

FHBRO Number 88-12

Dawson City, Yukon Territory

**Klondike Thawing Machine Building (KTM Building)**

Third Avenue

The Klondike Thawing Machine building (KTM Building) was constructed in 1899 as a single-storey warehouse with a loft space for the Dawson Transfer and Storage Company, a mining equipment supply and transport company. The building was modified by 1904 to serve as a grocery warehouse. Between 1913 and 1935, the warehouse was operated as a large general store by the “KTM” company, with whom it is principally associated. Acquired by Parks Canada in 1970 and extensively refurbished in 1979, the building is currently used to store artifacts. The building is part of the Dawson Historic Complex National Historic Site. The Department of Canadian Heritage, Parks Canada is the custodian. See FHBRO Building Report 88-12.

**Reasons for Designation**

The KTM Building has been designated Recognized for its environmental significance, its architectural importance, and its historical associations.

The KTM Building fronts onto Third Avenue, an important thoroughfare leading from the town to the gold-rich creeks, developed initially between 1899-1900 as a location for outfitters supplying prospectors with equipment, stores and horses. Today, Third Avenue boasts retail stores, hotels and bars, many surviving from that period. Located opposite the Westminster Hotel, a well known downtown landmark, the KTM Building is oriented to the main axis of the “Ladue” historic cadastral survey. The building is significant as an original, distinctive and familiar building which maintains and reinforces the streetscape’s historic character.

Architecturally, the significance of the KTM Building lies in its status as a rare surviving example of a small to medium sized outfitter’s warehouse of the Gold Rush period (1897-1906). With its functional shed form clad largely in corrugated iron, and with a wood “boomtown” false facade added in 1904, it generally maintains its massing, design, detailing, finishes and use.

Historically, the KTM Building is directly associated with Dawson City’s role as a supply service and distribution centre for the mining community during the Yukon Gold Rush. The warehouse is also associated with many of the town’s leading commercial businesses and their owners including, most importantly, the KTM Company and its owner, George Frederick Johnson.

**Character Defining Elements**

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The heritage character of the KTM Building resides in its site relationships, overall form, scale, construction, boomtown commercial architectural design, and surviving original elements, materials and details in the front half of the warehouse.

Part of the heritage character of the KTM Building resides in its unchanged location, oriented to the main axis of the “Ladue” historic cadastral survey. Independent from adjacent buildings, and fronting the Third Avenue boardwalk, the building reinforces the character of the streetscape. Its elongated rectilinear footprint is almost double its width, which gives the building both its elegant proportions and its utilitarian warehouse rank. The painted decorative commercial facade and unpainted functionally designed lateral and rear elevations of the building, typical of boomtown architectural treatment, dramatize its relationship with the streetscape. The building’s fenestration generally, and delivery access via the rear service alley, were strategically located and support the utilitarian warehouse function. These characteristics should be protected.

The past restoration works have included new foundations and floor, repair and extensive replacement of fabric in the front three bays of the building, and an entire reconstruction of the structure and external finishes of the rear five bays. This work was based on on-site investigation and heritage recording of the building undertaken in 1971, and was designed to conserve the KTM Building’s planning, structure, interior volumes, and architectural character. Feature elements include the decorative white painted wood false retail facade of horizontally assembled wood siding with applied black signage lettering; the continuous pitched-roof apex line which integrates with the front elevation design; the lateral walls and pitched-roof finishes featuring board-on-board siding clad with unfinished corrugated iron for fire protection; a rear elevation of stained vertical board and batten construction; and where found to survive, original structural components, cladding elements and hardware. These should continue to be respected and maintained.

The KTM Building presents its c.1903-09 commercial facade design with its large retail windows, the entrance double door, and single door to the side, with placement reflecting the irregular spacing of the timber structure behind. The fenestration and half-glazed and panelled doors of the retail facade, together with the wood doors and double-hung sash windows to the sides and sliding door to the rear, were reconstructed in 1979.

Historic photographs of the building during the era when it was under KTM ownership show no awnings over the boardwalk. The canvas and metal pipe-framed awning which was currently installed to shelter historic displays behind the retail windows from direct sunlight is consistent in general appearance with awnings originally attached to

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the false front, and with the c. 1900 character of the Dawson City streetscape.

Internally, the KTM Building retains its original planning and use, with a retail space in the front two-and-a-half bays, sub-divided from the warehouse area to the rear by a wood partition. Internal finishes were mostly, if not entirely, replaced in 1979. The building's interior layout and function should be maintained, including its internal volumes, structural framing, and all original materials and details found surviving.

The design of any modifications to the building should be based on an understanding of the evolution of the building, and the rationale for previous restoration design decisions, particularly on the street frontage. This is particularly so in the front half of the building where much original fabric survives and which is the most visible part of the building to the public.

For further guidance, please refer to the *FHBRO Code of Practice*.

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