

by Mary Balf, Kamloops Museum

Kamloops has a poor record in regard to its buildings of past eras. There is very little left of our original Main Street (Victoria West) core that was gradually abandoned early in the century.

And there is nothing left of the Lorne and Lansdowne village that grew in the latter 1880s to house CPR workers, and the famous CPR gardens are buried under the tarmac of Thompson Park shopping centre.

It is therefore very refreshing to find recycled buildings, arising as a Phoenix when their old use dies. Yet there are a few such examples; two are provided by our fire halls, surprisingly.

A fire hall is highly specialized, and the temptation to demolish an old one must be considerable. Ours both survive.

In 1905, after years of nagging by the Fire Brigade, City Council decided to build a proper hall. In the spring they wrote to several cities for plans of their halls, and apparently agreed on one that was suitable for the equipment they wished to house.

They settled on a site next to the City Hall, presumably because First Avenue was about midway between the old west end and the newer townsite, and service to both would therefore be good.

On May 1 there was a delightful ceremony. The Fire Department had been responsible for May Day festivities since their inception in 1893, and it was therefore very appropriate that the foundation stone should be laid by May Queen Mary Barnhart.

Her picture, and the inscribed silver trowel that she used, may be seen in the Museum. The crowning and sports program had been held in Alexandra Park (North Kamloops), so that there was a procession across the first white bridge to the site, and a dinner afterwards.

The hollow stone encased the names of the Queen and her attendants, as well as those of civic dignitaries and the usual coins and papers.

But there were objections to the site, and City finally decided to offer closest protection to the new eastern portion of town, by

choosing the north side of the 300 block Victoria Street. Presumably the foundation stone was moved too; there is no mention of a ceremony.

The contract was awarded to A.C.Taylor for \$2,950, and building started in November, with completion next year. The hall was the joy of the Fire Department. Its proudest hour was achieved in 1911, when new motorized equipment arrived, and the horses were put out to pasture.

The hall gave good service, although the tower was declared unsafe in 1922 and had to be rebuilt. By the 1930s it was too small, and, despite the Depression, a new one was deemed necessary.

They did not use second-hand plans this time; the architect was Iain R.Morrison, trained in Scotland, and arriving in Kamloops in 1932, after a few years in Vancouver. His first design was the McIntosh Memorial, recently moved to the extreme west end of St. Paul Street.

Morrison was later responsible for many homes and small businesses, and in 1948 designed the Wing building and the Paramount Theatre. He was a Little Theatre enthusiast until his death in 1954.

A site was chosen on Fourth Avenue, and in June 1935 the contract for \$24,433 was awarded to H.J.Davies, who had been in business here since 1911, and had built the City Hall.

by Mayor W.J.Moffatt,

Erection proceeded apace; it was opened on December 9, 1935, and duly acclaimed. It was painted cream, with pastel green on the base, crest and coping. Its modern style was greatly admired.

The Sentinel devoted a full page to eulogizing the building, architect, contractor, Fire Chief, Mayor and everyone else even remotely concerned. There was a sour note in 1938, however, when City sued the architect for faulty design of the heating system.

Meantime the old building was adapted as a hotel - the Hub City, Mount Paul, Saga and now Kamloops Inn. It bears little resemblance to its first incarnation, but is more economical than destruction.

The 1935 hall is being very happily recycled, with the full retention of all external features - an excellent job!