

100 Front Street East, Bobcaygeon

Heritage Designation Evaluation

Bobcaygeon

PLAN 70 PT LOT 7 LOT 8 PT - BLK F E ANNE

PIN 63130-0243

July 2021



Statement of Cultural Heritage Value or Interest

The subject property has been researched and evaluated in order to determine its cultural heritage significance under Ontario Regulation 9/06 of the Ontario Heritage Act R.S.O. 1990. A property is eligible for designation if it has physical, historical, associative or contextual value and meets any one of the nine criteria set out under Regulation 9/06 of the Act. A heritage evaluation of the property has determined that 100 Front Street East, Bobcaygeon has cultural heritage value or interest and merits designation under the Ontario Heritage Act.

1. The property has design value or physical value because it:

i. is a rare, unique, representative or early example of a style, type, expression, material, or construction method:

Likely constructed around 1866 by John Platt, the subject property is an early example of a residential property in Bobcaygeon. It is likely the oldest surviving home in the original Rokeby townsite and one of the oldest in Bobcaygeon as a whole. It is a representative of residential vernacular design in the mid-nineteenth century and demonstrates the architectural transition occurring in the mid-nineteenth century from Georgian to Gothic domestic architecture.

ii. displays a high degree of craftsmanship or artistic merit:

The property displays a typical degree of craftsmanship and artistic merit for a house of its type and age.

iii. demonstrates a high degree of technical or scientific achievement:

There are no specific technical or scientific achievements associated with this property.

2. The property has historical or associative value because it:

i. has direct associations with a theme, event, belief, person, activity, organization, or institution that is significant to the community:

The subject property has direct associations with the lumber industry in Bobcaygeon, being home to several families, namely the Platts and the Boyds who were directly involved with this major aspect of the Bobcaygeon economy in the nineteenth century. It is also directly associated with Winnett Boyd, the grandson of lumber baron Mossom Boyd, and celebrated Canadian aeronautical engineer who made major contributions to jet engine and nuclear reactor design in the mid-twentieth century.

ii. yields, or has the potential to yield, information that contributes to an understanding of a community or culture:

The property yields information about the lumber industry in Bobcaygeon. In its association with the Platt family, it provides information about the development of lumbering in Bobcaygeon in the middle of the nineteenth century.

iii. demonstrates or reflects the work or ideas of an architect, artist, builder, designer or theorist who is significant to the community:

The builder and/or designer of the subject property are not known.

3. The property has contextual value because it:

i. is important in defining, maintaining or supporting the character of an area:

The subject property is important in supporting the character of the former Rokeby townsite and forms part of the wider cultural heritage landscape on the northern side of the Bobcaygeon River which is comprised primarily of historic residential properties centred on Market Square.

ii. is physically, functionally, visually, or historically linked to its surroundings:

The property is historically linked to its surroundings as part of the former Rokeby townsite and is linked to the other historic properties in the area as part of a wider cultural heritage landscape. It is also historically and visually linked through its location near the Bobcaygeon River and its surviving boathouse. The property can be seen as an important part of the historic landscape of Front Street East and the waterfront.

iii. is a landmark.

The property has been recognized as a local landmark by the Bobcaygeon community. The concern regarding its proposed demolition has demonstrated the familiarity of the community with this property and its important place within the historic fabric of the community.

Design and Physical Value

100 Front Street East has design and physical value as one of the oldest houses in Bobcaygeon and as the oldest house on its original location in the Rokeby townsite on the north side of the river. The house dates from prior to the incorporation of Bobcaygeon as a village in 1876, likely from the mid-1860s, and is an important remnant of the original government townsite named Rokeby.

The exact date of construction for this house is not definitively known but it was believed to date back to 1858, predating the crown patent which was issued to John and Rebecca Platt in 1862. However, the assessed values for the property indicate that a house was at this location in the mid-1860s and was likely constructed between 1863 and 1866 when the property value jumps from \$20 to \$100, with a jump to \$200 in 1867, indicating that the house may have been under construction in 1866. Similarly, the price of the property when it was sold by Rebecca and John Platt to Patrick Holleran in 1882 of \$400 indicates that there was a building on the property; Holleran was, in fact, renting a house on the property from Platt prior to the purchase indicating that a house had been constructed. It was later sold to William Sterne St. George for \$1300 in 1907 which also indicates a building on this location. If the house was constructed in the mid-1860s by the Platts, as the assessment rolls suggest, it would be one of the oldest surviving houses in Bobcaygeon as a whole and the oldest in the government townsite of Rokeby.

There are a number of architectural features visible from the exterior which would suggest a mid-nineteenth century construction date. This includes the six-over-six sash windows which were popular in mid-nineteenth century styles, although they did experience a revival in the early twentieth century. The other is the wide central entrance with transom and sidelights which is typical of a number of mid-nineteenth century architectural styles in Ontario. Structurally, the house is believed to be constructed from log and timber frame construction, dating it to an older period.

Most of the other houses from this period in Bobcaygeon which are still extant have been moved to Kawartha Settler's Village and out of their original, historic context. Some of these were located outside of the village when they were originally constructed. These include: the Mossom Boyd carriage house (1840s); the Wray house (1850); the Duggan house (1851), the Junkin house (1864), the Kimble house (1865) and the Muir house (1868). While these remain important from an historical point of view, the removal of them from their original context makes them difficult to compare to 100 Front Street East as early houses in the community because they are divorced from their surroundings.

As with many houses constructed in the early years of settlement in communities across Ontario, the house does not easily fit into an architectural style, as it had been modified

and added to over the years. At first glance, the house is most closely related to the Gothic Revival style and the Ontario Gothic cottage with its large central gable. However, the central gable is believed to have been added to the 1890s and, in fact, the development of this house shows the evolution from the Georgian to Gothic styles occurring in the middle of the nineteenth century. This evolution is typical of many nineteenth century homes, built in the early days of settlement where their designs were utilitarian, but effectively Georgian in their layout, but which became slowly transformed into the Gothic style through the addition of ornamental features.

The basic form of the house is that of a small three-bay cottage with a central entrance and gable roof, the basic prototype for much of Ontario's vernacular residential architecture in the middle of the nineteenth century. The house is built on a rectangular plan with a rear kitchen addition, which was typical. The exterior of the house has virtually no ornamentation and its most notable architectural features include its wide front verandah which stretches the length of the façade and the rubble stone chimneys, which appear to be constructed from local Bobcaygeon limestone.

This was the basic plan of most Georgian style homes in Ontario during the nineteenth century, which were generally three or five bays depending on their size, symmetrically arranged around a central hall. The Georgian style arose from the Classical tradition and was brought to Canada at the turn of the century, mostly by Loyalist settlers from the United States. It is typified primarily by its lack of ornamentation, symmetrical massing and large multi-pane windows. 100 Front Street East is by no means a Georgian house, but the original structure took some of its architectural cues from this classical style. These include its lack of ornamentation, central entrance with sidelights and transom, multi-pane sash windows, chimneys on either side of the main portion of the house and its centre hall plan. The centre hall plan, typical of many vernacular dwellings at this time, was a continuation of the symmetrical Georgian plan which had dominated residential design in many areas of the province in the first half of the century. Generally, the central hall was flanked by either one or two rooms on either side, depending on the size of the house with a central stairway leading to the bedrooms upstairs.

There are some key differences between the typical Georgian house and 100 Front Street East, which show the beginning of the transitions from one style to the next. The first is the roof. Georgian houses typically have a shallow pitched roof with the second storey windows visible on the front façade. This is not the case at the subject property where the roof is a much steeper pitch, consistent with the Gothic style which was beginning to rise in popularity in the 1850s. The next is the verandah; while verandahs were found on Georgian homes, they were not a key feature of the style, but they became increasingly popular in the second half of the century on Gothic Revival homes. It is not known whether the verandah is an original feature of the house.

These two features are also found in the Ontario Gothic cottage, the most popular house style in Ontario in the middle of the nineteenth century. Many of the classical features of the Georgian style were held over into the Gothic cottage, giving it its symmetrical layout which was paired with a central gable and decorative features such as gingerbread and wide verandahs. Features such as transoms and sidelights at the entrance and multi-pane sash windows are found in both styles. This house style was extremely popular with many families in rural and urban settings across Ontario because it took its cues from the dominant architectural style of the middle of the century – the Gothic Revival – in an accessible, reasonably-sized interpretation. It was heavily popularized in the 1860s through publications such as *The Canadian Farmer* and had a wide reaching impact.

At 100 Front Street East, the central gable was the final addition, believed to have been added around 1890. The addition of a central gable to transform a house from a basic rectangular, centre hall plan dwelling to a Gothic cottage was extremely common in Ontario communities in the second half of the nineteenth century. Homes were often constructed on the most basic plan when families first moved to an area and then added to and decorated as they settled and grew. Homeowners used the central gable to transform their house because it was popular and made their homes fashionable. The addition of the central gable was the final transformation of 100 Front Street East into a Gothic cottage. It is, however, unique in that it is not a window, but rather a door exiting onto a small balcony. There are other examples of this modification locally. At this property, in particular, the addition of the balcony took full advantage of the views afforded by this house due to its proximity to the river.

The other architectural element of the property is the boathouse. Although this appears to be in poor repair at the time of the writing of this report, it nevertheless remains an important physical element of the property and typifies the boathouses constructed in the nineteenth and early twentieth century.

The date of construction for the boathouse is not known but it was likely constructed in the late nineteenth or early twentieth century with the rise of recreational watercraft in the greater Kawartha region and the transition of the community away from the lumber industry to tourism and recreation. The building itself is highly utilitarian in construction with few architectural details except for the rear, multi-pane windows. This utilitarian design and low profile to the river is typical of turn of the century boathouses and the structure at 100 Front Street East is one of the remaining ones along the Bobcaygeon River making it itself a unique and significant structure.

Historical and Associative Value

100 Front Street has historic and associative value in its association with two of the families who lived there: the Platts and the Boyds. Both families were involved in the Bobcaygeon lumber industry in the mid-nineteenth century which was a key driver of the local economy. The Boyds who lived in the house in the twentieth century were also notable in the community in their own right, particularly Winnett Boyd, the great grandson of lumber baron Mossom Boyd, who became an important figure in Canadian engineering in the mid-twentieth century. The property yields information about the lumber industry in Bobcaygeon in the nineteenth century and its importance to the local community.

The crown patent for the subject property was received by John (1826-unknown) and Rebecca Platt (1840-unknown) in 1862. The Platts moved to Bobcaygeon from Northumberland County around 1867 and lived in the property with their two daughters, Rosannah and Annie. From census and directory records, it appears that their reason for moving to Bobcaygeon was the lumber industry.

Very little is known about the Platt family or their residence in the community, given that the family returned to Northumberland to farm, likely near the hamlet of Norham, before 1881. However, they were not resident in Bobcaygeon for as long as they owned the property, beginning to rent it out to tenants as early as the late 1870s when they appear to have moved back to Northumberland.

John Platt first appears in the Verulam Township Assessment rolls in 1862. He is as being in commercial partnership with a Read, possibly general merchant J.S. Read. Together, they are listed as “Platt & Read – Merchant” occupying a property on Joseph Street but little is known about the details of their business together. Platt appears the next year, listed alone and as the owner of the lot on Front Street. By 1867, when the house is likely to have been completed, he is listed as a lumber merchant in the assessment rolls and continues to be identified as such; his profession is corroborated by the 1865-66 Peterborough and Victoria County Directory. The family had arrived by 1867 as there are four people noted as residing at that address in the Assessment rolls.

The family continued to live in the house in the early 1870s. The 1871 census confirms their residence in Bobcaygeon. It is interesting to note that, in the census, Rebecca is listed as a lumber merchant and not her husband, although this may be an error. Not enough is known about their business in the community to make an assessment as to Rebecca’s involvement in the business.

However, despite the limited information regarding the Platts in Bobcaygeon, their residence in the village, and their departure, yields information about the growth of the lumber industry in the middle of the nineteenth century. The lumber industry was central

to the economy of the community during this period and is a significant thematic aspect of the history of the area.

The lumber industry in Bobcaygeon effectively began in the 1830s with the granting of 400 acres of land on and adjacent to Bobcaygeon Island to Thomas Need with the provision that he build a saw and grist mill for Verulam Township which was opening up at this time. The saw mill was constructed first and began the village's long association with the industry. The mill was purchased in 1844 by Mossom Boyd who would become known as one of the most important figures in the lumber industry in Ontario in the late nineteenth century. Until his death in 1883, Boyd built a significant lumber business across the Trent River system that became the largest operators in Ontario. The business which operated until 1904 was later taken over and continued by his sons Martin Mossom and W.T.C. Boyd. The business would eventually decline in the latter decades of the century with the depletion of timber resources in central Ontario but in its heyday was a major factor in the Bobcaygeon economy.

By the end of the century, Boyd's business came to dominate the Bobcaygeon lumber industry, but in its early days, he was not the only lumber merchant in the community. The 1865-66 Peterborough and Victoria Counties Directory lists two lumber merchants operating in the village: Mossom Boyd and John Platt. This was typical of lumbering areas in the early and mid-nineteenth century when various operators of different sizes were participating in the industry, either as competitors or fulfilling different aspects of it.

The lumber industry had a significant impact on the growth of the community with new residents, such as the Platts, moving to Bobcaygeon to participate and take advantage of the economic growth and new jobs it offered. From its first settlers in the 1830s, the population ballooned to 500 twenty years later, then to more than two thousand by the 1880s with a steep decline after the closure of the Boyd mill.

The reason for the importance of the industry to Bobcaygeon was because of its location in an area of prime timber resources. In the nineteenth century, the Trent River valley was the site of some of the highest quality pine in Ontario but, in the early decades of the century, was not logistically feasible to cut because of the lack of navigable route above Peterborough. The canalization of the system, beginning with the lock at Bobcaygeon in 1833, allowed for the opening of the area for logging because it allowed for the logs to be transported out of the region. Similarly, the construction of the colonization roads in this area in the 1850s, although primarily aimed at assisting settlers reach the more northerly counties, were extremely important as routes for loggers and their equipment to travel to the lumber camps. The Bobcaygeon Road, in particular, was constructed from Bobcaygeon beginning in 1856 to the Petersen Road near Carnarvon and was used extensively by Boyd as it opened up Somerville and Harvey Townships as well as the southern portion of Haliburton County.

Between 1850 and 1880, the lumber industry boomed across the northern half of Victoria County and, by the end of this period, the pine from this area was effectively annihilated. Boyd's operations had begun around Bobcaygeon and, as the area was depleted, moved north into Somerville Township and the adjacent Harvey Township, in Peterborough County, in the late 1850s and 1860s. Boyd soon shifted his business north, acquiring leases on several townships in Haliburton County, signing a lucrative deal with the Canada Land and Emigration Company in 1869. This expansion allowed the industry to continue to operate, but it required significant resources, transportation networks, and manpower to achieve.

By the late nineteenth century, the lumber industry in eastern Canada as a whole had transformed from an industry with many small local players to one dominated by a few large family firms, namely Mossom Boyd, D.D. Calvern, J.R. Booth and William Price who operated across Ontario and Quebec. These larger operators were not only successful in penetrating the more remote areas of their respective provinces because of their size and logistical power, they were capable of driving other, smaller merchants out of the industry. Boyd's path to dominance in the region is extremely clear: he was the owner of the local sawmill and had rights to large tracts of land throughout the region, but also had significant financial backers which allowed for growth and expansion.

Platt's role in this is almost completely unknown. What is known is that he arrived in Bobcaygeon to work as a lumber merchant and by the mid-1870s, he was gone. His departure coincides with a period of consolidation within the lumber industry in eastern Canada and its monopolization to a few hands. Whether his business failed or was absorbed into Boyd's cannot be determined at this time, but whatever the cause of his departure it speaks to wider trends in the lumber industry in the 1860s, 1870s and after and yields information with regard to its development in Bobcaygeon during this period.

After the Platt's departure, the property passed through a number of hands. The property was next acquired by Patrick Holleran, sometimes named as O'Holleran, in 1882. Holleran was a tailor in Bobcaygeon and had rented the property from Platt at least as early as 1881. Holleran sold the property to Mary Helen Orr in 1906 who subsequently sold it the following year to William Sterne St. George (1852-1925), an American railway official.

The property also has significant historical associations St. George's grandson, Winnett Boyd (1916-2017), who grew up in the house and became a significant figure in Canadian aeronautical and nuclear engineering in the mid-twentieth century. Born to Winnett Wornibe Boyd (1890-1950), also known as Brownie, and Marjorie Sterne St. George (1893-unknown), also known as Monnie, in 1916, Boyd was also the grandson of Mossom Boyd, the Bobcaygeon lumber baron who significant shaped the nineteenth

century growth of the village. Although born in Wales while his father served in the First World War, Boyd returned to Bobcaygeon with his mother in 1917 and spent a portion of his childhood in the home, which belonged to his grandfather, William Sterne St. George. His parents had both grown up in Bobcaygeon and had had an understanding since they were young, finally marrying in 1913 despite opposition from both families. However, with the divorce of his parents in 1928, his mother Margery continued to live in the Bobcaygeon house, while his father moved to Montreal and remarried. In 1935, Boyd attended the University of Toronto for mechanical engineering, before proceeding to MIT for graduate studies. He was highly successful in his academic studies with his receipt of the Harvey Aggett scholarship at the University of Toronto being reported on in the Bobcaygeon Independent in 1937.

Boyd was well-respected in the Canadian engineering community and was recognized for his work during his lifetime during which made a significant impact on jet engine and nuclear reactor development. After beginning his career working for Demerara Bauxite and the Aluminium Company of Canada (Alcan), he joined the Royal Canadian Navy in 1943 but was soon transferred to the National Research Council to assist with jet engine development under the umbrella of the Crown corporation, Turbo Research. When Turbo Research was sold to Avro Canada after the war, Boyd continued his career there, developing the Orenda engine which was the most powerful jet engine in the world in the mid-twentieth century.

By the 1950s, Boyd had moved on as a consulting engineer in the nuclear field. His major project was the National Research Universal Reactor at Chalk River which was, at the time, considered one of the world's foremost research reactors, producing medical isotopes, serving as the neutron source for the Canadian Neutron Beam Centre, and as a materials test site for the CANDU reactor. The reactor was retired in 2018 and was the world's oldest operating reactor at the time of its decommissioning.

Boyd won a range of awards for his work throughout his career, recognizing his contribution to Canadian engineering throughout the second half of the twentieth century. He later retired to Bobcaygeon and died in 2017 at Victoria Manor in Lindsay at the age of 100. Although Boyd did not live in Bobcaygeon for much of his adult life, he nevertheless had a strong connection to the community both individually and as part of the Boyd family.

Contextual Value

100 Front Street East has contextual value in that it is historically linked to its surroundings as part of the nineteenth century landscape of Rokeby. It is also linked to

the historic Trent Severn Waterway system, particularly through its boathouse. The property is also a local landmark.

As the likely oldest surviving home in Rokeby, the property is historically linked to the other historic properties on the northern mainland. The government townsite of Rokeby forms a large cultural heritage landscape centred on Market Square where Main and Joseph streets meet. From this core, the former government townsite extends to the east, north and west. While there are many contemporary homes in this area, a significant collection of historic properties remains. These are primarily residential and date from the 1860s and onward. 100 Front Street East is a key part of this landscape because of its age.

The property has a significant contextual connection to the Trent Severn Waterway to which it is adjacent. The first lock on the system was constructed in Bobcaygeon in 1833 as the first step towards canalization of the Trent system and the waterway has always had a significance presence in the community. 100 Front Street forms part of the historic landscape of the waterway as it passed through the village and has done so since the 1860s. Although the vegetation in front of the house itself is now overgrown, the house was at one time, clearly visible from the water, as was its boathouse and it maintained the character of the area which included a range of boathouses and associated historic homes which could be seen from the water when passing through the community. Although this landscape has changed, particularly with the demolition of the two Boyd homes on the opposite side of the river, this contextual connection to the waterway and the property continues to support its unique historic character.

The subject property is also recognized as a local landmark by the Bobcaygeon community. Located on Front Street East, it is close to the water but the house not immediately noticeable from the water or the road; the boathouse can be seen from the river. However, the concern regarding the proposed demolition of the property in early 2021 has identified the property as a local landmark due to the recognition by the community as such because it is a well known property in the village, particularly because of its association with Margery Sterne St. George and Norman Oliver, who purchased the house from her in 1971. The lack of visibility of the house was not the case in the late twentieth century when its prominent location and well-kept grounds made it visible from the water and road.

Summary of Reasons for Designation

The short statement of reasons for designation and the description of the heritage attributes of the property, along with all other components of the Heritage Designation Brief, constitute the Reasons for Designation required under the Ontario Heritage Act.

Short Statement of Reasons for Designation

100 Front Street East in Bobcaygeon has cultural heritage value as it is believed to be the oldest surviving residential property on the Rokeby town site and, therefore, an early example of a house in Bobcaygeon as a whole. The house appears to have been constructed around 1866 by John Platt, a lumber merchant, as a home for his family. The house is of vernacular construction but is demonstrative of the transition between the Georgian and Gothic Revival styles in the middle of the nineteenth century, with Gothic features added to a classical centre hall plan design including the centre gable which is believed to have been added in the 1890s.

It has historical and associative value for its association with the both the Platt and Boyd families who were players in the lumber industry in the second half of the nineteenth century. The industry was a major economic driver in the early history of the village and the subject property yields information on the development of the industry. More specifically, the property was owned by Winnett Wornibe Boyd, his wife Margery Sterne St. George and their family in the early twentieth century, including their son Winnett Boyd, the noted Canadian engineer who made significant contributions to nuclear development and jet engine design.

The property has contextual value as it is historically linked to its surroundings as part of the former government townsite of Rokeby. This cultural heritage landscape, which is located on the north bank of the Bobcaygeon River, is comprised of a large number of historic properties dating back to the 1860s of which 100 Front Street East is the oldest. The subject property also has a contextual connection to the Trent Severn Waterway to which it is adjacent and supports the historic character of the waterway as it passes through Bobcaygeon. It is also a local landmark and has been recognized as such by community members.

Summary of Heritage Attributes to be Designated

The Reasons for Designation include the following heritage attributes and apply to all elevations, unless otherwise specified, and the roof including: all façades, entrances, windows, chimneys, and trim, together with construction materials of wood, brick, stone, stucco, concrete, plaster parging, metal, glazing, their related building techniques and landscape features.

Design and Physical Value

- One and a half storey timber construction
- Symmetrical massing
- Steeply pitched gable roof
- Clapboard cladding
- Central gable including:
 - French doors with rounded transom
 - Balcony
- Fenestration including:
 - Six over six sash windows
 - French doors
- Verandah including:
 - Square columns
- Central entrance including
 - Transom
 - Sidelights
- Stone chimneys

Historical and Associative Value

- Relationship to the Platt and Boyd families
- Relationship to the nineteenth century lumber industry in Bobcaygeon

Contextual Value

- Boathouse on the Bobcaygeon River
- Views to and from the house along Front Street East and the Bobcaygeon River

Images



100 Front Street East, Bobcaygeon – Front view



100 Front Street East, Bobcaygeon – Rear view



100 Front Street East, Bobcaygeon – Side view



100 Front Street East, Bobcaygeon - Boathouse



100 Front Street East, Bobcaygeon – Historic image



100 Front Street East, Bobcaygeon – Historic image

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