

119 Woodward Ave. Designation Report



Location: 119 Woodward Avenue
PLAN 930 LOT 6 LOT 7 PLAN 878 Lot 18 PT Lot 19 PT.

Description of Property

The building is a traditional American Foursquare single-family residence, constructed 1903-1904 by Albert H. Mahon. The building is approximately 2 ½ storeys tall and has four dormer windows at the top of the building's roof each on each face of the roof. The foundation is made from local sandstone excavated during the construction of the Sault Canal and the house exterior is constructed of decorative molded concrete blocks. The property has not undergone significant modifications, retaining the large open porch across the front and most of the original stained-glass windows. However, the rear porch has been extended and modernized over the years and a fire escape has been added to the building's second storey.

Statement of Cultural Heritage Value and Interest

The physical heritage features that are present are its overall design as an American Foursquare style home which was popular during the late 1800s and early 1900s. The foundation of the building is sandstone that was excavated during the construction of the Sault Ste. Marie canal and the building retains some of the original lead glass windows.

What this property lacks in physical heritage features is more than compensated by its history in relation to the famous Canadian doctor Norman Bethune. The Bethune family was quite familiar with the fur trading traditions of the north. The family patriarch, the Reverend Doctor John Bethune (1751–1815), Norman's great-great-grandfather, established the first Presbyterian congregation in Montreal, largely to serve the Scottish fur traders when back at their home base. His great grandfather, Angus Bethune (1783–1858) joined the North West Company (NWC) at an early age and travelled extensively throughout what was the North West of Canada at that time, exploring and trading for furs. He also became Senior Officer for the NWC in its trading mission to China. Angus Bethune married Louise McKenzie (1793-1833), a Métis woman, who is buried near the Hudson's Bay Post at Michipicoten. Angus was appointed postmaster in Sault Ste. Marie in 1827, became Chief Trader for HBC in 1835 and retired in 1839 to Toronto. While in Sault Ste. Marie, he likely resided in the HBC Fort near the canoe lock.

Their son, Norman Bethune Sr., was educated as a doctor in Toronto and England, practiced in Scotland and Canada, and was one of the founders of the Upper Canada School of Medicine. Norman's father, the Rev. Malcolm Nicolson Bethune, was a Presbyterian minister, initially at Gravenhurst where Norman was born to his wife Elizabeth Goodwin and him in 1890. It was during one of his ministering assignments, that he is recorded as residing at 119 Woodward Ave. in 1905 when the house was newly built. At the time, Norman Jr. would have been 15 years of age. It is likely that he attended school at the Soo Business College, on the third floor of the Taylor Block, 484-8 Queen St. E. Norman completed high school in Owen Sound. He went on to the University of Toronto where his medical education was interrupted by WW I. He is

known in Canada for his work in perfecting instruments for thoracic surgery in Montreal, in Spain for developing a method to obtain blood in a mobile clinic to assist wounded soldiers during the Spanish Civil War and is revered in China for performing battlefield surgical operations on the front line for both sides in the revolutionary war. He died in China in 1939.

List of Heritage Attributes:

- The building is an example of an American Foursquare style home.
- The building's foundation is made of local sandstone that was excavated during the construction of the Sault Ste. Marie Canal.
- The building has several of the original lead glass windows intact.
- Norman Bethune, an important figure in Canada's medical history, lived at this residence in 1905 while attending school in Sault Ste. Marie.
- The molded concrete blocks that make up the exterior of the building appear to be original.
- Albert H. Mahon constructed the building in 1903-4.



Photo: North-West Elevation (Rear of House)

Legal Description

PLAN 930 LOT 6 LOT 7 PLAN 878 Lot 18 PT Lot 19 PT. PIN: 31538-0031

