

CITY OF VICTORIA HERITAGE REGISTER UPDATE

Original Owner: Bertha Sims

Contractor: Moore & Whittington

Date of Construction: 1907

Description of Historic Place

Situated in the historic James Bay neighbourhood on the east side of Menzies Street, between Simcoe and Niagara Streets, the Sims Residence is a two storey, wood-frame house set high on a shingle-clad plinth. The second storey is marked by projecting square bays at the corners of the front façade, and there is a small balcony above the central inset front porch.

Heritage Value of Historic Place

The Sims Residence, built in 1907, is valued as a tangible representation of James Bay's transition from a pioneer farm to the first Garden City suburb in Victoria. Hudson's Bay Company Chief Factor, James Douglas, established James Bay, a peninsula of fertile land, as Beckley farm in 1846. The early subdivision and sale of Beckley Farm land into small lots occurred just after gold was discovered on the Fraser River in 1858. James Bay subsequently developed into a centre for industry and shipping, which facilitated transportation links and residential development. James Bay's industrial Outer Harbour serviced the region's booming resource development. As a result of this commercial activity, smaller workers' homes were built in James Bay's western reaches (closer to the Outer Harbour), while grander estate homes were built on the former Beckley Farm.

The Sims Residence is additionally valued for its Edwardian-era architectural details, with its scale and grandeur reflecting the optimism and rapid growth of the booming economy prior to the outbreak of the First World War. This house is characterized by symmetrical massing, with projecting square bays on the front corners of the second storey, and was likely based on a pattern book design. Moore & Whittington, established as carpenters and builders in 1893, built it on a speculative basis for many years in the Victoria region. The first occupants were Bertha Sims (1881-1959) and Horace E. Sims (1878-1929), later the president of the Sooke Harbor Fishing & Packing Company.

The Sims Residence epitomizes the community value of the James Bay neighbourhood, the city's oldest Garden City suburb that encompasses a mix of residential, commercial and industrial uses.

Character-Defining Elements

Key elements that define the heritage character of the Sims Residence include its:

- location within the historic James Bay neighbourhood
- continuous residential use
- minimal setback from the front and side property lines
- residential form, scale and massing as expressed by its: generally symmetrical cubic form; two storey height; full ground level basement; pyramidal roof with hipped front dormer; central inset front entry; and projecting second floor corner bays
- wood-frame construction, with shingle siding at the foundation, narrow lapped wooden siding above, wooden trim and detailing, and open eaves with tongue-and-groove siding
- Edwardian era design details such as: lathe-turned inset columns; narrow front balcony with scroll-cut balustrade, modillions, dentil mouldings and scroll-cut brackets