

STANLEY/LIGHTNING HOTEL: STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE



Photos 1 south view, 2 northwest view & 3 interior living room taken October 4, 2016 Roger Boychuk

Historic photo taken 1962 by Allen Sharpe More photos available on request

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Description:

The Lightning Hotel is an 1870s style road house, built with “Butt and Pass” log construction. The historic place includes the building and its lot. It is located in the old gold mining community of Stanley, 2km off Highway 26, the Barkerville Hwy, 70 km East of Quesnel.

Heritage Value:

The Lightning Hotel, also known as the Stanley Hotel, has historic and aesthetic value for its connection to the gold rush era and its road-house style design.

The building has historic value for its connection to the Cariboo Gold Rush and Cariboo Waggon Road. The history of the Lightning Hotel goes back to the original Cariboo Gold Rush when in 1873, the first proprietor William Houseman, known as the Duke of York, renamed his Yorkville Saloon “The Lightning Hotel”. It was the last building standing in what was the gold rush town of Stanley. The present Lightning Hotel dates back to the era of stage coach service (pre-automobile) and is the last remaining building from the La Fontaine/Eleven of England Mine. It is also valued for its location on the original Cariboo Waggon Road.

The Lightning Hotel has aesthetic value for its road-house style design and ‘butt and pass’ log construction. The road-house style design is significant for being reminiscent of the Cariboo Waggon Road and gold rush era. It is also valued for being built with logs squared on three sides as it is the only known building in the area that was built with logs milled in this fashion.

Character-Defining Elements:

- "Butt and Pass" log construction, which is entirely pinned together with wood dowels
- logs squared on three sides
- Road-house style of structure complete with "coach door", above front door.
- Original interior wall cladding
- Original stair case
- Much of the original flooring

EXTRA INFORMATION:

Location:

- 53° 2' 22.42" N, 121° 43' 35.26" W
- C.D.L. #12634

History:

- Because of its longevity, much has been written about the Lightning Hotel from its arrival at its current site in 1873 to present. The present building sits on site of the earlier "sister building".
- The original building was brought down from the town of Richfield after the great fire that destroyed most of the town. The building was saved by a bucket brigade. The building was then moved on skids, from Richfield to Van Winkle.
- Van Winkle, the first establishment on the Lightning Creek, mushroomed into being in 1861 and flourished until 1870, when it was overshadowed by the new mining community of Stanley, located 1 1/2 miles (2km) downstream. At this time several hotels and buildings were moved from Van Winkle to Stanley and "The Yorkville Saloon & Hotel", owned by William Houseman, a flamboyant, local, character, also known as "The Duke of York" was one of them. Houseman renamed his Saloon the "Lightning Hotel".
- Stanley was a very active town site, and in the summer of 1905, there were more people in Stanley than in Barkerville. Through the years this building was sold numerous times and in the early 1900's Len Ford sold it to J.F. (Jimmy) Williams who operated it until March of 1923 when it burned down. There is some speculation that when the original Hotel burned down in 1923 it was rebuilt on its original site using buildings purchased by Jimmy Williams from the defunct La Fontaine Mine.
- The Hotel had many owners over the years from William Ellis, John Lowe, William Morgan, Len Ford and also super chef and confectioner Hannah Williams who owned it until 1947, at the time of her death.
- During the early 1900s an additional wing (which was the mirror image of the original structure) was built doubling the size of the building. The addition had all the hallmarks of a building built in the 1920s lending to the further confusion of the date of the original building. The 1920s addition disappeared sometime between 1970 and 1990 leaving the current structure all that remains of the Lightning Hotel. The current construction bears all the 'traits' of a building of the late 19th Century. In fact, hotels of the 1800s were no larger than the building currently standing. In addition, a building such as the one that stands today would never have been found in a mining camp.
- It was purchased by prominent Vancouver Mining Executive Mr. Jack LaFleur and his wife Nita who opened it in 1967 for the Centennial year. After that, the building was closed and slowly fell into a state of disrepair with the second half of the building (built in the early 1900s) disappearing completely.
- In 1996, Jack and Nita LaFleur's son, Mark LaFleur and his business partner Lawrence Adams took on the job of restoring the property by giving it a new foundation and securing it structurally. The work was done by Mr. Howard Berlin.
- Karen Olsen, the present owner, continues the restoration process to this day.