

The Coronation Block
238-246 Queen Street East
Sault Ste. Marie

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An Architectural and Historical Report
Prepared by D. Perry Short & Willie Eisenbichler

for

The Local Architectural Conservation Advisory Committee (LACAC)
of the Sault Ste. Marie Historic Sites Board
Prepared October, 1982

*This is a copy of the original document, originals included in the Municipal Heritage Committee Binder –
Titled: “The Coronation Block”

The CORONATION BLOCK (now Oraziotti Furniture) completed shortly after the Hussey Block, is similarly divided into two wider outer bays with a narrower centre bay and though similar in treatment displays some differences.

Upper floor windows are the same height as the adjacent block but are wider—only one per bay—and the third floor windows have oval arches. The parapet and cornice treatment is identical with only the inscription recess differing in detail and echoing the curve of the windows.

The street façade of both buildings is of course, rough-dressed sandstone masonry to all areas now visible. If "White Stone from the Laird Quarry" was used anywhere (as reported in the paper at the time) it must have been at the street level for none has survived the subsequent face lifts.

The masonry work is similar to that of the (now) Abitibi buildings, as one might expect with stone from the same source (excavation of the Locks) and in all likelihood laid by some of the same masons who might, by then, have settled in the town.

Side walls were of random rough-dressed sandstone and originally blank, although windows have since been inserted to convert the upper floors to apartment use.

The rear wall of both buildings is also of random stone construction with numerous arched window and door openings, now much altered. However, those on the third floor of the Coronation Block still contain their original wooden double hung and glazed transom sashes and frames, preserved no doubt by being walled over on the inside.

A large modern addition now extends the ground and second floors of the Coronation Block to the rear for the full width of the original building and numerous additions (wood stair and porch, fire escape, brick chimney, etc.) disfigure the rear of the Hussey Block.

There are also indications of an original single-storey wood structure attached to the north end of the east side of the Hussey Block.

Architectural Description

The Block comprises two separate structures, both completed in 1902. The first one, known as the "Hussey Block" was erected by a Mr. John Hussey (described in the Sault Star at the time as "the west end butcher") and its neighbour to the west, the "Coronation Block" (commemorating King Edward VII) by a Mr. I. Taillerfer who was also the General Contractor for the earlier building.

The Hussey Block has a Queen Street frontage of 40' 0" and the Coronation Block, of 30' 0". The whole 70' 0" frontage giving a scale and proportion appropriate to the three storey height. Both buildings were originally 80' 0" deep and are constructed entirely of stone.

Both buildings were designed by H. Russell Halton who conducted an architectural practice in Sault Ste. Marie from 1901 to 1904, and perhaps longer if Comstock's directory of 1909 is accurate.

The Hussey Block (now the Hub Clothing Store) is the earlier and most easterly of the two buildings. The street frontage comprises three bays, divided by pilasters. The two wider flanking bays embraced, at sidewalk level, large—and for the time and location very daring—store windows. The narrower centre bay contained doors to the two flanking stores, to two basement stores (evidently a "first" for the city) and to the second floor. This was originally designed as a lodge hall for lease to the Catholic Order of Foresters. The upper floors had, in each bay at each floor, a pair of double hung windows with glazed transom over; those on the second floor having a flat lintel; and the third floor ones having semicircular arches.

The entire façade is capped with a substantial parapet, corbelled out to line with the pilasters and embellished with blind arcading interrupted by a recessed inscription panel and surmounted by a sturdy corbelled and dentillated cornice with a cyma recta moulding at the cap.

The style of the stonework is Romanesque revival perhaps acknowledging similar contemporary commercial and industrial construction at the paper mill buildings around the Locks.

While all visible parts of both blocks are of interest in demonstrating construction methods common in the City at the turn of the century, the Queen Street façade is the aspect of the building most worthy of preservation.

The slightly projecting pilasters provide a subtle irregular rhythm (the wider bays of the narrower block are approximately the same width as the narrow bay of the wider block) which is perfectly in scale with the broad façade, and the different window shapes define the separate ownership without creating disharmony. The finely detailed parapet and cornice, which would be disproportionately heavy for either building singly, provides a totally satisfying termination to the entire facade. This part of the building displays the best stone masonry craftsmanship in the entire downtown area.

Subsequent alterations have obscured the second floor of the Coronation Block, but it seems likely that the stonework behind is substantially unchanged. Both buildings also have totally new storefronts. While it may not be possible, or even desirable, to restore the original ground floor treatment (for the function of the buildings has changed) it would be both possible and desirable to modify the façade treatment of the furniture store to reveal all of the upper part of the Coronation Block. Future window replacement might also more closely reflect the design of the original building.

The wheel comes full circle. It is even now as the reporter said in 1902: “It is such buildings as these that help to build up our town in a creditable manner and the owners are to be commended for their spirit of public enterprise.”

The Coronation and Hussey Blocks were erected in 1902. The architect for both buildings was H. Russell Halton and the general contractor was Isaie Taillefer. Mr. Ross and Mr. Campbell (probably George Ross and Alexander Campbell) did the stone work on the Hussey Block while John Culliton and William G. Anstey installed the heating and plumbing. It is very likely that Ross and Campbell as well as Culliton and Anstey also had the contracts for the Coronation Block as the same architect and general contractor were used and the two buildings were erected about the same time in the same architectural style.

The owner of the Hussey Block was John A. Hussey. He had arrived in Sault Ste. Marie in 1890 from Simcoe County and had taken a job working on the construction of the canal. Later (the date is uncertain) he established a butcher shop on Bruce Street in partnership with R. Eckert. By 1902 he had a new partner, Thomas Drury in the Hussey, Drury & Co. Wholesale and Retail Butchers, located at the corner of Queen Street and Spring Street. This business prospered. The 1903-1904 City Directory lists one head office and store of the company as well as four branches, one of which was in the new Hussey Block.⁽¹⁾

John Hussey's community involvement was extensive. He was a member and President of the Sault Ste. Marie Board of Trade and of the Rotary Club. He served as Alderman from 1902 to 1905 and from 1925 to 1927. Other organizations to which he belonged included the Knights of Columbus, the Catholic Order of Foresters, and the St. Vincent de Paul Society, of which he was President from 1913 to 1930.

The Hussey Block was "nearing completion" in September, 1902 and was assessed in 1903 at \$18,000. The first floor provided room for two stores, the chief one being a branch of the Hussey, Drury & Co. Room for two other stores in the basement with separate entrances from the street, prompted the Sault Star to report that the Hussey Block was "the first building in town to have this up-to-date arrangement."⁽²⁾ The second floor provided space for offices and rooms for rent. The use of apartments in the Hussey Block has continued to the present with the Hub Apartments. The third floor held a large lodge hall (St. James Hall), anterooms, a kitchen, club rooms, and baths.

St. James Hall was formally opened on January 12, 1903 with a "splendid send off" and quickly established itself as a leading hall in Sault Ste. Marie. Originally leased by the Catholic Order of Foresters, it was the site of many plays, banquets, dances, euchre parties, and other social and community events. It could hold a large number of people as evidenced on February 19, 1903 when 200 people sat down for a euchre party.⁽³⁾ On another occasion 400 invitations were sent out for an Irish banquet.⁽⁴⁾

In 1919 the name of the hall was changed to Hussey Hall. It continued operating by that name until 1940. The 1921 City Directory also lists the Finnish Hall and the Foresters Hall as being in the Hussey Block. This would indicate that either the Hussey Hall had been subdivided, or that other rooms in the block had been converted into halls. A 1979 Sault Star⁽⁵⁾ article locating the Foresters Hall on the second floor of the Hussey Block would suggest the latter theory for this hall. In 1930 the Finnish Hall moved to 126 Thompson Street leaving only the Hussey Hall and Foresters Hall until 1941 when the City Directory lists the Foresters Hall and the Native Sons of Canada Hall. The following year saw only the latter hall still in existence. 1942 also marked the last year that a hall was mentioned as operating in the Hussey Block.

The Coronation Block was completed in late 1902. This date appears on the block beside the name and the Sault Star article of September 25, 1902 mentions that Mr. Taillefer was

constructing a building on the west side of the Hussey Block, clearly the Coronation Block. However, the exact date of completion is uncertain.

The name Coronation Block is an obvious reference to the coronation of King Edward VII which took place August 9, 1902.

The first store to operate in the Coronation Block was the Sarasohn & Co. department store. It was replaced c. 1906 by the Harry Steinberg department store which did not last long, for the City Directory of 1907 lists “two vacant stores” in the Coronation Block.

In 1911 the S. Rosenstein department store (renamed the Leader Department Store in 1912) moved into the Coronation Block, bringing with it some stability for the block. In 1913 it expanded into the Hussey Block. Hussey, Drury & Co. had closed its branch there c. 1907. In 1913 the City Directory also stopped differentiating between the Coronation and Hussey Blocks in its street directory index.

In 1920 the British Clothing Company (renamed Davis Clothing and Furnishings in 1922) moved into 238 Queen (Coronation Block) and in 1922 Joseph Basest Second Hand Goods (renamed Hub Clothing store permanently in 1959 after previously appearing by that name in the City Directories of 1935 and 1941) moved into 248 Queen (Hussey Block). In 1941 Davis moved to 300-306 Queen Street and the following year Orazietti furniture moved into the Coronation Block. The Hub-Orazietti combination continues to dominate the Hussey-Coronation Blocks to the present.

In 1950 the name of the Hussey Block was changed to Hub Block in the street index of the City Directory, and to Basest Block in 1953. This name continues to the present.

Footnotes:

- (1) City Directory 1903-04. Listings for the Hussey, Drury & Co. are as follows: Head Office and store north side Queen 4 east of March, Branches located in the Hussey Block, McDougall Block, Superior Street, and Steelton.
- (2) Sault Star, September 25, 1902.
- (3) Sault Star, February 19, 1903.
- (4) Sault Star, February 19, 1903.
- (5) Sault Star, September 17, 1979.

Transcript of Article – Sault Star, Thursday, September 25, 1902 – **THE NEW HUSSEY BLOCK**

In this issue we show the Hussey Block now nearing completion, which is conceded by all who have seen it to be one of the handsomest business blocks in the town and does great credit to our local architect, Mr. H. Russell Halton. It is situated on the north side of Queen Street just west of Bruce Street and is being built for Mr. John Hussey, the west end butcher.

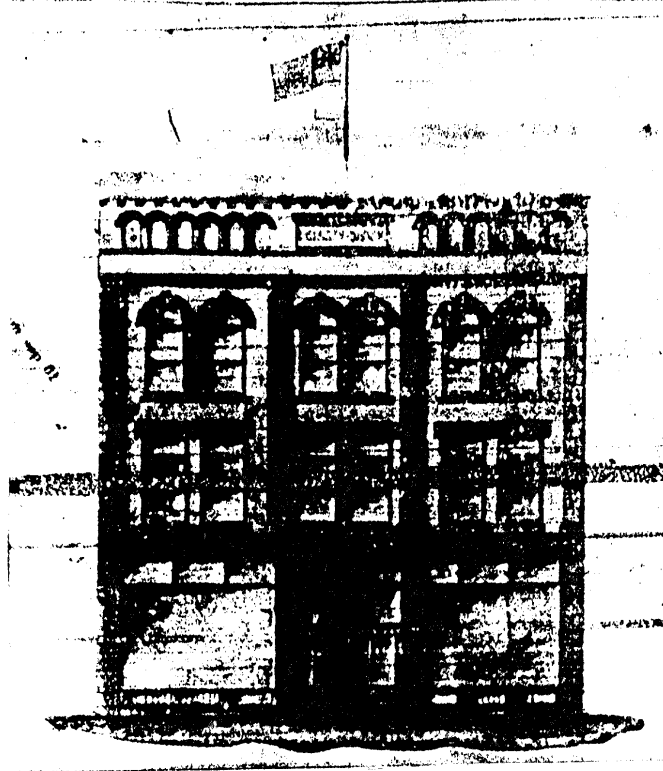
The building is 44 feet by 80 feet deep and besides the two commodious stores on the first floor it has also two stores in the basement with separate entrances from the street, the first building in town to have this up-to-date arrangement. The second floor contains eight large and well laid out offices with all modern conveniences.

The third floor has the largest lodge hall in the district, 29 feet wide by 57 feet deep and 12 feet high. It is capable of being made into a hall 77 feet long. Adjoining there are large anterooms and a kitchen. There are also convenient and spacious club rooms with baths, lavatories, etc. This flat has been leased to the Catholic Order of Foresters.

The inside finish throughout is ash with maple floors, is lighted by a special laid out system of electric wiring, and the whole heated by hot water. Special attention has been given to the plumbing work, which is all executed on the best sanitary principle. One of the special features of the building is the stone part, which is built entirely of local stone. The red limestone, which we see so much of here, being treated in an entirely new manner and gives a very pretty effect. The white stone came from the Laird quarry.

The building, when completed, will cost in the neighbourhood of \$20,000.00. Mr. I. Taillefer is the contractor for the building. Messrs. Ross and Campbell did the stone work. The Hamilton Bridge Co. provided the steel work. R. Traux & Co. supplied the interior finishing and Messrs. Culliton & Ansley have the heating and plumbing contract.

Mr. I. Taillefer is also erecting, under the direction of the same architect on the west side, a similar building, giving the block a total frontage of 71 feet six inches. It is such buildings as these that help to build up our town in a creditable manner, and the owners are to be commended for their spirit of public enterprise.

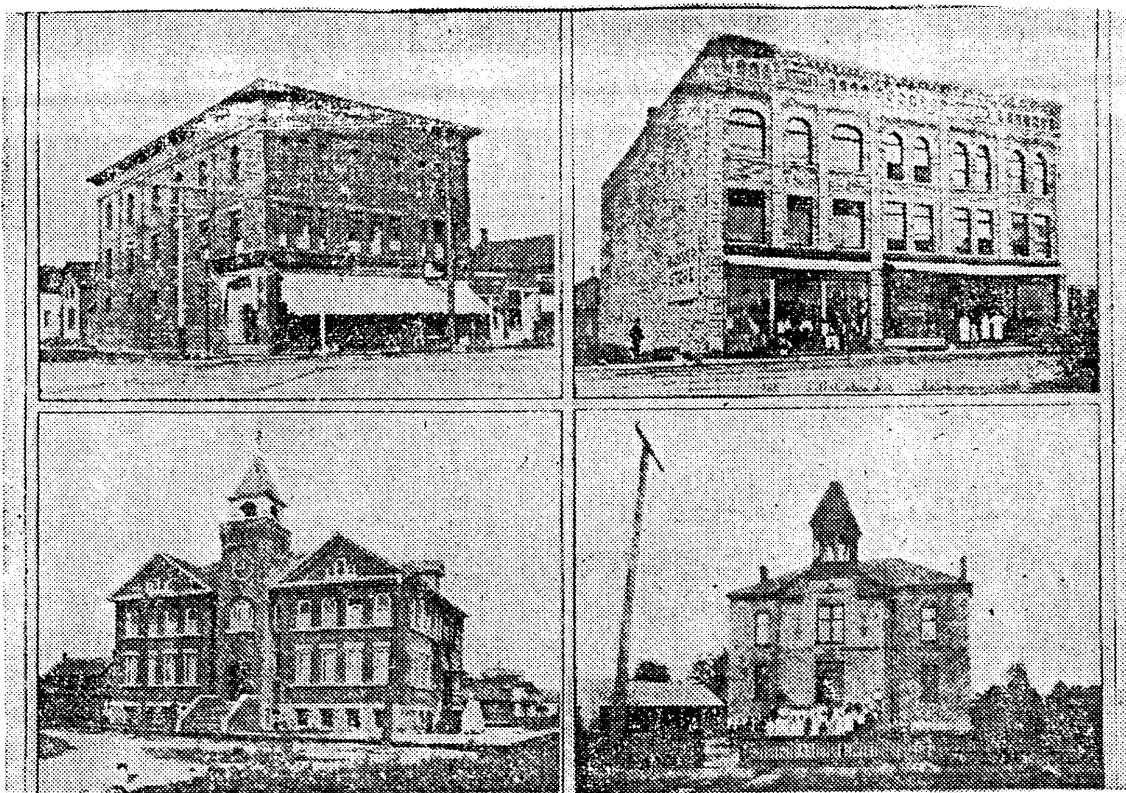


THE NEW HUSSEY BLOCK
(SAULT STAR PICTURE)

The Opening of St. James Hall

The local Court of the Catholic Order of Foresters took possession of their new quarters in the above hall in the Hussey block on Tuesday night with a splendid band of which made the highly gratifying to the membership. The hall which was very prettily and tastefully decorated was filled with a very appreciative audience. Mr. J. J. Kahoe presided and there was present with him on the platform His Lordship Bishop O'Connell, Detention, Rev. Fathers Lussier, Hamilton and Gault, of the Sault, Rev. Father Collins, of Bracebridge, Provincial Chief Robert Macdonald, of Ottawa, Provincial Organizer Hogan, of Toronto, and officers of the local court. The speeches of the distinguished visitors were very appropriate to the occasion and were listened to with great interest and pleasure by all present. During the evening musical numbers were rendered by the following artists in a manner that gained great appreciation: Miss Brennan, piano; Miss Koval, vocal; Miss Helen Cameron, violin; and Mr. James Stone, vocal. The event was a complete success in every detail and the opening event of this hall will be well remembered by those present as one of the most enjoyable treats ever given a Sault audience. At the close of the meeting the local officers of St. James' Court entertained the distinguished officials to supper at the Grandview, where appropriate speeches were made interspersed with several good songs.

SAULT STAR ARTICLE
(OCTOBER 23, 1902)



SAULT STAR OCT. 29/77.

Stores and schools

Top right, clockwise: Harris Block and Masonic Hall, Coronation and Hussey Block, Separate school and St. Ignatius school.

SAULT STAR ARTICLE ON OLD SAULT BUILDINGS
(OCTOBER 29, 1977)

238 - 246 Queen St. E.



Queen St.
Facade.



view from
West.

view from
East.



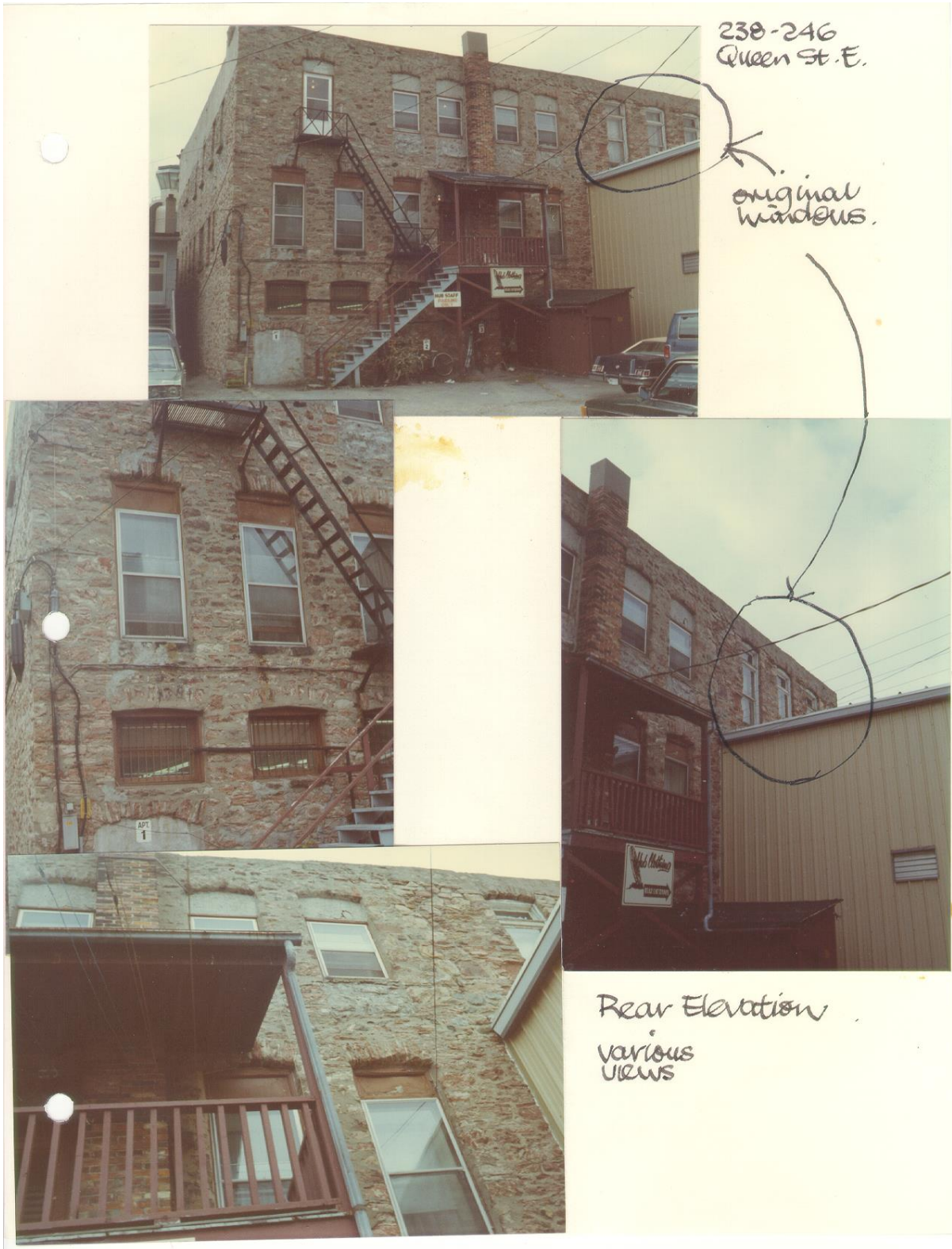
238-246 Queen St. E



East Wall.
showing new windows & parging over.

row of
original
joist seatings.
now mortared
over.





238-246
Queen St. E.

original
windows.

Rear Elevation
various
views

239 - 246 Queen St. E.



Details of
Street Facade.

