

J.B. Fletcher Store – Statement of Significance

3602 Sutton Street, Ainsworth BC

Description of Historic Place

The J.B. Fletcher store building is a late 19th Century single-storey wood-frame mercantile structure with an above ground stone-walled basement, built into a slope. The J.B. Fletcher name is displayed on a prominent parapet on the highway side of the building, which is located at the north west corner of Sutton Street and Highway 31, on the shores of Kootenay Lake in Ainsworth, BC.

Heritage Values of Historic Place

Built in 1896, the J.B. Fletcher store is valued as one of the last surviving buildings from the original townsite of Ainsworth, established in the 1880s and considered the oldest mining settlement in the West Kootenays. With silver mines operating in the surrounding hills starting in the late 1880s, and the construction of a wharf on Kootenay Lake in the 1890s, Ainsworth became the commercial and social heart of this remote and isolated area with the store playing a crucial role in supplying the emerging community. The J.B. Fletcher store building is significant for its long-term, continuous use as



a general store for 82 years from 1891 until 1973 and as the only remaining piece of the commercial infrastructure of the Victorian-era townsite today.

Positioned on what is arguably the most prominently visible location in Ainsworth, visible from the town, the lake and the highway - and for this reason one of the most photographically documented buildings in Ainsworth over the decades, the store building is valued both as a symbol of Ainsworth and as well as a regional historic landmark on the road from Nelson to Kaslo.

Social and cultural value are found in the building's early association with prominent West Kootenay merchant and businessman Henry Giegerich and latterly in its long connection with the Fletcher family. With the erection of the pier on the lake, Ainsworth became an important supply point for the area's mining camps, prompting Henry Giegerich (1860-1940) from Montana to open a series of general mercantile stores in the West Kootenay starting with the original Ainsworth store in 1891. The current store building, rebuilt by Giegerich right after the 1896 fire, has heritage and cultural value as one of the last tangible links to Giegerich's regional retail operation. Further social value is found with the building's long association with storeowner John Bradley Fletcher (1884-1973) aka Jack or 'Pop', after whom the historic place is named. J. B. Fletcher managed the store for Giegerich from 1912 to 1929, and then owned and operated, what was for many decades the only store in Ainsworth, until his death in 1973.

Social and cultural value are also found in the J.B. Fletcher store's prominent location and historic function in the village as an informal community centre with the porch serving as a stage for important community events and a meeting point for the town. Further value is found with the building's current role as an informal museum and heritage attraction since its restoration in the mid-1980s and stewardship by the J. B. Fletcher Restoration Society since 1983. Located on Ainsworth's most important intersection leading into the town - the building's current use as a heritage attraction provides a focal point for the community and for visitors.

Aesthetically, the former general store is valued as a monument to the general stores which sat at the centre of so many small, rural communities in BC and for its expression of the boomtown architectural style which was popularized in Western Canada at the turn of the 20th century. The rectangular plan, the expansive, undivided interior store space, the false front parapet and the large storefront windows and its wood cladding are all features representative of the style.

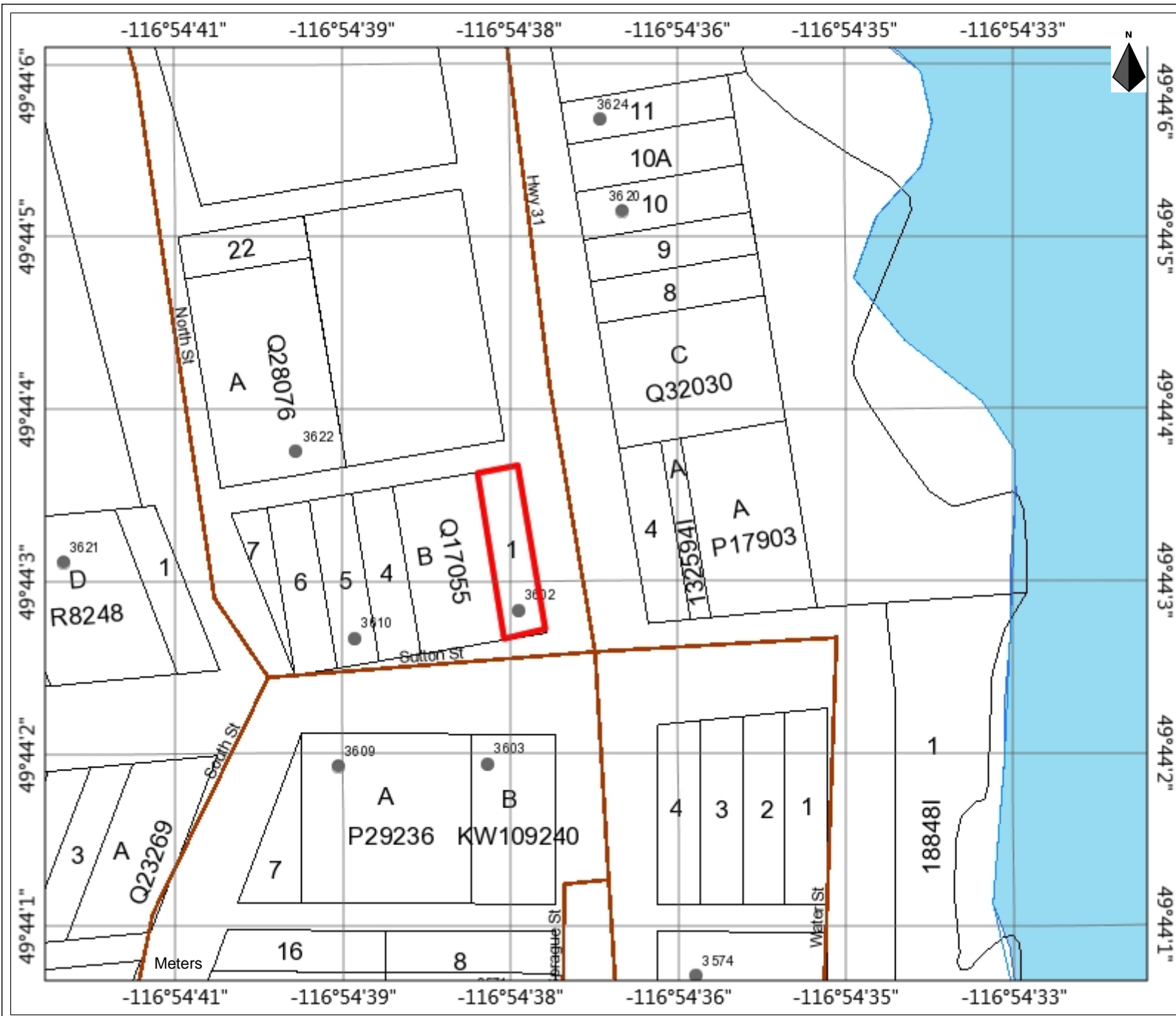
Character-Defining Elements

The character-defining elements of the J.B. Fletcher Store include:

- original location on prominent intersection at Ainsworth entrance and close to lake
- its commercial form, scale, massing and details as expressed in its single storey height, above ground stone basement and flat roof with:
- prominent parapet of horizontal channel siding with four decorative brackets supporting a plain cornice with frieze board and trim finished with two large corbels
- sign board with frame with vertical channel siding and a hand-lettered J.B. Fletcher sign
- symmetrically designed store front with centrally placed recessed double door entrance flanked by large four light display windows sitting on a panelled stallriser (bulkhead)
- wood siding, trim boards, brackets and decorative mouldings on storefront
- wood sash glazed storefront assembly with transom windows
- stone-wall foundation with arched door opening at the southeast corner
- attached freight shed at the rear with gable roof

Interior elements (with accession numbers if accessioned):

- undivided open store space
- tongue and groove clad ceiling
- built-in wood shelving with crown moulding covering the entire length of the interior wall planes including a portion of the rear wall.
- 3 gas lamp pendants
- 2 string holder and cones
- clearly defined original office space at the rear
- 5 wood, free-standing counters (1983.1.6 - 10)
- 6 counter-top glazed display cabinets:
 - Toronto Show Case Co. (1983.1.1-1)
 - Butler Brothers (1983.1.1-2)
 - (1983.1.1-3)
 - Portland Showcase Works (1983.1.1-4)
 - A.N. Russell and Sons (1983.1.1-5A)
 - (1983.1.1-5A)
- 2 paper dispensers (1983.1.11 & 12)
- cash register - National Cash 1898 (1983.1.13)
- Stimpson Computing Scale 1903 (1983.1.14)
- cheese cutter and cover (1983.1.15 & 20)
- Lane Brothers Swift Coffee Mill (1983.1.16)
- collapsable tiered metal and wood display stand (1983.1.22)
- bill collector desk (1983.1.26)
- Cincinnati Safe and Lock Co. safe (1983.1.41)



J.B. Fletcher General Store

Legend

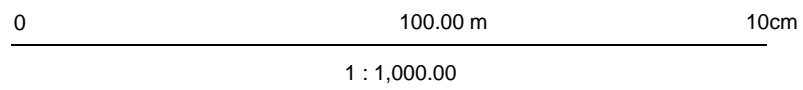
- Civic Address
- Address Range
- Streams (Large Scale)
- Cadastre
- Lakes (Mid Scale)

Notes

Map Details



202 Lakeside Drive
Nelson, BC
1-800-268-7325
<http://www.rdck.ca>



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