

The Royal Hotel
126 South Railway St. S.E.

Pt. lot 18, all 19 & 20 Plan 1491
Date of construction: Building 1, 1904; Building 2, 1908

Early Hotel History of Medicine Hat

Prior to 1883, Medicine Hat was just a prairie landscape with a river. Its only human occupants were nomadic Plains Indians. This was to change when in 1883 the Canadian Pacific Railway came through and at the same time the NWMP set up barracks. Almost immediately the village had 200 occupants. Those who came to work on the railway and the railway bridge needed temporary residency and the first hotel to be established was the Lansdowne. By 1884, there were 4 hotels, the Brunswick, Burnside, the Lansdowne, and the American Hotel. By 1887, to serve the needs of CPR employees, the original Cosmopolitan Hotel had been established on South Railway street and of the earlier hotels, only the Brunswick remained. A year later only two hotels existed, the American Hotel, next door to the Hargrave Sissons block and the original Cosmopolitan, at that time located on the corner of South Railway and Toronto (3rd Street). These two hotels were joined by the Assiniboia Hotel on Toronto St., built by H.H. Ross in 1899. In 1904, the town of 1200 was large enough to support a fourth hotel when the Royal Hotel was built.

Building 1 - 1904

On March 17, 1904, the Medicine Hat News reported that contractor M. Sackrider was to build a new hotel owned by restaurateur/business man Quon Koy. Known as the Royal Hotel, the building was to be a frame 2-storey building 26' x 36'. The ground floor was to feature a parlour, bar room, office and 4-5 bedrooms. At the rear was to be a kitchen, pantry and sample rooms. The upper floor of the building was to house 15 bedrooms. Quon Koy was to be in charge of the kitchen department. The proprietor of the hotel department was James L. Brown. Work began on the Royal Hotel in May and it was expected the hotel would be open for business July 1, 1904.

Less than a year after the Royal was built, Quon Koy sold the building, at a cost of \$10,000 to John Howson. Born in Ontario, John Howson came to Medicine Hat in 1902 from Regina where he and his brother operated a livery and a liquor store. Howson also owned the American Hotel and was to later establish a liquor store in the 200 block of S. Railway which was destroyed by fire in 1912. Howson also served as alderman in 1911 and part of 1912.



1912 Alderman
John E. Howson
0055.0070

Building 2 - 1908

On August 22, 1907, the Medicine Hat News reported that John Howson had plans to build an addition to the Royal.

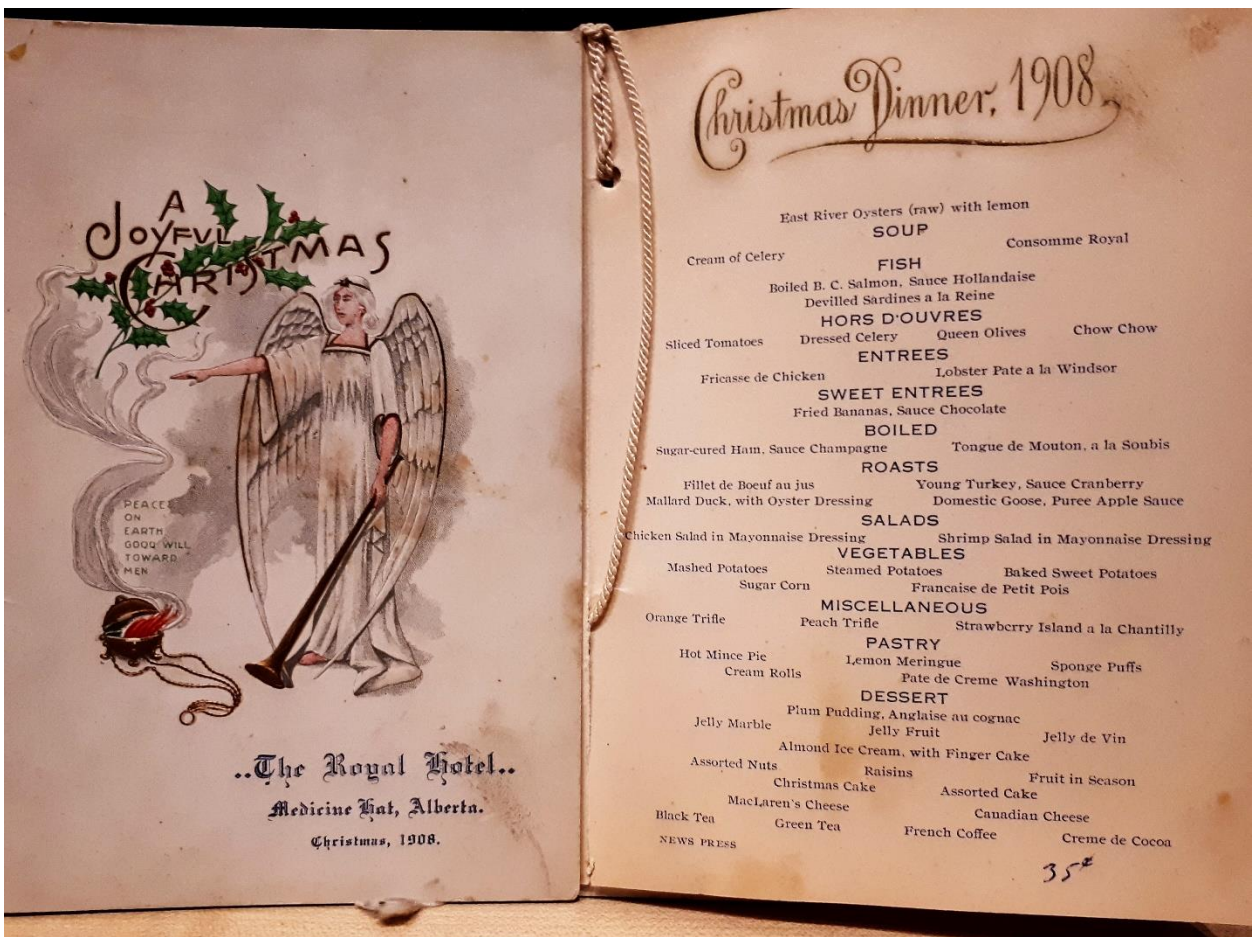
Architect William T. William had drawn up the plans for the addition which was to be a brick two-storey structure with a high-veranda across the front. Master mason George Worthy was hired as the bricklayer, Charles Taylor, carpenter. The new annex, at a cost of \$20,000 was to be 26' x 130' with a full basement.

It boasted a bar as one of the largest in Alberta. There were 29 additional bedrooms with lavatories located on each floor.



The Royal Hotel in 1908.
Original building is frame.
The brick addition is to the immediate left.
There are decorations promoting the July 2, 1908 Stampede.
0329.0054

In the new annex's first year of operation, Christmas dinner could be purchased at a cost of \$.35.



In 1910, Howson purchased a lot next to the Royal Hotel with the idea of further expansion. However, in the same year Howson sold the Royal Hotel property and the lot to Robert J. Rice.

The brick addition only 1912

Far right
0133.0021



In 1934, hotelier George Cantalini purchased the Royal Hotel. Cantalini had previously bought the Corona Hotel in 1927, and the old Assiniboia Hotel in 1931. He later purchased the Huckvale block and converted it to a hotel which he named the Assiniboia after the original Assiniboia Hotel burned down in 1944. In the same year, he purchased the Cosmopolitan Hotel. The Royal Hotel was part of the Cantalini chain of hotels for many years.

August 1958 advertisement AGT phonebook

After many alterations, the Royal Hotel bears little resemblance to the original buildings.

The Royal Hotel, Sep. 1, 2018



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*Heritage Resources Committee
Prepared by Sally Sehn, July 26, 2018
Sources: Esplanade Archives, MH News*