



STAFF PHOTO. Some of the employees of the Inland Cigar Factory in the late 1890s poses for a staff photograph.

A very good smoke

Certainly the most unusual of Kamloops' pioneer industries was a cigar factory which for over 20 years was an important business in the city. The business began in January of 1888 when George E. Borthwick arrived to make arrangements for start-up of his factory.

Word of a cigar factory in Kamloops had begun the previous August when James Harling of Vancouver inquired about the possibilities and even rented a building on Main Street, now West Victoria Street, to serve as his factory.

This establishment never opened but George Borthwick, then employed at Kurtz and Company's cigar factory in Victoria, made similar inquiries in December of 1888.

He rented half of the main floor of the Masonic Hall in the 200 block of Victoria Street for his premises which he named the "Inland Cigar Factory". Serving only the local market at first, the factory employed three journeymen cigar makers counting Borthwick, and one local boy, Joe Goupeit, as apprentice and "mascot".

Their tobacco was imported from Cuba and Sumatra allowing the product to be advertised as the "finest Havana Cigars". Actually only the best brand, "Pride of Kamloops", was all Havana tobacco. The three lesser brands, "Nature's Beauties", "La Flor de

**Images of
THE PAST**

John
STEWART

KAMLOOPS MUSEUM

that the company had been reorganized and refinanced for expansion.

The two main partners were M.P. Gordon of Vancouver, and George Borthwick.

A new building was erected for the factory in 1888 on the northeast corner of First Avenue and Seymour Street which still stands today. It now houses a piano store and an architect's office, but is perhaps best remembered as the old home of "Quality Books".

Since at least 1888 the 30 workers at the Kamloops cigar factory were members of Lodge 400 of the Cigar Maker's International Union of America, known for short as the Cigar Maker's Union. The company always proudly advertised as a union shop,

perhaps because Borthwick himself had once been a member of the union.

At that time the cigar manufacturing industry employed a good deal of child labor and some of the eastern factories were notorious for their exploitation of children. In the only photograph we have of some of the staff at the local factory there are two young boys and two women.

We know that salaries ranged from \$15 to \$30 per week but little else about working conditions, though we can be certain that the boys and the women received the lower salaries.

Business continued to be good into the 1900s and the company even hired several Spanish workmen

from Cuba to insure Havana quality for its product. But the year 1908 brought disaster for Kamloops if not for the company.

Claiming that business was excellent on the Coast and elsewhere, but not locally, the Inland Cigar Company directors voted to move their business to Victoria.

The Inland Sentinel cried that the fault was Kamloops' as local merchants refused to support this important local industry. However, it was more likely that, as most of the business and population was on the coast, costs would be lower if the company moved there.

In 1910, Borthwick retired from the cigar business and purchased a ranch at the mouth of the Barriere River on the North Thompson. He also ran the store, sawmill and post office.

This was not the end of cigar making in Kamloops nor of the history of the factory building. More on that next week.



PIONEER INDUSTRY. The Inland Cigar Factory on the corner of First Avenue and Seymour Street is seen as it looked in the 1890s.

PART 1 of 2

Cabinet" and "Stags", were a mixture of Cuban and American tobaccos.

Business was very good locally and soon Kamloops-made cigars were being sold in the Kootenays and on the Coast. In February of 1897 it was announced

PART 2 of 2

The old cigar factory, which had existed in the brick building (now plastered over) on the northeast corner of Seymour Street and 1st Avenue since 1898, closed in 1906. The owners transferred their business to Victoria where customers were more numerous and costs were less.

However, this was not the end of the cigar industry in Kamloops. John E. Mackin and five other former employees of the Inland Cigar Company were determined to stay and work in Kamloops.

They formed a new company with Mackin at the head, called the Western Cigar Manufacturing Company Ltd. They kept the same building for their factory but came out with a new brand of cigars, "Seal of B.C."

Claiming to use only the best Havana tobacco, the new company was optimistic. Mackin said that the staff was small "for now" but they planned to expand to a staff of 24 within a year. By 1910 the company still had only five employees.

Business and profits must have picked up considerably by 1913 for the company announced in July that it was to build a new and more modern factory next door at 293-1st Ave. The older building on the corner was to be leased to the Model Bakery Company.

On Oct. 14 a grand opening was held which was poorly attended by local businessmen due to poor weather. For those who did attend there were refreshments and free

samples of the locally produced cigars.

By 1917 hard times had struck the Western Cigar Company. It is hard to say just what all the problems were. The owners complained that local cigar smokers were reluctant to patronize a Kamloops industry. Perhaps the cigars were not as good as the advertisements claimed.

More likely transportation costs were too expensive to compete with factories producing a similar product on the Coast. Kamloops simply did not have sufficient population to support the industry on its own.

The first sign of trouble was in August of 1917 when the company sold the older building, which it had leased to the Model Bakery, for \$5,000. S.J. Wilson was purchaser of the building and the bakery business.

The second sign of trouble was a long poem appearing in the paper entitled "In Old Quebec." A couple of verses carry the main message.

"If men in Kamloops will but try

To give home goods the show

We might keep here an industry

Yes, even make it grow.

"If we don't get your best support,

Cigar men in Kamloops Will soon be memories of the past,

Be down in the Pea Soups.

"They'll have to travel eastward

To get a job by Hec.

To make cigars for Kamloops folks

Way back in old Quebec."

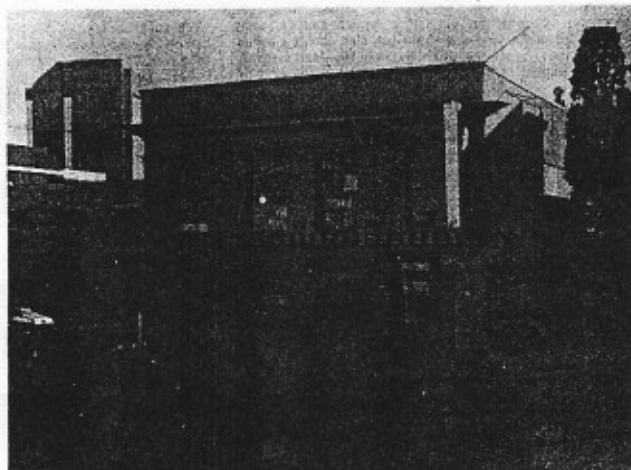
A year later the Western Cigar Company was still limping along with three new brands, "Master Duke," "Terminus," and "Kamloops Club." After that we hear no more of cigar manufacturing in Kamloops though the date of the demise of the company is uncertain.

The Model Bakery on the corner of 1st Avenue and Seymour Street continued for many years. In 1925 the Fuoco brothers bought the business from S.J. Wilson. In 1950 Santy Fuoco sold out to McGavin's Bakery and he remained as manager of their Kamloops branch.

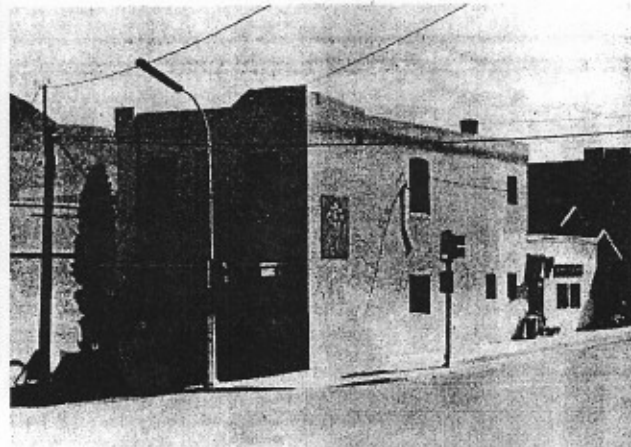
In recent years both buildings have gone through numerous incarnations but beneath the plaster are two fairly nice brick buildings of early Kamloops.

Cigar venture goes up in smoke

But two early brick buildings remain



NEW PREMISES. This old building at 293-1st Ave. was built in 1913 as the new premises for the Western Cigar Manufacturing Company.



STILL STANDING. Both old cigar factories are still standing. This picture shows the older of the two as Quality Books in 1977. The low addition at the back was added by the Model Bakery in 1927. It was demolished after the fire in 1979.

Images of THE PAST

John STEWART

KAMLOOPS MUSEUM



ORIGINAL BUILDING. The original cigar factory of the Inland Cigar Company was built in 1898. For many years it was the Model Bakery before selling out to McGavin's Bakery.