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Henry's Alcoholic Emporium Wins Belated Respectability

Henry the Johnson Street saloon keeper is probably turning in his grave at the aura of respectability bestowed on his comfortable old house this week.

The provincial cabinet officially designated Henry's old house at 1109 Catherine Street a heritage home, preserving it forever as evidence of the area's history.

The 2,000-square foot house was built around 1895 — no one seems sure of the exact date.

One of its early owners was Henry Siebenbaum, keeper of the Palace Saloon, a joyous Johnson Street emporium. Henry and his saloon prospered during the days of the Klondike goldrush and he was able to buy the stately house at 1109 Catherine.

Dave Conway of the provincial department of municipal affairs says the house is a good example of Eastlake architecture. It is actually a low to middle income version of the city-owned Roslyn House.

The house was once called Rose Cottage, but the name seems to have been forgotten, he says.

The house is now owned by Florence and Tony Kovacevic who bought it two years ago and now run their interior design business from the ground floor.

Most of the restoration work was done before the Kovacevics moved in, but they did redecorate the interior and paint the exterior.

"I'm delighted it happened," Florence Kovacevic said of the legistlation.

"I hope it happens to hundreds and hundreds of homes."

Victoria city council applied to the provincial cabinet on May 13 to have the home designated. Official cabinet approval was granted Thursday.