



Statement of Significance

Cobalt Hotel – 917 Main Street, Vancouver

October 2021



MCLEAN HERITAGE

PLANNING & CONSULTING



Courtenay Office:

6091 Ledingham Road, Courtenay, BC V9J 1M5

Vancouver Office:

57-3436 Terra Vita Place, Vancouver, BC V5K 5H6

(778) 308-4357

mcleanheritage@gmail.com

www.mcleanheritage.ca

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1. INTRODUCTION

Address: 917 Main Street, Vancouver

Legal Description: Lots 2, 3 and 4, Block 23, District Lot 196, NWD, Plan VAP184

Neighbourhood: Downtown Eastside

Zoning: FC-1

Type of Resource: Building; Commercial and Residential; Commercial (ground) and SRO (upper)

Historic Names: Royal George Hotel, Cobalt Hotel, Cobalt Motor Hotel

Original Owner: Empire Supply Co.

Date of Construction: 1910

Architect: Campbell & Bennett

Builder: Campbell & Bennett

Heritage Status: Listed as a “Priority” site to be added to VHR

This report is a Statement of Significance (SoS) of a building located at 917 Main Street. It is located in the historic area of the Downtown Eastside in Vancouver.



Location of 917 Main Street. Source: City of Vancouver VanMap

This SoS is based on information obtained from the City of Vancouver Archives, VPL Special Collections and a site visit completed on **September 23, 2021**. It outlines the architectural, historical, contextual and other aspects of interest as part of its potential assessment by the City of Vancouver as a heritage resource.

2. STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

DESCRIPTION

The Cobalt Hotel is a five-storey heavy-timber frame and brick-clad vernacular Edwardian-era commercial and residential building situated on the west side of Main Street, between Prior Street and Milross Avenue, in the Thornton Park sub-area of the Downtown Eastside of Vancouver, BC.

HERITAGE VALUE

The Cobalt Hotel, built in 1910, is valued as some of the earliest commercial development along the eastern end of False Creek and its continued residential use on the upper floors, both of which illustrate the evolution of the area; it is additionally valued for its cultural association as a live entertainment venue over many decades, and for its design elements.

The Cobalt Hotel is significant as a mixed-use building providing commercial uses on the ground floor and accommodation on the floors above that reflect some of the earliest development on this section of Main Street. It illustrates the development pattern on what was then a peninsula extending south into False Creek. Its early uses were indicative of the industrial expansion along the shoreline of what became the east end of False Creek following the infill of its inter-tidal section east of Main Street. Warehouses and wharves were constructed to serve as a shipping, receiving and distribution point for the city and region; the associated historic uses at the rear of this property, which at one time abutted the edge of False Creek, included a livery stable for marketing of horses and other animals. The required access was provided by the enclosed narrow passageway running between Main Street and the rear, when there was no lane or other road extensions to serve that purpose. This passageway would have initially accommodated horse-drawn carriages, and later small trucks.

The Cobalt Hotel is valued for its cultural association as an active music venue and its earlier function as a beer parlour that was evident as early as the 1930s. As an entertainment facility, it hosted many small independent bands that did not require a larger concert venue. While it was situated on the periphery of the downtown, it was in close proximity to other such venues, for example along East Hastings Street, that offered a nucleus of small-scale performance venues. It was in the late 1990s, however, that the Cobalt Hotel acquired a more notorious reputation. This was, in part, connected to the socio-economic issues of the Downtown Eastside that began as far back as the 1970s and the deteriorating living conditions of the SRO units here due to lack of maintenance over many decades.

The Cobalt Hotel is additionally valued for its simple yet decorative vernacular design features, including brick cladding, stone lintels and sills and multiple pressed tin

cornices. The most notable design feature, a narrow, contained passageway leading from the street to the rear of the site, reflects the historic access through the property that pre-dates this building, and remains intact.

CHARACTER DEFINING ELEMENTS

The elements that define the heritage character of the Cobalt Hotel are its:

- Location on Main Street, south of Chinatown, in the Thornton Park sub-area of Vancouver’s Downtown Eastside;
- Continuous commercial use (ground floor) and residential use (upper floors);
- Five storey form occupying the front half of the property with no front setback;
- Light wells extending from the north and south sides, creating an “H” shaped floorplan for the upper floors;
- Heavy timber construction set on concrete foundation;
- Vernacular style design elements including:
 - Brick cladding on the upper front facing, with a rhythm of flush and inset wall faces on the second, third and fourth floors; with the dominant expression of the top floor as a result of no insets and framed above by a full-width pressed tin cornice and below by a secondary pressed tin cornice;
 - Centrally-set steel fire escape on the front;
 - Brick cladding at the rear.
- Fenestration including balanced arrangement of single-set punched openings on the front with double hung wood windows on the second to fifth floors, and a set of paired narrow double-hung wood windows on the third to fifth floors set in an equally proportioned punched opening; a paired set of double-hung windows in the central section; stone sills of variable length above which are set lintels with lengths matching the sills; single-set punched window openings at the rear with double-hung wood windows and stone sills without lintels; series of loading bay and window openings at the rear, ground level;
- Remnants of wood-frame storefront including full-width transom;
- “Cobalt Motor Hotel” signage on the front face;
- Narrow vehicle passageway from the street to the rear of site, now enclosed, including the following interior elements:
 - Pressed tin ceiling;
 - Timber cross-connections in ceiling;
 - Rough wood walls;
 - Sliding barn door;
 - Heavy timber flooring.

3. PHOTOGRAPHS, MAPS, PLANS AND PERMITS

3.1. CURRENT PHOTOGRAPHS



South-west view



East view



North-east view



Front elevation (east side)



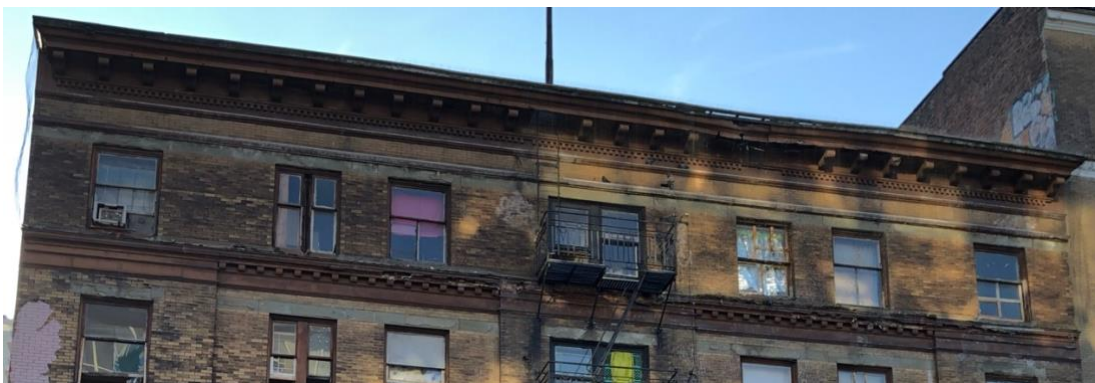
Front elevation - upper floors and fire escape.



Front elevation - upper floors and signage.



Partial view of storefronts and upper floors.



Details of primary and secondary cornices.



South Elevation – Cobalt Hotel displaying painted red wall.



Rear Elevation (west side).



Original pass-through from street to rear of site, featuring a number of original, early or historically compatible components including pressed tin ceiling, timber cross-connections, rough wood walls and heavy timber flooring.

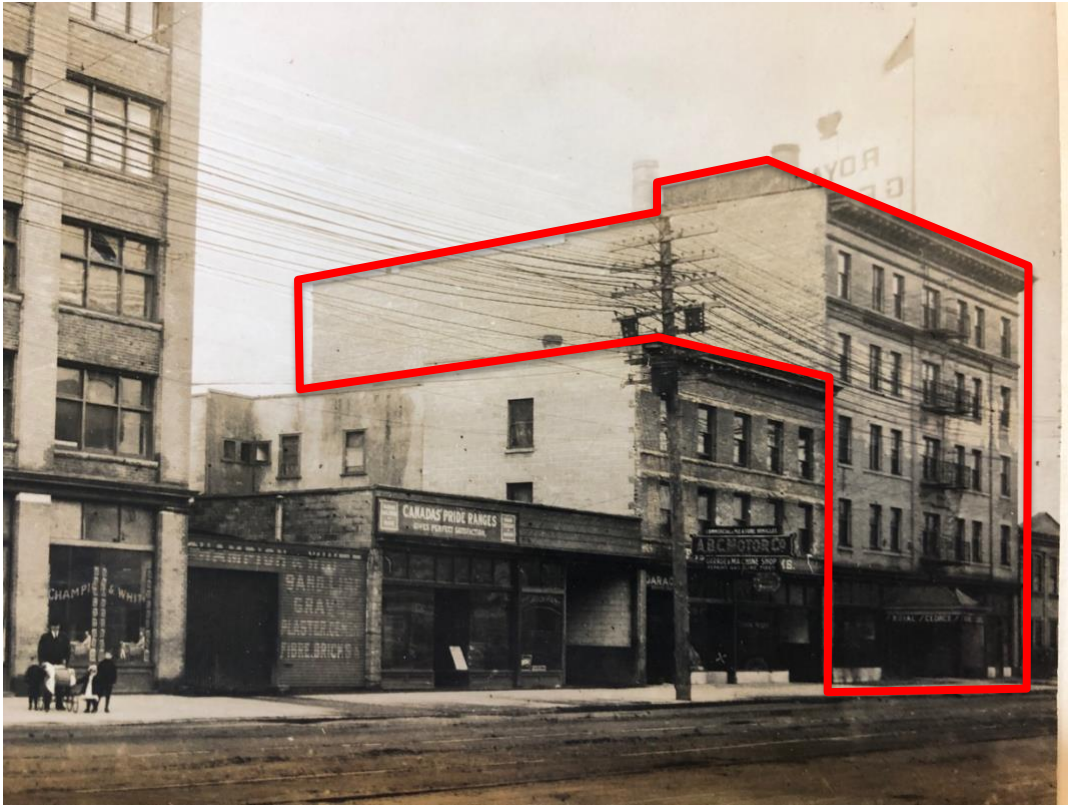


Sliding “barn” door situated in the pass-through.



Original floor and wall components of the pass-through including rough wood wall, concrete foundation and heavy timber flooring.

3.2. ARCHIVAL PHOTOGRAPHS AND IMAGES



900 Block Main Street, west side, c. 1910. CVA 359-14



Group of men on the street with Cobalt Hotel in background, c. 1925.
CVA 99-1309.25



False Creek looking south, back of Cobalt Hotel, 1948.
VPL Special Collections 80630

915 MAIN, REAR COBALT HOTEL, CORNER
 Prior St. **Horses! Horses! Horses!** Now
 is your chance to buy horses at your own price;
 25 head to pick from; do not fail to look these
 over before buying elsewhere. **F. M. Sellers.**
 Sey. 4582. **382-6-30**

Advertisement for horses by Sellers [sic] and Baker, *The Province*, April 23, 1921.

COWS—TWO GOOD COWS, DUE TO
 freshen, cheap; will trade. 915 Main, rear
 Cobalt Hotel. **268-6-49**

Advertisement for cows, *The Province*, May 22, 1923.

HOTELS

HOTEL AUSTIN, 1221 GRANVILLE ST.—
 200 modern rooms; centrally located; tran-
 sient and residential guests catered to, who ap-
 preciate cleanliness, good service and respectable
 surroundings. Rates reasonable. Sey. 7050.
268-26-66

COBALT HOTEL, 917 MAIN—NEW MANAGE-
 ment; hot and cold water in every room; private
 bath; elevator service. Prices from \$3 a week up.
87-28-88

Advertisement for accommodation at the Cobalt Hotel, *The Province*, May 19, 1923.

Suspect arrested in stabbing

CRIME | Man taken into custody after longtime Cobalt Hotel resident wounded

BY DARAH HANSEN
VANCOUVER SUN

VANCOUVER | A Vancouver man is recovering from a knife wound to his back after a stabbing at the Cobalt Hotel early Sunday.

Cobalt staff identified the victim as Adrian MacKinnon, a longtime resident of the hotel, which is located at 917 Main Street.

According to hotel staff, MacKinnon stumbled from his room upstairs to the front desk around 9:30 a.m., asking for an ambulance.

Police said the wound is not considered to be life threatening.

A suspect was taken into custody later Sunday.

Police say the Cobalt Hotel and its bar have been a problem for the past dozen years.

reported in two days in Vancouver. On Friday, gunshots erupted in the 500-block of Seymour Street at about 2:30 a.m. No one was injured in that incident, which police say may be linked to a fight which broke out earlier inside the Au Bar, located at 674 Seymour St.

Vancouver police spokesman Const. Tim Fanning said the weekend's violence speaks to the need for a strong police presence, particularly in the city's downtown core where reports of gunfire and weapons have been frequent. Police have linked the crime level to the city's decision to expand nightclub operating hours.

"It seems like every weekend we're encountering this," Fanning said.

But Vancouver councillor Peter Ladner— who recently penned an

Vancouver Sun, April 25, 2005

WEDNESDAY, JULY 13, 2016

THEPROVINCE.COM | NEWS | 11

Police seek suspect in arson incident

CRIME: Molotov cocktail thrown into Cobalt's lobby office could have been 'devastating' to 1910 structure

JOHN COLEBOURN

**video**

See footage of the incident at the theprovince.com

Vancouver police say an arsonist is on the loose after a Molotov cocktail was thrown into the lobby office at the notorious Cobalt Hotel.

Vancouver police Const. Brian Montague on Tuesday confirmed one person entered the Cobalt lobby on July 4 just before midnight and threw something into the hotel's ground-floor office.

"It was a Molotov cocktail thrown into the office," said Montague. "It did not ignite."

He said if the firebomb had gone off, it could have been devastating for the 88 residents of the single room occupancy hotel that was built in 1910 and is being monitored by city engineers due to the deteriorating quality of the structure.

"It was an accelerant of some sort," Montague said of the contents inside the glass bottle thrown into the office.

"It could be potentially devastating for sure."

The man in the hotel's surveillance video is wearing an orange

ball cap, a black hoodie and dark jeans. Few other details are known about the arson attempt.

The hotel at 917 Main St. is owned by Northstar International Motor Hotel Ltd.

"You are dealing with a building with the hard-to-house," said Montague of the difficulties they face in the investigation.

After canvassing the hotel and talking to staff and others, some who suffer from mental illness or have drug addictions, Montague said it remains unclear who was the target of the bomb.

"Arson is difficult," he said. "It can be a challenge until you get a suspect or intended victim."

One man, an employee, was in the back of the office at the time of the arson, but was unscathed.

"It is unclear if the employee was the intended victim," Montague said.

Meanwhile, Vancouver police were involved in a dramatic early morning takedown inside the Regent Hotel on Hastings Street Tuesday morning.

Vancouver police, along with another governmental agency went into the Regent shortly after 7 a.m.

A lone male was taken into custody. According to residents, police had to use force to gain access to room 217 on the second floor of the Hastings Street single-occupancy room hotel.

The man is believed to be a full-time resident of the Regent Hotel.

The hotel is owned by Triville Enterprises Ltd., a company whose sole director identified in public corporate records is Parkash Sahota, who is also listed as a director of the company that owns the Cobalt Hotel.

The hotel is presently shrouded under a massive blue tarp after the City of Vancouver put a stop-work order on the facade maintenance work.

VPD's Montague said charges have yet to be filed.

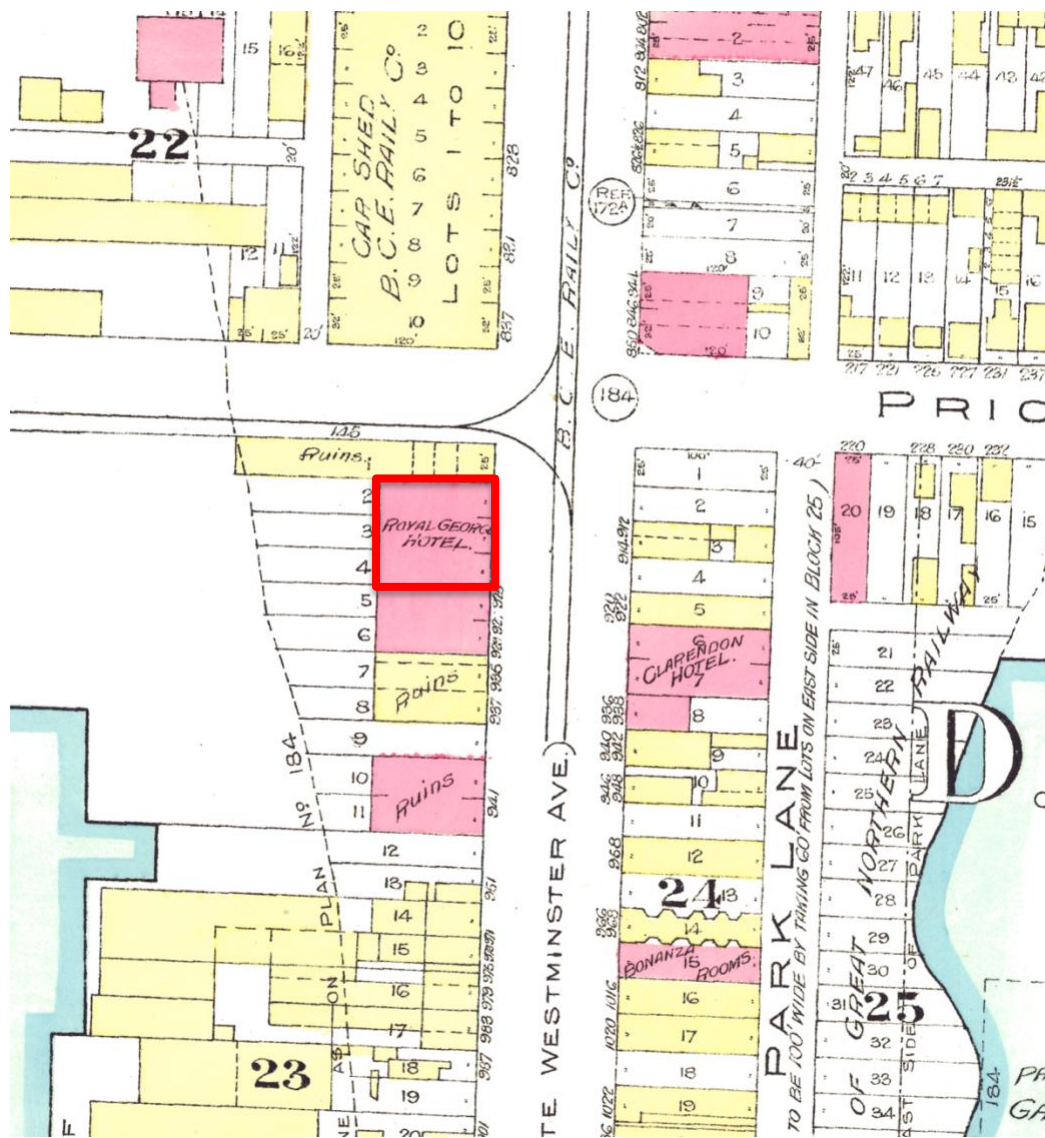
jcolebourn@postmedia.com



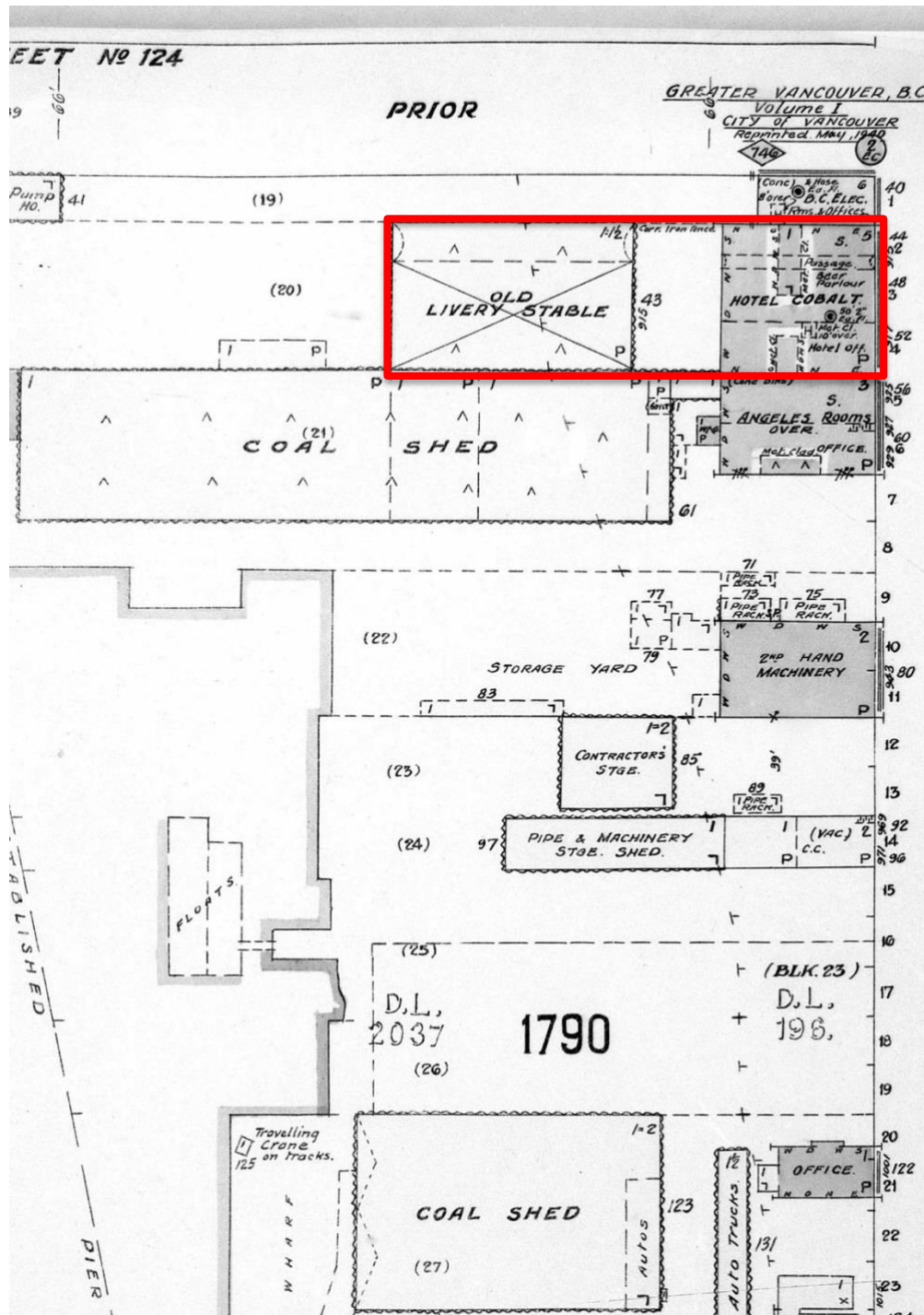
Vancouver police are searching for a man who threw a Molotov cocktail into the ground-floor office of the Cobalt Hotel on Main Street last week. The firebomb failed to ignite. WAYNE LEDENFROST/PNG FILES

The Province, July 13, 2016

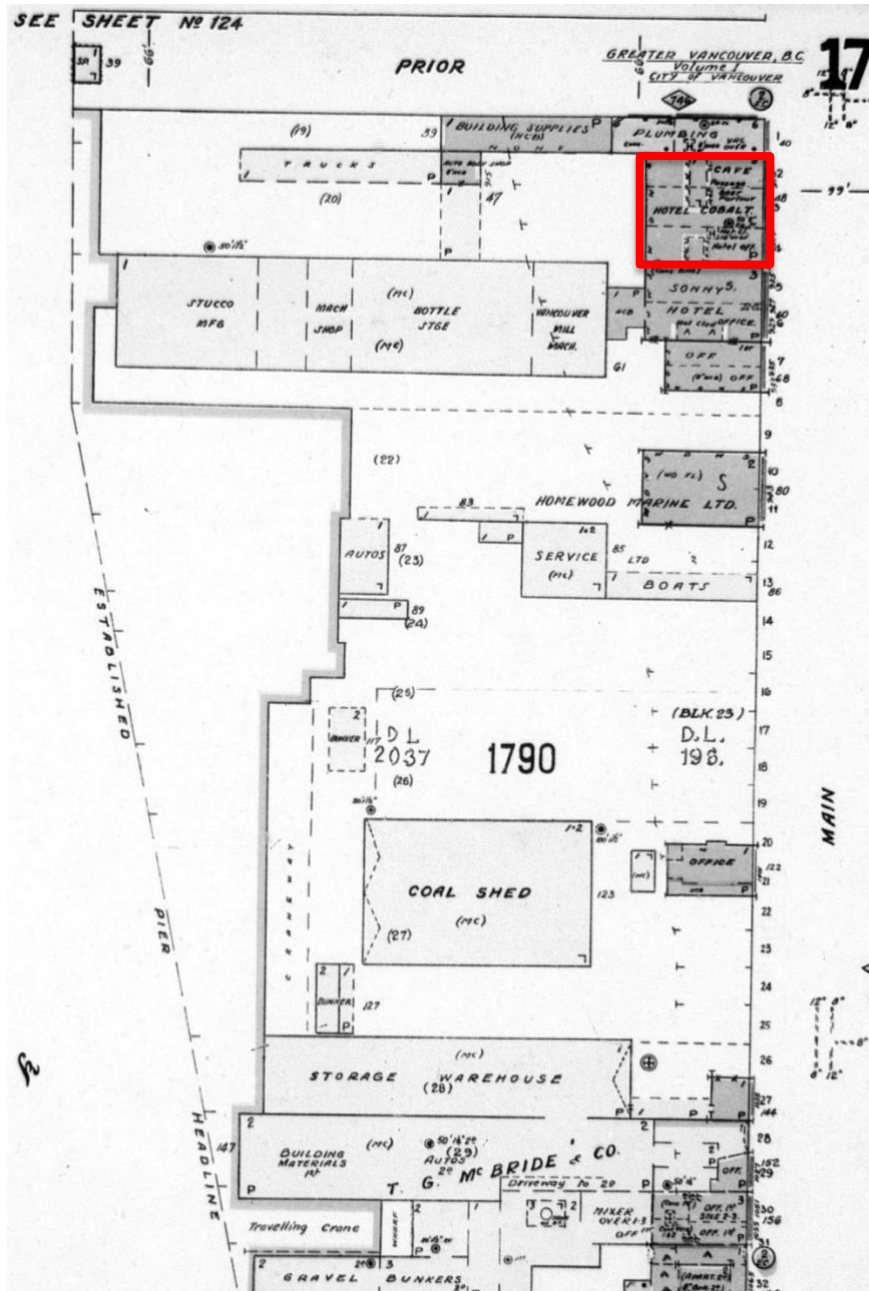
3.3. FIRE INSURANCE PLANS



1912 Fire Insurance Plan 342, CVA



1940 Fire Insurance Plan 599, CVA



1955 Fire Insurance Plan 610, CVA

3.4. PERMITS AND APPLICATIONS

Building Permits:

- Vancouver Building Permit #2513; Owner: Far West Lumber Co., Ltd.; Architect: Far West Lumber Co., Ltd.; Builder: Far West Lumber Co., Ltd.; Legal: DL: 196 Block: 23 Lot: 2 to 4; May 29, 1912; 915 Main Street; Value: \$350.00; Remarks: Factory/warehouse; frame building [*Daily Building Record*].
- Vancouver Building Permit; Owner: Empire Supply Co.; Architect: Campbell & Bennett; Builder: Campbell & Bennett; Legal: DL: 196 Block: 23 Lot: 2, 3, & 4; Date: June 17, 1910; 909-915 Westminster Avenue [Main Street]; Value: \$57,000.00; Remarks: Concrete building.
- Vancouver Building Permit; Owner: Vancouver Construction Co., Ltd.; Architect: Vancouver Construction Co., Ltd.; Builder: Vancouver Construction Co., Ltd.; Legal: DL: 196 Block: 23 Lot: 02-03-04; Date (Y-M-D): March 19, 1909; 907-911-913-915-917-919 Westminster Avenue [Main Street]; Value: \$10,000.00; Remarks: Warehouse & wharf.

4. APPENDICIES

4.1. RESEARCH SUMMARY

HISTORIC NAME(S):	Royal George Hotel, Cobalt Hotel, Cobalt Motor Hotel
LEGAL:	Lots 2, 3 and 4, Block 23, District Lot 196, New Westminster District, Plan VAP184
CIVIC ADDRESS:	917 Main Street
OTHER ADDRESS:	N/A
ORIGINAL ADDRESS:	915-917 Main Street
ORIGINAL OWNER:	Empire Supply Company
SUBSEQUENT OWNERS:	
SOURCE:	Building Permits
CONSTRUCTION DATE:	June 1910
SOURCE(S):	Building Permit
ARCHITECT:	Campbell & Bennett
BUILDER:	Campbell & Bennett

4.2. OWNERSHIP AND OCCUPANCY

The Cobalt Hotel has had a variety of ground floor tenants occupying the retail space. In the very earliest years, from its opening in 1910 until 1913, lumber dealers occupied much of the space in the building, as well as having use of the rear to store or distribute lumber. The first lumber business was Canadian Western Lumber Company (1910 to 1912) which had its large mill in Coquitlam and executive offices on West Hastings Street. It was replaced by a smaller building supply company in 1913.

Through much of the history of the building, a small convenience store with a focus on cigars and tobacco was located in the ground floor.

For the duration of its existence, the upper floors have served as accommodation of various categories. It was initially a hotel serving workers in the resource industry, and its later classification has been as Single Room Accommodation (or commonly known as an “SRO”) by the City of Vancouver.

Ownership appears to have been primarily held in a corporate arrangement rather than by individuals. From the mid-1930s and subsequent decades, the company was listed as “Cobalt Hotel Co. Ltd.” It is not known what the ownership structure was prior to the mid-1930s.

4.3. CITY DIRECTORIES

YEAR	STREET ADDRESS, BUSINESS, INDIVIDUAL	ALPHA LISTING
1910	[Westminster Av] 917 Mrs L Cononica	Mrs L Cononica h 917 Westminster Ave
1911	915-927 Canadian Western Lumber Co Ltd 917 Royal George Hotel	CANADIAN WESTERN LUMBER CO., LTD., A.D. DAVIDSON, President, A.D. McRAE, Vice-Pres. and Gen. Mgr., J.D. McCORMACK, Secretary-Treas. LUMBER MANUFACTURERS General Offices: FRASER MILLS, B.C. Executive Offices: 18 HASTINGS W. City Sales Office: 915 MAIN ROYAL GEORGE HOTEL, GEORGE B. SHEPHERD, Proprietor 915-917 MAIN
1912	915-925 Western Canadian Lbr & Fuel Co Ltd 917 Royal George Hotel	ROYAL GEORGE HOTEL, GEORGE B. SHEPHERD, Proprietor 915-917 MAIN Western Canadian Lumber & Fuel Co Ltd Frank E Armstrong mgr 915-925 Main
1913	915 Blake-Diether Co bldg. materials 915 Far West Lumber Co Ltd 915 Dominion Shale Brick & Sewer Pipe Co warehouse 917 Royal George Hotel	Blake-Diether Co (A C Blake and L M Diether) bldrs' materials 915 Main Far West Lumber Co Ltd Clarence Lucas mgr 915 Main [No listing for Dominion Shale Brick & Sewer Pipe
1914-1915	915 G T P T Co Ltd 917 Royal George Hotel 917 Robt L Taylor cigars	Royal George Hotel G B Shepherd prop 917 Main Robt L Taylor cigars 917 Main r 25 8 th Av W
1916	915 Empire Fuel Cartage & Horse Exchange 917 Royal George Hotel 917 Robt L Taylor cigars	Empire Fuel Cartage & Horse Exchange Geo Parsons prop 915 Main Royal George Hotel Geo B Shepherd prop 917 Main Robt L Taylor cigars 917 Main r 25 8 th Av W
1917	915 Johnston Storage Co 917 J Campbell	JOHNSTON STORAGE COMPANY, LIMITED, STORAGE AND FURNITURE MOVING; CAN. NOR. RY. CARTAGE AGENTS, 915 MAIN STREET Warehouse: 1160 HAMILTON STREET Joseph Campbell cigars 917 Main h 1221 King Edward E
1918	915 Johnston Storage Co 917 Royal George Hotel 919 Vacant	JOHNSTON STORAGE COMPANY, LIMITED, STORAGE AND FURNITURE MOVING; CANADIAN NORTHERN RAILWAY CARTAGE AGENTS, 915 MAIN STREET C.N.R. Freight Office Warehouse: 1160 HAMILTON STREET Royal George Hotel Thos Hartigan prop 917 Main
1919	915 Vacant 917 Royal George Hotel 917 Lewis J Ryan 919 Vacant	Lewis J Ryan tobacconist 917 Main r 1975 Broadway W Royal George Hotel T Hartigan prop 917 Main

YEAR	STREET ADDRESS, BUSINESS, INDIVIDUAL	ALPHA LISTING
1920	915 L J Ryan confr 917 Cobalt Hotel 919 Vacant	Cobalt Hotel J J Coleman prop 917 Main Lewis J Ryan confr 915 Main h same
1921	915 James Turner confr 917 Cobalt Hotel 919 Vacant	James Turner confr 915 Main h same Cobalt Hotel John J Coleman prop 917 Main
1922	915 Sellars & Baker 915 James Turner confr 917 Cobalt Hotel	(F M) Sellars & (E) Baker horsedlrs 915 Main Fred M Sellars of Sellars & Baker h 316 E 7 th Ernest Baker of Sellars & Baker r 700 Main Cobalt Hotel J J Coleman prop 917 Main James Turner conf 915 Main h same
1923	915 Sellars & Baker 915 James Turner confr 917 Cobalt Hotel	(F M) Sellers [sic] & (E) Baker horse dlrs (rear) 915 Main Cobalt Hotel B S Weinrobe prop 917 Main James Turner conf 915 Main h same
1924	915 (rear) Baker & Sellars 917 Cobalt Hotel 917 Occupied	(E) Baker & (F) Sellars sale stables rear 915 Main Hotel Cobalt (B S Weinrobe) 917 Main
1925	915 J Turner 915 (rear) Baker & Sellars 917 Cobalt Hotel	(G) Baker & (F M) Sellars sales stables rear 915 Main Hotel Cobalt (B Weinrobe) 917 Main Jas Turner conf 915 Main
1926	915 J Turner 915 (rear) J D Campbell 917 Cobalt Hotel	John D Campbell horsedlr rr 915 Main r 211 E Georgia Hotel Cobalt (B Weinrobe) 917 Main Jas Turner conf 915 Main h 4193 Pr Albert
1927	915 Better 'Ole Conf 915 (rear) J D Campbell 917 Cobalt Hotel	John D Campbell horse dlr rr 915 Main r 211 E Georgia Better 'Ole Confectionery (J Turner) 915 Main Hotel Cobalt (B Weinrobe & Mrs M Brasnick) 917 Main
1928	915 Better 'Ole Conf 915 (rear) J D Campbell 915 (rear) H E Waller 917 Cobalt Hotel	[No listing for Better 'Ole Confectionery] John D Campbell teaming contr rr 915 Main r 211 E Georgia Hotel Cobalt (Cobalt Hotel Co Ltd) 917 Main Henry E Waller horse dlr rr 915 Main h 1856 Venables
1929	915 Better 'Ole Conf 915 (rear) J D Campbell 915 (rear) H E Waller 917 Cobalt Hotel	Better 'Ole Confectionery (J Turner) 915 Main John D Campbell genl contr rr 915 Main r 207 E Georgia Cobalt Hotel (M Lee, F E Johnson) 917 Main Henry E Waller horse dlr rr 915 Main h 1856 Venables
1930	915 The Better 'Ole 915 (rear) J D Campbell 915 (rear) H E Waller 917 Cobalt Hotel	(The) Better 'Ole (J Turner) confr 915 Main John D Campbell genl contr rr 915 Main r 1038 same Cobalt Hotel M Lee mgr 917 Main Henry E Waller horse dlr rr 915 Main h 1856 Venables

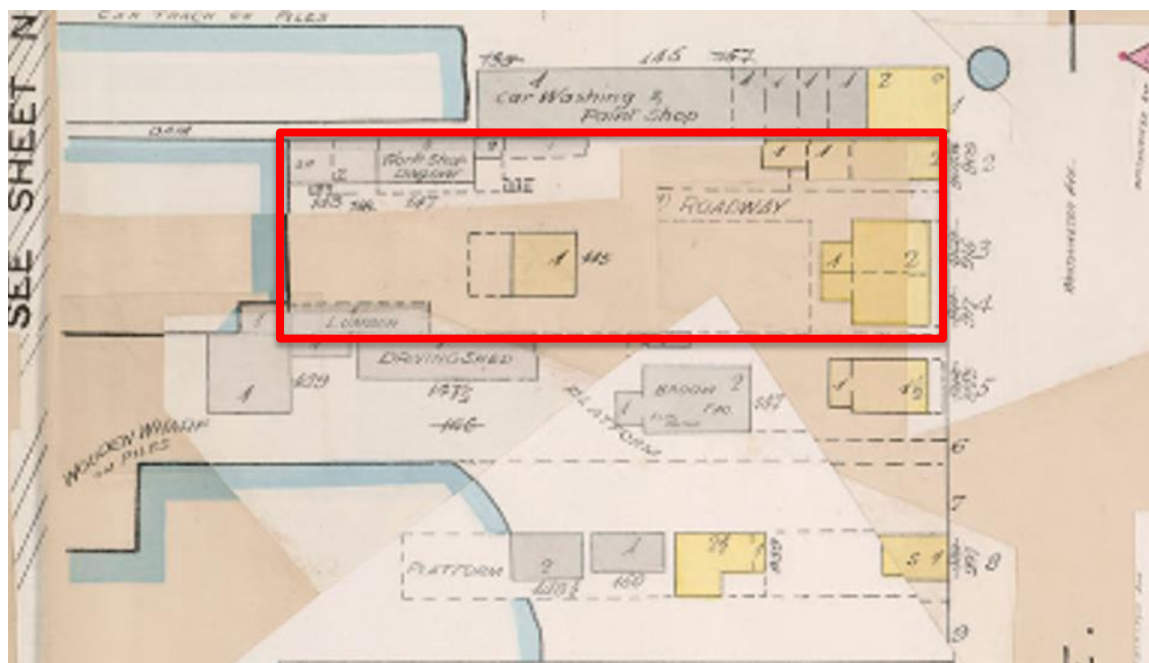
YEAR	STREET ADDRESS, BUSINESS, INDIVIDUAL	ALPHA LISTING
1931	915 The Better 'Ole 915 (rear) H E Waller 917 Cobalt Hotel	(The) Better 'Ole (J Turner) confr 915 Main Cobalt Hotel (G Palmu) 917 Main Harry E Waller horsedlr rr 915 Main h 1856 Venables
1932	915 The Better 'Ole 915 (rear) H E Waller 917 Cobalt Hotel	(The) Better 'Ole (Mrs B Bennett) confr 915 Main Cobalt Hotel (Cobalt Hotel Co Ltd) 917 Main Harry E Waller horse dlr rr 915 Main h 1856 Venables
1933	915 The Better 'Ole 915 (rear) H E Waller 917 Cobalt Hotel	(The) Better 'Ole (Mrs A G Price) confr 915 Main Cobalt Hotel (Cobalt Hotel Co Ltd) 917 Main Harry E Waller horse dlr rr 915 Main h 1856 Venables
1934	915 The Better 'Ole conf 915 (rear) H E Waller live-stock dlr 917 Cobalt Hotel	(The) Better 'Ole (Mrs A G Price) conf 915 Main Cobalt Hotel (Cobalt Hotel Co Ltd) 917 Main Cobalt Hotel Co Ltd G Palmu pres 917 Main Harry E (Winifred) Waller horse dlr rr 915 Main h 1856 Venables
1935	915 The Better 'Ole conf 915 (rear) H E Waller live-stock dlr 917 Cobalt Hotel	(The) Better 'Ole (Mrs E M Radford) confy 915 Main Cobalt Hotel (G Palmu) 917 Main Henry E (Maude W) Waller livestock dlrs rr 915 Main h 1856 Venables
1936	915 The Better 'Ole conf 915 (rear) H E Waller livestock dlr 917 Cobalt Hotel rooms 917 Cobalt Hotel beer parlor	(The) Better 'Ole (Mrs E M Radford) confy 915 Main Cobalt Hotel (A Strand) rooms 917 Main Cobalt Hotel Co Ltd L H Jackson pres beer parlor 917 Main Henry E (Maude W) Waller livestock dlrs rr 915 Main h 1856 Venables
1937	915 The Better 'Ole conf 915 (rear) Vacant 917 Cobalt Hotel 917 Cobalt Hotel Co Ltd beer parlor	(The) Better 'Ole (Mrs A G Price) conf 915 Main Cobalt Hotel (A Strand) 917 Main Cobalt Hotel Co Ltd L H Jackson pres beer parlor 917 Main
1938	915 The Better 'Ole conf 915 (rear) M Merin livestock dlr 917 Cobalt Hotel 917 Cobalt Hotel Co Ltd beer parlor	(The) Better 'Ole (Mrs A G Price) conf 915 Main Cobalt Hotel (A Strand) 917 Main Cobalt Hotel Co Ltd L H Jackson pres beer parlor 917 Main Max (Marion) Merin livestock dlr rr 915 Main h 664 E Georgia
1939	915 The Better 'Ole conf 915 (rear) M Merin livestock 917 Cobalt Hotel 917 Cobalt Hotel beer parl	(The) Better 'Ole conf 915 Main Cobalt Hotel (A Strand) 917 Main Cobalt Hotel Co Ltd L H Jackson pres beer parlor 917 Main Max (Marion) Merin livestock dlr rr 915 Main h 664 E Georgia
1940- 1941	915 The Better 'Ole conf 915 (rear) Vacant 917 Cobalt Hotel 917 Cobalt Hotel beer parl	(The) Better 'Ole conf 915 Main Cobalt Hotel (A Strand) 917 Main Cobalt Hotel Co Ltd C I Albright pres beer parlor 917 Main

YEAR	STREET ADDRESS, BUSINESS, INDIVIDUAL	ALPHA LISTING
1942-1943	915 The Better 'Ole conf 917 Cobalt Hotel 917 Cobalt Hotel beer parl	(The) Better 'Ole (W Price) conf 915 Main Cobalt Hotel (A Strand) 917 Main Cobalt Hotel Co Ltd C I Albright pres beer parlor 917 Main
1944	915 Better 'Ole conf 917 Cobalt Hotel 917 Cobalt Hotel beer parl	Better 'Ole (W Price) conf 915 Main Cobalt Hotel (A Strand) 917 Main Cobalt Hotel Beer Parlor (E Clause, S Kirstuik, J Polonich) 917 Main Cobalt Hotel Co Ltd C I Albright pres 917 Main
1945	915 Better 'Ole conf 917 Cobalt Hotel	Better 'Ole (W Price) conf 915 Main Cobalt Hotel Beer Parlor (E Clause, S Kirstuik, J Polonich) 917 Main Cobalt Hotel Co Ltd 917 Main Cobalt Hotel Rooms (M Jurjovich) 917 Main
1946-1947	915 Better 'Ole Conf 917 Cobalt Hotel	Better 'Ole (J A Caswell) conf 915 Main Cobalt Hotel Co Ltd 917 Main
1948	915 Better 'Ole Conf 917 Cobalt Hotel * 917 Cobalt Hotel beer parlor	Better 'Ole (J A Caswell) conf 915 Main Cobalt Hotel J Babcock mgr 917 Main Cobalt Hotel Co Ltd J Beydak mgr beer parlor 917 Main
1949	915 Better 'Ole Conf 917 Cobalt Hotel * 917 Cobalt Hotel beer parlor	Better 'Ole (J A Hume) conf 915 Main Cobalt Hotel J Babcock mgr 917 Main Cobalt Hotel Co Ltd J Beydak mgr beer parlor 917 Main
1950	915 Better 'Ole tobac 917 Cobalt Hotel * 917 Cobalt Hotel beer parl	Better 'Ole (J Wood) tobac 915 Main Cobalt Hotel J Beydak mgr 917 Main Cobalt Hotel Co Ltd J Beydak mgr beer parl 917 Main
1951	915 Vacant 917 Cobalt Hotel * 917 Cobalt Hotel beer parl	Cobalt Hotel H L Martin mgr 917 Main Cobalt Hotel Co Ltd J Beydak mgr beer parl 917 Main
1952	915 Vacant 917 Cobalt Hotel 917 Cobalt Hotel beer parl	Cobalt Hotel (H L Martin) 917 Main Cobalt Hotel Co Ltd J Beydak mgr beer parl 917 Main
1953	915 Vacant 917 Cobalt Hotel 917 Cobalt Hotel beer parl	Cobalt Hotel (H L Martin) 917 Main Cobalt Hotel Co Ltd J Beydak mgr beer parl 917 Main
1954	915 C Wolfe 917 Cobalt Hotel 917 Cobalt Hotel beer parl	[No listing for C Wolfe] Cobalt Hotel (H L Martin) 917 Main Cobalt Hotel Co Ltd J Beydak mgr beer parl 917 Main
1955	915 Cobie Coffee Shop 917 Cobalt Hotel 917 A Tolparoff 917 Cobalt Hotel beer parl	Cobie Coffee Shop (Miss C Petrie) 915 Main Cobalt Hotel (H L Martin) 917 Main Cobalt Hotel Co Ltd (E H Bentz, E Robinson and L Soubry) beer parl 917 Main Alexis Tolparoff r 917 Main

* Asterisk indicates ownership

4.4. CONTEXT – SUBJECT SITE

Prior to the construction of the Cobalt Hotel in 1910, the subject site (comprising Lots 2, 3 and 4), contained a single two-storey dwelling addressed as 909 Westminster Avenue and a two-storey duplex dwelling addressed as 915 and 917 Westminster Avenue. These houses were developed by the late 1890s. The rear of 915-917 included another single-storey house set toward the rear, along with other workshops or sheds adjacent the piers extending out into False Creek. These rear buildings were accessed by what was defined as a “roadway” or passageway, which aligns with the current pass-through set in the building.

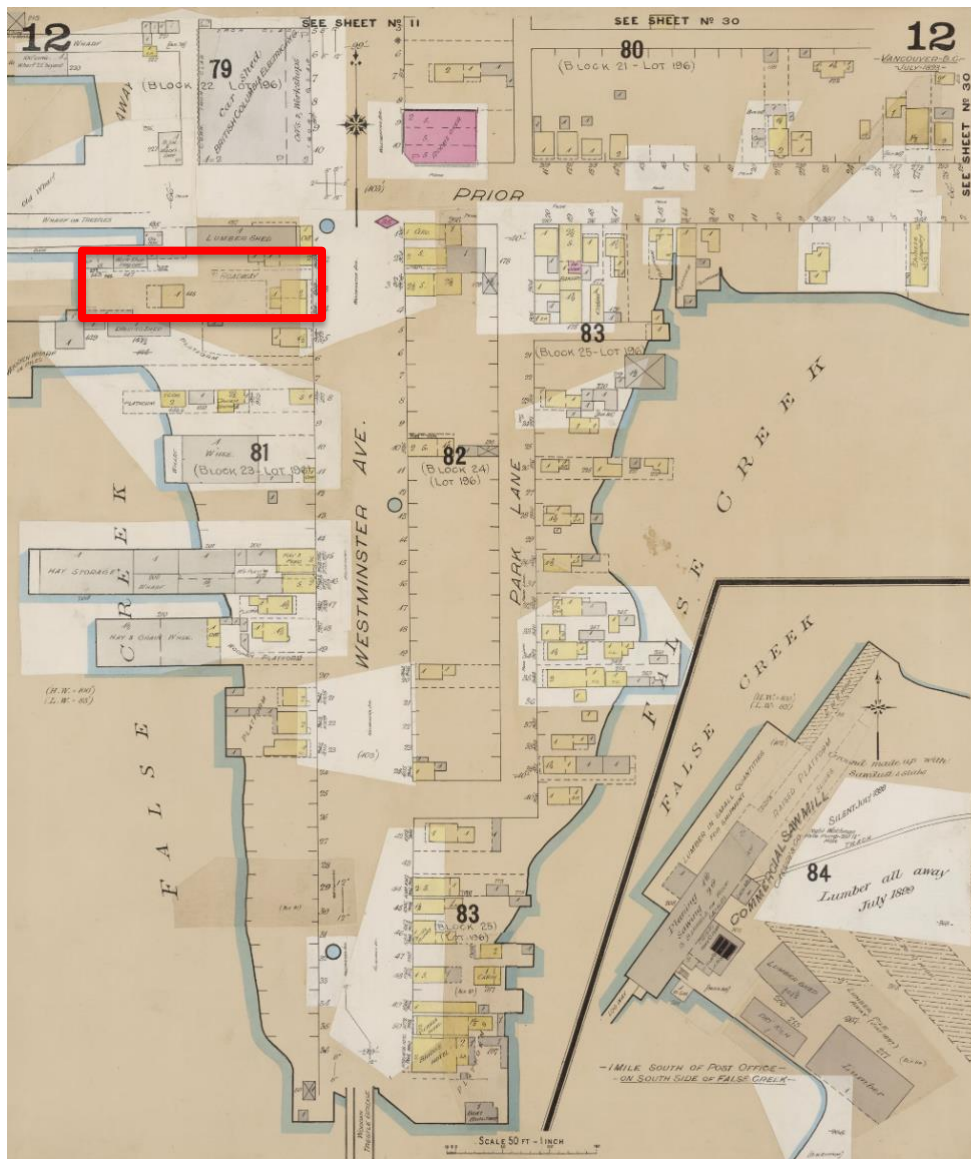


1897 Fire Insurance Plan, Updated 1903. Lots 2, 3 and 4, now the site of the Cobalt Hotel, outlined. Source: Library and Archives Canada

In later years this passageway would continue to provide access to the rear of the site, first by horse and carriage, and later by automobile, which would otherwise have not been possible due to the surrounding buildings and the water to the west.

4.5. HISTORIC CONTEXT OF AREA

The site was part of a series of buildings constructed along the narrow peninsula that jutted into False Creek. This was made accessible and became a key transportation route with the construction of a bridge linking the commercial area to the north, and Chinatown, with Mount Pleasant to the south.



1897 Fire Insurance Plan, Updated 1903 outlining the extent of the original peninsula that extended south into False Creek.

The portion of False Creek situated to the west of what was then Westminster Avenue (now Main Street) was the deeper and navigable section that allowed for shipping and related industrial uses. It was therefore on the west side of Main Street that commercial and industrial-related development began to replace

working-class houses built in the late 1800s, such as those on the subject site. By the early 1910s, most properties along Main Street south of Prior Street had redeveloped with larger buildings, with the exception of sites used for outdoor industrial storage. These buildings were mostly masonry, many of which provided short-term accommodation for workers in the provincial resource industries, in later years becoming what were known as “SROs”. They typically accommodated workers in mining and forestry, who returned to Vancouver for short stays for the duration of the shutdown of those industries (usually short-term), and leaving the city to return when the work resumed. Remaining examples of this development are situated immediately to the north and south of the Cobalt Hotel – the Angeles Rooms (1909) to the south and the BCER Men’s Quarters to the north at 190 Prior Street (1913) – and the American Hotel (1907) across the street. A laneway now runs behind the Cobalt Hotel, which follows the original shoreline of False Creek.

The slightly newer Bank of Montreal building (1929) is located across the street at the south-east corner of Main and Prior streets.

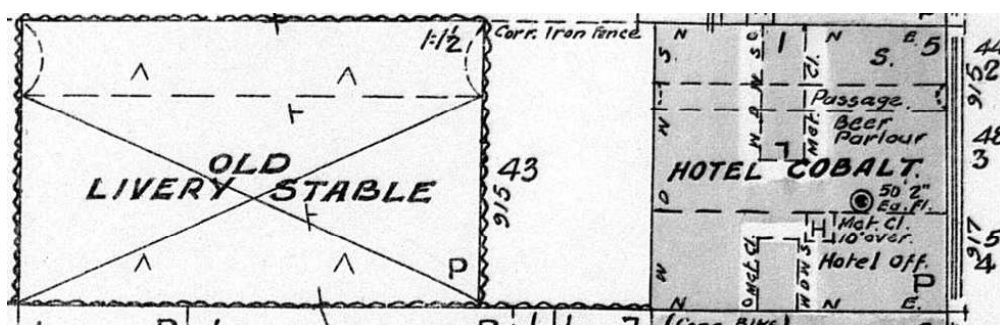
4.6. HISTORY OF THE COBALT HOTEL

The Cobalt Hotel was a building that served a single-occupant accommodation purpose from the time it was constructed in 1910, until the present day. It began as the Royal George Hotel, presumably a reference to King George V, who was proclaimed in May of that year, around the time of issuance of the building permit. Coincidentally, the first proprietor of the hotel was George B. Shepherd who served in that role until 1917, although no evidence exists that the name may have been, in some way, attributed to him. The upper four floors always served a residential use, as short-term accommodation. The ground floor has served a commercial use, most notably as a pub or beer parlour for those living in the building or those residents or workers from the nearby area.

Similar to sites to the south along Main Street, 917 Main Street included a number of other uses beyond the commercial and upper floor accommodation. For the first two years the site was occupied by the Canadian Western Lumber Company as its city sales offices; its large-scale mill was located in Coquitlam (Fraser Mills). What is notable about this site is the use of the rear of the property for various businesses that housed or sold animals, particularly horses. Through the mid-1910s until the 1940s, the rear of the site was occupied by a livery stable. Beginning in 1916, Empire Fuel Cartage and Horse Exchange was located at 915 Main Street, and for a short time it housed the Johnston Storage Company who were cartage agents of the Canadian Northern Railway, coinciding with its arrival in Vancouver.

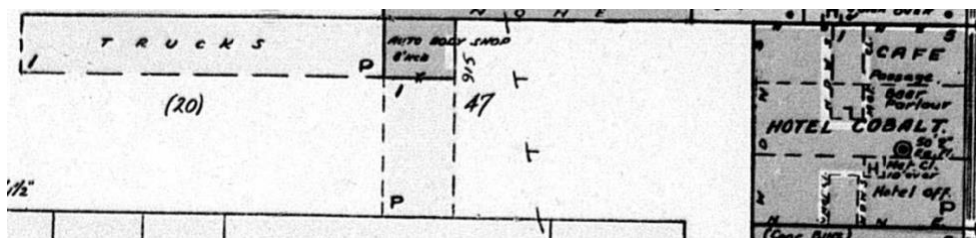
Subsequent businesses listed included horse dealers, beginning with Sellars & Baker in 1922, with the business continuing into the late 1930s under other names. Post-World War II was notably a time when horse-drawn wagons and other delivery

modes, already in decline in the 1930s, were rapidly erased from the urban scene, replaced by readily available vehicles and improvements to the road network.



1940 Fire Insurance Plan, enlarged to show ground floor uses and the rear stable

1939 was the last year of the livery stable on this site. By 1955, the livestock dealer was replaced by an auto body shop and a garage for truck storage.



1955 Fire Insurance Plan, enlarged to show changes to rear of site

It is not known why the hotel's name was changed from the Royal George Hotel to the Cobalt Hotel. However, "Royal George" was a name that remains to this day in other western provinces and beyond, including Scotland and Australia. Its name change may simply have been to distinguish it from those others, or for a local connection to the town of Cobalt, Ontario. For whatever reason, its name was changed in 1919, so for most of its existence, it has been listed as either the "Cobalt Hotel" or the "Hotel Cobalt". In more recent decades, it has also been known as the "Cobalt Motor Hotel" as illustrated by the existing signage.

The hotel's business function expanded into what would have been vacated retail space on the ground floor, with the opening of a beer parlour in the 1930s. The pass-through (now converted to commercial space as a bar known as the Boxcar) divided the retail space into one small unit at the north end and a much larger retail space at the south end. The north end was for many years rented by a confectioner, cigar and tobacco merchant, beginning in 1919 with the departure of the lumber business and cartage agents, and for an extended period of time, known as The Better 'Ole (1927 to 1950). Subsequently it became a coffee shop (1955 onward). However, it was in the 1940s, with the closure of the livery stable and livestock dealers situated behind the building, that the hotel and its beer parlour function took on the dominant role on this site, which continued well into the late 2010s.

4.7. REFERENCES – MUNICIPAL AND OTHER RECORDS

- Title Search: N/A
- City of Vancouver Plans: No plans available
- City of Vancouver Archives Plans: No plans available
- Water Application Records: Not available
- Maps: Fire Insurance Plans: City of Vancouver Archives, No. 599
- City Directories: Henderson’s City Directory (1910-1923); Wrigley Henderson Amalgamated (1924-1926); Wrigley’s BC Directory (1926-1932); Wrigley’s Greater Vancouver and New Westminster Directory (1933); Sun British Columbia Directory (1934); British Columbia and Yukon Directory (1935-1948); Vancouver and New Westminster City Directory (1949 -1955).
- Heritage Vancouver Building Permit Database <http://permits.heritagevancouver.org/>
 - Permit issued for concrete building, June 17, 1910, value \$57,000
 - Permit #3504 for factory/warehouse at rear of Royal George Hotel issued September 23, 1912, value \$2500
 - Permit #3603 for factory/warehouse at rear of Royal George Hotel issued October 5, 1912, value \$100
 - Permit #6010 for dwelling-house at rear of Royal George Hotel issued December 13, 1913, value \$4000
- Research Summary for 917 Main Street, City of Vancouver Heritage Action Plan, Donald Luxton & Associates, 2017
- BC Vital Statistics
 - Gust Palmu, d. June 3, 1959, New Westminster, age 71, Death Registration No. 1959-09-007208
 - Coonie Irel Albright, d. February 27, 1966, Vancouver, age 82, Death Registration No. 1966-09-003031
- BC Assessment Records <https://www.bcasessment.ca/>
 - Described as 5 storey Beer Parlour/Hotel, 4800 sq.ft. leasable area, 12,566 sq.ft. site area

4.8. PUBLICATIONS AND DOCUMENTS

- *Vancouver – A Visual History*, Bruce Macdonald. Talon Books, 1992.
- *Penguin Dictionary of Architecture and Landscape Architecture*, 5th Edition, Penguin Books, 1999.
- *Vancouver After Dark – The Wild History of a City’s Nightlife*. Aaron Chapman. Arsenal Pulp Press, 2019.



Courtenay Office:

6091 Ledingham Road, Courtenay, BC V9J 1M5

Vancouver Office:

57-3436 Terra Vita Place, Vancouver, BC V5K 5H6

(778) 308-4357

mcleanheritage@gmail.com

www.mcleanheritage.ca