



Boas Tailor and Furrier Shop



In many ways, Skagway was one of the last Western frontier boom towns. In two year's time, Skagway's population went from one family to more than eight thousand people. Many of Skagway's buildings are stereotypical of a western boom town building: a two-story false fronted building with a small shop downstairs and the shopkeeper's residence upstairs. The history of the Boas Tailor and Furrier Shop mirrors Skagway's up-and-down, boom-and-bust frontier economy.

Building History

The first proprietor of this building was Henry Boas. Boas, a tailor and furrier, first moved to the neighboring gold rush town of Dyea in 1897, but with the collapse of that town, he moved to Skagway and purchased property on Broadway between Third and Fourth Avenues in 1899. Shortly thereafter, he erected this two-story false fronted building with the intention of attracting business.

Shortly after the store opened, Boas formed a partnership with Charles R. Winter. Boas sold out to Winter in 1902

and left Skagway for the new gold rush boom towns of Fairbanks and Iditarod.

Winter carried on with the business, advertising in the 1904 newspaper, "All Kinds of Goods at Eastern Prices, Coats, Capes, Boas, Muffs, Gloves, Robes, and Rugs of All Kinds. New Fur Mens Coats from \$7.00 to \$100.00. Genuine Seal Caps \$7.00." Winter continued with the business, but apparently business proved to be unprofitable. Winter eventually sold his building to George B. Wright, a carpenter for the White Pass and Yukon Route Railway. For the next three years (1905-1908) several businesses operated in the structure.



*Boas Tailor and Furrier Shop in original location (on left)
Third and Broadway, 1900*

False front architecture is characterized by an elaborate wall added to the front of a usually simple gable-roofed building. Compared to the front of the structure, the building's sides and back were often less substantially constructed. A look at the Boas building's roofline from the side will reveal its false front.

boomtown architecture, the first floor served as the place of business, the second floor became housing for seasonal workers. When Herman Kirmse unexpectedly died in 1912, his widow, Hazel, inherited the store. Hazel later wanted the store closer to the railroad depot and the tourists, so the building was moved to its present location (on Broadway between 2nd and 3rd) in 1926. The building was extensively remodeled at this time and continued to be used as a curio shop.

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SKAGWAY == **ALASKA**

Advertisement from Skagway Daily Alaskan, October 1, 1910

the building to the National Park Service. The National Park Service restored the structure in 1986 and the building is currently part of the park's historic property leasing program.

Today, the restored Boas Tailor and Furrier stands as a reminder of Skagway as a boom town, both in its frontier past and its modern present.

Annual lease payments help offset the costs of maintaining this and other historic buildings in the park. The compatible commercial use of this structure continues Skagway's long tradition as a bustling center of business activity.