

1442 Elford Street - Statement of Significance

Building History - Family and Fernwood Neighbourhood Associations

Section 1: Description of the historic place as it exists today.

A relatively late example (1901) of regional wood-framed high-Victorian house style, this home remains a fine reminder, supported by the similar house next door, of the early twentieth century build-out of the Fernwood neighbourhood.

Section 2: Heritage Value - the “aesthetic, historic, scientific, cultural, social or spiritual importance or significance for past, present or future generations”.

There is a very prominent Victoria family history associated with this house. Owner, builder: 1901-1916: John Pitcairn Elford (b Australia 1850-1917) built this house, like his brother Theo, for revenue on part of the larger family property. John was christened on Pitcairn Island on the family's passage to California. John later went back to San Francisco to apprentice, then work as a carpenter. He returned to Victoria and after several years became a contractor in partnership with his father, building many houses and business blocks, including the old Royal Jubilee Hospital, North Ward School, the Post Office, and the Driard Hotel. In 1886 John and William J. Smith setup Queen City Brick & Tile Works, later Victoria Brick & Tile Company. In 1912 their plant, 10 acres to the east of Douglas Street and north of Topaz Avenue, produced 40,00 bricks and 12,000 feet of drain tiles a day for the building boom of the era. The Cameron family were also prominent residents from 1929-44. Both families continue to contribute vivid memories of their tenures, and of their participation in the Fernwood community.

Section 3: Heritage Thematic Framework – Residential and Community Continuity.

This home, particularly in an architecturally restored condition, can provide a material representation of the established residential continuity of the Fernwood neighbourhood, and of the domestic, community, and refined aesthetic commitment of the original builder/owners - and of their neighbourhood participation and that of successive note-worthy house residents.

Section 3: Character Defining Elements - Character-defining elements (CDEs) identify the principal features of the historic place that embody its heritage values.

The hipped roof and the asymmetrically placed gables on this two storey house are basic features of a Queen Anne residence. The front and left bays have square bays over cutaway bays, with scroll-sawn brackets. There is a bell-cast belt-course between the first and second floors and Queen Anne windows on the front and two sides. Like 1436 Elford next door, this house has an inset corner porch with turned square posts. There are sandwich brackets as capitals and turned spindles in the balustrade. A heavily bracketed through-the-roof wall dormer sits on the right front, above the porch. The original exterior has been covered with asbestos siding for decades, which has helped protect many elements of the original elaborate siding and decorative details, and which will be removed to reveal and restore original finishes. The quality of original polychromatic paint scheme will be respected in the restoration.

Original ornate front yard gardens will be recalled in the new site landscaping.