

Village of Cumberland



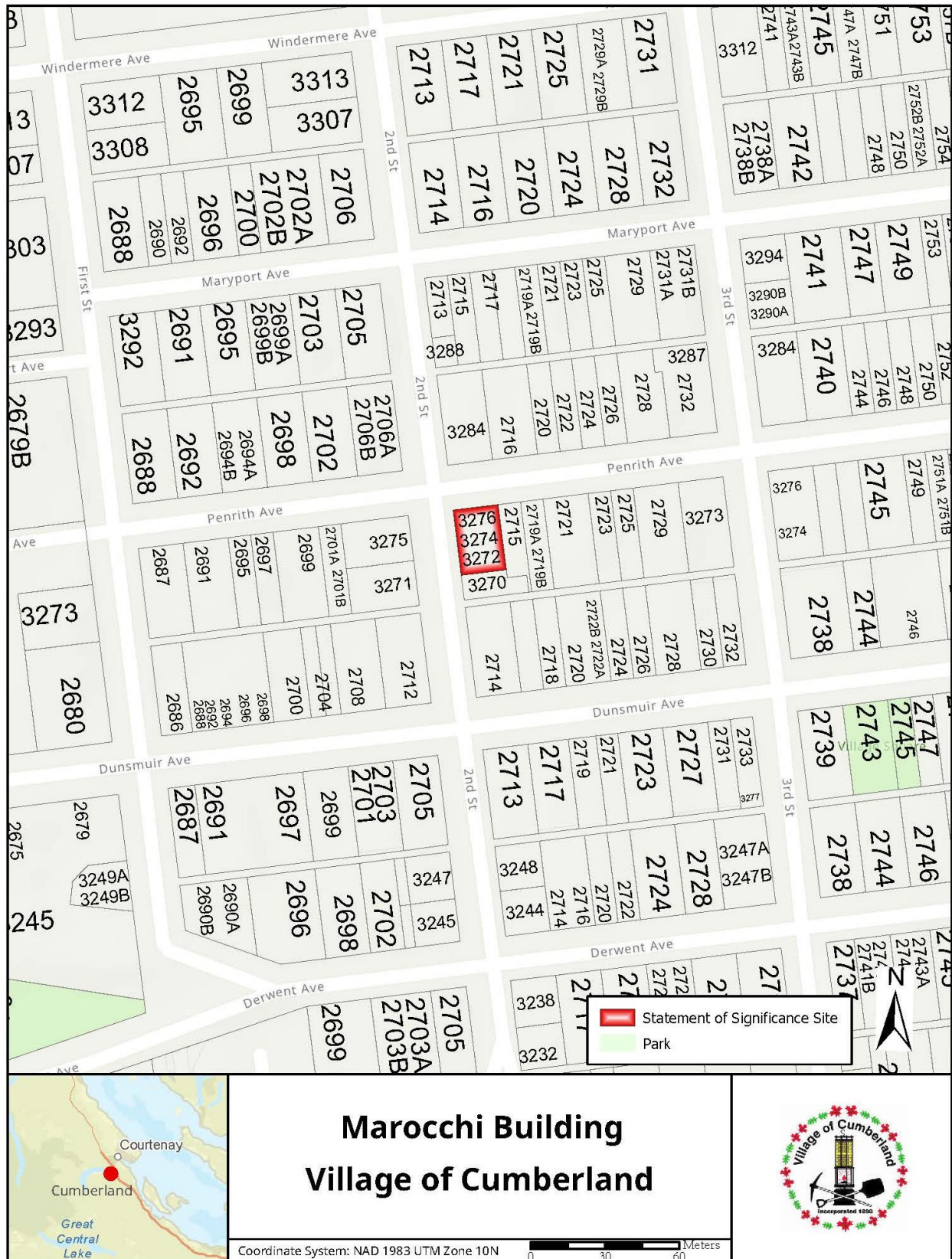
Statement of Significance

Marocchi Building

3276 Second Street, Cumberland, BC ~1912



Prepared by Eric Pattison, Cumberland Heritage Committee Member :October 2024



Description

3276 Second Street is situated on the east side of the street at the corner of Penrith Avenue one block north of Dunsmuir Avenue, Cumberland's main street. The two-storey, wood-framed and clad building has a nominally flat roof and is sited directly at the north and west property lines. Abutting to the south is a contemporary two-storey building. Original main floor commercial and upper floor residential uses continue. Restoration work has reconstructed historic exterior elements removed during previous renovations.

Heritage Values

Built in 1912 by Giovanni "John" Marocchi (1866-1921), wife Rosa (1871-1938), the building has historic values in its association with Italian immigration to Cumberland transitioning from working in area coal mines to starting local businesses; and to the Marocchi extended family's long history in the community.

The building has cultural values in its association with late-19th century Italian immigration to British Columbia. The 1891 census lists Italians as the fourth largest demographic in Cumberland after English, Scottish and Chinese.

The building has social values with its association with the extensive Marocchi family—and the greater Cumberland Italian community—in their extensive participation in, and support of, the social fabric of the village.

The building has economic values as an early and substantial purpose-built grocery, and its association with other Marocchi enterprises. Employees, local taxes, suppliers, social clubs, trades and service providers all benefited economically from Marocchi family business activity.

The building has aesthetic values as a frontier commercial building affordably constructed with local materials. There is no record of an architect or construction drawings. Of note, the Marocchi store in Courtenay had the same façade character and details—likely also the same colours—albeit modified to suit that property.

The building has scientific and environmental values for its traditional construction techniques, locally-sourced, low energy-intensive materials—their quality, durability and reparability—and for the embodied energy (the total energy expended over the building's 112 years lifecycle) held in the building.

Character-Defining Elements

- Location on Second Street in the historic commercial area of Cumberland.
- Continuous original uses of retail commercial at grade with residential accommodation above.
- Siting at the west and north property lines facing Second Street and flanking Penrith Avenue.
- Collection of early 20th century commercial vernacular design features:
 - Simple overall form and massing, with no added bays, appurtenances or rooftop features;
 - Traditional layout, scale and mullion configuration of storefront windows (note original windows not extant);

- Reconstructed glazed wood entry door with side and transom lites recessed into the building;;
- Reconstructed wood residential entry door recessed into Second Street facade.
- Triangular storefront wood cornice with decorative wood end caps;
- Original Second Street roof parapet with wood trims and diagonal Tongue & Groove siding panels (note the original parapet cornice, the east/west stepped upper parapet and the high Penrith Avenue parapet—to accommodate the roof slope—are not extant; ref.C100-065);
- Reconstructed horizontal wood claddings including wide and narrow (facing Second Street) ‘drop’ siding (note all original cladding was narrow clapboard, or lapped, siding);
- Traditional layout, scale and 1/over/1 appearance of original windows on the upper floor (note original windows not extant);
- Collection of reconstructed wide, flat-stock, wood trims (note upper floor window head cap and sloped sill not extant), and;
- Period appropriate paint colour scheme with distinctive field, trim, feature, sash and door colours.

Appendix A – History Notes

In 1884 the Marocchi brothers Giovanni “John” and brother Luigi “Louis” (1862-1902) left the economically depressed Trivoli region of Austria—later the Trentino region of Italy—to work in the nascent British Columbia coal mines.

By 1890 the brothers were operating a bakery, likely in Union; the mining camp predating Cumberland. Probably this first bakery was a side business as they worked in the mines.

The 1895 Williams Directory for Union--the earliest directory to list them—notes John and Louis as ‘miners’. The 1898 lists them as ‘bakers’.

Cumberland village was not platted until 1894/95. This is when the Marocchi brothers built their bakery on Second Street.

The business quickly expanded to include a bottling works and alcohol sales. A family house had been built by carpenter Tom Ripley in the centre of the property.

Other Marocchi family members arrived from Italy in the early 20th century. Rudolph in 1907 and Victor in 1911. Both are listed in directories as ‘miners’. In the 1920s Primo and Santina Marocchi arrived from Italy.

In 1912 Marocchi businesses further expanded with the construction of the subject grocery store—by carpenter Reginald “Ronnie” Fitzgerald on the north portion of the property along Penrith Avenue.

A similar store and bakery was built in Courtenay in 1913. It burned down in 1916 and was not rebuilt.

The largest baker in the region, Marocchi bread was delivered throughout the Comox Valley and in large quantities to visiting steamships.

In 1915 during WWI later Italian immigrants from Austrian provinces that had not yet becoming naturalized citizens were interred and otherwise restricted as enemy aliens. This group included several Cumberland miners and a Vittorio “Victor” Marocchi. All were released in 1916 when Italy became a war ally and their Italian ethnicity was confirmed.

By 1933 Louis’ son John Louis Marocchi Jr. (1896-1986) and wife Elsie (1906-1989)—other son Silvio (b.1891) having died in 1927—were running the businesses when the Cumberland fire destroyed the bakery, bottling works and the family home. The grocery store survived.

The bakery was rebuilt around the original brick ovens. In 1938 it was subsequently sold to Albert Brooker and renamed.

John and Elsie’s son Ray (b. 1925) and wife Winnifred (1924-2012) worked at the store for many decades and sold it in 1974 to Reginald Grahame.

Marocchi businesses operated for approximately 84 years in Cumberland.

Appendix B – Historic Photographs

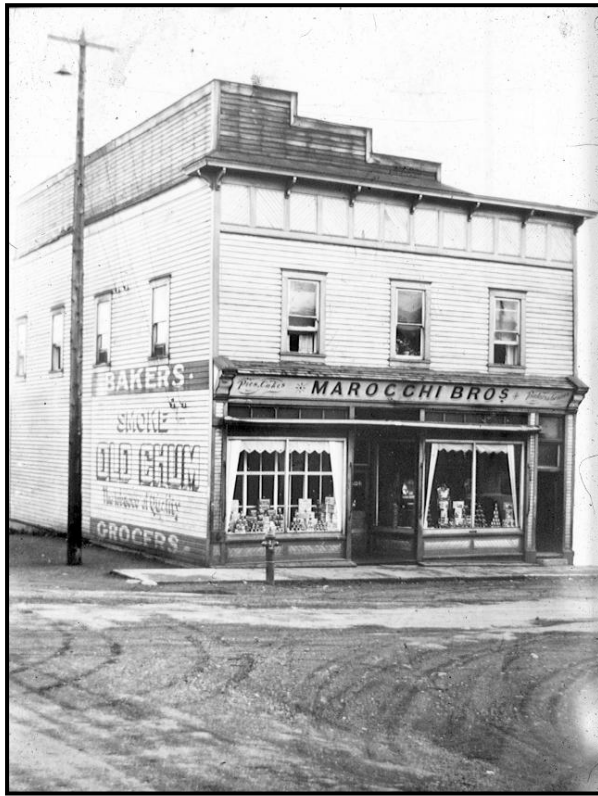


Photo 1: Looking SE. CMA C030-099

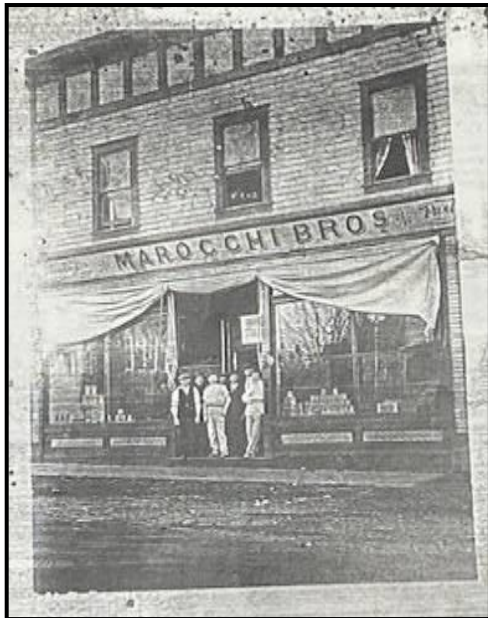


Photo 5: After the 1933 fire. Marocchi bldg. in background. CMA C100-065 (detail)



Photo 2: Marocchi Store, Courtenay.
ref. R. Masters



Photo 3: 1894 (?) Marocchi Bakery &
Bottling Works. CMA C030-013



Photo 4: CMA 'address' files (Ray &
Winnifred)

Appendix C – Current Photographs



From left:
- 1912 Marocchi Bldg.
- Infill bldg.
- 1933 rebuilt bakery bldg.





Research Resources

Barr, Jennifer Nell. Cumberland Heritage: A Selected History of People, Buildings, Institutions & Sites, 1888-1950. Village of Cumberland, 1997.

Bowen, Lynne. Transcript of interview with John Louis Marocchi, Mary Conti and others, 1984. Research for "Three Dollar Dreams", Oolichan Books, 1987. BC Archives, Ref: AAAB7614

Comox Valley Record, February 12, 2012. Winnifred Marocchi Obituary.

Comox Valley Record, May 21, 2014. Reginald Ian Grahame Obituary.

Courtenay Museum:

- Fire Insurance Map, Cumberland 1921:
- Masters, Ruth. Comox Valley Memories, 1988-91. (scrapbook with newspaper clippings)

Cumberland Museum and Archives:

- Building address files (3270/76 Second Street);
- Historic photograph collection.

Mandres, Marinel. Ich bin Italiano: The Internment of Trentini, Tirolesi, and Triestini in Canada during the First World War. Italian Canadiana, 36(1) Spring 2022, pgs. 169–199. <https://doi.org/10.33137/ic.v36i1.39377>

Official Community Plan. Village of Cumberland, 2011.