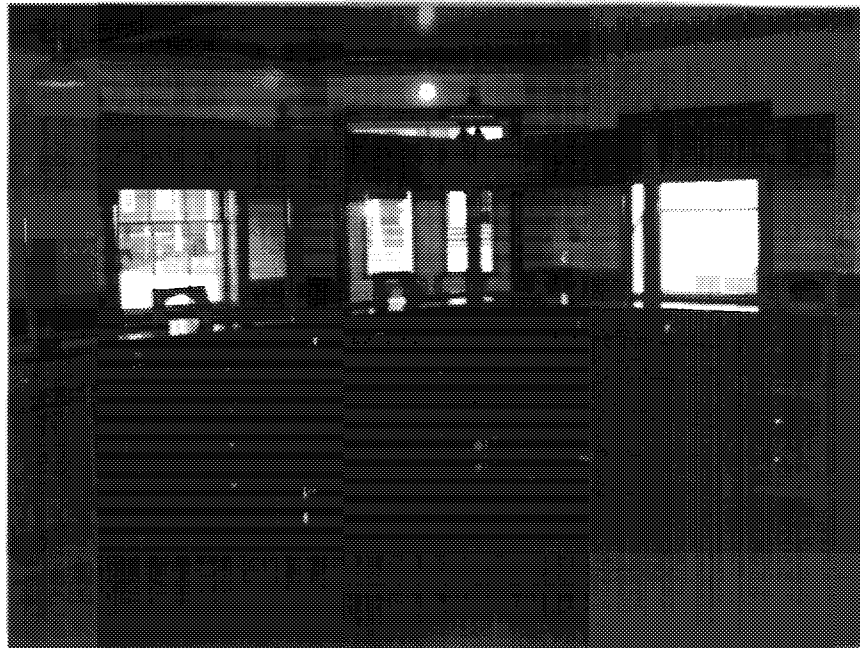


4 Second Ave. side of Bank of B.N.A. (KNHS, EC-CPS, 1987.)

BANK OF BRITISH NORTH AMERICA, DAWSON, YUKON



5 Bank of B.N.A.; banking counter looking south. (KNHS, EC-CPS, 1988.)



6 Bank of B.N.A.; view from behind banking counter toward corner entrance. (KNHS, EC-CPS, 1988.)

BANK OF BRITISH NORTH AMERICA, DAWSON, YUKON

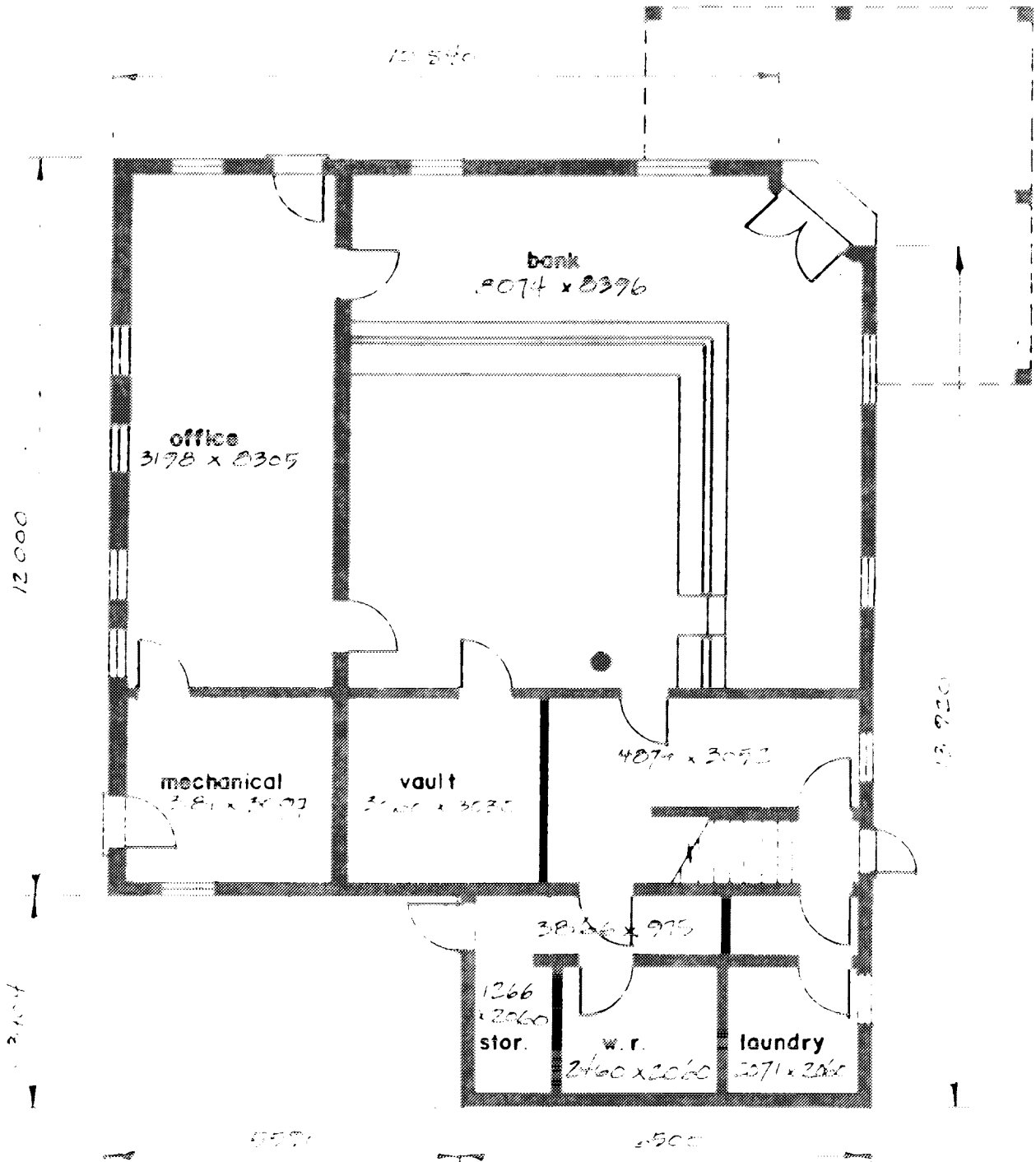


7 Bank of B.N.A.; Alex McDonald's office looking toward entrance on Queen St. (KNHS, EC-CPS, 1988.)



8 Bank of B.N.A.; view from Alex McDonald's office into banking area. (KNHS, EC-CPS, 1988.)

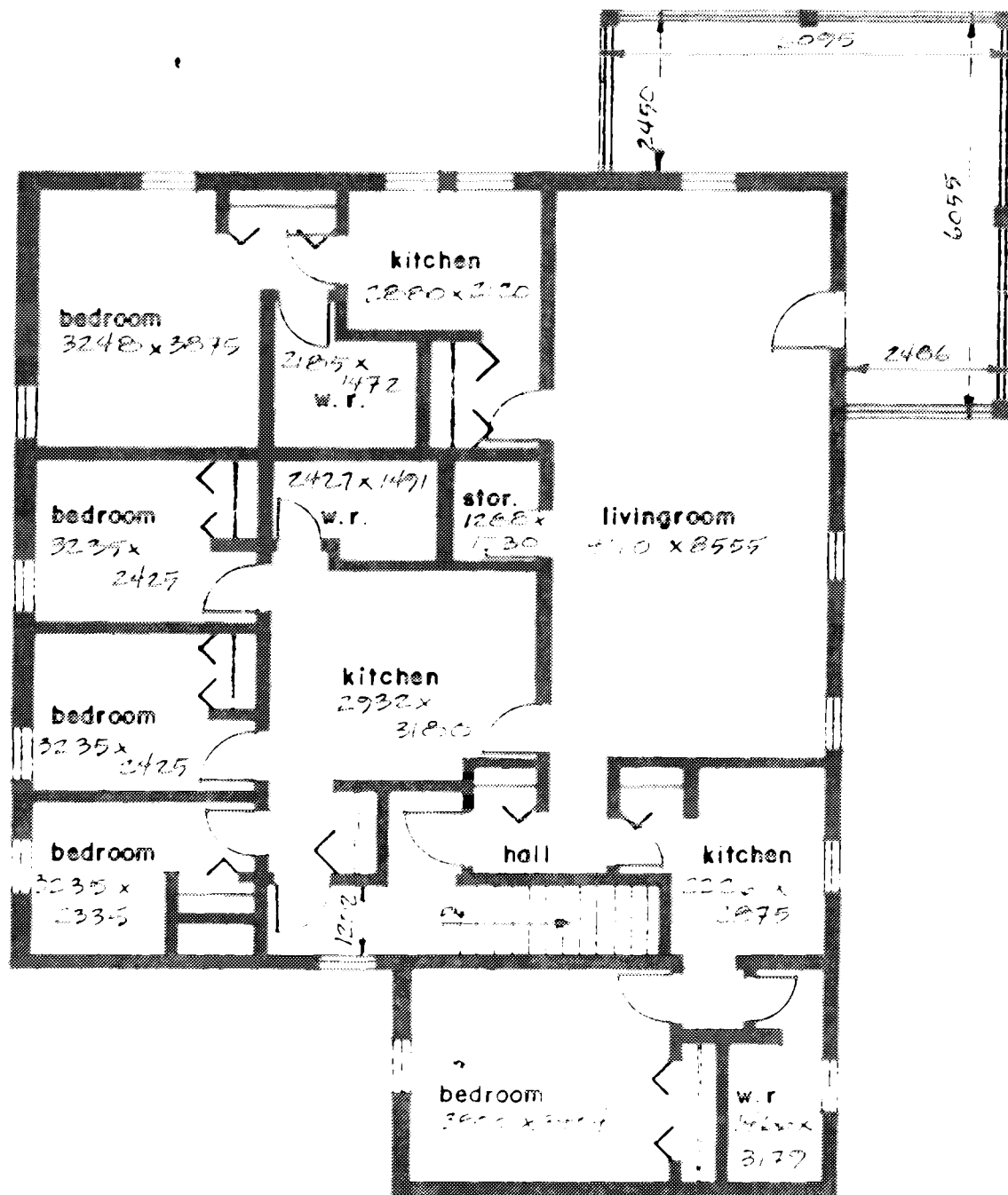
BANK OF BRITISH NORTH AMERICA, DAWSON, YUKON



GROUND FLOOR PLAN

scale 1:100





## SECOND FLOOR PLAN

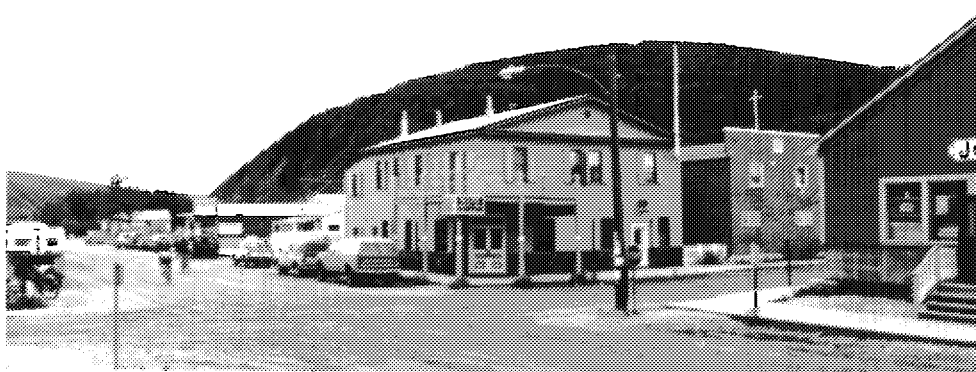
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11 Second Ave. looking north. Bank of B.N.A. on left.  
(J. Mattie, AHB, EC-CPS, 1988.)

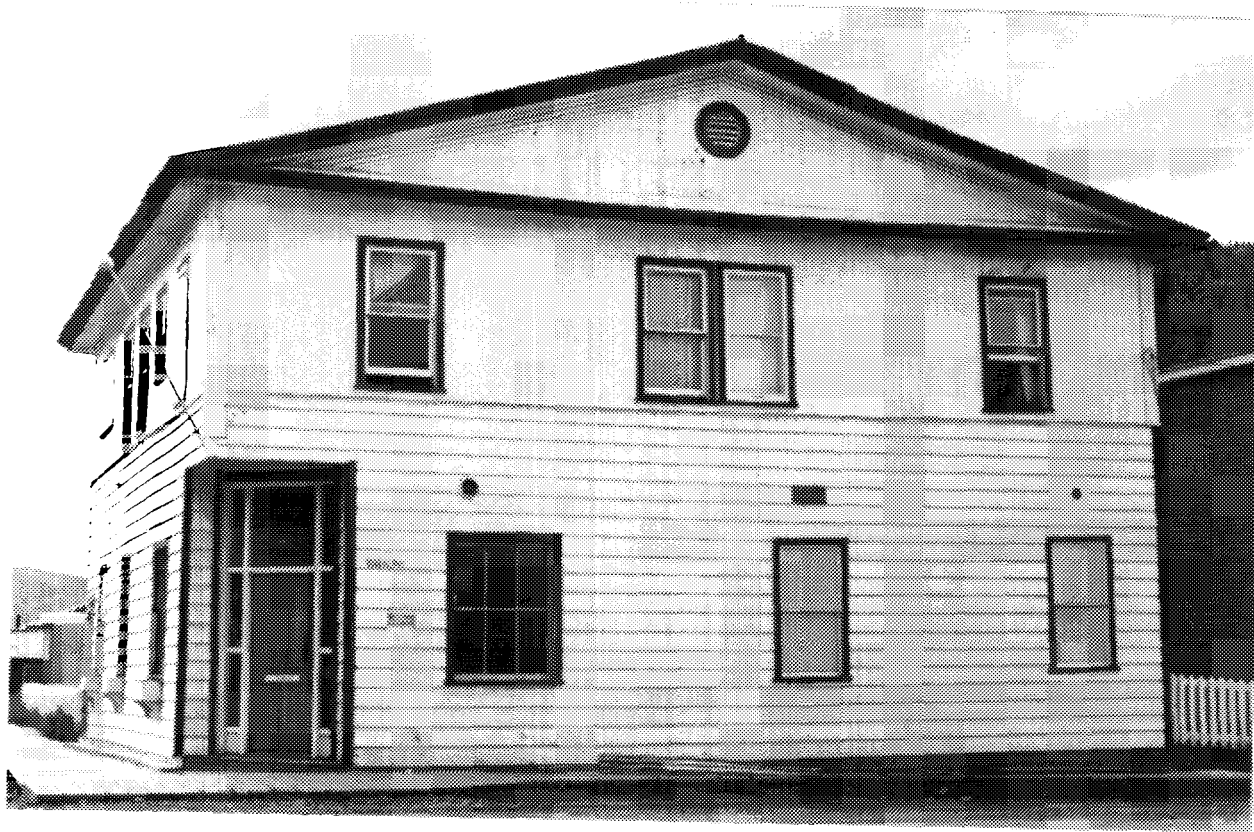


12 Queen St. looking west toward Front St. and river. Bank of  
B.N.A. on left; portion of Bank of Commerce visible in  
centre. (J. Mattie, AHB, EC-CPS, 1988.)

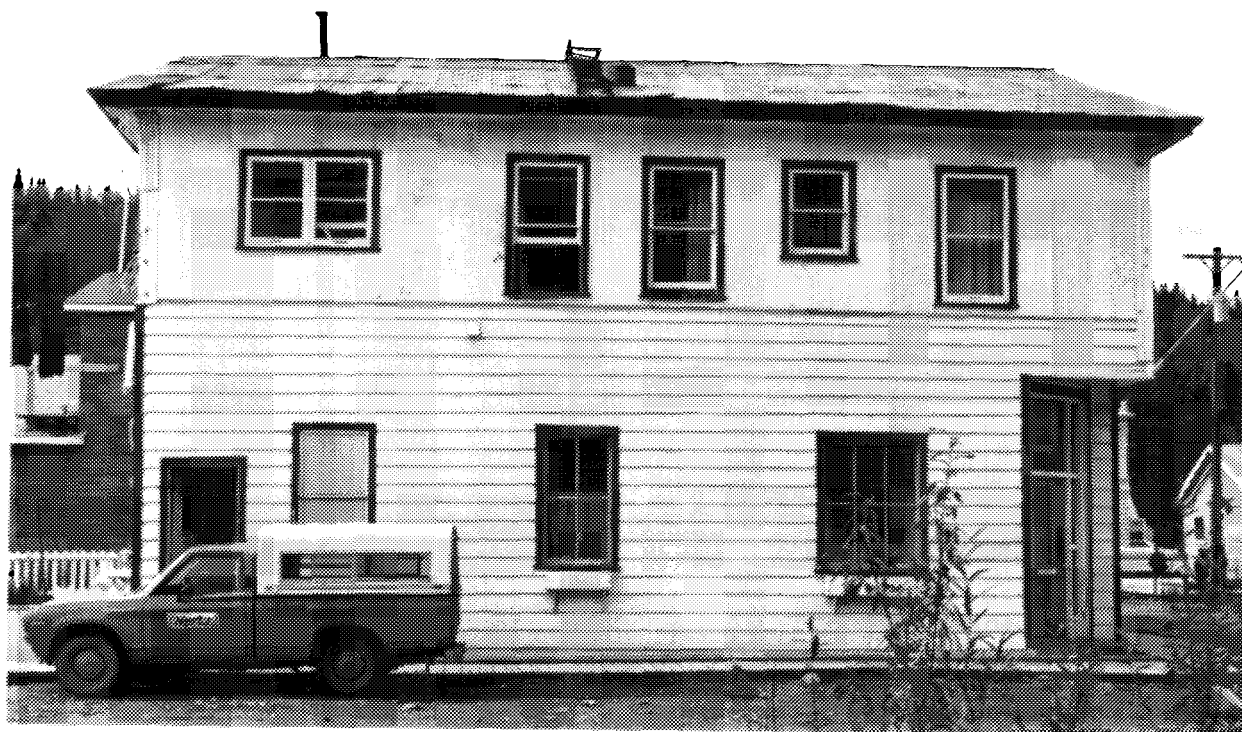


13 Second Ave. looking south (left). (KNHS, EC-CPS, 1987.)

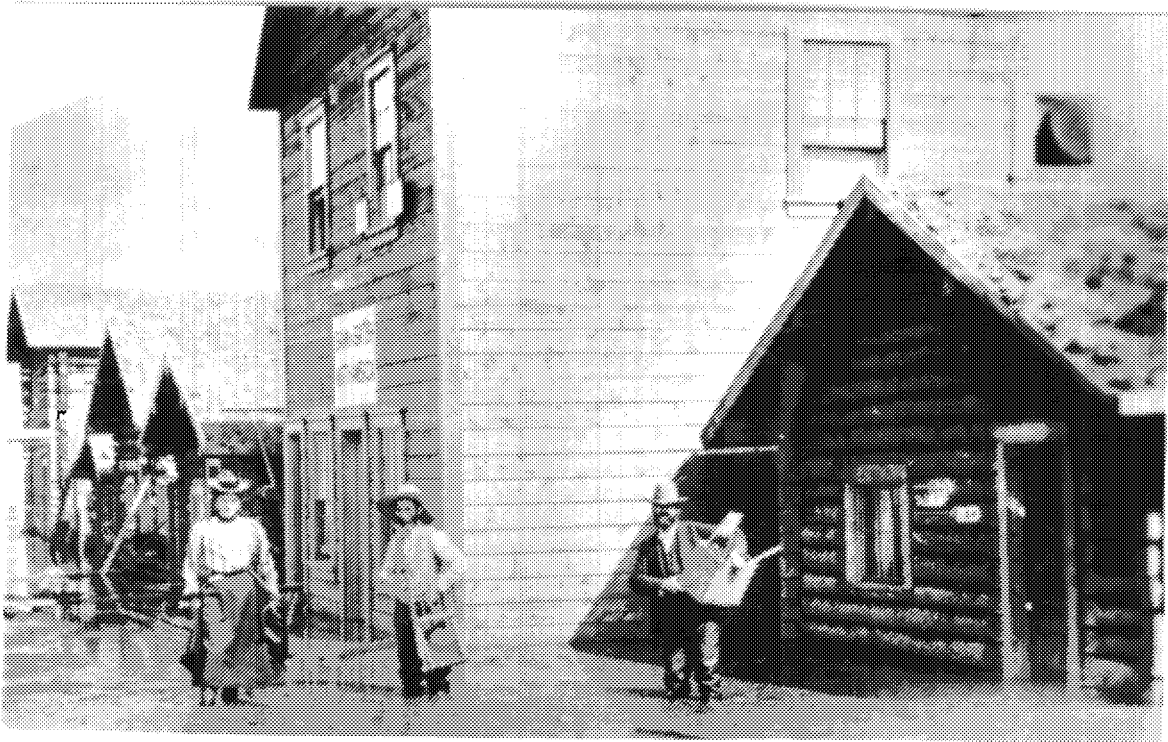
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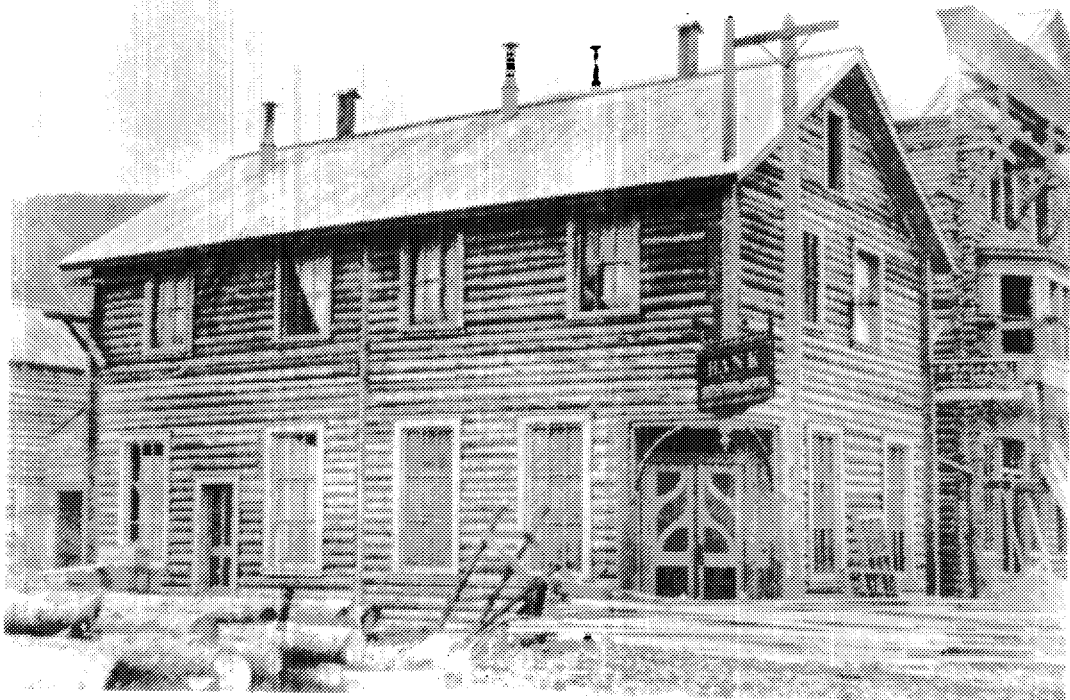
14 Bank of B.N.A. in 1973 before restoration. (CIHB, EC-CPS, 1973.)



15 Second Ave. side of Bank of B.N.A. before restoration. (CIHB, EC-CPS, 1973.)



16 Initial quarters of the Bank of B.N.A. in "Victoria Hotel", Front St. between Princess and Harper, spring, 1898. (Dawson Photo Collection, HRB, EC-CPS.)



17 First Bank of B.N.A. on the present site, cor. Second Ave. and Queen St.; constructed in summer 1898, destroyed by fire in April 1899. (Dawson Photo Collection, HRB, EC-CPS.)





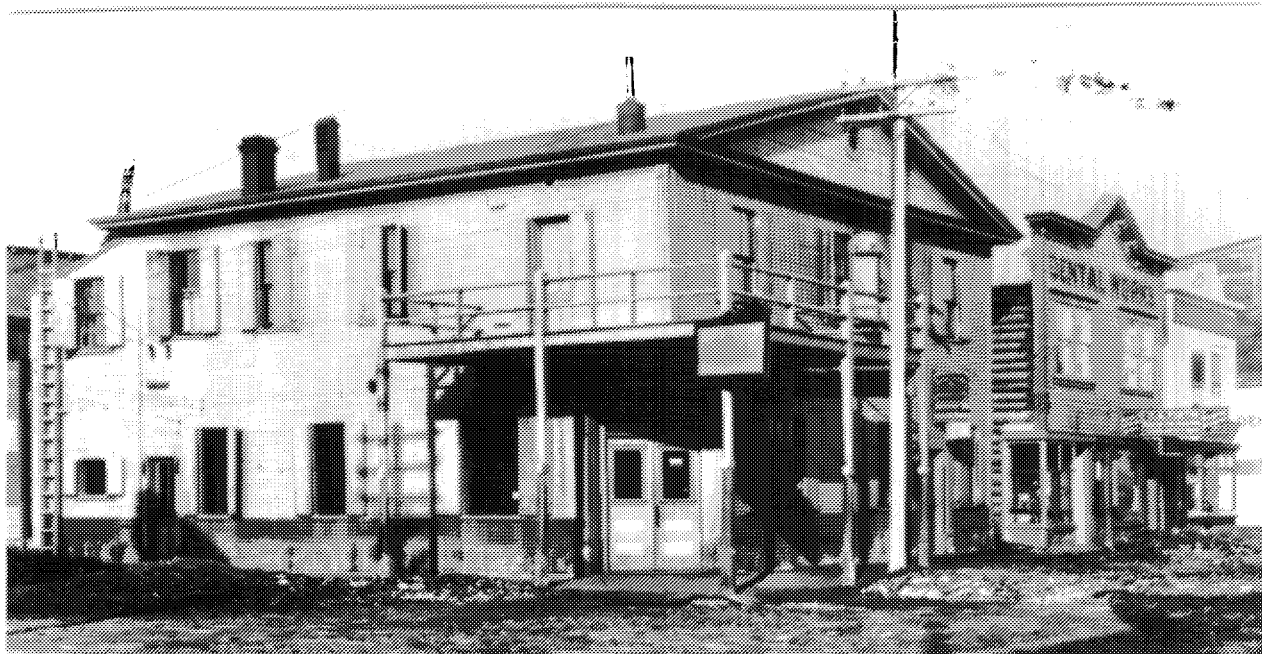
18 Bank of B.N.A. under construction in 1900. (NA/AN - C53169.)



19 Bank of B.N.A., probably in winter of 1900-01; removeable winter porch is in place, but metal shutters have not yet been hung, and bottom portion of corrugated iron has not yet been painted in a darker shade of grey. (NA/AN - C53172.)



- 20 Second Ave. side of Bank of B.N.A. in 1900. Miners and packhorses pictured after having brought a "wash up" of gold to the bank's assay office. (NA/AN - C8256.)



- 21 Bank of B.N.A., probably in 1905. (Dawson Photo Collection, HRB, EC-CPS.)



22 Queen St. west from Second Ave., July 1904; Bank of B.N.A. at left. (NA/AN - C14546.)



23 Queen St. east from Second Ave., July 1904; Bank of B.N.A. on right. (Dawson Photo File, HRB, EC-CPS.)





24 Toronto Dominion Bank, 96 Main St., Penetanguishene, Ontario; constructed ca. 1900. (CIHB, EC-CPS, 1979.)



25 Canadian Imperial Bank of Commerce, Champion, Alberta; constructed in 1906. (CIHB, EC-CPS, 1974.)





26 Canadian Bank of Commerce, Front St. at Queen, Dawson, Yukon; constructed in 1903, W.P. Skillings, probable architect. (CIHB, EC-CPS, 1973.)



27 B.C. Hydro building, 491 - 2nd Ave., Fernie, British Columbia; constructed ca. 1912 for Home Bank. (CIHB, EC-CPS, 1971.)

## **5. B.Y.N. TICKET OFFICE**

Front Street at foot of King Street  
Dawson, Yukon

### **INTRODUCTION**

This 12.5m x 9.0m wooden structure (Figures 2-4) was built in 1900 at the height of Dawson's economic boom. It is the only remnant of the city's historically significant waterfront, with the exception of the Bank of Commerce to the south (oriented more toward Front Street than the river). It is also the only remaining structure connected to Dawson's earliest and biggest trading enterprise - the Alaska Commercial Company which had been grubstaking prospectors and miners along the Yukon River since 1869. After serving as a ticket office for river traffic until 1953 and, later, aircraft travel until the late 1960s, the building was acquired by Parks in 1980 for period infill - this in spite of the fact that it had not been identified as a prime heritage resource by the HSMBC in 1967. A major study investigating its role and evolution was completed in 1982-83. Foundation stabilization and maintenance have since been carried out, making it serviceable to tenants such as the Western Arctic Tourist Association which used it in August 1988 to promote tourism along the Dempster highway north of Dawson. Further upgrading of the interior is needed to make the building more attractive as a rental property.

### **HISTORICAL ASSOCIATIONS**

#### Thematic

This ticket office is the sole remnant of what was once (ca. 1900-1919) a thriving waterfront development in Dawson (Figure 16). Warehouses, docks and gangways crowded the banks of the

Yukon River here to service the many sternwheelers and barges tied up, sometimes three abreast. These were the lifeline of the Yukon, bringing the city its voluminous quantities of supplies, the mail, and thousands of people, and carrying away gold shipments bound for world markets. Besides being important as a unique waterfront survivor, the building is historically valuable for its close association with the biggest and most influential trading company in Dawson's early years - the Alaska Commercial Company which changed its name to the Northern Commercial Company in 1901. It was the earlier version of this firm that put up the basic portion of the structure in 1900.<sup>1</sup> A rival company bought it in 1913, giving it the name that is used today - the British Yukon Navigation Company (B.Y.N.) Ticket Office.<sup>2</sup> Much had transpired in the intervening years, including a number of alterations to the building itself, and more was yet to come - indicative of the almost continuous use to which the ticket office has been put throughout most of its existence.

The A.C. Co. had been trading in the Yukon basin since 1869 so when the Klondike gold rush was set off in 1896 it was in a good position to capitalize on the ensuing demand for goods of all types and for transportation both in and out of the area. The company's established navigation route was along the northern portion of the Yukon River between the Klondike area and the Bering Sea port of St. Michael's, Alaska (Figure 1). In 1900 it had 11 steamers on the river transporting over 1,100 passengers and 6,000 tons of freight.<sup>3</sup>

The natural scouring of the riverbank along part of the Dawson townsite made for reasonably good docking up to this time, but increased traffic by 1900 demanded better facilities including temporary shelters for freight. The waterfront was owned by the crown, and at one point a major government dock and warehouse cluster was under consideration. In May of 1900, however, a decision was taken to lease space to private companies for their own development. The A.C. Co. requested and was given permission

to build on the land directly opposite its store on Front Street. A dock and a 200' long open-sided timber-framed warehouse (made secure with peripheral palings) were erected. The extreme south end of the warehouse would later become the enclosed ticket office of this report. By the summer of 1900 the dock and warehouse were functioning to capacity. In December, one of the local newspapers described the scene of the previous summer:

The docks of the company embrace all the waterfront contiguous with the main buildings, and here during the few months of navigation, the company's steamers land their immense cargoes of merchandise and passengers. At this time, the greatest activity is manifested, and hundreds of men are employed in unloading the steamers which arrive and depart with the greatest possible dispatch. Under the long shed of the dock, a steamer load is deposited, from which it is immediately rushed to the warehouse to make room for the next boat's cargo.<sup>4</sup>

As indicated, the dockside shed was not intended for long-term shelter. These more substantial storage buildings were located across the street and elsewhere. At least 10 were owned by the A.C. Co. and its successor, in addition to a large retail store and a few storage lots - greater facilities than those of any other company in Dawson.

Changes were required in the waterfront facilities soon after they were constructed. By early summer of 1901, a small portion of the warehouse was closed in, probably to create an office (this comprised about one third the space later to become the ticket office; part of its once exterior wall can still be seen as an interior partition - visible in Figure 5). This area was expanded later in 1901 (Figure 14) and then again some time between 1902 and 1910. A number of other alterations were made during and after these years as well, including re-arrangements of doors, windows and partitions. Around 1919 under ownership of the B.Y.N. Co., the building assumed the general appearance that

it now displays, having become free standing when the warehouse and dock were dismantled.<sup>5</sup>

All these adjustments to the physical quarters are indicative of changes in ownership, and in volume and type of business done here. Events in the winter of 1900-01 signalled the end of the A.C.Co.'s pre-eminent position. First there was the decline in business following the collapse of the boom in 1899, and then the completion of the railway over the White Pass between Skagway and Whitehorse. White Pass and Yukon Route which built this rail line also established a river division operating steamers from Whitehorse to Dawson and named it the British Yukon Navigation Company - the namesake of the extant ticket office under review.<sup>6</sup> The W.P. & Y.R. and its subsidiary B.Y.N. could now offer the public a shorter faster route to the outside world. The N.C.Co. with its long northwesterly passage to St. Michael's was forced to become more competitive in its rates, but still it did manage to remain profitable for more than a decade. By 1913, however, it succumbed to increasingly poor economic circumstances, selling out to the W.P. & Y.R. and being absorbed by its subsidiary, the B.Y.N.

Freighting and warehousing had decreased in volume by this time, but what there was, was handled at the W.P. & Y.R. dock just north of this building. Passenger transportation by steamer continued with decreasing frequency until 1953 when the removal of the territorial capital to Whitehorse eliminated sufficient demand. This ticket office and the platform around it served as the point of departure for the many passengers leaving Dawson and for the few coming to it in those latter years of the city's economic decline. In the 1920s the building began to see additional use as an airline ticket office when the W.P. & Y.R. established a new air division.<sup>7</sup> This subsidiary eventually changed hands a number of times, coming under Canadian Pacific Airlines at one point (1941). The ticket office remained in use well into the 1960s, at times serving passengers arriving and

departing by way of float planes on the river. Bankruptcy of a small airline successor which owned it in 1980 made it available for purchase by KNHS. As the only building left pertaining to the early waterfront transportation theme in Dawson, it filled a major gap in Parks' historical resources. Lacking the financial backing to interpret the theme, however, Parks has been leasing the building to other users serving the public.

#### Person/Event

There is no known person or event directly associated with this building, although the structure has been the scene of much fanfare marking the comings and goings of prominent people.<sup>8</sup>

#### Local Development

The B.Y.N. Ticket Office uniquely illustrates several phases of Dawson's development. A short time before it was built, the city's waterfront was undeveloped. The southern portion near the conjunction of the Klondike and Yukon rivers was a beach along which scows and rafts were pulled up, having carried stampeders downstream from Whitehorse to Dawson (Figure 13). North of the beach the water was deeper and sternwheelers were able to tie up in some places. It was in this area that the beginnings of the ticket office went up in 1900. The original construction components that have survived, are linked to the height of Dawson's economic development in 1900. At that time the city's waterfront had begun to be crowded with many passenger and freighting facilities, none of which remain save this example. Also beginning around 1900, Front Street (bordering the east side of the building) was built up with some of Dawson's finest structures and served as the city's main thoroughfare (Figure 17). Only the Bank of Commerce farther to the south joins the B.Y.N. Ticket Office as an architectural remnant of the waterfront from that era.

In its current free-standing state of detachment from the long-gone open shed, the building illustrates the further

metamorphosis of Dawson into a "has been" where the city's one-time biggest carrier and supplier could no longer survive for lack of business. Even so, the building is symbolic of the fact that by 1900 the Klondike was well connected to the outside world through transportation means. Serviced by a declining number of sternwheeled steamers and then aircraft, it was not the remote outpost it had been in the late 1890s when the gold rush was at its peak.

## ARCHITECTURE

### Aesthetic Design

This building is not a notable example of architectural aesthetics for it was never intended to be so. Evolving haphazardly from part of an open-sided warehouse built in 1900, it only became a separate unit around 1919 and its components were primarily functional. There appears to have been no regard for the continuity of line across the building's street-side front where double doors to the north are substantially lower than the windows and single door to the south (Figure 2). Nor is there any symmetry or rhythm to the structure's openings on the other sides (Figures 3, 4). In spite of the lack of pre-meditated design the building's exterior is reasonably attractive and its widely overhanging blue roof is actually quite striking, especially from the river (Figure 11). Inside, the building has almost no architectural merit at all (Figures 5-7).

Although it had certain functional spaces in common with other purpose-designed transportation facilities of the late 19th and early 20th centuries, the ticket office cannot begin to compete in aesthetics with most of them. Many are among the finest buildings in major cities, and even unpretentious ones in small centres are usually of better quality. The 1885 railroad shed built at the terminus of the C.P.R. in developing Vancouver was a building similar in several respects to that of the B.Y.N., but

it had stick-style roof brackets that were attractive as well as functional; it had an elegant elliptical arch in the building's overhanging shelter to the west; and its overall proportions and relationships were harmonious (Figure 19). The small train station built at Prudhomme, Saskatchewan ca. 1905 was essentially functional as well, but it had a better rhythm to doorway and window openings, its roof brackets were shaped, and the overall reposeful lines were emphasized in two horizontal bands of wooden strips set low on the building's walls - all consciously aesthetic elements (Figure 18). The wooden ferry terminal at Dartmouth, Nova Scotia (ca. 1910) employed traditional architectural features to achieve a different aesthetic effect: it was entirely symmetrical and had classically-derived pilasters, cornices, keystone arches and small pediments over windows (Figures 20, 21). The B.Y.N. building shares only the functional intentions of these other buildings.

#### Functional Design

Being a utilitarian building that grew according to need, the functional aspects of the B.Y.N. Ticket Office were adequately laid out. The outdoor platform partly sheltered by a widely overhanging roof (Figures 3, 4) and the interior's largest room provided a place for passengers to gather - similar features to those of the railroad stations and ferry terminal shown in Figures 18, 19, and 21. Like these buildings too, there was an area for ticket purchase, attached offices, a restroom, and a small freight storage area for passenger baggage (Figure 8). The current configuration of rooms is not original, of course, nor does it closely reflect the building's recent existence as a ticket office for flights that departed from an out-of-town runway. No passenger waiting area was required for that use. Rather, the structure is an accumulation of changes begun shortly after initial construction as an open-sided freight shed.

The extreme south end of the shed was closed in by 1901 and this was enlarged to the present size around 1908. Within this space



there were frequent alterations over the next 40 years or so. Perhaps the most carefully considered functional plan was brought about by renovations in 1905 judging by a report in the Dawson Daily News:

#### Ticket Office Completed

The alterations and repairs to the N.C. [sic] ticket office have been completed, and the office is one of the finest in the North.

Col. Barker, the genial agent, has the eye when it comes to arranging a transportation office for dispatch of work and neatness. The office is finished in fir, with native tint and was papered with a sky blue tint of ingrain. A long counter with wickerwork separates the lobby from the desk departments. Four large desks, all in one room, afford ample accommodation back of the counter for the deskwork.<sup>9</sup>

There is now little of this in evidence. The wallpaper is long gone leaving the unfinished under surface exposed (Figures 5, 6). There are no mouldings around windows and doors, as presumably there once were.

The building's exterior has fared better, however. The wide overhang of the roof has helped to preserve the clapboard walls. In addition, the corrugated iron on this roof was a good protective material, both against the weather and against the spread of fire from chimney sparks. The roofing on the northern portion was properly done at some point after being haphazardly put together from recycled iron scraps when the open warehouse to the north was removed ca. 1919. Since acquisition, Parks has stabilized the post and mudsill foundation, replaced some of the boards in the outdoor platform, and repainted the building according to its 1960 appearance (white walls; bright blue roof).<sup>10</sup>

#### Craftsmanship and Materials

The interior of this building has been crudely finished, at least

what remains to be seen. Doors and windows are only roughly framed. Exposed surfaces in the extreme south end appear to be an under surface meant to receive a covering of wallpaper such as described in the above citation from Dawson Daily News. This treatment was common in many buildings in Dawson where structural shifting due to permafrost heaving and melting meant that walls had to be somewhat flexible. The building's exterior shows a higher level of craftsmanship. Good milled clapboards cover all sides, and doors and windows are properly framed. However, there has been no additional decorative working of materials such as in the roof brackets. These are the plainest type possible being nothing more than boards providing bracing at an appropriate angle.

## ENVIRONMENT

### Site

The building's relationship to its site has been substantially altered, especially on its river side. Here where the Yukon River gave the building its *raison d'être*, a wide dike was built in 1987 to control the spring flooding that had been a problem in previous years (Figure 9). Whereas the water's edge was once immediately adjacent to the west, it is now about 100 feet away and cannot even be seen from the ticket office because of the dike's height. The building, on the other hand, can be viewed from a new angle - from the top of the dike. Earlier disruptions almost pale by comparison, although some of these were major too. Around 1919 the dock extending out into deep water and the attached open-sided warehouse (both built in 1900) were dismantled (see Endnote No. 5). These components of the original complex had been a hive of activity from 1900-19 (see Figure 16). After 1910, this included the unloading of heavy equipment destined for use by companies, by then mining the goldfields. A large crane facilitating movement was installed on the dock and must have been a prominent aspect of the site's appearance.

The streetside orientation of the building has not changed as drastically, although it is no longer the intermediate stage between Dawson and the river transportation system (see Figures 14, 15). Now it has closer links to vehicle transportation on Front Street. Tourists in cars, campers and motorhomes pass by and park in a lot north of the ticket office where the attached warehouse once stood (Figure 10). Underneath this lot are the remains of three steam boilers, installed in the north end of the warehouse in 1902 to provide a central heating system for N.C. Co. buildings across the street.<sup>11</sup> Adjacent to the lot on the west side is a gazebo-like picnic shelter (visible in Figure 11), high enough for users to view the river over the dike, and to see the ticket office from yet another angle.

### Setting

Visually, the ticket office only reinforces the heritage character of Dawson on the north end of downtown Front Street; for accurate historic interpretation purposes, however, it establishes the character by being the most important structure here. Two other buildings nearby are visually more impressive but they are recent constructions. One is the reconstructed A.C. Co. store across the street, the other an approximation of the old W.P. & Y.R. terminal (immediately adjacent to the south and visible in Figures 9, 10 and 12). Beyond this is the sternwheeler S.S. Keno beached on the riverbank since 1960. Although it was built in 1922, some time after Dawson's historically important period, and it never actively serviced the city, it was one of the few surviving boats of its type and was chosen by HSMB to commemorate the important role of river transportation in the Klondike (see Report No. 15 within this submission). The B.Y.N. Ticket Office ties in with this theme and thus gives reinforcement to the S.S. Keno's more imposing presence.

When seen from the river, the B.Y.N. Ticket Office does make a

fairly strong visual statement by virtue of its large and bright blue roof (Figure 11). Sight of the lower portion of the building is obscured by the dike, however, as is that of the many low-rise heritage reconstructions housing shops and restaurants along Front (Figure 12). From the river position, it would be difficult to determine whether or not this was a heritage structure, if one did not have prior knowledge.

### Landmark

The ticket office is a conspicuous sight to Dawson's residents and visitors. Virtually all tourists make their way to the Information Centre across the street, housed in the two-storey log building that is a reconstruction of the old A.C. Co. store. Guided tours of the town leave this centre frequently and the historical associations of the ticket office are verbally interpreted on the itinerary. Since Front Street is a major town thoroughfare, the building is encountered by those travelling on it for any number of reasons, including travel to and from the ferry that goes across the Yukon River. The ticket office's roof is prominently visible from the ferry and from other river craft that are such an integral part of Dawson's summer activities. It is also an easily identified landmark from two well-visited heights - the Midnight Dome above the townsite to the north, and the "Top of the World" highway leading to Fairbanks, across the river to the west.

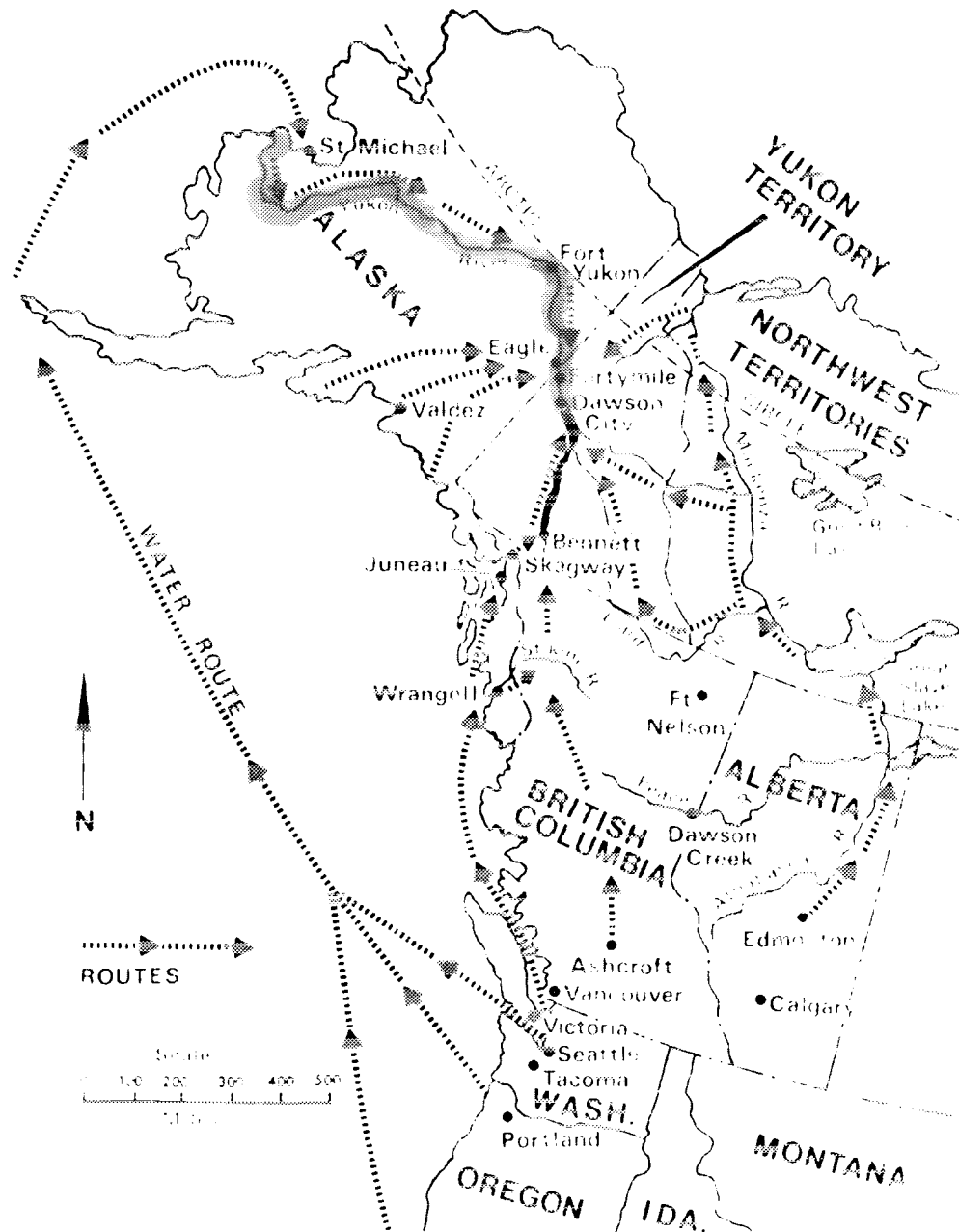
### Endnotes

- 1 See Richard Stuart and W.A. Waiser, "The great Plant of the Alska Commercial Company": The BYN Ticket Office and N.C. Co. Warehouse, Microfiche Report Series 136 (Ottawa: Canadian Parks Service, 1982-83), p. 13. For more information on the company see pp. 7-14.
- 2 For a history of this company and its predecessor see Margaret Archibald, A Substantial Expression of Confidence: The Northern Commercial Company Store, Dawson, 1897-1951 (Ottawa: Canadian Parks Service, 1982). See also Stuart and

Waiser, op. cit., "Northern Navigation Company Ticket Office," pp. 15-23.

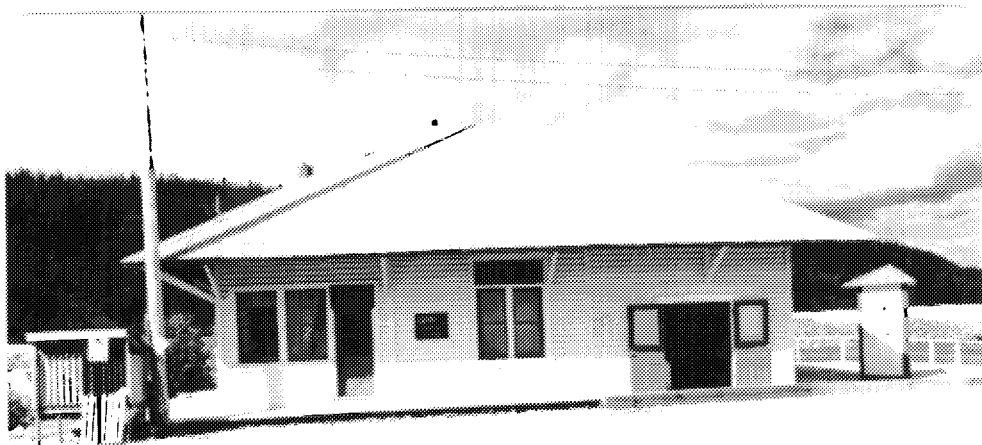
- 3 Ibid., p. 15.
- 4 Stuart and Waiser, op. cit., p. 10.
- 5 For the B.Y.N. Co. period of the ticket office see Stuart and Waiser, op. cit., pp. 24-31.
- 6 Ibid., p. 12.
- 7 Ibid., p. 29.
- 8 For this and the following period of use as an airplane ticket office see Stuart and Waiser, op. cit., pp. 32-35.
- 9 For a description of some of these events, see Laura Berton, I Married the Klondike (Toronto: Little, Brown, and Co., 1954).
- 10 Cited in Stuart and Waiser, op. cit., p. 22.
- 11 There is no evidence that this centrally produced heat ever reached the south end of the warehouse (now extant as the ticket office) where stoves were used. Information about the archaeological remains is from Robie Van Rump, Heritage Recorder, KNHS, 29 July 1988. For historical information on the boilers, see Stuart and Waiser, op. cit., p. 19.

## THE NORTH COUNTRY AND ROUTES TO THE GOLD FIELDS

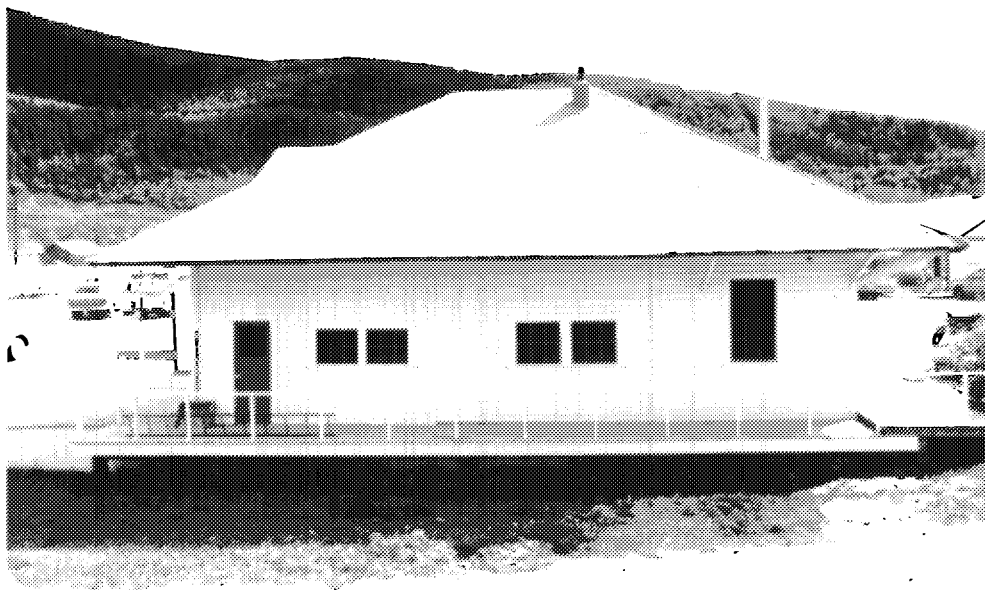


- 1 Map showing transportation routes to Dawson. The A.C./N.C. Co. had a virtual monopoly on commercial navigation between Dawson and the Bering Sea port of St. Michael, Alaska. The B.Y.N. Co., serviced the shorter southern route between Dawson and Bennett, British Columbia and then connected to the railroad between Bennett and Skagway, Alaska. By 1913 when B.Y.N. bought out the N.C. Co.'s river division, the ticket office under review was servicing the whole length of the river. (Stan Cohen, *The Streets Were Paved With Gold*. Missoula, Montana: Pictorial Histories Publishing Co., 1977, p. 17.)

B.Y.N. TICKET OFFICE, DAWSON, YUKON



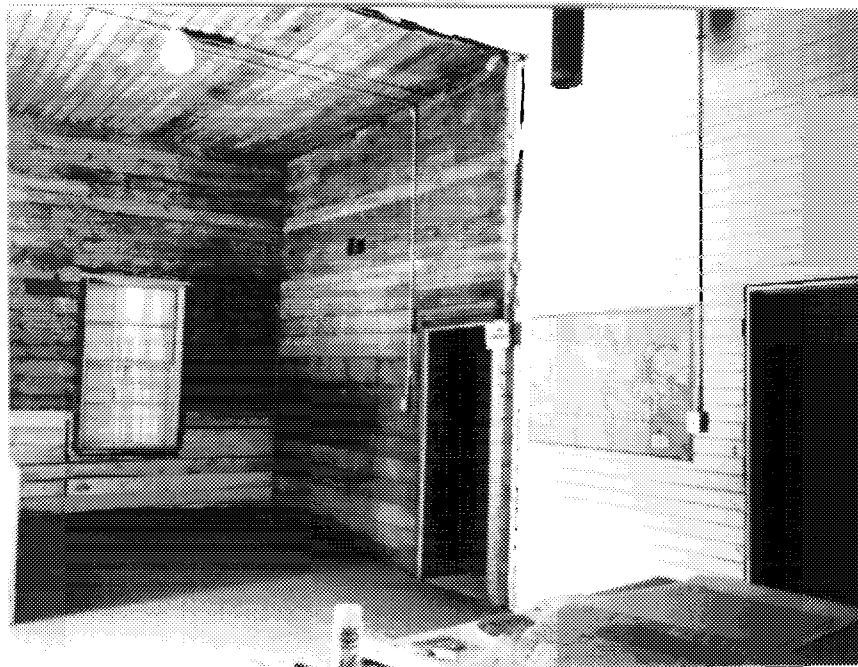
- 2 B.Y.N. Ticket Office, 1123 Front St., Dawson, Yukon; constructed in 1900 as one segment of a 200' long open shed; this south end of it comprises an area that was enclosed in 1901 to create an office, then enlarged to the present size some time between 1902 and 1910; rest of shed dismantled in 1919 and north side of this building's roof adjusted correspondingly. (KNHS, EC-CPS 1987.)



- 3 West side (river side) of B.Y.N. Ticket Office. (KNHS, EC-CPS, 1987.)

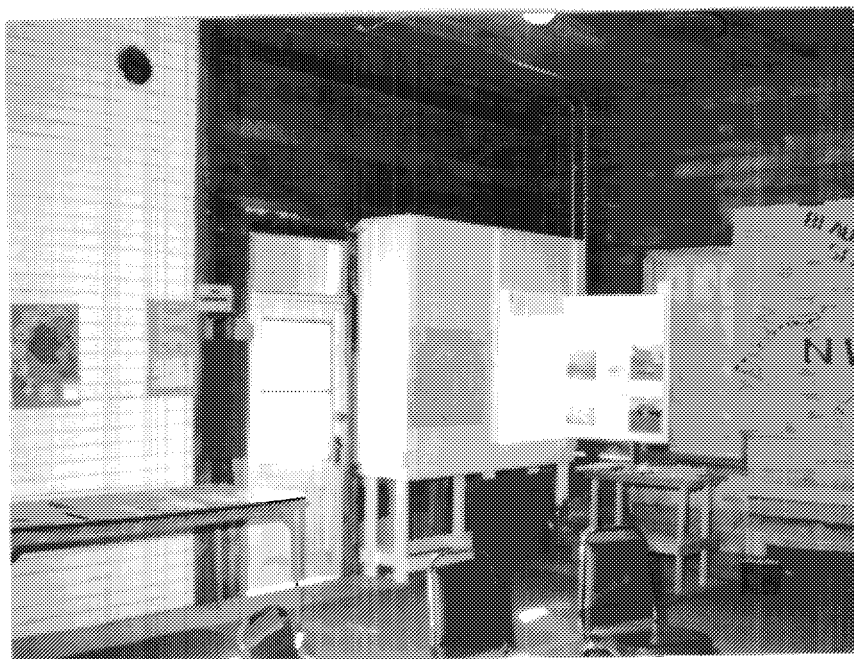


4 North side of B.Y.N. Ticket Office. (J. Mattie, AHB, EC-CPS, 1988.)



5 B.Y.N. Ticket Office interior; view toward two interior doors at rear of room rl-01 (See Figure 7). (J. Mattie, AHB, EC-CPS, July 1988.)



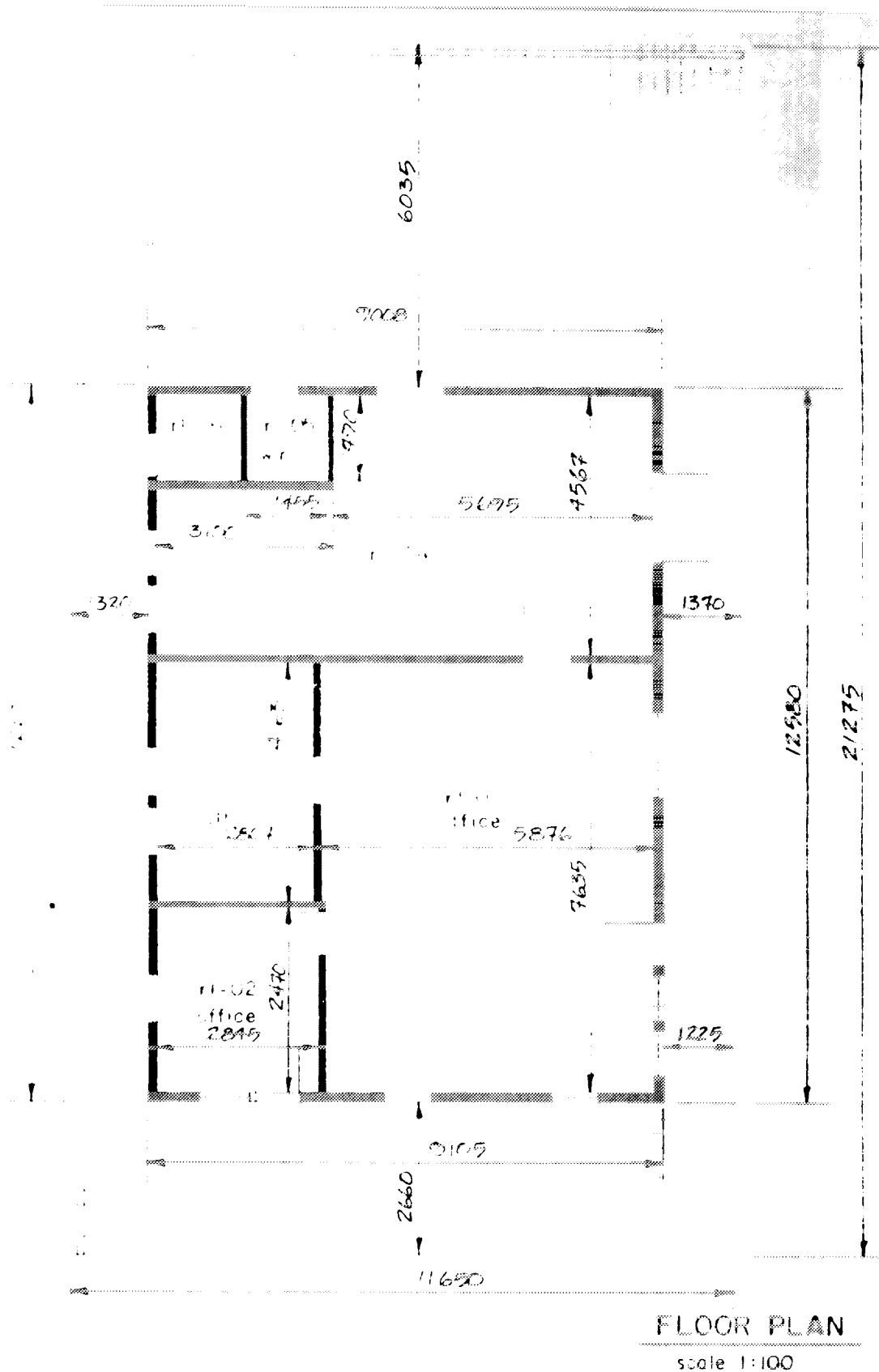


6 Room rl-01; view from back of room toward front door.  
(KNHS, EC-CPS, August 1988.)



7 Room rl-04; view from front double doors toward rear.  
(KNHS, EC-CPS, August 1988.)

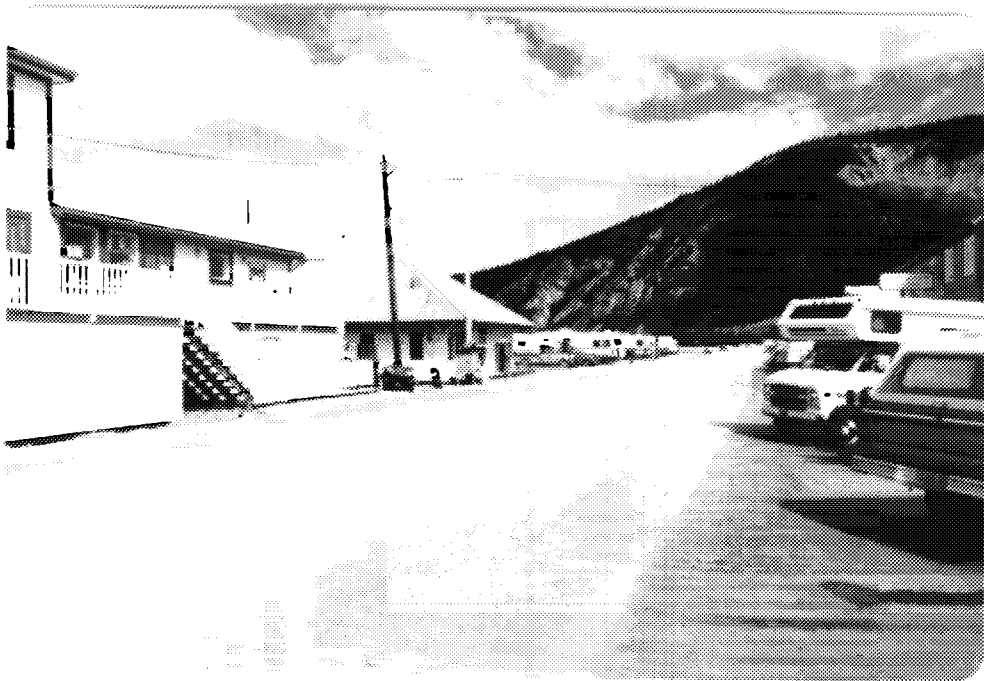
B.Y.N. TICKET OFFICE, DAWSON, YUKON



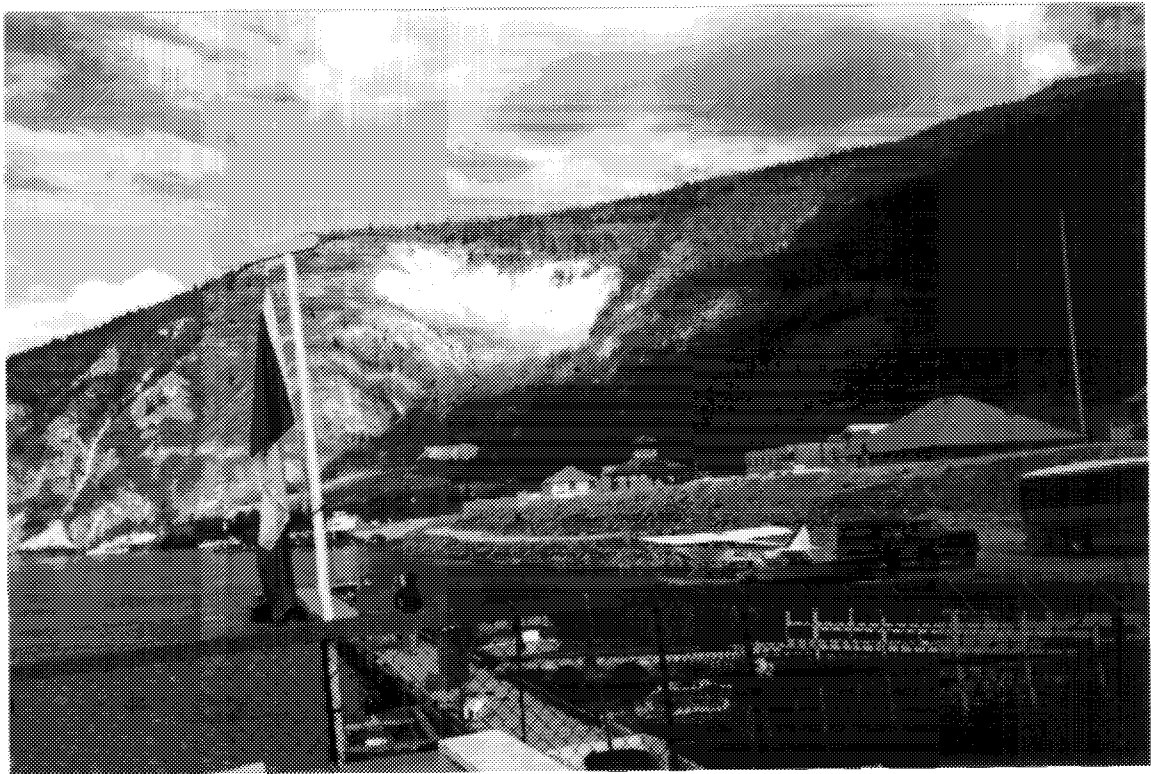
- 8 Floor plan of B.Y.N. Ticket Office (waterfront is along left side of this plan; Front St. is to the right). (KNHS, EC-CPS, 1987.)



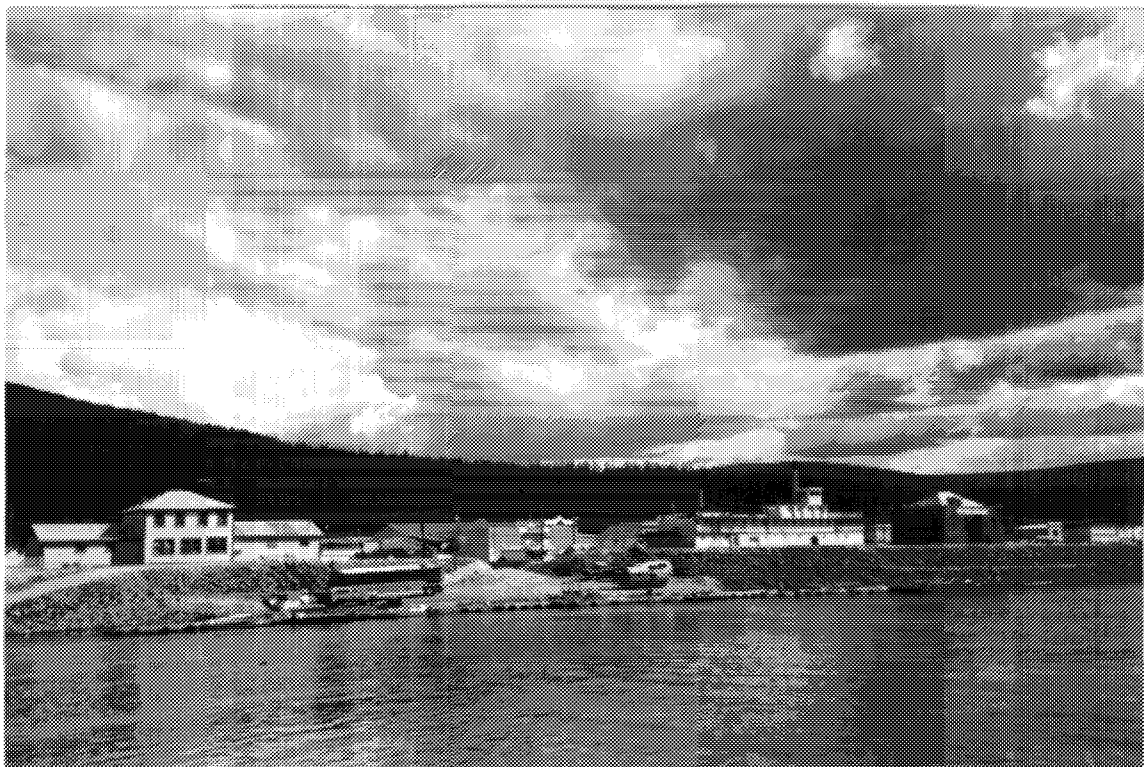
- 9 Dawson waterfront looking south, showing 1987 dike (centre and right); B.Y.N. Ticket Office (left); S.S. Keno (centre). (J. Mattie, AHB, EC-CPS, 1987.)



- 10 Front St. looking north; B.Y.N. Ticket Office (centre); parking lot beyond; Information Centre (right). (KNHS, EC-CPS, 1987.)



11 Dawson waterfront looking north; (J. Mattie, AHB, EC-CPS, 1988.)



12 Dawson waterfront viewed from Yukon River. B.Y.N. Ticket Office is out of sight to the left (north). (J. Mattie, AHB, EC-CPS, 1988.)



13 Front St. and waterfront south of B.Y.N. Ticket Office, Dawson, 1899. (NA/AN - PA16174.)



14 Front St. ca. 1902. B.Y.N. Ticket Office is second from left, beside the White Pass and Yukon Route building. (Dawson Photo Collection, HRB, EC-CPS.)





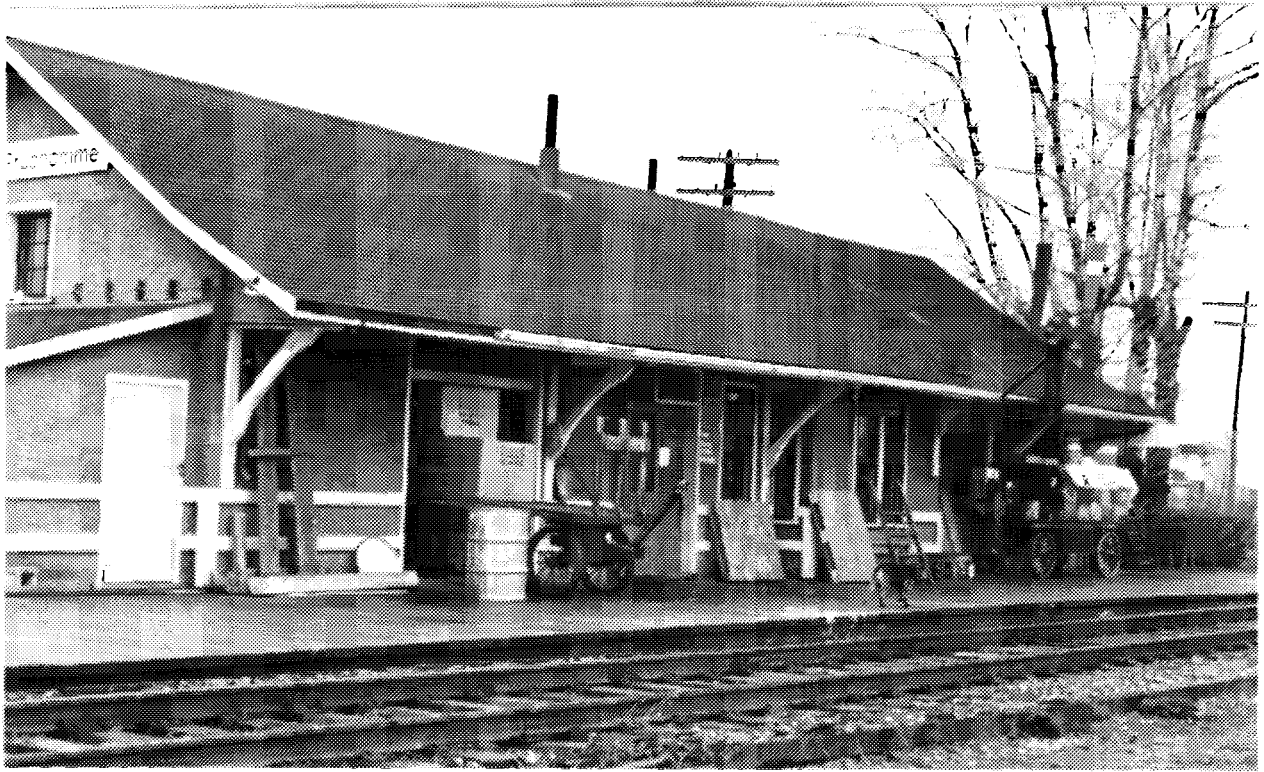
15 Front St. ca. 1902. B.Y.N. Ticket Office is second building from left. (NA/AN - PA101567.)



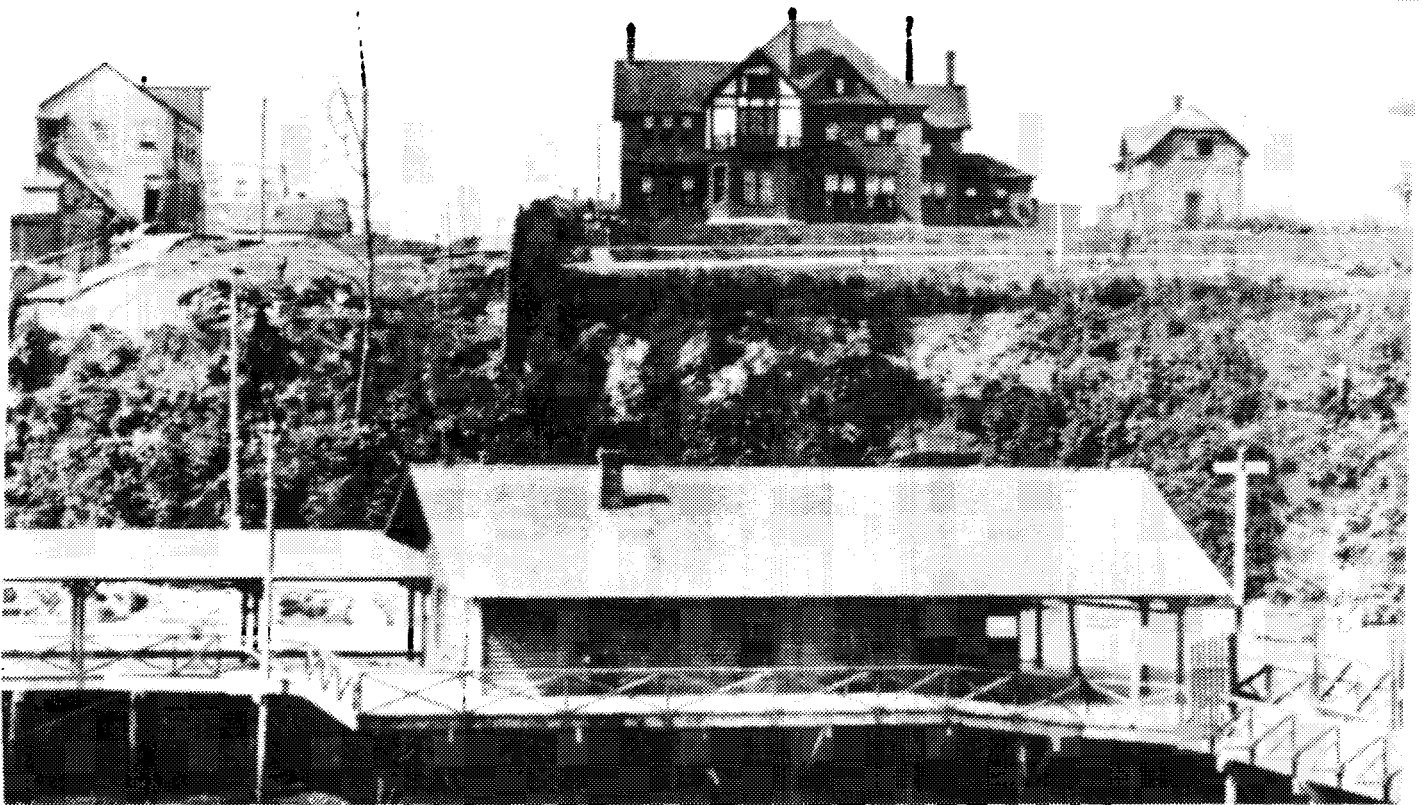
16 Dawson ca. 1901-02. B.Y.N. Ticket Office is light coloured segment of N.C. Co. building on waterfront. (NA/AN - C675.)



17 Front St. ca. 1904. Arrow points to B.Y.N. Ticket Office.  
(Dawson Photo Collection, HRB, EC-CPS.)



18 Canadian National railroad station, Prudhomme, Saskatchewan; constructed ca. 1905. (CIHB, EC-CPS, 1974.)



19 Canadian Pacific Railroad station at foot of Howe St. and beside Burrard Inlet, Vancouver, British Columbia; constructed ca. 1885. (Vancouver's First Century. A City Album. 1860-1960, Vancouver: J.J. Douglas Ltd., 1977, p. 25.)





20 Dartmouth Ferry Terminal, Alderney Drive, Dartmouth, Nova Scotia; constructed ca. 1910. (CIHB, EC-CPS, 1974.)



21 Rear view of Dartmouth Ferry Terminal. (CIHB, EC-CPS, 1974.)

## 6. ROBERT SERVICE CABIN

Eighth Avenue at Hansen Street  
Dawson, Yukon

### INTRODUCTION

The Robert Service cabin (ca. 1900)<sup>1</sup> (Figures 1-9) is a small two-room log structure (4.5m x 5.9m) which is typical of the hundreds of miners' cabins built on Dawson's hillside during and shortly after the Klondike gold rush. Robert Service, already established as a famous Yukon writer, rented and lived in it from 1909 to 1912 during which time he wrote The Trail of Ninety-Eight and Songs of a Rolling Stone. Shortly after he left, it became a local tourist attraction and eventually drew people here from around the world. It was put on HSMBC's list "A" in 1967 and was acquired by KNHS in 1970. A professional actor is now employed by KNHS during the summer to interpret the site, reciting Service's poetry and telling the story of his life. For many, this is one of the highlights of a trip to Dawson - not only because of the effective presentation, but because of the beautiful location and the rustic cabin evocative of the whole Klondike gold-rush experience.

### HISTORICAL ASSOCIATIONS

#### Thematic

The Robert Service cabin is perhaps the only building that is representative of the entire Klondike gold rush. As a simple log cabin it was typical of the abodes of thousands who came here to seek their fortunes in the great "stampede" of 1898-99. More important, however, is its association with a literary figure who encapsulated the whole Klondike experience in his poetry. Robert Service, living and writing in this cabin from 1909 to 1912, gave focus to the mythology that had grown up around the region since

news of its incredible riches was broadcast around the world, beginning in 1897. Service's poetry was known, admired, and dramatically recited by a generation of North Americans and many Europeans. Thus, an episode of Canada's history entered the popular imagination where it has remained to this day. Shortly after Service left Dawson in 1912, the cabin itself became a much-visited secular shrine, the importance of which has been described by historian Richard Stuart:

Here is the central myth of the Klondike Gold Rush, of ordinary men and women driven by a vision, overcoming insuperable obstacles, some to achieve wealth and others a sense of purpose in life, set in some of the most dramatic landscape in North America. At a prosaic level, it is difficult to take this building seriously, but at a mythic level, it becomes the cardinal feature of Dawson's history. Were the town of Dawson to disappear, yet the cabin remain, it would still contain the essence of all that is expressed by the word "Klondike."<sup>2</sup>

The difficulties Stuart has "at a prosaic level" include the reality that Robert Service did not come to Dawson until 1908, well after the historical event of the gold rush. His most famous collection of verse, Songs of a Sourdough, was written in Whitehorse in 1907 before he had even seen the Klondike. Furthermore, the cabin may not have been built during the height of the Rush (See Endnote No. 1), and its current historical integrity may be questionable, having undergone many "restorations".

All this has little bearing, of course, on the dynamics of myth in a culture, and the Robert Service cabin remains as an outstanding example of the spirit, if not the facts, of the Klondike gold rush. Such a building relates to NHPS's Theme 2(c) ("The larger impact of the Gold Rush on Canada, including the popular imagination . . . .") (see INTRODUCTION - Twenty-two Dawson Buildings, p. 4). This was recognized when HSMBC put the Robert Service cabin on its List "A" in 1967, giving it the status of a National Historic Site.<sup>3</sup>

#### Person/Event

Robert Service was an internationally known writer who brought fame to the Yukon. Born in 1874 in England, he spent his childhood in Scotland and was educated there as well. Upon graduation from high school, he worked as a bank clerk and then left for America where he spent time wandering from California to British Columbia. In 1894 when only twenty years old, he officially emigrated to Canada and became employed by the Canadian Bank of Commerce. After a number of postings throughout British Columbia, he was sent to Whitehorse in 1907. There, in his spare time, he wrote Songs of a Sourdough - a collection of Yukon verse that included the "The Shooting of Dan McGrew" and "The Cremation of Sam McGee" (ultimately his most famous ballads). It was an immediate commercial success. So much so, that by 1909, after a bank transfer to Dawson, Service was financially independent and could devote himself entirely to writing.

Leaving the bank's provided accommodations, he rented the small log cabin of this report and lived here until 1912 when he left the country. His literary production was prolific, widely disseminated, and extremely popular. In many instances, it referred to his rented log dwelling. The romantically descriptive "Good-bye Little Cabin" was written just after he left Dawson and did much to immortalize the humble structure in the minds of the public. Although he returned to Europe and settled in France where he died in 1958, Service remained "The bard of the Yukon" and was sometimes referred to as "The Canadian Kipling."<sup>4</sup>

#### Local Development

The Robert Service Cabin on Eighth Ave. illustrates two phases in Dawson's development. The first phase was the one contemporary with the structure's erection either during or shortly after the gold rush of 1898-99. At that time, commercial enterprises were

taking over most of the flat and exorbitantly priced building lots between the Yukon River and Third Avenue. Poor drainage between Third and Fifth allowed for only sparse development here. Rising up the hillside beyond Fifth, however, were the cabins and tents of the prospectors and miners - hundreds more than are now evident. By 1900 quite a number of neat frame houses were also built along Sixth Avenue and adjacent streets, with some log cabins remaining between (Figures 11, 12). In this period, the Robert Service cabin had a succession of owners and was entirely typical in its siting, construction, and use.

Later, the cabin became the most significant building in establishing Dawson as a destination for tourism. By the time Service left Dawson in 1912 he was world-famous for his Yukon poetry, and his landlady refused to rent his cabin to anyone else, wishing to preserve it as a memorial. It was already popular with tourists in 1915 according to an account in the Seattle Times which mentioned "a sentimental regard for Service's cabin."<sup>5</sup> A fundraising tea held on its grounds in 1917 by one of the local I.O.D.E. chapters further elevated it in public recognition. Crowds swarmed to the event which was reported in the Dawson Daily News:

Robert Service Tea Proves Unique Hit  
Many Turn Out And Make Pilgrimage to Bard's Cottage  
Cabin is Made a Shrine  
Happy Evening Spent Where the Muse was Wont to Hover Near

The cabin home of Robert Service was converted into a shrine Saturday evening. Scores of old friends of the Dawson bard gathered at the little log cottage made famous by the classic lines he penned within the walls. The yard was a scene of peculiar beauty . . . .<sup>6</sup>

A number of those who made the pilgrimage to Service's cabin were other writers who, with their own pens, drew further attention to it. Historian Richard Stuart has quoted from a number of these, including Charlotte Cameron, an international traveller, writer and lecturer from Britain. In A Cheechako in Alaska and Yukon

(1920) she wrote of Service and his cabin:

His was the true spirit and genius of the vast Northland; thousands of people, after reading his wonderful poems, will long to visit the country he has immortalized . . . Service's cabin is entirely rustic . . . .<sup>7</sup>

Cameron then went on to describe the cabin in great detail for her readers.

Tourism grew in Dawson over the next several decades, particularly in the 1950s when a road was completed from Whitehorse to Dawson (Whitehorse itself became more accessible in the early 1940s as it was on the route of the Alaska highway being built at that time). Attendant with expanded tourism was increasing concern over the cabin's preservation and that of Dawson's other historic structures. The Service cabin seems to have been the foremost tourist attraction, however. It was the only one mentioned in the town's small monthly newsletter in 1954 when an editorial column in Klondike Korner called for government involvement in the problem:

OTTAWA has a governmental department known as the Historic Sites and Monuments Branch, to perpetuate the memory of outstanding historical events, persons and preservation of buildings. We have a building here in Dawson that perhaps we might interest their department in preserving, namely Service's cabin. This cabin attracts hundreds of visitors yearly.<sup>8</sup>

The HSMBC did indeed take an interest in the building (and other historic ones in Dawson) and was instrumental in directing Parks to acquire it for KNHS in 1970. CPS has since carried out needed restorations throughout the 1970s and '80s. Along with other governmental and private bodies, KNHS has used the building to promote tourism in this part of the country - a key role in shaping local development and one that the building had been performing practically since the day Robert Service left.

## ARCHITECTURE

### Aesthetic Design

Log cabins generally owe their designs more to functional considerations than to aesthetic intentions. Nevertheless, most, if not all, have considerable visual appeal because of their harmony of scale and form to their usual natural environments. The Robert Service cabin is particularly appealing in this way, being well-proportioned and structurally suited to its picturesque site on a hillside above Dawson (Figures 1-6). Rustic landscaping features around it include untended willows, poplars and alders along three sides of the property, a simple fence made of sapling poles and in summer, masses of delphinium and other perennials that grow to astounding heights in the long daylight hours of the northern sun. External features of the house are picturesque too, with lush growth on the sod roof (described as "bewhiskered" by Service) and a verandah and front steps roughly framed out of sapling wood. The front door off to the left side allows ample room on the right for a hammock like the one once used by Service - now a reposeful sight evocative of the times when he must have dreamed and been inspired in this idyllic setting. At the peak of the roof gable is a magnificent set of moosehorns, a feature Service likened to a "Winged Victory".<sup>9</sup> According to his autobiography, it was one of the two things that attracted him to the cabin in the first place - that, and the sweeping view of Dawson and the Yukon River.

The cabin's interior (Figures 7-9) has been described in great detail by Service and others - mostly the functional arrangements of furniture, stove, wall hangings, etc. Words and phrases such as "monastic simplicity" and "rustic" have been used to indicate its lack of pretensions. Still, it was cosily furnished and attractively decorated with photographs and penned mottoes - typical of the times, but perhaps somewhat less cluttered than other cabin interiors. When Service returned to Dawson after a trip outside in the summer of 1911, he was glad to be back in his

cheerful surroundings:

. . . I caressed the walls and the rough furniture  
and loved them . . . . It was very bright and  
warm chez moi.<sup>10</sup>

As one of the many log cabins that were built in western Canada around the turn of the century, the Robert Service structure is generally representative. Among its counterparts, however, there are a number of variations of detail in log treatments, corner notching, verandah designs, and other features. Some may be able to trace their ancestry to regional traditions developed elsewhere such as Ontario. Here, early log cottages were often well-finished and made of heavy squared timbers<sup>11</sup> (e.g. Figure 13). A cabin on Eighth Avenue (Figure 14) may or may not derive from this Ontario tradition, but it is closer than the Service example. Its logs are squared, apparently keyed at the corners, and the half-hipped verandah roof is supported by milled building components. Another cabin at Grand Forks, British Columbia, is more roughly finished but has the same general form (Figure 15).

The closest comparable example of those recorded in the CIHB inventory of buildings is one at Atlin, British Columbia (Figure 16). Its verandah is similarly formed by an extension of the roof purlins and ridge pole (less sophisticated than the hipped roofed examples mentioned above), and it has sapling-constructed verandah supports. These are set in patterns of crosses, diagonals and verticals - more decorative than the Service example. It may be that this type of cabin, with narrow-gauge rounded wall logs and roof extending into a sapling-supported verandah, was a particularly western type, although this has not been clearly established. In any case, the type seems to be based more on availability of materials and ease of building than on established architectural traditions.

Apart from the use of this simple log cabin type in early frontier conditions, the general form has been used over and over



in more modern times when other choices have been available. A number of small frame houses in Dawson, built when milled lumber was readily available, are similar in outline. Their main differences are their balloon frames and clapboard siding (several are visible in Figure 17). More recently, log cabins with gable roofs extending into verandahs have been built in many places as nostalgic revivals. They still represent a popular aesthetic form as well as an effective functional one. In Dawson, a number have been constructed, including some by the territorial government for native peoples housing (Figure 18), and some by the Triple J Hotel as cabins (Sixth Ave. between King and Queen Streets).

Of all these examples, the Robert Service cabin is probably the most attractive, primarily because of its beautiful site. The romantically suggestive "props" supplied by KNHS (hammock, bucksaw, snowshoes and moosehorns at the front, and washtub at the back) also add to its charm.

#### Functional Design

Until modern insulating and heating technology was developed, the log cabin was the best functional solution to housing in northern forested regions. Its materials could be gained locally (often from the site itself) and construction methods did not exceed the capabilities of the average frontier builder. Historical references abound, testifying to the functional effectiveness of such cabins. Laura Berton (mother of the well-known Canadian author, Pierre Berton) wrote of them out of her own Klondike experience: "I sometimes wonder how the Yukon could have been settled without them." She later contrasted them with the draughty poorly-insulated frame houses available in Dawson:

The neat log cabin with its mud roof and its moss chinked walls and its carefully notched and matched logs was the aristocrat.<sup>12</sup>

Another author, writing in a 1900 article in the Toronto Globe enthusiastically praised them:

One of the surprises is how utterly comfortable some of these cabins may be made. With double floor and well caulked interstices . . . those little brown cabins hold a world of comfort when the mid-winter stars look down upon the Yukon Valley.<sup>13</sup>

The article, which includes more detail than noted here, could easily be applied to the Robert Service cabin, illustrating how typical it was of its type (for others in the genre see Figures 14, 15, and 16).

There were quite a number of vacant log cabins in Dawson from which Service could choose in 1909. He selected a well-built one with logs that were unpeeled at the time, square-hewn at the ends and saddle-notched to ensure a tight fit. Historian Richard Stuart has described some of its other features of construction and layout:

The spaces between the logs were probably caulked, then chinked with moss, providing a tight seal. There were three windows, two on the south and one on the north, all double-paned and sealed. There were also two door spaces - one at the front (with double doors) and one at the back. The roof planking was set on the ridge beam, two purlins and top logs of the sidewall extending over the sides as well as the full length of the cabin and the porch.

Inside there were two rooms, the larger one in the front, the smaller in the rear, separated by a simple vertical partition of rough sawn boards butted to the walls and covered with muslin. The cabin was heated by a stove . . . .<sup>14</sup>

Service himself provided many additional details of the interior, including a special fitting that he had installed in the stove pipe:

I had a drum fitted into the stove pipe so that the heat was conserved and I could dry clothes inside. The draught in the stove was so good I could light a fire in two minutes and in ten the sides would be glowing red . . . .<sup>15</sup>

In addition, Service could well afford the other few but expensive amenities he installed - a telephone, and electricity.

All these historical details and more have enabled CPS architects to carry out an accurate restoration/reconstruction. Although the building had previously been conserved and exhibited as being authentic of Robert Service's period, many well-intentioned but erroneous alterations had crept into the structure's fabric by the time Parks acquired it in 1970. In 1923-24, for example, the sod roof was replaced by a metal one, and at some earlier point, a windowed front door was used to replace the original unfenestrated double ones (both inner and outer) of stout wood. There had been quite a number of other repairs and replacements of materials too, and interior decoration had become adulterated.

One major problem that needed immediate attention by the 1980s was the foundation - the weakest element of the building's construction. Sills had been merely laid on the ground, eventually causing rotting and shifting of other members. In 1958, when owned by the Klondike Visitors Association, a new foundation was put in place along with another new roof. Also at this time, the verandah received new posts, and the cabin's walls were straightened.<sup>16</sup> In 1983-84, an extensive and more accurate restoration/reconstruction was undertaken by Parks, including major repairs to the foundation and log walls, and a return to the sod roof of the original.<sup>17</sup>

#### Craftsmanship and Materials

The Robert Service cabin was evidently well built for its type and shows a good knowledge of log construction methods. Because of its many replacements of parts, however, it is difficult to assess its original craftsmanship except through historical documentation. Historian Richard Stuart examined and assessed it before Parks carried out its extensive renovations:

The logs were laid in place and the corners notched with considerable skill; after eighty

years they have not bowed or slipped out of place, nor has there been serious water damage at the corners.<sup>18</sup>

Stuart has deducted that the logs were locally cut because their bark was still evident in early photographs. Even so, he believes they were well dried before being used, as evidenced in the absence of settling by the early 1980s. The square saddle-notching at the corners was a somewhat unusual departure from the more common round saddle notched corners and those that are keyed or dovetailed. Stuart attributes this more to a clever building solution than lack of skill, although it did require less effort:

This was an effective method of ensuring a tight fit for the logs with a minimum of labour - there was no need for the elaborate scribing if they had been round, nor for the laborious task of hewing the entire log to make it square.<sup>19</sup>

Inside, the cabin shows typical workmanship and handling of materials for a Yukon cabin - construction and finishing not meant to last indefinitely but to serve an immediate shelter purpose.

#### Site

The building's relationship to its site is quite close in spirit to what it was when Robert Service lived here with one major exception: the view that once attracted Service has been obscured by overgrown trees across the street and down the hill. Otherwise, the main features remain plus a few minor ones that were added during the site's period of operation as a privately-run (and later, city-run) tourist attraction.

The cabin sits on the extreme south-east corner of the lot, facing Dawson townsite and the Yukon River. Sapling-constructed front steps form a transition from the rustic verandah to the front yard; a wooden sidewalk bordered by sapling flower boxes continues from here to the street. These latter features were probably put in place in the mid- to late-1940s and were

retained by Parks landscape architects who researched and partially restored the site. They also left untouched most of the well-established vegetation, including willows, alders and poplars, wild delphinium and roses. A pole fence like the one extant in Service's time was reconstructed, replacing a white picket fence in place by 1958 at least. Two levels of log-constructed retaining walls were rebuilt at the rear of the property, based on archaeological evidence that such a feature originally existed - one that did much to prevent soil erosion and water damage to the cabin. The open area of the property where people gather for the Robert Service presentation has been leveled somewhat for better wheelchair access, and some portable low wooden benches are set in rows for use of the audience.

#### Setting

The building under review is an unobtrusive structure in a natural hillside landscape with a gravel road and wooden sidewalk in front being the only urban intrusions. Eighth Avenue forms Dawson's easternmost boundary above which is a low-growing forest and ruins of early log cabins contemporary with the Robert Service one. The streetscape is all housing (mostly old) and there are many vacant lots between. The street itself is fairly quiet with most tourists leaving their vehicles downtown and coming to this area on foot. In fact, there are street signs admonishing visitors and residents to maintain the quiet because of KNHS oral presentations at the Robert Service site. This could be interpreted as evidence that the cabin actually establishes the present character of the neighbourhood - that of a quiet residential district in which an important national shrine is located.

The Jack London log cabin is about a half block away to the south at a jog in Eighth Avenue. This non-KNHS structure was moved to its present site from nearby Henderson Creek and reinforces the area's character. Oral readings and storytelling occur at this site as well.

### Landmark

The Robert Service cabin is well known not only among local residents but among tourists who come here specifically to see it. Perhaps this is less so now, however, than earlier in the century when Service's poetry was on the lips of millions who were captivated by the romance of the Klondike and by at least one generation of school children. Many of those children are retired now and visit here by the thousands in their campers and Winnebagos. For them and for younger travellers too, the Robert Service cabin is one of the highlights of a Dawson visit. A good deal of the credit for this must go to the KNHS-hired professional actor who dramatically recites Service's poetry on site, and tells the story of his life. Still, this literary and historic interpretation gives a higher profile to the cabin itself and it is inevitably photographed by almost everyone who comes.

### Endnotes

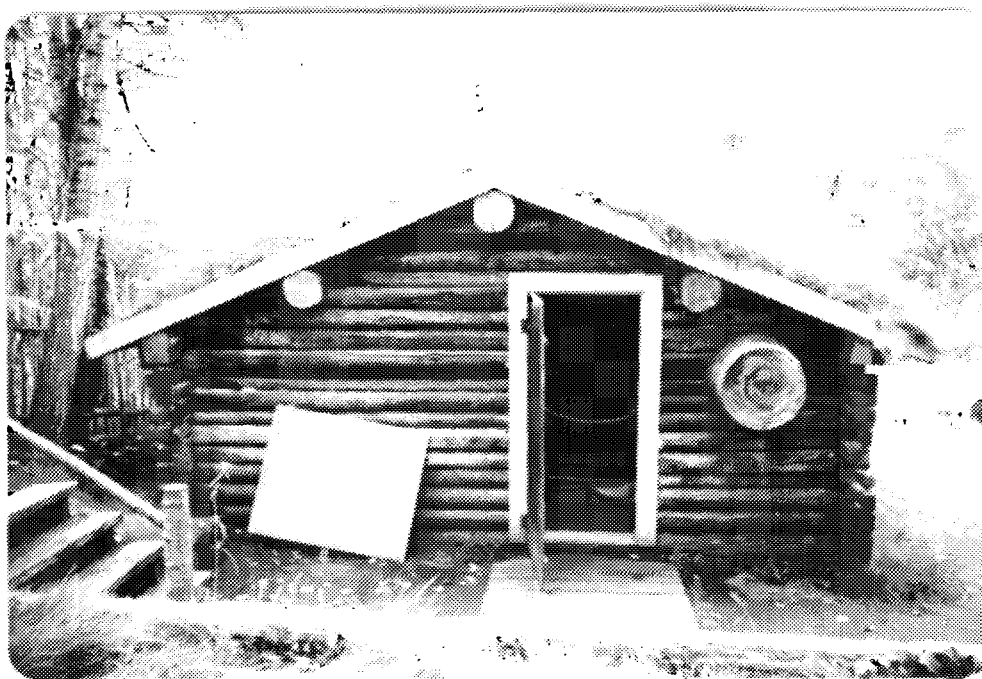
- 1 Dawson City. Directory of Existing Structures, Robert Service Cabin, Block K, Lot 1, Area 6 (Catalog No. 6-K-1). This directory notes the title search that was done on the cabin property: original patent granted to Stewart Menzies; 19 May 1900 to Mrs. Matilda Day (with her husband, the probable builder of the cabin); 27 July 1900 to John N.E. Brown; 22 August 1901 to Edna B. Clarke (Service's landlady). At this time, Mrs. Clarke also bought the south half of the adjacent lot, thus giving the cabin its spacious yard to the north.
- 2 Richard Stuart, The Robert Service Cabin, Dawson, 1902-70, Microfiche Report Series 90. (Ottawa: Canadian Parks Service, 1983), p. 63.
- 3 "Background to and Status of Dawson City, Klondike and Gold Rush-Related National Historic Sites." For Review by Historic Sites and Monuments Board of Canada, November, 1987. Appendix "A", p. 4.
- 4 This section is based on Stuart, op. cit., pp. 5-6. Stuart's main source of information was Carl Klinck, Robert Service: A Biography (Toronto, 1976). See also David Evans, "Robert William Service," The Canadian Encyclopedia, Vol. III (Edmonton: Hurtig Publisher, 1985), p. 1679.

- 5 Stuart, op. cit., p. 14.
- 6 Ibid., p. 20.
- 7 C. Cameron, A Cheechako in Alaska and Yukon (London, 1920), p. 131. Ibid.
- 8 Klondike Korner, Vol. 11, 23 September 1954, p. 3. Cited in Stuart, op. cit., p. 56.
- 9 This and the "bewhiskered" reference cited in Stuart, op. cit., p. 12.
- 10 Robert Service, Ploughman of the Moon. An Adventure into Memory (New York, 1945), p. 357. Cited in Stuart, op. cit., p. 11.
- 11 John I. Rempel, "Log Construction," Building With Wood (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1980), pp. 25-91.
- 12 Laura Berton, I Married the Klondike (Toronto, 1974), p. 38. Cited in Stuart, op. cit., p. 7.
- 13 Faith Fenton, Toronto Globe, 1900. Cited in Stuart, op. cit., p. 8.
- 14 Ibid., p. 10.
- 15 Service, op. cit. Cited in Stuart, op. cit., p. 11.
- 16 See Stuart, op. cit., Appendix: "Outline of Recorded Changes to the Cabin," pp. 65-69. In point form, Stuart lists the changes to the cabin's landscape, and to its interior and exterior appearance.
- 17 Recent information about the building supplied in conversation with Andrew Powter, AES, PWC, DU, EC-CPS, 24 October 1988. Changes also noted in FHBRO information sheets supplied by KNHS.
- 18 Stuart, op. cit., p. 10.
- 19 Ibid.

ROBERT SERVICE CABIN, DAWSON, YUKON



1 Robert Service Cabin, Eighth Ave. at Hansen St., Dawson, Yukon; built ca. 1900, front view, 1987. (EC-CPS, KNHS, 1987.)



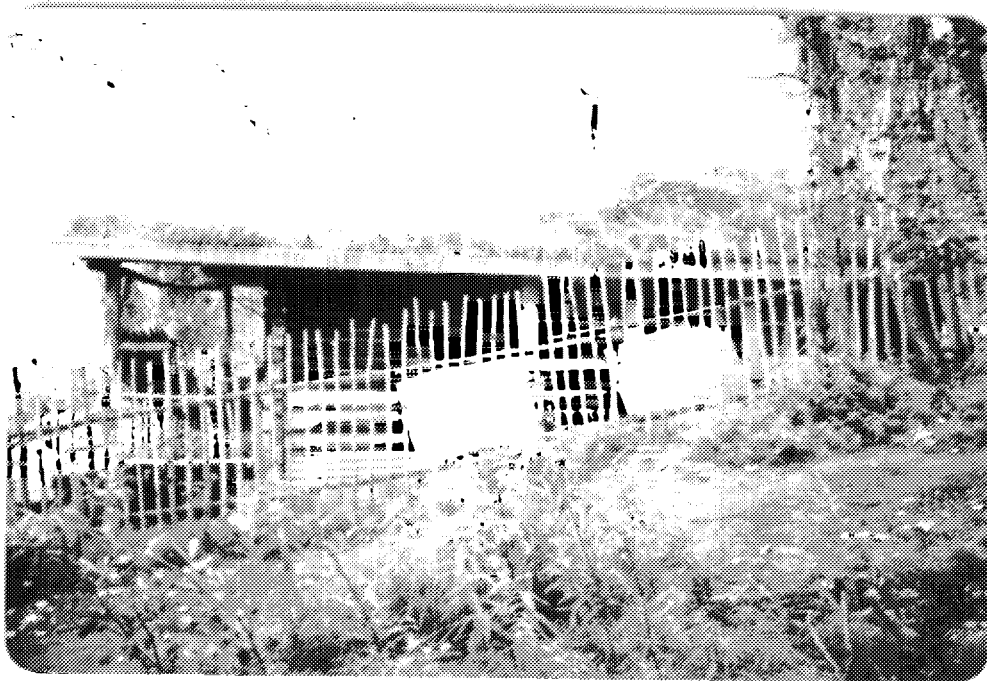
2 Robert Service cabin, rear view, 1987. (EC-CPS, KNHS, 1987.)



ROBERT SERVICE CABIN, DAWSON, YUKON

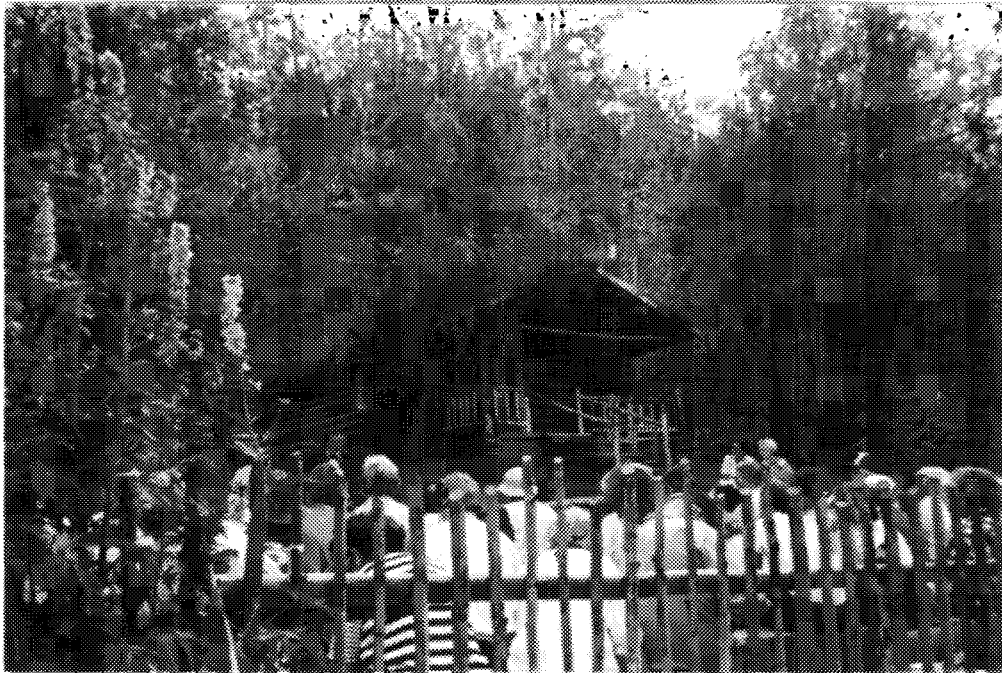


3 Robert Service cabin, north side view, 1987. (EC-CPS, KNHS, 1987.)



4 Robert Service cabin, south side view, 1987. (EC-CPS, KNHS, 1987.)

ROBERT SERVICE CABIN, DAWSON, YUKON



- 5 Robert Service cabin; crowd gathered in front for oral interpretation of Service's life and poetry. (J. Mattie, EC-CPS, AHB, 1988.)



- 6 Robert Service cabin as seen from Eighth Ave. (EC-CPS, KNHS, 1987.)

ROBERT SERVICE CABIN, DAWSON, YUKON

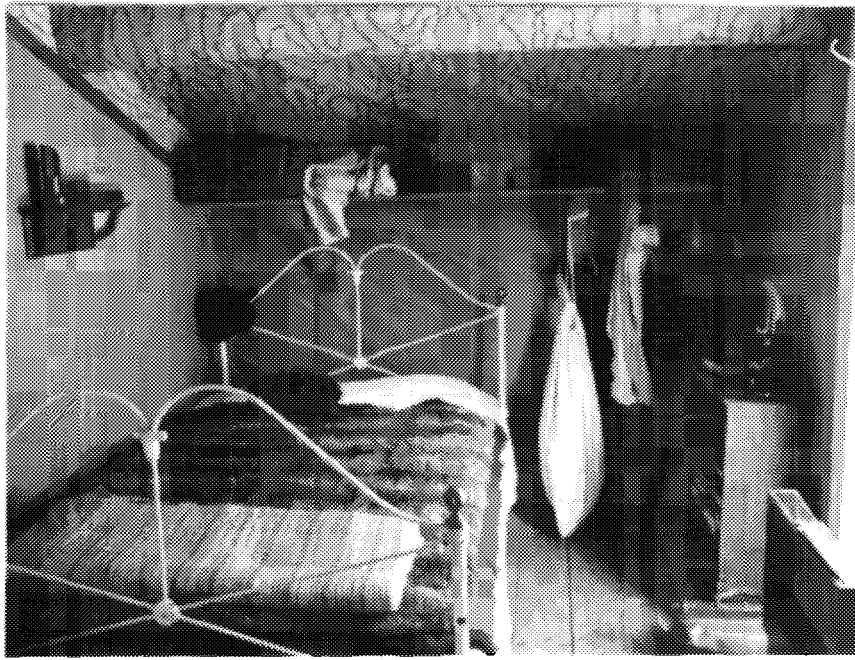


7 Robert Service cabin interior, north side of large front room. (J. Mattie, EC-CPS, AHB, 1988.)

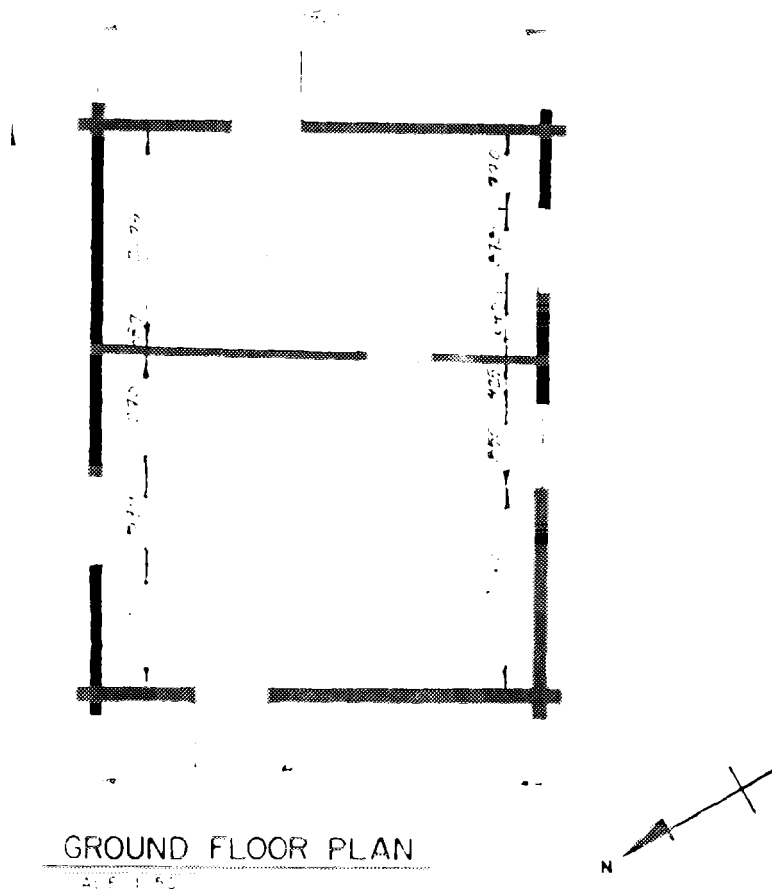


8 Robert Service cabin interior, south side of large front room. (J. Mattie, EC-CPS, AHB, 1988.)

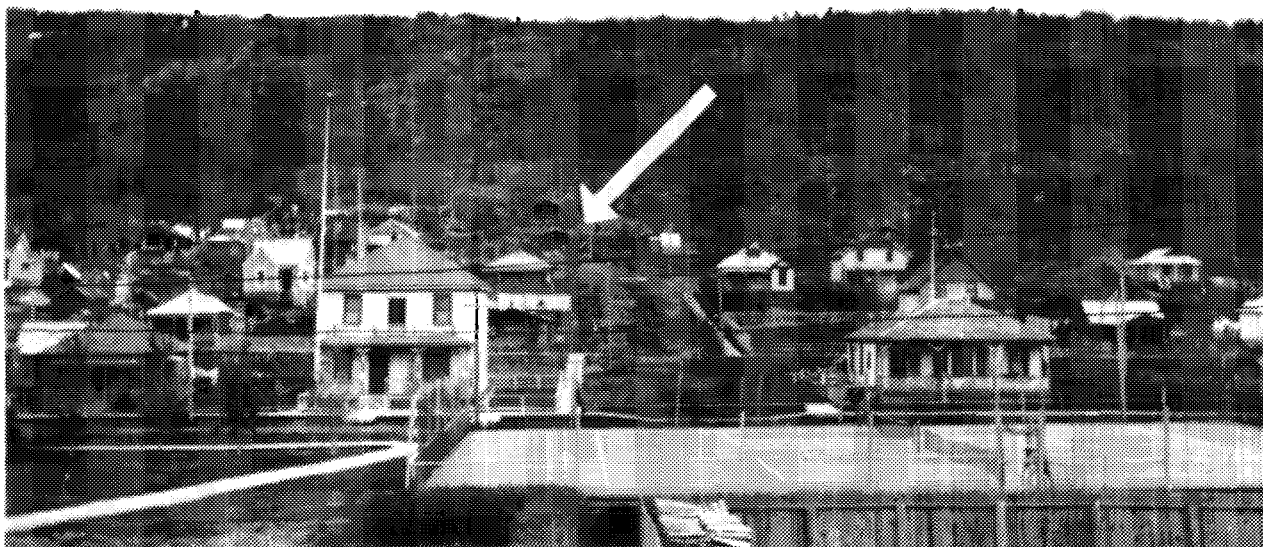
ROBERT SERVICE CABIN, DAWSON, YUKON



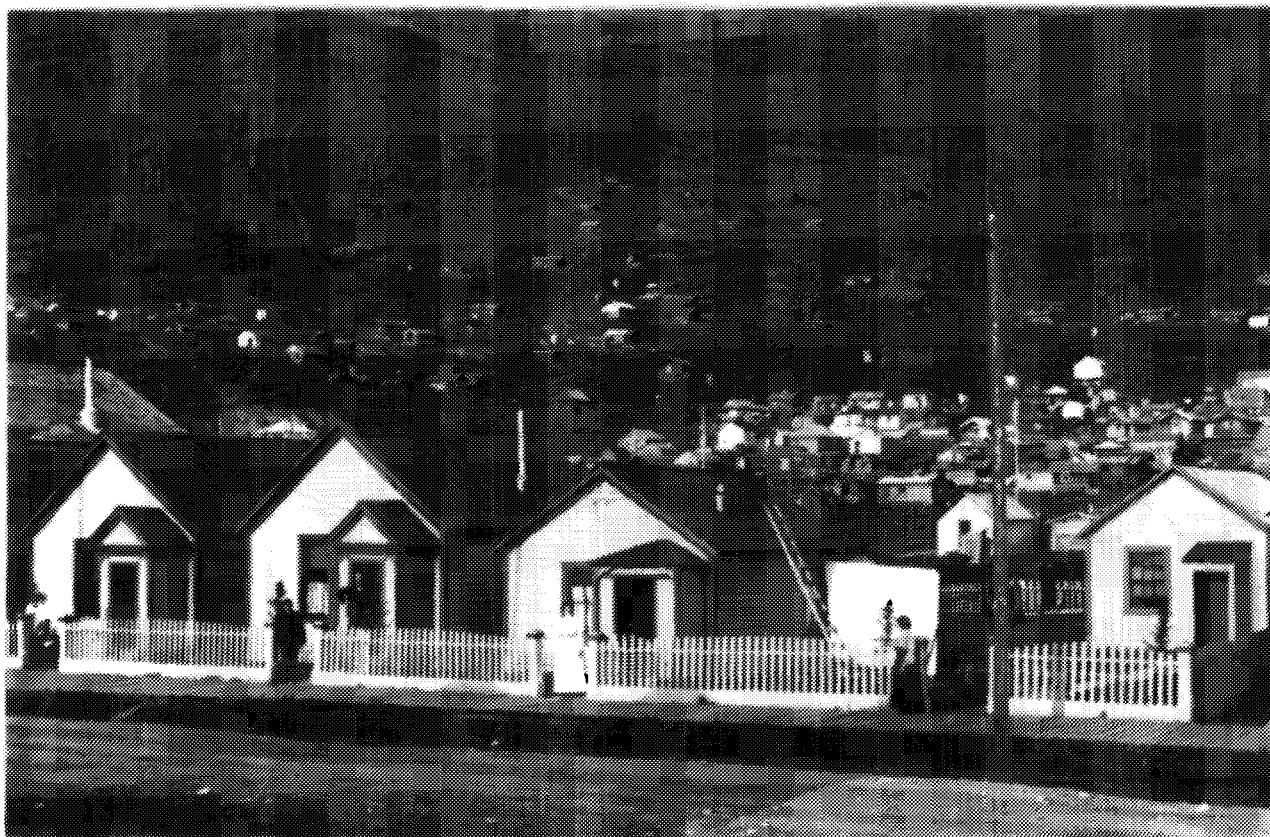
9 Robert Service cabin interior, bedroom at rear (see plan below). (J. Mattie, EC-CPS, AHB, 1988.)



10 Plan of Robert Service cabin. (EC-CPS, KNHS, 1987.)



- 11 Photograph taken from east side of Government Reserve looking up Hansen St., date unknown (possibly ca. 1915). Arrow points to Robert Service cabin. (NA/AN, PA-44674.)

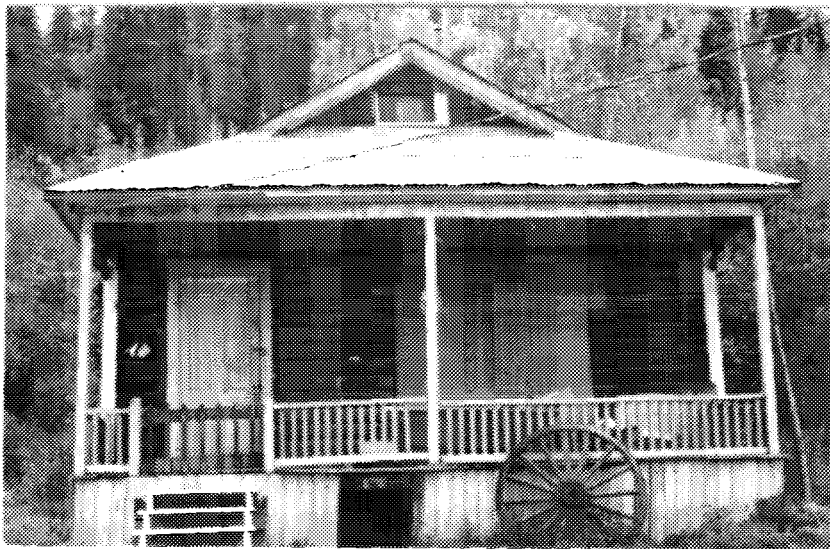


- 12 Photograph showing housing north of area where Service cabin is located, ca. 1905. (NA/AN, PA-13319.)





- 13 Log cabin at Porter's Hill, near Goderich, Ontario; built ca 1830. (EC-CPS, CIHB, 1973.)



- 14 Log cabin, Eighth Ave., Dawson, Yukon; built ca. 1900. (EC-CPS, CIHB, 1973.)

ROBERT SERVICE CABIN, DAWSON, YUKON



15 Log cabin, Grand Forks, British Columbia; built ca. 1914.  
(EC-CPS, CIHB, 1975.)



16 Log cabin, Atlin, British Columbia, built ca. 1910.  
(EC-CPS, CIHB, 1976.)



- 17 Frame houses in Dawson, probably Fifth Ave., ca. 1905. Some show general form of Robert Service cabin with gable front facing the street and simple verandah across the façade. (NA/AN, PA-20547.)



- 18 Modern log cabin erected by territorial government, Fourth Ave. north of King St., Dawson, Yukon. (J. Mattie, EC-CPS, AHB, 1988.)



7. CUSTOMS HOUSE (McCORMICK PLACE)  
Princess Street at Sixth Avenue  
Dawson, Yukon

## INTRODUCTION

The 1902 structure of this report is an irregularly shaped three-bedroom frame and log dwelling (Figures 1-3) on a corner lot just east of Dawson's business district. It is locally known as the Customs House because a federally-employed customs agent lived here from 1953 to some time in the early 1960s. Now used for KNHS staff housing, it has been renovated to modern residential standards with great loss of original material.

## HISTORICAL ASSOCIATIONS

### Thematic

The Customs House relates only marginally to HSMBC's Theme 2(b) ("The development of Dawson as a supply, service and distribution centre; its development as a territorial capital") in that it has housed some of the people involved in providing supplies and services to Dawson. Supplies and services represented by the various owners include dentistry, hardware, telephone operation, transportation, and government. The designation "Customs House" is something of a misnomer as it does not pertain to any such use, except as a residence of the federally-employed customs agent at Dawson. In fact, this period of ownership by the Department of Revenue was a relatively short one (1953 to early 1960s). A more appropriate designation, and one that CPS uses, is the McCormick Place, named after the man who lived here the longest (1923-40).

The structure did not become part of KNHS because it represents an important historical theme, however. Rather, it was acquired

as part of a plan to provide staff accommodation in some of the better examples of Dawson's old houses, at least ones that were available and could be bought for a reasonable price. It was calculated that the cost of such housing, renovated to modern standards, would not exceed that of newly-constructed quarters. Furthermore, more of Dawson's historic structures would be preserved and be animated by the activities of people going about their daily lives.

#### Person/Event

People who lived in this house were recognized in their community. The first owner (1902-04) was the American dentist, Dr. John Brown. Next (1904-07) came J.R. Grey, proprietor of the Dawson Hardware Company; then Elizabeth Wilson (1907 - ca. 1915), a telephone operator. The building was vacant for several years (although still owned by Mrs. Wilson) before being purchased by Samuel McCormick, former miner, but owner/operator of a transportation business while he lived here from 1923 to 1940. Thomas R. Campbell, a truck driver for the McCormick business, had moved in by 1942 and he lived here until 1948. The next owner was C.N. Williams, a territorial civil servant who was transferred to Whitehorse when the Yukon capital moved there in 1953. In that year, the federal Department of Revenue bought the property and leased it to its regional customs agent until the early 1960s.<sup>1</sup>

#### Local Development

Construction of the Customs House at the corner of Princess Street and Sixth Avenue was part of the transformation of Dawson's central bog area in 1901-02. Ringed around this poorly drained land were the main business district toward the Yukon River (west), mixed development that included a number of warehouses to the north, housing rising up the hill to the east, and the Government Reserve to the south. Some correction of the drainage problem began in 1900, but after Dawson was incorporated as a city in 1901, a proper sewer and other municipal services

were installed. This made the previously unused central portion much more attractive for building.<sup>2</sup> A photograph taken in May 1901 shows that a few small warehouses had already been built here by this date but they are still surrounded by large tracts of open land.<sup>3</sup> Another photograph taken two years later (Figure 13) shows housing (including the Customs House) occupying more of the vacant spaces. There is also better street grading, boardwalks, and electric power poles and cables.

This latter phase of Dawson's development signified a new stage in the city's life. The mad chaotic gold rush of 1898-99 was over. More stable development was taking hold even though the population had dwindled from its peak. Corporate mining with labour-saving machinery was beginning to replace individual gold panning in the nearby creeks. Many families had moved in to good frame houses and some fine government buildings had been built. There was now a good school and a large athletic facility as well (both visible in Figure 13) Meanwhile, thousands of Dawson's single men had gone on to pursue gold in Alaska, and the city's dance halls, saloons and brothels had been either decimated in numbers or eliminated altogether. The Customs House, built by Dr. John Brown (dentist), was part of this new respectability that Dawson's boosters seemed so anxious to convey.<sup>4</sup> In many newspaper articles and editorials, they ignored the undeniable fact that the Yukon wilderness frontier was at the city's very doorstep, and the possibility that the rich gold deposits might soon become unprofitable to mine.

## **ARCHITECTURE**

### Aesthetic Design

The architectural quality of the Customs House is pleasant enough for a small unpretentious vernacular residence. It must be understood, however, that Parks has worked on it so much that virtually all of the visible components are reconstructions.

Also, before the recent rehabilitation, the house had a long series of additions and alterations, producing most of the conglomerate massing seen today. Now basically L-shaped with jogs in the west and north walls, it has a projecting verandah at the front, and a recessed one at the side (Figures 1-3). Roofing varies according to the requirements of these projections - some gabled roofs and some hipped. Windows, doors, ventilators and trim are outlined in dark green mouldings, adding to the structure's lively character. Some elements lend a few quality touches such as the fine picket fence with urn-capped gate posts, the paneled front door, and the well-turned newel post and railing of the recessed verandah - all historically correct reconstructions. Inside, there are deep mouldings with bull's-eye boxed corners (more typical of an earlier age) and v-joint boards on the ceiling of the living/dining room - all reconstructions as well.

Comparable housing that has evolved over the years without being guided by an overall master design can be found in most of Canada's small towns. One example at Wynyard, Saskatchewan (Figure 15) appears to be somewhat similar with perhaps one extension that postdates its original construction. It also has one gable facing the street and a side porch reminiscent of the recessed one at the Customs House. Another house at Didsbury, Alberta (Figure 16) has several extensions and both hipped and gabled roofs. Ontario's small houses are often more substantial than the above-mentioned wooden examples, and their subsequent additions are sometimes quite substantial too. A brick house at Whitby is a case in point (Figures 17, 18). It shows an original well-planned symmetrical façade to the street, but apparently newer rear additions, wings, a projecting bay, and porches at the side and rear. In fact, it appears to have had two additions to the rear (one behind the other), both built of brick to match the main house. The side verandah has a roof supported by posts that rest on brick piers (Figure 18). None of these examples can match the complexity of changes evident in the Customs House,

however - a good example of vernacular architecture that greatly evolved according to need.

### Functional Design

The current layout of the Customs House (Figure 10) is one developed by CPS for contemporary staff housing. It includes an up-to-date kitchen (Figure 6), bathroom, furnace and laundry rooms, three bedrooms, a living room (Figure 5) and a family room. Certain non-original aspects of the building's evolved design were retained by CPS when it acquired the property, but a considerable number of modifications were made too - some relating to reconstructions of previously existing features, and others to a new and more logical use of space. For example, there was a restoration of the recessed porch on the Sixth Avenue side of the house (Figure 3) necessitating a redesigned kitchen layout; an exterior alcove at the rear was filled in to create more interior space and allow for a relocation of the bath and furnace rooms; and the front enclosed verandah was altered to bring it closer to one of the stages in its history (compare Figures 10 and 12).

These extensive changes are only the latest in a long series of substantial alterations and additions the building has endured. When constructed in 1902 it was a simple three-room house with front and side verandahs and a shed at the rear (Figure 11). Slightly more elaborate than the many minimal frame houses of Dawson, it had a roof with front and side gables, and a hipped slope at the back. Perhaps this initial hint of complexity gave inspiration to the following owners. In any case, almost every one of them contributed something to the evolution. It is not clear whether J.R. Grey or Elizabeth Wilson was responsible for the first modification - the enclosing of the side porch facing Sixth Avenue. Samuel McCormick created the wing to the west by attaching a fire-damaged log building in 1931. In the 1940s, Thomas Campbell added a shed at the north side of this addition and replaced the old shed behind the kitchen with a new two-room

addition. There were also re-arrangements of walls, windows, and doors throughout.<sup>5</sup>

By this time, construction details of the building were quite mixed. The original balloon-framed part still rested on a post-and-mudsill foundation, but floor joists ran in several directions on top of this and were extended in other directions when new additions were built. The west side log addition resting on grade represents another type of construction technique. Another newer feature was the sawdust insulation boxes running around the building's enlarged perimeter, probably placed there in the 1940s.<sup>6</sup>

CPS has since done away with these boxes, installing modern insulation under the flooring instead. There is an air space between this level and the ground, created by a system of wooden cribbing and steel jacks which form the building's foundation (the jacks are being phased out as the cribbing appears to be the better method of support). Skirting around the building's edges conceals the cribs and jacks and the gap between house and ground.<sup>7</sup>

Materials have been as varied as construction and layout. By the 1940s, there were hardwood floors in the living/dining room; linoleum was used in other rooms. "Textured sheeting" on the walls had replaced the original wallpaper on cotton muslin (since replaced with gyproc panels by CPS). Outside, most of the roof was shingled, but there was some corrugated iron used as well (this mix was retained or replaced by CPS). Coved wooden siding covered most of the exterior walls except for the log addition which received corrugated iron (since covered with wooden siding by CPS to create uniformity).

The functional provisions of the house must have suited the C.N. Williams who lived here from 1948 to 1953 without making any major changes. From today's perspective, however, it would seem

that the building's functional quality was only fair considering the magnitude of the financial resources spent by various owners (especially CPS) to bring it up to standard. And yet, its redeeming qualities were apparently sufficient to make the renovators want to expend the effort.

#### Craftsmanship and Materials

There must have been some reasonably good craftsmanship in the original components of the Customs House but this has been obliterated in subsequent alterations and renovations. The current reconstructed wide mouldings, panelled front door, v-joint wooden ceilings, and exterior gateposts all show good workmanship, but are CPS reconstructions. The building's interior work in the 1930s, '40s, and '50s was likely rather poor with new hardwood flooring placed on top of old, new asphalt shingles nailed directly over existing roofing materials, and structural work showing serious problems by the 1970s.

### **ENVIRONMENT**

#### Site

A major change to the Customs House property occurred in 1921 when Elizabeth Wilson purchased the adjoining half lot to the west, although she no longer lived here. This gave the house its spacious front and west side yard, creating ample room for the log addition put on by Samuel McCormick in 1931. Mrs. Wilson had previously maintained a large circular flower bed and peripheral plantings (partly visible in Figure 14) and perhaps intended to move back one day to expand her garden. In any case, subsequent owners seem to have planted nothing more than grass. Meanwhile, a few birch and poplar trees have grown up, either by accident or by design. There have been changes in fencing but what is now in place is a reproduction of the original picket one with urn-capped gate posts (compare Figures 1 and 13). The CPS-restored side verandah on Sixth Avenue is now the main

entrance to the house rather than the formerly used Princess Street entrance. The former is conveniently located near the parking lot to the rear (a non-original feature). Recent elevation of the Sixth Avenue road bed has caused drainage problems for the house. In summer 1988, CPS was obliged to raise it higher on its cribbing and then build a new and deeper skirting because the one produced in 1985 was now too short.

### Setting

The Customs House fits in with its largely residential neighbourhood, but is a better example of housing than most. A mobile home sits on the adjacent lot to the north, and beyond this there are small prefabricated homes (Figures 7, 8). A few older houses are in the vicinity (probably contemporary with the Customs one) but with the exception of the Macaulay House to the east (See Report No. 12), these are small and undistinguished. A fairly large unpainted rectangular building is immediately to the west (Figures 8, 9) - apparently the same one that appears in the 1903 photograph illustrated in Figure 13. Judging by its size and shape, this could have been one of the many early warehouses that stored Dawson's supplies needed throughout the winter months.

### Landmark

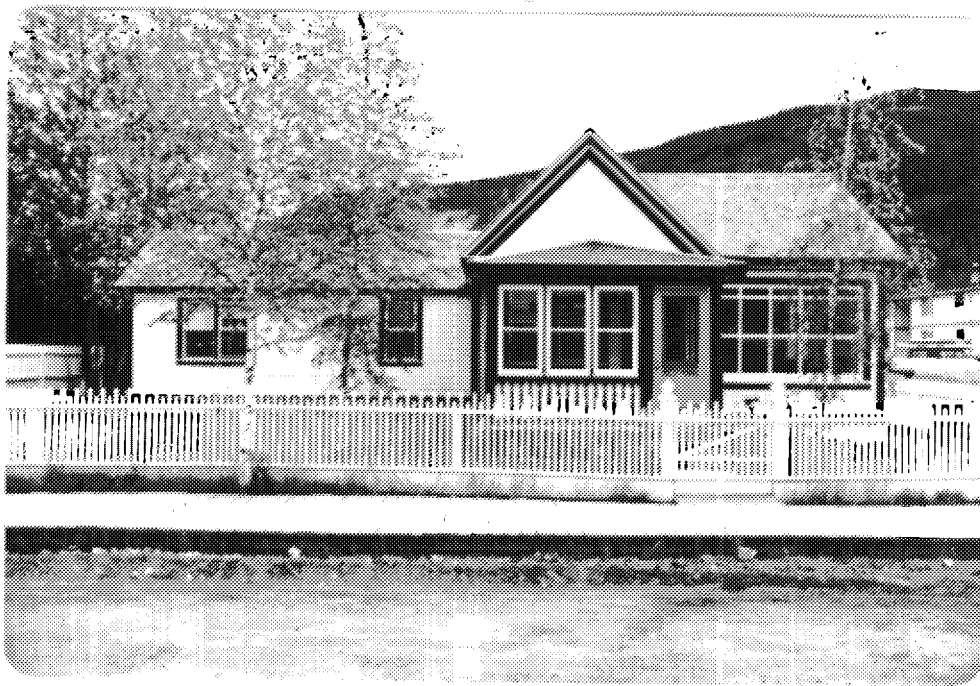
Being on a corner property, the Customs House is highly visible to pedestrian and vehicular traffic (Figure 8). The picket fence around it is eye-catching and the large (for Dawson standards) spruce tree just beyond the lot's western edge gives it a certain landmark status. The house is not interpreted in KNHS guided tours. Among local residents, however, it has a reputation as the house that has undergone innumerable costly and still-continuing renovations, with unimpressive results.



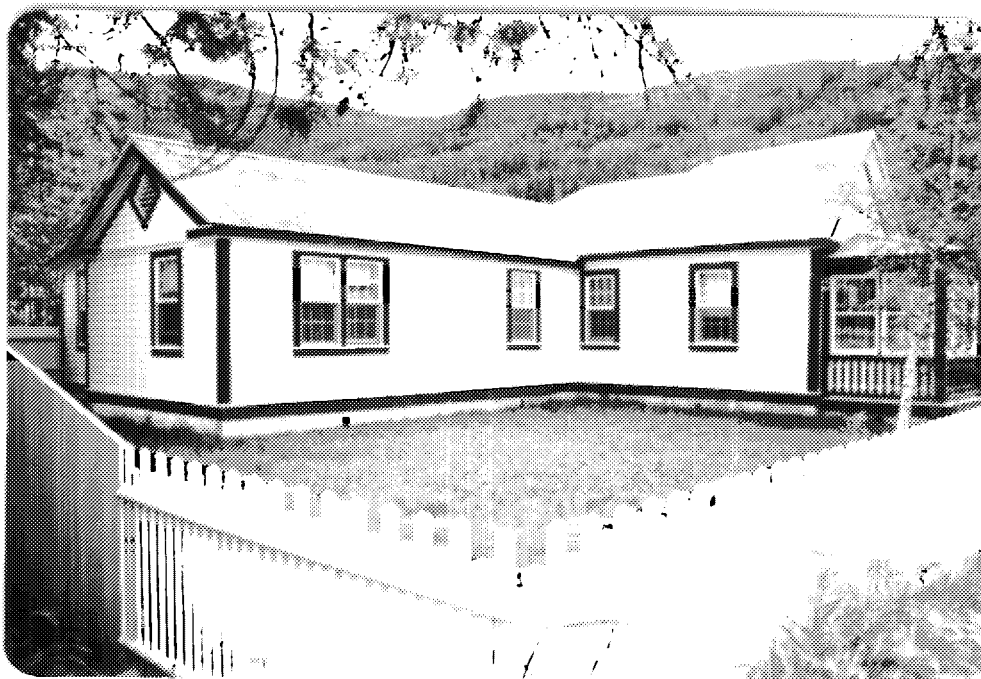
Endnotes

- 1 The preceeding information on early residents of the house is contained in W.A. Waiser, "The McCormick Place: Staff Housing for Klondike National Historic Sites," Parks Canada. Research Bulletin No. 226 (Ottawa: Parks Canada, 1984), pp. 2-9.
- 2 A good description of this development is found in R. Stuart, "Dawson City: Three Structural Histories," Parks Canada. Manuscript Report Number 383 (Ottawa: Parks Canada, 1980), pp. 87-88.
- 3 See photograph catalogued as "NA/AN, PA-16297" and illustrated in Waiser, op. cit., Figure 1, p. 11.
- 4 A good description of Dawson's urbanization and the corporate takeovers of individual mining claims is found in Margaret Archibald, "Grubstake to Grocery Store: Supplying the Klondike, 1897-1907," Canadian Historic Sites. Occasional Papers in Archaeology and History No. 26 (Ottawa: Parks Canada, 1981), pp. 53-66.
- 5 For a detailed description of the changes, see Waiser, op. cit., pp. 1-9.
- 6 Ibid., p. 6.
- 7 This, and other information on the building's current status acquired during site visit, 27 July 1988, accompanied by KNHS Heritage Recorder, Robie Van Rumpt.

CUSTOMS HOUSE, DAWSON, YUKON



- 1 Customs House, Princess St. at Sixth Ave., Dawson, Yukon; constructed in 1902; front view in 1987. (EC-CPS, KNHS, 1987.)



- 2 Customs House; view from south-west corner of property along Princess St. (EC-CPS, KNHS, 1987.)

CUSTOMS HOUSE, DAWSON, YUKON



3 Customs House; view of east side along Sixth Ave. (EC-CPS, KNHS, 1987.)



4 Customs House; rear view (north side). (EC-CPS, KNHS, 1987.)

CUSTOMS HOUSE, DAWSON, YUKON



5 Customs House, living room. (J. Mattie, EC-CPS, AHB, 1988.)

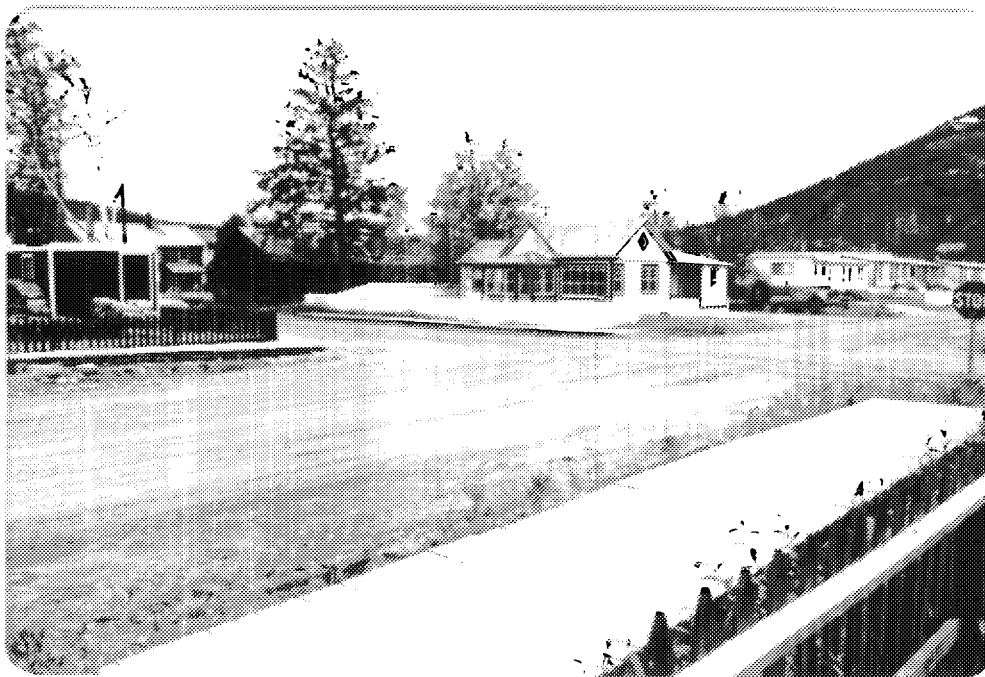


6 Customs House, kitchen. (J. Mattie, EC-CPS, AHB, 1988.)

CUSTOMS HOUSE, DAWSON, YUKON

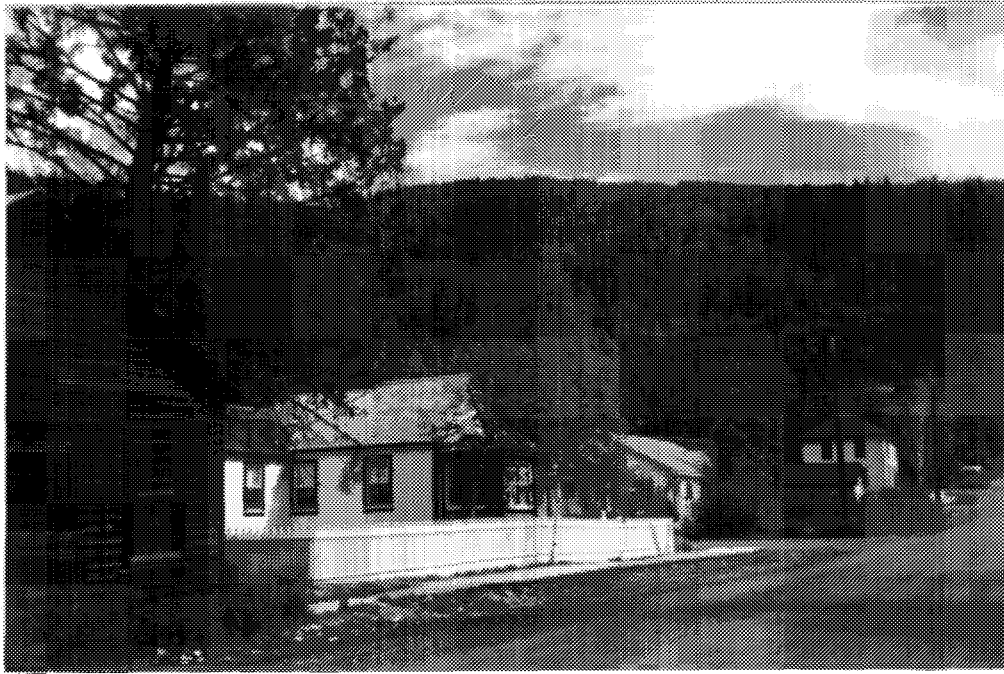


- 7 Sixth Ave. looking south; prefabricated houses at right; mobile home is between them and Customs House (arrow). (J. Mattie, EC-CPS, ANB, 1988.)

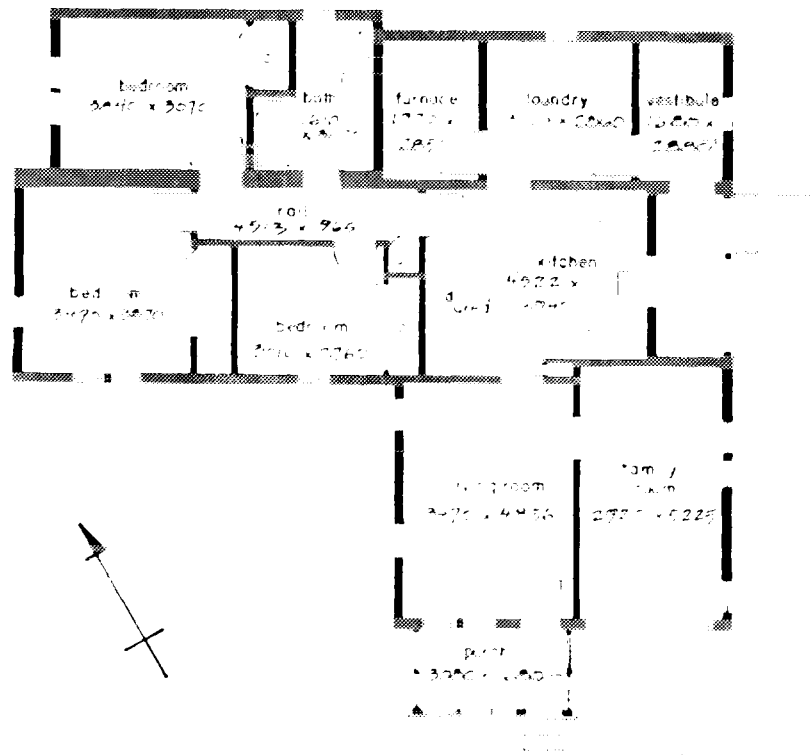


- 8 Customs House at intersection of Sixth Ave. (lower left to upper right) and Princess St. (EC-CPS, KNHS, 1987.)

# CUSTOMS HOUSE, DAWSON, YUKON



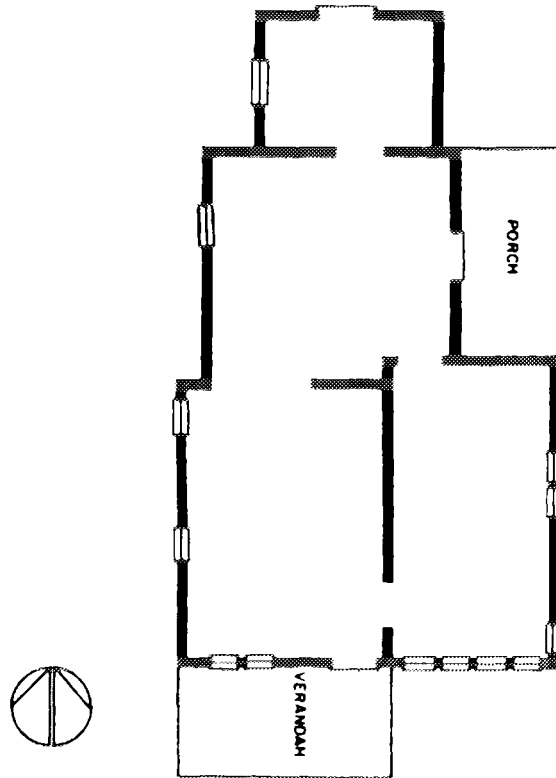
- 9 Customs House and view up Princess St. Note Macaulay house at next intersection on Seventh Ave. (J. Mattie, EC-CPS, AHB, 1988.)



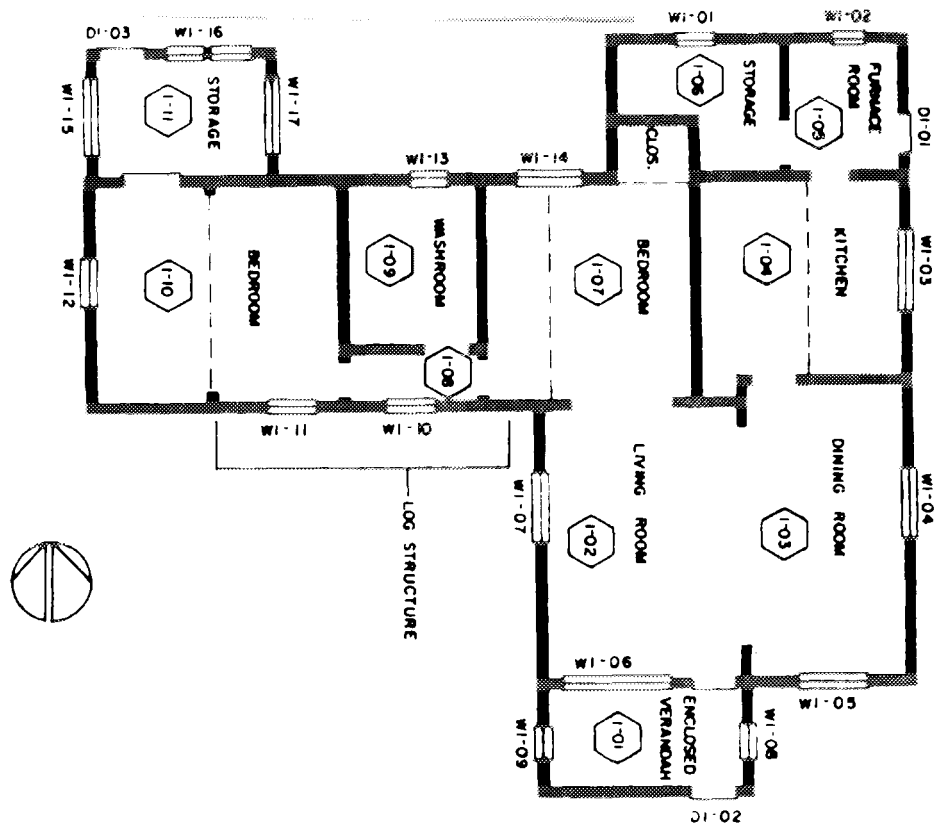
GROUND FLOOR PLAN

- 10 Current plan of Customs House. (EC-CPS, KNHS, 1987.)

# CUSTOMS HOUSE, DAWSON, YUKON



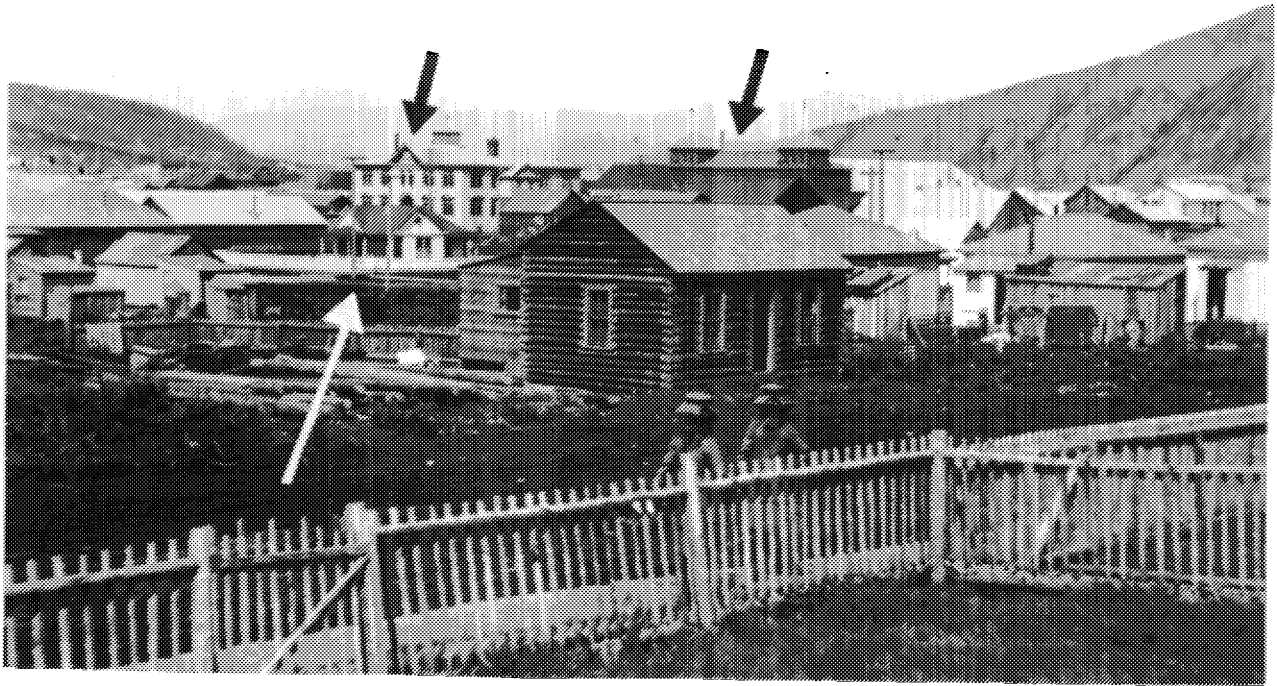
- 11 Plan of Customs House at it was originally built, 1902.  
(W. A. Waizer, Research Bulletin No. 226, EC-CPS, December 1984 [hereafter R.B. No. 226], p. 4.)



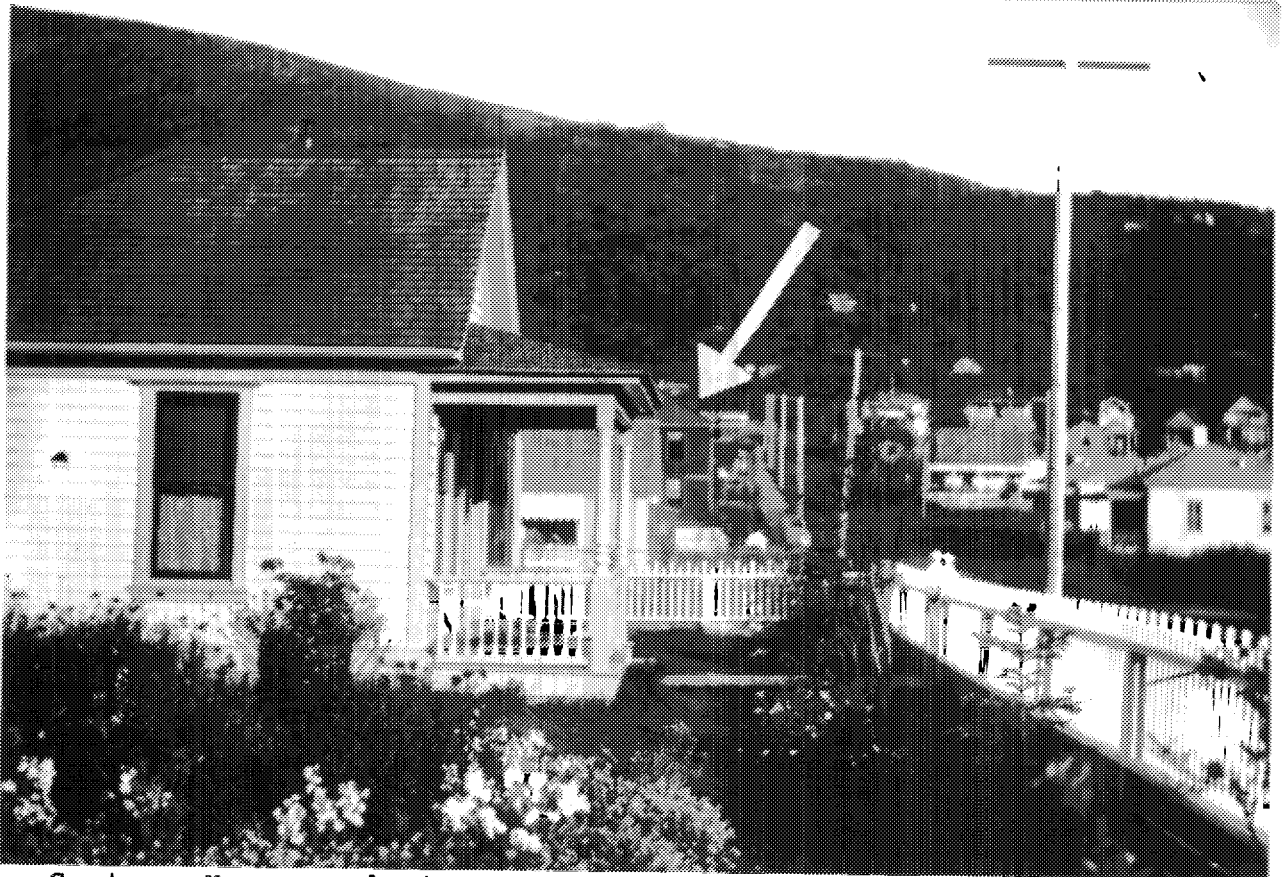
- 12 Plan of Customs House before KNHS rehabilitation in 1985.  
Most of this plan was in place by 1948.  
(R.B. No. 226, p. 8.)



CUSTOMS HOUSE, DAWSON, YUKON



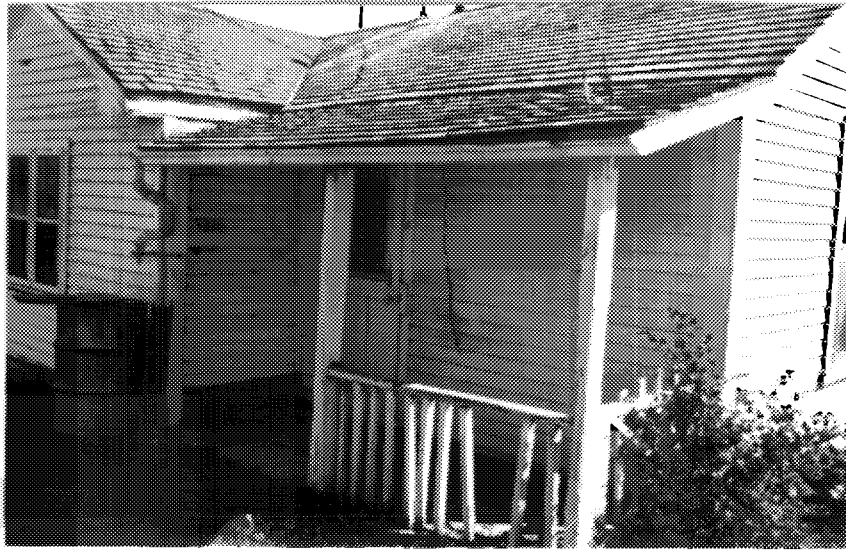
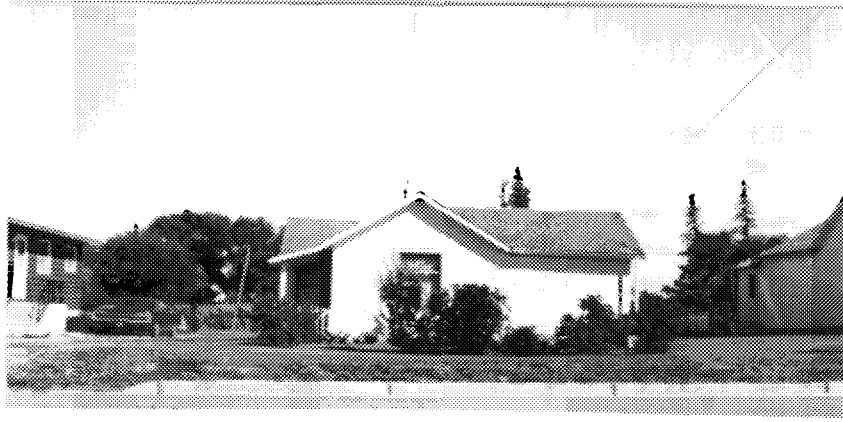
- 13 View of central Dawson from Seventh Ave., 1903. Customs House (white arrow); Dawson School, designed by Thomas Fuller, 1902 (left black arrow); Dawson Amateur Athletic Association with twin cupolas (right black arrow). Both latter buildings since destroyed. (NA/AN, PA-16467.)



- 14 Customs House and view up Princess St., ca. 1910. Note also Macaulay House in next block at corner of Seventh Ave. (arrow). (NA/AN, PA-13285.)



CUSTOMS HOUSE, DAWSON, YUKON



- 15 Residence, 510 - 4th St. East, Wynyard, Saskatchewan; constructed ca. 1910; front and side views. (EC-CPS, CIHB 1976.)



- 16 Residence, 2130 - 22nd Ave., Didsbury, Alberta; constructed ca. 1905. (EC-CPS, CIHB, 1905.)

CUSTOMS HOUSE, DAWSON, YUKON



- 17 Residence, 505 Centre St. South, Whitby, Ontario;  
constructed ca. 1880. (EC-CPS, CIHB, 1972.)



- 18 Whitby residence (505 Centre St. South); side view.  
(EC-CPS, CIHB, 1972.)

9.     **Black House**  
       Fifth Avenue at Turner Street  
       Dawson, Yukon

**INTRODUCTION**

The Black House (Figures 1-4) is one of Dawson's better dwellings. It is a two storey frame building with a hipped roof and a number of projections (dormers, verandahs, side and rear extensions) which give it architectural interest. Long occupied by a succession of Dawson's business and government elite, including the famous George and Martha Black, it is now used as a residence for the superintendent of KNHS.

**HISTORICAL ASSOCIATIONS**

Thematic

Because of its use as a dwelling for Dawson's government and business elite, the Black House has a tangential relationship to HSMBC's Theme 2(b), "The development of Dawson as a supply, service and distribution centre; its development as a territorial capital." Owners and occupants here were among the leaders who helped bring Dawson to this state. Also, by virtue of its relatively large size, its substantial construction, and its elegance, it is indicative of the confident spirit in which the business and government community viewed Dawson's economic prospects in 1900 when the house was built. Although the local economy was slipping into decline by 1914, the house continued in use for some time as one of the residences of Dawson's diminishing upper class: from 1908 to 1929 by managers of the Yukon Gold Company; and from 1929 to 1948 by George and Martha Black, two of the Yukon's most influential and famous citizens. Upon their departure, the house was briefly considered in 1949 for purchase by the federal government as a residence for the

Yukon Commissioner,<sup>1</sup> an office revived in 1948 after having been abolished in 1916.

#### Person/Event

The house under review is most closely identified with George and Martha Black who used it as a seasonal residence when they were not occupied with parliamentary duties in Ottawa. CPS historian Margaret Archibald has succinctly summarized their careers which are of national interest:

Both of these well-known Yukon figures had arrived in Dawson during the feverish days of 1897-1898. George Black, a young New Brunswick lawyer, served three terms on the Yukon Council before being appointed Yukon Commissioner in 1912. As Captain in the Canadian Expeditionary Force he led the Yukon Infantry Company overseas in 1916, returning to the Yukon in 1919. Since the office of the Commissioner had been abolished in his absence, Black turned to provincial politics in British Columbia. While unsuccessful in this attempt he ran as the [federal] Conservative candidate and won the Yukon seat in the general election of 1921, a seat which he held for three subsequent terms. In 1930 he was elected Speaker of the House of Commons.

Martha Louise Munger Purdy had ventured to the Yukon from Chicago in 1898 and was manager of two Munger sawmills [in Dawson] when she met George Black . . . and married him in 1904. As wife of the Commissioner (1912-1916) Martha was well-known for her quick wit, her sometimes unorthodox approach to society and her success in Yukon horticulture. The elaborate formal gardens that are now commonly considered to be the historical setting of the Commissioner's residence flourished during her occupancy. It was partly this botanical interest that earned her honours as Fellow of the Royal Geographical Society (London) in 1917, and a reputation as an authority on the subject of Yukon wildflowers. During the war Martha accompanied her husband as far as England where she took an active part in wartime social work and where she gave hundreds of lectures on the Yukon.

During George Black's first eight years as M.P., the two spent their summers in Dawson, probably

renting from George's brother John Black a bungalow bordering the eastern edge of the Government Reserve. Not until 1929 did they purchase a home of their own, namely this two storey house on Fifth Avenue. It is probable that the Blacks inhabited this house during most parliamentary recesses until George declined the Conservative nomination in 1949.

In 1935, after fourteen continuous years in the House of Commons, the last five of them as Speaker, Black was forced by a [health] breakdown to withdraw. In the election of that year Martha ran as an Independent Conservative and won the Yukon seat, thus becoming only the second female Member of Parliament in Canada. She sat for one term only, withdrawing when her husband was again able to run in 1940. He resumed and held his seat until 1949, and was appointed Privy Councillor in 1945. On July 1 1946 Martha Black was awarded the decoration of O.B.E. for her "Cultural and social contributions to the Yukon."

References to the periods spent in the Fifth Avenue house (ca. 1929-1949) indicate a lifestyle that while certainly more modest, was probably not unlike life in the Commissioner's residence. Friends and political contacts were entertained (this was one of the first Dawson stops during the Yukon visit of the Minister of Mines and Resources in 1942), renovations were undertaken, and a large and colourful Yukon garden was planted and tended. While both of Martha Black's books, My Seventy Years and Yukon Wildflowers, were published during her ownership of the house, it is not known whether they were actually written here.

The Blacks owned this property at least until 1948. As a reference for the following year indicates a Whitehouse address for them, George Black's refusal of the P.C. nomination in 1949 may have brought an end to their tradition of summer residence in Dawson. The Blacks continued to live in Whitehorse, the new territorial capital, until 1957 when Martha died at the age of 91. George Black died in Vancouver in 1965.<sup>2</sup>

Another resident of the house was a figure of some historical note as well: Thomas Dufferin Pattullo who owned and lived in it from 1905 to 1906. Again, Margaret Archibald has provided a summary of his life and career:

Pattullo had entered the territory in 1898 as secretary to J.M. Walsh, the first Commissioner. He rose through the administrative ranks to become Assistant Gold Commissioner in 1902, following J.L. Bell to that post. During the time in which he lived in this house he ran a brokerage and financial partnership and while still in Dawson sat on City Council. He left Dawson for Prince Rupert and became mayor of that city ca. 1913. In 1916 he was elected as its Liberal MLA. From cabinet minister (1916-1928) and leader of the Liberal party in 1928 Pattullo became Premier of British Columbia, 1933-1941. He died in 1956.<sup>3</sup>

### Local Development

The Black House was one of a number of non-governmental structures erected on the eastern side of the 40-acre Government Reserve in Dawson's south end. Apparently the lots on which they were built were considered extraneous to government needs being on its eastern periphery. This strip had become even more separated from the Reserve's core area when Fifth Avenue was pushed across it in 1899.<sup>4</sup> A more obvious boundary was thus created for the west side development which included Fort Herchmer (the NWMP post), other government buildings, and the three protestant churches with their attendant residences and outbuildings.

The character of the eastern section changed markedly in late 1901 with the building of the territorial Administration Building (the equivalent of a provincial capital building) on the east side of Fifth Avenue near the corner of Church Street. Originally planned for a location on Front Street facing the Yukon River, the large and imposing edifice was built here instead. A small hospital, a Masonic Hall and a cabin had to be removed to accommodate it on its site,<sup>5</sup> but the Black House which was about three fourths of a block to the south was not affected. Built only a short time previously (either late 1900 or early 1901<sup>6</sup>) the house probably had little to do with the choice of site for the new government building, but it certainly fit in well with the area's upgraded character which this large new

structure brought about.

## ARCHITECTURE

### Aesthetic

The Black House is one of Dawson's most prestigious residences, surpassing others in its size, height, and architectural details (Figures 1-4). The basic two-storey portion is cube-like in form but this has been enlivened with numerous projections including dormer windows, a front porch, and side and rear extensions. The roofs over all projections are well designed and proportioned. In most cases they echo the hipped shape of the main roof and repeat its widely overhanging eaves. Details such as turned verandah posts, diamond panes in some of the windows, and a colour emphasis of the trim (black against the dark cream of the walls) contribute to its appeal. The well-restored interior is no less attractive. Here, the most outstanding aesthetic details are the metal panels pressed with decorative motifs on the walls and ceiling of the breakfast room (Figure 8, right); the wide mouldings throughout the house; and the fine hardware (door hinges and knobs), of which some pieces are also pressed with decorative designs. The ruffled shade light fixtures in the dining room and breakfast area are reproductions similar to what was originally in place (compare Figures 8 and 9 with Figure 11).

While the Black House is clearly one of Dawson's best, it is not unusual in size, form and quality when compared to houses in the rest of Canada, especially to others in the West where wood is the most common construction material. The use of hipped roofs on the dormers narrows the number of comparable examples somewhat. The CIHB inventory reveals that these were used in both modest and substantial houses and in both small towns and urban centres. Some dormers have additional features reminiscent of the Black House, but none in the inventory show their exact placement in which the windows break through the eaves line.

One house in the village of Carmangay, Alberta is modest indeed (Figure 15). Like the Black House it has a considerable roof overhang, a front porch with turned posts, and a side and rear extension, but these latter are much less complex than those at Dawson. Another house in Moose Jaw, Saskatchewan is a little larger and apparently better appointed (Figure 14). Its main hipped roof is much steeper than in the previous example, and dormers project from it on all four sides. Its other projections are a bay window and a shed-roofed extension to the rear - again, a simpler composition than at Dawson. Two other examples are in British Columbia - one at Revelstoke (Figure 17) and one in Vancouver (Figure 16). Both are slightly larger and more pretentious than the Dawson house and have their own features of interest. All, however, share a lively use of projecting forms and understated decoration (primarily in the window glass and verandah posts), imparting an informal graciousness to their respective aesthetic designs. The Black House may be slightly smaller than the British Columbia examples but its overall aesthetic composition is at least the equal of these in terms of proportion, scale and detail.

#### Functional Design

The functional design of the Black House has proved its effectiveness through satisfactory use by sophisticated owners and tenants (ca. 1900-1975), and most recently, through its adaptability to a good refurbishment by CPS. The ground floor layout now consists of living and dining rooms, a breakfast room and kitchen, a pantry, a laundry room and furnace room (Figure 10). An enclosed porch facing south is accessible from the dining room and provides a sun-catching sheltered area in which to grow plants - a welcome feature in the north (Figures 3, 5). The front hallway (Figure 8, left) is too narrow to be a grand entrance but it adequately provides access to the house with an air lock for the cold days of winter. The second floor containing three bedrooms and a bathroom is reached by way of a



straight flight of stairs, rather awkwardly leading up at a right angle from the front hall. The second floor hallway is more generously proportioned, and the straight stairway to the attic room leads up from it. Built-in storage space on the ground floor as well as upstairs was carefully considered in the original design, and has either been maintained by CPS or adapted.

Some features which had been added throughout the building's history were demolished by CPS because of their poor condition and lack of essential usefulness (e.g. a breakfast nook off the kitchen, and a woodshed to the rear).<sup>7</sup> There were also some re-arrangements of doors and partitions to relocate the kitchen, and to create a laundry and a furnace room. On the whole, however, the layout is little changed, at least from its historically significant period when the Blacks resided here.

Rehabilitation of the building has dictated the replacement of some outdated components with modern ones such as heating ducts, the electrical system, and plumbing fixtures. There has also been some replacement of structural timberwork and millwork. Old wall finishes of wallpaper on muslin were recorded, removed, and replaced with period style reproduction wallpapers over gypsum board panels.<sup>8</sup> The decorative pressed metal panels in the former kitchen were recycled for use in the newly created breakfast room. Door hardware, which includes wrought brass escutcheons and porcelain door knobs, is mostly original and is notable for its fine quality.

The main structural problem of this frame building has been the foundation. As in so many Dawson buildings which KNHS has acquired, the foundation posts were decayed because of poor drainage and occasional flooding. A new wooden foundation was installed early in 1988 and the house was raised at the same time.<sup>9</sup> The building should now offer many more years of comfortable living in functionally satisfying conditions.

### Craftsmanship and Materials

The workmanship in the Black House is of very good quality, both in its original components and in the restoration that was carried out by CPS in 1978/79. The latter work was done only after careful assessment of the as-found condition and according to detailed specifications set out by CPS restoration architects. In the new breakfast room (former kitchen) for example, there were 14 points for the workmen to follow regarding salvage of the old metal panels. After removal from their existing positions on the walls, they were to be wire brushed to remove peeling paint, roughened with steel wool, and washed down with mineral spirits. Panels were then to be primed before re-installation.<sup>10</sup> This took some careful fitting and matching with new material as the room configuration for the new use was not exactly as it had originally been. Similar care was taken in salvaging the woodwork and in integrating it with new replacement material.

### **ENVIRONMENT**

#### Site

The Black House property has gone through a number of changes, none of which have drastically affected its continuing character as a substantial residence on a corner lot. Additions to the house (which already had original protrusions of front porch and dining room extension - see Figure 12) came early. By ca. 1918 the south side verandah seems to have been in place as well as the two small additions to the rear.<sup>11</sup> By 1938 the verandah had been given an enclosing low balustrade, and by 1949 at least, it was completely closed in with windows in the upper portion - the state to which CPS has recently restored it. At some point (it is difficult to tell when), a small breakfast nook was appended off the north side of the kitchen, but this was not retained by CPS which deemed it "structurally and aesthetically unsatisfactory, and likely to complicate foundation construction."<sup>12</sup> Where an old lean-to shed (referred to at one point as an office) had

been (by 1949 at least), a new addition housing the rear entrance, furnace room and utilities room has been built. A gravel driveway with ample room to park recreational vehicles, a boat and other modern equipment leads off from Fifth Avenue to the garage on the north-east corner of the property. Outbuildings include a restored garden shed, a new single car garage, and a small greenhouse attached to it. A new picket fence now encircles the property, replacing a similar one that had been there for many years. This in turn had replaced the original pole fence which echoed the lines and materials of a rustic gazebo in the south side yard (Figure 12).

The most regrettable change to the double lot property (100 ft. by 100 ft.) is the loss of the once-impressive garden. Martha Black created a horticultural showpiece here shortly after she moved in. Many flowering plants which could thrive in northern latitudes were laid out in a formal plan which included a rock garden, gravel paths and a stone walkway. CPS did develop a plan to restore it based on considerable research<sup>13</sup> but this has not been implemented. In 1988 when the Black House was raised and given a new foundation, a simple lawn was planted instead and a few annuals were set around the foundation and sidewalk.

### Setting

The Black House is something of an anomaly in south Dawson. A fine house on a prominent lot, it is near the prestigious Administration Building and Minto Park to the east, both of which enhance the Black House property. On the other hand, there is a modern swimming pool and change house directly butted up to the Black House driveway (Figure 7), and the territorial government Highways Department has an unsightly storage lot across the street. In this environment, the Black House has a fairly imposing presence, but it is not enough to overcome the negative factors which seriously detract from its setting.

### Landmark

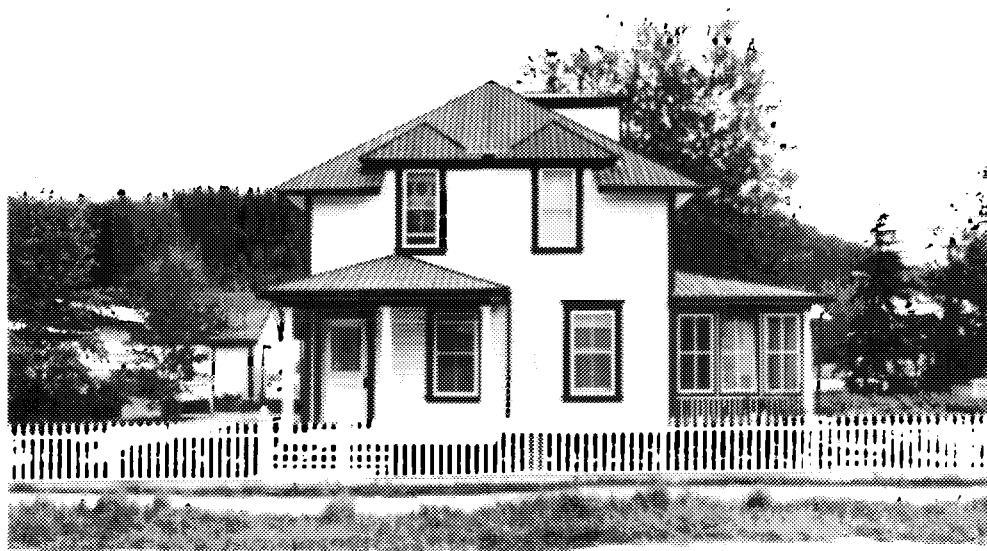
The Black House is south of Dawson's downtown core (Figure 5) and is therefore not as conspicuous a landmark as some of KNHS's other historic buildings. It is, however, highlighted on tour maps and many visitors do walk the extra distance beyond the Dawson City Museum (in the old territorial Administration Building) a short distance down the street. There is a small sign on the south west corner of the property's fence interpreting the important associations of famous Yukoners with this house. Being on a corner property the house is fully visible to the considerable traffic that passes by on Fifth Avenue - a major route leading into and out of town (Figures 5, 6). It also gains exposure to local residents by its proximity to the city's swimming pool next door (Figure 7).

### Endnotes

- 1 Letter [from building inspector M. Duguay] to Department of Public Works Chief Architect, C.G. Brault, 28 April 1949. [in Ken Elder's file marked "Dawson City - Black House"]
- 2 Margaret Archibald, "The Black House. Government Addition 1-15-1. Dawson, Y.T. [hereafter cited as "The Black House . . ."]", pp. 5-7.
- 3 Ibid., p. 5.
- 4 Margaret Archibald, "A Structural History of the Administration Building, Dawson, Yukon Territory," Parks Canada Manuscript Report Number 217 (Ottawa: Parks Canada, 1977), p. 20.
- 5 Archibald, "The Black House . . .", p. 3.
- 6 Archibald points out that the house was probably already under construction when the Dominion Land Titles Office recorded lot 1-15-11 of the Government Reserve as transferred to William Creem in late 1900. Certainly by spring 1901 the house was in place as indicated by a panoramic photograph of that time. Ibid., p. 1.
- 7 [Ken Elder], "Black Residence, Dawson, Y.T. Rehabilitation Design and Work Outline. Restoration Services Division Component [hereafter cited as "Black Residence . . ."]

- Rehabilitation"]" (Ottawa: Department of Indian Affairs and Northern Development, 1977), pp. 17-18.
- 8 The restoration work is described in Ibid., pp. 31-79.
- 9 This information gained in site visit accompanied by KNHS Heritage Recorder, Robie Van Rumpt, 27 July 1988.
- 10 Ken Elder, op. cit., pp. 52-53.
- 11 The evolution is summarized in Ken Elder, op. cit., pp. 9-18.
- 12 [Ken Elder], "The Black Residence: Preliminary Accommodation Study and Rehabilitation Proposal," ([AES, PWC, DU, EC-CPS], June 1976), p. 2.
- 13 Ibid., p. 1 and Figure 6. See also historical photograph of the garden in Martha Black's time illustrated as Figure 6 in [Ken Elder], "Black Residence . . . Rehabilitation", p. 16. See also Sheila J. Minni, "Archaeological Exploration of the Klondike Historic Sites. 1976 and 1977," Parks Canada Manuscript Report Number 309 (Ottawa: Parks Canada, 1978), pp. 30-35.

BLACK HOUSE, DAWSON, YUKON



- 1 Black House on Fifth Ave. at Turner St., Dawson, Yukon; constructed ca. 1900; front (west) view in 1987. (EC-CPS, KNHS, 1987.)

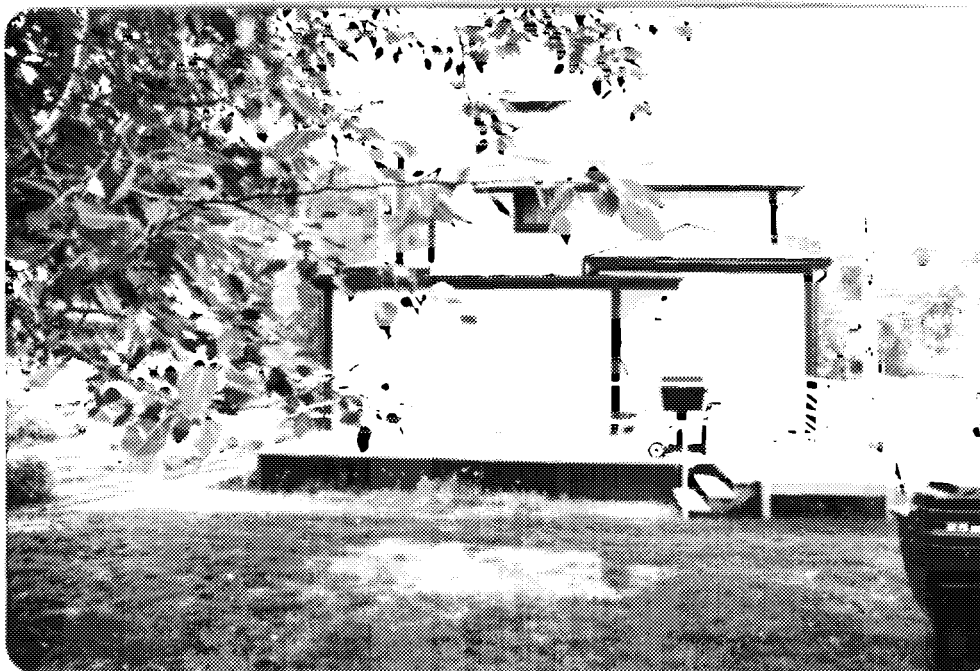


- 2 Black House; north side view with driveway in foreground. (EC-CPS, KNHS, 1987.)

BLACK HOUSE, DAWSON, YUKON



3 Black House in summer 1987; south side view. EC-CPS, KNHS, 1987.)



4 Black House in summer 1987; east (rear) view. (EC-CPS, KNHS, 1987.)

BLACK HOUSE, DAWSON, YUKON



- 5 Black House at north east corner of Fifth Ave. (left) and Turner Street (to the right). Administration Building (now Dawson City Museum) is barely visible farther down the street, along with its shed that houses one of the early locomotives that traveled over the White Pass and Yukon Route railway. (EC-CPS, KNHS, 1987.)



- 6 Black House and Fifth Ave. leading into centre of town to the north. (J. Mattie, EC-CPS, AHB, 1988.)



- 7 Civic swimming pool next door to the Black House on the north side. (J. Mattie, EC-CPS, AHB, 1988.)



BLACK HOUSE, DAWSON, YUKON

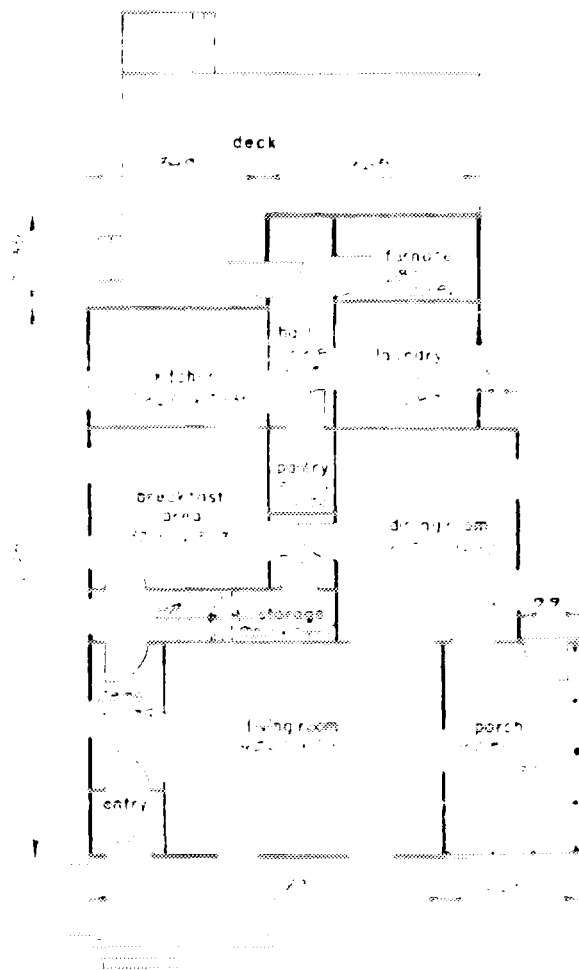


8 Interior of Black House as restored by CPS; front entrance and living room to the left (left); breakfast room looking toward kitchen and back hallway (right). (J. Mattie, EC-CPS, AHB, 1988.)



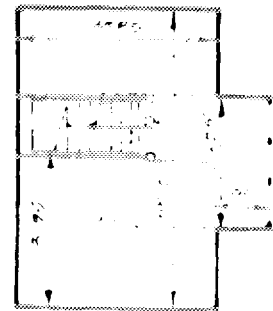
9 Interior of Black House as restored by CPS; dining room looking toward living room. (J. Mattie, EC-CPS, AHB, 1988.)

# BLACK HOUSE, DAWSON, YUKON



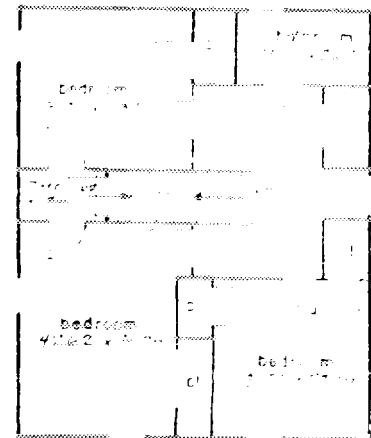
GROUND FLOOR PLAN

SCALE 1/4" = 1'-0"



ATTIC FLOOR PLAN

SCALE 1/4" = 1'-0"



SECOND FLOOR PLAN

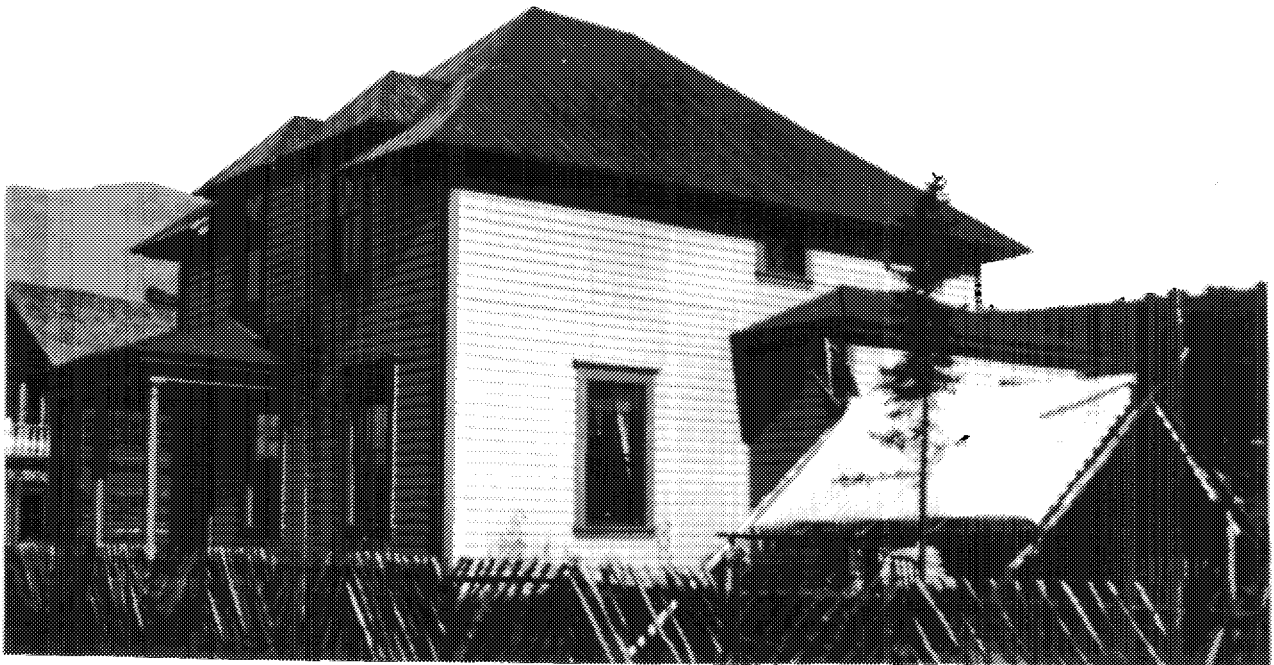
SCALE 1/4" = 1'-0"

- 10 Black House; ground, second and attic floor plans. (EC-CPS, KNHS, 1987.)

BLACK HOUSE, DAWSON, YUKON

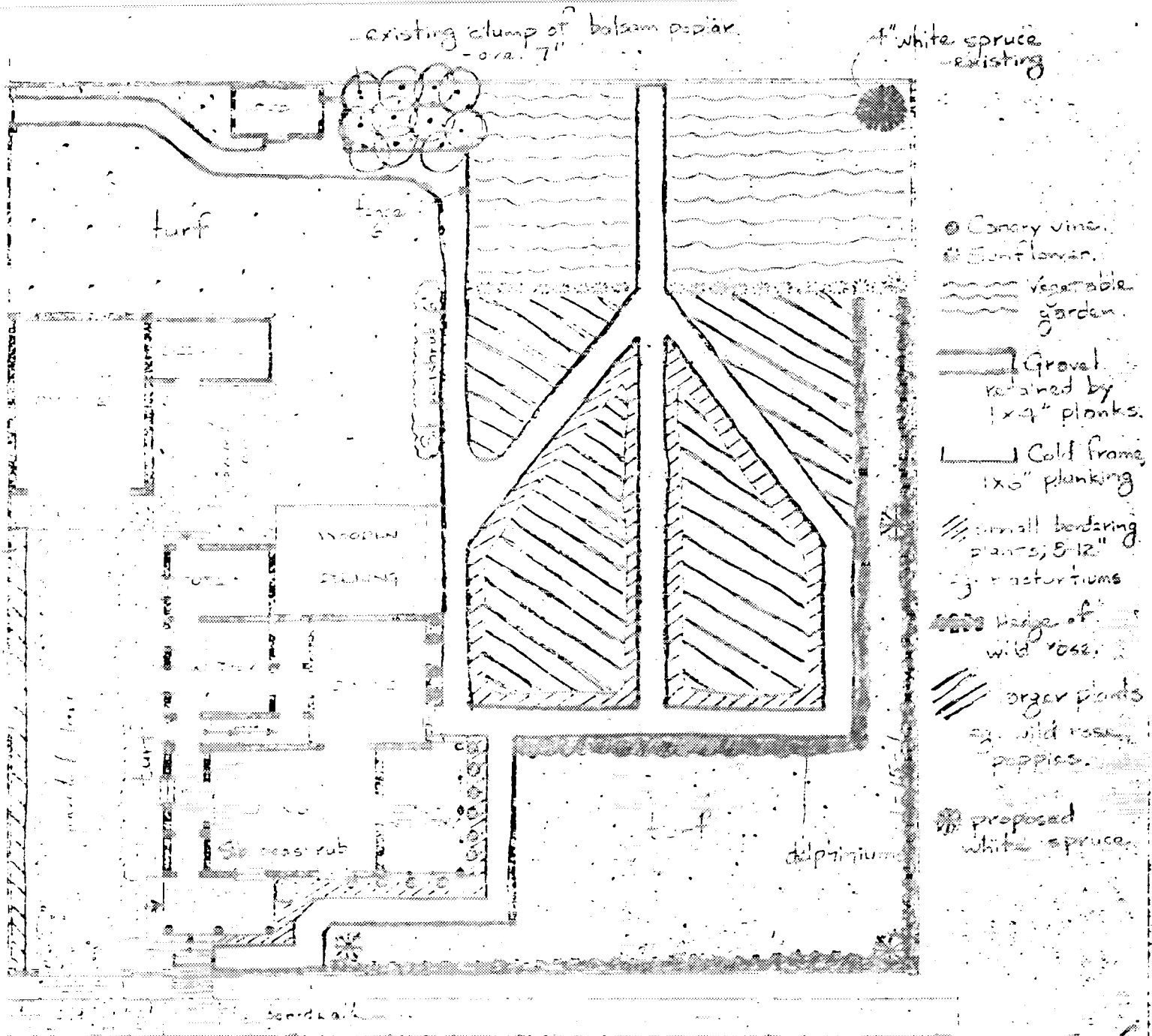


- 11 This photo is identified as "Interior view of Mr. Coffey's residence (Yukon) summer of 1906." Whether or not this is the Mr. Coffey that occupied the Black House ca. 1924-29 is not known, but the photo shows an interior that would have been much like the one in the Black House.  
(NA/AN, PA-102901.)

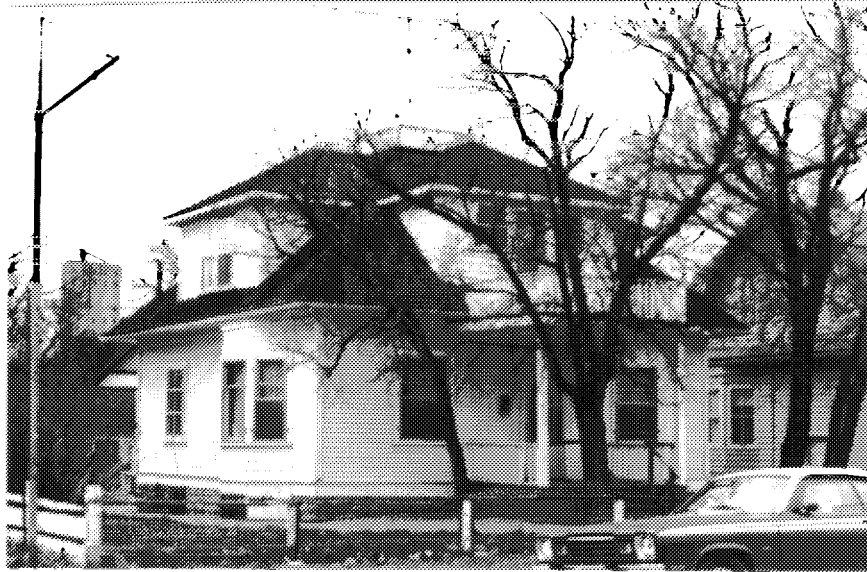


- 12 Black House in 1901 when it was apparently occupied by J.L. Bell but owned by William Creem; view from south west side.  
(NA/AN, PA-17017.)

# BLACK HOUSE, DAWSON, YUKON



- 13 Plan of Black House property and proposed restoration of Martha Black's ca. 1930 garden. Note that rear part of house was not developed according to this plan. The garage, greenhouse and shed are, however, close to what was built or restored. (The Black Residence: Preliminary Accommodation Study and Rehabilitation Proposal, June 1976, Ken Elder, AES, PWC, DU, EC-CPS.)



- 14 House at 421 Stadacona St. West, Moose Jaw, Saskatchewan; constructed ca. 1900. (EC-CPS, CIHB, 1973.)



- 15 Two views of house at Carmangay, Alberta; constructed in 1913. (EC-CPS, CIHB, 1974.)

BLACK HOUSE, DAWSON, YUKON



16 House at 2395 - 7th Ave. West, Vancouver, British Columbia; constructed ca. 1912. (EC-CPS, CIHB, 1973.)



17 House at 904 - 1st St. West, Revelstoke, British Columbia. (EC-CPS, CIHB, 1972.)



10.        **Commanding Officer's Residence**  
          508 Fifth Avenue  
          Dawson, Yukon

## **INTRODUCTION**

The Commanding Officer's (C.O.'s) Residence (Figures 1-4) was built in 1902 for Superintendent A.E.R. Cuthbert. He was in charge of the NWMP post, Fort Herchmer, at Dawson from 1902 to ca. 1906. During this time, Fort Herchmer achieved its greatest strength, manned by over 250 NWMP recruits and another 200 men from the Yukon Field Force (a unit of the Canadian Militia). They were accommodated in dozens of buildings on the 40-acre Government Reserve at the south end of town. Only four of these have survived - all CPS-owned structures, three of which have previously come to FHBRO for review (see Report Nos. 87-68, 87-69, 87-72). All were "Recognized" following evaluation.

## **HISTORICAL ASSOCIATIONS**

### Thematic

Because of the police service and government connections associated with the C.O.'s Residence, this building relates to NHPS's Theme 2(b), formulated to clarify the commemorative base for CPS activities in Dawson (i.e., "The development of Dawson as a supply, service and distribution centre . . . ; its development as a territorial capital"). The 1902 house is one of only four NWMP structures left on the Government Reserve<sup>1</sup> in the south end of the city - a compound named Fort Herchmer which once included dozens of police buildings and was the headquarters of a local force that included some 450 men.<sup>2</sup> The numerous buildings were indicative of the strong role which the NWMP had assumed in controlling development of the Yukon - a territory so recently

formed (June 1898) and so close in geography and cultural influence to American Alaska. By late 1898, the beginnings of a proper territorial administration had been set up, and over the next two years, various civil servants were dispatched from Ottawa to take over some of the non-police duties which the NWMP had been performing - postal service, recording of mining claims, justice, and others. Major public buildings to house their offices were erected on the Reserve as well, with the exception of the Post Office which was located downtown. The C.O.'s house was built only two years before major withdrawals of both police and territorial government personnel started to occur. For a brief time, however, it was a centre of activity for NWMP affairs, and for social occasions among Dawson's business and government elite.

#### Person/Event

The C.O.'s house was built for Superintendent A.E.R. Cuthbert, Commanding Officer of the NWMP post, Fort Herchmer, at Dawson. A native of Berthier, Québec (b.1860), and a graduate of McGill University, Cuthbert entered the NWMP in 1885.<sup>3</sup> He may well have gone immediately west to fight in the North West Rebellion for by 1886 he was in charge of the important NWMP detachment at Prince Albert, Saskatchewan,<sup>4</sup> only 44 km. north east of Batoche where the decisive battle which quelled the Métis uprising had occurred the previous year. Throughout 1886 he made regular reports on the still volatile conditions among the Métis of the area. Later (1899), Cuthbert volunteered for military service in the South African war, becoming a member of the Canadian Mounted Rifles contingent. By 1901, he was back with the NWMP in Canada, perhaps immediately posted to Dawson. By 1902, he was Superintendent there, and presided in this post until 1906 at least.<sup>6</sup> This period was the time of the NWMP's greatest strength at Dawson, peaking in 1904 with a force of over 250 men, supplemented by another 200 from the Yukon Field Force. Cuthbert's later career is sketchy, but it is known that he was a RNWMP Superintendent in Alberta in 1911 when there were police



crackdowns on bawdy houses there.<sup>7</sup>

#### Local Development

The C.O.'s house is a good example of the Government Reserve's change in character a few years after the Gold Rush of 1897-98. During the Rush it had been a collection of temporary log buildings, hastily constructed to house the burgeoning NWMP force that was working to maintain law and order in the Klondike and to provide Dawson with some of the other services it required.<sup>8</sup> Government officials were eventually appointed to take over non-police duties (e.g. justice, mail delivery, and sanitation inspections), and by 1902, three major buildings on the Government Reserve had been built to house them. These were the multi-use territorial Administration Building (1901),<sup>9</sup> the territorial Court House (1901),<sup>10</sup> and the Commissioner's Residence (1902).<sup>11</sup> The Reserve also had lands set aside for religious purposes. By 1901 the Presbyterians had replaced their early log buildings on a portion of these lands with an imposing Gothic Revival church, and a Second Empire style manse, both of frame construction (see Reports 13 and 14 within this submission). The Methodists and Anglicans developed lands on either side of the Presbyterian property.

For its part, the NWMP was also upgrading its early quarters from simple log structures to better frame ones. The C.O.'s house was among these buildings. Erected in 1902, it illustrates a time when expectations were high for a continuing role for the NWMP in Yukon development - just before the peak year of 1904 when the force (and the territorial administration too) reached its maximum strength and then quickly began to shrink due to the region's economic decline.

## ARCHITECTURE

### Aesthetic Design

The basic portion of the C.O.'s house is cube-shaped with a fairly high hipped roof (Figure 1). A two storey addition at the rear (Figures 2-4) relieves the heavy appearance of this solid mass (at least from some angles) as does a verandah which extends full length across its façade and down the south side. Window and door spacing is almost symmetrical across the front, although the second storey central window is slightly off-side, apparently so placed from the beginning. The simple geometrical design of the balustrade in the verandah was a popular one at the turn of the 20th century and was illustrated in at least one catalogue of the period.<sup>12</sup> A variation of it was also used in at least one other house on the Government Reserve at Dawson (Figure 15).

For other Canadian examples comparable to the C.O.'s Residence, the CIHB inventory has offered over 200 houses in Ontario and the western provinces. Most have a few added details to give architectural interest. A house at Hallowell, Ontario, for example, is similar in basic form, but has an angled corner entrance off a verandah that has a roof supported by posts on stone piers (Figure 14). Another house at Petrolia, Ontario (Figure 13) appears to predate the C.O.'s house by at least 20 years, showing architectural detailing from an earlier age - Italianate brackets along the eaves, Second Empire style iron cresting on the verandah roof, and Eastlake verandah posts. All are combined on a house whose basic shape and proportions are similar to the C.O.'s Residence in Dawson - illustrative of the enduring and adaptable qualities of this basic design.

### Functional Design

The original design of the C.O.'s house has been adaptable to modern use. When first built, the structure was a frame

two-storey single family residence (Figure 11) with attached rear kitchen, and probably servants quarters above this. Inhabited until about 1940, it was then vacant until 1976 when it was converted into two apartments by CPS - one on each level (Figure 5). Some awkward allocations of space in each unit (e.g. the dining room is too far removed from the kitchen in the ground floor unit) were the result of the retention of original bearing walls. In some other cases too, these original walls limited the design of a new and better layout.

Early foundation problems have been solved with the installation of new wooden cribbing underneath floor joists. The cribbing in turn rests on thick multi-layered plywood pads. Space between the first floor and ground levels is concealed with metal skirting. This is a feature long used in Dawson to give buildings a better appearance (it approximates the look of a concrete foundation) and to partially prevent drafty air transfers. Heating is now provided by hot water radiators, with supporting boilers located in a furnace room at the back of the house.<sup>13</sup> Again, this is a better system than the original one based on a cellar furnace and ductwork. Inevitably this caused ground melting, and therefore foundation sagging which had many destructive side effects.

CPS has reconstructed a number of other features to bring the house closer to its early state - the wooden shingles on the roof (replacing a metal covering put on in its later history), and an open verandah.<sup>14</sup> While the later enclosed verandah (in place by the 1930s at least) may have been more practical from a functional perspective, an open one was decided upon for reasons of economy and historical accuracy. The original was requested by Supt. Cuthbert in 1903, one year after the house was built.<sup>15</sup> Historical photographs (e.g. Figure 11) show that it was fitted with retractable curtains (presumably canvas) that would have afforded some privacy and protection from the wind.

### Craftsmanship and Materials

As originally built, the C.O.'s House seems to have enjoyed a good level of workmanship. It appears straight and sturdy in early photographs and carefully finished in its details which were by no means elaborate. Its poor state of repair by 1912<sup>16</sup> was an indication of the failure of the heating and foundation design, rather than a failure of workmanship. This has been rectified by recent CPS-supervised work which has included careful restoration and/or reconstructions of exterior elements such as the new verandah. Interior work is not now of a very high quality (Figures 6, 7), but would be easily reversible if a decision were ever taken to restore the interior as well.

### Designer

No architect has so far been identified for the C.O.'s Residence. It is quite possible, however, that the design was produced within the NWMP administration, as presumably was the case for the Sergeant's Mess and Canteen.<sup>17</sup> Another possibility is that Robert Moncrieff was responsible. In 1903 this private architect/builder designed the NWMP stables at Fort Herchmer and was designing and building other structures around town.<sup>18</sup>

## **ENVIRONMENT**

### Site

In 1902 the C.O.'s Residence was built on a large lot on Fifth Avenue, directly across from the territorial Administration Building between Church and Turner Streets. Its back side faced the Government Reserve collection of NWMP buildings and the religious properties along Church Street. The former related closely in function to the C.O.'s House but were physically separated from it by a slough which cut across the Reserve. A bridge to the south and west of the house connected the two areas. One or more cabins may have been removed from the C.O.'s lot to accommodate its construction, as suggested in a photograph

of 1900.<sup>19</sup> There was, however, a good deal of open space as well, so if there was a site disruption in 1900, it would seem to have been minor.

The current physical relationship of the house to Fifth Avenue and the Administration Building is very similar today to that when built. There has been a change in use, however, due to Dawson's loss of status as capital of the Yukon. No longer does this part of Fifth Avenue bustle with the activities of territorial officials, civil servants, and Mounted Police. Rather it is now mainly animated by tourism, with some heavy machinery activity taking place to the south.

Vegetation and fencing changes appear to be the only major alterations within and along the C.O.'s property lines since 1902. At first denuded of any trees that may previously have existed, the site in 1902 was bare and open, thus making the house much more visible than it is today (Figure 11). A 1903 aerial photograph also shows long lengths of fencing defining the property's north and south boundaries.<sup>20</sup> These extend to the lot's western extremity which terminates at the slough (a portion of this fence is visible on the left side of Figure 10). Another photograph taken in 1933 shows that the property at that time was more carefully landscaped.<sup>21</sup> The slab fence has disappeared. Gravel driveways and paths have been laid, and trees and lawns have been planted in a formal arrangement.

Today the property is quite overgrown with trees on its north and south sides (Figures 8-10). A picket fence separates the east side of the lot from the Fifth Avenue boardwalk and there is a short length of the same fencing on the north side as well (Figure 3). A large parking area has been created on the north side, with access off the lane that goes beside St. Andrew's manse and connects with Fourth and Fifth Avenues. Landfilling has practically eliminated the slough that once was a strong influence on the property's orientation. On the west side of

where it once existed, only three NWMP buildings remain (the Married Officer's Quarters, the Hospital/Jail, and the Stables - see FHBRO Report Numbers 87-68, 87-69, 87-72). These are now easily accessible from the C.O.'s by pedestrian routes. The relationship between all former NWMP buildings is rather obscured, however, by infill development and loss of context.

### Setting

The C.O.'s house is not a visually prominent building on Fifth Avenue, primarily because of its dark brown colour which makes it blend in with its surrounding heavy growth of trees. It is, however, at least compatible with the imposing Administration Building across the street, and with Saint Andrew's Manse to the north and west (Figure 8). Less compatible is the equipment and building materials storage yard owned by the City, immediately to the rear on the property's west side.

### Landmark

Being directly across the street from the Dawson City Museum (in the old territorial Administration Building - Figure 8) means that the C.O.'s Residence is conspicuous to tourists who inevitably make the museum one of the stops in their Dawson visit. The house is also marked in tourist maps of the city, and is interpreted on CPS guided walking tours. As a landmark for vehicular travellers on Fifth Avenue, the house suffers in immediate recognition because of its visual camouflage (a dark volume in a thick growth of trees) and because of its neighbour - the attention-grabbing Administration Building.

### Endnotes

- 1 For a history of Fort Herchmer, see Edward F. Bush, "Fort Herchmer, Dawson: Past and Present," Parks Canada Manuscript Report Number 78 (Ottawa: Parks Canada, 1972).
- 2 This number includes both NWMP and Yukon Field Force personnel. Their numbers declined after 1904. See Bryan Dewalt, "Thematic" section of "NWMP Married Officers'

Quarters," "NWMP Hospital/Jail," "NWMP Stables," FHBRO Report Nos. 87-68, 87-69, 87-72.

- 3 Henry James Morgan (ed.), The Canadian Men and Women of the Time: A Handbook of Canadian Biography of Living Characters (Toronto: William Briggs, 1912), p. 291.
- 4 John Peter Turner, The North-West Mounted Police. 1873-1893. Volume II (Ottawa: Edmond Cloutier, 1950), pp. 271 and 290.
- 5 T. Morris Longstreth, The Silent Force (New York: The Century Co., 1927), p. 224.
- 6 R.C. Fetherstonhaugh, The Royal Canadian Mounted Police (New York: Carrick & Evans, Inc., 1938), p. 142.
- 7 "Busy Bawdies," Horizon Canada, Volume 5, No. 59 (Saint-Laurent, Québec: Centre for the Study of Teaching Canada, Inc., 1985), pp. 1406-1411.
- 8 For another discussion of "Local Development" apropos to Fort Herchmer, see Bryan Dewalt, op. cit.
- 9 See Margaret E. Archibald, "A Structural History of the Administration Building, Dawson, Yukon Territory," Parks Canada Manuscript Report Number 217 (Ottawa: Parks Canada, 1977).
- 10 See Joan Mattie, "Court House, Dawson, Yukon," FHBRO Report No. 87-63. Designated "Classified" after evaluation.
- 11 See Joan Mattie, "Commissioner's Residence, Dawson, Yukon," FHBRO Report No. 87-66. Designated "Classified" after evaluation.
- 12 The Victorian Design Book. A Complete Guide to Victorian House Trim: Reprint of a Universal Design Book Containing Official Price Lists (Ottawa: Lee Valley Tools, 1984), p. 200. Illustrated in Joan Mattie, "Light Station at Cape Sable Island, Nova Scotia," Figure 24, FHBRO Report No. 87-115.
- 13 "Specifications for Plumbing and Heating Installations. C.O.'s Quarters. Dawson City. Yukon Territory, February 6th, 1976" (In Andy Powter [AES, PWC, DU, EC-CPS] file marked "Maintenance: C.O.'s Residence")
- 14 Ibid., memo from R.G. Stuart to "FILE".
- 15 Bush, op. cit., p. 119.
- 16 Ibid., p. 136. Bush gives a detailed account of the problems and of the prison labour that was used to cope with repairs and maintenance.

- 17 Illustrated in Ibid., Figure 56, p. 173.
- 18 Dewalt, op. cit., "Designer" section of "NWMP Stables", FHBRO Report No. 87-72.
- 19 National Archives of Canada photograph number PA-13327. Illustrated in St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church, Dawson. A Structural and Use History. Prepared for Parks Canada Prairie Region. (Ottawa: Commonwealth Historic Resource Management Limited, 1984), Figure 7.
- 20 Vancouver Public Library photograph. Illustrated in Ibid., Figure 28.
- 21 Yukon Archives photograph. Illustrated in Ibid., Figure 52.



COMMANDING OFFICER'S RESIDENCE, DAWSON, YUKON



- 1 NWMP Commanding Officer's (C.O.'s) Residence, 508 Fifth Ave., Dawson, Yukon; constructed in 1902; front view in 1897. (EC-CPS, KNHS, 1987.)



- 2 C.O.'s Residence; south side view. (EC-CPS, KNHS, 1987.)

COMMANDING OFFICER'S RESIDENCE, DAWSON, YUKON

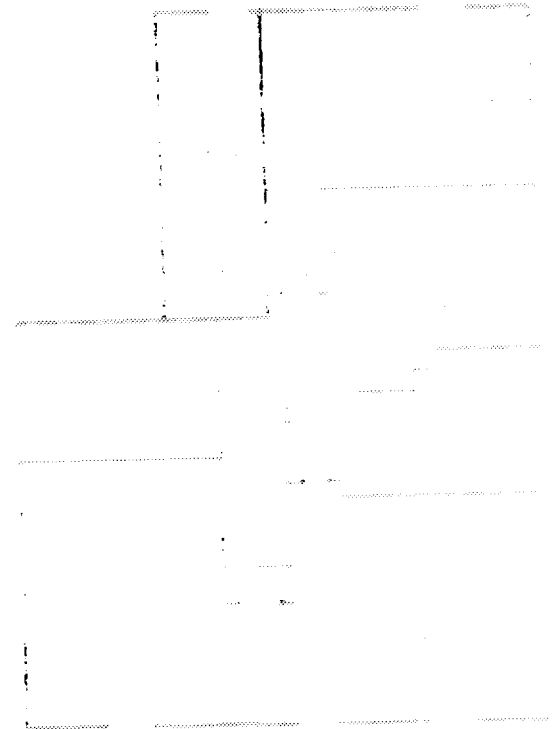
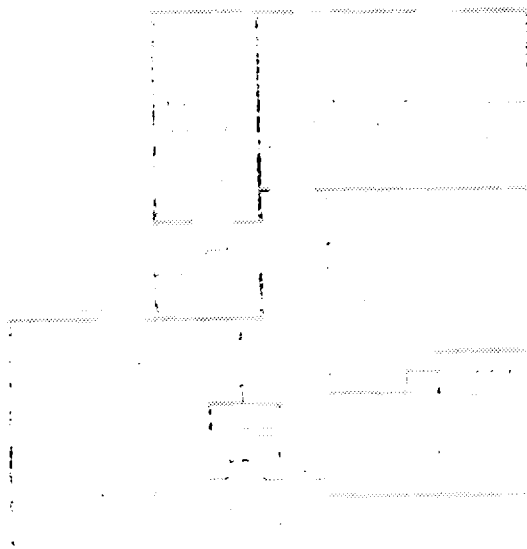


3 C.O.'s Residence; rear (west) view. (EC-CPS, KNHS, 1987.)



4 C.O.'s Residence; north side view. (EC-CPS, KNHS, 1987.)

COMMANDING OFFICER'S RESIDENCE, DAWSON, YUKON



SECOND FLOOR PLAN

GROUND FLOOR PLAN

- 5 C.O.'s Residence; ground and second floor plans. (EC-CPS, KNHS, 1987.)

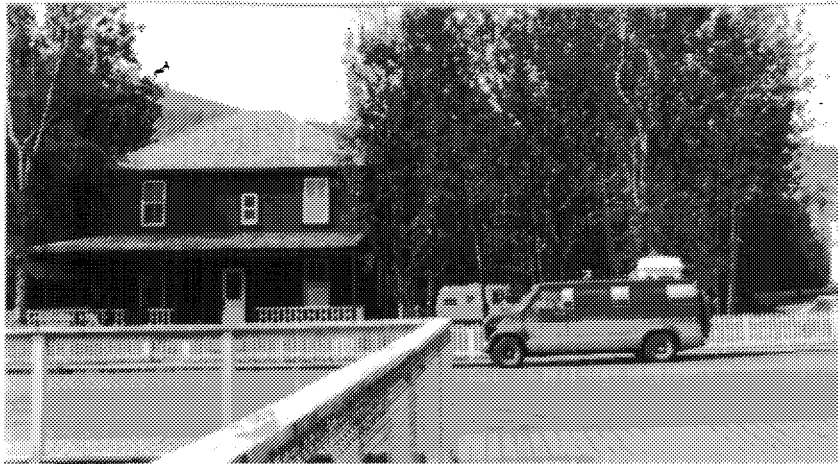
COMMANDING OFFICER'S RESIDENCE, DAWSON, YUKON

- 6 C.O.'s Residence; ground floor hallway. (EC-CPS, KNHS, 1988.)

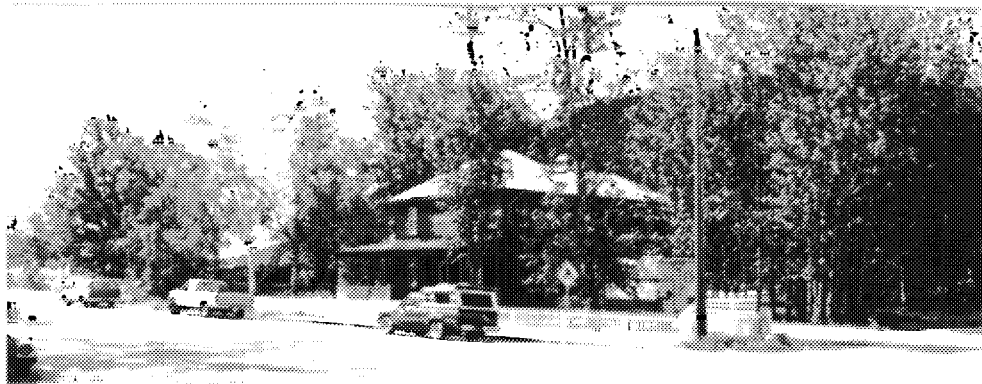


- 7 C.O.'s Residence;  
living/dining area in  
ground floor apartment.  
(EC-CPS, KNHS, 1988.)

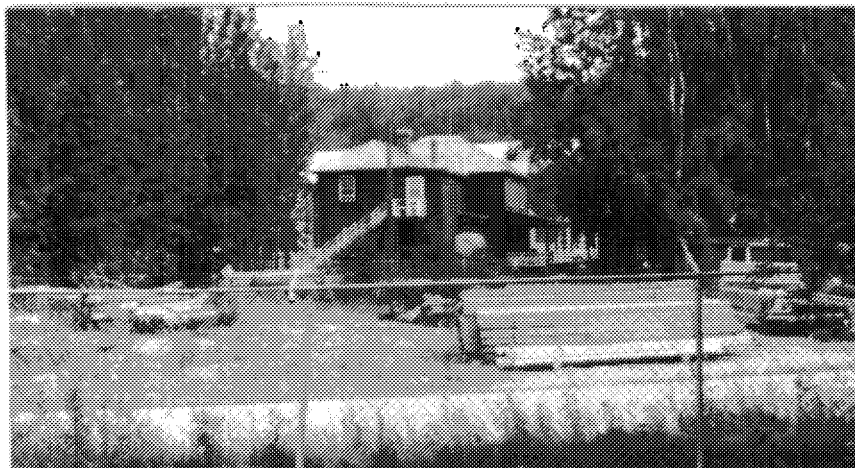
COMMANDING OFFICER'S RESIDENCE, DAWSON, YUKON



- 8 C.O.'s Residence as seen from plaza in front of Administration Building. (J. Mattie, EC-CPS, AHB, 1988.)

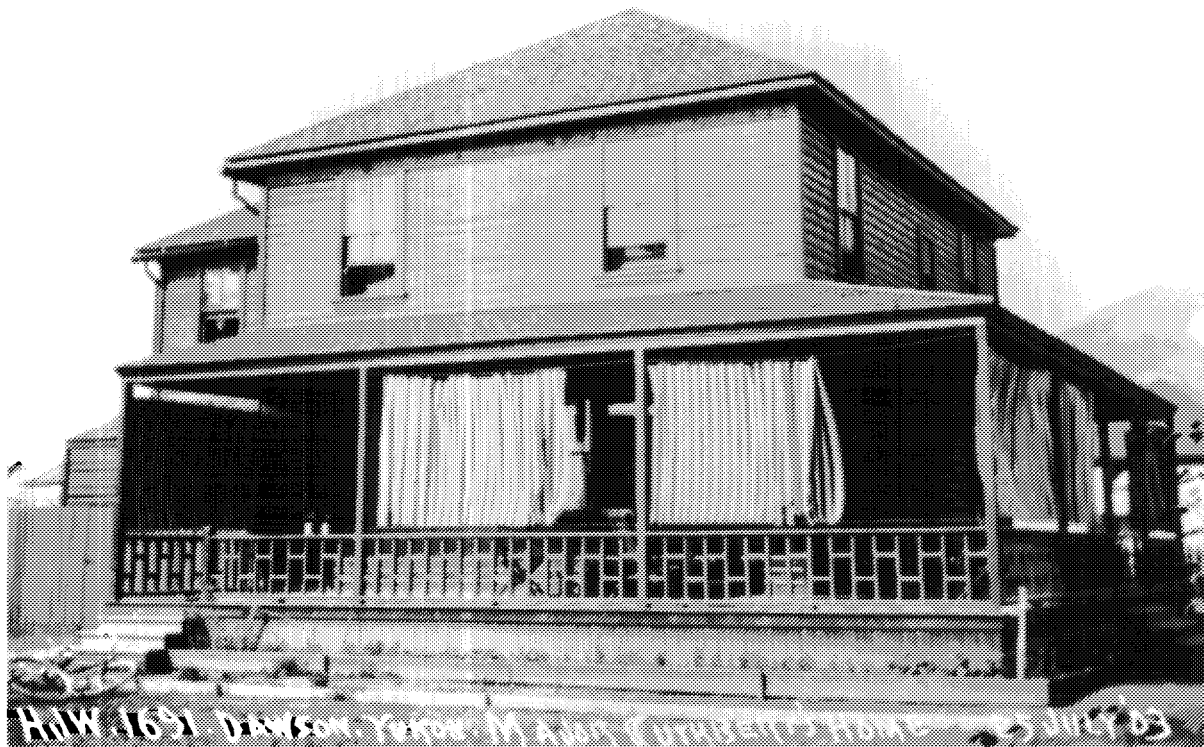


- 9 C.O.'s Residence on west side of Fifth Ave., between Church and Turner Streets. (EC-CPS, KNHS, 1987.)



- 10 C.O.'s Residence; rear view showing proximity to equipment and building supplies storage yard. (J. Mattie, EC-CPS, 1988.)

COMMANDING OFFICER'S RESIDENCE, DAWSON, YUKON



11 C.O.'s Residence; view from south east in 1903. (NA/AN, PA-16582.)



12 C.O.'s Residence and another RCMP residence to the right (since demolished); view from south east during flood of 1944. (NA/AN, PA-102689.)





- 13 House at 420 Warren Ave., Petrolia, Ontario; constructed ca. 1872. (EC-CPS, CIHB, 1972.)



- 14 House at Hallowell, Ontario; constructed ca. 1880. (EC-CPS, CIHB, 1972.)



- 15 Unidentified house on Government Reserve with a verandah similar to that on the C.O.'s Residence. Superintendent Cuthbert's superior, Commissioner Z.T. Wood (in charge of the NWMP in the whole Yukon Territory), is standing in the doorway. (NA/AN. C-42768.)



11. St. Andrew's Presbyterian Manse  
601 Fourth Ave.  
Dawson, Yukon
12. St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church  
Church St. at Fourth Ave.  
Dawson, Yukon

## INTRODUCTION

St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church and Manse were both built in 1901 on Government Reserve land set aside for religious use. These imposing frame structures replaced log ones built during the height of the Klondike Gold Rush in 1898, all built under direction of the Rev. Dr. Andrew S. Grant, a prominent figure in Dawson's and the Yukon's early development. After serving as a major focus of community life, the church was abandoned in 1932 when its dwindled congregation joined with St. Paul's Anglican down the street. Subsequently, it fell into an advanced state of decay but was stabilized in its condition through measures undertaken by CPS. The manse was occasionally used by the Women's Auxiliary of St. Paul's after 1932, and by the I.O.D.E. which repaired and refurnished it in 1940. By 1977, when acquired by KNHS, the manse had long been neglected but was still in fairly good restorable condition. Exterior restoration was, in fact, carried out in 1982/83 and the interior was rehabilitated into living quarters for KNHS staff - a three bedroom family home and a one bedroom apartment.

## HISTORICAL ASSOCIATIONS

### Thematic

The 1901 church and manse relate to CPS Theme 2(b) ("The development of Dawson as a supply, service and distribution centre; its development as a territorial capital") through the social and religious services to the community that they housed. The St. Andrew's minister and congregation not only worked for the psychological and spiritual well-being of members, they also gave health and welfare care to the needy in general, and made entertainment and educational programmes available to the whole spectrum of town residents. Dawson's Anglican and Roman Catholic churches are of no less historical interest, but their buildings are still congregation-owned.

The first Presbyterian missionary in Dawson - the Reverend S. Hall Young - arrived in October 1897 in the early part of the Klondike Gold Rush. Initially he worked among protestant patients at St. Mary's Roman Catholic hospital, then housed in a large tent.<sup>2</sup> Temporary quarters to begin attracting and forming a Presbyterian congregation were soon found in a two-storey log dwelling, and services were subsequently held in a sawmill by Young's successor, the Rev. Dr. Andrew S. Grant, soon to be the founder of St. Andrew's. By the spring of 1898, when the influx of gold-seeking stampeders was nearing its peak, a Board of Trustees for the church had been chosen. In May, the infant congregation gave Dr. Grant a vote of confidence by asking him to serve as its first permanent pastor. An extraordinary, multi-gifted man, he accepted, and remained in Dawson until 1907, throughout its period of greatest economic and social strength. During this time, he was instrumental in building St. Andrew's congregation to a membership of over 600, in helping it to become an influential force in the community, and in overseeing the erection of a fine church building and manse.

Both church and manse were the largest and perhaps most elegant

of their types in Dawson, reflective of the congregation's aggregate character. It could count among its members senior civil servants, merchants, physicians, engineers and entrepreneurs, one of Dawson's mayors, and the Yukon Member of Parliament.<sup>3</sup> Nothing short of the best possible church structures would adequately express their personal and community aspirations. In keeping with this attitude, they also purchased a particularly fine D. W. Karn organ from Woodstock, Ontario, and formed a choir that must have become splendidly accomplished. Its opening concert (at which townsfolk were given their first opportunity to see inside the new church) was heralded as the social event of the year.<sup>4</sup> Other musical performances were held regularly after that, establishing St. Andrew's as the centre of Dawson's musical activity.

The manse was an extension of the church rather than simply a dwelling for the minister and his family. The quality of it was considered an important factor in attracting a high calibre clergy - a point Dr. Grant probably kept in mind while helping to plan it. In its more public rooms, it was the scene of meetings, teas, parties, and consultations with the minister. Most of the latter occasions would have taken place in the large and generously appointed library adjacent to the spacious front vestibule.

Not all of St. Andrew's activities were geared to entertainment and good times. The church also built and ran the Good Samaritan Hospital in the adjacent block to the west; the Sunday School conducted religious and ethics classes; the Ladies' Aid Society was active in helping the destitute and in encouraging better domestic conditions in Dawson households; and fundraisings were held for various charitable causes.

With Dawson's economic decline (fully apparent by 1907) the church's programmes correspondingly shrank in scope and support. Increasingly, the manse, rather than the church sanctuary, was

used for congregational gatherings, it being smaller and easier to maintain. After struggling along with debts and subsidies from headquarters in Toronto (by then the United Church), the church eventually closed its doors in 1932 and ceased to exist as a separate body. Most of the few members who remained, joined St. Paul's Anglican church, a short distance away on Front Street.

#### Person/Event

St. Andrew's Church is not known to have been the scene of any particular significant event, although further research may disclose one of community importance at least. The manse, on the other hand, has close ties with Dr. Andrew S. Grant, pioneer Yukon missionary, able administrator, and successful entrepreneur. From Almonte, Ontario, he travelled north in February 1898 over the harrowing White Pass trail to minister to the thousands of "stampeder" heading for the Klondike gold fields. At Bennett, British Columbia (at the end of the trail and the point at which gold seekers would travel downstream on the Yukon River to Dawson), he joined Reverend J.M. Dickey to establish a mission and lay the foundation of a congregation. The church structure that was built by Dr. Grant's successor was partly financed by payments received for the medical treatments Grant administered.<sup>5</sup>

In the spring of 1898, Dr. Grant moved on to Dawson and proceeded to lay the foundation of a Presbyterian congregation, anticipating that a permanent community would remain and flourish following the gold rush. He was instrumental in attracting money and influential people toward the cause, and in securing architect W.P. Skillings to design both church and manse. Grant's talents were not only pastoral, medical and administrative. He also had a strong business sense and managed to amass a large personal fortune while in the North. He acquired the largest mining concession in the Yukon in 1905 and set up a company to exploit it. With some of the profits he

invested in Toronto and Vancouver real estate, other mining concessions, the timber trade, steamers, coal mines, a railway, and the Dawson Electric Light and Power Company.<sup>6</sup> He was also financially generous to St. Andrew's, bailing the congregation out of its debt situation later on by buying the manse for a good price and selling it back to the congregation after he left, for a fraction of its value.<sup>7</sup>

Leaving Dawson in 1907, Grant went back to Ontario to enable his children to attend quality schools in Toronto. There he took up administrative positions within the Presbyterian church and remained active in it until his death in 1935.

#### Local Development

St. Andrew's Presbyterian church and manse are among the best examples of structures that illustrate Dawson's rapid metamorphosis into a prosperous and respectable community by 1901. No longer a boisterous mining camp as in 1897-98, nor the boomtown of 1898-99, the community by 1900 was increasingly being settled by families and business people of Canadian origin who gave every indication of an indefinite residency. Dr. Grant's initial mission work to the sick and destitute was transformed into a proper church with all the organization and amenities expected in congregations to the south.

In the summer of 1898, St. Andrew's congregation had built its first church and manse - both of log construction - on a large Government Reserve block of land at the south end of town. The Methodists and Anglicans were given adjacent lots as well, so that this part of Dawson became a park-like religious precinct. With the erection of better frame buildings here by 1901, the street they bordered was aptly renamed Church Street, changed from Mission Street. St. Andrew's Presbyterian church was the largest and most ambitiously-built structure in the group, and the only one with a manse (the Methodist church had a small parsonage, and St. Paul's Anglican had a modest rectory).

## ARCHITECTURE

### St. Andrew's Manse

#### Aesthetic Design

Ranked by the Klondike Nugget as second only to the Commissioner's Residence, St. Andrew's Manse was indeed (and still is) one of Dawson's better dwellings (Figures 1-4). It draws its stylistic inspiration from two sources: the Second Empire style, fashionable from ca. 1870 to the 1890s; and the Classical Revival style, popular around 1901 when the manse was being constructed.

Influence of the Second Empire style can be seen in the mansard roof and in the picturesque projections of dormers, bay window, porch, and side extension. With all these sculptural details, the style was an expensive one to produce and therefore was generally associated with owners of above-average wealth and prestige - true enough in the Dawson example. By the time this house was built, however, Second Empire style had already passed out of fashion elsewhere. In Canada, Ontario had seen the strongest influence of the style, in buildings that were often richly developed with picturesque massing (towers, side extensions, projecting two-storey bay windows, etc.); sculptural mansard roofs with elaborate eaves trim, brackets, cresting and ornate dormer windows; round-headed windows elsewhere, and various other decorative details<sup>8</sup> (e.g. Figure 14).

While the most highly developed Second Empire houses in Ontario were usually in brick, the province saw some lesser examples built in wood. These provide closer comparable examples for the Dawson manse. One at London (Figure 15) is about the same size, but its Victorian architectural details (a round-headed window, fretwork, brackets, varying patterns and textures in the wooden

siding) suggest an earlier era than does the manse. The handling of composite details in the manse compares favourably to this London example where details are rather crowded in some sections, creating a "busy" effect. It also compares favourably with another example at Wallaceburg, Ontario (Figure 16) where the crowding of dormers in a small mansard roof, and other secondary details, create another rather "busy", crowded composition.

Second Empire houses of any kind are quite rare in western Canada beyond Manitoba, primarily because the style was past its prime before this part of the country was well settled. An exception is the Victoria/Esquimalt area which did, of course, see earlier settlement, being easily accessible by sea. A number of 1890s Second Empire houses have been recorded here by CIHB such as the one at 507 Head Street in Esquimalt (Figure 17). Much more ornate and idiosyncratic than the Dawson manse (as are the other Esquimalt examples), it has individualistic details of carved bosses, finials and brackets - the work of its original owner, Captain Jacobson, a sealer. Like most western examples, it is in wood.

The Classical Revival details of St. Andrew's Manse helped bring it stylistically more up to date - such details as the simplicity of the dormer and other windows, the smooth planes of the clapboard walls, the pediment-like gable of the front porch, dentil moulding (in the porch and bay window cornices), and balustrade rails topping the bay window and side extension. Some of Dawson's other prestigious buildings erected at the same time exhibited similar features, the nearby Administration Building in particular (Figure 12). Here Classical Revival details are used in conjunction with a balanced Classical plan - a more modern composition than the somewhat outdated manse. The mixture of two stylistic sources in the manse is revealing, however - perhaps indicative of a desire to temper Dawson's newness by a suggestion of historical depth.

What remains of the exterior today is a careful restoration done by CPS, with a relatively small amount of new material used to replace deteriorated members. The building now appears little changed from early views of it in historical photographs (Figure 13).

The interior of St. Andrew's Manse is part restoration and part rehabilitation, with restoration work primarily confined to the front hallway and staircase (Figures 5, 6) and to the living room (Figure 8). In these locations, the spaciousness and woodworked details contribute to a good aesthetic quality of which the design elements are neither Second Empire style nor Classical Revival. Rather, they are elements that were long used in many types of buildings, and in the case of the wooden components, were probably machine-produced and available by catalogue order.

The entire house, then, shows a mixture of stylistic sources but these have been combined and executed with restraint to create a very good composition - one that suggests a certain amount of wealth and prestige but is not overly pretentious.

#### Functional Design

The structure under review is a good example of the manse as a specific kind of building. More than a house in function, it was also a place for congregational social events, consultations with the minister, and other meetings.<sup>9</sup> In St. Andrew's Manse, these were provided in generously sized ground floor rooms which could be either used individually or thrown open for larger group functions. Good circulation routes were possible between the large vestibule (designated as the family room in Figure 9) and the living and dining rooms. The minister's study (lined with built-in bookshelves) was to the right of the vestibule - a convenient location for visitors who did not have to disturb the rest of the household to gain access.



In the CPS rehabilitation of the manse, part of the ground floor room arrangement was obscured. The former dining room was converted into a kitchen, and the library has become part of a separate apartment which also incorporates the former kitchen, a pantry, and the rear entrance. The vestibule (Figures 5, 6) is little changed except in use - now a child's play area rather than a formal entrance. The small entry-way between the vestibule and the front door provides a heat-saving buffer between the living quarters and the outdoors (Figure 6).

Upstairs, there are three bedrooms (Figure 7), a storage room and a bathroom, all modernized by CPS with new materials. A full basement has also been created - apparently the only one in Dawson. Made possible by adequate drainage on this particular site, and by the absence of permafrost, it has pressure-treated wooden walls and is well insulated so as to be fully useable.

Original functional inadequacies that once produced problems in the manse were subsequently alleviated with supplementary measures.<sup>10</sup> Stoves soon replaced the central heating system which was insufficient. Poor insulation was only partly improved in the 1920s by the erection of sawdust-filled boxes around the building's exterior perimeter at the foundation level. Ice build-up on the flat library roof was lessened with the erection of another sloping roof on top of it. Frost in the basement was not eradicated until the CPS renovations in 1982/83 which included good insulation and a new oil-fired furnace. The house is now an example not only of the manse as a functional type, but of a domestic building in the extreme north where elegance has not been sacrificed for comfort. It is only the recent improvements in heating and insulation that have made this possible.

#### Craftsmanship and Materials

There was no shortage of either craftsmen or good materials when it came time to build a proper Presbyterian manse in Dawson in 1901. Excellent workmanship is evident in the basically solid

balloon frame construction and in certain details such as the front interior stairway. The wide mouldings around doors and windows (presumably machined) are carefully fitted. Most interior work was in fairly good condition when CPS undertook restoration and rehabilitation in 1982/83.<sup>11</sup> Some exterior components such as the balustrade railings around the top of the bay window and the library extension, had deteriorated and disappeared, however, and were reconstructed from photographic evidence.

### **St. Andrew's Church**

#### Aesthetic Design

The church is a late example of High Victorian Gothic architecture interpreted in wood (Figures 16-18). The peak years of this style were from the 1860s to the 1890s.<sup>12</sup> In Ontario, where the most fully expressed Canadian examples can be found, churches were almost always built of brick and stone. They are also characterized by a lively massing of interpenetrating forms, and a great variety of textures and eclectic details. High Victorian Gothic churches differed from both preceding and succeeding developments in the Gothic Revival. Earlier, there had been a closer copying of European medieval prototypes; later there would be more emphasis on a rational plan with scaled-down Gothic details seemingly appended rather than integrated into the main design.

Brick and stone were impractical in Dawson's sub-arctic climate and so was the greater height and the more picturesque massing and detailing of the best Ontario examples. What St. Andrew's did retain of the High Victorian Gothic spirit was the interest in variety of details and texture (there are both shingles and clapboards), and the asymmetrical position of the entrance tower (Figures 18, 19). The tower is capped by a pyramidal, slightly bell-cast roof which is high enough to at least suggest a spire -

an important element in this phase of the style. The asymmetrical position of the tower gives an impression of a greater degree of irregular massing throughout, than in fact exists. The building's main blocks are actually quite symmetrical, although there is a noticeable variance of measurement in opposite sides of the nave, the transepts, and the chancel (note measurements in Figure 25). Considering its size, material, and scale, the church also has quite a variety of Gothic detail - the overhanging top portion of the façade wall which forms a kind of hood over the nave's stained-glass Gothic window; the pointed arches of the doorway and tower ventilators; the buttress panels at the tower's corners; and the diamond-shaped panes in the door. Inside, there was fine Gothic-detailed furniture, a pointed arch recess for the pipe organ, exposed principal rafters, and metal panels on the ceiling and walls embossed in ecclesiastical designs (rafters and panels visible in Figures 21 and 24).

Canada has many other wooden High Victorian Gothic churches, most of which are in the Atlantic provinces and in the West rather than in Ontario and Québec. In Atlantic Canada, some notable examples were designed by architect William C. Harris (1854-1913); many are illustrated in the book Gothic Dreams,<sup>13</sup> an account of Harris' life and career. His varied compositions show the wide range of possibilities in wooden church design using the Gothic repertoire of forms and details. Most are more intricate and taller than St. Andrew's in Dawson, but many share the features of bell-cast tower roof, wooden buttresses, and varied textures of wooden siding (shingles and clapboards).

In western Canada, a comparable example can be found at Emerson, Manitoba. Also called St. Andrew's (Figure 30), it has a corner tower that is capped with a full spire pierced by trefoil openings. The whole is in keeping with the exaggerated profile so favoured by architects working in High Victorian design - more so than in the Dawson example. This church also shows more attempt to vary the texture of the wall surfaces, not only in the

hooded effect over the window openings (similar to the one over Dawson's main window but not as projecting), but in the variety of clapboard widths as well. For additional variety, there appears to be an application of trefoil or quatrefoil bosses in the tower wall.

A number of wooden examples exist in British Columbia. St. Andrew's at Dawson had an immediate predecessor in St. Andrew's at Lake Bennett.<sup>14</sup> Built in 1899, about a year after Dr. Andrew S. Grant had laboured to establish a congregation there, this still extant log building is a basic rectangular structure. Yet it has a surprisingly well developed High Victorian Gothic tower with a high spire, pointed ventilator openings, pinnacles and varying wall textures (Figure 29). Another church at Kelowna (Figure 28) has a façade Gothic window about the same size as St. Andrew's in Dawson, and is similarly massed in a fairly compact plan (cruciform in this case). Its lack of a spire on the tower, however, is indicative of its later date when Gothic details were much simplified. Many other wooden British Columbia examples are illustrated in the book Early Indian Village Churches.<sup>15</sup> Most of these mission churches were erected during the High Victorian Gothic period and show kinship to the style's main features.

Fairly close comparisons can also be made with western urban churches built in other materials. An apparently stucco-finished example in Victoria, British Columbia (Figure 27) has a wall overhang above the main façade window (round-headed rather than pointed) very much like the one in St. Andrew's. Its pyramidal tower roof is similar too. However, the tower itself is taller in the Victoria church, and the whole building more complex, as befitting a more pretentious urban structure.

Considering all the above-mentioned comparable examples and others illustrated in various sources, the design of St. Andrew's church in Dawson emerges as one of good but undistinguished quality. Yet it is remarkable in its very fact of existence here

in the Yukon, so far-removed from its historical design sources. Northern conditions have not been kind as far as preservation is concerned. When CPS acquired the building in 1977, ground upheavals had caused massive shifting and breaking of structural members, and interior fittings had been removed. The aesthetic qualities which remain in this building must either be seen from the perspective of their possible restoration, or simply as evocative of what once was.

### Functional Design

In layout, the functional design of St. Andrew's well satisfied the needs of Presbyterian worship, most notably seen in the wide open space of the main sanctuary, with transepts and a front centre alcove for the prominent organ (Figure 23). The broad span of the ceiling was made possible by the use of composite roof framing consisting of heavy (8" x 10") principal rafters held in place by metal tie rods - in effect, a truss system (visible in Figure 21. See also Figure 24).

The sprawling layout and high ceilings had their drawbacks as far as heating was concerned. A partial solution to the soon-evident problem was effected in 1910 when the transepts and part of the nave were curtained off with heavy canvas.<sup>16</sup> In the 1920s, sawdust-filled insulation boxes were erected around the lower part of the building's exterior perimeter,<sup>17</sup> a common insulation practice in Dawson at the time. The boxes helped to prevent cold drafts from coming under the building's floor which was held up off the ground by the post and mudsill foundation.<sup>18</sup>

The post and mudsill foundations sunk into permafrost staved off destructive shifting of structural members for several decades, but eventually, deep water which collected in the crawl space underneath, caused the posts to rot. Frost upheavals inevitably occurred too, resulting in extreme deformation of the floors and walls.<sup>19</sup> A network of CPS-installed bracing now fills the interior to prevent the whole structure from collapsing (Figure 21).

Much remains inside, however, of the pressed metal panelling above the wainscotting (visible in Figure 21. See also Figure 24). Widely used around the turn of the century for decorative and fire preventive purposes in southern Canada, pressed metal was especially effective as a wall and ceiling treatment in Dawson. Here, some amount of wall shifting and cracking was expected because of unstable ground conditions and wide-ranging temperature levels. Lesser Dawson buildings usually had interior wall finishes of wallpaper on top of cotton muslin, while some of the better ones had v-joint wooden paneling. Many had a combination of both, with the wooden panelling used as wainscotting. Apparently no other local buildings used the decorative pressed metal as extensively as St. Andrew's.

#### Craftsmanship and Materials

There appears to have been good craftsmanship throughout the church but this has mostly been defaced with the building's deformation due to rot and frost damage. Evidence remains, however, of a knowledgeable handling of timber frame construction techniques and of the handling of materials - not surprising considering that the church was built by an apparently experienced contractor (Robert Moncrieff) to plans and detailed specifications by an architect (W.P. Skillings).<sup>20</sup> Some of the finer work was imported (possibly from Ontario), including the Gothic stained glass window and all other principal windows, the diamond-paned doors (Figure 22), the oak pulpit carved in elaborate Gothic motifs, and the oak pews with quatrefoil and curvilinear ornament.<sup>21</sup> All furnishings have since been removed - some traceable to other churches such as the United Church in Whitehorse. The majestic D.W. Karn pipe organ, of which the congregation was so proud (Figure 23), has an attractively carved pipe case. Owned by KNHS, it is currently being stored in a warehouse at nearby Bear Creek. The sanctuary's pressed metal panels would have been mass-produced and easily installed, and therefore are not among the notable items or components showing

craftsmanship.

#### Designer (Church and Manse)

St. Andrew's architect Warren Porter Skillings was born at an unknown date in Portland, Maine. From 1889 to 1900 he practiced architecture in Seattle, Washington. There he designed houses, schools and commercial buildings. One of the highlights of this early part of his career must have been the acceptance of his design for the Washington State building at the Columbian Exposition in Chicago in 1893. In the same year, he placed fourth in competition for the design of the British Columbia legislative buildings. While in Dawson from 1900 to 1906, Skillings provided designs not only for St. Andrew's, but also for "numerous houses," the city's two and only brick buildings (commercial), and possibly the Canadian Bank of Commerce on Front Street. In 1906, Skillings moved to San Francisco, where he participated in the city's rebuilding following the disastrous earthquake of that year. From 1910 to 1939 he practiced architecture in San José. In both California cities, Skillings is known to have designed prestigious buildings.<sup>22</sup>

In the absence of a thorough investigation and analysis of Skillings's life's work, it might be assumed that the designs he produced for St. Andrew's Church and Manse were not among his finest, hampered as he was by the restrictions of northern building conditions.

### **ENVIRONMENT**

#### Site

The main physical change to St. Andrew's Church church property is the disappearance of the log structures that served as the congregation's first church and manse. Built in 1898 where the present church sits, the two were moved to the south east side of the lot when the new construction began in 1901 (see Figure 11).

There they served as extra space for meetings and visitor accommodations almost to the time of the congregation's disbanding in 1932 (the early church was demolished in 1929 and the manse some time later). In 1909, the property also lost its picket fence. Part of its length has been reconstructed by CPS in recent years. Another change just outside the property has affected the orientation of the manse - the disappearance of the slough that it once faced. Actually part of a slow moving creek, it curved around beside the manse and behind the Commissioner's Residence forming a picturesque component of this park-like setting. Landfilling the slough has enabled the city to upgrade Fourth Avenue in front of the manse, and to build a laneway angling off of it to the east. This has created better vehicular access to the rear of the manse and has made a parking space possible in this area (Figure 2).

In use, the present church building's relationship to its site and immediate environment has been considerably changed. Once a place of frequent and well attended religious and social activity, it is now derelict and visited only by a few tourists. The manse has fared better. Again used as a residence after limited use in the 1940s and 1950s, and abandonment in the 1960s and 1970s, it is now occupied by KNHS staff who maintain its lived-in appearance.

### Setting

St. Andrew's church together with St. Paul's Anglican (two blocks to the west) establish the north end of the Government Reserve as a park-like religious precinct. The derelict condition of St. Andrew's does not seem to detract from this influence as it is still a large and prominent building. Similarly, its landscaping features are not as carefully tended as they once were, but this is in keeping with the general state of the Reserve - still a pleasant space, fairly open, and with plantings that have grown up more by chance than by design.



While in much better condition than the church, St. Andrew's Manse plays a secondary or reinforcing role in suggesting that this is a religious precinct. Obviously a fine and substantial dwelling, as were most manses in southern Canada, it might not be readily identified as a building associated with the church by an uninformed layman. In any case, because of its high architectural quality and its well-tended grounds, the manse fits in well with the prestigious government buildings close by (the former Commissioners Residence, the Court House, and the territorial Administration Building) and with the park-like environs.

#### Landmark

St. Andrew's church is a familiar landmark to city residents, in part because of its conspicuous site at the corner of Church Street and Fourth Avenue. Not a busy intersection for vehicular traffic, this corner is nonetheless well-travelled by pedestrian tourists who usually come here on their way to the Dawson City Museum on Fifth Avenue (in the former territorial Administration Building) - one of the highlights of a Dawson visit. The Manse is a familiar landmark as well, although it was built next door to the south and farther into the Government Reserve where traffic is even lighter. In addition to the good locations of the two buildings, their imposing size and good architectural quality contribute to their public recognition. They are historically interpreted in KNHS walking tours, in printed brochures, and in a sign on the church.

#### Endnotes

- 1 St. Paul's Anglican church was one of the original four buildings on HSMBC's "B List". See "Background to and Status of Dawson City. Klondike and Gold-Rush Related National Historic Sites. For review by Historic Sites and Monuments Board of Canada," November, 1987, Section II, 2.1, p. 2.
- 2 Commonwealth Historic Resource Management Limited

- [Commonwealth . . .Ltd.], St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church, Dawson: A Structural and Use History (prepared for Parks Canada, Prairie Region, 1984), p. 3.
- 3 Richard Stuart, "St. Andrew's Manse, Dawson, Y.T. Structural and Use History," Microfiche Report Series No. 105 (Ottawa: Parks Canada, 1981), p. 13.
  - 4 Ibid.
  - 5 Margaret Carter, "St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church, Lake Bennett, British Columbia," Canadian Historic Sites. Occasional Papers in Archaeology and History No. 26 (Ottawa: National Parks and Sites, 1981), p. 162.
  - 6 Stuart, op. cit., p. 41.
  - 7 Ibid., pp. 40-42.
  - 8 See Christina Cameron and Janet Wright, "Second Empire Style for Canadian Houses," pp. 17-21 in "Second Empire Style in Canadian Architecture," Canadian Historic Sites. Occasional Papers in Archaeology and History No. 24 (Ottawa: Parks Canada, 1980).
  - 9 For precedents in the Scottish Presbyterian manse, see Robert M. Fraser, The Kirk and Manse (Edinburgh: A. Fullerton & Co., 1857).
  - 10 A chronology of changes to the manse is contained in Stuart, op. cit., pp. 65-66.
  - 11 A detailed description of the "as found" condition, and several proposals for rehabilitation are found in Andrew Powter and Lynne Fontaine, "Stabilization and Rehabilitation. St. Andrew's Manse, Dawson City, Yukon. [1981]" (report on file, Engineering and Architecture Branch, PWC, DU, EC-CPS).
  - 12 See Mathilde Brosseau, "Gothic Revival in Canadian Architecture," Canadian Historic Sites. Occasional Papers in Archaeology and History No. 25 (Ottawa: Parks Canada, 1980).
  - 13 Robert C. Tuck, Gothic Dreams. The Life and Times of a Canadian Architect. William Critchlow Harris. 1854-1913 (Toronto: Dundurn Press Ltd., 1978).
  - 14 Margaret Carter, "St. Andrew's presbyterian Church, Lake Bennett, British Columbia," Canadian Historic Sites Occasional Papers in Archaeology and History No. 26 (Ottawa: Parks Canada, 1981).
  - 15 John Veillette and Gary White, Early Indian Village churches. Wooden Frontier Architecture in British Columbia

(Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press).

- 16 Commonwealth . . .Ltd., op. cit., p. 39.
- 17 Brian D. Ross, "A Report on the 1985 Field Season of Archaeological Investigations at the Klondike National Historic Sites, Dawson City, Yukon," Research Bulletin No. 265 (Ottawa: Environment Canada - Parks, 1988), p. 4.
- 18 See FHBRO Report No. 86-88, Functional Design for a detailed discussion of permafrost and the foundation systems adapted for its condition in Dawson.
- 19 There were differential floor levels of up to 1.6 metres in the church when recorded by CPS in 1982. Commonwealth . . . Ltd., op. cit., p. 23.
- 20 Skillings' detailed specifications are reproduced as "Appendix E: Contract Specifications," Ibid. pp. 74-92.
- 21 Ibid., p. 28.
- 22 "Appendix A: Warren Porter Skillings: Chronology," Ibid., pp. 59-61.

ST. ANDREW'S CHURCH AND MANSE, DAWSON, YUKON



- 1 St. Andrew's Presbyterian Manse, 601 Fourth Ave., Dawson, Yukon; constructed in 1901, W.P. Skillings, architect; front (west) elevation in 1987. (EC-CPS, KNHS, 1987.)



- 2 St. Andrew's Manse; rear view. The back of the Commissioner's Residence appears on the left. (J. Mattie, EC-CPS, AHB, 1988.)

ST. ANDREW'S CHURCH AND MANSE, DAWSON, YUKON



3 St. Andrew's Manse; south side view (library extension is in foreground). (EC-CPS, KNHS, 1987.)



4 St. Andrew's Manse; north side view. Arrow points to former territorial Court House (now KNHS headquarters) and to NWMP buildings. (EC-CPS, KNHS, 1987.)



5 St. Andrew's Manse; staircase leading up from vestibule.  
(J. Mattie, EC-CPS, AHB, 1988.)



6 St. Andrew's Manse; view from vestibule toward enclosed front entrance. (J. Mattie, CP-CPS, AHB, 1988.)

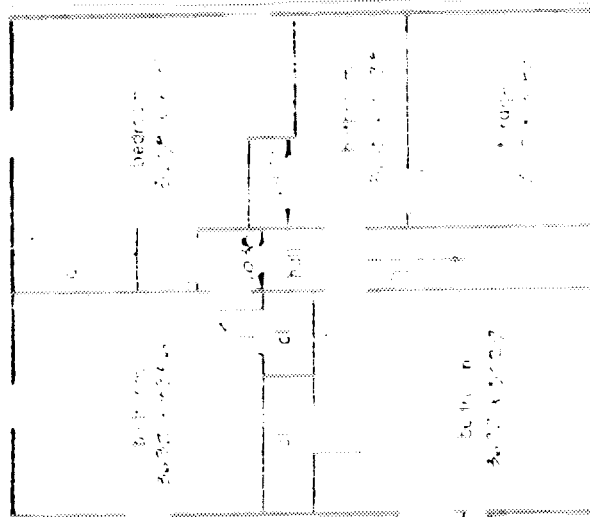


7 St. Andrew's Manse; upstairs bedroom. (J. Mattie, EC-CPS, AHB, 1988.)



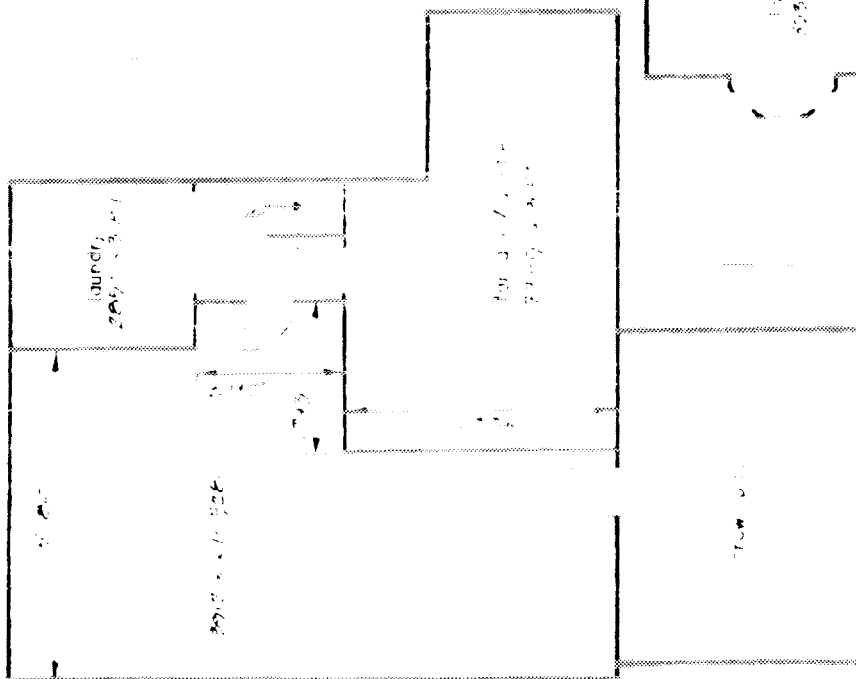
8 St. Andrew's Manse; view from living room toward kitchen (former dining room). (J. Mattie, EC-CPS, AHB, 1988.)

# ST. ANDREW'S CHURCH AND MANSE, DAWSON, YUKON



SECOND FLOOR PLAN  
SCALE 1/4" = 1'

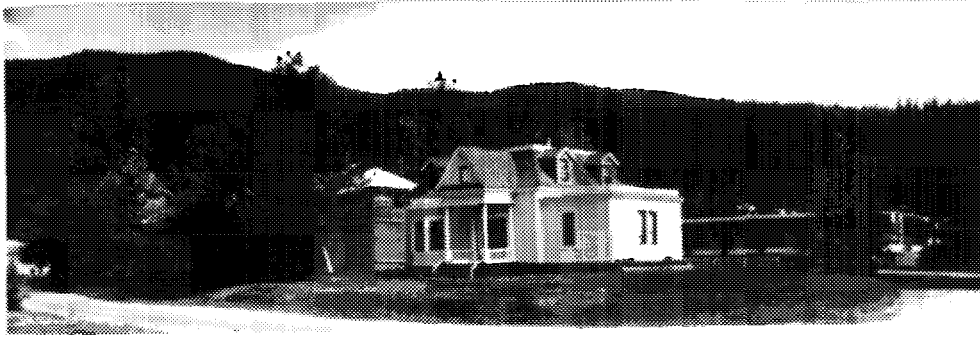
GROUND FLOOR PLAN  
SCALE 1/4" = 1'



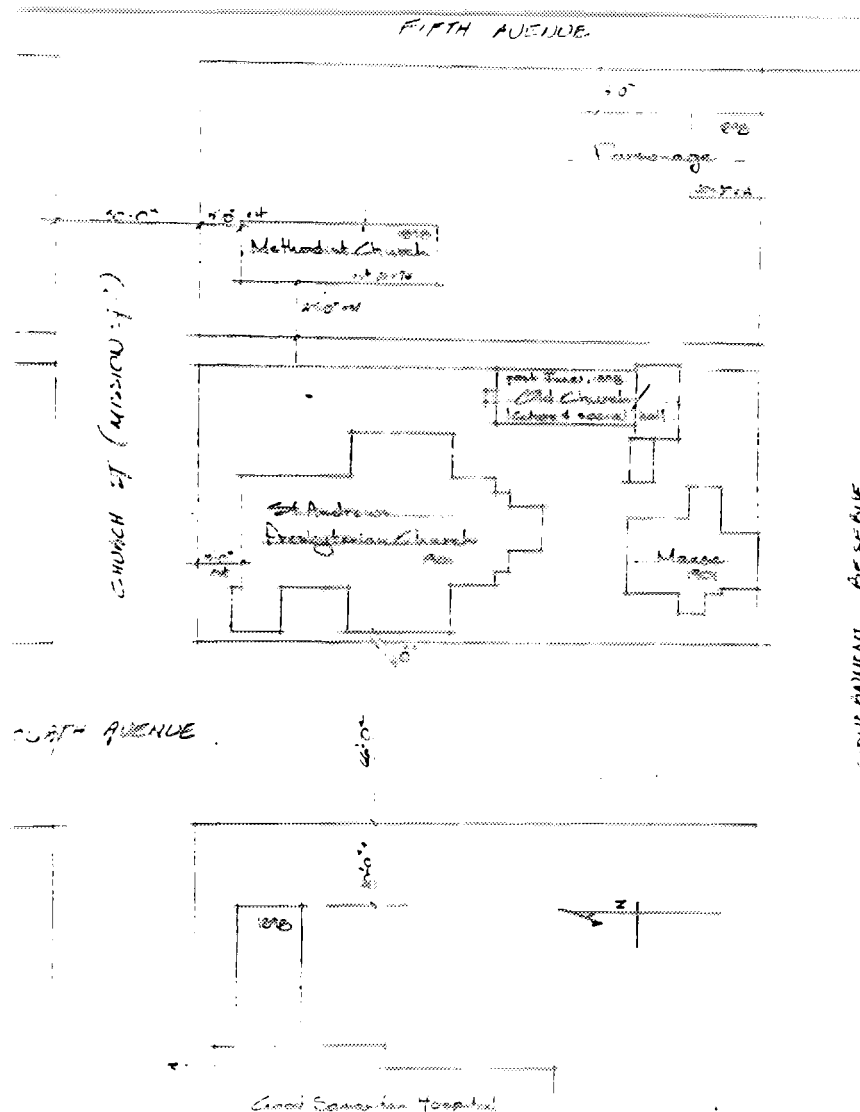
BASEMENT PLAN  
SCALE 1/4" = 1'



ST. ANDREW'S CHURCH AND MANSE, DAWSON, YUKON

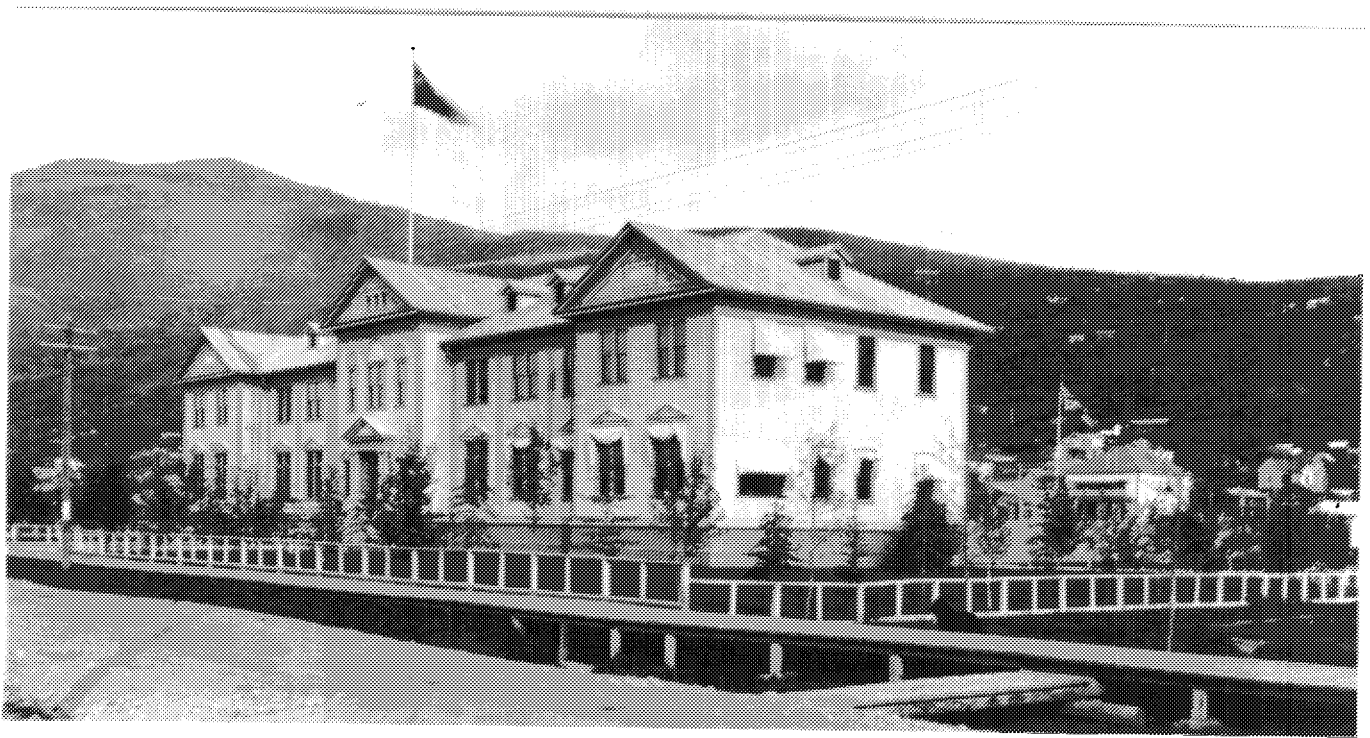


- 10 St. Andrew's Manse; St. Andrew's church is visible at left; senior citizen's home fronting Fifth Ave. is visible on right. (EC-CPS, KNHS, 1987.)



- 11 Plan of St. Andrew's property at corner of Fourth Ave. and Church St. in 1901. The 1898 log church and manse were joined together to form a lecture and social hall on the south east side of the property. Note Good Samaritan Hospital (run by St. Andrew's congregation) to the west; Methodist church property to the east. (Lyette Fortin, PWC-AES, DU, EC-CPS, 1981.)

ST. ANDREW'S CHURCH AND MANSE, DAWSON, YUKON



12 Territorial Administration Building, Fifth Ave. between Church St. and Turner St.; constructed in 1901, T.W. Fuller, architect; view from south west ca. 1904. (NA/AN ,PA-46695.)



13 St. Andrew's Manse (right); St. Andrew's Church (left); log building behind the two is the former church, at this time used as a church hall; behind the manse (both left and right of it) is the Administration Building on Fifth Ave. View from west, ca. 1910. (EC-CPS, HRB, Dawson Photo Collection.)



14 Second Empire style house, 195 Elgin St., Madoc, Ontario;



15 House with mansard roof and other features characteristic of the Second Empire style, 309 Cromwell St., London, Ontario; constructed ca. 1870. (Side views of this house show its mansard roof more clearly; see CIHB photo card) (EC-CPS, CIHB, 1972.)



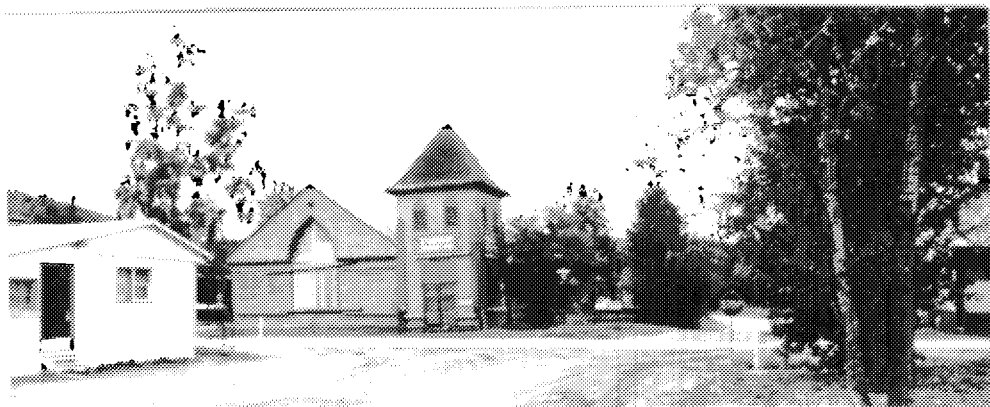
16 House at 315 King St., Wallaceburg, Ontario; constructed ca. 1870. (EC-CPS, CIHB, 1972.)



17 House at 507 Head St., Esquimalt, British Columbia; constructed in 1893. (EC-CPS, CIHB, 1970.)

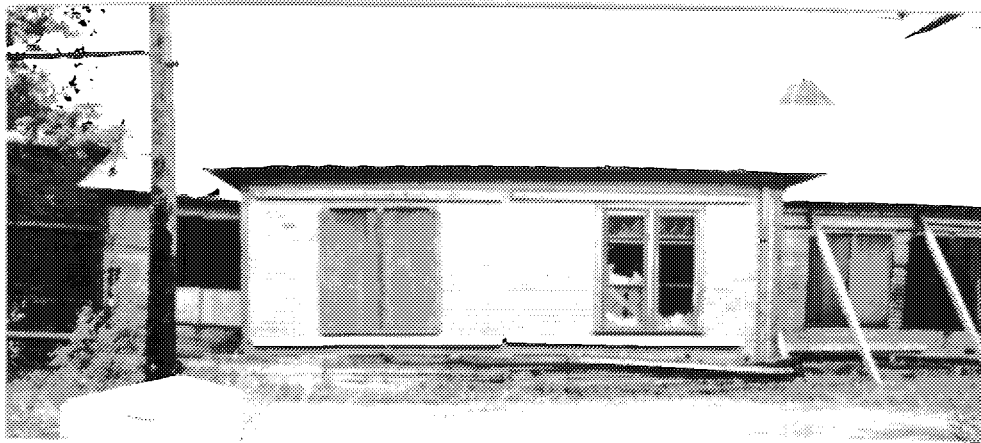
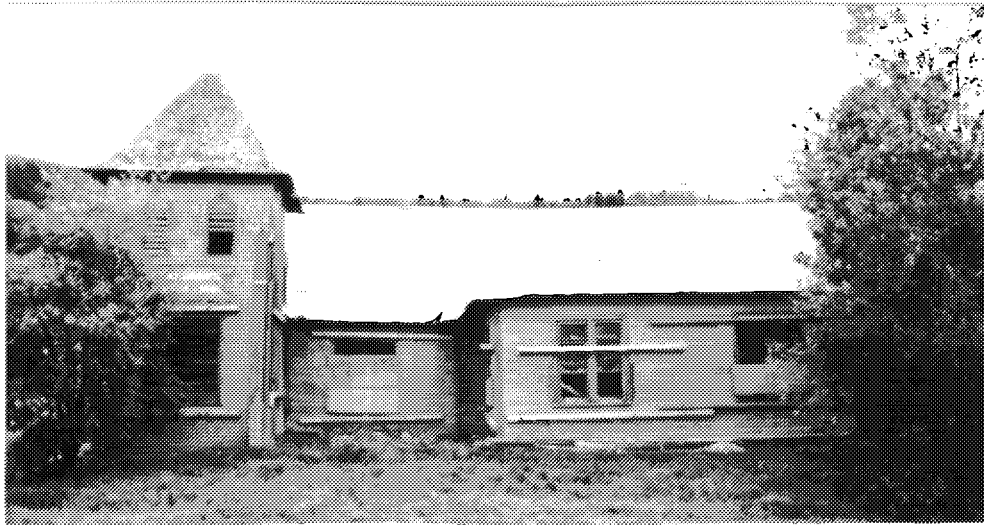


- 18 St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church, Church St. at Fourth Ave., Dawson, Yukon; constructed in 1901, W.P. Skillings, architect; view from Church St. in 1903. (NA/AN, PA-16527.)



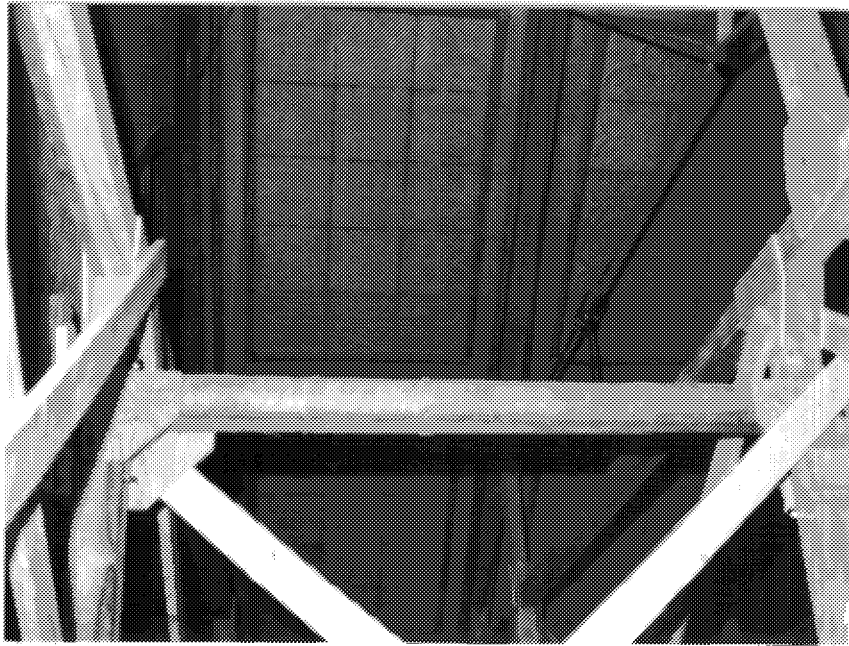
- 19 St. Andrew's Church as it appears today. (EC-CPS, KNHS, 1987.)

ST. ANDREW'S CHURCH AND MANSE, DAWSON, YUKON



20 Three views of St. Andrew's Church; from top: west side view, east side view, south (rear) view. (EC-CPS, KNHS, 1987.)





- 21 The interior of St. Andrew's Church is now filled with CPS-installed wooden bracing. Original components still visible are: the embossed metal panels on the ceiling, the metal tie rods attached to metal-covered principal rafters, and the opening for the façade's Gothic window (left). (EC-CPS, KNHS, 1988.)



- 22 St. Andrew's Church; inside of one of the front doors (outside is protected with a plywood panel). (EC-CPS, KNHS, 1988.)



- 23 St. Andrew's Church; interior ca. 1904. (St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church, Dawson. A Structural and Use History, Prepared For Parks Canada Prairie Region, Commonwealth Historic Resource Management Limited, 1984 [hereafter cited as Commonwealth . . . Ltd.], Figure 18.)



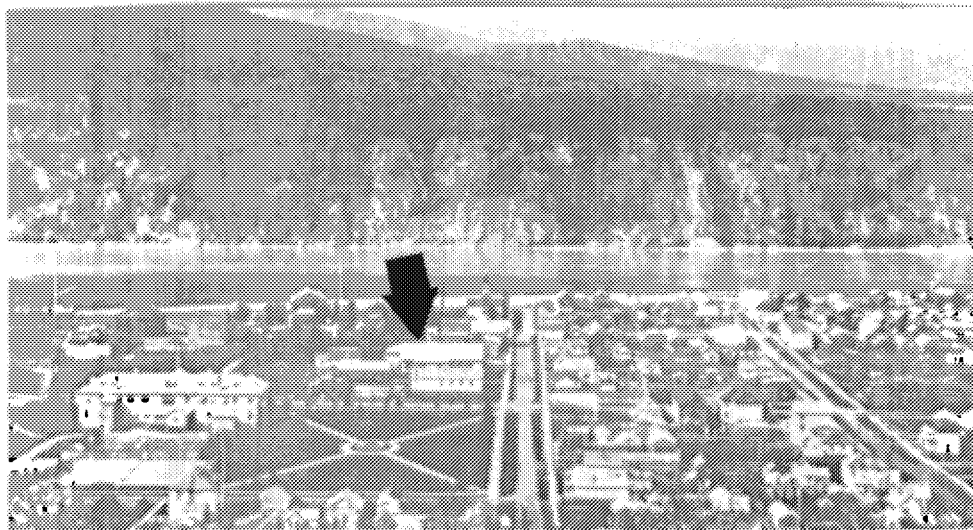
- 24 St. Andrew's Church; interior, 1901 (dedication service). (Commonwealth . . . Ltd., Figure 16.)



ST. ANDREW'S CHURCH AND MANSE, DAWSON, YUKON



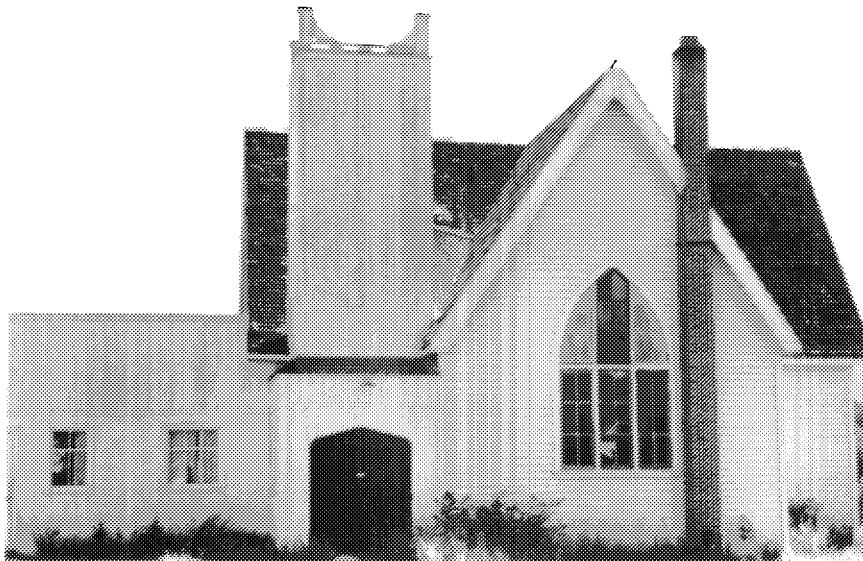
25 St. Andrew's Church; floor plan. (EC-CPS, KNHS, 1987.)



26 South end of Dawson in 1914. Arrow points to St. Andrew's church. Sited on the Government Reserve, it had prestigious neighbouring buildings such as the territorial Administration Building, the territorial Court House, the Commissioner's Residence, and St. Paul's Anglican Church - all visible in this photo and still extant today. (Commonwealth . . . Ltd., Figure 50.)



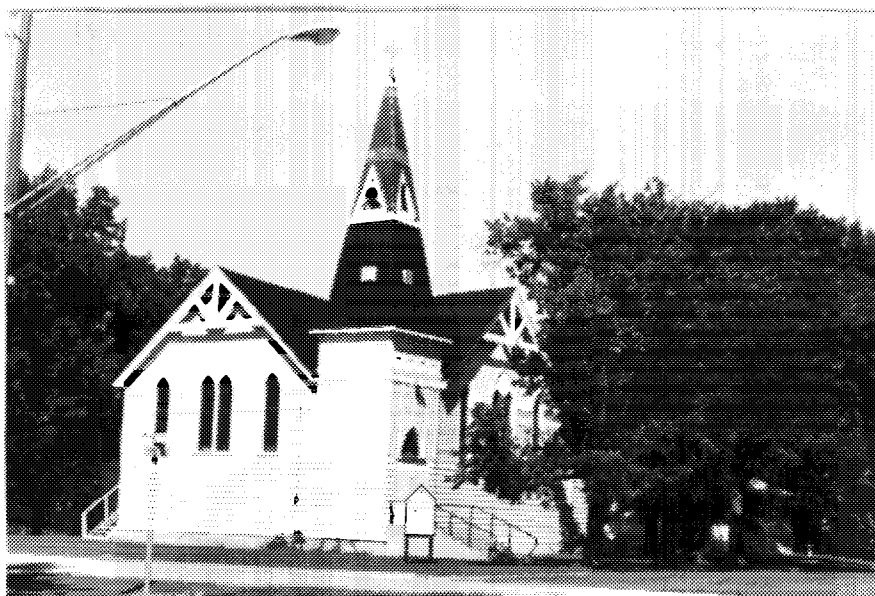
27 Emmanuel Baptist Church, 1900 Fernwood Rd., Victoria, British Columbia; constructed in 1892. (EC-CPS, CIHB, 1970.)



28 Church near Kelowna, British Columbia; constructed ca. 1910. (EC-CPS, CIHB, 1974.)



- 29 St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church, Bennett, British Columbia; constructed in 1899 under the direction of Rev. J.A. Sinclair (Dr. Andrew S. Grant's successor in this mission); undated photo. The church survives in a derelict condition. (NA/AN, C-4326.)



- 30 St. Andrew's United Church, Emerson, Manitoba; constructed ca. 1890. (EC-CPS, CIHB, 1976.)

13.     Ruby's Place  
       233 Second Ave.
14.     Third Avenue Hotel Complex  
       Third Ave. between Princess and Harper
15.     Harrington's Store  
       Third Ave. at Princess (north west corner of intersection)
16.     Mme. Tremblay's Store  
       Third Ave. at King St. (south east corner of intersection)

## INTRODUCTION

The four buildings discussed in this segment of FHBRO Report No. 88-12 have been grouped together because of their similarity of function as commercial buildings. Three of the four - Ruby's Place (built ca. 1903), Harrington's Store (ca. 1900), and Mme. Tremblay's Store (1899), also have similarities of architectural design, being two-storey structures with boomtown fronts and oriel windows - a once common type in Dawson which helped give the city its distinctive appearance. The fourth building (actually a complex of three buildings) is the Third Ave. Hotel Complex (built ca. 1900). It represents a common type too, with boomtown fronts extending above simple gable roofs behind.

Only Harrington's Store and Mme. Tremblay's Store are open to the public. Their exteriors have been restored, while interiors have been either rehabilitated as period pieces or modernized completely. Ruby's Place has had the façade restored, but the rest of the building has only been stabilized in its poor condition. The Third Ave. Hotel Complex is derelict and will likely remain so, as KNHS has no plans for it other than to ensure that it does not deteriorate any further.

## **HISTORICAL ASSOCIATIONS**

### Thematic

The four buildings have housed commercial enterprises which clearly relate to NHPS' Theme 2(b), developed to clarify the commemorative base for CPS activities in Dawson ("The historical consequence of the gold rush; the development of Dawson as a supply, service and distribution centre . . . "). Services which the buildings collectively represent are: hotel and boarding house accommodations, restaurant food, laundry, prostitution, photography, and news dissemination. Supplies which were offered out of these buildings include: baked goods, groceries, dry goods, women's wear, tobacco, and bicycles.

### **Ruby's Place**

Although it was first used as a laundry (perhaps only during the first year), and a boarding house (ca. 1904-1935), Ruby's Place (Figures 1-3) is best remembered as a house of prostitution from 1935 to 1962. The only surviving building in Dawson known to have provided such a service on a continuing basis, it is thematically representative of many that existed during the Klondike gold rush, and to a lesser extent, in the subsequent short-lived period of prosperity. For this reason, it was placed on HSMBC's List "A" as Dawson's representative brothel. Brothels played a prominent role in the city's early history, but became less conspicuous in later years. In fact, their numbers declined sharply after 1900 when many miners took off for Nome, Alaska, following news of a gold strike in that region. There were soon police crack-downs too, in part brought on by agitation from the Women's Christian Temperance Union in southern Canada which charged that "Dawson was beset by dens of iniquity and overrun by women of ill repute."<sup>1</sup>

Mathilde "Ruby" Scott, the madam who ran Ruby's Place as a

brothel for the 27 years between 1935 and 1962, was a late-comer on the scene. By the time she arrived in Dawson, prostitution was again an accepted part of community life, although a more discreet one than in the days of the gold rush. Police and medical officers maintained a watchful eye on participants. Ruby was apparently allowed by them to remain in business because she kept such "a decent place" where "even the customers had to behave."<sup>2</sup> This included good conduct after imbibing liquor which she also sold. Many men found her quarters more congenial for drinking than the barren "snakerooms" of the hotels. When Ruby's brothel did close in 1962, it was voluntary on Scott's part. After this, she lived alone for a few years, occasionally taking in boarders, tourists and prospectors.

### **Third Ave. Hotel Complex**

The most prominent part of the Third Ave. Hotel Complex is the hotel itself - the two-and-one-half storey northern portion (Figure 9). Thematically, hotel accommodations are an important part of the fabric of Dawson's history, and this is the only KNHS building to be tied into it. Nevertheless, a number of private enterprises have renovated, refurbished and reconstructed other hotels in town and are operating them as modern businesses. Thus, there is no shortage of other Dawson structures that represent the theme by suggestion, if not complete historical accuracy. The derelict Third Ave. Hotel was one of the humbler hotels built in the city around 1900, offering inexpensive rooms and probably meals to the miners who patronized the supply and service businesses along Third Avenue. The building had a number of owners, one of whom was E.O. Ellingsen who bought it in 1914, and operated it as a hotel until about 1920.<sup>3</sup> The building may then have been vacant until the early 1930s when Ellingsen converted it into a hardware store.<sup>4</sup> This he operated until 1944 when he retired and left Dawson.<sup>5</sup>

The theme of photography in Dawson is also represented in the Thrid Ave. Hotel Complex, in the single-storey buildings next

door to the hotel section (Figures 9-13). While quite a number of excellent photographers were drawn to Dawson during the gold rush and the boom period that followed, none of their studios have survived except this one operated by Ellingsen. A multi-career man, he apparently learned the photography trade from a partner in the well-known Dawson studio of Larss & Duclos.<sup>6</sup> By 1907, he had set up his own studio in the south annex under review and probably expanded into the north annex in 1912 when a tobacco shop went out of business here. At first only renting the quarters, Ellingsen bought them (and the hotel next door) in 1914. By this time, he had also acquired first-rate photography equipment and studio furnishings from other photographers who had left town or gone into other lines of work. Thus, his Third Ave. photography shop was extremely well equipped. It was described in the hyperbolic newspaper language of the time as ". . . the largest quarters in the North, and altogether, the largest and best equipped studio north of Vancouver."<sup>7</sup> Initially specializing in commercial photography (advertised as "Creek and Mining Views a Specialty"<sup>8</sup>), Ellingsen diversified into portraiture when his competitors went out of business. In 1918 he was also retailing cameras, film and amateur supplies. Much architectural and artifactual evidence of Ellingsen's photographic business remained when KNHS acquired the complex in 1978, and the body of his photographic work illustrates a period of Dawson's history that is not otherwise well documented.

#### **Harrington's Store**

Harrington's Store (Figures 19, 20) was acquired by KNHS more for its prominent architectural presence and for its street infill value than for an historical association. This latter is rather obscure and appears to have been quite ordinary. The upper floor was intended and used as housing. The ground floor corner section was probably first run as a grocery store by W.A. Harrington; the adjacent section to the north may have been a restaurant.<sup>9</sup> Harrington apparently moved to another location in

1903, but returned in 1906 and remained here until 1917, never having owned the structure.<sup>10</sup> The building then seems to have been used as a bakery (1917-22) and perhaps as a bicycle repair shop for a time after 1923.<sup>11</sup> While historical knowledge of Harrington's Store is vague, the building most certainly falls within the supply and service theme identified for KNHS development by NHPS. It and Mme. Tremblay's Store may be viewed as substitutes for Strait's Store which was on HSMBC's original List "A", but has been unavailable for purchase, and is now considered to be beyond restoration. (See "Status Report. Dawson City Buildings," Secretary's Report, HSMBC, November 1973, Appendix A, p. 14.)

#### **Mme. Tremblay's Store**

Mme. Tremblay's Store (Figures 28-30) is another building that is best remembered for its later rather than initial use. Various tenants such as a baker and news dealer had occupied it before Emilie Tremblay moved her dress shop here in 1913.<sup>12</sup> The store was then in business until 1940 - long enough for it to become something of a local landmark and for legends to grow up around it. It was believed by some that Mme. Tremblay had sold fancy Parisian ball gowns to Dawson's dance hall girls in the early days. In fact, the dance halls had long been closed before she opened her shop, and the only Paris shipment she received seems to have been one small order of perfumes and accessories. On the other hand, Mme. Tremblay did provide a valuable service to more ordinary women of the Klondike during its economically depressed years, offering them some feminine accoutrements in this male-dominated corner of the world.

#### Person/Event

The following people are connected to three of the four buildings under review.

#### **Mathilde "Ruby" Scott - Ruby's Place**

Ruby, or Mathilde Scott as she was christened in 1885 near



Amiens, France, was a long-standing fixture of Dawson, known and loved by a broad spectrum of society. Before coming to the city in 1935, she had managed brothels in Paris, Strasbourg (1925), San Francisco, and Honolulu.<sup>13</sup> Her Dawson house of prostitution was the city's last, in business until 1962.

This rather exotic lady with the foreign accent entertained lavishly (including the town's most respected citizens), and flamboyantly sported a large diamond ring and an expensive fur coat. She was a seasoned traveller, spending several winters in California, and a few vacations in her native France. Her good reputation with locals, however, seems to have stemmed in large part, from her fair prices, honest dealings, and her generosity. She often treated tavern patrons to rounds of drinks, gave frequent help to the needy, and sent war-time care parcels to all enlisted men from Dawson. One source also remembers that she would send presents to every newly-married couple in Dawson, and to the parents of newborn children. Other stories of her warmth and largess abound - small-scale human interest stories, perhaps, but apparently representative of a type of person who fulfilled a social need in some communities. As historian Hal Guest has remarked:

Ruby was not unique . . . . She seems to fit the mould of madams who are remembered as "den mothers" who acted like hostesses in clean and quiet houses.<sup>14</sup>

Ruby's last years (1969-74) were spent in a senior citizen's lodge in Dawson where she continued to act the part of hostess, being described by a fellow resident as a "grande dame of the old style."<sup>15</sup>

#### **E.O. Ellingsen**

Erling Olav Ellingsen was the last of the professional photographers who operated in Dawson during its heydays. His studio occupied the two annexes north of the Third Ave. Hotel.

A Scandinavian by birth, Ellingsen was living in South Dakota when gold rush fever struck in 1897, and he, his wife, and young son set out for the Klondike.<sup>16</sup> It was 1903 before they took up residence in Dawson, however, having spent the intervening years prospecting in the Teslin, Yukon district and running a roadhouse at Thistle Creek. Ellingsen's first endeavour in Dawson was to purchase and run the Chicago Hotel on Third Avenue, across the street from the Third Ave. Hotel Complex. There is no evidence to suggest that he had attempted professional photography before this time. Most likely he soon began to learn the trade from J.N.E. Duclos of the Larss & Duclos studio in Dawson. In 1906 he must have been quite proficient at it, for he was left in charge of the shop when Duclos went south for eight months.

In 1907, Ellingsen set up his own photography shop in the south annex of the complex under review, later expanding into the north one. Maintaining his interest in hotels for awhile, he carried on photography until 1933, by which time Dawson's population had drastically declined and the economy was in severe depression. This twenty-six year photographic coverage of the Klondike was not repeated in the work of any other individual. It stands as an important documentation of the region for a period that has been neglected in comparison to the gold rush years. Good evidence of the workings of Ellingsen's studio remain in the Third Ave. Hotel Complex, and a large collection of his prints and negatives is held by the University of Washington in Seattle.

#### **Emilie Tremblay - Mme. Tremblay's Store**

Emilie Tremblay was a well-known local Dawson character, about whom a pamphlet was written and published in her native Québec. Entitled Une Pionnière du Yukon,<sup>17</sup> it illustrates a point made by historian Richard Stuart who has suggested that Mme. Tremblay's life touches closely upon the major part played by French Canadians and the important role of women in the commercial and social life of the Yukon.<sup>18</sup>

Mme. Tremblay and her husband Nolasque came to prospect and mine in the Yukon River basin in 1894, but left in 1895 for several years' sojourn in New York. Although they were thus away for the beginnings of the Klondike gold rush, the Tremblays returned in early 1898, accompanied by friends and acquaintances from Québec and New York, and several tons of supplies. The next fourteen years of labour in the creeks outside Dawson earned the Tremblays a comfortable living for awhile, but by 1912, their mining claim had become unprofitable. With the limited capital they had accumulated, they moved in to Dawson and purchased stock for a small shop of "novelties" in the building now known as Mme. Tremblay's Store. The type of goods offered for sale has not been clearly described, but apparently it included dry goods of some sort (perhaps women's clothing or cloth for same), perfumes and handbags. Mme. Tremblay's niece took over the store's management in 1935 when Emilie travelled east for an extended visit, following her husband's death that year. It is not clear how long she was away, but in 1940, Emilie was in the region again, having remarried and moved out to the creeks with her new husband. Her shop at the corner of King and Third went out of business at that time.

#### Local Development

The buildings under review well illustrate the initial optimism of Dawson's economic life in the years from 1899 to 1903, and then the reorganization of commercial enterprises when that optimism began to disintegrate. Their frame construction of milled lumber was a more sophisticated architectural statement than the log and canvas buildings that had previously crowded Front Street - Dawson's main thoroughfare in the early phases of the Klondike gold rush in 1897. By 1898, this crudely built business core had expanded away from the river to Second and Third Avenues.

**Mme. Tremblay's Store** was built the following year in 1899 - not on its present site at King and Third, but another block further

east, on Fourth.<sup>19</sup> This location was on the outer edges of the growing town, probably selected in anticipation that land would soon appreciate in this direction as well. Economic and demographic events intervened to prevent it, however, and Mme. Tremblay's Store was eventually moved to the corner of King and Third in 1905 to bring it closer in to the shrinking centre of commerce. Evidently the building was considered a valuable enough structure to make the effort worthwhile.

Meanwhile, the town had rapidly gone through a number of developmental phases with widespread fires wiping the slate clean in some areas in 1899 and then again in 1902 and 1904. Front Street was rebuilt after 1899 with some of the city's most prestigious commercial establishments. Second Street - one east of Front - was not quite as grand, but certainly became more respectable than it had been in 1898 when bawdy houses and "bawdy cigar stores" were among the salacious businesses that operated here.<sup>20</sup> In 1899 the Bank of British North America erected its version of a classical-inspired building on the corner of Second and Queen (Report No. 4 within this FHBRO submission). By 1902, the two-storey Winaut's Store (FHBRO Report No. 86-89) with its splendid boomtown front had been erected in the block between King and Queen Streets. Filling in the spaces were other premises offering a wide variety of goods and services.

**Ruby's Place**, originally a boarding house with a small ground-floor shop, was built on Second Avenue, probably in the spring of 1903<sup>21</sup> following a fire which levelled the east side of the block between Queen and Princess Streets, the previous winter. Another fire in 1904 stopped just short of Ruby's on the north side, wiping out the hotels and boarding houses that had been reconstructed here. By this time, there was little incentive for new building as the town had slowly begun its downhill slide. Ruby's thus remained in relative isolation as one of the few substantial structures in this block, although it was joined in 1906 by the two-storey Odd Fellows Hall next door

to the south (visible in Figure 6).

**Harrington's Store** and the **Third Avenue Hotel Complex** are located on a street that changed a number of times, too. Both were built when Third Avenue was replacing Front as the main route to the creeks. It was a strip serving the needs of miners come to town to load up on bulk supplies and to avail themselves of services. These were available from a number of warehouses, machine shops and blacksmiths' shops which lined the east side of Third, and more varied shops on the west side. Inexpensive accommodations were also available in this district. **Harrington's Store** on the west side of Third (at the corner of Princess) may have gone up as early as 1900<sup>22</sup> and would therefore have been among the first constructions of better quality here, replacing log and crudely built milled wooden structures, recently destroyed by fire.

**The Third Ave. Hotel Complex** was probably built about the same time since it already appears in place in a photograph dated March 1901. This shows the hotel without its extended boomtown front (Figure 15). The two adjacent annexes in this photograph look much as they did in another photograph of 1908 (Figure 17). By this time, the street had become more urban looking with a greater diversity of businesses. These were more oriented to local patronage rather than to the creek trade - not surprising since by this time, corporate mining had replaced the labour-intensive mining previously done by individuals. The number of miners in the region was accordingly reduced. In keeping with the street's newer character, E.O. Ellingsen's photographic studio went into the south annex in 1912, and later expanded into the north one. It remained in business here until 1933. This use of the annexes had replaced three known earlier ones. A blacksmith had the south one until 1904 and a freighter had used it for storage some time after that. A tobacco shop is the first known business to occupy the northern annex. This was between 1902 and 1912, thus bridging the period when Third Avenue was transformed from a freighting district to the time when it became

more oriented to the needs of Dawson's townsfolk.

## ARCHITECTURE

### Aesthetic Design

The four buildings in this combined report are entirely typical of the many two-storey commercial structures that were erected in Dawson between 1899 and 1903. They are now among the best of the few that survive. All have boomtown fronts that were designed to provide a more impressive elevation than was called for by their functional designs. In the case of the Third Ave. Hotel Complex and Harrington's Store, this provided some visual continuity to the façades of other buildings along the street (Figures 17, 24). Both Mme Tremblay's Store and Ruby's Place, on the other hand, were isolated buildings, probably erected in anticipation that similar structures would be erected on adjacent lots.<sup>23</sup>

Three of the four have oriel windows in some portion of their second storeys - ostentatious features that were and are ubiquitous throughout the city's downtown core (some can be noted in Figures 25 and 26). Not repeated in such concentrations in other Canadian communities, oriel windows in Dawson show a closer aesthetic connection to the architecture of certain west coast American cities - San Francisco in particular (Figures 41, 42) - and to Alaskan boomtowns<sup>24</sup> where these windows, and two-storey bay windows, are distinctive components of urban streetscapes. Of the three oriel-windowed buildings under review - Ruby's Place, Mme. Tremblay's Store, and Harrington's Store - not one clearly stands out as the best example of its type.

Harrington's square-sided oriel window set in the corner, above the main entrance, is the most awkward-looking but this adds to its particular charm (Figure 19). This building also has very fine double entrance doors which are highly decorative and in amazingly good condition, having been well protected by the

overhang above (Figure 22). There is nothing original left visible in the interior (Figure 23).

**Mme. Tremblay's** oriel window is in itself probably the best proportioned and detailed (Figure 29). It has angled rather than squared sides, and small brackets supporting its roof. These repeat the brackets at the main roofline - a reference to the Italianate commercial architecture that so dominated North American streetscapes in the 19th century. (Harrington's shows an even more vestigial reference to this style in its wooden trim in the cornice area of the flat roofline - Figure 19.) The irregularity of Mme. Tremblay's window placement is more reflective of functional design than aesthetic intent. Nevertheless, it adds interest to the otherwise plain side facing Third Avenue, as does the recessed entrance leading to the second floor (Figure 28). The interior of the ground floor corner shop has been rehabilitated to approximate the period of Mme. Tremblay's shop. It is quite plain as far as architectural details are concerned but the unadorned walls do provide a good backdrop for goods which the current tenant has imaginatively displayed (Figure 32).

The aesthetic qualities of **Ruby's Place** are totally confined to the façade (Figures 1, 2) - an indication that this was meant to be but one of a series of urban buildings, with frontage the only portion exposed to passersby. The two oriel windows here are box-like, with panelling in the lower parts and well-proportioned hipped roofs capping the tops. Wooden trim along the building's plain cornice, as well as framing around window, door and corner edges, have been highlighted by dark paint to contrast with the light colour of the clapboard walls, thus contributing to the structure's lively aspect. The overhang of the top floor on the north side (see Functional Design section) adds to this quality. It has also resulted in a slightly narrower ground floor. Although both floors are symmetrical within themselves (on the façade), their features are misaligned between top and bottom

levels. Rear windows on both levels are unusual in that they are placed flush with the corners. Inside, there are other anomalies such as the staircase that cuts across a window. A trained architect is not likely to have been responsible for these aberrations. More likely the building is an unskilled interpretation of the more ordered and sophisticated urban design conceived by professionals in major cities.

Few other examples of Canadian wooden structures with oriel windows have been found in the CIHB inventory. Of those 14 that did come to light, most are houses. Two commercial buildings - both at Saint John, New Brunswick (Figures 39, 40) - are among the rare urban ones that show any relationship at all to the Dawson examples, although they lack the boomtown façades so characteristic of the West.

While Dawson has lost many urban oriel-windowed buildings with boomtown fronts such as the Salvation Army premises (extant from 1898 to 1910) (Figure 38), there are still a few privately owned ones in addition to those held by KNHS (e.g. Caley's Store visible to the right of Mme. Tremblay's in Figure 29) In addition, many new buildings are being erected with boomtown fronts and oriel windows (e.g. Figure 44), thus conforming to Design Guidelines for Historic Dawson prepared by CPS in 1978. In this publication, KNHS-owned Winaut's Store (see FHBRO Report No. 86-89) serves as the ultimate example of good commercial design incorporating these particular features, so distinctive of the city's heyday.

The **Third Avenue Hotel Complex** (Figures 9-11) represents another common, but less decorative commercial type in Dawson. The main hotel block has an extremely plain flat-topped boomtown front extending above a simple gable roof behind. The current fenestration is at least two renovations removed from the original design (compare Figures 15 and 17) in which windows were narrower and better proportioned in relation to the two doors and



the wall surface. All states of façade development illustrate a strictly utilitarian architecture, but one adequate for the inexpensive rooms that were available here. The two small annexes to the south were treated with some elaboration of the window and door trim - peaked pediment-like caps over all, echoing the peaks of the gables that were left exposed above the partial boomtown fronts. The façade of the north annex has been severely altered. The south one, however, is basically intact, including the window frames that once held panes of coloured glass around their outer edges - a common type around the turn of the century.

CPS has no immediate plans to improve the derelict state of the complex - only to ensure that its present condition is stabilized. Nevertheless it is a picturesque group, perhaps even more evocative of Dawson's boomtown days than other buildings which have been restored.

### Functional Design

#### **Ruby's Place**

Ruby's Place is typical of many Dawson structures that were built for the combined functions of rooming house and a ground floor shop of some sort - a laundry in the case of Ruby's when it opened in 1903.<sup>25</sup> Within a year the laundry seems to have gone out of business, however, and the entire building was used for accommodations<sup>26</sup> as were at least two cabins to the rear (see Site section). The layout (Figure 4) was easily adapted to use as a brothel when Ruby Scott bought the building in 1935. Bearing walls were largely left intact throughout the building's period of use, but there were changes in doorways, and partitions were added and removed.<sup>27</sup> Originally endowed with an exterior staircase at the rear, the building at some point received a second staircase to the upper floor. This has since been removed, leaving a gaping hole as evidence of its former position toward the front of the house. The present interior staircase

(installed in the back of the building at an unknown date) cuts across the upper portion of the north east corner window (Figure 5, upper left) - one of the several instances of haphazardly designed renovations. The layers of wallpaper and cotton muslin over rough boards in Ruby's (visible in Figure 5, upper left) are typical of Dawson wall treatments - a solution to the inevitable shifting due to subsoil freezing and thawing.

The building has evidently been designed to fit into a continuous urban row which was never realized. The space under the overhang on the north side would have allowed passage to the back of the building if adjacent structures had butted up to its sides. This would have been necessary in view of the exterior rear staircase, originally the only means of access to the second floor. (Another isolated building on Third Avenue has a similar overhang. See Figure 8)

Although CPS has restored the façade of Ruby's, it has only undertaken minimal stabilization measures to maintain the rest of the structure which is in poor condition. Jacks underneath the building have replaced the rotted foundation. Above this, the flooring consists of some new supporting members, some original fabric, and some early renovation materials. This includes (in descending order from interior to exterior crawl space underneath): several layers of linoleum, masonite sheeting, 3/4" rotted planks, 2" x 4" joists, 4 inches of sawdust insulation, asphalt paper, linoleum paper, 3/4" rotted planks again, new 2" x 5" joists, girders and screw jacks<sup>28</sup> - a real mess of partial measures undertaken to preserve this building throughout its history.

### **Third Ave. Hotel Complex**

The functional design of the hotel part of this complex is simple and typical of other Dawson buildings erected around 1900. Executed in milled lumber and frame construction, the hotel was as straight and sturdy as any in the city during its boom days.

It has since shifted precariously and is leaning to the south, however. Now maintained in this derelict condition, it is propped up with supporting metal rods. Still visible on the interior is the layout (Figure 14) which includes a large open space on the ground floor - perhaps used as a restaurant as was typical of other hotels. Partitions for sleeping rooms are intact on the second and third floors. The interior is now filled with CPS-installed wooden bracing to prevent the building from collapsing.

Bracing also fills the two annexes. Once identical structures united by an apparently continuous false-fronted façade (Figure 17), they are now also joined to the hotel by a short passageway (Figure 14). Both annexes have seen some changes. The north one (the middle of the group) has had its door reset to one side, allowing for a large window which occupies the remaining portion of the structure's width (Figure 9) - perhaps installed in 1912 when Ellingsen expanded his photography shop here, or in 1914 when he purchased the complex. At least one large display window seems to have been a feature of other photographers' shops of the era.<sup>29</sup> The other alterations may have been Ellingsen's work too. These include a long extension to the rear of the south annex. The back portion of this is equipped with a sizeable ventilator and a skylight (visible as a roof protrusion in Figure 12). A large multi-paned window is set in the north side of this extension, evidently the "extensive and well-lighted portrait photographing room in the rear" described in a Dawson Daily News report of 1917.<sup>30</sup> Built-in shelves and counters have been installed throughout. Quantities of photographic chemicals and equipment have been disposed of or removed to safe storage by KNHS staff.

### **Harrington's Store**

When built, Harrington's Store was typical of many Dawson commercial structures with two storeys, corner entrances and apparently flat roofs. Behind the flat cornice line, a slight

downward pitch to the north (extending away from the Princess St. side) allows for precipitation run-off (Figure 20). The large corner oriel window is supported underneath its centre by a pillar (Figure 19), unlike other similar windows around town which are either cantilevered (e.g. at Ruby's - Figure 2) or braced with brackets (these were framed in under the oriel window at Mme. Tremblay's - Figure 29). While oriel windows were primarily an aesthetic feature in Dawson, they did allow for a greater vantage of the street and for more light diffusion within. Except for a small washroom in one corner, the ground floor of the interior is entirely open (Figure 21). It has been refitted with new materials to create an exhibition space - currently used for a photographic exhibit (Figure 23). The second floor has not been restored and is not easily accessible since its exterior stairway at the rear was removed (Figure 20).

#### **Mme. Tremblay's Store**

This building must have functioned well beginning in 1899 for both commercial shops and living quarters, as it was considered worthwhile to move it to a better location in 1905. Buildings were usually relatively easy to move in Dawson because of their insubstantial attachments to their foundations, generally of the post and mudsill type. An investigation of the foundation at Mme. Tremblay's was done under the Dawson City Archaeological Program in 1978. It was found to be of the "classic" form as described in the Program's report:

In its most "classic" form, large planks would be laid directly on top of the permafrost zone which, in turn would support posts of varying lengths. Top plates are then positioned on the posts. Ideally, an insulation layer would be spread over the site and posts would be of sufficient length to provide a crawlspace for ventilation.<sup>31</sup>

After 1905, the building was well-used again - almost continuously until 1976 when purchased by KNHS. Many changes to doors, walls and windows were made throughout the years, however,

as it was transformed from a bakery and a newstand to the women's shop run by Emilie Tremblay from 1913 to 1940. In the 1950s, Mme. Tremblay's corner store was altered to become a tradesman's workshop, and the upper floor was converted from dormitory-like rooms into two separate apartments.<sup>3 2</sup>

CPS has restored the building's exterior to its appearance in 1899. Lacking detailed historical evidence of interior ground floor space, it has renovated the shops to approximate their appearance in the period of Mme. Tremblay, with some use of tongue-and-groove wall boards (Figure 32). The apartments upstairs have been entirely re-designed and refitted to modern standards for KNHS staff (Figure 28). Separate stairways for each apartment have been created in two rear extensions (Figure 33). The third stairwell, which is recessed on the Third Avenue side (Figure 28), was part of the 1979 restoration of the exterior. Although functional, it has experienced some problems. Heat loss occurs in the parts of the building that are near it. Also, intoxicated locals have found it a good spot to sleep off a drunk, much to the annoyance of the building's inhabitants.

### Craftsmanship and Materials

Because of renovations, reconstructions and severe deterioration in some cases, it is difficult to determine original craftsmanship in the four buildings under review - with a few exceptions. **Ruby's Place** appears to have had substandard workmanship on the interior and on side and rear exterior walls. As historian Hal Guest has written, "The façade projected elegance and craftsmanship; the remaining walls reflected function and quick construction."<sup>3 3</sup> A few better quality details such as the newel post in the rear staircase, and the decoratively incised door covering one of the oriel window openings (but installed upside down), were likely salvaged from other buildings well after the initial construction date (Figure 5). The **Third Ave. Hotel Complex** is in a derelict state. Some craftsmanship can still be noted in the pedimented caps of the

doorway and windows in the south annex. This treatment was originally repeated in the adjacent annex to the north (Figure 17). **Harrington's Store** has particularly fine entrance doors (Figure 22) that are richly carved - probably mass-produced by machine in some factory to the south. **Mme. Tremblay's Store** appears to have been a well-constructed building with a fine oriel window and a bracketed cornice at the roofline, the details of which have been highlighted with contrasting colours of paint (Figures 28, 29).

#### Designer

**Ruby's Place** is the only building for which evidence exists suggesting a designer, and that an untrained one. John M. Ogara may have been responsible. He was the husband of Eva Ogara who had title to the property and first ran the boarding house here. In 1903 when the structure was built, he was listed in the Dawson directories as a carpenter, the only year he was so designated.<sup>34</sup> Otherwise, Ogara spent most of his time in the creek country outside of Dawson, working as a miner or mine labourer. The design of the building itself does not suggest a more trained architect.

### ENVIRONMENT

#### Site

##### **Ruby's Place**

The site of Ruby's Place has probably changed very little since 1903 when the present development occurred - with the possible exception of the number and arrangement of cabins at the rear (Figure 3). Fire inspection reports are ambiguous on this point, indicating a range from two to seven.<sup>35</sup> The lower figure seems more likely for the earliest period. Some of the confusion in cabin numbers may have come from the fact that the two extant cabins are linked to each other and to the main building by shed

roofs and crude walls. Sheltered spaces underneath have thus been created, perhaps giving rise to an extra cabin count. There is very little additional space on the site where other cabins could have been located, unless it was on the narrow strip of land between Ruby's and the Odd Fellows Hall to the south. This is currently a separate legal lot, however, and might well have been in the early days too.

The whole complex is built right up to the lot line on the north side. Beyond this, in the adjacent property, gravel has been laid to create a roadway. It was ordered by the owner of the commercial building next to Harrington's Store on Third Ave. who wanted vehicular access to a parking lot at the rear of his new building. (Piles of gravel ready for spreading are visible in Figure 7) This move has visually detracted from the site of Ruby's Place and has exposed it to environmental hazards - increased dust, chance of damage by vehicles and flying rocks, and altered drainage patterns.

### **Third Ave. Hotel Complex**

Except for its derelict condition and its loss of neighbouring buildings, the Third Ave. Complex remains much as it was when photographed in 1901 (close to the time of construction) (Figure 15) and in 1908 (Figure 17). Its boomtown fronts still butt directly against the Third Avenue sidewalk, the only parts of the buildings designed to be seen by passersby. With the Minto Hotel having been demolished to the north, and a small log building no longer occupying the lot to the south, however, the complex is now visible on both sides as well (Figures 11, 18). It is thus possible for visitors to wander around the back to see the building's rear extensions, the evidence of Ellingsen's studio, and the outhouse (Figures 10, 11). Untended trees and bushes have grown up in some of the vacant spaces surrounding them.

### **Harrington's Store**

Harrington's Store is likely the first building of any note on

its site. It appears today much as it did when constructed ca. 1900. A prominent corner entrance building, it occupies all of its frontage on Third Avenue. Board sidewalks run around both the Third Ave. and the Princess St. sides. A vacant portion of the lot to the rear along Princess Street (Figures 20, 25) separates the building from the large Odd Fellows Hall to the west (frontage on Second Avenue). A commercial building erected next door to the north in late 1987 (Figures 25, 26) has created a problem for Harrington's stability. The downspout of this new building directs rain and meltwater toward Harrington's foundation cribbing, carrying with it the potential for soil erosion and structural problems due to rotting wood.

#### **Mme. Tremblay's**

In 1905, Mme. Tremblay's Store was moved to the corner of Third Ave. and King St. - a prominent corner lot on which another building (a two storey wooden structure with corner entrance) had previously been located. Adjacent buildings to the east and south remained in place before and after the move.<sup>36</sup> The eastern one (two storey with two oriel windows) existed until around 1947, having only recently disappeared when a ca. 1948 photograph was taken (Figure 35). From this time until the CPS restorations and renovations of 1979/80, a vacant lot remained to the rear of the store, thus leaving it open to view. CPS used the lot to erect twin rear entrances to the second floor apartments, and to create a recreational wooden deck between (Figure 30). A storage shed has also been built here with clapboarded walls designed to harmonize with the main building. The new construction forms a street frontage which is quite unlike the former oriel-windowed building that occupied this site, but it is closer in character than the vacant lot that was here from ca. 1948-1979.

#### Setting

Both Harrington's Store and Mme. Tremblay's Store have important influences on their urban settings, being two-storey corner buildings at major intersections. There are concentrations of



other historic buildings near these intersections too. This led NHPS in its Master Plan of 1977<sup>37</sup> to consider them as parts of clusters that would receive intensive development and interpretation in the future.

The Princess Street cluster in the neighbourhood of **Harrington's Store** includes the Red Feather Saloon (across the street) and Bigg's Blacksmith Shop (on the opposite corner) (Figures 25-27). The **Third Ave. Hotel Complex** is farther down Third to the south. **Ruby's Place** is behind and to the west, on Second Avenue. Both of these latter are located in the middle of their blocks and are somewhat isolated, lacking neighbouring restored historical buildings. They do not contribute as strongly to the character of their respective areas as do Harrington's and Mme. Tremblay's.

**Mme. Tremblay's** in the King Street cluster, has as its neighbour across the street, the Dawson Post Office - the pre-eminent building in this part of town (Figure 37). Historic buildings (not KNHS owned) are on the other two corners of the intersection (Figure 36), and the Palace Grand Theatre is a short distance away to the west. Beyond these buildings, there is considerable vacant space (Figure 34), especially to the east and south along King and Third. Mme. Tremblay's serves to anchor the historic character here.

### Landmark

The community of Dawson is comprised of the townsite's entire population, plus tourists and quite a large number of prospectors, miners, and others in the region who use the city as their centre of supplies and services. There would be little difference in a downtown building's recognition among individuals in all these groups, as most would be, or soon become, familiar with the whole town, given its relatively small size. However, a ranking of the four buildings for their landmark value might be considered as follows.

**Mme. Tremblay's** is probably the most prominent as it is opposite the old Post Office - truly a symbol of the city and region (see FHBRO Report No. 87-67). It is also near the Visitor Reception Centre on Front Street, from which point most tourists begin their tour of Dawson. It is also on the most travelled route between the Palace Grand Theatre and Diamond Tooth Gertie's Gambling Hall, both frequented by visitors and locals alike. In addition, the building houses a popular store.

**Harrington's Store** ranks next in recognition. It is the only other building of the four that is open to the public, currently housing a KNHS-sponsored exhibit of historic photographs of the Klondike. On a corner property at a busy intersection, it is part of a bustling district of hotels, shops, restaurants, and saloons.

The **Third Ave. Hotel Complex** may rank third. In a derelict condition and occupying a central position in a block that has many vacant lots, some shacks, and unrestored historic buildings, it is appreciated by many for its picturesque qualities and its evocative character. As such, the complex is much photographed. The building considered to be most photographed of all Dawson structures - the extremely derelict 1901 Strait's Store<sup>38</sup> - is a short distance away to the south at the corner of Third Ave. and Harper Street. Most pedestrians thus pass by the Third Ave. Hotel Complex on their way to it, and to other attractions farther south, such as the Government Reserve and the Dawson City Museum in the old Administration Building.

**Ruby's Place** ranks last because it is not open for viewing, it is only minimally interpreted (by a sign and on guided tours), it has no immediate commercial neighbours, and it is not on a major route from one point to another. However, it is not far from the cluster of KNHS-owned and private commercial buildings near Third Avenue and Princess Street, and is, in fact, considered a part of this cluster in NHPS' Master Plan of 1977. It is also not far

from the bustle of shops and restaurants lining Front Street, one block over to the west. One of the well-patronized restaurants in this group operates an outdoor café on a deck that directly looks out on Ruby's Place. The significance of the building may be lost, however, on those who may not have become acquainted with its history.

#### Endnotes

- 1 Hal J. Guest, "A History of Ruby's Place, Dawson, Y.T. With Some Comment on Prostitution at the Klondike 1896-1962. Parks Canada Microfiche Report Series No. 91, p. 14.
- 2 Ibid., p. 20. Guest has gathered these and other comments in interviews with local residents.
- 3 This information, based on a search of R.L. Polk & Co. directories, is from Ken Elder, "Ellingsen Studio" [as yet unpublished manuscript to be included in a book on post cards of Alaska and Yukon], p. 7.
- 4 This information based on a search of Dawson Municipal Records - Assessment and Tax Rolls. "Dawson City. Directory of Existing Structures" [NHPS volumes containing information researched in 1973]. Catalog No. 3-HE-8.
- 5 Dawson Daily News, 6 April 1944, p. 4. Cited in Elder, op. cit., p. 8.
- 6 Ellingsen was taken on as assistant in this studio in 1906. Dawson Daily News, 22 September 1906, p. 3. Cited in Elder, op. cit., p. 6. The following information in this section is based on Elder's research in the the Dawson Daily News as well.
- 7 This quote is part of an article describing the studio in some detail in Dawson Daily News, Discovery Day Edition, 17 August 1917, p. 7. Ibid., p. 2.
- 8 Dawson Daily News, Special Edition, 21 July 1909, p. 47. Ibid., p. 11.
- 9 This information is from notations accompanying a photograph at KNHS, Dawson (Box 16, Item No. 21).
- 10 This information is from the Municipal Tax Rolls, noted in "Dawson City, Directory of Existing Structures", Catalog No. 3-J-20.
- 11 Ibid.

- 12 Richard Stuart, "Madame Tremblay's Store: A Structural History," Parks Canada Research Bulletin No. 92, 1978, p. 4. The following material on Mme. Tremblay's Store is drawn from this publication as well.
- 13 Guest, op. cit., p. 33. The following information on Mathilde "Ruby" Scott is derived from Guest, op. cit.
- 14 Ibid., p. 36.
- 15 Ibid., p. 39.
- 16 Elder, op. cit., p. 3. The following information on Ellingsen is based on Elder's research as well.
- 17 M. Bibillier, Une Pionnière du Yukon, Publications de la Société Historique du Saguenay, No. 13, Chicoutimi, 1948.
- 18 Stuart, op. cit., p. 15. The following material on Mme. Tremblay is drawn from this source as well.
- 19 These two positions are clearly evident in photographs illustrated in Stuart, op. cit., e.g. Figures 9-11, pp. 9-11.
- 20 These are mentioned in the Local Development section of Margaret Archibald, "Winaut's Store," FHBRO Report No. 86-89, p. 4.
- 21 Guest, op. cit., p. 3.
- 22 Staff Report, "Early Buildings of Dawson," Historic Sites and Monuments Board of Canada, Agenda Paper 1967-16, p. 160.
- 23 Mme. Tremblay's was the only substantial building in its locale when built at the corner of King St. and Fourth Ave. At King St. and Third Ave, where it was moved in 1905, it did adjoin another oriel-windowed building, visible in several photographs illustrated in Stuart, op. cit. (Figure 22), p. 24.
- 24 Several oriel window buildings are visible in the Nome, Alaska street scene illustrated in Margaret Archibald, "Winaut's Store," FHBRO Report No. 86-89, Figure 6.
- 25 Guest, op. cit., p. 9.
- 26 The establishment was named the "St. Clair Boarding House", as evident in a 1904 photograph of Second Avenue. In 1911 a new owner listed it in business directories as a hotel. Around 1917, under another owner, it again became known as a boarding house. Ibid., pp. 9-10.
- 27 The evolution of the building, as far as can be determined,

is discussed in Guest, op. cit., pp. 42-57.

28 Guest, op. cit., p. 52.

29 For example, see large window in Larss & Duclos studio  
pictured in National Archives photograph NA/AN, PA-13360.

30 Elder, op. cit., pp. 1-2.

31 David Burley and Brian D. Ross, The Dawson City  
Archaeological Program: Structural Report for 1978  
Operations. Manuscript Report No. 384 (Ottawa: Parks  
Canada, 1979), p. 81.

32 Details of the changes are provided in Stuart, op. cit., pp.  
17-21.

33 Guest, op. cit., p. 42.

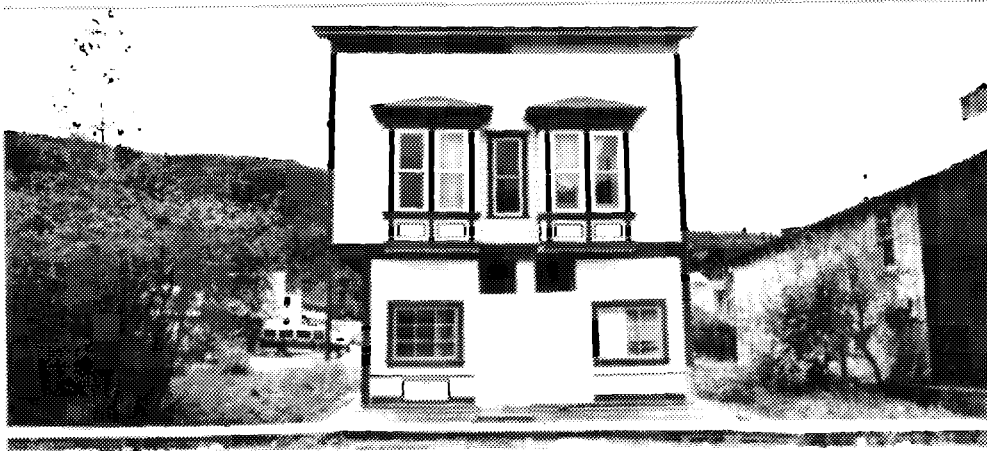
34 Ibid., p. 3.

35 Guest, op. cit., p. 56.

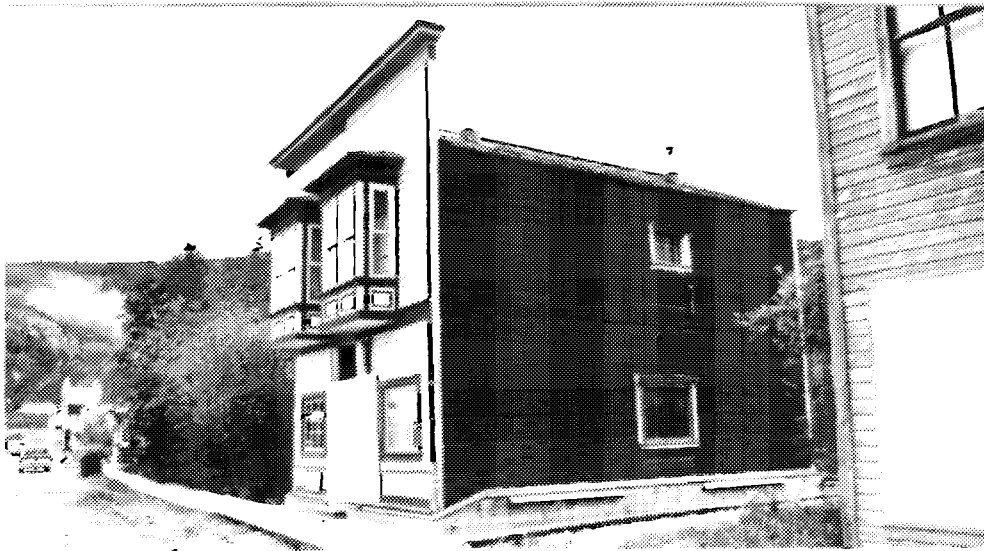
36 Stuart, op. cit., Figure 12, p. 12.

37 Klondike National Historic Sites. Master Plan Preview  
(Ottawa: Parks Canada, 1977), p. 7.

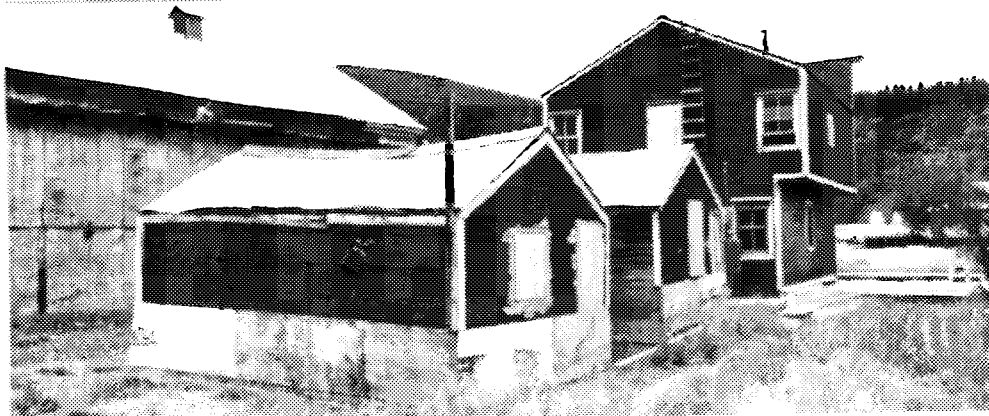
FOUR COMMERCIAL BUILDINGS: RUBY'S PLACE, THIRD AVE. HOTEL COMPLEX,  
HARRINGTON'S STORE, MME. TREMBLAY'S STORE, DAWSON, YUKON



- 1 Ruby's Place, 233 Second Ave. between Queen and Princess Sts., Dawson, Yukon; constructed ca. 1903. (EC-CPS, KNHS, 1987.)



- 2 Ruby's Place; view of south side; Odd Fellows Hall, constructed in 1906, is visible at right. (EC-CPS, KNHS, 1987.)



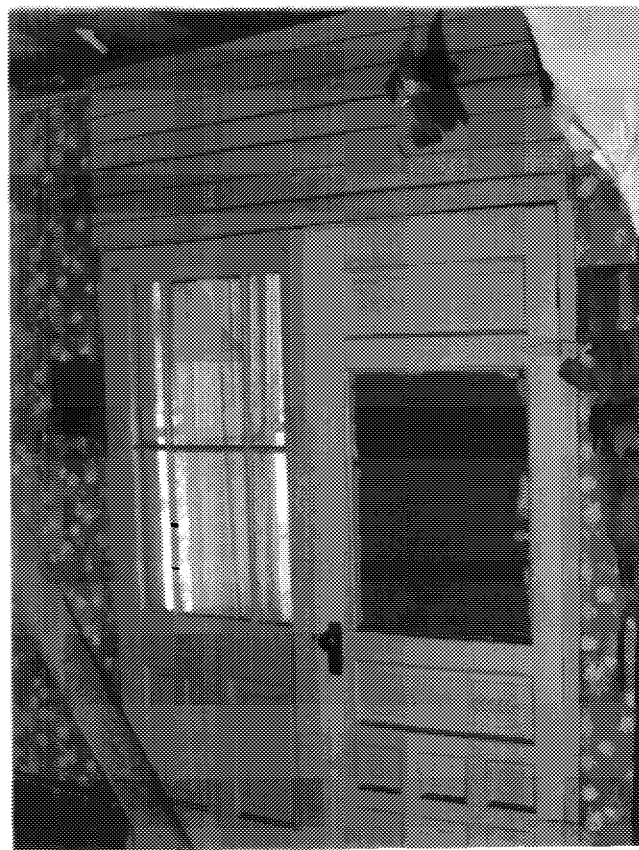
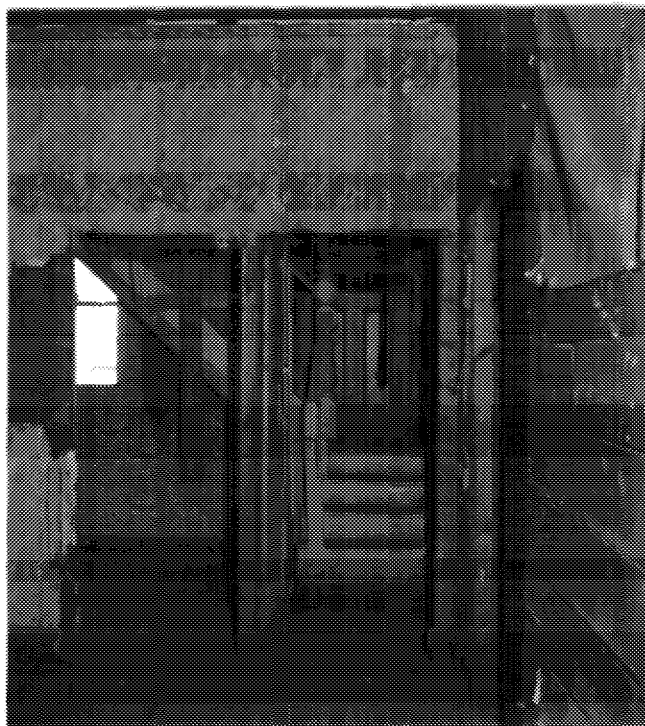
- 3 Ruby's Place and cabins at rear; Odd Fellows Hall is visible at left. (EC-CPS, KNHS, 1987.)

FOUR COMMERCIAL BUILDINGS: RUBY'S PLACE, THIRD AVE. HOTEL COMPLEX,  
HARRINGTON'S STORE, MME. TREMBLAY'S STORE, DAWSON, YUKON



4 Ground and second floor plans of Ruby's Place. (EC-CPS,  
KNHS, 1987.)

FOUR COMMERCIAL BUILDINGS: RUBY'S PLACE, THIRD AVE. HOTEL COMPLEX,  
HARRINGTON'S STORE, MME. TREMBLAY'S STORE, DAWSON, YUKON



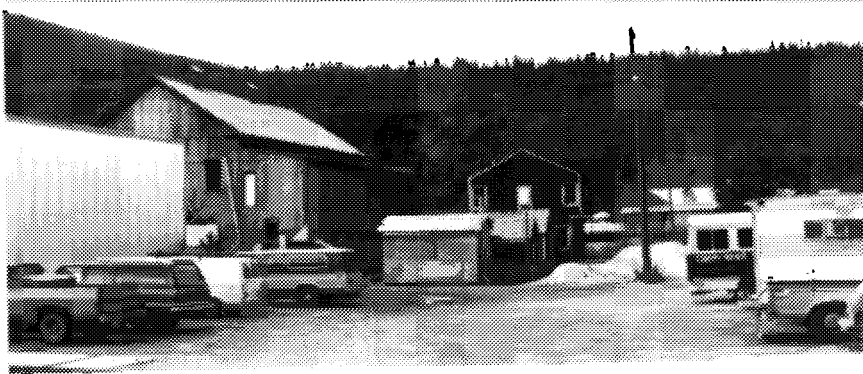
- 5 Ruby's Place; interior views. Upper left: staircase at rear; upper right: doors and windows enclosing oriel window space; lower left: second floor hallway; lower right: interior of one of the cabins. (EC-CPS, KNHS, 1988.)



FOUR COMMERCIAL BUILDINGS: RUBY'S PLACE, THIRD AVE. HOTEL COMPLEX,  
HARRINGTON'S STORE, MME. TREMBLAY'S STORE, DAWSON, YUKON



- 6 Ruby's Place; view looking south along Second Ave. Odd Fellows Hall is to the right of Ruby's. (EC-CPS, KNHS, 1987.)



- 7 Ruby's Place; rear view from Third Ave. (EC-CPS, KNHS, 1987.)

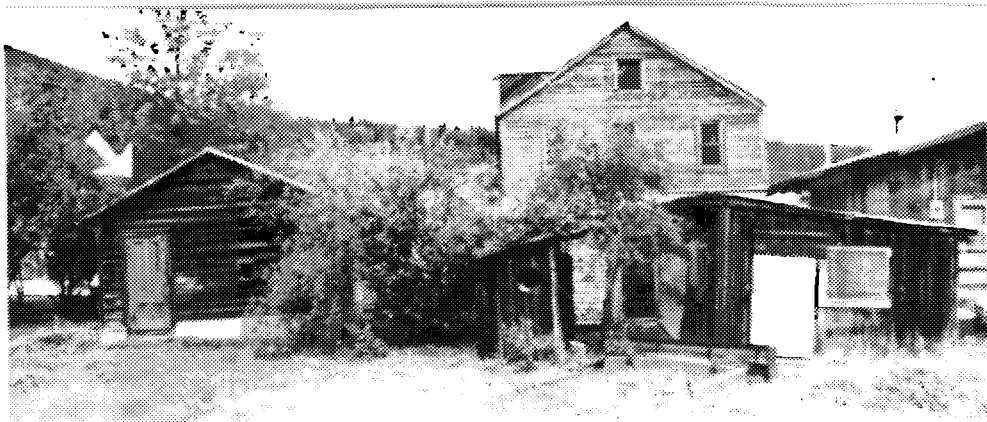


- 8 Rear view of Ruby's Place at left (arrow). Building on Third Ave. (right) was probably constructed in 1901. (J. Mattie, EC-CPS, AHB, 1988.)

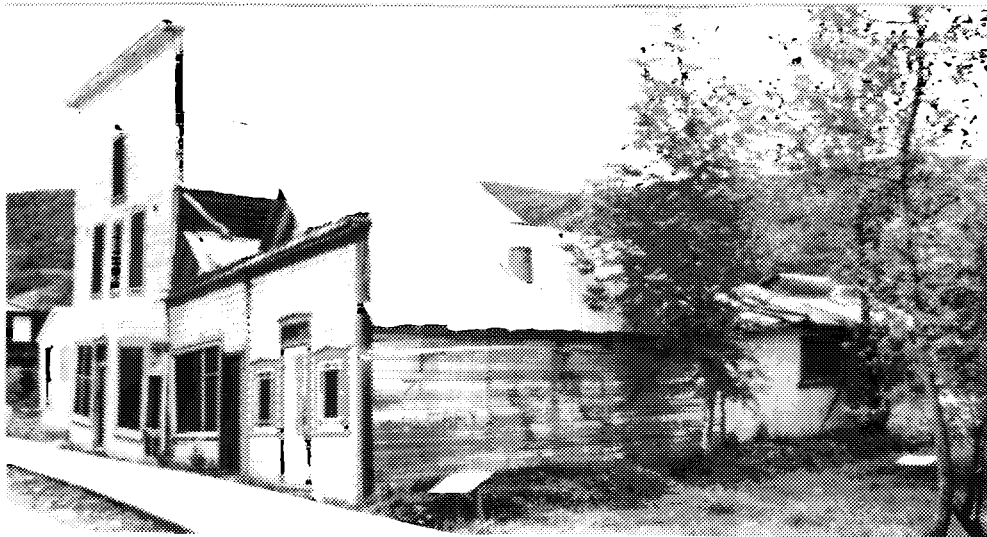
FOUR COMMERCIAL BUILDINGS: RUBY'S PLACE, THIRD AVE. HOTEL COMPLEX,  
HARRINGTON'S STORE, MME. TREMBLAY'S STORE, DAWSON, YUKON



9 Third Ave. Hotel Complex, Third Ave. between Princess and Harper Sts., Dawson, Yukon; constructed ca. 1900. (EC-CPS, KNHS, 1987.)



10 Third Ave. Hotel Complex; rear view. E.O. Ellingsen's photographic studio was in the annex at left (arrow). (EC-CPS, KNHS, 1987.)



11 Third Ave. Hotel Complex; south side view. (EC-CPS, KNHS, 1987.)

FOUR COMMERCIAL BUILDINGS: RUBY'S PLACE, THIRD AVE. HOTEL COMPLEX,  
HARRINGTON'S STORE, MME. TREMBLAY'S STORE, DAWSON, YUKON



12 Third Ave. Hotel Complex; view of E.O. Ellingsen's photographic studio in south annex. (J. Mattie, EC-CPS, AHB, 1988.)



13 Third Ave. Hotel Complex; north side view of E.O. Ellingsen's photographic studio in south annex. (J. Mattie, EC-CPS, AHB, 1988.)

FOUR COMMERCIAL BUILDINGS: RUBY'S PLACE, THIRD AVE. HOTEL COMPLEX,  
HARRINGTON'S STORE, MME. TREMBLAY'S STORE, DAWSON, YUKON



14 Ground floor plan of Third Ave. Hotel Complex. (EC-CPS,  
KNHS, 1987.)

FOUR COMMERCIAL BUILDINGS: RUBY'S PLACE, THIRD AVE. HOTEL COMPLEX,  
HARRINGTON'S STORE, MME. TREMBLAY'S STORE, DAWSON, YUKON

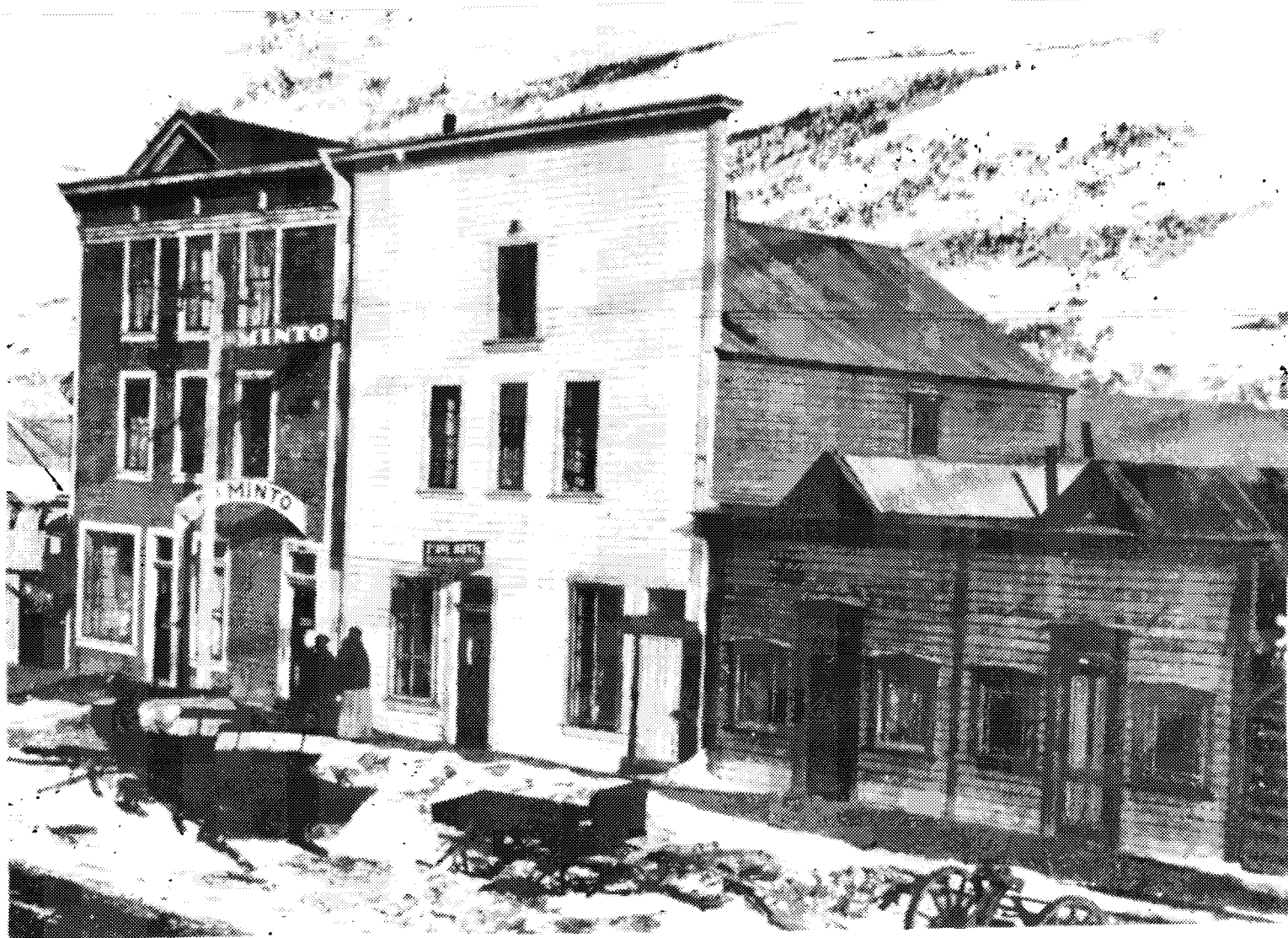


- 15 Third Ave. Hotel Complex, March 1901. Note the 2 1/2 storey hotel building at left (arrow) which was later shortened and became Biggs' Blacksmith Shop (Report No. 18). (NA/AN, PA-16987.)



- 16 Third Ave. Hotel Complex and view north along Third Ave. Note Harrington's Store at left. (J. Mattie, EC-CPS, AHB, 1988.)





17 Third Ave. Hotel Complex ca. 1908. (EC-CPS, HRB, Dawson Photo Collection.)

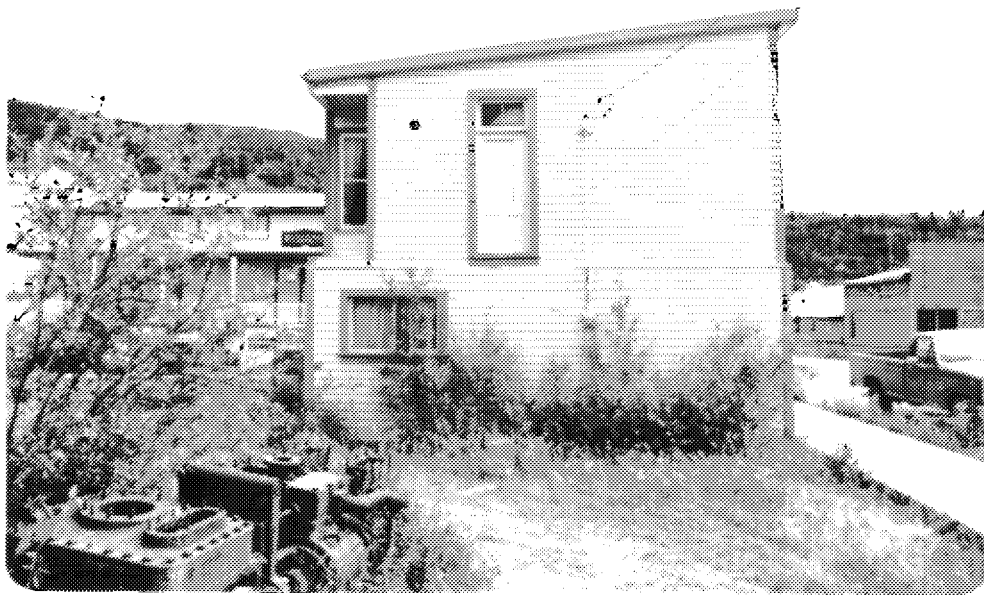


18 Third Ave. Hotel Complex; view south along Third Ave. (J. Mattie, EC-CPS, AHB, 1988.)

FOUR COMMERCIAL BUILDINGS: RUBY'S PLACE, THIRD AVE. HOTEL COMPLEX,  
HARRINGTON'S STORE, MME. TREMBLAY'S STORE, DAWSON, YUKON

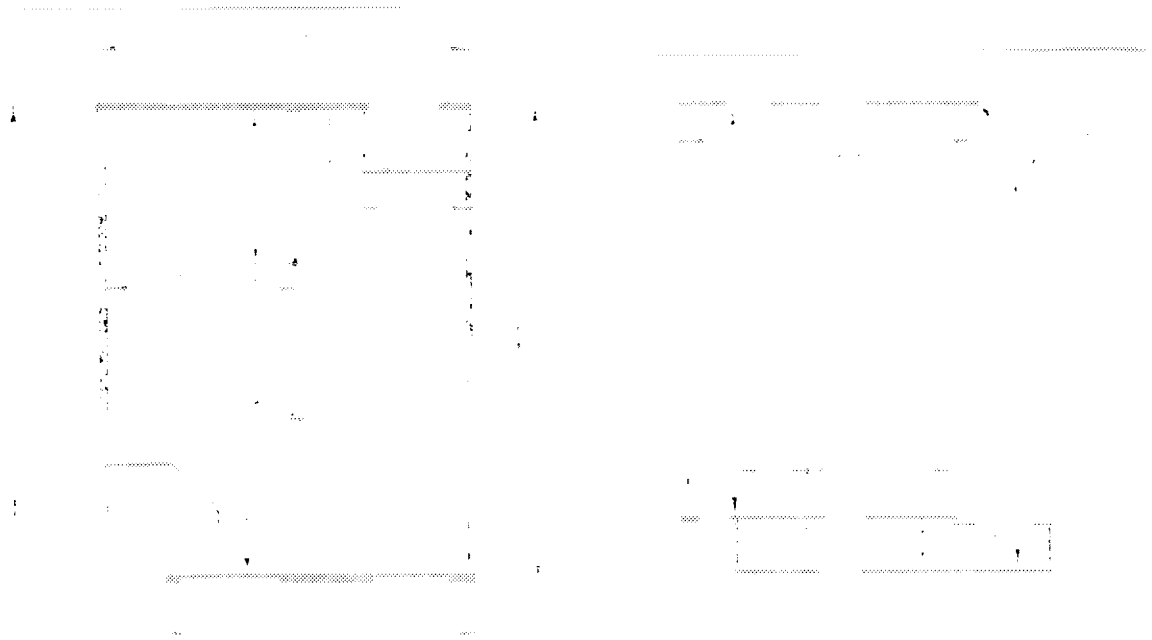


- 19 Harrington's Store, Third Ave. at Princess St., Dawson, Yukon; constructed ca. 1900; view of Princess St. façade and north along Third Ave. (right). (EC-CPS, KNHS, 1987.)



- 20 Harrington's Store; rear view in 1987. The only access to the second floor is through exterior door on that level. A new commercial building has since been erected within inches of the left side. (EC-CPS, KNHS, 1987.)

FOUR COMMERCIAL BUILDINGS: RUBY'S PLACE, THIRD AVE. HOTEL COMPLEX,  
HARRINGTON'S STORE, MME. TREMBLAY'S STORE, DAWSON, YUKON



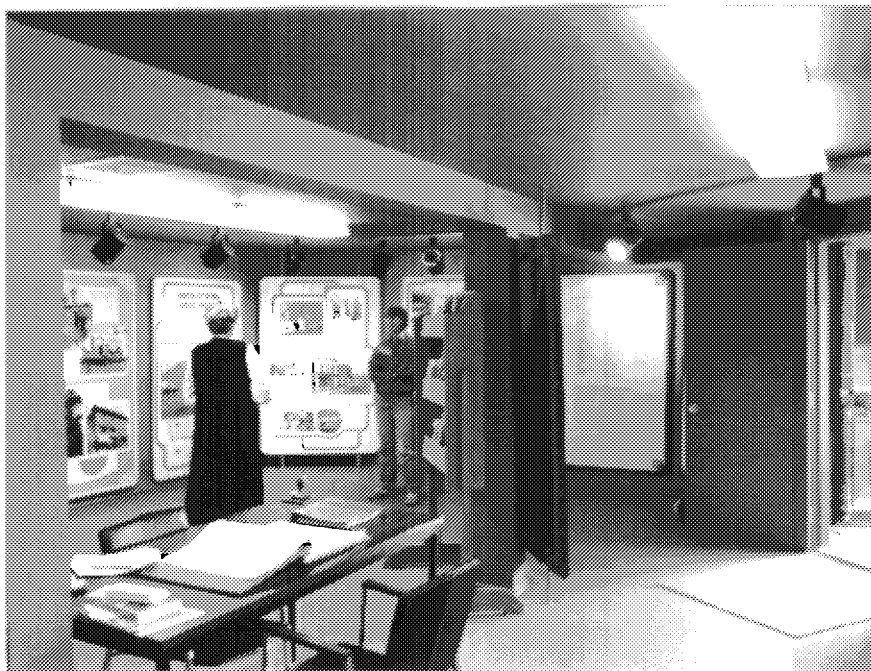
- 21 Harrington's Store; ground floor plan (left), and second floor plan (right). (EC-CPS, KNHS, 1987.)



- 22 Harrington's Store; detail of double doors at corner of Third Ave. and Princess St. (AES, PWC, DU, EC-CPS, Chris Grant Photo Collection, 1970.)



FOUR COMMERCIAL BUILDINGS: RUBY'S PLACE, THIRD AVE. HOTEL COMPLEX,  
HARRINGTON'S STORE, MME. TREMBLAY'S STORE, DAWSON, YUKON

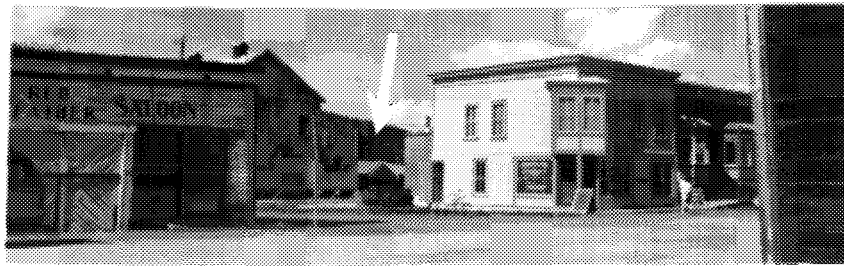


23 Harrington's Store; ground floor interior now used for KNHS photographic exhibit. (J. Mattie, EC-CPS, AHB, 1988.)



24 Third Ave. in 1904; Harrington's Store is at left. (NA/AN, C-14547.)

FOUR COMMERCIAL BUILDINGS: RUBY'S PLACE, THIRD AVE. HOTEL COMPLEX,  
HARRINGTON'S STORE, MME. TREMBLAY'S STORE, DAWSON, YUKON



- 25 Harrington's Store; also visible in this photograph from left: Red Feather Saloon; Odd Fellows Hall on Second Ave.; Ruby's Place (arrow); Harrington's Store; new commercial building with oriel windows (right). (J. Mattie, EC-CPS, AHB, 1988.)



- 26 Harrington's Store (left); view north along Third Ave. (right). (J. Mattie, EC-CPS, AHB, 1988.)



- 27 Harrington's Store (right); view south along Third Ave. (left). Note also: corner of Biggs' Blacksmith Shop (far left); Third Ave. Hotel Complex; West's Boiler Shop (arrow). (J. Mattie, EC-CPS, AHB, 1988.)

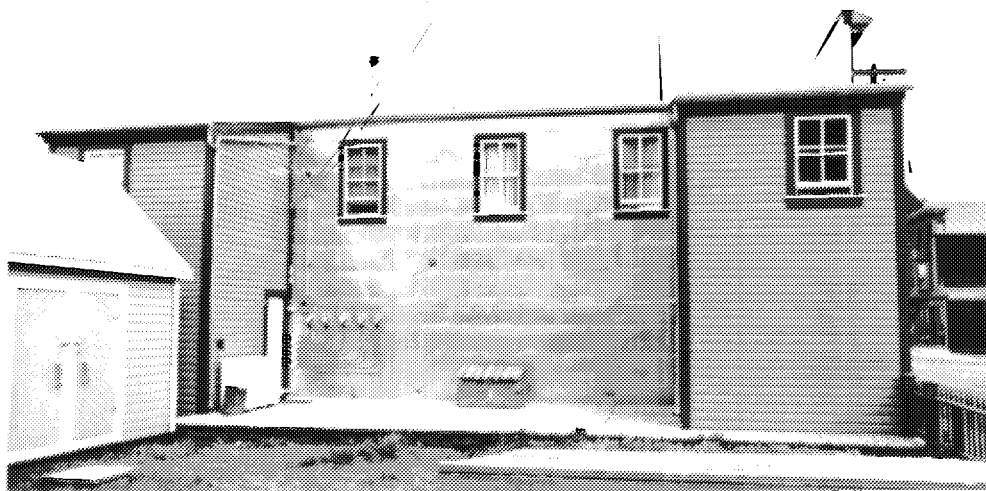
FOUR COMMERCIAL BUILDINGS: RUBY'S PLACE, THIRD AVE. HOTEL COMPLEX,  
HARRINGTON'S STORE, MME. TREMBLAY'S STORE, DAWSON, YUKON



28 Mme. Tremblay's Store, Third Ave. at King St., Dawson, Yukon; constructed in 1899 at Fourth Ave. and King St.; moved to this site in 1905; view of Third Ave. façade in 1987. (EC-CPS, KNHS, 1987.)



29 Mme. Tremblay's Store; view of King St. façade in 1987. (EC-CPS, KNHS, 1987.)



30 Mme. Tremblay's Store; rear view. (EC-CPS, KNHS, 1987.)



31 Mme. Tremblay's Store; interior view of second floor apartment, north side. (J. Mattie, EC-CPS, 1988.)



32 Mme. Tremblay's Store; interior view of store at corner of Third Ave. and King St. (J. Mattie, EC-CPS, 1988.)



FOUR COMMERCIAL BUILDINGS: RUBY'S PLACE, THIRD AVE. HOTEL COMPLEX,  
HARRINGTON'S STORE, MME. TREMBLAY'S STORE, DAWSON, YUKON

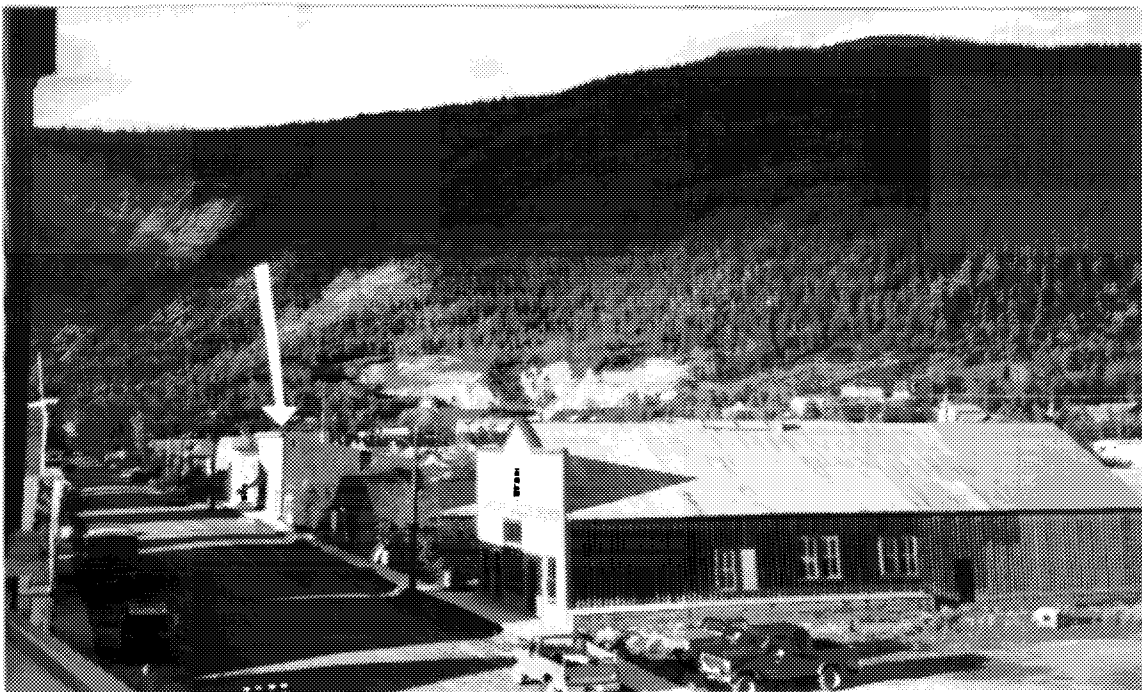


- 38 Photographs showing three of the many other oriel-windowed buildings in early Dawson. Palace Grand Theatre (formerly the Savoy) (upper left); commercial building (upper right), King Street; both constructed ca. 1899; view in 1901. (EC-CPS, HRB, Dawson Photo Collection). Salvation Army Building [Front Street] (lower photo); constructed ca. 1899. (NA/AN, PA-13302.)

FOUR COMMERCIAL BUILDINGS: RUBY'S PLACE, THIRD AVE. HOTEL COMPLEX,  
HARRINGTON'S STORE, MME. TREMBLAY'S STORE, DAWSON, YUKON



- 33 Mme. Tremblay's Store; ground floor plan (left), second floor plan (right). (EC-CPS, KNHS, 1987.)



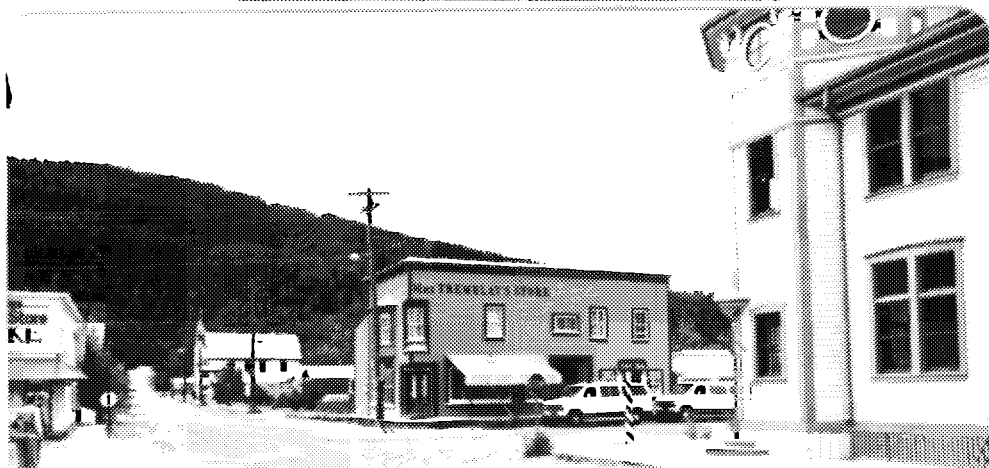
- 34 Mme. Tremblay's Store (arrow) in context. Third Ave. is at lower left; Dawson Daily News is centre/right. (J. Mattie, EC-CPS, AHB, 1988.)



35 Mme. Tremblay's Store; view of corner façades ca. 1948.  
(NA/AN, PA-22458.)

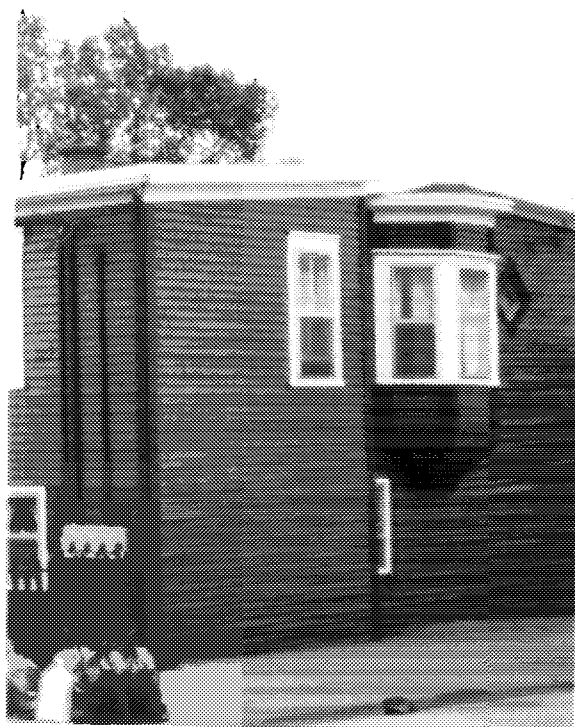


36 Mme. Tremblay's Store (centre); Klondike Kate's restaurant  
(left); Dawson Daily News is visible to the south along Third  
Ave. (arrow). (J. Mattie, EC-CPS, AHB, 1988.)

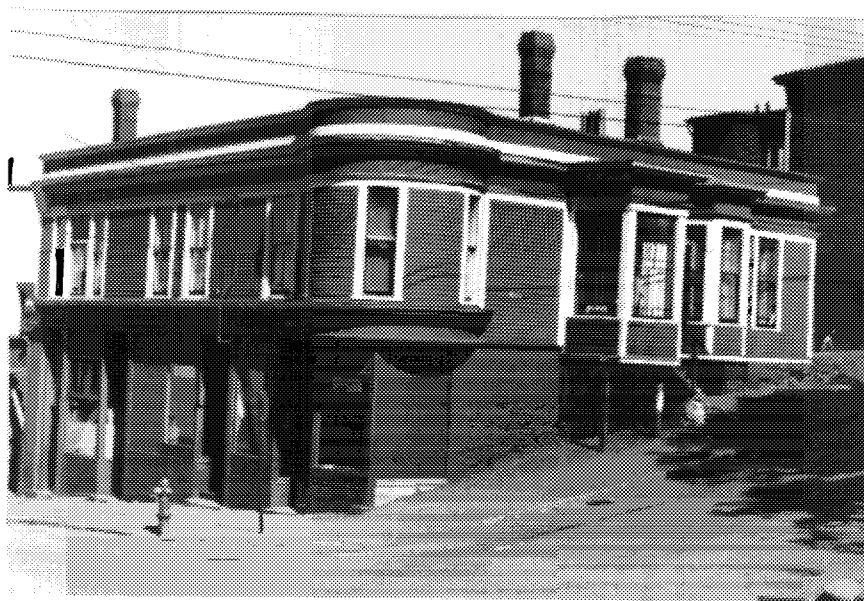


37 Mme. Tremblay's Store (centre); Post Office (right); store  
which became Klondike Kate's restaurant in 1988 (far left);  
St. Mary's Catholic Church (centre left). (EC-CPS, KNHS,  
1987.)

FOUR COMMERCIAL BUILDINGS: RUBY'S PLACE, THIRD AVE. HOTEL COMPLEX,  
HARRINGTON'S STORE, MME. TREMBLAY'S STORE, DAWSON, YUKON



- 39 Building at 141-143 Rodney St., Saint John, New Brunswick; constructed ca. 1900; oriel window in left photo is partially visible in photograph of façade (right). (EC-CPS, CIHB, 1979.)



- 40 Building at 17 Mt. Pleasant Ave., Saint John, New Brunswick; constructed ca. 1900. (EC-CPS, CIHB, 1979.)

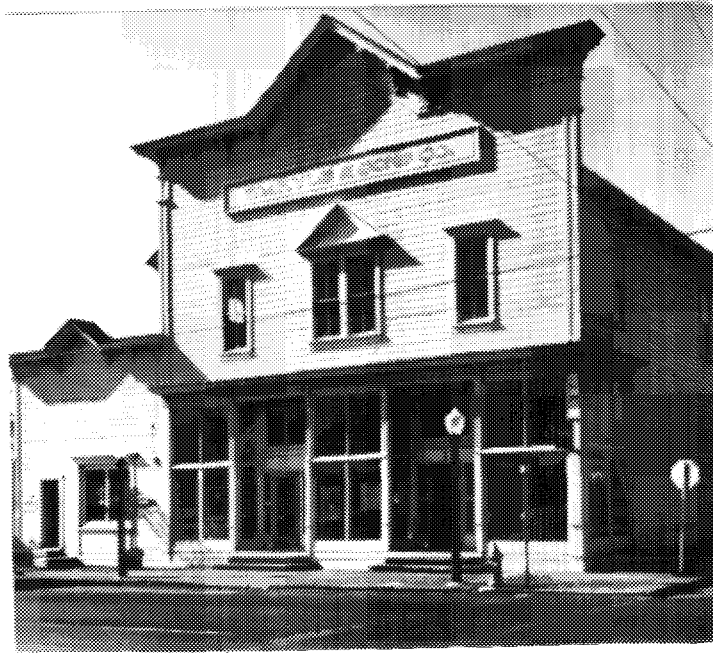




- 41 Houses with boomtown fronts at 2661-2673 Clay St., San Francisco, California; constructed ca. 1906. (Thomas Aidala, The Great Houses of San Francisco, New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1974 [hereafter cited as Great Houses . . .], p. 24).



- 42 Building with oriel windows at 802 Page St., San Francisco, California; constructed ca. 1906. (Great Houses . . ., p. 112.)



- 43 William Kyle and Sons Co. building, Florence, Oregon; constructed 1901; view showing boomtown front with façade wall extending above the eaves of the gable roof behind. (Rosalind Clark, Architecture Oregon Style, Portland: Professional Book Center, Inc., 1983, p. 65).



- 44 New commercial building on Second Ave. near corner of Queen St.; constructed ca. 1988. (J. Mattie, EC-CPS, AHB, 1988.)

17.    **N.C. Co. Warehouse**  
      King Street at Fifth Avenue  
      Dawson, Yukon

**INTRODUCTION**

This 35' x 200' wooden structure was erected in 1898 for the unheated storage of goods. Its simple design and siting on a bleak gravelled lot belie its historical importance as one of Dawson's few buildings that date to the height of the Klondike Gold Rush, and its association with the earliest and largest trading company along the Yukon River. In addition, it illustrates the necessity of extensive warehousing in this land of short shipping seasons and long harsh winters. Since 1978 the building has been owned by KNHS which currently uses it for operational purposes.

**HISTORICAL ASSOCIATIONS**

Thematic

The N.C. Co. Warehouse (Figures 1 - 3) is one of the few structures in Dawson that date to the time of the actual gold rush of 1898. As such, it ties into the latter part of NHPS' high-priority Theme 1(b), formulated to give direction to KNHS' development, i.e. "Dawson . . . as the supply and service centre of the gold fields during the Rush."

More specifically, the warehouse is part of the history of the Alaska Commercial Company (A.C. Co.), later to become the Northern Commercial Company (N.C. Co.) in 1901. Some of that history has already been outlined in the report on the BYN Ticket Office (Report No. 5 within this FHBRO submission). Operating along the northern segment of the Yukon River since 1869, the San Francisco-based firm became the largest supplier of provisions to

Dawson and the Klondike region. It encountered serious competition when the North American Transportation and Trading Company (N.A.T. & T. Co.) entered the fray in 1892. Both erected sizeable stores and warehouses along Dawson's riverfront in 1897 after gold was discovered in the nearby tributaries of the Klondike River. The big rush by outsiders to join in the bonanza occurred in the spring of 1898 and a number of other trading companies arrived on the scene at that time as well. Warehouses became a dominant feature of the townsite over the next several years, particularly north of King Street. Over fifty were built to house the great quantities of commodities brought in by river steamers during the few weeks of high summer,<sup>1</sup> to be used throughout the following period of winter (some of these are visible in Figures 15, 16).

The number of wholesale traders such as the N.C. Co. and the N.A.T. & T. Co. in Dawson was relatively small compared to the hundreds of retailers upon whose patronage the wholesalers depended. Very few retailers had space to store large amounts of commodities and so made frequent trips to the wholesalers as stock needed replenishing. Restaurants and saloons were major markets for the wholesalers too. In 1901 there were 33 of the former,<sup>2</sup> and 23 of the latter,<sup>3</sup> with perhaps 50 per cent of Dawson residents consuming their meals and drinks outside their abodes.<sup>4</sup>

The N.C. Co. held onto the biggest slice of the market in general merchandise which included food, a wide variety of drygoods and staples, and miners' outfits. At the height of prosperity, it was operating 22 trading posts along the Yukon River.<sup>5</sup> Facilities at the Dawson post included a dock for the comings and goings of its 13 paddlewheel steamers. Adjacent was a 200-foot long open-sided warehouse for the temporary storage of goods. Across the street was the company's 40' x 80' two-storey retail store made of logs (the biggest store in town). Next to it on the north side were three corrugated iron warehouses, a

two-storey building housing some of the company's 65 employees, and another warehouse.<sup>6</sup>

The building under review was erected in 1898 when the A.C. Co. was scrambling to keep ahead of its competitors. It was part of a complex of four warehouses, designated "A", "B", "C", and "D" in a block of land bounded by Fifth and Sixth Avenues, and King and Queen Streets (Figure 12). This site was well away from the centre of the business district (and its threat of fire), but was joined to the N.C. Co.'s main operations on Front Street by tram car tracks on King Street. Along this route, goods were transported from the wharf to the various storage buildings, depending on their nature. Warehouse "A" - the subject of this report - was a simple wooden shell for cold storage; Warehouse "B" was insulated and heated for warm storage; Warehouses "C" and "D" were corrugated iron buildings for the storage of equipment needed to outfit a miner. All were of similar size and shape.

Having built these fine facilities, the N.C. Co. was soon faced with their redundancy. The commodities market was quickly decimated as the Klondike gold rush came to an end, and thousands departed the region. Still, a more stable though smaller-scaled prosperity took hold for a few years, as labour-intensive mining carried out by individuals gave way to larger-scale hydraulic operations by corporations. The N.C. Co. retained its pre-eminent position in the shrinking market by tightening its efficiency (reducing inventory and staff), and by amalgamating with other companies. Its old rival the N.A.T. & T. Co. finally withdrew in 1912, leaving the N.C. Co. again as the sole wholesale trader in the region. Although it adjusted and greatly reduced its operations over the next decades, it was still in business until the 1960s.<sup>7</sup> The death knell came in 1966 when the Yukon Consolidated Gold Corporation shut down its mining operations in the nearby gold fields and the N.C. Co. lost a major client. Two years later, in 1968, it began to sell its various Yukon properties.<sup>8</sup> By this time, Warehouse "A" was the

only one of its Dawson buildings dating to the heydays of the 1897-1903 period. This was sold to a Dawson group in 1969 and to Parks Canada in 1978.

#### Person/Event

There is no well known person or event associated with this building.

#### Local Development

When the N.C. Co. Warehouse was constructed in the summer of 1898, Dawson was experiencing the height of the gold rush. Log buildings jammed Front Street, and commercial structures were being hastily built two avenues back from the river to the west, between Queen and King Streets. Beginning to go up beyond King Street to the north was the warehouse district with storage facilities primarily owned by the two trading giants, the A.C. Co. and the N.A.T. & T. Co. Although all gold rush stampederers were required by the NWMP to bring in their own year's supply of food after the winter of 1897-98,<sup>9</sup> the trading companies helped make up the shortfall when necessary. Beyond that they offered mining and prospecting supplies, clothing, stoves, utensils, and more. Luxury items were available too, without which Dawson would never have achieved the sophistication it did in so short a time.

The N.C. Co.'s complex of four large storage buildings between Fifth and Sixth Avenues, of which the structure under review is the only survivor, illustrates the extent of warehousing at this time. Also, the location of the warehouses well away from the downtown area (Figure 13, 14) illustrates the concern over the possibility of wide-spreading fires. Many North American cities had experienced devastating conflagrations around the turn of the century and Dawson was not to be spared. Major fires swept through the city twice in the winter of 1898-99, wiping out whole blocks of buildings. This sub-arctic city could not afford a major loss of its essential goods stored away for use in the

harsh winter months. The extant N.C. Co. warehouse on Fifth Ave. at King Street was built in a place and in a manner to minimize that risk.

## **ARCHITECTURE**

### Aesthetic Design

The N.C. Co. Warehouse has no pretensions to formal aesthetic design, being a basic functional building (Figures 1 - 6). Yet it does have certain aesthetically pleasing qualities arising out of the appropriateness of its form to its function. The extended low rectangular shape is actually quite a striking volume, with the long sweep of the metal roof emphasizing this. Originally, the company name stretched across the roof in big bold letters (Figure 14), but this has not yet been reproduced by KNHS on the new roof installed in 1985. Under the eaves a dozen small windows on each side provide some visual relief to the plain board-and-batten walls which have been weathered to a mellow tone.

### Functional Design

The strongest determining factor in the functional design of this building was probably the means of hauling goods here from the N.C. Co.'s dock and temporary storage shelter on Front Street, i.e. by horse-drawn tram carts on rails. Those rails came up King Street, then split into two short lengths just beyond Fifth Avenue to arrive at the front doors of Warehouses "A" and "C" facing King (Figure 12). The carts were then pushed by hand on rails through the warehouses, with unloading taking place as required. The long narrow lengths of the buildings facilitated the process, as a minimum of steps were needed to move goods into storage on either side of the tracks. A single row of electric light bulbs over the tracks illuminated the space. Small windows located near the ceilings allowed for maximum piling of goods, as did the lack of interior posts. Roof trusses and short braces

between ceilings and walls made these latter unnecessary.

Being an unheated cold storage building, Warehouse "A" did not have double walls with sawdust insulation between, as did Warehouse "B" which was for warm storage. To reach Warehouse "B", tram carts had to pass all the way through and out the south end of Warehouse "A". The doorway is still in place but is no longer used by KNHS for its own purposes. The larger door adjacent to it on the east side (Figure 5) is presumed to have been for the exit of goods onto horse-drawn drays throughout the year, or onto sleds pulled by dog teams, as sales were made.

The N.C. Co. assumed a risk when it built its warehouse complex on boggy ground between Fifth and Sixth Avenues, but measures were taken to minimize potential damage from excessive frost heave and foundation rot. Five rows of posts sitting on mudsills ran down the length of the building,<sup>10</sup> making the spacing between closer than in most buildings. Although CPS has replaced this with adjustable steel posts (1986), the old foundation lasted remarkably well and helped to ensure the building's longevity. Most of the structure is, in fact, original, although it has had a new metal covering on the roof (1985) and some pieces of wall boards have been replaced (visible in Figure 4). Inside, the old flooring is still intact, and the narrow gauge tracks still run down its length. A small tram cart on them remains functional (Figure 6).

Compared to other buildings of the warehouse genre, the N.C. Co. one in Dawson is simpler than some but more complex than others. Countless basic shell type warehouses have been built all over Canada. Most in Dawson were wooden,<sup>11</sup> some heated and some not. They were long and gable-roofed, and one or two storeys (e.g. Figures 15, 16). A number seem to have had central passageways through which horse-drawn vehicles could be driven, being loaded and unloaded as they went. The Dawson Daily News building (Report No. 1) was originally a warehouse of this type, similar



in concept to the N.C. Co. Warehouse where tram carts on rails were used instead. There are few early warehouses of any kind left in Dawson - a significant loss considering how prominent they once were in the city's fabric. Modern ease of transporting goods throughout the whole year has made them superfluous to a great extent.

Elsewhere in Canada, warehouses have tended to be of less flammable brick and stone and often multi-storied.<sup>12</sup> Some near railroads or docks also had tracks running through them as does the N.C. Co. Warehouse in Dawson. The Peake Bros. Warehouse in Charlottetown, Prince Edward Island, is one example that has this feature, with tracks coming a short distance to it from the waterfront.<sup>13</sup> It is possible that the N.C. Co. Warehouse in Dawson is unusual in that its tracks extended a considerable distance away from the point of initial unloading of riverboats.

#### Craftsmanship and Materials

There is nothing extraordinary about the craftsmanship of this warehouse. Its extremely simple but effective functional design did not require anything more than average ability in the handling of materials. For example, no fine finishes of mouldings or walls were called for on the interior. The exterior boards and battens and the sheet metal roofing are among the most easily installed surfaces in building construction.

#### Designer

A known designer is not associated with this building.

### **ENVIRONMENT**

#### Site

The N.C. Co. Warehouse site has changed considerably since 1898 when it was first developed.<sup>14</sup> Originally it accommodated three

other warehouses identical in size to Warehouse "A", but differing in construction and use. Together they covered most of the city block between Fifth and Sixth Avenues, and Queen and King Streets, and were joined to the A.C. Co.'s main buildings on Front Street by a tramway track (Figure 12)<sup>15</sup>. A two-storey log building for staff accommodations sat between Warehouses "A" and "C" facing King Street (visible in Figure 13). In 1899 this was joined by another two-storey structure opposite its rear, but some distance away on Queen Street (visible in Figure 14). This was probably used by company police who maintained a constant surveillance of the property and its valuable store of commodities. A fence completely surrounding the block, with openings only on King, helped ensure security. In historical photographs, another building in the middle of the yard seems to appear and disappear with the seasons. Speculation is that it was a portable sawmill for the company's own use.<sup>16</sup> Piles of firewood could usually be found around the site. Subsequently, there were minor changes to the buildings, including a small open-sided shed attached to the east side of Warehouse "A". It has long since gone as have all the other developments mentioned above. A hotel and tourist cabins have been built in their place (Figures 10, 11).

### Setting

The visual influence of the N.C. Co. Warehouse on the south eastern corner of Dawson's business district is not as great as might be expected considering its impressive length and its corner position at King Street and Fifth Avenue (Figure 7, 8). Having lost its contextual buildings, fence, and tramway tracks, it now sits alone in a bleak gravelled yard - common enough in Dawson, but not contributing to a strong urban design. Other surrounding buildings tend to overwhelm it in colour and detail, and in the bustling activities they support. This is especially true with respect to St. Mary's church and the new firehall (both across the street on Fifth) (Figure 9), and the Triple J Hotel to

the south (on the site of former Warehouse "B") (Figures 10, 11).

#### Landmark

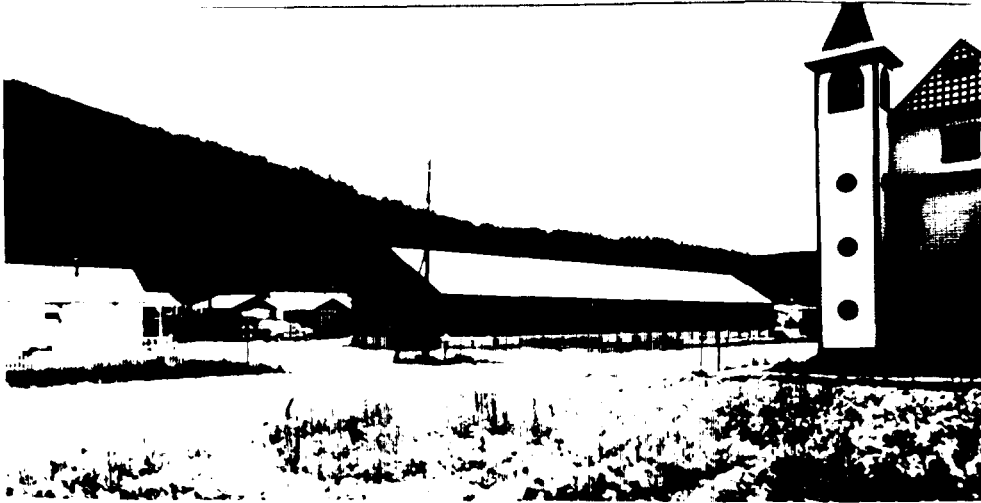
Once a major landmark with its prominent roof sign, the N.C. Co. Warehouse is somewhat obscure in its current state. Now used for KNHS storage, it is not open to the public and there is not much activity on its property. Its simple functional design would not likely be immediately recognizable to most viewers as among the oldest in Dawson unless one took advantage of the CPS guided tours of the city, or read the small interpretive sign on a corner of the building. Nevertheless, the proximity of the warehouse to a hotel, a campground, and a church ensures that it is at least frequently encountered.

#### Endnotes

- 1 Margaret Archibald, "Grubstake to Grocery Store, Supplying the Klondike, 1897-1907," Canadian Historic Sites Occasional Papers in Archaeology and History No. 26, p. 59.
- 2 Ibid., p. 68.
- 3 Ibid., p. 69.
- 4 This was the assessment of Major H.J. Woodside writing in the Dawson Daily News, midsummer edition, 1899, p. 1. Cited in Archibald, op cit., p. 68.
- 5 Ibid., p. 12.
- 6 Ibid., p. 34. See also National Archives photograph C675 illustrated on p. 55.
- 7 In 1921 some of the company's posts, including the one at Dawson, began to be sold off to local managers but this arrangement was short-lived. By January 1922, a group of former managers resurrected the chain under the old name, with the addition of "Limited" at the end of it - "Northern Commercial Company Limited" (N.C. Co. Ltd.).
- 8 W. A. Waiser, Stabilization Study: The Northern Commercial Company Warehouse, Parks Canada Microfiche Report Series No. 136 (Ottawa, Parks Canada, 1983), p. 86.
- 9 Archibald, op. cit., p. 36.
- 10 Waiser, op. cit., p. 77.

- 11 One brick warehouse is known to have been built in Dawson. Erected in 1899 on King St. between Third and Fourth avenues, it was heralded as a harbinger of things to come. Only a few other brick structures were actually built as they were not suited to permafrost conditions. Archibald, op. cit., p. 53.
- 12 A variety of these are illustrated in Architecture Industrielle (Montreal: Communauté Urbaine de Montreal, Service de planification du territoire, 1982).
- 13 Mary Cullen, "Charlottetown, P.E.I. - Marine Centre," FHBRO Building Report No. 83-02, p. 31.
- 14 A thorough description of the site in the 1898-1901 period is included in Waiser, "The Alaska Commercial Company Complex," op. cit., pp. 72-82.
- 15 This information obtained in site visit accompanied by Robie Van Rumpt, Heritage Recorder, EC-CPS, KNHS, 27 July 1988.
- 16 Waiser, op. cit., p. 80.

N.C. CO. WAREHOUSE, DAWSON, YUKON



- 1 N.C. Co. Warehouse, King St. at Fifth Ave., Dawson, Yukon; constructed summer 1899; view from north west corner in 1987. (EC-CPS, KNHS, 1987.)



- 2 N.C. Co. Warehouse, Fifth Ave. (west) side. (EC-CPS, KNHS, 1987.)



- 3 N.C. Co. Warehouse, King St. side. Dawson's new fire hall is visible at right. (EC-CPS, KNHS, 1987.)

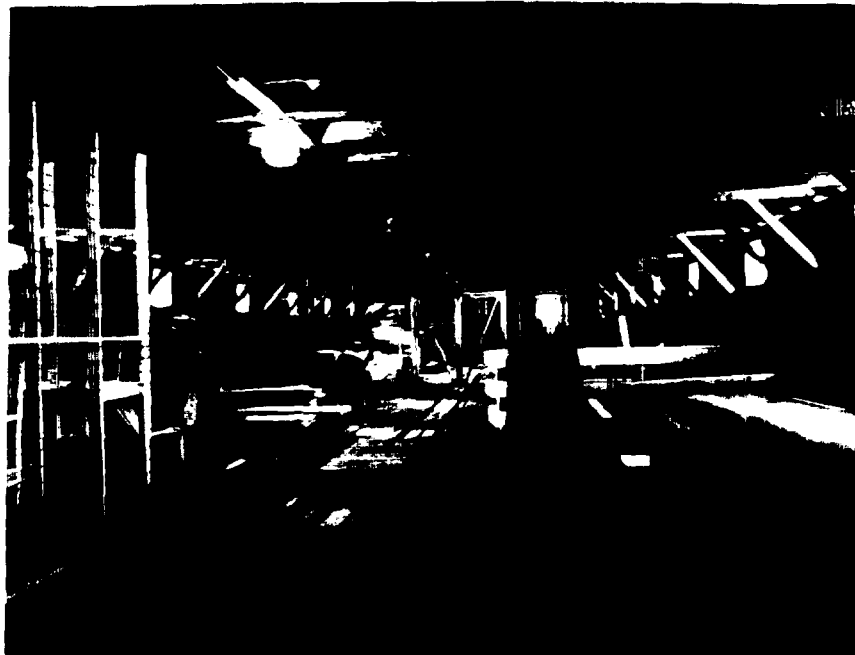
N.C. CO. WAREHOUSE, DAWSON, YUKON



4 N.C. Co. Warehouse, east side. (EC-CPS, KNHS, 1987.)



5 N.C. Co. Warehouse, south side. (EC-CPS, KNHS, 1987.)



6 N.C. Co. Warehouse, interior view. (J. Mattie, EC-CPS, AHB, 1988.)

N.C. CO. WAREHOUSE, DAWSON, YUKON



- 7 N.C. Co. Warehouse (arrow) on King St. To the left are the Triple J Hotel cabins on former site of N.C. Co. Warehouse "C"; to the right is St. Mary's Catholic church; the Post Office is visible on left of street in the distance. (J. Mattie, EC-CPS, AHB, 1988.)



- 8 N.C. Co. Warehouse as seen from campground across street. (J. Mattie, EC-CPS, AHB, 1988.)



- 9 New firehall and St. Mary's Catholic church on west side of Fifth Ave., across street from N.C. Co. Warehouse. The campground is beyond, to the north. (J. Mattie, EC-CPS, AHB, 1988.)

N.C. CO. WAREHOUSE, DAWSON, YUKON

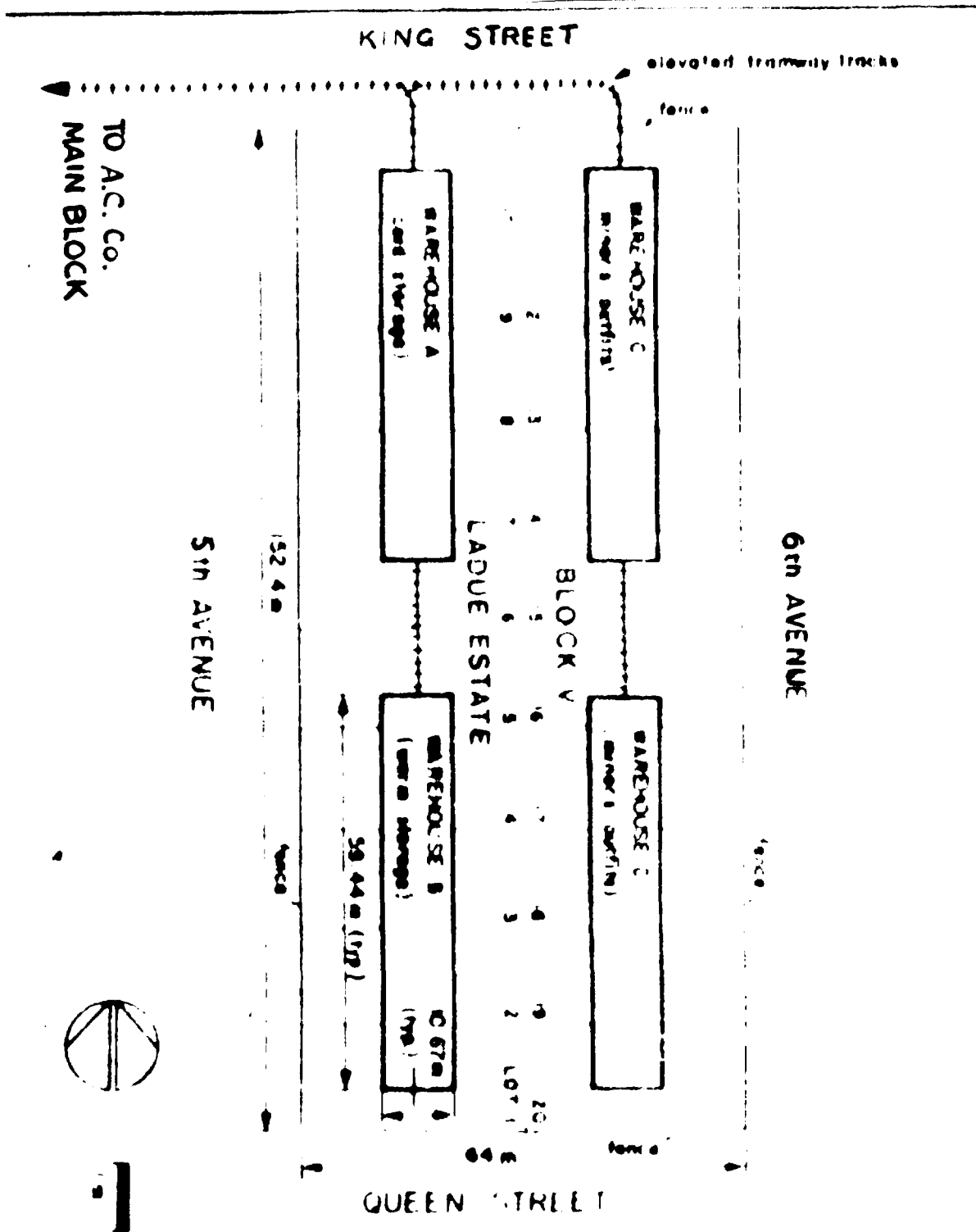


- 10 N.C. Co. Warehouse (arrow); Triple J Hotel on site of former Warehouse "B" is in foreground at corner of Fifth Ave. and Queen St. (J. Mattie, EC-CPS, AHB, 1988.)



- 11 Triple J Hotel cabins on site of former Warehouse "C", now adjacent to the N.C. Co. Warehouse on the east. (J. Mattie, EC-CPS, AHB, 1988.)

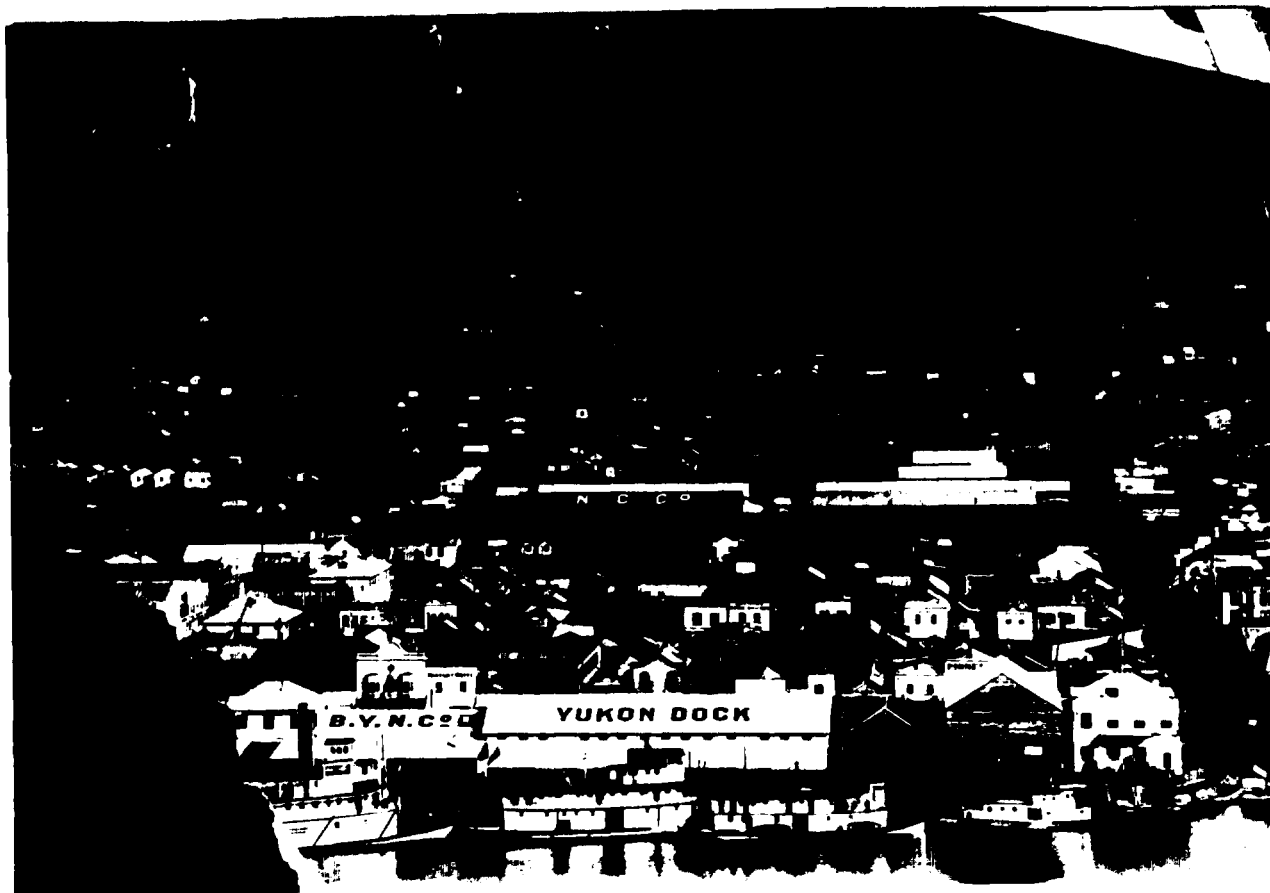




- 12 Layout of N.C. Co. warehouses between Fifth and Sixth Avenues, 1898-1921. (W.A. Waiser, Stabilization Study: The Northern Commercial Company Warehouse, Microfiche Report Series #136, Ottawa, Parks Canada, 1983, p. 76.)



13 N.C. Co. warehouses recently built on boggy land, well away from Dawson's main development near Front St., 1899. (NA/AN, PA16199.)



14 N.C. Co. warehouses, ca. 1900. (NA/AN, C17015.)

N.C. CO. WAREHOUSE, DAWSON, YUKON



15 Warehouses being erected for the Alaska Exploration Co. in Dawson, ca. 1898. (NA/AN, PA-13298.)



16 North American Transportation and Trading Co. warehouses in Dawson, just north of the N.C. Co. retail store and warehouses, Front St. north of King, ca. 1900. (NA/AN, C22344.)

**18. Biggs' Blacksmith Shop**

Third Ave. at Princess St. (south west corner)

Dawson, Yukon

**19. West's Boiler Shop**

Third Ave. south of Princess St. (east side)

Dawson, Yukon

**INTRODUCTION**

Biggs' Blacksmith Shop and West's Boiler Shop are two vernacular structures on the south end of Dawson's downtown core. Here in the early 1900s they were part of a freighting district where workers from the gold fields and others could have horses shod, equipment repaired and metal parts fabricated, as well as see to other matters. The blacksmith shop under review operated as such from 1907 to ca. 1950, and the boilermaker's from 1914 to the late 1940s. These dates are not reflective of the buildings' original uses and constructions, however. Biggs' was converted from a hotel built in 1899; it had three annexes attached to its rear in 1913. West's can not be firmly associated with an earlier year than 1910, although it may well have existed before, either on this lot or another one, possibly as a house and then a carpenter's shop.

Both buildings were acquired by KNHS with their former tradesmen-owners' collections of tools and metal by-products intact. These have been recorded in situ, removed to storage elsewhere and are being catalogued. A good understanding of the workings of gold field equipment and repairs is expected to develop from study of these resources. Unfortunately, the buildings themselves are in poor condition, although they have at least been stabilized.

## **HISTORICAL ASSOCIATIONS**

### Thematic

The two buildings in this combined report primarily represent the service aspect of NHPS' Theme 2(b) formulated to give direction to development at KNHS, i.e. ". . . Dawson as a supply, service and distribution centre . . . ." Services provided were small-scale industrial ones - smithing at Biggs' shop and boilermaking at West's. Not a great deal is known about the operations of either of these establishments, but they do appear to be typical of their genres. Quite likely both catered to needs in the nearby goldfields as well as those in town.

### **Biggs' Blacksmith Shop**

When HSMBC made up its "A" List (buildings to be acquired and restored at Dawson) it simply specified "a blacksmith shop." At the time, two were available and subsequently purchased. Of these, Biggs' was in far better condition than the Third Avenue Blacksmith Shop (now a ruin)<sup>1</sup> and so has become "the blacksmith shop" of KNHS (Figures 1, 2).

Biggs' was not initially erected as a blacksmith shop, but rather went up in 1899 as the two-and-a-half storey gable-roofed Great Northern Hotel (Figure 6). Eight years later (1907), when demand for rental accommodations had greatly decreased, William "Fatty" Oakden converted it into a smithy.<sup>2</sup> He retained the second floor rooms, probably as an apartment for himself and his assistants. In 1913, the building was enlarged by having one frame and two log annexes appended to the rear (Figure 7). These were probably existing structures moved here from another location as was the common practice at the time. In 1924, the shop came into the hands of A.A. "Billy" Biggs who had run the afore-mentioned Third Avenue Blacksmith Shop across the street since 1914. With the acquisition, Biggs transferred his operation, evidently considering Oakden's former shop a better structure. He retained

it until his death, presumed to have been in 1954 or 1955.<sup>3</sup> Meanwhile, around 1944, he had the upper storey of the hotel dismantled and a shed roof put on behind the false front,<sup>4</sup> giving it the appearance it has today (Figure 2).

When acquired by KNHS in 1970, the building was still a good example of the blacksmith shop which HSMBC wished to commemorate at Dawson. An essential and ubiquitous trade shop in almost every Canadian community, the smithy typically performed the functions of horseshoeing, carriage making, tool and hardware manufacture, and repairs of iron in various forms. Oriented toward the needs of agriculture in many small southern Canadian communities, blacksmith shops in Dawson catered to mining-related needs, specializing in mining tools ("points" and "picks" according to the sign on Biggs' former premises).<sup>5</sup> The usual horseshoeing was done as well, but even this was tied into mining, as horse-drawn wagons were essential to gold field operations. They could bring in supplies from Dawson, and carry out gold and worn equipment that needed repairs in shops such as Biggs'. Used for blacksmithing between 1907 and ca. 1950, Biggs' shop spans the period when motorized vehicles replaced horses as the primary means of transport. As with many smithys elsewhere, Biggs' adapted to the changing conditions. Beginning in the 1930s, the shop also did repair work to automobiles and trucks.<sup>6</sup> When "Billy" Biggs died in 1955, the building was found to be filled with a plethora of blacksmith and mechanics' tools and equipment - an anvil, tongs, post drill, saw sharpener, grinder, motor, bellows, mallets, clamps, hoops, etc. (Figures 8 - 10). It is an extremely rich collection which KNHS has for the most part removed, and has since been cataloguing in storage elsewhere.<sup>7</sup>

### West's Boiler Shop

Very little indeed is definitely known about the history of this building (Figures 14, 15) and its operations. What is recorded is that Jesse A. West, a machinist and a blacksmith, was the owner in 1914. The 1915-16 Polk Directory of the city lists him as "J.A. West, Boiler Manufacturer and General Repairing."<sup>8</sup> His business subsequently became known simply as West's Boiler Shop; it was functioning until the late 1940s.<sup>9</sup> Although these are the bare facts of the place, a fair bit can be conjectured about its history by what is known of the boilermaker's trade, by requirements for boilers of various sorts in Dawson at the time, and by the wealth of artifacts left in the building.

Boilers were essential pieces of equipment in the age of steam, roughly from the mid-19th to the mid-20th century. They could produce both heat and power, and were crucial to the progress of the industrial revolution. The boilermaker as a tradesman developed along with it - a person who was proficient at riveting and welding the tight seams necessary to hold steam under pressure in a container, whether in the giant boilers used in steam locomotives, steamships, or factories, or smaller ones in domestic heating systems.<sup>10</sup>

At Dawson, there was considerable business for a boilermaker such as J.A. West. He may have serviced the sternwheeled riverboats when they were in port, and perhaps steam-powered road equipment, steam shovels (Figure 22), and pile drivers. The N.C. Co. had a large steam heating plant for its several buildings on Front Street which he may have worked on. In addition, he may have fabricated various tanks and bins - all part of a boilermaker's stock-in-trade. Almost certainly he would have worked on steam-powered equipment for the Klondike gold fields. Steam thawing of permafrost became a commonplace of placer mining practice, as the hard substance had to be broken down or melted to release the gold. In this process, steam from portable

boilers was directed through rubber hoses and iron pipes ("points") which were driven into the ground.<sup>11</sup> The K.T.M. Co. (Report No. 3) was the first to supply this equipment in the Klondike, but J.A. West could well have serviced it when necessary, and perhaps also helped repair the large-scale thawing equipment used with the giant dredges later on (Reports No. 21 and 22). Found within his workshop, which KNHS purchased in 1978, were the tools of his trade: a forge, sheet metal rollers, a drill press, an arc welder, work benches, drawers and storage cupboards (Figure 18), and many other metal pieces and tools, some of which still litter the yard south and east of the building (Figures 15, 19).

Elsewhere in industrialized Canada, boilermakers became highly unionized and kept up with changing needs for pressure-tight vessels, including those used in chemical plants, in the beverage industry, in oil and gas refineries, and in steel mills, to name a few.<sup>12</sup> J.A. West's shop represents an earlier age of the independent tradesman who improvised manufactures and repairs to suit the needs of his community - in this case, a sub-arctic gold mining town.

#### Person/Event

Alexander Arkins "Billy" Biggs, and Jesse A. West were two Dawson tradesmen who also had other entrepreneurial interests in town. Billy Biggs owned and operated at least two blacksmith's shops - the Third Avenue Blacksmith Shop (FHBRO Report No. 87-65) and the Biggs' Blacksmith Shop under review. Together they represent his smithing career which lasted at least 35 years, from ca. 1914 to ca. 1950. Biggs also ran a bicycle shop in Harrington's Store which he apparently bought in 1923.<sup>13</sup>

Jesse West is recorded as owner and operator of the boiler shop under review from 1914 until the late 1940s.<sup>14</sup> He bought the Red Feather Saloon in 1919 (FHBRO Report No. 86-88), and the structure now known as West's Machine Shop (FHBRO Report No.



87-64) in 1929. These he seems to have retained until 1958 which may be the year of his death.<sup>15</sup> All of these properties owned by Biggs and West are in the immediate proximity of the intersection of Third Ave. and Princess Street in Dawson (Figure 20).

### Local Development

Historical documentation on Biggs' Blacksmith Shop and West's Boiler Shop is sketchy, but evidence suggests they were not put in place at the same time, the former dating from 1899<sup>16</sup> and the latter, perhaps from 1910.<sup>17</sup> By 1910, however, they were both consistent in appearance and function with the predominant character of Third Avenue as a freighting district. Described by historian Richard Stuart, it was crowded with "stage lines, storage companies, machine-shops, wholesalers and jobbers, blacksmiths, leathersmiths, and inexpensive rooming houses."<sup>18</sup>

In the preceding 11 years before 1910, Third Avenue had gone through considerable change. When Biggs' shop (the better documented of the two) was built as the Great Northern Hotel in 1899, Third Avenue was only beginning to be developed, and Princess Street was a mere slash through the top layer of moss and permafrost. A photograph taken about that time shows very rough conditions, with crude log shacks, uneven ground, and building materials littering what is supposed to be a street.<sup>19</sup> The Great Northern Hotel stands out in this photograph as one of the better buildings of the area. Drainage improvements to the boggy land stretching beyond the east side of Third were made throughout the next several years. In addition, the Third Avenue road surface was macadamized in 1902, making the street the main trunk road to the creeks and also making it much more attractive for further development. More varied types of businesses soon began to locate here, including the Red Feather Saloon on the south west corner of Princess and Third, and Harrington's Store on the north west corner of this intersection (Figure 20).

By 1904, the street was quite mixed in use, particularly north of

Princess, although it still had the character of a miner's district - a place to get equipment repaired, stock up on supplies, visit a saloon, have an inexpensive meal, and stay in a cheap room. This was still the case when West's shop was first noted as such on its present site in 1910. There is a good chance, however, that it either existed elsewhere before this time, or was used here for another purpose (perhaps a residence and then a carpenter's shop).<sup>20</sup>

## ARCHITECTURE

### Aesthetic Design

Perhaps the most favourable comment that could be mustered for the aesthetic qualities of **Biggs' Blacksmith Shop** is that it has an interesting sequence of line, volume and texture. The structure is stepped down from the truncated (former) Great Northern Hotel portion facing Third Ave., to the three lower rear annexes (Figure 2). There are variations of wood surfaces throughout - some horizontal clapboards, some diagonal boards (in the doors and gable), some vertical cladding, and a sizeable portion in logs. There is both a gable roof and a shed roof, all behind the square-topped false front facing Third Avenue (Figure 1). In another more sophisticated community, this composition might be considered as having no merit, but in Dawson, it fits the well-worn image of a community that was recently a near-ghost town in the extreme north-west, a remnant of the famous centre of the Klondike Gold Rush. Prettier blacksmith's shops were built in other historic western communities, including a Vancouver one illustrated in a photograph of ca. 1911 (Figure 13), and another unidentified one shown in a ca. 1890s photograph in the Glenbow Alberta Institute Archives (Figure 12). Both of these appear to have been purpose-built; they have good symmetrical balance and good proportions in spite of their humble functions. A number of similar blacksmiths shops survive in western outdoor museums such as at Heritage Park in Calgary, Alberta, and at Barkerville,

British Columbia. Most of these museum smithys do not sit on original sites, however, but have been moved along with other structures to create an artificial village setting.

Unless one can appreciate the romantic attraction of a ruin, it is harder to find aesthetic merit in **West's Boiler Shop** (Figures 14 - 16). The qualities of good proportion, scale, and detail are all absent here, with windows crowded into the façade's corners and haphazardly placed along the side walls. Details are crude in the extreme. Still, the building is not out of character in Dawson, and the combination of its derelict state, the untended natural growth around it, and the litter of boiler pieces and parts is actually quite picturesque.

#### Functional Design

##### **Biggs' Blacksmith Shop**

The functional requirements of a blacksmith's shop have apparently been adequately met in this building which is comprised of four sections assembled in 1913 (probably entirely from existing buildings). The front portion was first designed in 1899 as a hotel; in 1907, this was converted to a smithy with living quarters above. (Evidence of its second floor window openings are still visible where the walls have been left standing on the south and west sides.) (Figure 3). The large double doors in the façade would have been put in at this time to admit horses and wagons. It was not until 1944 that the gable roof was changed to a shed roof that sloped down from the upper part of the south wall, probably when the old roof needed repairs and the second floor rooms were no longer in use. This eliminated the second storey, although there was some room left for a storage loft. The three annexes to the rear were likely appended when more space was needed as business prospered, and structures that could be moved were readily available in Dawson.

The existing building arrangement of four units - designated as Areas "1", "2", "3" and "4" from façade to rear in CPS structural reports (Figure 5) - shows features suited to a blacksmith's needs. These include large doors (one on the façade and two on the north walls of the rear annexes); spacious open areas to accommodate tools, scrap iron, and the large objects, horses or vehicles being worked on; a forge; and various workbenches, built-in shelves, racks and cupboards. Windows are small or boarded up, perhaps for the blacksmith to better judge the colours of glowing metal in the forge, as suggested by blacksmithing historian William Wylie.<sup>21</sup> Metal roof coverings and corrugated iron on part of the wall near the forge would have reduced the chance of sparks setting the building on fire (visible in Figure 8).

The conglomeration of an altered former hotel building and three disparate annexes has meant a complexity of structural systems, none of which was particularly well-designed.<sup>22</sup> Foundations vary under each of the sections but little evidence remains of them because of advanced decay.<sup>23</sup> Areas 1 and 2 appear to have rested on joists on top of piles; whether or not there were also mud sills has not been determined so far. The log walls of Area 3 have apparently rested on grade since their beginnings, as have log floor joists. The perimeter walls of area 4 apparently bear on timber piles. None of these systems was adequate to prevent the deformation of the building due to settling and heaving permafrost. CPS has stabilized the problem by installing a network of interior bracing (Figure 4).

Walls vary greatly. Those in Area 1 are balloon framed with horizontal boarding on both the interior and exterior; some wood chip insulation has been found between the two. Area 2 is stud framed but not covered on the interior. Area 3 has saddle-notched log walls, while Area 4's logs are squared and half-lapped at the corners.

All of the gable roofs over the annexes appear to date from 1913, but even so, there is a mixture of building techniques. Areas 2 and 3 have roofs supported on purlins, some of which are lap-jointed. There has also been some use of trusses composed of log rafters and log tie-beams. Roofing materials consist of boarding, building paper and corrugated metal. CPS restoration architect David Bouse has judged the roof systems to be "severely underdesigned."<sup>24</sup>

The Biggs' shop is a haphazardly designed structure compared to early purpose-built smithys in Upper Canada, as discussed by archaeologist John Light. His findings were that they were generally organized into four types of space - work area, storage area, refuse area, and community space.<sup>25</sup> These were neatly combined in the small CPS-owned shop at Grand Pré National Historic Park (ca. 1850),<sup>26</sup> and apparently so in the early 20th century western examples illustrated in Figures 12 and 13. At Biggs' these spaces appear to be intermingled throughout its long length, although the current state of disorder may have obscured an earlier organization. Certainly it was a better arrangement than Dawson's first blacksmithing facilities housed in tents (Figure 11). Despite its drawbacks, Biggs' shop appears to have been quite adequate for its purpose and it was certainly well equipped as far as tools, equipment and fittings were concerned. Today, its varied construction methods and materials show an interesting mix of vernacular building practices in Dawson over more than fifty years.

### **West's Boiler Shop**

This light industrial shop is a basic shell as far as structure is concerned, similar in layout and construction to a blacksmith's shop. As in a smithy, front double doors were put in place to admit large wagons and objects created and repaired (Figure 14). Exterior walls show a mixture of materials and finishes, including boards and battens, shiplap siding (south

side), and horizontal planks and plywood (east side) - all illustrative of a vernacular builder's response to available materials, local conditions, and economy of use.

The building may have been first used as a residence and then a carpenter's shop. If so, the previous interior layout was gutted to create a simple open space, suitable to the needs of Jesse A. West, boilermaker (Figure 18). While the building appears structurally simple, the array and distribution of artifacts found in it showed technological sophistication when acquired by KNHS in 1978. CPS archaeologists and curators have meticulously recorded the arrangement of this material within the shop, and then moved much of it into safe storage. They have since been cataloguing and analyzing its placement, hoping to learn something of the distinct work areas within the building. This information is expected to shed light on other small industrial shops and complexes such as blacksmith shops, machine shops, saw mills and rock crushing operations. And, as archaeologist Brian Ross has written, "Such a study would also be valuable in the interpretation of the placer mining industry for which boiler manufacturing and repairing was an indispensable element."<sup>27</sup>

#### Craftsmanship and Materials

The quality of workmanship in both Biggs' Blacksmith Shop and West's Boiler Shop is rudimentary. The original hotel portion of Biggs' may once have been characterized by reasonably good finishes around the windows and the top of the false front (as indicated in historical photographs),<sup>28</sup> but these details have almost entirely disappeared. Windows and doors installed during the blacksmithing period are crude (Figure 3). The log walls of the rear annexes appear to be typically crafted for North West pioneer conditions, with saddle notching at the corners of Area "3" and squared half-lapped notches at the corners of Area "4". At West's the craftsmanship is even more minimal - in fact, it is a hodge-podge of expedient measures taken to provide basic shelter, without any apparent pride in the builder's craft.

Vertical boards and battens, horizontal planks and shiplap, plywood and corrugated iron are combined in a jumbled way, particularly on the east (rear) side (Figure 19). Presumably Jesse West was responsible for part of this work, but he was, after all, a craftsman in metal, not wood.

### Site

#### **Biggs' Blacksmith Shop**

The site of Biggs' shop has not been radically altered since the three annexes were appended to the former Great Northern Hotel in 1913 (Figure 7). The building and lot are still recognizable as a smithy, conveniently sited on a street corner, with double doors opening onto Third Avenue, and two side doors opening onto Princess (Figure 2). Gravel ramps were probably built up from the street to each door when the building was in use. The half lot south of the building is still vacant, presumed to have been used by Biggs as an outdoor work area. Evidence exists of a south-facing door in Area 2 of the building which would have opened onto this space. By 1982, wall settlement and landfill around the property had produced a visual change between grade and building of about one metre, but this was corrected in Parks' stabilization carried out in 1983.

#### **West's Boiler Shop**

West's shop directly butts against the Third Avenue boardwalk, half way between Princess Street and Harper Street, just as it did when operational (Figures 20, 21). It occupies the south west quadrant of a lot that also has a crude shed in the north-east corner (Figure 17). This structure, which is surrounded on three sides by overgrown trees and bushes, borders a back alley that gives vehicular access to the property at the rear. Much of the side yard to the north of the main shop is covered with rotting planks (Figure 15) - apparently the

floorboards of another building that once stood here. Metal parts are littered around the site - typical of the refuse left by a boilermaker.

### Setting

Between Biggs' Blacksmith Shop and West's Boiler Shop are vacant lots and the also-derelict Third Avenue Hotel Complex (Report No. 14) (Figures 20, 21). Across the street are the abandoned Red Feather Saloon (Figure 2), West's Machine Shop and the Third Avenue Blacksmith Shop (all CPS owned. See FHBRO Reports No. 86-88, 87-64, and 87-65); there are also more vacant lots on this side of the street (Figure 20). A half block to the south is the extremely derelict Strait's Store, one of the most photographed of all Klondike buildings. This section of Dawson is thus a kind of ghost-town precinct and the two shops under review make a strong contribution to its character. It is a quieter and perhaps more evocative place than the bustling area of commerce to the north, where restored buildings and new ones with turn-of-the-century design elements are mixed, thus blurring the heritage character.

### Landmark

Although both Biggs' and West's shops are in poor condition, they appear to be popular with tourists who frequently photograph them. Apparently many visitors expect to see derelict structures in Dawson and these fit their preconceived notions of the place. West's and Biggs' are obvious historical buildings, unlike those that have been restored, reconstructed or rehabilitated in the block to the north. Of the two shops, Biggs' is the more prominent, being on a corner property.

### Endnotes

- 1 See Margaret Archibald, "West's Machine Shop" and "Third Avenue Blacksmith Shop," FHBRO Reports No. 87-64 and 87-65, p. 2.



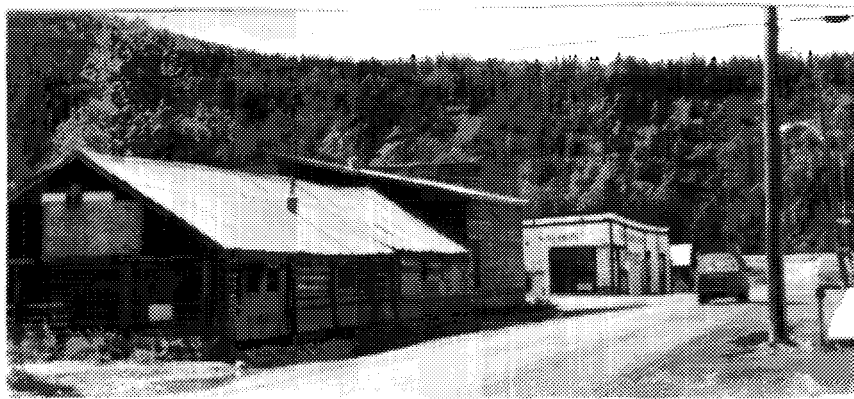
- 2 David Bouse, Guy d'Amours, Claude Lévesque, "Oakden's Blacksmith and Machine Shop (Biggs Blacksmith Shop), Dawson City, Yukon. Structural Evaluation and Stabilization Feasibility Study Report," Report #EA-PC-82-29 (Ottawa: Parks Canada, Architecture and Engineering Services, 1982), p. 3.
- 3 Victoria Faulkner, "Historic Buildings, Dawson, Y.T.," (Ottawa: National Parks Branch, 1962), p. 7.
- 4 Bouse, d'Amours and Lévesque, op. cit., p. 3. (Historical research for this report was provided by Parks Canada, Prairie Region, Winnipeg.)
- 5 Archibald, op. cit., Figure 7.
- 6 Noted in site visit to Biggs' accompanied by KNHS Heritage Recorder, Robie Van Rumpt, 27 July 1988.
- 7 This was documented in 1970 in an extensive photo report by Chris Grant. Available in Resource Centre, Architecture and Engineering Services, Public Works Canada, Dedicated Unit, Environment Canada - Canadian Parks Service. See also the brief description of this particular collection in Michael Gates, "Gold Rush Technology," Canadian Collector, Vol. 20, No. 5 (Sept., 1985), p. 59.
- 8 Brian D. Ross, "The 1983 Field Season of Archaeological Investigations at the Klondike National Historic Sites. Dawson City, Yukon," Parks Canada Research Bulletin No. 234 (Ottawa: Parks Canada, 1985), p. 4.
- 9 FHBRO information sheet prepared by KNHS.
- 10 For a history of the development of the boilermaker's trade and his products, see Robert MacIntosh, Boilermakers on the Prairies (Winnipeg: International Brotherhood of Boilermakers, Iron Shipbuilders, Blacksmiths, Forgers and Helpers, 1979).
- 11 See Norman R. Ball, "The Development of Permafrost Thawing Techniques in the Placer Gold Fields of the Klondike," Parks Canada Research Bulletin No. 25 (Ottawa: Parks Canada, 1975), pp. 3-4.
- 12 MacIntosh, op. cit.
- 13 "Dawson City. Directory of Existing Structures," (Ottawa, Parks Canada, 1973) [hereafter cited as "Directory"], Catalog No. 3-J-20.
- 14 FHBRO information sheet prepared by KNHS.

- 15 No owner of the property other than West has been discovered from 1914 to 1958, at which time it was purchased by Fred G. Caley. "Directory", Catalog No. 2-HE-6.
- 16 Bouse, d'Amours and Lévesque, op. cit., p. 2.
- 17 This is the date of construction given in "Directory", Catalog No. 2-HE-6. Land ownership has been traced back to 1902, however. In fact, three owners held the property before Jesse A. West acquired it in 1914.
- 18 Richard Stuart, Dawson City: Three Structural Histories, Manuscript Report Series No. 383 (Ottawa: Parks Canada, 1980), p. 18.
- 19 The photograph is illustrated in Stuart, op. cit., p. 109.
- 20 The FHBRO information sheet prepared by KNHS suggests it may have been a residence from ca. 1903 to 1906. On the other hand, "Directory", Catalog No. 2-HE-6 states categorically that "No building existed on this lot until 1910 . . . ." Land title searches noted in this source indicate two owners of the property before 1910, going back to 1902.
- 21 William N.T. Wylie, The Blacksmith in Upper Canada, 1784-1850: A Study of Technology, Culture and Power, Microfiche Report No. 298 (Ottawa, Parks Canada, n.d.), p. 3. For further information on blacksmithing, consult John D. Light and Wm. N.T. Wylie, "A guide to research in the history of blacksmithing," Parks Canada Research Bulletin No. 243 (Ottawa: Parks Canada, 1986).
- 22 Detailed structural information is found in Bouse, d'Amours, and Lévesque, op. cit.
- 23 Preliminary archaeological work on the foundations was carried out in the summer of 1983. See Ross, pp. 2-4.
- 24 Bouse, d'Amours and Lévesque, op. cit., p. 12.
- 25 John D. Light. "The Archaeological Investigation of Blacksmith Shops," IA. The Journal of the Society for Industrial Archaeology, Vol. 10, No. 1 (1984), pp. 55-56.
- 26 See Shannon Ricketts, "Blacksmith's Shop. Grand Pré National Historic Park, Nova Scotia," FHBRO Report No. 88-45.
- 27 Ross, op. cit., p. 5.
- 28 For example, see NA/AN, PA-16987.

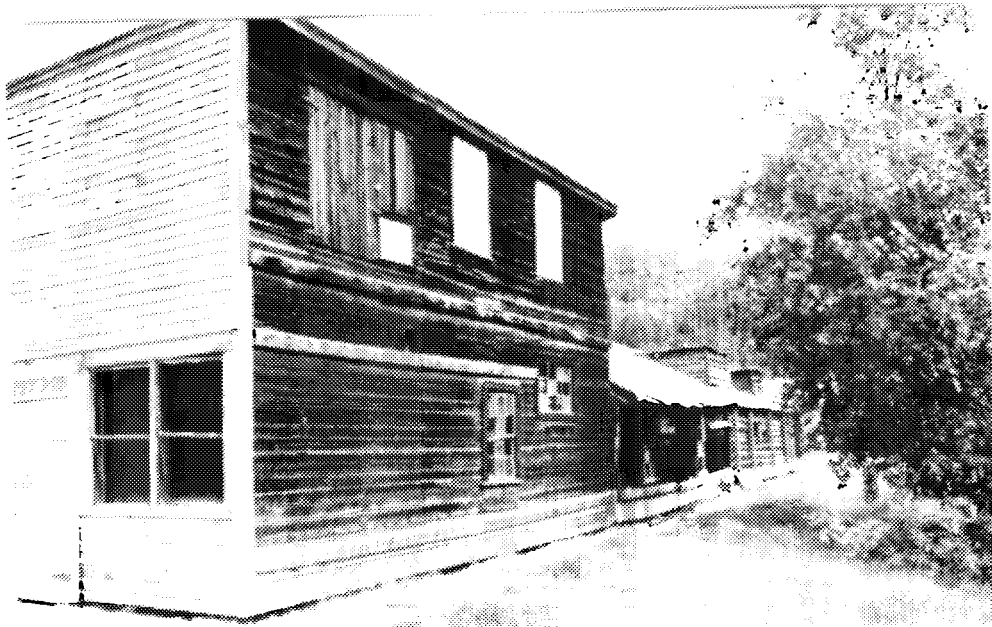
BIGGS' BLACKSMITH SHOP AND WEST'S BOILER SHOP, DAWSON, YUKON



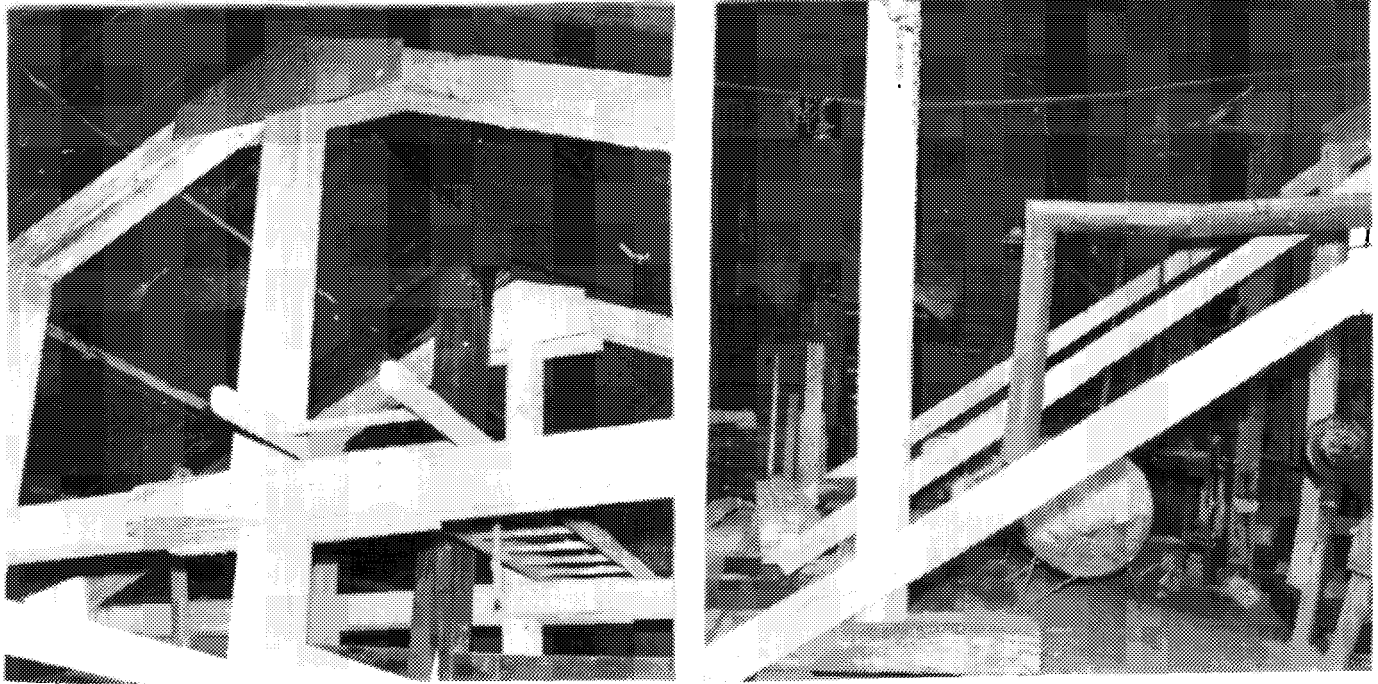
- 1 Biggs' Blacksmith Shop, Third Ave. at Princess St., Dawson, Yukon; front portion constructed in 1899 as the Great Northern Hotel; rear annexes appended in 1913; view from Harrington's Store on north west corner of intersection, 1987. (EC-CPS, KNHS, 1987.)



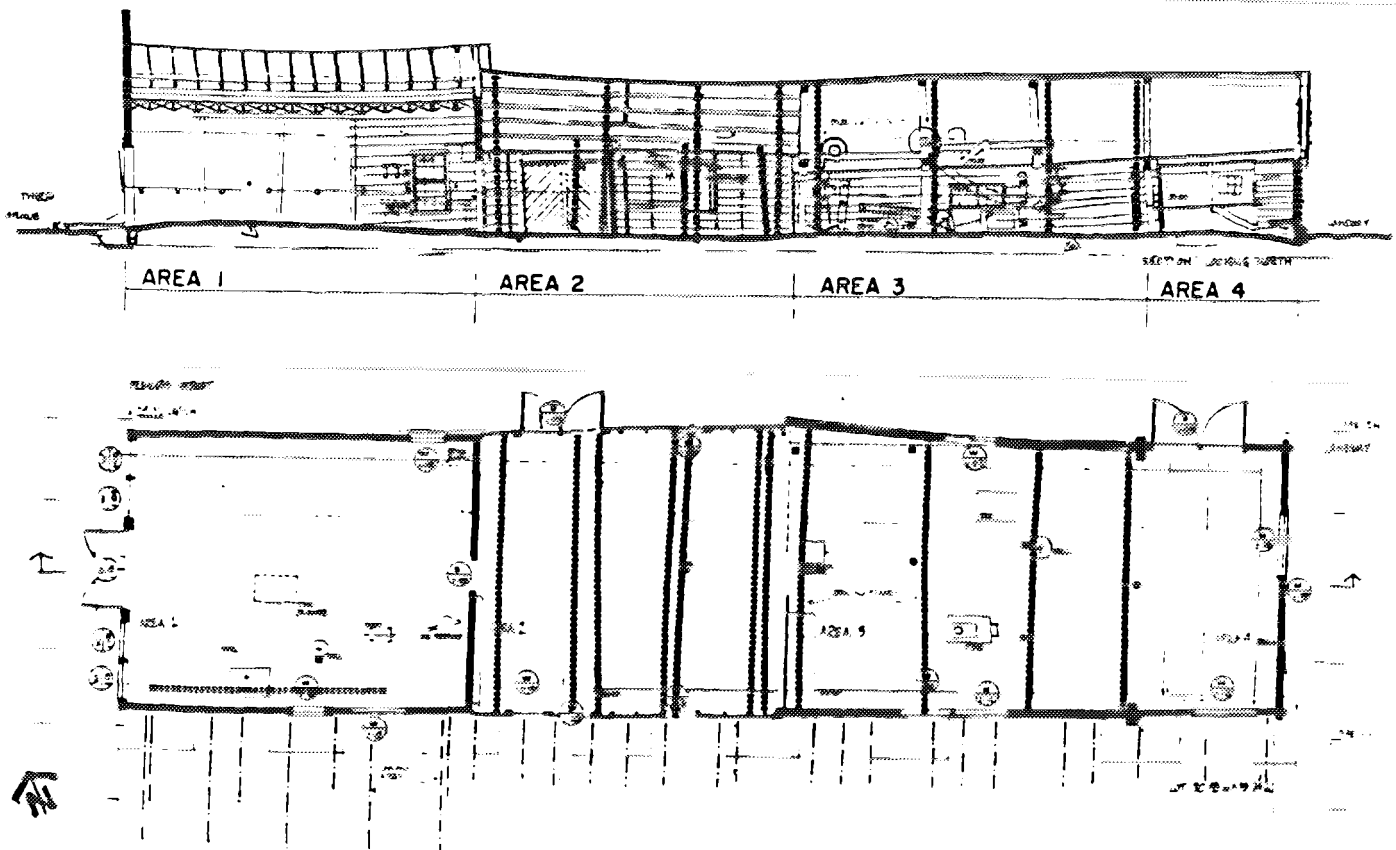
- 2 Biggs' Blacksmith Shop; rear and side view from Princess St. looking west toward Third Ave. intersection. (J. Mattie, EC-CPS, AHB, 1988.)



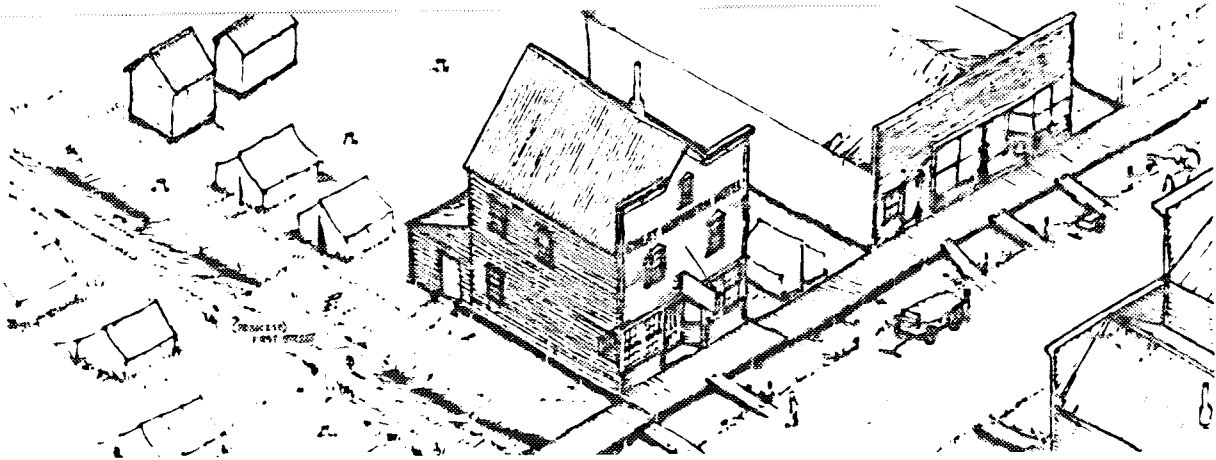
- 3 Biggs' Blacksmith Shop; south side view and façade (left). (EC-CPS, KNHS, 1987.)



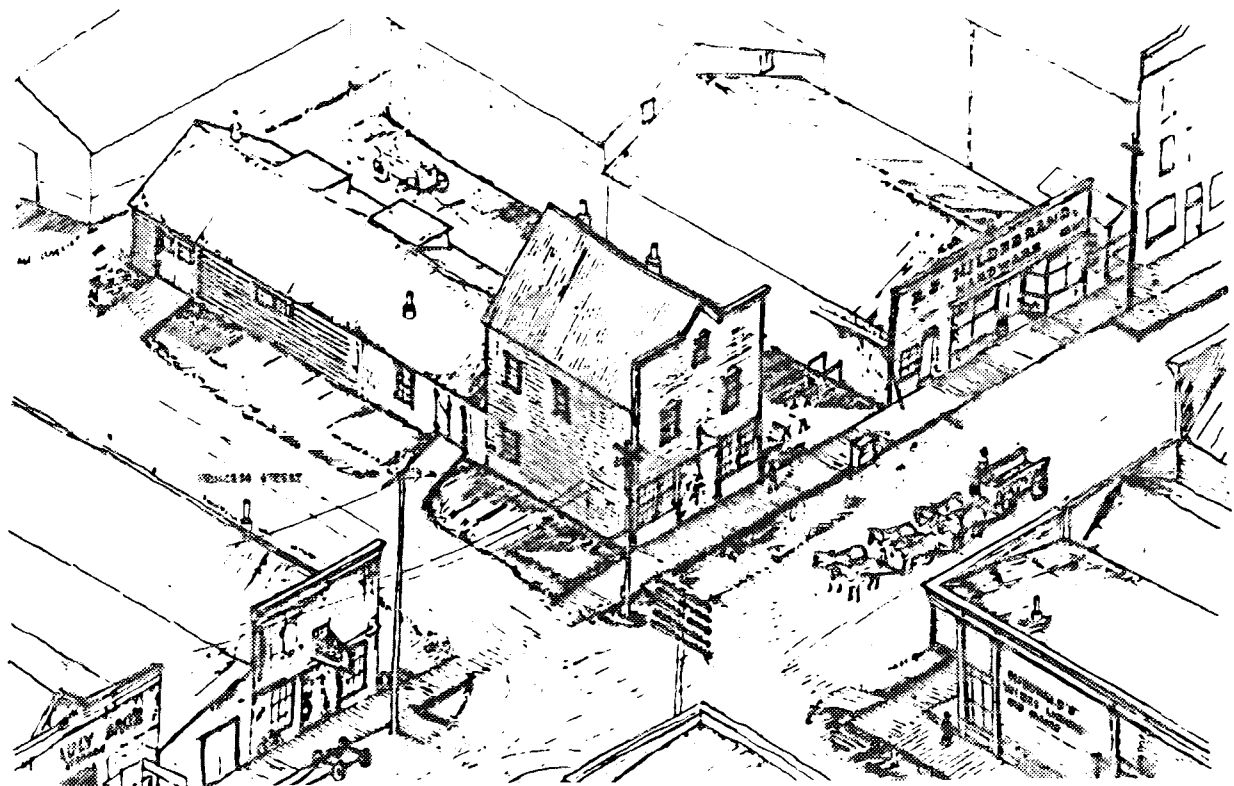
- 4 Biggs' Blacksmith Shop; interior showing bracing installed by CPS. (AES, PWC, DU, EC-CPS, Biggs' Blacksmith Shop Photo Report, 1987.)



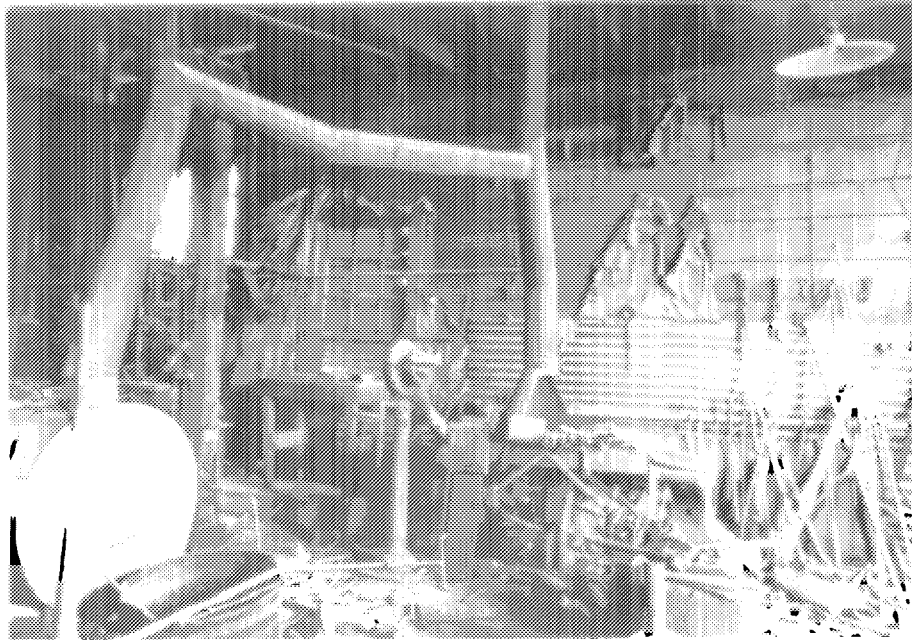
- 5 Biggs' Blacksmith Shop; longitudinal section and plan. (David Bouse, Oakden's Blacksmith and Machine Shop (Biggs' Blacksmith Shop), Dawson City, Yukon, Structural Evaluation and Stabilization Feasibility Study Report, October, 1982, EA-PC-82-29 [hereafter cited as Bouse, 1982].)



- 6 Drawing showing conjectured view of Biggs' Blacksmith Shop in 1900 when it was the Great Northern Hotel. Hildebrand's Hardware is to the right in a lot now occupied by a small house. (Bouse, 1982.)



- 7 Drawing showing conjectured view of Biggs' Blacksmith Shop ca. 1913 after annexes were appended at rear. (Bouse, 1982.)



- 8 Biggs' Blacksmith Shop; "as found" state of forge area when building was acquired by KNHS in 1970. (AES, PWC, DU, EC-CPS, Chris Grant Photo Collection, 1970 [hereafter cited as Grant, 1970].)



- 9 Biggs' Blacksmith Shop; interior "as found" condition showing some of the in situ artifacts acquired by KNHS in 1970. (Grant, 1970.)





10 Biggs' Blacksmith Shop, interior view in 1970 before KNHS removed most of the artifacts and carried out stabilization measures. (Grant, 1970.)

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11 Makeshift blacksmith shop in Dawson ca. 1898. (NA/AN, PA-13476.)

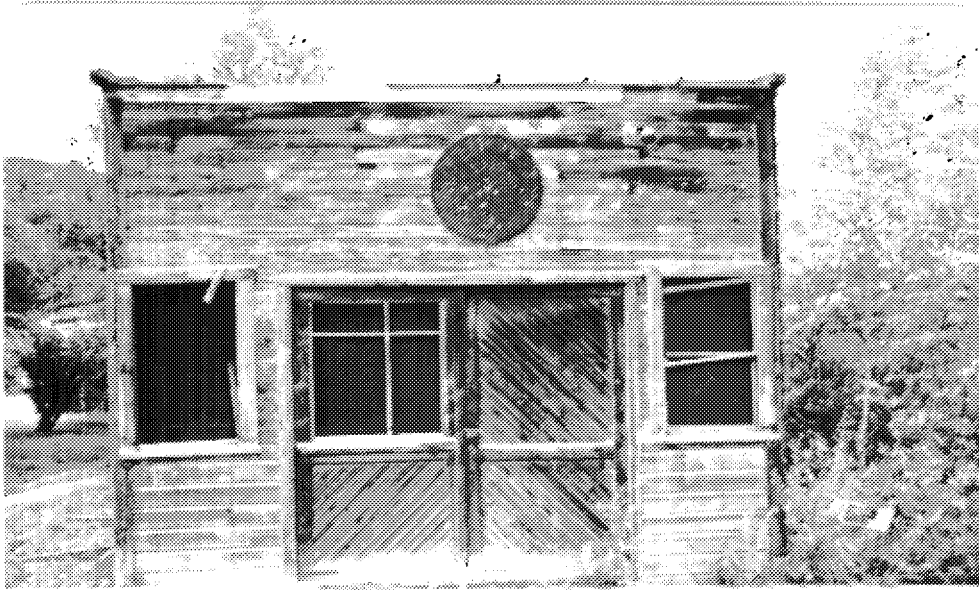


- 12 Unidentified blacksmith shop pictured in a Fort Macleod, Alberta photo collection. (Glenbow-Alberta Institute, NA3263-9.)

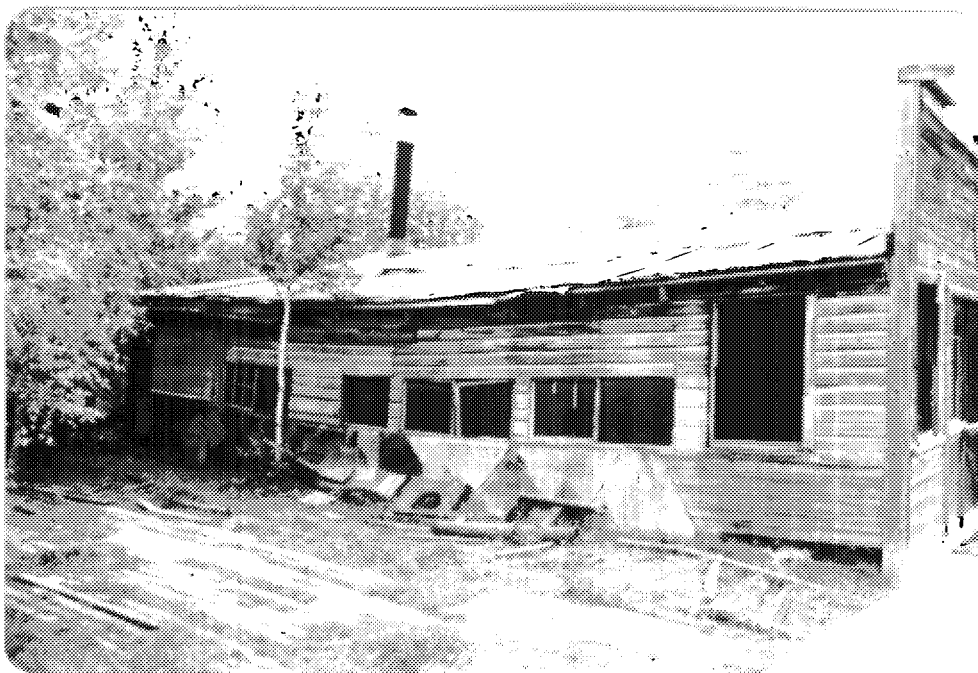


- 13 W. Quaife Blacksmith Shop, Fraser at East 27th St., Vancouver, British Columbia; view ca. 1911. (Vancouver Public Library 984.)





14 West's Boiler Shop, Third Ave. between Princess and Harper Sts., Dawson, Yukon; constructed ca. 1910 or earlier; façade in 1977. (EC-CPS, KNHS, 1987.)



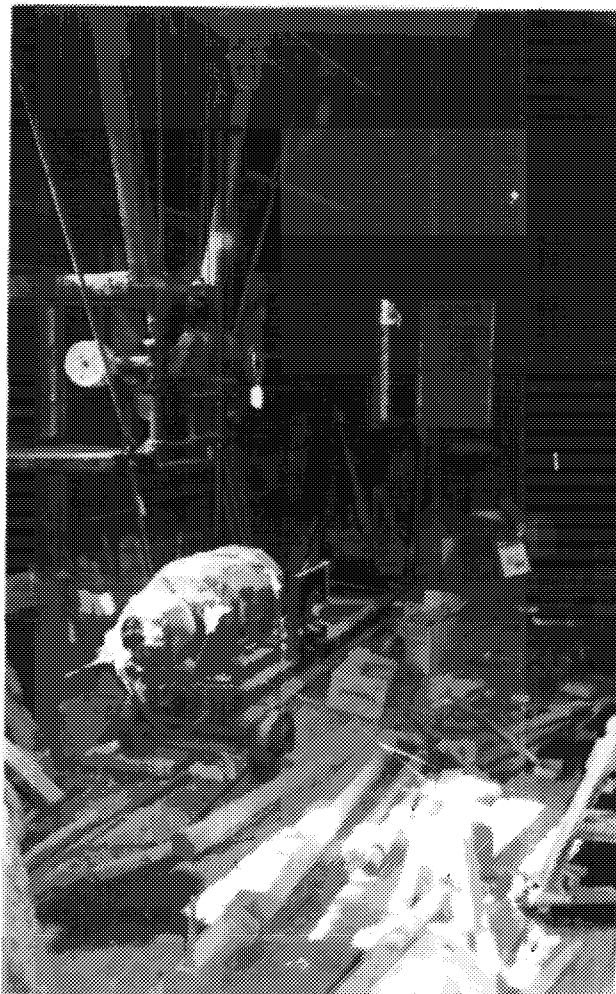
15 West's Boiler Shop, north side. (EC-CPS, KNHS, 1987.)



16 West's Boiler Shop, south side. (EC-CPS, KNHS, 1987.)



17 Shed at eastern extremity of West's Boiler Shop property. (EC-CPS, KNHS, 1987.)



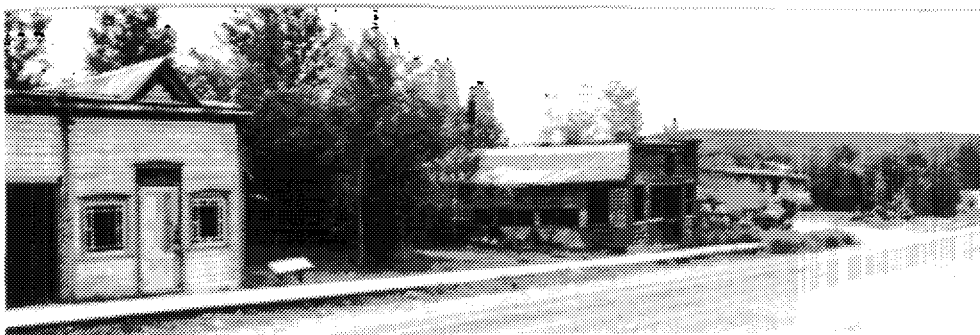
18 West's Boiler Shop; interior view in 1988. (J. Mattie, EC-CPS, AHB, 1988.)



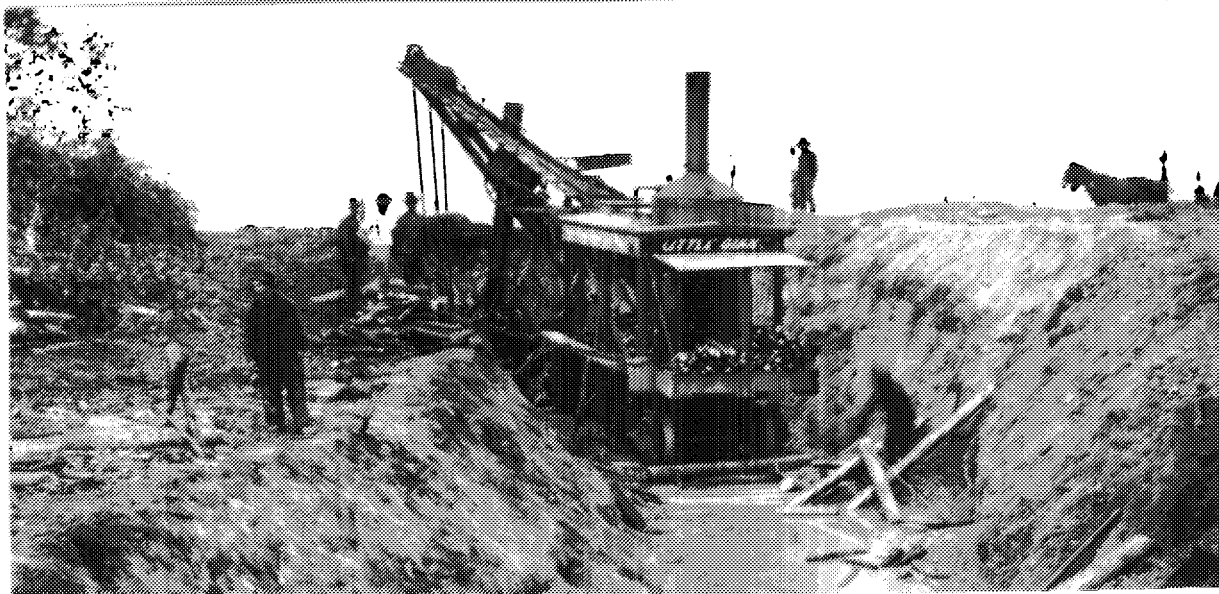
19 West's Boiler Shop; rear view in 1987. (EC-CPS, KNHS, 1987.)



- 20 Third Avenue, Dawson. West's Boiler Shop is in right foreground; to the north is the Third Avenue Hotel Complex, then Biggs' Blacksmith Shop. Across the street (near left) is West's Machine Shop, the Third Avenue Blacksmith Shop, Red Feather Saloon, and Harrington's Store. (J. Mattie, EC-CPS, AHB, 1988.)

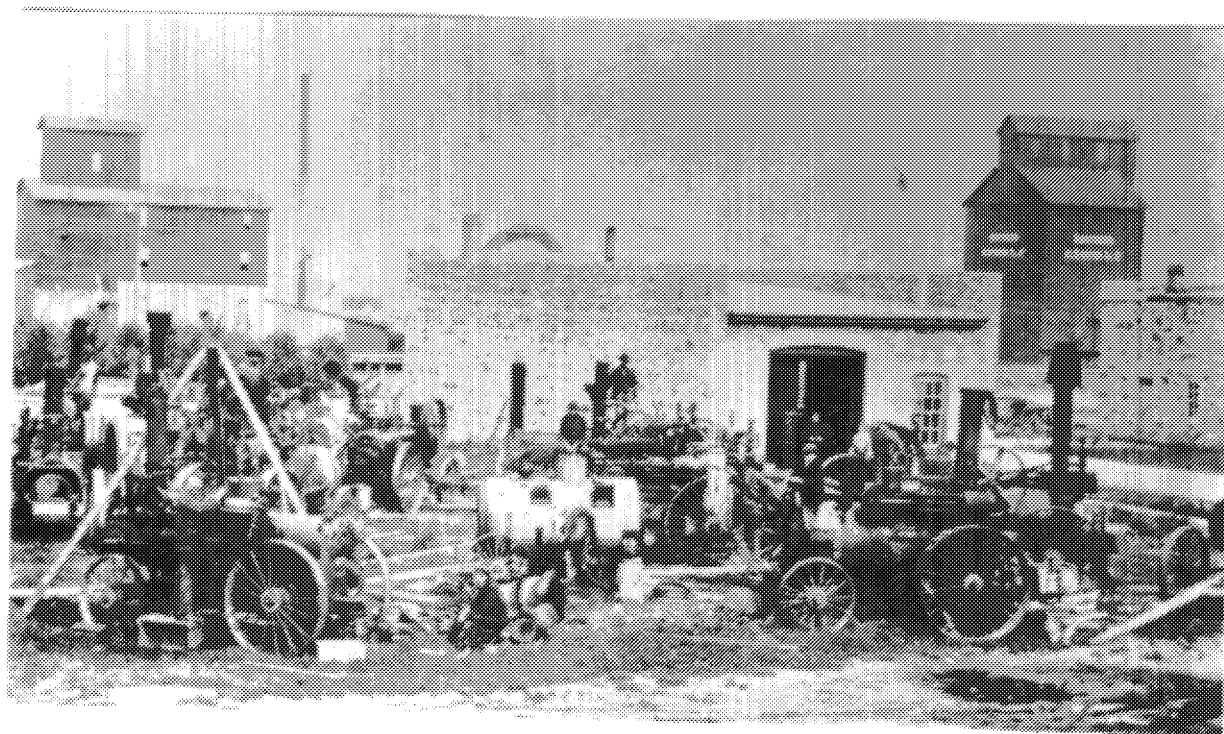


- 21 Third Avenue looking south. Annexes of Third Avenue Hotel Complex are at left; West's Boiler Shop is to the right beyond the vacant lot. (J. Mattie, EC-CPS, AHB, 1988.)

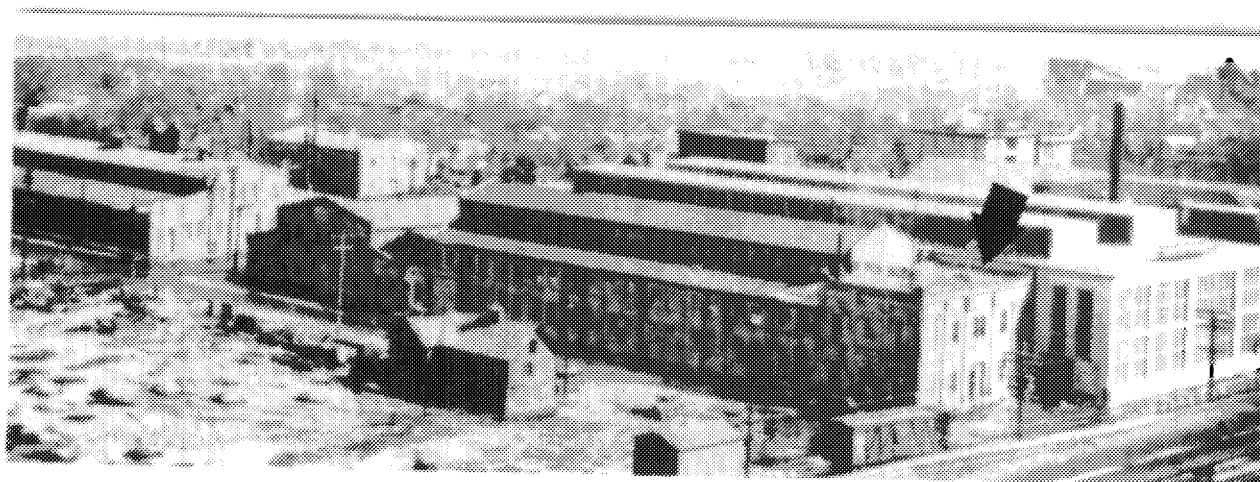


- 22 Steam-powered shovel in Klondike gold fields, 1906. (NA/AN, PA-102885.)





23 Steam tractors in front of Mitchell's Repair Shop, Virden, Manitoba, 1904. (Robert MacIntosh, Boilermakers on the Prairies, Winnipeg, International Brotherhood of Boilermakers, Iron Shipbuilders, Blacksmiths, Forgers and Helpers, 1979 [hereafter cited as MacIntosh, 1979], p. 36.)



24 Vulcan Iron and Engineering Works, Winnipeg, Manitoba; view in 1949. Arrow points to earliest building of the complex, erected in 1900. (MacIntosh, 1979, p. 30.)