

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

The one-storey frame building commonly known as the N.C. Co. Warehouse was constructed by the Alaska Commercial Company in the late summer and fall of 1898 as part of a complex which initially included four warehouses and a two-storey log staff quarters. The building, a cold storage facility, has continued to serve a warehouse function under successive owners. Known changes to the exterior of the building include the painting of "N.C. Co." in large letters on the west side of the roof (1901), the addition of a small open-sided shed to the east elevation (1902-1903), the fixing of the sliding door and the cutting of a new transom over the central door in the south elevation (c.1921), the tearing up of the tramway track and trestle at both elevations with some track elements left at the interior (1921), and the addition of a corrugated metal skirting (c.1973). On the interior, the only known change of any significance is the addition of a temporary office in the northeast corner by Parks Canada (c.1973). The building is owned by Canadian Heritage and continues to serve in a warehouse capacity for artifact storage. See FHBRO Building Report 88-12.

### **Reasons for Designation**

The N.C. Co. Warehouse was designated Recognized because of the important theme it illustrates and the essential role it played in the development of the community. The proven functional qualities of the building were also a factor in its designation.

Built by the largest trading concern on the Yukon River at the height of the rush which followed the discovery of gold in August 1896, the N.C. Co. Warehouse is one of a very small group of buildings directly associated with the theme of the Klondike Gold-rush. More specifically, it demonstrates how the short shipping season in the North was handled by the creation of large storage facilities. The construction of the warehouse represents the first development in this area north of King Street which became a warehouse district, later superseded by residential/institutional development.

Warehouses built by smaller independent concerns on the Dawson townsite were predominantly vernacular designs, enlarged to meet the needs of the day, and were somewhat eclectic and improvisational in their use of materials. The N.C. Co. Warehouse, on the other hand, belongs to a class of buildings erected by large, established outside concerns with few economic constraints. As a consequence, the building is uniform in construction and of the highest quality materials, and may have been architecturally designed.

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The functionality of the Warehouse is excellent, with a central tramway for distributing the goods and a depth of storage on each side based on the practical distance for

man-handling of goods. The light timber platform framing of the walls and the regularly spaced Howe trusses with bracing which span the roof provide a column-free and unobstructed interior space that is ideal for storage. The numerous small windows, placed at regular intervals on the long walls and immediately under the top plate, provide the maximum stacking height for goods.

### **Character Defining Elements**

The heritage character of the building derives in part from the plain, symmetrical gable end facing the street, with its characteristic warehouse pattern of openings (a double door flanked by small windows at door head height) and shape (a proportion of 3:2 width to gable height). Additional contributions to the character are made by the long side elevations with their weathered board and batten finish and regularly spaced window pattern, and the gable roof with its standing seam, galvanized steel finish.

Removal of the large double door cut into the south elevation (between the south-east corner and the original central door) and the restoration of the board and batten wall, sliding door and window elements of this elevation would enhance the architectural character of the warehouse as a whole.

Internally, the building is characterized by the central tramway feature, the unpartitioned design of the space, and the exposed building frame. The removal of the office area in the north-east corner of the building and any other subdivision of the space would enhance the appearance and integrity of the interior.

Considering the intact condition of this rare gold-rush era warehouse, the continued use of the building for cold storage minimizes changes to the building fabric (structure, building envelope, access, exiting etc.), requires only minor upgrades to services (lighting, ventilation, plumbing, fire suppression, etc.), and, most importantly, does not increase the fire risk.

The historic relationship between the building and the adjoining thoroughfares of King Street and Fifth Avenue was originally heavily influenced by security and fire protection

concerns. Maintaining set-backs and side-yards and leaving the site unencumbered

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will ensure this relationship is preserved.

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

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