

OPINIONS

Uffish Thoughts: It was cleaning day at the old CIBC

Story & photos
by Dan Davidson

The cleaning bee at the Old CIBC building on Front Street was advertised to run from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m., on July 6, but it didn't really take as long as that. Lots of folks showed up and put in a few hours of volunteer labour, fueled by smokies and hamburgers prepared by the Dawson Firefighters.

A truck and large trailer were on hand to carry loads of junk away as it was shoved out the door. One full load was just metal scrap.

The place has been accumulating garbage since the bank sold it in 1989. Most of the junk was on the ground floor, though there was a period of time when the second floor was used for summer housing. July and August 1989 issues of the Klondike Sun (which everyone seemed to think I should take charge of) show that some literate folks lived there the summer after the paper was launched.

Mattresses, box springs, pillows, a coffee pot and assorted other domestic items speak to people having lived up there until the rear and side stairways were finally removed a few years later, making access difficult, if not impossible.

The level of cheerful participation in this cleaning exercise is a testament to how

much satisfaction there is in the town that the building now stands a chance of becoming something other than a wreck. The size of the cleanup crew waxed and waned with the day, and while waiting for the big trailer to return for the next load, but it included a fair mix of Dawson's population: city office folk, business owners, interested citizens, young and old.

The price tag of \$170,000 was a bit startling last winter, but this resolution to a problem that has been festering on Front Street since 1989 when the bank moved out and sold it to a private landowner, is most welcome.

Since that time the town has declared the building a Municipal Historic Site. It already has a National Historic Sites and Monuments Board plaque, which was fastened to boulder just south of the bank in 1988. It's a bit the worse for wear, and rumour has it that Parks Canada is looking into fixing it up or replacing it. It would certainly make sense to tie the building more directly to Park's operations at the Robert Service Cabin up on Eighth Avenue.

Given the sad condition it had fallen into, that wouldn't have been nearly as desirable during the last 24 years.

The Bank of Commerce (before the merger with the

Imperial Bank of Can. In 1961), arrived in Dawson at the urging of the Dominion Government (as it was often called then) to set up banking in 1898 and the present building came into being in 1901.

As the plaque mounted on the boulder says, "this Renaissance Revival building is one of Canada's finest surviving structures clad in decorative pressed metal." The metal is shaped and painted to look like the stone buildings that the style imitates.

There aren't very many of these buildings left in Canada – and Dawson has two of them, the other one being the Masonic Lodge four blocks up Queen Street. It started out as a Carnegie Library and is in much better shape due to the efforts of the Masons.

The town is still seeking funds to work on the building and bring it back to life. Priorities would be work on the roof, fixing a few holes where the weather gets in, replacing window, and then putting proper shutters on them for the winter. Much of the initial work will simply be about making the place look less like a wreck, but somewhere down the road – it may take a while – there may be some viable business operating out of the this heritage building. A bank would be nice. Are you listening, CIBC?



It looked worse than this at the very beginning, but this is still pretty bad.

Just a few hours later, the first floor junk was all gone.

The second floor took a while longer.



We want to hear from you!

The Klondike Sun is produced bi-monthly. It is published by The Literary Society of the Klondike, a non-profit organization. Letters to the editor, submissions and reports may be edited for brevity, clarity, good taste (as defined by community standards), racism, sexism, and legal considerations. We welcome submissions from our readership. However, it should be understood that the opinions expressed herein may not always reflect those of the publishers and producers of the Klondike Sun. Submissions should be directed to The Editor, Bag 6040, Dawson City, YT, Y0B 1G0, e-mailed to uffish20@hotmail.com, directly to the paper at klondikesun@northwestel.net or dropped off in the drop-box at our office in the Waterfront Building, 1085 Front Street. They should be signed and preferably typed (double-spaced), or saved on a digital file. If you can give a phone number at which you can be reached, it would be helpful. Unsigned letters will not be printed. "Name withheld by request" is acceptable and will be printed, providing the writer identifies themselves to the Sun editorial staff. A Publishing Policy exists for more details.



NEXT ISSUE: AUGUST 7
Deadline for submissions:
Friday, August 2 at noon

For more information:
Email: klondikesun@northwestel.net
Telephone: (867) 993-6318
Fax: (867) 993-6625

THE KLONDIKE SUN

BAG 6040 · DAWSON CITY, YUKON · Y0B 1G0

Office Hours: Mon-Fri, 11 A.M. to 3 P.M.

Tel: (867)-993-6318

Fax: (867)-993-6625

E-mail: klondikesun@northwestel.net

PRINTED BY THE YUKON NEWS
IN WHITEHORSE, YT

Societies Registration # 34600-20
GST # 12531 0581 RT

PUBLISHED BY THE LITERARY SOCIETY OF THE KLONDIKE:

President: Dan Davidson

Vice-President: Florian Boulais

Secretary/Treasurer: Helen Bowie

Board of Directors: Palma Berger,
Aubyn O'Grady, Evan Rensch

Editor/Head Writer: Dan Davidson

Office Manager: Alyssa Friesen

Staff Reporter: Lisa McKenna

Student Intern: Samantha Elmsley

Subscriptions/Distribution:
Diverse hands (See volunteer list)

Bookkeeping: Karen McIntyre

Contributors:

Garry and Sylvie Gammie, Josee Bonhomme, Sally Derry, Al Sider, Mike Roache, Chad Carpenter, Peter Marinacci and others as noted.

We acknowledge the financial support of the Government of Canada through the Canada Periodical Fund (CPF) for our publishing activities.

Canada