

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

Prescott Residence

35 San Jose Avenue

Original Owners: Charles Austen and Johanna Prescott

Builder: Charles Prescott

Date of Construction: 1891

Description of the Historic Place

The Prescott Residence is a one-storey wood-frame Classical Cottage located on the east side of San Jose Avenue between Dallas Road and Niagara Street in the Outer Harbour area of Victoria's historic James Bay neighbourhood. The house is distinguished by its hipped roof, central gabled dormer and symmetrical façade with a flat-roofed porch between angled bays - all with Carpenter ornamentation.

Heritage Value of the Historic Place

The heritage value of the Prescott Residence is summarized below in accordance with the Victoria Heritage Thematic Framework established in the Official Community Plan.

Theme 1: COASTAL SETTLEMENT

Subtheme 1.3: Pioneer Farms to First Suburbs

The Prescott Residence, built in 1891, is valued as a tangible representation of James Bay's transition from pioneer farm to Victoria's first Garden City suburb. In 1846, James Douglas, Hudson's Bay Company Chief Factor, established Beckley Farm on the peninsula of fertile land, now known as James Bay. The subdivision and sale of Beckley Farm land into small lots began in 1858 following the discovery of gold on the Fraser River. As James Bay developed into a centre for industry and shipping, the industrial Outer Harbour serviced the region's booming resource development and many smaller workers' homes were built nearby.

The building is significant for its association with the pioneer Prescott family, prominent for many years on San Jose Avenue. In 1891 Charles Austen Prescott (1860-1940) and Johanna Prescott (1862-1923) purchased several adjacent lots on San Jose Avenue. Charles, a carpenter, built the house at 35 San Jose. In 1911 he built and moved his family to a two-storey house at 49 San Jose Avenue. Son Claude Prescott, also a carpenter, lived at 35 San Jose from 1920-1929.

The Prescott Residence symbolizes James Bay's evolution and settlement patterns based on the subdivision of pioneer farms to residential lots. It makes a significant contribution to the rich and varied streetscapes, which continues today as a mix of residential, commercial and bureaucratic uses.

Theme 5: CULTURAL EXCHANGE

Subtheme 5.1: Architectural Expression

The Prescott Residence is valued as an example of the vernacular influence on the Late Victorian style, as characterized by its symmetrical massing, hipped roofline and Carpenter ornamentation. The front façade is distinguished by a pair of bracketed, angled, cutaway bays on either side of a small flat-roofed porch detailed with a ball and spindle frieze between chamfered square columns. The house is clad in drop siding with shingled gables. Most of the architectural and decorative features remain intact. Despite its modest scale, the house displays the high quality millwork and attention to detail that was lavished on even simple cottages of

the time, providing a public display of a carpenter's workmanship and a sign of social status. The house continues to serve its original function and contributes to the heritage character of San Jose Avenue.

Character-Defining Elements

Key elements that express the heritage value of the Prescott Residence and continue to define the character and history of the James Bay neighbourhood include:

- original location amongst houses of similar vintage and the contribution it makes to neighbourhood character, in particular San Jose Avenue
- continuous residential use

Key elements that define the heritage character of the building's exterior include:

- residential form, scale, and symmetrical massing as expressed by its: minimal setback from the front property line; one-storey height with central gabled dormer; medium-pitched hipped roof; rear hip-roofed extension with early right rear verandah addition
- wood-frame construction clad in wide drop siding with corner boards; original window openings trimmed in dimensional lumber with moulded crowns
- paneled glazed wood front door with transom window above
- exterior architectural details such as: red-brick brick internal chimney; paired scroll-sawn eave brackets; central flat-roofed entry porch with Carpenter ornamentation including ball and spindle frieze between chamfered square columns with moulded capitals and scroll-sawn brackets
- pair of front angled bays with arched, scroll-sawn, cutaway brackets and corner drop finials; right side box bay; all bays and dormer with shingled gabled pediments

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35 San Jose Avenue, James Bay
Photo: Hallmark Heritage Society
Archives, 1970s