

34-36 Herrick Street

Sault Ste. Marie

By-Law:	95-89
Date:	May 29, 1995
G.I.S. record:	X: 705,393.612
	Y: 5,153,938.135



Sault Ste. Marie Municipal Heritage Committee Designation Report
(formerly L.A.C.A.C.)

Building Description and History

*This is an edited copy of the original document
Originals included in the SSM Municipal Heritage Committee Binder – Titled: “34-36 Herrick Street”

INTRODUCTION:

“In the years preceding the birth of Sault Ste. Marie’s heavy industrial base, local industry consisted principally of lumbering and subsistence farming. Construction of the ship canal and the extension of the Canadian Pacific Railway spurline from Sudbury to Sault Ste. Marie created sudden boom conditions: the population increased as local ranks were swelled by the influx of workmen, many of whom brought their families; there was a run on residential property as workers sought accommodations; the number of reasonably well-paying jobs naturally led to an increase in discretionary spending. The feeling of wealth and well being that prevailed in the community had widespread ramifications as commercial enterprises prospered and long-sought social services finally appeared. In 1887, the village of Sault Ste. Marie was incorporated as a town.”

Extract: *Sault Ste. Marie, City by the Rapids*, Frances M. Heath, 1988 Windsor Publications (Canada) Ltd.

DESCRIPTION:

Built in 1889 in Second Empire Style, 34 Herrick Street is arguably the first known brick house constructed in Sault Ste. Marie.

The south elevation of the main house to the street was built as a totally symmetrical composition heightened by a projecting central frontispiece that continues up into the mansard roof constructed of cedar shingles. To the south of the main house was constructed a single storey extension presumed to have been a summer kitchen. The 1901 revision to the fire insurance plan of the City indicates that at that time the extension also projected to the north running parallel to the lane; this no longer exists and may have contained stabling or have acted as a coach house.

The main floor of the house is constructed of brick. The brick is of clay, yellow-buff in colour and contains no frog or makers stamp. It is not local but is reminiscent of the early Don Valley (Toronto) brick colour. However, given the lines of transportation at the time and the family business connections in Sault Ste. Marie, Michigan, it is possible the brick came by rail from perhaps brickyards in the Ohio area where similar coloured clays exist; but this is a speculation.

There is no record of the architect or builder of the house. There were no architects established in the City at the time, but again, in Sault Ste. Marie, Michigan it is known that an architect J.B. Sweatt was employed by W.H. Plummer to design the Algonquin Hotel the year previously (1888).

The brick has been well detailed particularly at the corners where quoins have been formed, and under the bay windows with inset panels of soldier bricks with their edges set out at 45 degrees. The basement of the house has been constructed of sandstone rubble, and the first three courses of brick above are projected out from the continuing face of the brick above, returning to meet this face with a course of a specially shaped 45-degree angled brick. The brick has all been laid in stretcher bond.

Two large bay windows with double hung wood sash windows are located symmetrically on either side of the central frontispiece which contains the main entrance porch. The lintels over the bay windows are arched and formed of a soldier course and a half of brick.

The entrance porch at the time of construction appears to have been constructed of wood and contains a pair of glazed main entrance doors in the centre of the porch with glazed windows on either side. The remarkable aspect of this porch (seen in early photographs) is the large size of glass. In fact the porch looks more like a stone front rather than a residence porch. The porch glazing sits on a heavily moulded wood base containing inset panels and porch and entrance are accessed by a set of wooden steps containing four risers which run the entire width of the porch.

The brick framing of the house terminates at ceiling level of the first floor and the second floor of the house is contained within the mansard roof. The flared base of this roof sits on a substantial wood cornice which projects out over the face brick below by almost two feet. The cornice is not ornamented but its size and five components produce an extremely strong horizontal element in the house's overall appearance, running around the entire perimeter of the building with the exception of the summer kitchen.

Second-floor windows are all projected dormers from the mansard roof and each of the four located on the south elevation (two in the projecting central section over the porch and one over each bay window) are roofed individually in miniature replications of the main roof. The windows themselves are double hung wood sash, a pair to each dormer.

The mansard roof, originally of cedar shingles, is concave and flares out to meet the cornice. An early black and white photograph indicates a horizontal band of scalloped shingles located midway up the roof, the width of the band being approximately six courses and of a lighter colour than the remainder of the roof.

The house was originally equipped with three brick chimneys, none of which exist today although it appears that the more recent chimney constructed on the west elevation is in the same location as one of the originals. The original chimneys are slender but with corbelled brick caps.

The symmetry of the house design has been reflected in the early landscaping. A walkway (possibly of wood) was constructed from the base of the porch steps down to another set of steps set in a stone retaining wall. This leads to another path to the street where four maple trees have been planted symmetrically on each side of the main entrance path - two on the upper level and two smaller on the lower levels. Low planting (possibly alpine currant) was also planted at the top of the retaining wall on either side of the steps. A Virginian creeper is also seen growing on the front east bay window.

At some stage in the history of the house, a demising wall was constructed through the middle; the front porch rebuilt to accommodate two front doors; and the resulting building has remained as two semi-detached houses to this day. The date of the division is not known but it is clearly shown on the 1901 revision of the 1899 Insurance Plan. (This change would not show on title as the Owners lived at no. 34 and rented no. 36).

The change to the front porch unfortunately removed the stonefront original with its large areas of glazing, although the replacement was constructed with reasonable compliment to the remainder of the house. The mansard roof is now asphalt shingled, although the original cedar shingles can still be seen on the exposed sidewalls of the dormer windows. Two of the originally planted trees still exist at the front of the house, although the retaining wall has long since disappeared and the lawns are banked down to the sidewalk.

SIGNIFICANCE:

The term "Second Empire" is derived from a style of architecture popular in France during the reign of Napoleon III. Transplanted to the United States and Canada by trade journals and pattern books. The style was extremely popular in Canada in the 1820's and 1880's, fully blown as public building and also in a toned down vernacular formed in residential (and often town house row) construction.

The following description of the Second Empire (1860-1900) is taken from John Blumenson, Fitz Henry and Whiteside 1990 *Ontario Architecture*:

"In vernacular tradition, often the most recognizable stylistic feature is the mansard roof. The profile of the roof may be straight, convex, concave or a combination of the three, covered with multicoloured slates and punctuated by dormers of various shapes and sizes. The formal appearance of the overall composition may be heightened by a projecting central frontispiece that at times continues upward, forming a distinct tower, when the projection occurs at the ends or corners of a building, as in the Toronto post office, this feature may be referred to as a pavilion. When the tower is placed off-centre, the asymmetrical balance of the façade creates a picturesque quality not unlike nineteenth century building practices, windows are large, with only one or two panes or lights per sash, and may be round, segmental or at times pointed; they are most often framed with enriched surrounds and mouldings. The cornice is often embellished in fashion similar to the Italianate, with brackets, large blocks and a decorated frieze. Though stone is preferred, brick is often used, but regardless of the material, the exterior is invariably enriched with Classical mouldings and detail around door and window apertures, as well as corners, where heavy rustication or quoins are employed. The entrance is often a double door, with glazed upper panels having coloured or etched glass. Large sweeping porches or wraparound verandas characteristic of the Queen Anne style are not popular in the formal symmetrical examples, but may be seen on the informal, asymmetrically balanced towered versions."

Sault Ste. Marie has few mansard roof properties remaining. The Administration Building at the Sault Ste. Marie Canal (1895) and the Wellington Square Townhouses (1913 Designated Bylaw 83-60) are the significant examples. 34-36 Herrick Street may well demonstrate however some unique characteristics not found in the other properties.

- The construction of a well-designed house complete with landscaping of substance in 1889, predates by almost a decade the emergence of the Sault as an industrial centre. This may be a unique condition.
- This property may well be the first residential building in the City constructed in brick.
- On evidence researched to this point, it would appear the property well meets L.A.C.A.C.'s criteria for designation. It would be of considerable interest, however, to try to determine the designer and contractor.

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94-10-30

Photo Taken: July 2004

