

Hotels, Hoteliers and Liquor Stores

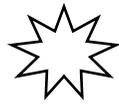


The story behind a Prince George heritage building

J. Kent Sedgwick

College of
New Caledonia 

Hotels
Hoteliers
&
Liquor Stores



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heritage building

J. Kent Sedgwick

College of New Caledonia History Series

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Note on Sources

I am greatly indebted to The Exploration Place at The Fraser-Fort George Regional Museum, owned and operated by the Fraser-Fort George Museum Society, for permission to use many historic photographs in this monograph taken from the Exploration Place website.

I have also made extensive use of the index to Prince George newspapers, available on the Prince George Newspapers Digitization Project, a collaborative venture by three libraries: The Prince George Public Library, The College of New Caledonia Library, and The Geoffrey R. Weller Library at the University of Northern British Columbia. The project provides free digital access to the historical newspapers of Prince George, British Columbia. The newspapers provide virtually the only primary source of information although they are not always accurate. A reader needs to remember the political bias of the paper and evaluate the accuracy with additional available sources, chiefly other papers.

The first newspaper was the *Fort George Tribune* which was published in South Fort George starting on 6 November 1909. George Hammond purchased the *Tribune* and relocated it to Central Fort George as a mouthpiece for his townsite in the summer of 1910. In August 1910, the *South Fort George Herald* began publication. From then on, the rival townsites each had its paper; the *Herald* spoke for South Fort George and the *Tribune* for Central. The *Herald* was renamed the *Prince George Herald* in 1915 when Prince George became a municipality. The *Tribune* ceased publication in 1915 and the *Herald* in 1916 when the *Prince George Citizen* began. The *Citizen* has continued to this day as the main newspaper.

I thank Ron Hyde of Richmond, BC., former Liquor Control Board employee who provided some information specific to Prince George.

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Introduction

The first government-operated liquor store in Prince George was created in 1921 after the provincial government took over retail liquor sales. This action had a lengthy precedent involving early attempts at controlling consumption, a short period of prohibition, and a new approach in which the government created a monopoly of liquor sales for itself. Due to the late development of the community, the Liquor Act of 1910 was the first legislation applied in Prince George. Consequently, although illegal liquor supplies were available (bootlegging), drinking establishments were bars in hotels from the beginnings of the community. There were no old-style saloons.

Prince George developed relatively late compared to other communities in British Columbia. Its beginnings stemmed from the fur trading post of Fort George and the city only came into existence in 1914 as the townsite of the Grand Trunk Pacific Railway (GTP). It was incorporated as a city in 1915. Two decades before that, in 1894, Indian Reserve No. 1 was surveyed, a two square mile tract which included the Carrier native village known as Lheidli in the southeast corner of the reserve beside the Fraser River. The southern boundary of the reserve was the northern boundary of the Hudson's Bay Company's (HBC) land, with the HBC buildings just south of that boundary. South of the HBC property, a community known as South Fort George, 2 km south of the eventual Prince George townsite, began in 1906 as a steamboat landing on the

Fraser River. Furthermore, 2.8 km west of the reserve, Central Fort George was established in 1908 as a rival to the railway's townsite. These "Three Georges" constituted the community generally referred to as Prince George in this paper.

The Grand Trunk Pacific Railway first expressed interest in acquiring the Indian Reserve for its townsite in May 1909. Negotiations to purchase the reserve were lengthy and complex. The Fort George Band, provincial and federal governments, the Catholic Church and several speculators were involved; not until 18 November 1911 was a surrender document signed by the band, an occasion marked by celebrations (where liquor flowed freely, which likely was bought from bootleggers) amongst the white business community in the Three Georges.¹ Title to the reserve was transferred to the GTP on 20 May 1912. Under the terms of the surrender agreement, the inhabitants of the native village were to vacate the log houses by the 1 June 1912 and be relocated to a newly-constructed village at Shelley on another reserve about 14 kilometres up the Fraser River. As it turned out, the village inhabitants were not relocated until September 1913, and then under duress. The timing of the village relocation is important because the delay meant the village was still existing when railway construction affected Fort George.



Lheidli village in May 1910. At the extreme right is the Fraser River (white area). It was along this road that railway construction workers walked to the Hotel Northern in South Fort George.

Photo: Exploration Place

Early Attempts At Liquor Control

It is sometimes forgotten that the first attempt at controlling the distribution of liquor in British Columbia came with the fur trade.² Ship-borne traders from the United States freely used liquor, primarily rum, to encourage trading with the aboriginal nations along the B.C. coast before 1800. Competition from the Hudson's Bay Co. eventually drove the American traders out of business and, from about 1840, the HBC greatly restricted the use of liquor in its trading practices because of the detrimental effect on the ability of the aboriginal population to gather furs for trade to the company. Nevertheless, the traders themselves had supplies of liquor. There was also an ample supply for white settlers around Victoria after the HBC moved its base there in 1846 from south of the newly-established border with the U.S.A. It was noted in some detail that Frederick Seymour, the Governor of British Columbia, drank himself to death in 1869, having served 5 years in office.³

James Douglas, HBC chief factor and governor of the Colony of Vancouver Island, attempted to regulate the availability of liquor for the colonists in 1853 by licencing wholesale and retail suppliers which included liquor stores and grocery stores, hotels (offering accommodation) and saloons. In the early 1860s, breweries and distilleries were established and licenced.



Grocery and liquor store in the Kootenay region of B.C., 1898.
Photo: BC Archives F-02152

Douglas claimed licencing was primarily to control consumption but the licencing fees were, no doubt, appreciated for the finances of the colony. The action may have been of little effect. When the Fraser River gold rush began in 1858, thousands of miners, many from the U.S.A., arrived in B.C. Then liquor consumption in saloons became the prevailing recreation for these men in the gold camps and their winter retreat in Victoria.

After confederation in 1867, it fell to the federal government to have jurisdiction over manufacture and interprovincial transportation of liquor under the British North America Act. Under increasing pressure from temperance groups, the federal government passed the Scott Act in 1878 to permit a local option to various, sub-provincial, government jurisdictions (essentially municipalities of various sizes, and county or districts) whereby a petition of electors (meaning male property owners) followed by a majority referendum of electors could prohibit the retail sale of liquor. This was an apparent infringement on the powers of provincial governments which licensed retail outlets, taverns and saloons, but was it upheld in the judicial system. Richard McBride's Conservative government, which came to power in 1903, refused to support the local option with legislation and few, if any, British Columbia communities took advantage of the local option, Chilliwack being a notable exception.

The British Columbia government issued licences to brewers and distillers, and wholesale liquor distributors.

More important for the drinking public were licences for saloons to serve beer and liquor. The licence system was often a patronage plum for friends of the government in power. Saloon operations were essentially uncontrolled, operating 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, all year initially.



A typical saloon. Victoria. ca. 1902.
BC Archives A-05794

In the years after the gold rush, saloons were like community centres, serving food and free appetizers, offering entertainment and card games and providing the only public toilets. The saloons gradually attained an unsavory reputation for fighting, gambling and prostitution. By 1900, there were more than a thousand such establishments in B.C. and the regulations were tightened up. Sunday closing was instituted

from 11:00 p.m. Saturday to 5 a.m. Monday although weekday hours were set by local authority. However, “travellers” of journeys greater than 3 miles were exempted and could still obtain a drink. No doubt there were many 3-mile journeyers in those days.

The Liquor Act of 1910 was the legislation regulating the first liquor outlet in the Prince George area. It allowed a maximum of three liquor licences in a locality with a population of 1000 white adults. No licence would be issued within 300 feet by road of a school or church. The licence application had to be supported by a petition signed by two thirds of adults householders within a three mile radius of the proposed licenced premise. Hotels were required to have at least 7 rooms along with a sitting room, dining room, bar room and kitchen. Stabling for 6 horses had to be available along with a supply of hay and grain. Women could not be served in the bar room. Hotels could not permit gambling or gambling machines. Travellers arriving at the hotel could have liquor only with meals in the dining room. Sale of liquor was prohibited to a chauffeur using a vehicle. A major change occurred in 1911 in an attempt to improve the image and operation of drinking establishments. Saloons of all ilk were given three years to convert to hotel status with accommodation and dining facilities, a requirement that meant the end of many saloons.⁴ By 1913, an amended Liquor Act extended Sunday closing from 10 p.m. Saturday to 7 a.m. Monday. Weekday hours called for closing at 11 p.m. and not opening until 7 a.m. next day.⁵

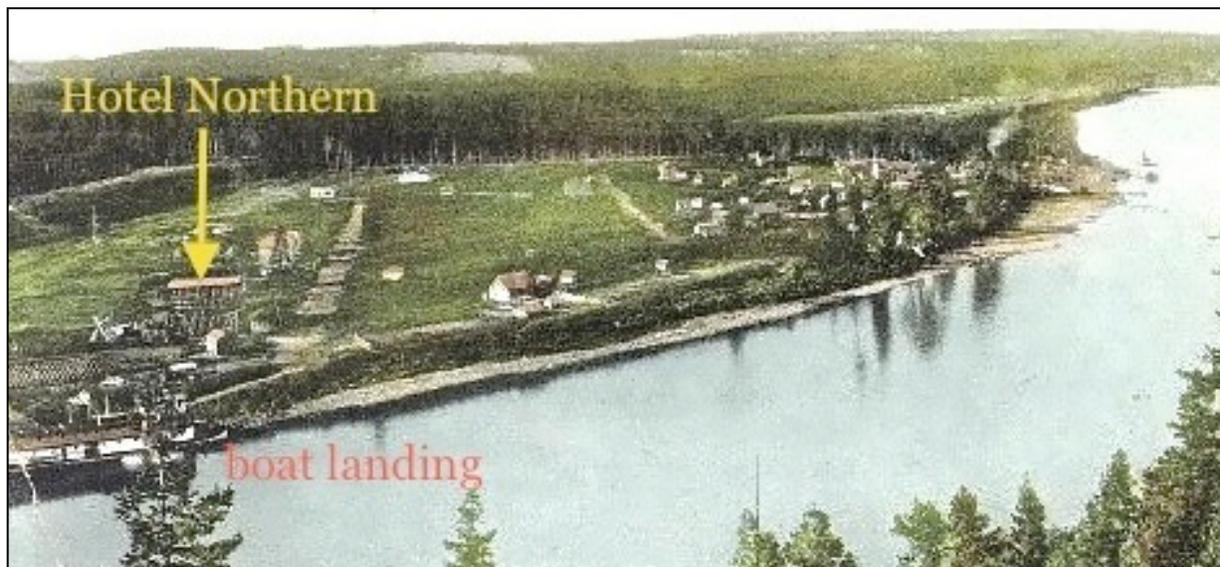


Hamilton's first store in South Fort George, built 1906.
He tried unsuccessfully to get a liquor licence, probably for this location.
Photo: Exploration Place

The Early Licenced Establishments

The first attempt to get a liquor licence for Fort George occurred as early as 1909. In a controversy set out in the local newspaper,⁶ A.G Hamilton had applied for a licence to sell liquor at his store, which was granted, then cancelled without a refund of the fee. Alexander George Hamilton was the true developer of South Fort George. He was a former North West Mounted Police member who served in the 1885 Riel uprising on the prairies. He set up a store at Giscome Portage, 40 km north of Prince George about 1904 but relocated to South Fort George in 1906. He subdivided District Lot 934 as Plan 701 in 1909 and sold town lots in 1910. In a letter to the paper, Hamilton attributed the licence cancellation to “malicious and lying individuals.” He said he “had a large shipment of liquor on the way, and I had to dispose of it...which has been done.” The editor of the paper, John Houston, who supported regulation of liquor but not its availability in barrooms, simply stated: “The liquor was in Fort George. It has been sold. If illegally, is the government free from all blame?”

The first licenced establishment in the Prince George area was in South Fort George. It was the Hotel Northern, built in 1910 by Albert Johnson and his partner Robert Burns. Johnson



The first Hotel Northern was built in South Fort George in 1910. It is shown on this hand-coloured post card.

Photo: Exploration Place

was an hotelier who operated the Occidental Hotel at Quesnel for years and a hotel in Ashcroft. Burns had the Essington Hotel on the Skeena River near Prince Rupert until the railway located on the north bank of the river, which depopulated Port Essington. The Hotel Northern was built on the northwest corner of Rose Ave. and Fourth St. at the bend in today's Queensway. It was strategically located near the BC Express Co. steamboat landing on the Fraser River. The hotel was three stories high with probably 30 rooms (although one article claims there were 70 rooms) in two wings from a central section. It was opened on the 17 October in 1910 and received a liquor licence on 3 December 1910. "The bar opened to a numerous and thirsty throng who long have lived a life of enforced abstemiousness."⁷

This auspicious start ended dramatically on 1 July 1911, Dominion Day. Fire broke out on the upper storey and the entire building was consumed. Volunteers rescued office fixtures, the safe, kitchen range furniture and so on. However, not all volunteers were aiding the hoteliers.

Looters were at their despicable work...These ghouls saw, and grasped, the opportunity of practicing the lowest form of thievery, the robbery of a burning building. Liquor was carried out of the barroom in armfuls and even cases...Even the discarded coats of the fire fighters were filched of valuables...These miscreants who were responsible for these outrages are a particularly low type of vermin. They should be brought to justice. In such cases as these no leniency should be shown.⁸

The hotel, valued at \$30,000, was covered by only \$12,500 insurance. All was not lost though. The looters missed two envelopes containing \$1000 in cash, and a cellar at the rear of the ruins contained \$10,000 worth of liquor.⁹

Al Johnson immediately undertook to replace the hotel. He dissolved his partnership with Burns who had plans for his own hotel, The Clarence, at the corner of Lasalle Ave. and Fourth St. (Queensway St. today). Burns gave notice that he would apply for a liquor licence on the 30 August 1911 but the hotel was never built.¹⁰ Johnson erected a second Hotel Northern, this time on the main business street of South Fort George, Hamilton Ave. On the northeast corner of Hamilton and Third St. (Inlander St. today), a three storey hotel measuring 61x71 feet with 30 rooms was rapidly constructed by Fort George's main contractor, Bronger & Flynn. It was open for business in October 1911 and received a liquor licence about the twentieth of October.¹¹ The *Fort George Herald* again offered support:

A well regulated licenced house is a necessary adjunct to a real live town inhabited by men who can 'take a drink and leave it alone.'... It will not be long ere the construction army [of the Grand Trunk Pacific Railway] is upon us here...¹²



The second Hotel Northern built 1911. This is the first stage of construction. Note the pattern of window placements on the front facade.

Photo: Exploration Place

Johnson was not about to miss the boom coming with the railway. The second Hotel Northern was added onto substantially at the rear over the next year, a process that was nearing completion in August 1912 and is evident in photographs from the time. "The new addition is the most modern building in the country north of the C.P.R. railway, the walls are lath and plaster, and a modern sanitary system [toilets] is installed on all floors."¹³ It had a basement heating system, electric lights and water tower in case of fire. However, it was the barroom that garnered most attention and several writers have built upon this description by local historian F.E. Runnalls who gathered his information in the 1940s from old-timers.

In South Fort George, Albert Johnson, who had lost his first hotel by fire, had erected the large and up-to-date Northern Hotel, advertised as 'the newest and most modern hotel in the Northern Interior.' It had a 100-foot bar and a staff of twenty-four bartenders, who

worked twelve on a shift. Hundreds of men crowded in to be served, and frequently stood five or six deep behind the bar. As much as \$7,000 was taken in one day, and it is said that the average throughout the season was \$2,000 a day. The softwood floor was soon worn out by the hob-nailed boots of the men, and had to be renewed frequently. Behind the bar was the 'snake-room' for victims of the 'D.T.'s. 'The barroom was packed out to the curb with fine young chaps from the [railway] right-of-way,' one witness recalls, 'many with hopes of visiting the old folk in the east, waking up to find their stake spent.'¹⁴

The bar, often described as the longest north of San Francisco, has been given various dimensions between 90 and 120 feet. It was on the left side of the building parallel to Third St.¹⁵ where the land parcel length was 124 feet, so 120 feet for the bar was possible but unlikely. In March 1913, the newspaper said the bartenders were so busy that "several have broken the index finger of their right hands punching the cash registers."¹⁶



The second Hotel Northern after the addition in 1912. Note the window location pattern on the front facade is the same as the first stage photo above. On the roof is the water tower.

Photo: Exploration Place

The Railway And Liquor Problems

Al Johnson, hotelier, and J.B. Daniell, editor of the *Fort George Herald*, were prescient in seeing the “construction army” of the railway coming to South Fort George. As the steel approached the British Columbia border at the Yellowhead Pass, the railway and provincial government acted to create a liquor-free zone (also supposedly prohibiting women of ill repute) in July 1911, administered by John Kirkup, a former government agent at Rossland and a B.C. Police officer during construction of the C.P.R. The zone would be supervised by the B.C. Provincial Police (the North West Mounted Police were the authority east of the pass).¹⁷ Steel reached the pass about the twentieth of November but survey parties were at work between the pass and Fort George as early as 1906. Survey parties were small and well controlled by the engineer in charge. However, the several thousand construction workers who followed the surveyors were a different matter. Gambling, prostitution and drinking were recreational pursuits for the men. Tete Jaune Cache, 50 miles from the border, where the Foley Welch & Stewart construction camp was located, was the epitome of the problem. It was described by the *Fort George Herald* as a town of “booze, belles and billiards.”¹⁸

Liquor smuggling originated both at South Fort George and from Tete Jaune, transported by riverboats, scows, horses and foot traffic. Supplies came to the railway line up the North Thompson River and down the Goat River Trail from Barkerville. Smugglers used overcoats with hidden pockets and more ingenious containers such as



Smuggling at Tete Jaune Cache.
Photo: Exploration Place

animal carcasses. A well-known photo of the latter method, taken by police at Tete Jaune, is captioned “blind pigs.” However, the more common meaning of a “blind pig” is an American term for an establishment selling illegal liquor. An unusual animal was advertised as an attraction and

an entry fee was paid to see the beast; a free shot of liquor was then given. Likely the term was applied to the photo due to the use of pig carcasses to hide the whiskey bottles.

After the Hotel Northern received its liquor licence in December 1910, a procession of railway workers, and those seeking such work, attended the hotel, often following the track between the railway right-of-way and South Fort George. This rough road was parallel to the Fraser River and passed through the Lheidli T'enneh village on Indian Reserve No. 1 (see photo, page 2) and in front of the Hudson Bay Co. store. Interrupting this route, and forming the northern limit of South Fort George, was the Hudson's Bay Slough, an inlet from the river that was a major obstacle to passage.



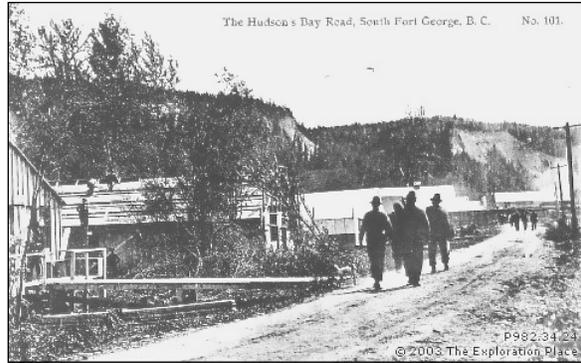
The road joining the Indian Reserve and South Fort George where it passed in front of the Hudson's Bay Co. store and the provincial government buildings (on right).
Photo: Exploration Place

Early in the history of South Fort George, perhaps as early as 1907, a crude bridge of "jack pine poles" was constructed across the narrow mouth of the slough, mainly to



The first crude bridge (left) across the slough. Looking west up the slough.
Photo: Exploration Place

connect to the HBC store as there was nothing else except the native village in that direction. In the spring runoff period in June 1911, the bridge was said to be “floating.” The decision was made to replace it and contractor Dan Brewster had finished the job with a proper timber bridge by December 1911. The road through South Fort George to the bridge (called Hudson’s Bay Rd., then First St. (which is Farrell St. today) was improved by July 1911.¹⁹



Hudson’s Bay Rd. leading into South Fort George from the slough bridge.
Photo: Exploration Place



The second, timber bridge at the mouth of Hudson’s Bay slough. A few buildings in South Fort George are visible on the left along Hudson’s Bay Rd.
Photo: Exploration Place

The impetus for this work was not only the fact that the original bridge had been in place “for a number of years” and was floating but, in 1911, the provincial government had erected government buildings next to the HBC buildings and constructed a ferry across the Fraser River from that point. It was increasingly important to connect South Fort George with these developments



The auto bridge across the slough on Queensway -1914.
Photo: Exploration Place

north of the slough. Not until late in 1914 was a bridge designed for automobile traffic constructed across the slough by contractor P.J. Kelley on Fourth St. (today's Queensway St.) where the present bridge is located.²⁰

It was along this route and across the bridge that railway construction workers reached the bar of the Hotel Northern. Catholic Father Nicolas Coccola, who became a spokesman for the Fort George Band during the negotiations with the railway for the reserve, was greatly concerned about the impact of the railway men on the village inhabitants.

Now the G.T.R. was building the steel bridge on the Fraser River and the builders passing day and night by the Indian village were dropping bottles and drinking was going on. So when I landed there in the night I could not sleep because of the noise of the drunk men. At the first meeting I called the chiefs and watchmen and asked them if their people were not exposed to be killed and if it was not preferable to go to another reserve to live peacefully. The old Chief Louis a good living man, and his party said: "Yes, here is not any longer a safe place for us."²¹

An example of the problems with the workers and the Lheidli T'enneh village was recorded in the newspaper in April 1913.

Charged with having liquor in his possession while on the Indian Reserve, A.M. [name deletion by author] appeared before Magistrate Herne [Thomas Herne, government agent] on Tuesday last. The evidence showed that on the night previous he [A.M.] had attempted to enter several houses in the Indian Village, and was considerably under the influence of liquor. Constable Brewster [of the BC Provincial Police] made the arrest on being summoned by the Indians and liquor was found in M.'s possession. He was fined \$100 and costs.²²

Beginning in May 1913, Bates & Rogers Construction Co. of Chicago established a construction camp to house 600 men to construct the railway bridge at Fort George. The camp was on an island in the Fraser River (locally called Johnson or Goat Island after a farmer who kept goats on the island) located near the centre of the planned bridge.²³ These men had ready access to the hotel in South Fort George about a half hour walk away. The traffic to the Hotel Northern became a significant reason for selling the reserve and relocating to a new village site at Shelley.

Rivals To The Hotel Northern

The townsite of Fort George (commonly called Central Fort George) came into being through the promotion of George John Hammond and his Natural Resources Security Co. Hammond was born in Port Dover, Ontario and his early business career was with several railroads. He was an inveterate promotor who sold securities in Minneapolis, fruit orchard land, and business properties in Nelson, B.C. He arrived in Fort George in 1909.²⁴ Hammond spent tens of thousands of dollars advertising town lots in Central Fort George, claiming the townsite was next to the railway's townsite of Prince George and had equal growth potential. Most of the townsite's key buildings were subsidized in some fashion by Hammond (school, church, manse, town hall, library, hospital, water tower and supply system, sternwheeler boat, sawmill, and newspaper). Unfortunately, the town elevation was well above the Nechako River and railway track with no effective access to the boat landing and train station.

Hammond insisted on a major hotel in his townsite which was erected by John A. Shearer and son Fred, who came from Saskatchewan and formed the Fort George Realty Co. There is



Hotel Fort George. The long facade faced Hammond Ave.
The annex with ballroom added by J.H. Johnson is at left
Photo: Exploration Place

some evidence that the hotel was designed by the architectural firm of Holabird & Roche of Chicago²⁵ which may show Hammond had a hand in the project because of his business connections in that city. The Hotel Fort George was a three-storey building on the southeast corner of Hammond Ave. and Central St. at the heart of the Fort George business district. It opened late in 1910 having applied for a liquor licence on 1 December 1910. This probably didn't please Hammond who was a prohibition supporter.²⁶ Nevertheless, without a licence, there were not enough hotel guests to keep the business alive. The *Herald* newspaper in South Fort George reported the licence application for "the tumble up and uncompleted shack that has been dubbed a hotel in the woods." In July 1911, the licence was still not approved and the *Fort George Herald* argued it shouldn't be because another licence should be issued for the Hotel Northern which was rebuilding after the fire.²⁷

Hotel Fort George came under the new ownership of J.H. (John Harmon) Johnson. He was born in Virginia in 1872, built several hotels, and came to Fort George about 1913, probably from Spokane where he was involved in a large 180-room hotel.²⁸ He purchased the Hotel Fort George, and added a 40 room annex with a ballroom, which he named Virginia Hall after his daughter. By the summer of 1914, the bar was doing \$1000 a day business, less than half the Hotel Northern but satisfactory. Johnson claimed his was the most modern hotel on the railway line between Edmonton and Prince Rupert able to accommodate 200 guests. It had steam heat, electric light, suites with bathrooms and even a piano in one suite. A "bus" met guests at the boats in South Fort George and the trains in Prince George, an indication of how far out of the action Central Fort George was at the time.²⁹

Nevertheless, all the investment and promotion was in vain. On 13 November 1914, the hotel, annex, another hotel, and 11 stores and offices burned on the west side of Block 113 facing the east side of Central St. One hotel



Hotel Fort George after the fire. Central St. is at the right.
Photo: Exploration Place

guest died in the fire. The hotel complex with annex and ballroom was valued at \$150,000; the insurance coverage was only \$77,000. Johnson rather desperately tried to transfer the liquor licence and continue the hotel in a two-storey building owned by the Fort George Trust Co. at the corner of Central St. and Winchester Ave. (5th Ave. today). The upper floors were offices that could be converted to rooms.³⁰ Whether this arrangement was successful is unclear because the burning of the Hotel Fort George was the beginning of the end of the town of Fort George. It never recovered and the railway townsite of Prince George became dominant.

Initially, the Hudson's Bay Co. attempted to offer a retail outlet for liquor to the rapidly developing railway townsite of Prince George. Since 1895, the HBC had been marketing its own brand of scotch, rye, brandy and rum in its stores and trading posts. A licence application was made on the 1 June 1914 for retail sales at the HBC store just south of the townsite boundary (the former Indian Reserve boundary) near the Fraser River.³¹ However, the location was well away from the developing commercial centre of Prince George along George St. and it wasn't long before there was an alternative supply centre. The HBC store was so poorly located relative to Prince George that the store was completely closed down in May 1915.

It was only a short time before a major hotel was planned for the railway townsite in competition with the Hotel Northern. It was said there would be a \$200,000 railway hotel in Prince George designed by Holabird & Roche, located at the north end of George St. near the railway station.³² However, this project came to nought.

Photographs taken in 1914, when the townsite of Prince George was just beginning to develop, clearly show one of the first buildings was a hotel.



King George Hotel (centre of photo) under construction on George St.
Photo: Exploration Place

It was erected for \$20,000 by private investors at the northwest corner of George St. and 5th Ave. It was a substantial, three-storey structure with distinctive bow windows. It had 50 rooms, a dozen with private bathrooms and connecting doors to make eight suites. Several sources suggest it was built by Pelham Construction Co. associated with Brewster and Pelham, Contractors. A notice for a liquor licence application notes Donald A. Brewster as applicant on behalf of the Prince George Hotel Co. Another source says it was built on land owned by “the builder, Dan Baxter.” Probably Baxter and Brewster were the same person with his name confused.³³ The property was leased by E.E. Phair, “a famous B.C. hotelman” who was in Nelson in the 1890s.



Prince George Hotel after renaming in 1915. The short facade faces George St. Bay windows were a distinctive feature.

Photo: Exploration Place

He operated it as the King George Hotel, then the Prince George Hotel. The name change was made in June 1915 after the electors chose “Prince George” as the name of the new city.³⁴ The change may also have been made to avoid confusion with a King George Hotel in the railway townsite of Prince Rupert. The liquor licence application was made on 10 January 1914 although the hotel and bar didn’t open until Saturday the third of October. Posted in the bar that notable day, despite the liquor laws, was an important notice: “Tomorrow’s Sunday: don’t forget your bottle, boys.”³⁵

The Prince George Hotel was important for its bar trade although it never reached the peak sales of the Hotel Northern in South Fort George when the railway construction gangs were frequent patrons. The boom time in Prince George ended with the commencement of World War I. The Prince George Hotel, however, became the prime hotel accommodation in the city, hosting important businessmen, politicians, travelling salesmen and a few members of the British aristocracy.

Despite the declining economy due to the war, a third major hotel opened in Prince George. J.H. Johnson abandoned Central Fort George and started construction on the 1 August 1915 of a hotel on the southwest corner of Third Ave. and Brunswick St. in the heart of Prince George. Under the direction of the architect H.J. Peyton and contractor James Laidlaw, a three-



The Alexandra Hotel, built 1915. The long facade faced Brunswick St.
Photo: Exploration Place

storey structure, 60x110 feet, was erected, unique in having a brick veneer exterior. It had 54 rooms, 12 with bathrooms. There was a dining room, a sitting room for ladies; and a barber shop and pool room were planned. “All walls are plastered and tinted, and the woodwork is of the finest grade coast fir.” The bar had “the finest fixtures ever seen in the north, without exception.

Cuban mahogany was used in constructing the bar and the work was specially done in Chicago.” Opening off the bar was a “white tiled lavatory.”³⁶

Johnson used a unique clause in the Fort George Incorporation Act (1915) to obtain the liquor licence. The citizens’ Incorporation Committee had Clause 14 inserted in the Act allowing, specifically, Al Johnson of the Hotel Northern in South Fort George and J.H. Johnson of the Hotel Fort George in Central Fort George to apply to the Board of Licence Commissioner for Prince George, rather than the Superintendent of the Provincial Police, for licences. It would appear that the intent was to encourage the hoteliers of those communities to have an easier path under local control to open hotels in Prince George. J.H. Johnson took advantage of the clause to effectively transfer the Hotel Fort George licence to the new hotel. The licence commissioners appointed by cabinet were: Alderman E.A. Engel; George E. McLaughlin, city police; Alderman H.H. Parks; and Norman H. Wesley, real estate businessman.

Johnson intended to name it Alexander after his father but Alexandra was registered in error. Initially the adjective Royal preceded the name and sometimes Alexandria was mistakenly used. The Alexandra built its trade by catering to community functions and dances often associated with the war effort, and then teachers and nurses associations.

There were other small hotels with beer parlours in early Prince George, such as the Europe, Royal (later renamed Astoria), National and Canada. However, they served more as working men’s hotels and were not prominent in the social life of the townsite as were the



The National Hotel in 1953. It is still operating.
Photo: Exploration Place

major hotels.



The Canada Hotel (ca. 1930) was typical of small, working-class hotels. The Canada was demolished in 1991 for the courthouse.

Photo: Exploration Place

Prohibition

Like all other provincial governments and the federal government, British Columbia flirted with prohibition after World War I. Around 1900, there was increasing pressure for prohibition of liquor distribution from various temperance associations and the women's suffrage movement. In British Columbia, the pressure led Conservative Premier William Bowser to table a bill calling for prohibition in May 1916 and a referendum on the bill and women's suffrage (getting the vote) was held during the September election. Suffrage was approved as was prohibition by a small affirmative number. Prohibition commenced 1 October 1917.

This action, however, did not prohibit manufacture or interprovincial trade in liquor which were in federal jurisdiction. So individuals could still obtain distilled liquor and brewed products from out of province. Under temperance pressure, the federal government banned liquor distribution to provinces that had approved prohibition which, in fact, was all of them. Federal prohibition therefore began in March 1918.

Prohibition was impossible to enforce. Bootleggers were too numerous to control by the few law officers available. The legislation allowed the sale of alcohol for “medicinal, sacramental and industrial” use. “Medicinal” liquor, including beer, was readily available from physicians, dentists, druggists and even veterinarians.

In British Columbia, a \$2.00 prescription allowed one to buy liquor at a drugstore or government vendor. One doctor wrote 4000 in 30 days. During 1919 British Columbia doctors signed about 181,000 prescriptions, and in one month, January 1920, they wrote over 27,000 prescriptions for medicinal liquor.³⁷

Hotel bars were allowed to sell low-alcohol (1.5%) near-beer but also had available illegally, under-the-counter, real beer and liquor. Nevertheless, prohibition greatly affected licenced hotels in Prince George.

Al Johnson received a wholesale liquor licence for a store in downtown Prince George in November 1916 and then closed the famous Hotel Northern in South Fort George as the town was very much in decline. Johnson left in late April 1917 and took a lease on the Castle Hotel in Vancouver on Granville St. opposite the second Hotel Vancouver (now demolished). He then

sold the lease in 1920 to a Seattle hotelier for \$100,000. The Hotel Northern languished as abandoned until August 1932 when Johnson “sold to Sid Roberts for \$1050 and it will be broken up for the lumber it contains.”³⁸

Another prohibition victim was announced in the *Prince George Citizen* as follows: “Since the advent of prohibition the Prince George [hotel] has remained closed, the former proprietor, Mr. E.E. Phair, leaving the city immediately following the advent of the ‘dry law’ [1 October 1917].”³⁹ So it remained until August 1919 when J.H. Johnson bought the hotel. He was said to be “the largest individual holder of improved property in the city.” Johnson served as Mayor in 1922 and 1923. He renovated and refurbished the hotel and in 1920 brought in Charles Johnson (no relative), a noted hotel man from Vancouver, to manage it. Johnson owned it well into the Great Depression years but sold to John Stott in 1933. He then managed the Blackstone Hotel in San Francisco until he retired about 1946. He died in Palo Alto, California in 1948.⁴⁰ The hotel had a long life as the premier hotel in the city but it closed on 2 January 2009 and is destined for demolition, possibly in 2011.

The Alexandra Hotel weathered prohibition but Johnson decided to concentrate on the Prince George Hotel and his other business interests. He sold the building to the provincial government in 1923 for \$48,500 which used it to replace the provincial government buildings which had been on the Hudson’s Bay Co. property since 1911. Over the years, the government housed a full range of services in the building including ministry offices, courthouse, and jail. By the early 1950s, the government building was being described as “dirty, gloomy, decrepit, rotten” and was referred to as the “Leaning Tower of Government” because the three floors tipped at various angles.⁴¹ The building was demolished in 1959 when a new, provincial government building was constructed on Third Ave opposite the north end of Vancouver St.



The provincial government building after its conversion from the Alexandra Hotel in 1923.
Photo: Exploration Place

Government Monopoly

With all the problems in enforcing prohibition, the federal government abandoned it on 31 December 1919 just as the United States federal government began prohibition on 16 January 1920, another ineffective attempt which lasted until 5 December 1933. In British Columbia, John Oliver's Liberal government also moved to abandon prohibition.⁴² It called for a plebiscite on 20 October 1920 offering a choice between retaining the Prohibition Act or providing for government stores retailing sealed containers of distilled spirits and brewed liquors. Although women were included as voters in the plebiscite for the first time, the government store option prevailed decisively. The Government Liquor Act was passed on 23 February 1921.

Initially, the government planned to have order offices and then would deliver from warehouses (including one in Prince George) directly to the purchaser's place of residence, including hotels. "This would eliminate the temptation of purchasers to sample the goods in a public place before reaching home."⁴³ Then the delivery scheme was rapidly changed to avoid the cost of maintaining a number of warehouses and the order offices became retail outlets.



The interior of a typical government liquor store. Cloverdale, 1925.
Photo: BC Archives C-02736

When the Liquor Act was proclaimed on June 15, the same day as the Prohibition Act was repealed, 23 government stores opened. In Prince George, the first government store opened late in June 1921. Prince George Mayor Henry Wilson published a notice stating:

it was "unlawful for anyone in British Columbia other than a Government Vendor to sell liquor [including beer] to any person." Any sign "displaying the words bar, bar-room, saloon, tavern, wines, beer or liquors" was prohibited.⁴⁴

By the end of 1921, there were 51 stores throughout the province, some in very small, remote towns such as Anyox, Michel, Pouce Coupe and Telegraph Creek. The government monopoly

providing “John Oliver’s drug stores” in small communities was generally seen as a very positive result.⁴⁵

For several years after the Liquor Act came into existence, private clubs with nominal membership fees provided members with individual lockers to store their liquor or beer. It was served at tables by the club for a “distribution fee.” Vancouver had more than 100 of these clubs, half in hotels and the remainder in veterans’ clubs (Legions). A number of court cases upheld the legality of this approach to social drinking in a “private” place.

Total government control of the sale of alcoholic drink in government stores did not prove acceptable to many liquor reformers who saw the effect as social inequality for the “working man.” The government-regulated cost of the cheapest case of beer was \$4.00 for a dozen quart bottles, nearly a day’s wage for many workers. Moreover, many such men didn’t have cars to transport the goods home which was the only legal place to drink it. There was always an undercurrent of support for “beer by the glass.” After the Liquor Act was proclaimed, even near-beer (1.5% alcohol), the savior of many hotel bars after Prohibition was instituted, was illegal.

The glass-of-beer movement had its effect and in March 1925, the Act was amended to allow the sale of beer by the glass in hotel “beer parlors.” Government regulation meant the “parlors” were far more spartan than the traditional concept of a comfortable, well-furnished room. There was no bar and no standing while drinking. Waiters served bottled or usually draft beer, a glass of the latter at a fixed government price of 10 cents. No soft drinks, food, or cigarettes were sold. Games, music, entertainment or singing were not allowed. “In short, the only thing one could do in a beer parlor was drink.”⁴⁶

Women were not legally excluded but were firmly discouraged by the parlor staff who often refused to serve them. In July 1927, women had a separate room defined for them and men were allowed only as “escorts” of the women. Beer parlors remained a major component of social drinking for more than four decades before liquor legislation was modernized. In 1928, Liquor Control Board records list the following licenced hotels: Columbus, Europe, McDonald, Prince George, Royal (renamed Astoria) and Windsor. The licence for the last was transferred to the National Hotel in 1931.

Government Liquor Stores On George Street

First Store – 1921

The city's first government liquor store opened on 25 June 1921 in the converted Great West Pool Room at 361 George St. (Lot 5).⁴⁷ The lease was \$100 per month. A 1919 photograph shows it was a two storey building with three rectangular windows in the upper facade. It is unclear who owned the building; it probably was local businessman John McInnis. He was a building contractor who did the conversion work which was rushed to allow "for the reception of a large and varied stock of headaches" for an opening on June 25. One major change involved raising the basement floor which was prone to flooding at high water. Shelving was built



Great West Pool Room building.
Photo: Exploration Place

“on two sides, from floor to ceiling,” and counters were installed “completely round the sales area.” Bars were placed over each window “to keep out any curious individual not in possession of a permit.” The opening ended a “Ten-Day Drought” between the enacting of the legislation and the availability of getting a legal drink by “many thirsty souls.” The *Citizen* newspaper summarized the process as follows: "The place where one took a shot with a cue will be changed to a place where a queue will wait to take a shot or two home in a bottle.”

Under the direction of vendor George Sutherland and five staff, all

“returned men” [war veterans], a very smooth system has been worked out" of obtaining a 50 cent permit, filling out an application and then receiving the goods of whiskies, champagne, wines and beers to be “carried away on the occasion, and not in the future...One will proceed through the system, pursuing it to its refreshing conclusion, in much the same manner as that employed in procuring a meal in a cafeteria."

For orders of more than a dozen bottles of beer, the brewery would deliver the goods to a purchaser's residence to fill store orders. ⁴⁸

Second Store – 1937

The upcoming election in spring of 1937 occasioned a sudden relocation of the government liquor store. John McInnis, the CCF candidate in the election and now definitely the building owner of the liquor store premises, caused “lots of grief” for the



George St. showing (1) the Great West Pool Room which became the first government liquor store; and (2) the former location of Northern Hardware which became the temporary liquor store. Photo taken in 1919.

Photo: Exploration Place

vendor Ernie Thompson in asking him to vacate the premises. McInnis wanted to avoid potential conflict of a contract with the government if he was elected. Thompson decided to relocate just up the street to Lot 2, the former location of Northern Hardware. Northern had moved to the northwest corner of Third and George in 1933 after a fire in the meat shop on Lot 1 had smoke-damaged the hardware store. The old liquor store closed on May 25 and was open the next day at the new location. However, this turned out to be a temporary arrangement.⁴⁹

Third Store – 1937

McInnis did not win the election but the temporary liquor store did not return to 361 George St., McInnis’s building. Instead, the government decided to move again to brand new premises. Karl Anderson, a prominent city businessman, had started the Panama news stand and variety store in South Fort George in 1913. A year later, he relocated to the burgeoning town of Prince George to a small shop on George St. (location unknown). In 1920, he bought the Helms building (Club Cafe) on Lot 6, 363 George St., and relocated his Panama news and variety store to that location. To accommodate the liquor store, Anderson constructed a new, single-storey building, replacing a butcher shop. It was at 365 George St. (Lot 7), adjoining Anderson's Panama store on the south side. It was 30x82 feet, of frame construction on a poured, full-size concrete basement. There was modern refrigeration in the basement for storage of his grocery stock for the adjacent Panama variety store. The counters were solid oak, and the exterior was distinc-

tive with coloured stucco, plate glass windows and concrete sidewalk, unusual because most sidewalks at that date were wood. The contractor was A.P. Andersen and it was said to be "the outstanding show place on the street."⁵⁰



The white building in the centre of the photo was the meat market demolished by Anderson to construct his new liquor store. I was unable to find a photo of the store. Adjacent on the right is the Panama News. The two-storey building with three windows was the first liquor store
Photo: Exploration Place

During the World War II years, the store should have been exceedingly busy with the population growth increasing from 2500 to nearly 6000 due to the soldiers stationed in Prince George. Nonetheless, that was not the case due to wartime rationing.⁵¹

All is quiet at the liquor store.

If your nerves are on edge and you wish to get away from the hustle and bustle of business, go to the Liquor Store.

Even if you are a teetotaler, you will see little to offend you there, for the shelves are shockingly bare. Only the odd bottle of rye, wine or ale is to be seen. The clerks feel the absence of the rush business on which they have thrived for years. Now they scarcely speak above a whisper and their manner is that of a mourner at a funeral.⁵²

The first store and Anderson's third store may still exist today under the "modernizing" facade work. City building permits do not record this information. The second store was demolished in 1940 to build a men's wear store.



"Modern" facade in 2011 on what may be Anderson's 1937 liquor store.
Photo: K. Sedgwick

A Modern Liquor Store

In May 1949, tenders were called for a larger, purpose-built liquor store which would be located on a vacant site facing 6th Ave. at Dominion St. (northeast corner), “in line with a province-wide policy to take the liquor stores off the main streets.” The contract for the \$40,000 store was awarded to the construction company of Garvin Dezell, who served four years as Mayor of Prince George from 1950 to 1953.

The store was a poured concrete structure (only the third such type in the city), approximately 40x100 feet, with stucco exterior. There was no basement. At the rear, there was a loading bay accessing 46 feet of warehouse space the full width of the building. The retail area at the front of the building was over 1600 square feet, twice the size of the old store at 365 George St. The hot water heating system used an oil-fired boiler although the tender specifications had provided for coal fuel.



The liquor store soon after construction in 1949.

Photos: Exploration Place

The "ultra modern glass brick" front windows allowed light in but were "not used for aesthetics, but were a means of security and to ensure that those underage could not see in" stated the Liquor Distribution Branch. The glass bricks were installed by a crew of a Vancouver company. The front entrance was decoratively tiled and two strong, stainless steel doors were installed. Shiny metal was also used as a trim along the roofline. The contract called for the front and west side to be white stucco with the other walls painted white. However, most people remember a light

yellow-brown which may have been changed during construction or painted later. The interior walls were light green with gray trim with a white ceiling. Gray linoleum tiles covered the floor. A counter in fir veneer was specified in the contract.⁵³

The store opened on 1 November 1949 “but there was no rush. Few people knew when it was to happen, fewer were on hand.” In attendance at the opening were

“Robert McMillan, store manager; Garvin Dezell, building contractor; Fred Brown, Liquor Commission inspector” and a few employees and customers including the first, Jack Pascal, “fulfilling a long ambition to buy the first bottle at the new store;...and a curious brown mongrel. There was no fan-fare, no official cutting of a satin streamer and no brass band.”⁵⁴

This store, with a 1956 warehouse addition on the east side, served the whole City for 20 years until significant growth occurred in the 1960s with the construction of three pulp mills. In 1969, the downtown store was largely superseded by a larger, downtown store/warehouse in a former Super Value supermarket on the northwest corner of Victoria St. and 20th Ave. Then, outlying stores were developed in the west part of the city, the north and the southwest. The Victoria/20th store was replaced in 1986 by another supermarket conversion of a vacant Canada Safeway building on the southwest corner of Victoria St. and 4th Ave.⁵⁵ The province decided to sell the store on 6th Ave. in 1986.



Liquor store Interior

Store Sale Gets Complicated

After the sale was announced in March 1986, the City's Heritage Advisory Committee received a letter from the liquor store employees union, the British Columbia Government Employees Union (B.C.G.E.U).⁵⁶ The union letter pointed out that the liquor store:

...is one of the few remaining 'historic' buildings in Prince George. The building is of unique character and a reminder of a past era in social attitudes...[and the union asked] the City Heritage Committee to consider and recommend to Prince George City Council the designation of the 6th Avenue Liquor Store as a historic site.

The B.C.G.E.U.'s request was supported by the Heritage Committee in a brief report to Council. The proposal was greeted with considerable skepticism; many people thought the building represented an unsavory aspect of society – too much alcohol consumption. Others felt the building had no architectural merit. Alderman George McKnight saw

nothing outstanding about the building's age or characteristics. There are lots of older buildings here more worthy of consideration than this one which is simply a square, block building.⁵⁷

The heritage designation proposal set in motion a series of events greatly affecting the government's plans for the sale of the building. At the City Council meeting on 28 July 1986, representation from the Heritage Advisory Committee, B.C.G.E.U., and M.L.A. Bruce Strachan was heard, supporting heritage designation of the liquor store. Following a report and recommendation of the Heritage Advisory Committee, Council proceeded to request a six-month extension of the selling date; the Liquor Control Board subsequently agreed to 60 days. Then, in September, in response to discussions with M.L.A. Strachan, the deputy minister responsible placed the sale on hold to give interested parties more time to consider the heritage possibilities.

Heritage Designation

The movement for heritage designation led to a number of meetings and reports through the summer of 1986, culminating in a five-page report by the Planning Department in December 1986 that discussed many issues. That report listed possible uses for the building, including a museum with a liquor distribution theme, a tourist bureau, retail store, restaurant, and commercial office, all keeping the heritage appearance. The report pointed out that the Heritage Advisory Committee's recommendation was to designate only the "front portion," thereby leaving the rest of the site totally open to development, an approach known as "facadism" in the heritage movement. Designation while under provincial ownership would not be a surprise or imposition on any new owner, thereby avoiding the possibility of compensation being demanded for a privately owned building.

On 22 December 1986, Council debated the designation motion and proposed several amendments. The final motion changed the "front portion" to the "facade," including that portion fronting on 6th Ave. and the portion fronting on Dominion St. On 6 April 1987, Council gave final reading to By-law No. 4894 designating two facades of the liquor store defined as: (1) thirteen linear meters fronting on 6th Ave. and (2) southerly ten meters fronting on Dominion St.

The rationale for the designation was provided by the Heritage Advisory Committee in a report to Council dated 19 June 1986. The rationale was based upon criteria developed several years earlier when the Committee was working on a heritage inventory of city buildings. The reasons included the social significance of the building to the community, its architectural design elements, and the fact that the Prince George store was the best remaining example of all those built in the province over the postwar period.

This particular building was an example of a standard design used for provincial liquor stores constructed in the late 1940s and 1950s. The design was by Lord (not a title) Wilfred Hargreaves of Victoria. Hargreaves was born in 1880 in Manchester, England. He had a varied engineering and architectural background and moved to Victoria in 1909 to establish a significant architectural practice. Following service in WWI, he became an architect in the 1920s with the provincial Department of Public Works.⁵⁸

The design elements of the Prince George store were used in an indeterminate number of communities in the province but, in 1986, examples were thought to still exist only in Prince George, Nanaimo, Ladysmith, and Rossland; the latter two much modified. Nanaimo is a desig-

nated heritage building but it is a different design.⁵⁹ The design displays elements of the “Art Deco” style which originated at the 1925 Paris Exposition and was popular worldwide during the 1930s. The style represented the modern age and displayed angular forms done in striking, new types of materials, shapes and colours. Perhaps the most dramatic example in the new style was the Chrysler Building in New York. Miami has the finest collection of Art Deco buildings in the world and that city declared a heritage conservation area to preserve these buildings. As well, former Prime Minister Trudeau lived in a notable Art Deco house in Montreal, now a provincial historical monument.⁶⁰

In the Prince George store, the front entrance is inset, with glass block and black ceramic tile curving into the paired, stainless steel doors. The glass block tile is continued across the facade and decorative, black and white mosaic tile was also used for the entry threshold. Shiny aluminum trim is used for the fascia above the glass block windows, and to cap the low parapet along the roof which serves as a false front. The parapet cap on both 6th Ave. and Dominion St., the designated facades, is stepped in a zigzag fashion to the centre points of the walls facing the streets (see next page).



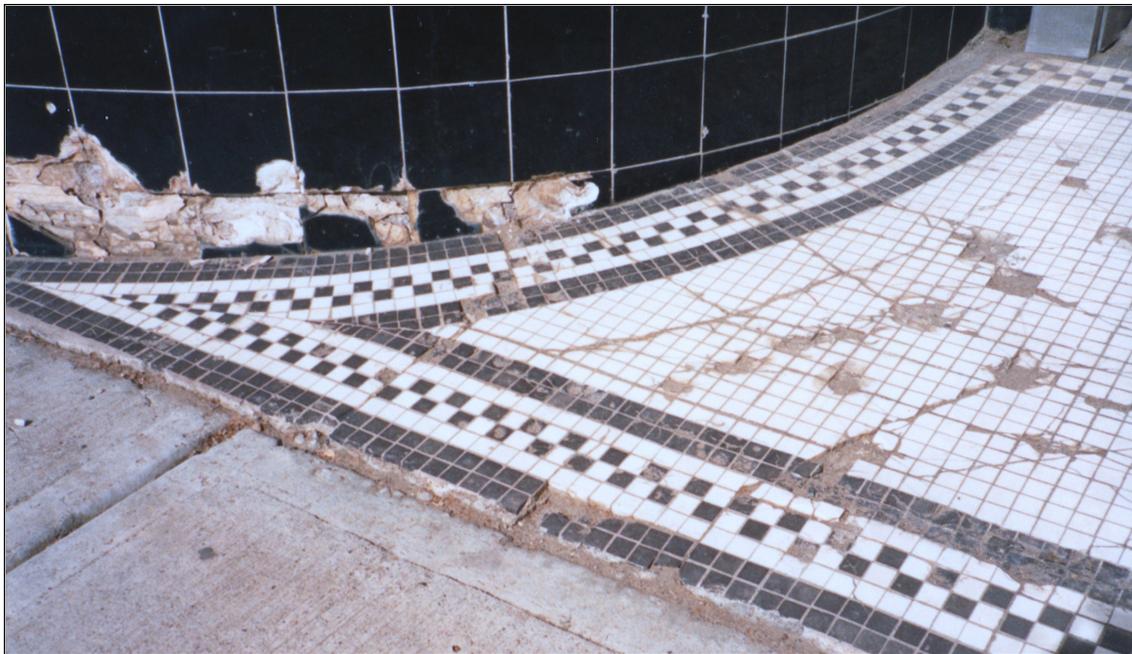
Front facade with details of glass block windows and stainless steel doors.
Photos: K. Sedgwick



Private Ownership

Following designation, the province again put the store up for sale in June 1987. It was bought by a local businessman for \$75,000. He said: “I have wonderful plans for the building involving a food franchise.”⁶¹ Nonetheless, the building was quickly resold for \$130,000 in February 1988 to a not-for-profit organization, Prince George Folkfest Multicultural Heritage Society. The Society was composed of 23 member groups which promoted ethno-cultural awareness in the city, and the building was intended as a headquarters and community centre.

The Society found it had serious maintenance problems (leaking roof, blocked stormwater drains, cracked walls and tile) and did not have the financial resources to undertake the necessary repairs. The Society pointed out that the municipal designation of facades only hampered its attempts to get funding from heritage support organizations because the whole building



Although damaged, the tile of the wall and entrance threshold shows the detailed pattern.

Photo: K. Sedgwick

was not protected. In June 1988, the Society requested a grant from the City for nearly \$13,000 for rehabilitation and restoration costs. Council turned down the grant request and the Society continued to limp along with the building defects, trying to get funding for repairs. By 1993, the roof repair alone would cost between \$30,000-60,000.

The Heritage Advisory Committee continued to correspond with the Society about repairs and funding for several years but the Society really had no financial resources to do any work. In June 1997, the Heritage Committee had one of its members, a retired architect, do an evaluation of the building and its funding problems. He pointed out that the intended use of the building had changed since the 1988 purchase. Many member groups of the Society had found their own space and they were no longer willing to contribute to any building costs. There was only one permanent employee who used about 1000 sq. ft. of the 3000 sq. ft. building and previous cultural programs had been discontinued. There was still heritage value in the designated facades but funding might be easier to find if the entire building was designated, although provincial monies were limited. The evaluation report stated: "Around the Province there is evidence of Municipal input for Heritage Conservation..."

The Heritage Advisory Committee did submit a report to Council based on this information in December 1997. It recommended adding to the designation by including the full Dominion St. facade and the front third of the building which had "a high ceiling, coved at the walls, and the natural lighting is through glass block walls which provide a very appealing interior atmosphere." It suggested Council buy the building, provide monetary assistance for maintenance of this and other heritage buildings, and that a review of the designation process be undertaken because of new provincial legislation enacted in 1994. Council took no action on the recommendations and a new owner was sought by the Multicultural Society. A spokesperson for the Society said: "We sold it because we couldn't get funding to repair a heritage building that had only two walls designated."

New Use For A Heritage Building

In the late 1990s, a Prince George social organization, Active Support Against Poverty (ASAP), was looking for a site for development of a homeless-at-risk residence. When the former liquor store site was proposed, there was considerable opposition from downtown merchants about the proximity of the site near businesses. The Downtown Business Improvement Association said: “the project will give a negative image of downtown and thwart efforts to attract new investment and revitalize the area.”⁶² The City’s planning division supported redevelopment of the liquor store site, pointing out that the central business district zoning allowed “single room occupancy” suites with more than seven units in a development, and also allowed for emergency shelter beds. Planning did emphasize the heritage designation on the two facades and stated those must be retained in a new project although the rest of the building could be demolished. The Multicultural Heritage Society sold the site to ASAP in 2000.

Legend Communities, a Kelowna, B.C. develop company which had completed several social housing and commercial residential projects in Prince George, undertook the \$3 million project. Gomberoff Bell Lyon Architects of Vancouver designed and constructed the residence for ASAP with funding from BC Housing. Due to very careful work, the two designated facade walls, being built of poured concrete, remained solidly standing while the rest of the building behind the walls was demolished.



The designated front wall, with glass block windows, and side wall were retained as the rest of the building was demolished.

Photo: K. Sedgwick

In a very innovative design solution, the retained, designated facades were used as an enclosure for an open courtyard for the residence. The glass blocks, tiles, stainless steel doors and metal trim were rehabilitated. Behind the courtyard, a three-storey residence (28 units) was constructed, set back from the street. The building also incorporated some street-level office space for ASAP as well as a 10-bed emergency shelter. At the suggestion of the City's Community Heritage Commission, design elements from the heritage facades of the liquor store (zigzag parapet with flashing, black tile, glass block) were incorporated into the residence design.

The residence, which opened early in 2002, is an interesting, downtown building which retains the designated facades of the City's 1949 liquor store as an innovative courtyard and incorporates heritage design elements from the store in the exterior of the new residence. It is now known as Bridget Moran Place, a tribute to a noted, local social activist who died in 1999.⁶³



Bridget Moran Place
The heritage facade of the original liquor store is distinctive on the left.
Photo: K. Sedgwick

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The term “bootlegging” originated in the practice of smugglers concealing liquor in their tall boots.
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Campbell's book contains the detail of much of this introductory section.
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- ³ G.P.V. and Helen B. Akrigg. *British Columbia Chronicle: 1847-1871, Gold and Colonists*. Discovery Press, Vancouver, 1977, pp. 373-377.
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- ⁶ *Fort George Tribune*, 13 November 1909, p.4.
- ⁷ *Fort George Herald*, 3 December 1910, p.1.
- ⁸ *Fort George Herald*, 8 July 1911, p.1.
- ⁹ *Prince George Citizen*, 9 November 1961, p.1.
- ¹⁰ *Fort George Herald*, 29 July 1911, p.1.
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- ¹² *Fort George Herald*, 28 October 1911, p.1.
- ¹³ *Fort George Herald*, 31 August 1912, p.1.
- ¹⁴ Rev. F.E. Runnalls. “Boom Days in Prince George” in *British Columbia Historical Quarterly*, Vol. VIII, No. 4, October 1944, p. 304.
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- ¹⁸ Garvin Moles in *Prince George Citizen*, 24 November 1984, p.3.
- ¹⁹ *Fort George Herald*, 24 June 1911, p.8; 22 July 1911, p.1; 9 December 1911, p.2.
- ²⁰ *Fort George Herald*, 21 November 1914, p.1.
- ²¹ Nicholas Coccola. *They Call Me Father: Memoirs of Father Nicolas Coccola*. edited by Margaret Whitehead, University of B.C. Press, 1988, p.164.
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- ²³ David Li. Davies. "Not a Bridge Too Far But One Far Enough" in *Canadian Rail*, May-June 2000.
- ²⁴ E.O.S.Scholefield. *British Columbia From the Earliest Times to the Present*. S.J. Clarke, Vancouver, 1914.
- ²⁵ *Fort George Herald*, 24 May 1913, p.1. This information was also included in a letter in the author's possession from the editor of the *Biographical Dictionary of Architects in Canada: 1800-1950*, an online source. I could find no reference to the hotel in the Dictionary.
- ²⁶ <http://www.livinglandscapes.bc.ca/thomp-ok/prohibition/prohibition.htm>
- ²⁷ *Fort George Herald*, 3 December 1910, p.1; 22 July 1911, p.1.
- ²⁸ *Prince George Citizen*, 26 February 1948, p.1.
- ²⁹ *Fort George Tribune*, 17 October 1914, p.16.
- ³⁰ *Fort George Tribune*, 14 November 1914, p.1.
- ³¹ *Fort George Herald*, 26 November 1913, p.5.
- ³² *Fort George Herald*, 24 May 1913, p.1
- ³³ *Fort George Herald*, 24 December 1913, p.3; *Fort George Tribune*, 17 October 1914, p.3.
- ³⁴ *Prince George Post*, 5 June 1915, p.1.
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- ³⁶ *Prince George Post*, 7 August 1915, p.1; 25 September 1915, p.1; 2 October 1915, p.1; *Prince George Herald*, 24 September 1915, p.1.
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- ³⁸ *Prince George Star*, 3 November 1916, p.1; 1 May 1917, p.1; *Prince George Citizen*, 16 April 1920, p.1; 4 August 1932, p.7.
- ³⁹ *Prince George Citizen*, 20 August 1919 p.1.
- ⁴⁰ *Prince George Citizen*, 26 February 1948, p.1.
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- ⁴³ *Prince George Citizen*, 13 May 1921, p.1.
- ⁴⁴ *Prince George Citizen*, 10 June 1921, p.4.
- ⁴⁵ Barry Mayhew. "Are you on the Indian List?" in *British Columbia History*, 41(2) 2008. Ron Hyde. "The Liquor Control Board and the Moderation Act-1921" in *British Columbia History*, 43(3) 2010.

⁴⁶ Robert A. Campbell. *Demon Rum or Easy Money: Government Control of Liquor in British Columbia from Prohibition to Privatization*. Carleton University Press, Ottawa, 1991, p. 54.

⁴⁷ The author has determined the locations of the liquor stores on George St. from fire insurance atlas plans and photographs available on the Exploration Place website. The civic address numbers may have varied with time but the legal lot numbers of Block 134, Plan 1268, D.L. 343 remain constant. All locations were on the west side of the street between 3rd and 4th avenues.

⁴⁸ *Prince George Citizen*, 14 June 1921, p.3; 24 June 1921, p.4; *Prince George Leader*, 24 June 1921, p.1.

⁴⁹ *Prince George Citizen*, 13 May 1937, p.3.

⁵⁰ *Prince George Citizen*, 15 July 1937, p.1; 23 September 1937, p.1.

⁵¹ *Prince George Citizen*, 26 March 1942.p.3.

⁵² *Prince George Citizen*, 11 March 1943, p.1.

⁵³ *Prince George Citizen*, 12 May 1949, p.1; 19 May 1949, p.6; 10 November 1949, p.19.

⁵⁴ *Prince George Citizen*, 3 November 1949, p.1.

⁵⁵ The author determined these locations from city directories and telephone books.

⁵⁶ At this point in time, the author was a planner with the City's Development Services Department and was secretary to the Heritage Advisory Committee. Consequently, he had access to the files concerning the liquor store from the time when the provincial government decided to sell it.

⁵⁷ *Prince George Citizen*, 24 June 1986.

⁵⁸ Donald Luxton. *Building the West: The Early Architects of British Columbia*. Talon Books, Vancouver, 2003, p. 365.

⁵⁹ <http://www.historicplaces.ca/en/rep-reg/place-lieu.aspx?id=1397&pid=0>

⁶⁰ <http://artdecobuildings.blogspot.com/2009/09/maison-cromier-montreal.html>

⁶¹ *Prince George Citizen*, 24 July 1987.

⁶² *Prince George Citizen*, 17 May 2001, p.1.

⁶³ Some of this material was used for an article by the author in *Heritage BC Newsletter* , Spring 2002 entitled "Prince George Heritage Liquor Store Now Part of Social Housing Residence."

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