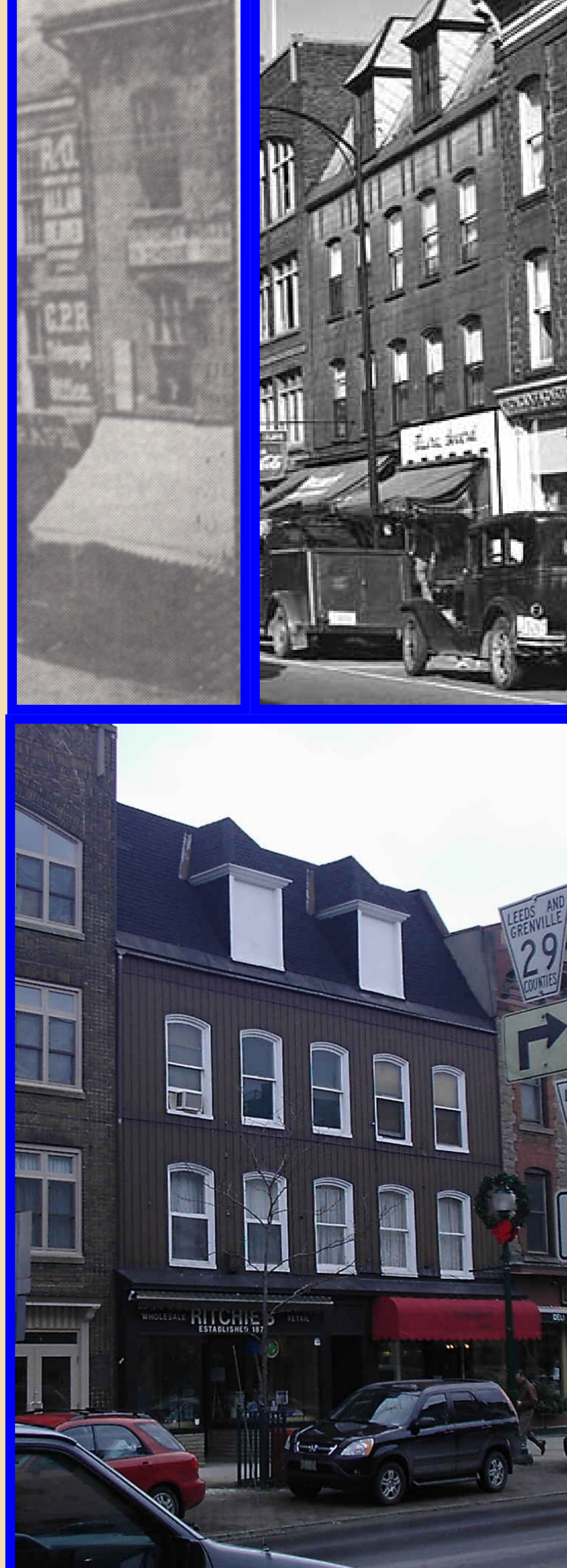




RITCHIE'S BUILDING

1820

25 - 29 King St. West



DIRECTORY LISTINGS:

- 1886/1890: Ritchie's Tobacco Store (25), F.G. Heywood, barbor shop (29)
- 1895/1900: Ritchie's Cigar Store (25), H. Whitney & Bro., jewellery (29)
- 1910/1929: Ritchie's Cigar Store (25), L. Simonds & Co., millinery (29)
- 1931: Ritchie's Cigar Store (25), vacant (29)
- 1935/1946: Ritchie's Cigar Store (25), Blanche Row, millinery (29)
- 1949/1971: Ritchie's Cigar Store (25), Laura Secord Candies (29)
- 1980/1982: Ritchie's Wholesale (25), Laura Secord Candies (29)
- 1984: Ritchie's Wholesale (25), P D Image (29)
- 1986: Ritchie's Wholesale (25), Joni Fashions (29)
- 1988: Ritchie's Wholesale (25), Brockville...Association For Community Involvement (29)
- 1990: Ritchie's Wholesale (25), Brockville...Association For Community Involvement / Conserv Thousand Islands (29)
- 2004: Ritchie's Wholesale (25), Brockville...Association For Community Involvement (29)
- 2006: Ritchie's Wholesale (25), Fotheringham Design / Brockville...Association For Community Involvement (29)
- 2009: Ritchie's Wholesale (25), Gil Gilbert's, vintage clothing, textiles & jewelry (29)
- 2012: Ritchie's Wholesale (25), Todd's Place, bikes & ski's (29)
- 2013/2015: Ritchie's Wholesale (25), Soulfire Tattoo & Studio (29)
- 2018: Ritchie's Wholesale (25), Royal Tattoo (29)

The building had fancy top trim that can be seen in the top left, and the outline just after removal in top right. Later years saw new siding put on.

Ritchie's itself harks back to the early days and has a feel both in the store and outside, the storefront. It would be nice if it stayed this way permanently, but nothing is forever.

Laura Secord Candies was beside Ritchies for almost 4 decades (c1948 - c1983) before eventually moving north into the Thousand Islands mall. This was the store's second location as Laura Secord Candy Shop had first been at 57 King St. W.

OUTSIDE INFORMATION

A hidden gem, and all the more precious, Ritchie's Smoke Shop on King Street has a myriad small and large treasures hidden within its considerable square footage 140 feet (42.7 meters) deep!

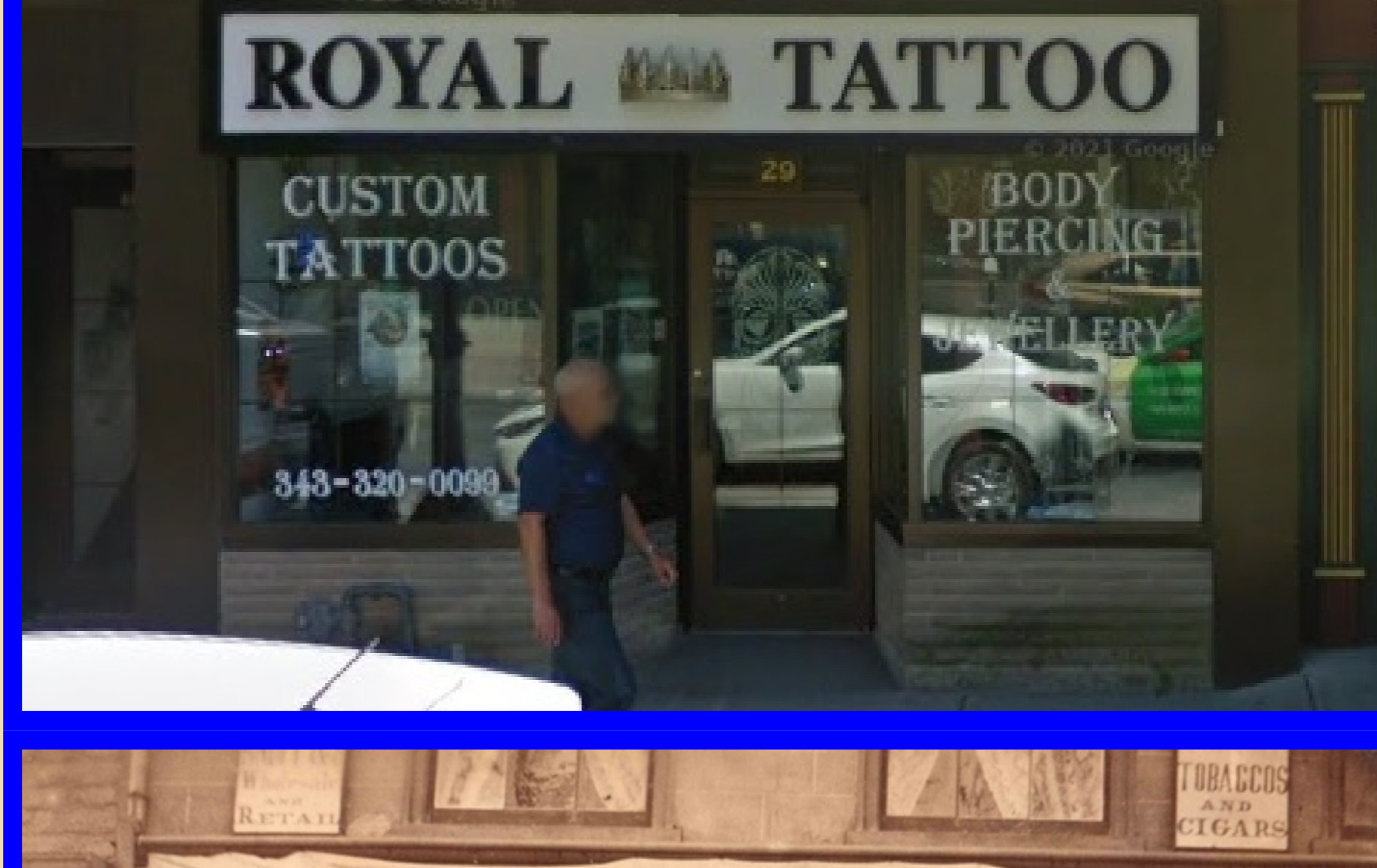
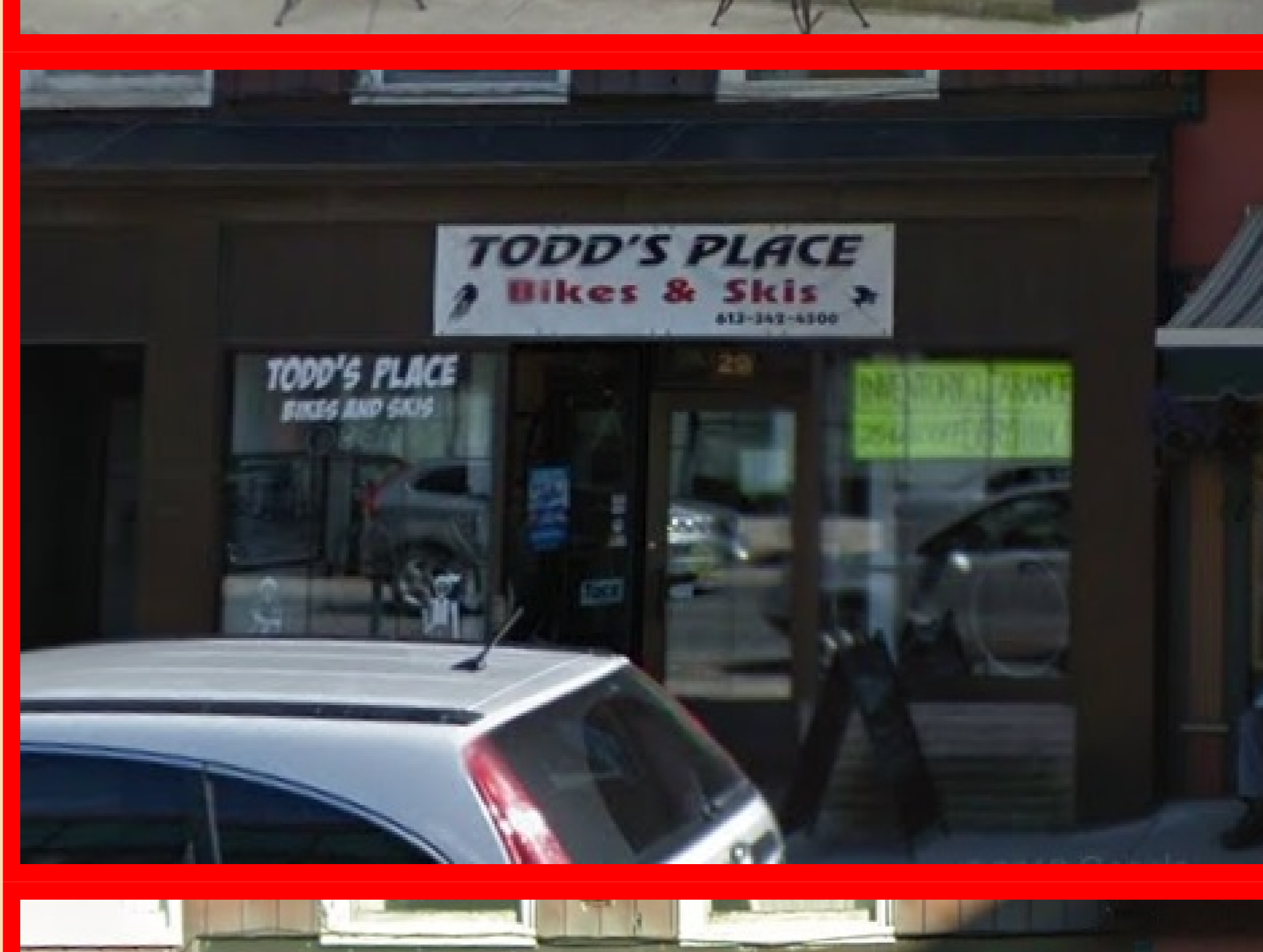
The current owners are the Hickling family. John Hickling is the one who still opens the store at 7 a.m., but he now shares the running of the business with his son Peter. "It was a pool hall and bowling alley, back in the day," said John Hickling. The pool and billiard tables are still there, all six of the massive six-by-12 foot tables with pool cues are still at the back of the store gathering dust under cloth coverings stacked high with boxes of candy and chips waiting to make it onto the shop floor at the front. "It stopped being a pool hall about 10 years ago," said Hickling, adding that there are several other options in town now. Down in the basement the remnants of the four-lane, five-pin bowling alley can just be discerned between boxes of chocolates and chips. The lanes are just barely visible, the wood grey with age and wear, but the slate board still proudly announces the names and scores of players dating back 80 years, including a 'perfect' game scored by Alfie Countryman in the late 30s early 40s.

Those aren't the only delights to be discovered in the old store. There are several perfectly intact large mirrors advertising cigars from companies that have long since gone out of business. There's an old wooden telephone booth, beautifully crafted wooden store cabinets with fine detailing, a spectacular tin ceiling and an ancient still-operating humidor, and last but not least the rotary phone still in use behind the counter. "In the winter we mostly get the regulars," said Janet Jones, who has worked at Ritchie's for close to a year. "All year round we get people coming from places like Ottawa and Morrisburg to pick up cigars they can't get in their area."

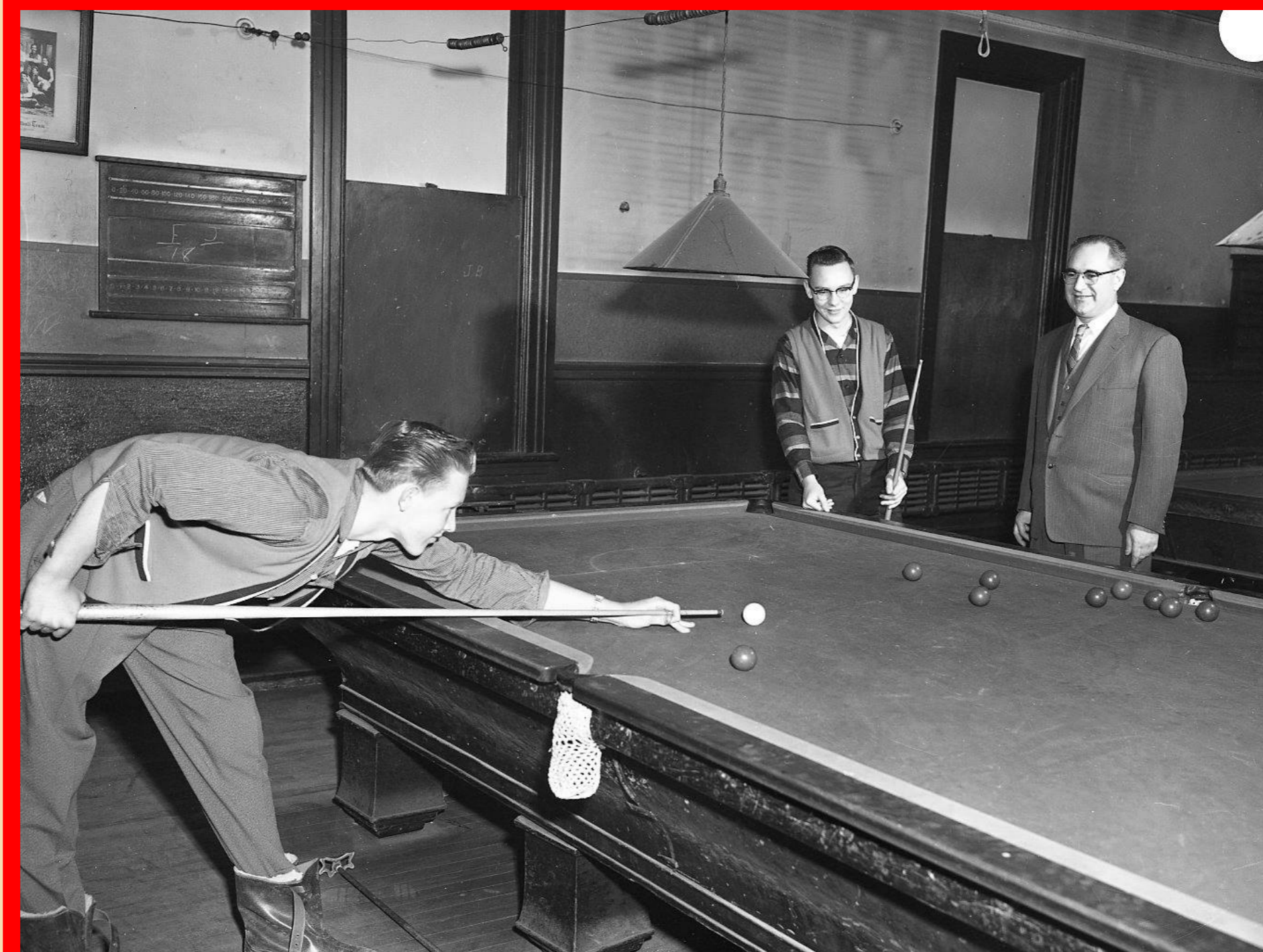
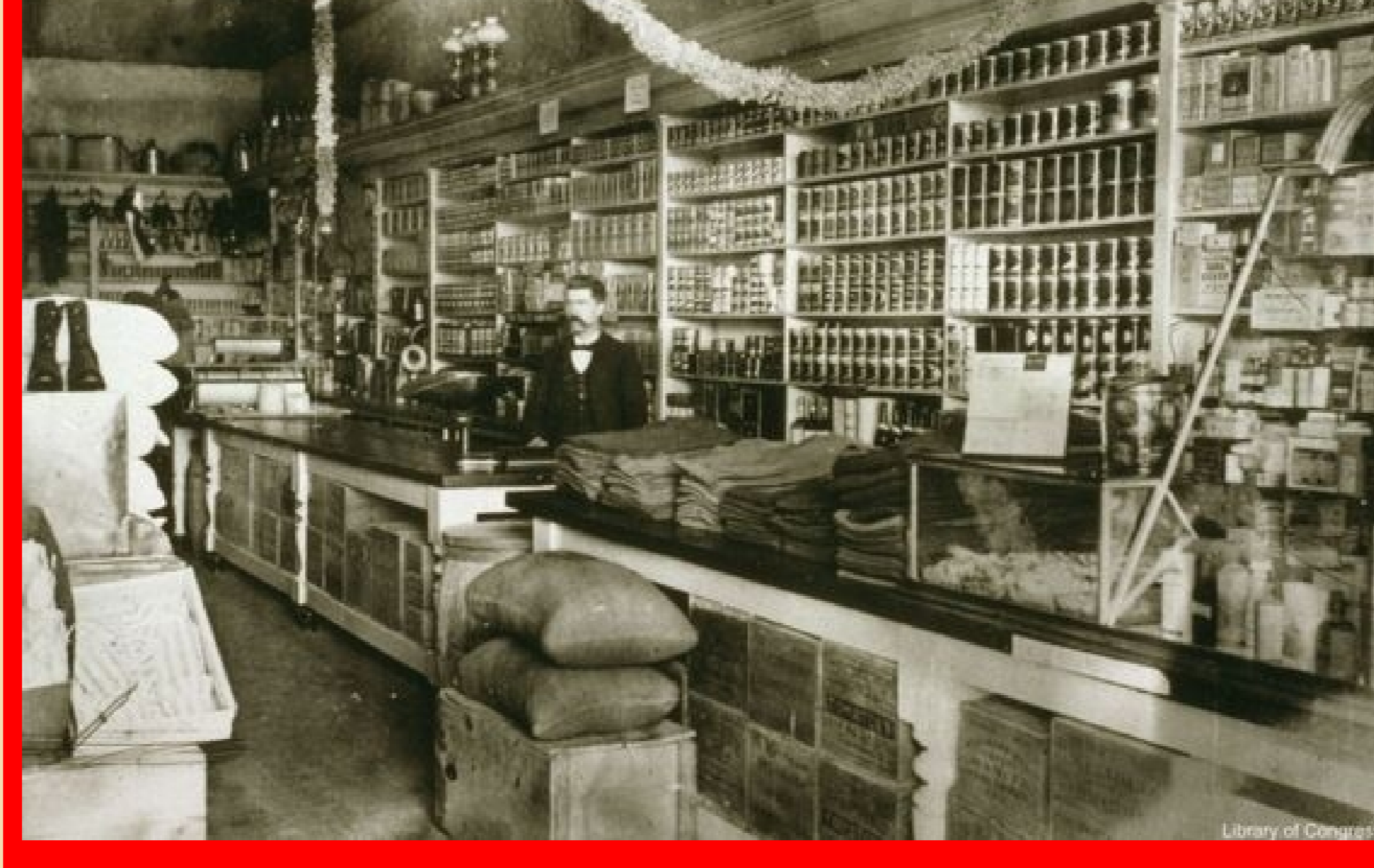
The building, which consists of two storefronts and four apartments above, was built in 1820. In 1870 Isaac Ritchie opened the smoke shop, complete with a billiard and pool hall at the back of the store. In 1890 his son Francis Isaac Ritchie, a.k.a. Ike, took it over. Ike Ritchie was a minor celebrity in his day: An accomplished athlete, he captained the town's first hockey team and was also captain of the Lacrosse Club, but was best known as a footballer and rower. His interest in rowing as it turns out, was something he shared with John Hickling's grandfather. Eventually Ike sold the store to Hickling's grandfather in the early 1900s, and it's been with the Hicklings ever since. This store has been operated by three generations of senior oarsmen in one family, said Hickling. All three Hickling generations have won the Canadian Henley, thereby earning the title.

A lot has changed in the more than 100 years since the store first opened. "We used to sell six million cigarettes a year, now we're down to two or three million," said Hickling. What he'd like to see is Ritchie get into the cannabis market now that it's legal, but like many others he has to wait until the province opens up a second intake of applications for retail sales, with fewer restrictions. SLATE BOARD PICTURE John Hickling points to a slate board from decades past, when Ritchie's Smoke Shop on King Street West was a bowling alley. [Recorder & Times, Feb. 25, 2019 \(Howaida Sorour\)](#)

STOREFRONTS



INTERIOR



Ritchie's Pool Room.