

Upton - 1865
(Wemyss Simpson House)
10 Kensington Terrace
Sault Ste. Marie

By-Law:	83-266
Date:	October 24, 1983
G.I.S. record:	X: 706,232.414
	Y: 5,153,799.375



P-24671 L11 and N 149.11' of S 450' of
E 94.4' of PTN PK LT 13.

*This is an edited copy of the original document, originals included in the Municipal Heritage Committee Binder – Titled: “Upton”

Wemyss MacKenzie Simpson was born in London, England in 1825, the youngest of seven sons. His parents were Geddes M. Simpson and Francis Simpson. He came to Canada in the early 1840's. In 1841, he had entered into the Montreal Department of the Hudson's Bay Company.¹ In 1844, he was sent from Lachine P.Q to the Red River in Manitoba, in charge of the first party of Grey Nuns to go west. During these years, he also served in Hudson's Bay Posts at York Factory, Oxford House, Norway House, and Red River for the Northern Department of the Company.¹

Simpson first came to work at the Hudson Bay Post in the Sault on the site of the Block House in 1849. His stay was short as he left the Sault in 1851 to work in La Cloche. In 1852, he was made Chief Trader of that factory and in the next year (1853) married Annie Ironside of La Cloche, daughter of Captain Ironside of the Indian Department.¹

In 1855, Simpson was again posted at Sault Ste. Marie where he was to remain for most of his life. The 1861 census of Sault Ste. Marie lists Simpson with the Hudson's Bay Company. He was "36 years old, his wife Annie was 29". They had a family of "four boys and two girls, a company staff of three males and one female, including an East Indian Clerk James Cotten, and a servant girl, Mary Hood".² Simpson and his family, from this information, appear to have been living at the Hudson's Bay Post itself, probably in one of the buildings shown in an 1889 photograph of the Post.³

In 1862, Simpson was made Chief Factor of the Post until he retired in 1865, when the Post was closed.¹ It was during this year that Simpson began to build his house. The land was purchased from the Crown, but there is no mention of an architect. Simpson himself may have designed the house, as its design is certainly British in origin. By 1866 however, the house had been built and been lived in.

In 1867, Wemyss Simpson was elected Algoma's first member of the newly established Parliament. David Pim, a local resident, recorded that Simpson won by nine votes.⁴ As the first M.P in Algoma, Simpson was one of the most respected men in the community, but he was very active in other areas as well. Simpson served as the Postmaster from 1857 to 1858, and was President of Algoma District Agricultural Society. He was also a prominent member of the Anglican Church and served as Rector's Warden in 1865 and 1879. He was one of the prominent promoters and contributors for the building of St. Luke's Cathedral in 1870, and in 1874, donated the land on which Bishophurst now stands. In the government, he negotiated with the Indians for soldiers to pass through their land on the way to the Riel Rebellion and after his re-election in 1871; he resigned to become the Indian Commissioner. Simpson retired from public life in 1877 and spent the rest of his life in the house he had built.

The records at the City Registry Office only go back to 1921, but in 1904, the "old fashioned homelike villa of stone" was owned by an English gentleman named H.W. Evenden.⁶ The house was also rented at various times, but after several years, Evenden appears to have sold the house to a J. McPhail, who in 1921 sold it to a Captain Henry L. Sargeant.⁷ In 1943, after Sergeant's death, some of the land on the property appears to have been sold although the house was kept as part of the estate.⁷ In 1949 however,

Sergeant's heirs sold the house to R.M. Flower and Leslie Charles Spong. More land was sold in 1951 and 1953. In 1964, the house was sold to Thomas Gibbs who sold it two years later to a man named Vezeau. Finally in 1967, the house was sold to William Humes, the present owner.⁷

The house has been used as an apartment for years, long before Humes became the owner. There have been many changes as a result. The original house had 16 rooms, which have been divided up into ten housekeeping units and two apartments.

Architectural Description

The Wemyss Simpson House stands on a quiet dead end street in an older area of the city. It is the last house on the north side of the street and is isolated from traffic and pedestrians. The lot on which the house sits has many trees, as does most of the property on the street. The west side of the Simpson lot is open as there is a gravel parking lot for the tenants' cars. The house itself was built in the "Georgian" style with symmetrical fenestration and a low truncated hipped roof that originally had iron cresting along the edge. Like most Ontario houses however, it has had other features added to suit the owner's taste. The building resembles the home of a wealthy English gentleman. Photographs of the house taken in 1890's ⁸ reveal a large two storey stone house with three bays across the main south façade. The main section of the house was approximately square, although there were only two bays on the east and west walls. The main feature of the house was a large veranda extending around the east, south, and west sides. It covered the first storey and had a slanting roof. The south side of the veranda was supported by six square wooden posts. Where the pillars met the eaves, there were decorated bargeboards. The decoration was the same on all sides. The main doorway contained a single, six-panel door with a transom window and two side lights. In the bays to each side of the door were large French doors that opened out onto the veranda. The corners of the main faced were quoined with projecting stones and the wall was built of smooth-cut squared stone. Above the veranda were three large rectangular windows. These windows were double-sashed and were decorated with projecting stone labels or hood-mould. The hood-moulds are supported by decorated stone corbels. Each one is decorated by a centre keystone. Resting on top of each keystone is a plain wooden frieze underneath the boxed cornice eaves of the roof. Just visible at the rear of the building is a projecting vestibule with a gable roof.

The house, as an apartment building, has been allowed to decay and looks very run down. The "faded" look of the house has been increased by the removal of the large veranda. The house, as a result, looks stripped or at best, unfinished. Some features of the house are revealed however, by the veranda's removal.

The house is a "prime example of public facadism in Ontario". The south wall is built of smooth, square stone while the east and west walls are built of randomly placed rubble sandstone. The public or street façade of the house is made to look better than the rest of the house. Another structural feature of the house is that the first storey is taller than the second, thus giving the upper storey a compressed appearance. A band of stone that

marks the original roofline of the veranda, forms a continuous sill for all the windows on the second storey of the house. The upper storey windows are double-sashed. There is a large storm sash with eight panes for an outer window. The inner window has a six over nine-pane arrangement.

The east and west sides of the house each have two bays. Each bay contains two windows, one per floor. The windows are located near the ends of the wall. The tall rectangular lower windows are meant to echo the French doors on the south wall. In fact, the north window on the west wall has been made into a side entrance. The other windows have an outer eight paned sash, with a double-sashed six-over-six pane interior window. The stone decorations on each window consist of a plain stone sill. The vertical edges of the window consist of a plain stone sill. The vertical edges of the window are decorated with alternating long and short blocks of grey stone. Above each window is a grey stone lintel decorated with a projecting keystone.

The upper storey windows on the east and west walls are about the same size as the lower windows, although the upper wall is not as high. Some of the windows have an outer eight-pane sash, but all have double-sashed windows with a six-over-six arrangement. The stone decoration around each window consists of a continuous stone sill and vertical surrounds built of alternating blocks of long and short stone. Above each window is a projecting stone lintel, decorated by a projecting keystone and supported by small stone corbels.

The projection on the north wall, originally housing the kitchen and servants' quarters, is a two storey stone structure with a gable roof. The east and west walls each have three bays. The lower storey is higher than the second, making the upper windows smaller. On the south end of the west wall is a projecting stone shed with a gable roof. This is the entrance to the "servants quarters", and makes up the south bay on the west wall. The other bays are filled with large rectangular double sashed windows with a four over four-pane window arrangement. The windows are decorated with a plain stone sill and lintels. The windows on the upper floors are approximately square and are variously sashed.

There is only one surviving chimney on the east side of the main house. It is built of grey stone and has several stacks.

Significance

The Wemyss Simpson House is the second oldest building in Sault Ste. Marie and is worthy of the protection of this city. Unlike most of the stone buildings in the city, which were left with their stone façades unadorned, the main façade has been consciously given a finished look. The carefully cut and smoothed stone, very likely brought from somewhere else, is rare in such an early building in Northern Ontario. Even in its present state the house still has a look of elegance and sophistication. Despite the interior alterations that have been made, the exterior stone walls have remained essentially unchanged. Its value would be lessened greatly if these features were to be altered.

Another interesting characteristic of the Simpson House is its similarity to Bishophurst (1875). Perhaps some of the features of Bishophurst may have been copied from this older house. Bishop Fauquier knew Wemyss Simpson as Simpson donated the land for the Gee House. If it is assumed that both the plans came from England, as it would be fair to do, the similarities could be accounted for in this way. The French door opening onto the veranda is found on both houses. The large box-like structure of the main house, its low-hipped roof, and the smaller projecting wing, are all similar characteristics. Each house follows the same styles and designs and it would be a shame to lose either one, for any reason.

Another important reason for the designation of this house is that few people know of its existence, even after quite a bit of newspaper coverage. This has been the result of the house's isolation. Standing on a dead end street, it is not "passed" regularly as the "Old Stone House" or "Precious Blood Cathedral" would be. Even if people have heard of the house, they do not know where it is or have never seen it. In such a case, it could be argued that its loss would be of little consequence. Such an argument must be avoided at all costs. The Wemyss Simpson House is of great historic value to the city as the home of the first M.P., and a man who helped to give the City of Sault Ste. Marie its first sense of permanence as a town. Architecturally, the house is also important for its early age. Despite its run-down appearance, the stonework on the house is quite delicate and beautiful. The man façade, the hood-moulds over the windows with the keystones are all fine examples of stonework, not to be found in any other homes of this date or after. Even the stone in Bishophurst or Precious Blood is as delicately worked. As a result, the Wemyss Simpson House should be designated and protected by the city, so that this historic and beautiful home can be preserved.

Footnotes

- 1) Footnote in The Letters of Letetia Hargrave, The Champlain Society, Toronto, pages 205,206
- 2) Sault Daily Star, November 14, 1973, “New Yorker Recalls Old Home”
- 3) See photograph #2, Sault Armoury Museum, Filing Cabinet “B”, Category “F”, item 1C.
- 4) River of Destiny, The Saint Mary’s, by Joseph E. and Estelle L. Bayliss, Detroit, Wayne University Press, 1955, page 259.
- 5) Sault Daily Star, February 15, 1977, “Kensington Terrace House Belonged to First M.P”, page 19.
- 6) Sault Daily Star, November 14, 1973, “New Yorker Recalls Old Home”
- 7) Abstract Book 47, Folio 236, Registry Office Sault Ste. Marie
- 8) See photograph # 1, Sault Armoury Museum, Filing Cabinet “B”, Category “F”, item 114.
- 9) The doors and windows were all replaced this summer, 1977.

“UPTON” - 10 KENSINGTON TERRACE
SAULT STE. MARIE, ONTARIO

Otherwise known as the Wemyss Simpson House.

Background

Wemyss MacKenzie Simpson was born in London, England in 1825. He emigrated to Canada in the early 1840's and joined the Hudson's Bay Company serving in a variety of posts in Northern Ontario and Manitoba before settling in Sault Ste. Marie in 1855. He was made Chief Factor of the local Hudson's Bay post in 1862.

On or about that time he purchased a piece of crown land on what is now Kensington Terrace and shortly thereafter constructed the large stone residence subsequently known as "Upton". We have assumed a construction date of 1865 since the building was known to be completed and occupied by the following year.

Wemyss Simpson had a very distinguished career and occupied a prominent place in the community and his taste and breeding are reflected in the house he built for himself.

A more detailed history with footnotes can be found in Randy Spillers report of 1977.

Property Description

"Upton" comprises two parts. The main house is rectangular measuring 45'-0" X 38'-0" with a wing measuring 37'-0" X 20'-6" projecting to the rear (north) which has a small attached entrance porch on the west side. The entire structure is two storeys throughout.

In general massing, that is shape of building, window proportions, use, of hipped roof and free standing (one now demolished) chimneys with end walls, the house does not fall into any clearly defined architectural "style". Rather, it resembles the Regency period of villa, often the residences of prosperous business men and merchants, springing up around the outskirts of English towns and cities in the first half of the 19th century and with which Simpson would be familiar in his youth. However, the presence of a veranda (now removed), which extended around 3 sides of the building, is a concession to the Canadian climate and lifestyle, although more modest verandas (often in wrought iron) are also characteristics of the Regency style.

To the Main House

The front (south) façade is constructed of coursed grey ashlar with smooth margins, chisel dressed field and neatly articulated joints, projecting quoins and a continuous string course at the second floor window sill level. The central wide doorway and narrower flanking French window openings have flat arches with chamfered rusticated skewed voussoirs and carved keystones.

The three upper windows have shallow segmental arched lintels, which are hooded, shouldered and supported on carved corbelled brackets. The keystones of these arches were carved (one now replaced) with a floral design on the flanking arches and a head on the centre arch.

Balance of exterior walls are of undressed red sandstone with stringcourse continuing around the building and similar, although less elaborate, lintel treatment. The stone is skilfully laid and carefully coursed at regular intervals vertically. This constitutes the finest example of both dressed and coursed rubble masonry construction in the City.

There was a wide veranda (now demolished) extending the full length of the front, returning around the east side and partway around the north side, perhaps as far as the staircase window. At the west end, it extended only by its own width and returned upon itself at the southwest corner. Photographs of the period suggest a tin plate roof over boarding on simple rafters supported by a fascia beam and six columns with carved wooden cap embellishments. The south veranda was probably supported off a continuous stone foundation wall (part of which is visible behind the existing paving) supporting the central flight of steps and above which the wooden columns rested on small square stone bases. This may have been floored with flat dressed flagstones. The rest of the veranda was probably wood framed with a wooden floor but all traces of this structure, except for the rafter pockets in the walls have now disappeared. However, it was probably similar in appearance to the main south veranda except for the supporting stonework.

The south façade comprises three bays with French doors or windows to the lower floor on the outer bays with a single six-panel door, transom and sidelights occupying the centre bay. On the second floor above, there are three vertical sliding sash windows of 6/6 configuration. All doors, frames and trim are original.

East and west walls- each consist of two bays of upper and lower windows located symmetrically but closer to the corners. These are similar in shape and size to the upper south façade windows, although with simpler lintel treatment.

On the north side, the original arrangement is obscured by the projecting wing. There is a large arched vertical sliding sash window at the stairwell landing on the central axis of the building.

The north wing leaves some questions unanswered for construction is much cruder. The stone is more random with less care taken in the coursing, there are no quoins and no stringcourse and the windows have flat arches with five partially dressed voussoirs and projecting keystones.

While the ground floor is at the same level as that of the main house, the upper floor is slightly lower and the second floor ceilings considerably lower following the line of the roof slope at the exterior walls. There are three bays of windows on each side, the lower windows, while still 6/6 are much smaller than those of the main house and the upper

windows, because of the lower eaves, are smaller still and narrower with 6/3 sash, now much altered on the west side. On the east side, the central window has been converted to a door. The north end is a blank wall.

This wing was constructed with a full basement, which connects with a small area of basement, under the northwest corner of the main house. This appears to be original and is the only portion of basement under the main house. From this small basement area, there appears to be an original opening into the crawl space under the balance of the house and a later section broken out when the heating system was installed. The circulation of warm, dry air thus provided may have pressured the ground floor construction, which might otherwise, deteriorated from rot for the building interior is in excellent condition structurally.

The basement section had windows on the east side corresponding to the bays above but they are now filled in either with stone or concrete block.

The north wing appears to have been an afterthought for the string course on the main house appears to extend along the north wall where the wing joins it. This wing is not bonded to the balance of the stone work and is of cruder construction and less carefully detailed both outside in the treatment of stonework generally and openings in particular, and internally in trim and other mouldings. While this is consistent with construction of servants or auxiliary quarters, it does suggest a time lapse, however brief. There seems no other explanation for the thickness of both the foundation and upper walls or the main house at the junction of the two sections. The north wing has suffered most from alterations over the years. There are indications of the construction and removal of an earlier chimney flue, the addition of a small entrance porch on the west façade -- maybe an even later addition and some windows have been blocked up and others replaced. However, most of the visible work is original construction (walls, some windows, eave and soffit mouldings, and the like). Only the date of this work is unknown at the present time. However, it may be that the closing of the Hudson's Bay Post in Sault Ste. Marie in 1865 required Simpson to modify his original design to accommodate staff or other functions after the original design- perhaps even the construction was well advanced.

Internally

Although not part of the designation process at this stage, the interior merits recording. Although the building has passed through a succession of owners, almost all of the originally interior work survives. While the original floor may have new finishes and most original plaster work is now covered with hardboard panelling, interior doors, frames, trim, the fine staircase and landing window and many other features of the design remain intact. It is so that, were the building to come into the possession of a party of parties who were genuinely interested in recapturing the original atmosphere, this might not be difficult.

Even in the north wing, where most changes occur, doors, frames and trim have been retained and re-used. Since the City has no other example of construction of this early period, I will record the significant features for later reference.

Some technical comments in this report are at variance with the otherwise excellent study carried out by Randy Spiller several years ago.

Conclusion

This building is not only the second oldest major structure in the City; it is by far the best example of contemporary stone masonry in the City.

The dressed stonework of the main façade displays a very sophisticated standard of craftsmanship both in the execution of the main façade and in the treatment of the fieldstone elsewhere. For this reason alone it merits preservation and restoration where necessary.

Since the veranda was an integral part of the original design, its replacement should be a priority item in any continuing plans for restoration. An original photograph of the building is preserved in the archives of the Historical Society (Sault Armoury Museum Filing Cabinet B Category F item 114).

Much of the original millwork survives both inside and out and when replacement is necessary, these precedences should be followed wherever possible.

The present owners, Mr. Frank LeClair, is aware that his property has a historical significance and would be pleased to accept guidance in any matter affecting those parts of the building which are unique in their own right.

For purposes of designations, the significant features are preservations of the exterior appearance without further alteration, with a strong recommendation for reconstruction of the porch or veranda, reconstruction of the demolished chimney, and replacement of later windows with sash and trim more appropriate to the original appearance of the house.

Respectfully submitted

D. Perry Short, Architect

April 26, 1983

“UPTON”
10 KENSINGTON TERRACE
SAULT STE. MARIE, ONTARIO
(1865)

THE HOME OF WEMYSS SIMPSON
A PROJECT OF
HERITAGE SAULT STE. MARIE INC.

UPTON, 10 KENSINGTON TERRACE

Heritage Sault Ste. Marie has acquired Upton, 10 Kensington Terrace, Sault Ste. Marie, and will rehabilitate the interior and restore the exterior of this historic building.

Possible end uses for the project are now being considered. Subject to agreement and negotiation to the successful end user, Heritage Sault Ste. Marie will control and carry out all alterations to the property and will sell as a complete and fully restored property.

Upton was built by Wemyss MacKenzie Simpson. Simpson was Chief Factor of the Hudson's Bay Post in Sault Ste. Marie until he retired in 1965 at which time the Post was closed.

The property the house stands on was purchased from the Crown and the house was built and lived in by 1866.

In 1867 Wemyss Simpson was elected Algoma's first member of the newly established Parliament. A prominent member of the Anglican Church, he served as Rector's warden in 1865 and 1879. He was a prominent promoter and contributor to the construction of St. Luke's Cathedral in 1870 and in 1874 donated the land on which the Bishop's residence 'Bishophurst' on Simpson Street was erected.

Upton is of Georgian Style; that is, it presents a well-proportioned, dignified and symmetrical elevation to the street. Windows are large and sash type with the lower having French door openings. The main front elevation is of dressed stone with prominent quoins. Upper windows have hood-moulds with ornamented keystones. A veranda, now disappeared, was a prominent feature enveloping the front and part of the east and west elevations. Sidewalls are of random sandstone rubble and a later brick chimney has been added. The majority of the original room chimneys have been removed.

Despite its deterioration over the years, the house still has the potential for exciting and effective renovation. The room sizes and heights are generous and well proportioned. The fine central stairs still remain in good condition and there is considerable flexibility available in planning rehabilitation to bring the building up to Code requirements for change in use.

HERITAGE SAULT STE. MARIE INC.

Heritage Sault Ste. Marie was incorporated in 1986 with the following objectives:

- 1) To receive grants, accept donations, bequest or otherwise, to promote Community Heritage.
- 2) To make grants, and loans to promote preservation and rehabilitation of buildings in the City of Sault Ste. Marie.
- 3) To enter into agreements with other parties respecting the conservation work to be carried out on certain properties.
- 4) To provide loan quarantees subject to such security as is advisable to assist the property owners in obtaining funds to conserve or purchase heritage buildings.
- 5) To acquire property by purchase or otherwise for the purpose of rehabilitating the property and to dispose of any property so acquired.
- 6) To grant or reserve easements with the owner of heritage buildings.

The Board of Directors of Heritage Sault Ste. Marie Inc. is composed of twelve local businessmen with across-the-board experience in the fields of construction, architecture, heritage conservation, land surveying, real estate and appraisal, banking, development and planning. In addition, City Council has made an aldermanic appointment to the Board.

Funding for Heritage Sault Ste Marie Inc. projects is obtained from the City of Sault Ste. Marie and from the Ontario Ministry of Citizenship and Culture under the Non-Profit Community Heritage Fund Programme.

10 Kensington Terrace is a two storey, stone residence built in 1865. The building is 'L' shaped with a main block 65.6' X 37.2' with a 20.5' X 37.9' extension. The building sits on .45 acres of property at the end of Kensington Terrace (off Upton Road) in a select residential neighbourhood in Sault Ste. Marie.

The property has been designated as being of architectural and historic significance under the Ontario Heritage Act and as such is eligible for grants on an annual basis towards the cost of restoration work.

Gross floor area (both floors) is 4,946.54 sq. ft. plus an enclosed porch and a small partial basement. The property is zoned R6.

Permitted uses:

- 1) One family detached dwelling
- 2) Elementary School
- 3) Home occupation
- 4) Accessory use
- 5) Foster home
- 6) Group Home (subject to site plan control by by-law 84-81)

Other uses will require property rezoning. Plans of the house as existing are attached as well as an early sketch proposal demonstrating the possibility of conversion to six one-bedroom apartments.

Exterior restoration under the direction of Heritage Sault Ste. Marie Inc. will include:

- (1) removal of exterior recent chimney
- (2) masonry and carpentry repairs
- (3) new windows and doors
- (4) the re-building of the original veranda
- (5) landscaping and fencing of the grounds.

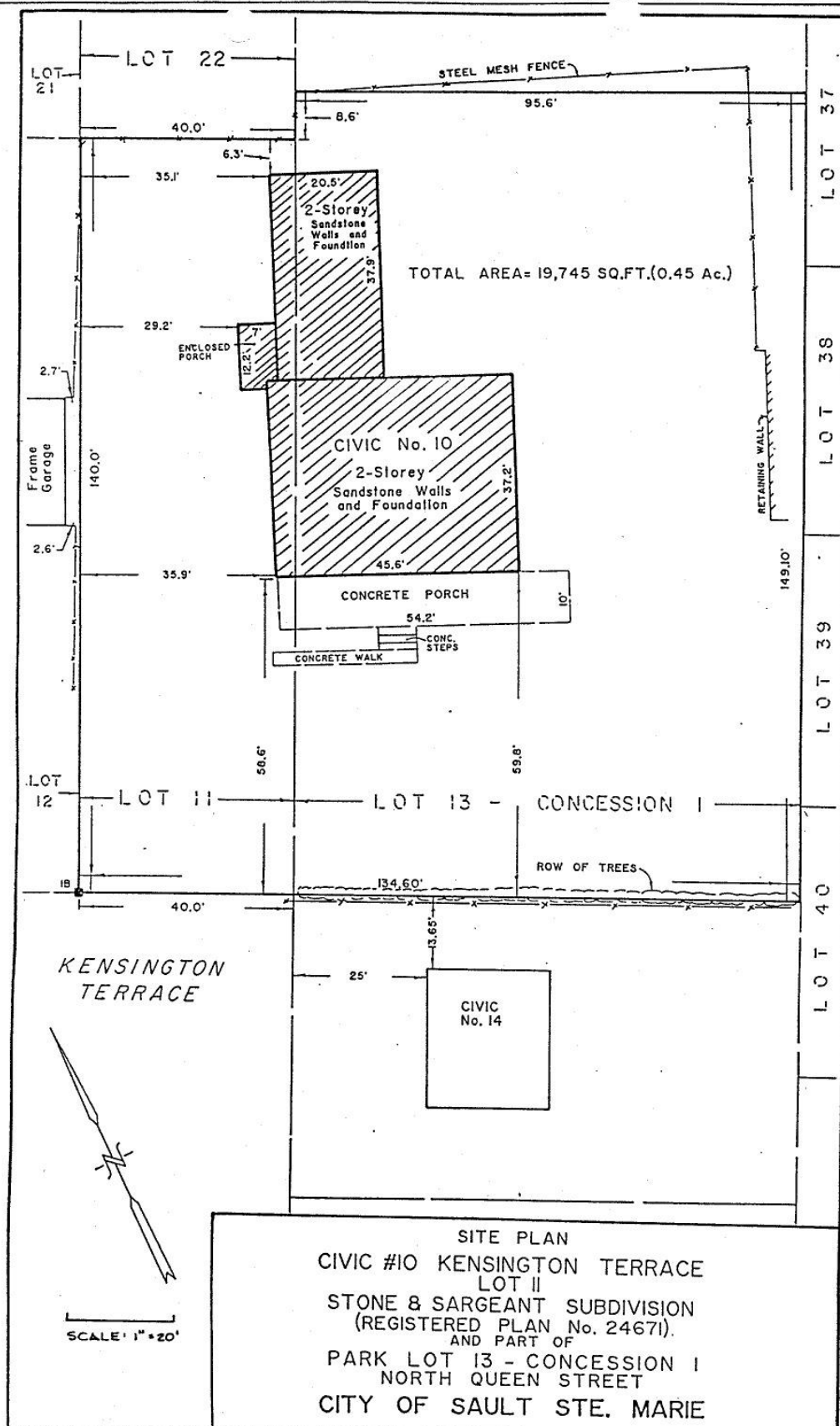
10 Kensington Terrace may be viewed by appointment. Contact Mr. Chris Tossell (942-1013) or H. Bullock (949-8888) to arrange. Heritage Sault Ste. Marie will arrange and coordinate design and construction to provide a complete product, rehabilitated internally to the end user's requirements and historically restored externally, handed over ready for occupancy.

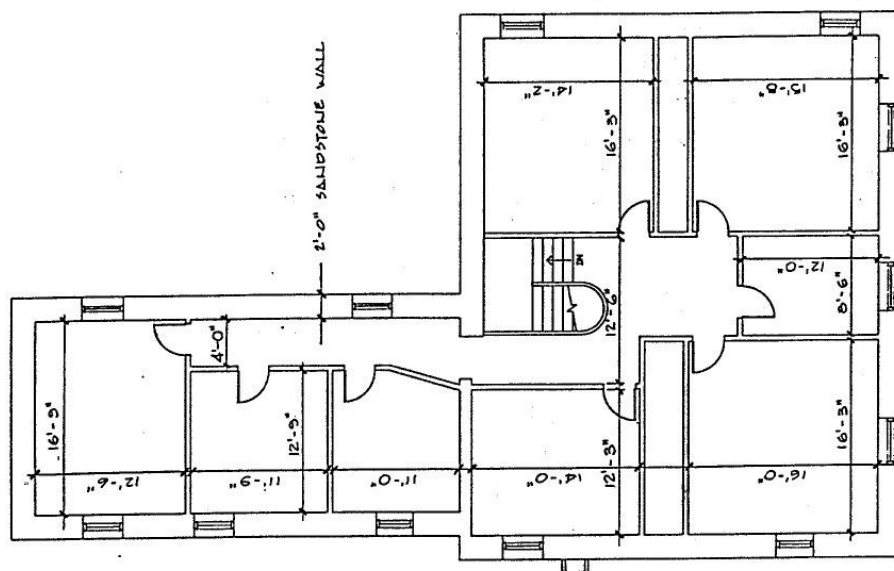


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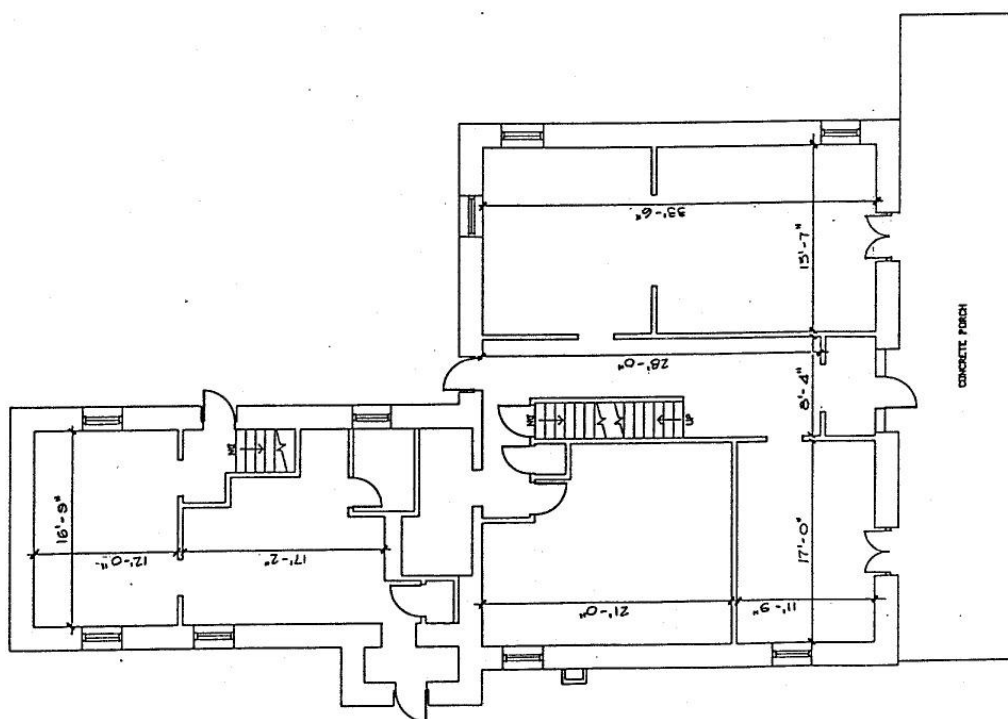
Photo Taken: July 2004







SECOND FLOOR



AS EXISTING
N.T.S.

GROUND FLOOR

