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Item No. 9.1.2
Heritage Advisory Committee
June 22, 2022

TO: Chair and Members of the Heritage Advisory Committee

-Original Signed-

SUBMITTED BY:

Jacques Dubé, Chief Administrative Officer

DATE: June 9, 2022

SUBJECT: Case H00537: Request to include 1102 Purcell's Cove Road, Halifax in the Registry of Heritage Property for the Halifax Regional Municipality

ORIGIN

Application by Fowler Bauld & Mitchell (FBM) Ltd., on behalf of the property owner, Anchor Group Limited, to include 1102 Purcell's Cove Road, Halifax in the Registry of Heritage Property for the Halifax Regional Municipality.

LEGISLATIVE AUTHORITY

The *Heritage Property Act* for the Province of Nova Scotia.

RECOMMENDATION

Should 1102 Purcell's Cove Road, Halifax score 50 or more points on evaluation as a heritage property under the HRM Heritage Property Program, the Heritage Advisory Committee recommends that Regional Council:

1. Set a date for a heritage hearing to consider the inclusion of the subject property in the Registry of Heritage Property for the Halifax Regional Municipality; and
2. Approve the request to include 1102 Purcell's Cove Road, Halifax in the Registry of Heritage Property for the Halifax Regional Municipality, as shown on Map 1, as a municipal heritage property under the *Heritage Property Act*.

BACKGROUND

In April 2022, Fowler Bauld & Mitchell (FBM) Ltd. applied on behalf of the property owner, Anchor Group Limited, to include their 1102 Purcell’s Cove Road property in the Registry of Heritage Property for the Halifax Regional Municipality. The property and the abutting lot (1110 Purcell’s Cove Road, PID 00251843) are located on the Purcell’s Cove Road, shortly after the fork with the Herring Cove Road close to the subdivision known as Brae Burn (Map 1). The subject site contains the former St. John the Baptist Roman Catholic Church and the associated parochial school, while the neighbouring site at 1110 Purcell’s Cove Road contains the former church rectory. The church was erected in 1929 to replace a repurposed powder magazine that had formerly served as a church for the community. The church, which was constructed in the Spanish Mission style, has strong ties to the local community and a remarkably unique architectural style. The church was home to the local parish until 2021, when the Archdiocese announced the closure of the church due to low parishioner numbers, financial constraints, and a decline in available priests. The property was subsequently sold to the current property owners, Anchor Group Limited.

This application is being considered in accordance with Sections 14 (Recommendation as municipal heritage property) and 15 (Registration as municipal heritage property) of the *Heritage Property Act*.

HRM’s Heritage Property Program

The purpose of the HRM Heritage Property Program is to help protect and conserve significant heritage resources including buildings, streetscapes, sites, areas, and conservation districts that reflect the rich heritage found in local communities throughout HRM. One of the principal aims of the Heritage Property Program is to recognize significant heritage resources through the inclusion of properties into the Municipal Registry of Heritage Property.

Under the Heritage Property Program, all registration applications for heritage buildings are evaluated by the Heritage Advisory Committee (HAC) using “The Evaluation Criteria for Registration of Heritage Buildings in Halifax Regional Municipality” (Attachment A).

The Evaluation Criteria for scoring a property and building are broken down into six categories as follows:

Criterion	Highest Possible Score
1. Age	25
2. Historical or Architectural Importance	20
3. Significance of Architect or Builder	10
4. Architectural Merit: Construction type and Style	20
5. Architectural Integrity	15
6. Relationship to Surrounding Area	10
Total	100

Should the HAC score a property with 50 or more points, a positive recommendation will be forwarded to Regional Council. If the property scores less than 50 points, the report will not be forwarded to Regional Council.

Nova Scotia Heritage Property Act

HRM’s Heritage Property Program receives its authority from the *Heritage Property Act* which seeks:

“to provide for the identification, designation, preservation, conservation, protection and rehabilitation of buildings, public-building interiors, structures, streetscapes, cultural landscapes, areas and districts of historic, architectural or cultural value, in both urban and rural areas, and to encourage their continued use”.

Sections 14(2) and 15(1) under the *Heritage Property Act* require that notice of recommendation is given to the property owner at least thirty (30) days prior to any Council decision to include the property in the Registry of Heritage Property for the Halifax Regional Municipality. The property owner is also given an opportunity to address Council before a decision is made on the registration request. Should a positive recommendation be forwarded to Council, heritage staff will ensure the required notices are sent to the owners and deposited at the Registry of Deeds.



Figure 1: 1102 Purcell's Cove Road (May 2022)

DISCUSSION

Heritage registration applications are evaluated by the HAC relative to six evaluation criteria as outlined previously, and described in greater detail in Attachment A. To assist the HAC in their evaluation and scoring, staff offer the following comments based on a historical research report (Attachment B).

1. Age:

The lands upon which the present church and parochial school buildings sit were conveyed by John Egan to the Roman Catholic Episcopal Corporation in January and October 1920. At the time of conveyance, the property contained a former powder magazine building, which served as a community church for nine years until the community had grown sufficiently to justify its establishment of a parish in 1927. The new St. John the Baptist church was constructed throughout 1928 and on June 24th, 1929, the cornerstone for the new church was laid by Bishop Macdonald.

Research indicates that the building was constructed in 1929 and as such, **staff recommend a score of 5 points for age.**

2. Historical OR Architectural Importance:

Note: Customarily, staff identifies *either* historical or architectural importance under this category and only includes information on the selected category in the report. In this case, staff have identified that the former St. John the Baptist Church has strong relationships to important persons in local history; specifically, to Rev. Peter F. Martin. However, as this is explored in greater detail below, Rev. Martin is known to have led racist, anti-Black performances, known as minstrel shows, prior to and during his assignment as the pastor at St. John the Baptist parish. Staff wish to address this historical association by suggesting that Rev. Martin's contributions to the church's history not be considered to add to the historical value of the property in any way. As such, staff are recommending that the subject property be evaluated for Architectural Importance only under this category.

Relationship to Important Occasions, Institutions, Personages or Groups

The former St. John the Baptist church has historical ties to John Egan (who deeded the property to the Church) and Reverend Peter F. Martin (b. 1892; d. 1973).

Rev. Peter F. Martin was born in 1882 and studied at St. Francis Xavier University. When in 1927 the congregation of St. John the Baptist had grown sufficiently to justify the establishment of a parish, Martin was assigned as its first pastor. Rev. Martin was instrumental in fundraising towards the creation of the

parish and the 1929 construction of the church building. He was an avid fundraiser, having raised \$100,000 toward the establishment of the St. Patrick’s Home for Boys, and also established baseball and basketball teams for the local youth.

It is important to note that Rev. Martin was also responsible for the staging of many minstrel shows at the old St. Agnes Hall. Minstrel shows were a common form of 19th and early 20th century entertainment which were deeply rooted in anti-Black racism and which employed blackface and racial stereotyping to express nostalgia for slavery and racist violence. Minstrels wearing blackface portrayed Black people as inferior: mocking their intelligence, dialect, dancing, and physical features. Canada had both professional and amateur minstrel troupes, and minstrelsy was a favourite form of entertainment used to fundraise for everything from schools and churches to police, community groups, and even charities. Blackface minstrelsy in Canada has regularly been used by white immigrant groups to assimilate into a white hegemonic society at the expense of the exclusion of Black people. While the popularity of minstrelsy has greatly declined, the use of blackface continues to this day to serve (intentionally or otherwise) as a means of excluding Black people from full and equal participation and recognition in society. **Based upon this information, staff recommend that the historical associations with Rev. Martin not be considered in the historical value of the property, and instead that the property should be evaluated only on Architectural Importance.**

Important/Unique Architectural Style or Highly Representative of an Era

The church building at 1102 Purcell’s Cove Road was constructed in the Spanish Mission Revival style. This church is the only such example of this style found in an ecclesiastical building in all Atlantic Canada and is therefore considered exceedingly rare. The nearest identified example can be found in the St. Theresa Roman Catholic Church in Toronto, Ontario. More detail on the Spanish Mission Revival architectural style can be found under the Architectural Merit evaluation in this report.

Due to the uniqueness of this architectural style in Atlantic Canada (and Canada broadly), **staff recommend a score of 16-20 points for the importance/uniqueness of architectural style.**

3. Significance of Architect or Builder:

St. John the Baptist Church was designed by architect David Francis Saxton (1889-1962). Saxton worked as a draughtsman, architect, and instructor, first operating his own practice from 1920-1927 and later joining the firm of C.A. Fowler and Co.

Saxton was known for designing other buildings in the Halifax area, including 1571 Barrington Street (a commercial storefront originally built for J.W. O’Neal’s “Semi-Ready Tailoring”), the Infectious Diseases Hospital at the intersection of University and Robie Streets (since demolished), the Governor McCall Apartments at the Former Exhibition Grounds, which temporarily housed families following the Halifax Explosion (since demolished), and a residence on the southeastern corner of Beech Street and Jubilee Road for a local house painter, Thomas J. Walsh.

Based on the local buildings known to have been designed by David Francis Saxton, **staff recommend a score between 1-3 points for the significance of the architect.**

4. Architectural Merit:

Construction type or building technology

The church building is of heavy timber framed construction, which is a typical construction type and technology for churches built during this period. The exterior of the church is faced in white Dutch lap siding, the windows are wood-framed, and the roof is asphalt shingled.

Based on the heavy timber framed construction, **staff recommend a score of 1-3 for construction type.**

Style

The church building was designed in a Spanish Mission Revival style, inspired by the architecture of the Spanish Missions in California. This style is exceedingly uncommon in ecclesiastical buildings in Nova Scotia. The style is derived from the style of Spanish missionaries in California from the 1700s through to the late 1800s, who colonized indigenous lands and forcibly converted indigenous people to Christianity.

At 1102 Purcell's Cove Road, many of the traditional Spanish Mission style materials (such as stone, stuccoed brick, and adobe) were translated to a typical timber construction, which better reflects the locally available skills and materials. However, several key Spanish Mission Revival style characteristics can still be found in the St. John the Baptist Church, including the hall-church layout with dual, octagonal belltowers, the projecting eaves, the decoratively shaped parapets above the gable roofline and the main entrance, and the use of round/roman arches in windows and mouldings.

The church also houses a pre-1845 statue of St. John the Baptist, which was brought from Rome by Archbishop Wash and originally installed in the tower-niche of St. John's Rest on Mumford Road. In 1928, St. John's Rest was destroyed by fire, but coincidentally, Rev. Martin had removed the statue three days prior and installed it at the new St. John the Baptist Church.

Character defining elements of the church building at 1102 Purcell's Cove Road include:

- Original Spanish Mission Revival church building
- Moderately pitched gabled roof with projecting eaves and a decorative parapet at the western gable end
- Apse with skylight at rear
- Board-formed concrete foundation pierced by pairs of single-hung, one-over-one windows with storm sashes
- Dual towers of Moorish-inspired octagonal design surmounted by belfries with octagonal domed roofs
- Towers featuring narrow rectangular windows and round-headed niches with label moulding, spherical label stops and statues of St. John the Baptist and St. Jean de Brebeuf
- Central row of four round-headed windows with large semi-circular label moulding terminating in spherical label stops
- Double central door with semicircular transept, label moulding, spherical label stops, and decoratively shaped parapet above
- Flanking single doors with semicircular transept, label moulding and spherical label stops (a later modification)
- Six buttresses either side
- Four sets of stained-glass windows per side
- Each set of stained-glass windows consisting of a pair of round-headed windows surmounted by a single circular window, framed by a semi-circular label moulding with spherical label stops, all windows having wired glass storm sashes
- Large round oriel window on the western elevation with three stained glass windows and a semi-dome roof

The church at 1102 Purcell's Cove Road is believed to be the only example of an ecclesiastical building in the Spanish Mission Revival Style in Atlantic Canada. As such, **staff recommend a score of 7-10 for style.**

5. Architectural Integrity:

The church building maintains a very good level of architectural integrity based on its original design and construction in 1928-9. There have been two primary changes over time; the first is a 1948 rear addition to accommodate the parochial school. The addition, which was created through the rear of the church basement and as such, has no impact on the church building's character defining elements. The second change includes the widening of the narthex (entry vestibule) sometime after 1972 to accommodate a pair

of front-facing, flanking doors. The doors appear to have been reused from the sides of the original narthex, similarly to the windows which were removed and then reinstated on the sides of the new narthex.

In terms of condition, St. John the Baptist Church is in good overall condition, with only minor noticeable wear to the siding and the roof. The wood-frame windows and the label mouldings are in excellent condition with minimal paint flaking and no obvious signs of rot.

The church has undergone only very minor modifications over the years and has been maintained in good condition. **As such, staff recommend a score of 11-15 points for integrity.**

6. Relationship to Surrounding Area:

The former St. John the Baptist Church has a strong relationship to both its own lot and to its broader surroundings. For most of its history, the church has been the tallest and more prominent architectural work in the neighbourhood and has served as a visual focal point for the larger community. Through the statue of St. John the Baptist, which was sourced from St. John's Rest on Mumford Road, the church also has historical ties to the first Catholic Church in Dutch Village.

Directly across from the church is an intact neighbourhood, the Brae Burn Subdivision, which was created in 1914. One of the original houses of the subdivision, which stands at what is now 1107 Purcell's Cove Road, served as the original rectory for the church. The neighbourhood and the church, together, represent a remarkably intact early 20th century neighbourhood that is illustrative of shifting demographics as people began leaving the old city and developing the mainland during the post-war boom.

The subject site is a prominent architectural feature of the surrounding area and bears a strong relationship to nearby neighbourhoods. As such, **staff recommend a score between 6 and 10 points for the relationship to the surrounding area.**

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

The HRM costs associated with processing this application can be accommodated within the approved 2022/2023 operating budget for C340 - Social and Heritage Policy.

RISK CONSIDERATION

No risk considerations were identified.

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

The community engagement process for a heritage registration is consistent with the intent of the HRM Community Engagement Strategy. The level of community engagement for this application was information sharing, achieved through public access to the required Heritage Advisory Committee meeting. As a provision of the *Heritage Property Act*, no registration of a municipal heritage property shall take place until Regional Council has given the owner of the property an opportunity to be heard.

ENVIRONMENTAL IMPLICATIONS

No environmental implications were identified.

ALTERNATIVE

The Heritage Advisory Committee may choose to refuse the application to include 1102 Purcell's Cove Road, Halifax, in the Registry of Heritage Property for the Halifax Regional Municipality if the property scores less than 50 points based on the evaluation criteria. In doing so, the application will not proceed to Regional Council for evaluation.

ATTACHMENTS

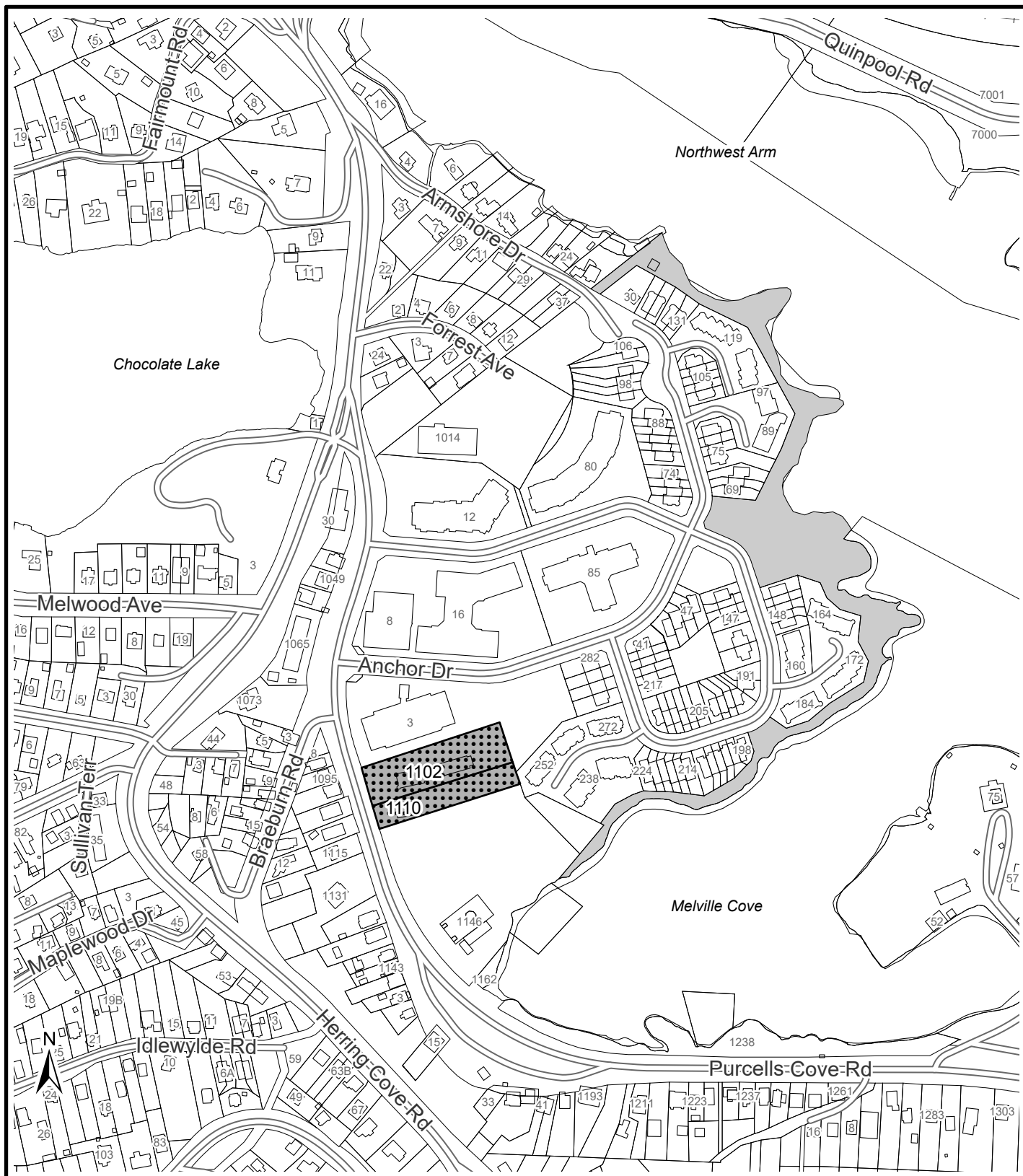
Map 1: Location Map

Attachment A: Evaluation Criteria

Attachment B: Historical Research Report

A copy of this report can be obtained online at halifax.ca or by contacting the Office of the Municipal Clerk at 902.490.4210.

Report Prepared by: Jenny Lugar, Planner II, 902.399.8576

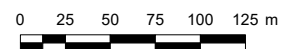


Map 1 - Location Map

1102-1110 Purcells Cove Rd,
Halifax

- Registered Heritage Property
- Subject Properties

HALIFAX



HRM does not guarantee the accuracy of any representation on this plan.

Attachment A

HALIFAX REGIONAL MUNICIPALITY HERITAGE PROPERTY PROGRAM EVALUATION CRITERIA

**EVALUATION CRITERIA
FOR REGISTRATION OF HERITAGE BUILDINGS (Revised 2004)**

1. AGE

Age is probably the single most important factor in the popular understanding of the heritage value of buildings. The following age categories are based on local, national and international occasions that may be considered to have defined the character of what is how the Halifax Regional Municipality and its architecture.

Date of Construction	Points	Timeline
1749 - 1785	25	Halifax Garrison Town to the Loyalist migration
1786 - 1830	20	Boom period following construction of Shubenacadie Canal
1831 - 1867	16	From Boom to Confederation
1868 - 1899	13	Confederation to the end of the 19 th century
1900 - 1917	9	Turn of the Century to Halifax Harbour Explosion
1918 - 1945	5	The War Years
1945 - Present	3	Post-War

** Maximum score of 25 points in this category*

2. HISTORICAL OR ARCHITECTURAL IMPORTANCE

A building can receive points for:

- A) Having specific associations with important occasions, institutions, personages and groups,
OR
B) For being architecturally important unique/representative of a particular period.

2A) Relationship to Important Occasions, Institutions, Personages or Groups

Nationally	Points	Comments
Intimately Related	16 - 20	
Moderately Related	11 - 15	
Loosely Related	1 - 10	
Provincially	Points	Comments
Intimately Related	11 - 15	
Moderately Related	6 - 10	
Loosely Related	1 - 5	

Locally	Points	Comments
Intimately Related	11 - 15	
Moderately Related	6 - 10	
Loosely Related	1 - 5	
No relationship to important occasions, institutions, personages or groups.	0	

** Maximum score of 20 points in this category, scoring from one of the three categories only*

2B) Important/Unique Architectural Style or Highly Representative of an Era

Importance	Points	Comments
Highly important, Unique, or representative of an era	16 - 20	
Moderately important, Unique, or representative of an era	11 - 15	
Somewhat important, or representative of an era	10 - 1	
Not important, Unique, or representative of an era	0	

** Maximum score of 20 points in this category.*

3. SIGNIFICANCE OF ARCHITECT/BUILDER

Is the structure representative of the work of an architect or builder of local, provincial or national importance?

Status	Points	Comments
Nationally	7 - 10	
Provincially Significant	4 - 6	
Locally Significant	1 - 3	
Not Significant	0	

** Maximum score of 10 points in this category.*

4. ARCHITECTURAL MERIT

The assessment of architectural merit is based on two factors:

A) **Construction type/building technology**: which refers to the method by which the structure was built (early or rare uses of materials), and building techniques;

AND

B) **Style**: which refers to the form or appearance of the architecture.

Construction Type/Building Technology		
A) Construction type	Points	Comments
Very rare/ early example	7 - 10	
Moderately rare/ early	4 - 6	
Somewhat rare/ early example	1 - 3	
Not rare/ common example	0	
B) Style	Points	Comments
Very rare/ early example	7 - 10	
Moderately rare/ early	4 - 6	
Somewhat rare/ early example	1 - 3	
Not rare/ common example	0	

** Maximum score of 10 points for Construction Type, and a maximum score of 10 for Style - a total maximum of 20 points in this category.*

5. ARCHITECTURAL INTEGRITY

Architectural Integrity refers to the extent to which the building retains original features/ structures/ styles, not the state of the building's condition.

Architecture	Consider any additions/ removal/ alterations to windows, doors, porches, dormers, roof lines, foundations, chimneys, and cladding.	
Exterior	Points	Comments
Largely unchanged	11 - 15	
Modest changes	6 - 10	
Major changes	1 - 5	
Seriously compromised	0	

** Maximum score of 15 points in this category.*

6. RELATIONSHIP TO SURROUNDING AREA

Points	Comments
6 - 10	The building is an important architectural asset contributing to the heritage character of the surrounding area.
1 - 5	The Architecture is compatible with the surrounding area and maintains its heritage character.
0	Does not contribute to the character of the surrounding area.

** Maximum score of 10 points in this category.*

SCORING SUMMARY

Property	Date Reviewed	Reviewer

Criterion	Highest Possible Score	Score Awarded
1. Age	25	
2. a) Relationship to Important Occasions, Institutions, Personages or Groups OR 2. b) Important, Unique Architectural Style, or Highly Representative of an Era	20	
3. Significance of Architect or Builder	10	
4. a) Architectural Merit: Construction type/building technology	10	
4. b) Architectural Merit: Style	10	
5. Architectural Integrity	15	
6. Relationship to Surrounding Area	10	
Total	100	

SCORE NECESSARY FOR DESIGNATION**50****Designation Recommended?****YES****NO****COMMENTS:**

Research Report

1102 Purcell's Cove Road, Halifax
St. John the Baptist Church

Prepared by:
Carter Beaupre-McPhee

May 12, 2022



HALIFAX

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Age

1102 Purcell’s Cove Road, formerly known as St. John the Baptist Roman Catholic Church, is situated on the eastern side of Purcell’s Cove Road between the intersections with Braeburn Road and Rosborough Loop. The present church building was erected in **1929** to replace the repurposed powder magazine that had formerly served as a mission church for the community (Evening Mail, 1929; Piers, 1932; St. John the Baptist Church, 1945).

The lands upon which the present church and parochial school buildings sit were conveyed by John Egan to the Roman Catholic Episcopal Corporation in two parts, the rear powder magazine parcel in January 1920 and the empty parcel in front in October 1920 [see Figures 2 & 4]. Much later, in 1968, the heirs of John Egan’s late son, Edmund J. Egan, conveyed to the Roman Catholic Episcopal Corp the large adjacent lot known as Egan’s Grounds, which stretched from the church’s lands to the edge of Melville Cove [see Figure 3]. When church building was surplus, the Catholic Archdiocese sold to Anchor Group the aforementioned front and rear church lots together with a sliver of the neighbouring Egan’s Grounds lot that includes the former Glebe House [see Figure 4].

OWNERSHIP HISTORY

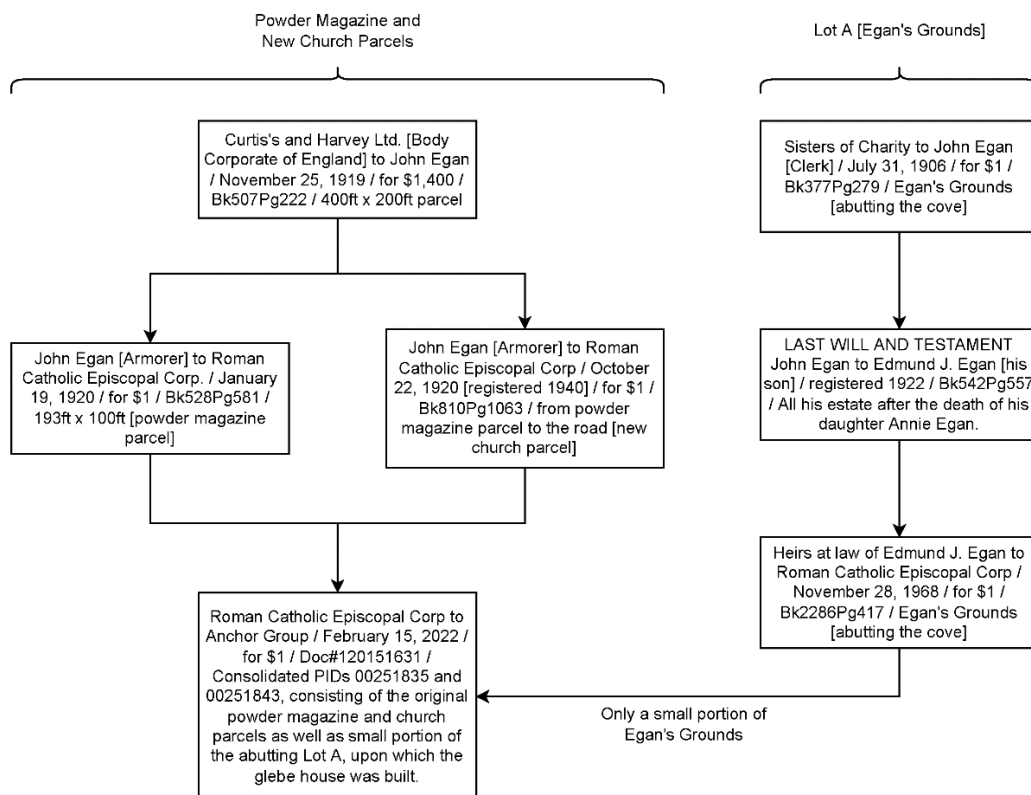


Figure 1: Deed history of 1102 Purcell’s Cove Rd

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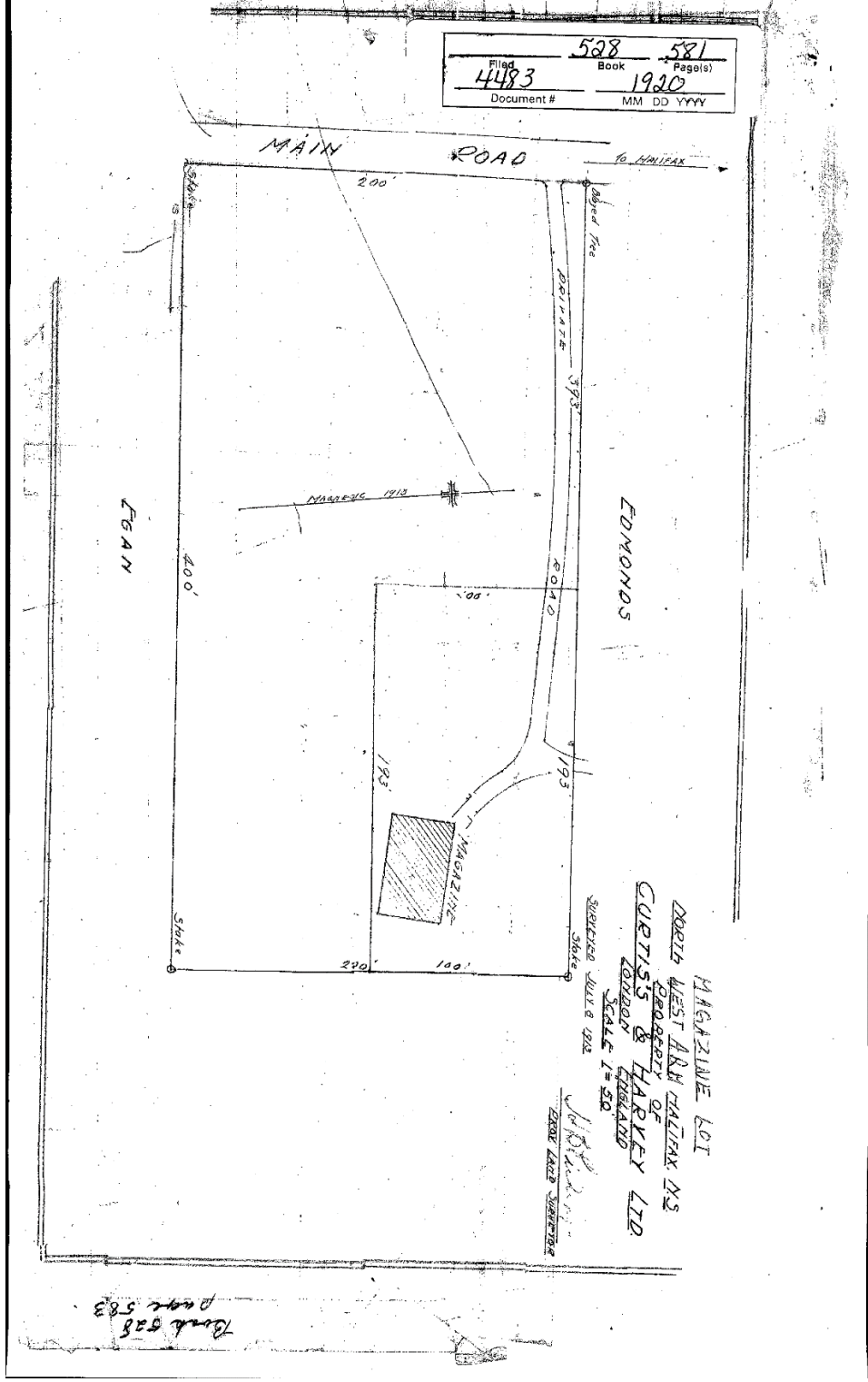


Figure 2: 1919 Plan showing the Powder Magazine pre-expansion and its lot as conveyed by John Egan to the Roman Catholic Episcopal Corp.

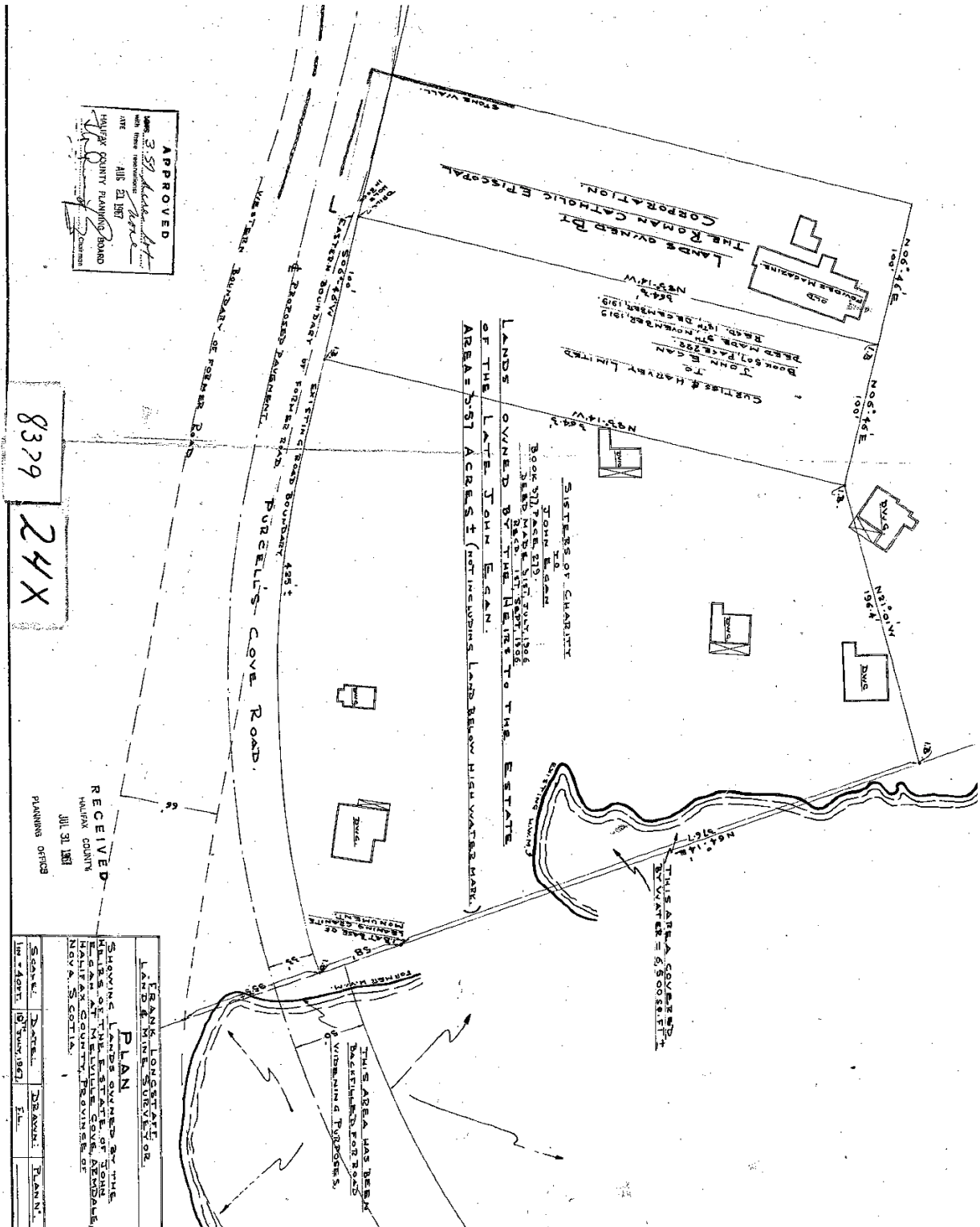


Figure 3: 1967 Plan showing the footprint of the Old Powder Magazine after additions and modifications from its use as a church and as a wartime emergency hospital [for unknown reasons the 1929 church building and the parochial school building are not depicted] (Longstaff, 1967)



Figure 5: St. John the Baptist Church in a 1961 aerial photo of Armdale (Halifax Planning Dept., 1961).

Historical or Architectural Importance

Relationship to Important Occasions, Institutions, Personages or Groups

The former St. John the Baptist Church at 1102 Purcell's Cove has historical associations with John Egan, Rev. Peter F. Martin, [b. 1792; d. 1873], his eldest son James William Johnston [Jr.], and his grandson Arthur Clement Johnston.

John Egan [b. 1839, d. 1921] and the Old Church (St. John the Baptist Church, 1945)

John Egan was born in 1839 in England, and emigrated to Canada at a young age (St. John the Baptist Church, 1945). He worked as a gunmaker for most of his life, following in the profession of his grandfather who lived in Dublin, Ireland (St. John the Baptist Church, 1945). At around 22 years of age, Egan joined the Halifax Volunteer Battalion as a gunmaker, and he is listed in the original roll of the Halifax Rifles from 1860 (Mackinlay, 1888; St. John the Baptist Church, 1945). The Volunteer Battalion were primarily engaged in training, ceremonial duties, and shooting competitions; however, they were called to defend Halifax against rumors of possible Fenian raids

in 1866, though the rumours proved to be unfounded (Mackinlay, 1888). In 1906, Egan purchased approximately 3.57 acres of land along Melville Cove from the Sisters of Charity [the local order of Catholic nuns] (Longstaff, 1967; NSPOL, 1906).

Following the Halifax Explosion and the rising cost of housing in the city, many began to move to the West End and across the Northwest Arm (Piers, 1932). John Egan saw the rapid growth of the community between Armdale and Herring Cove and identified a pressing need for a Catholic place of worship (St. John the Baptist Church, 1945). In 1919, Egan purchased a 200 ft by 400 ft parcel of land adjacent to Egan's Grounds from Curtis's and Harvey Ltd. of London, England (NSPOL, 1919). Curtis's and Harvey Ltd. was an explosives manufacturer which fell under control of the British Government during World War I and manufactured munitions (Cocroft et al., 2014). This munitions company had built a powder magazine on this lot to store dynamite and other explosives (St. John the Baptist Church, 1945). After the purchase of the powder magazine lot, Egan made an agreement with Archbishop Edward Joseph McCarthy: Egan would deed land to the Roman Catholic Episcopal Corp., provided the building be used as a chapel and religious services be provided for the community every Sunday (Gibson, 1929; Piers, 1932). The Catholic Church agreed, the land was conveyed in two parts in 1920, and the community faithful worked quickly to convert the old powder magazine to a small chapel which would be known as St. John the Baptist (St. John the Baptist Church, 1945). This little chapel was blessed by Archbishop Edward J. McCarthy on June 24th, 1920 (Gibson, 1929). From 1920 through 1927 the chapel was operated as a mission of St. Agnes Catholic Church, with the first mass held Sunday June 27th, 1920 and regular Sunday services provided by Rev. Michael J. Cole [later Monsignor Cole], the pastor of St. Agnes (St. John the Baptist Church, 1945).

In 1920, at 81 years of age, John Egan left Canada and travelled to California for the benefit of his health, but he died in August, 1921 (St. John the Baptist Church, 1945). His body was transported back to Halifax and buried in Holy Cross Cemetery (St. John the Baptist Church, 1945).

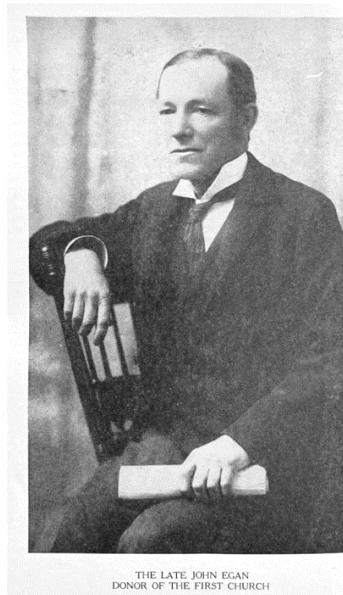
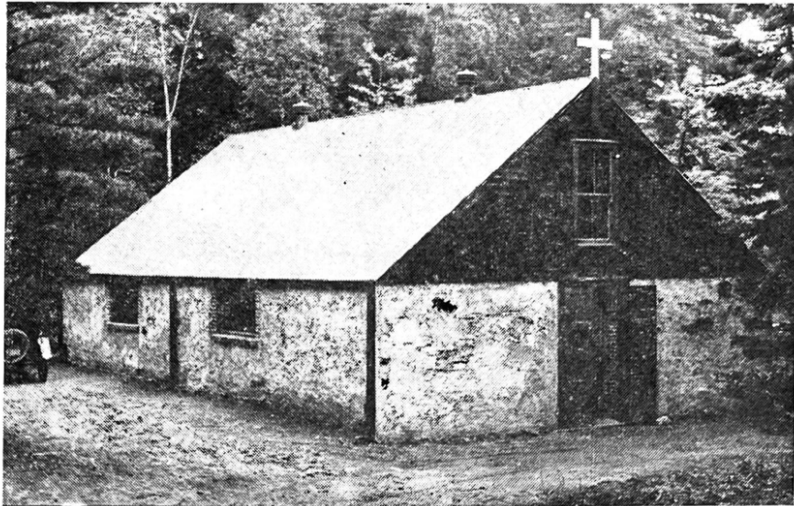


Figure 6: Portrait of John Egan (St. John the Baptist Church, 1945)



THE FIRST CHURCH—FORMERLY A POWDER MAGAZINE



THE OLD CHURCH—NOW FITTED UP AS AN A.R.P.
EMERGENCY HOSPITAL

Figure 7: The powder magazine fitted out as a church and later as an emergency hospital during WWII, showing the front addition originally added to accommodate a rapidly growing congregation (St. John the Baptist Church, 1945)

[Rev. Peter F. Martin \[b.1892, d.1964\] \(St John the Baptist Church, 1979\)](#)

By October 1, 1927, the congregation of St. John the Baptist had grown sufficiently to justify its establishment as a parish, with the curate of St. Agnes, Rev. Peter F. Martin, assigned as its first pastor (Gibson, 1929). Rev. Martin was born in Halifax in 1892 to Senator Peter F. Martin and Elizabeth Sullivan (Shea, 2021; St John the Baptist Church, 1979). He studied at St. Francis Xavier University as well as Holy Heart Seminary, and was ordained June 27, 1920 (Keating et al., 2000; St John the Baptist Church, 1979). He was appointed assistant to the St. Agnes parish priest Monsignor Cole (St John the Baptist Church, 1979). Msgr. Cole reportedly once told Martin “If you want a parish of your own, do something with that magazine at Armdale,” so he bought the house across the street from the powder magazine and got to work fundraising (St John the Baptist Church, 1979). So keen was his ability for fundraising that he raised \$100,000 for the establishment of the St. Patrick’s Home for Boys (St John the Baptist Church, 1979). Rev. Martin also had a strong interest in sports, and developed baseball and basketball teams to support the local youth (St John the Baptist Church, 1979).

It is important to note that Rev. Martin was also responsible for the staging of many minstrel shows at old St. Agnes Hall (St John the Baptist Church, 1979). Minstrel shows were a common form of 19th and early 20th century entertainment deeply rooted in anti-Black racism and which employed blackface and racial stereotyping to express nostalgia for slavery and racist violence (Howard, 2017). Minstrels wearing blackface portrayed Black people as inferior: mocking their intelligence, dialect, dancing, and physical features (Anti-Defamation League, 2019). Canada had both professional and amateur minstrel troupes, and minstrelsy was a favourite form of entertainment used to fundraise for everything from schools and churches, to police, community groups, and even charities (Howard, 2017). Blackface minstrelsy in Canada has regularly been used by white immigrant groups to assimilate into a white hegemonic society at the expense of othering Black people (Thompson, 2019). While the popularity of minstrelsy has greatly declined, the use of blackface continues to this day to serve [intentionally or otherwise] as a means of othering and excluding Black people from full and equal participation and recognition in society (Howard, 2017; Thompson, 2019). In light of Rev. Martin’s role in staging minstrel shows at old St. Agnes Hall, his contribution to the church’s history should not be considered to add to the historical value of the property in any way.

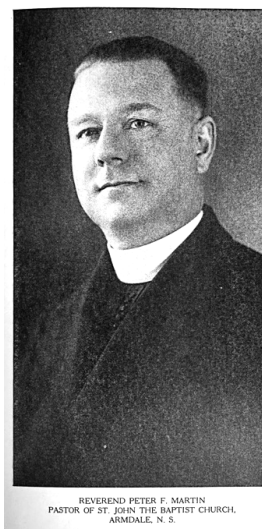


Figure 8: Portrait of Rev. Peter F. Martin (St. John the Baptist Church, 1945)

The New Church of St. John the Baptist

During Rev. Martin's tenure, the local population and congregation continued to grow in tandem, and the old church was soon found to be too small to serve the community (St. John the Baptist Church, 1945). An addition was added to the front of the old church to accommodate 50 people, but this too would only suffice for a short time (St. John the Baptist Church, 1945). By now, 70 families were attending services, and the Sunday school attendance had risen to 130 children (Evening Mail, 1929).

Funds were raised and plans were drawn for the construction of a new church (Evening Mail, 1929). Architect David Saxton was responsible for the design, with construction to be directed by Richard Carmichael (St. John the Baptist Church, 1945). And so construction began in front of the old church in April, 1929 (St. John the Baptist Church, 1945). On June 24th, 1929, the Feast of St. John the Baptist, Bishop Macdonald laid the cornerstone for the new church, and despite the added challenge of rough and boggy lands, construction was completed in December of the same year (Piers, 1932; St. John the Baptist Church, 1945). In his design, Saxton adapted the Spanish Mission style to the local wooden church-building tradition, producing a stunningly unique ecclesiastical building. On December 8th, 1929, Archbishop Thomas O'Donnell blessed the new church (St. John the Baptist Church, 1979). Notably, the new church reused the organ once belonging to St. Joseph's Church of North-End Halifax, which was destroyed in the Halifax Explosion (St. John the Baptist Church, 1945).

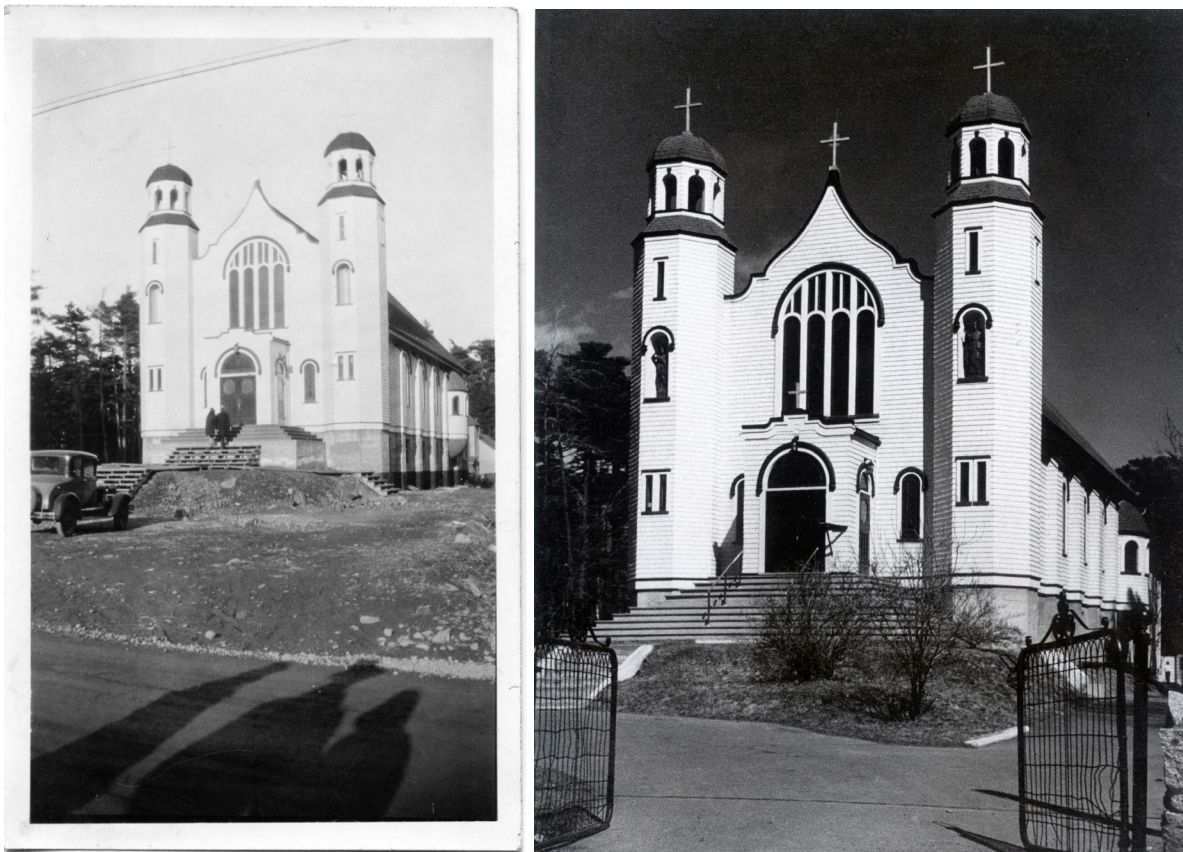


Figure 9: The new St. John the Baptist Church in 1929 [left] and 1954 [right] (Unnamed artist, 1929, 1954)

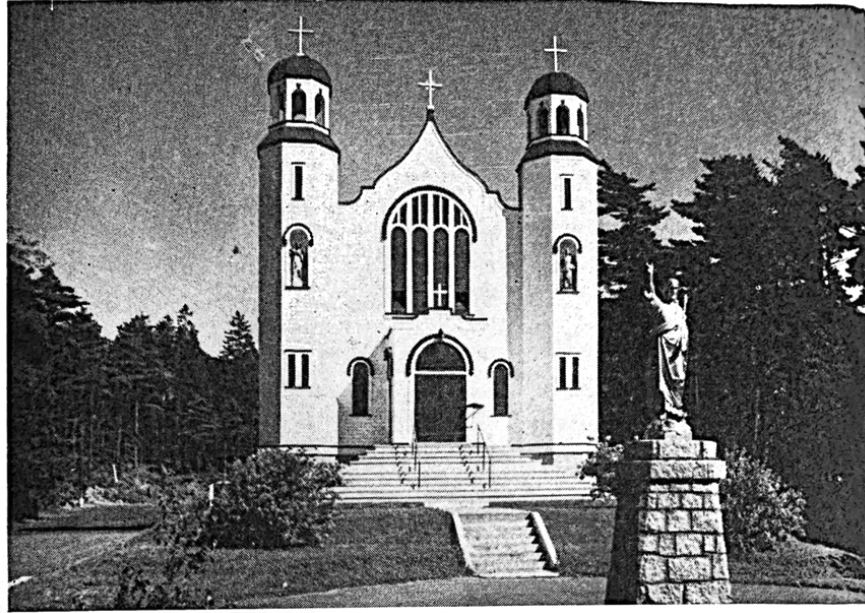


Figure 10: The new church with statue of Christ the King in front (St. John the Baptist Church, 1945)



Figure 11: The original rectory of the new church located across the street at what is now 1107 Purcell's Cove Rd (St. John the Baptist Church, 1945)

An Artifact of the Original Church

The new church also housed a pre-1845 statue of St. John the Baptist, brought from Rome by Archbishop Walsh (St. John the Baptist Church, 1945; St. Lawrence Church, 1953). This statue was originally installed in the tower-niche of St. John's Rest on Mumford Road (St. John the Baptist Church, 1945). St. John's Rest was the original Church of St. John the Baptist [not to be confused with either the powder magazine chapel nor the new church] and was originally built in 1847 as Archbishop Walsh's Chapel and Cottage. It was the first Catholic church in the Dutch Village area (St. Lawrence Church, 1953). It was later known as St. John's Convent, Maryville School, and finally St. John's Rest (St. Lawrence Church, 1953). On April 23, 1928, St. John's Rest was destroyed by fire, but by fortunate coincidence Rev. Martin had removed the statue three days prior and installed it in his new church (St. Lawrence Church, 1953).

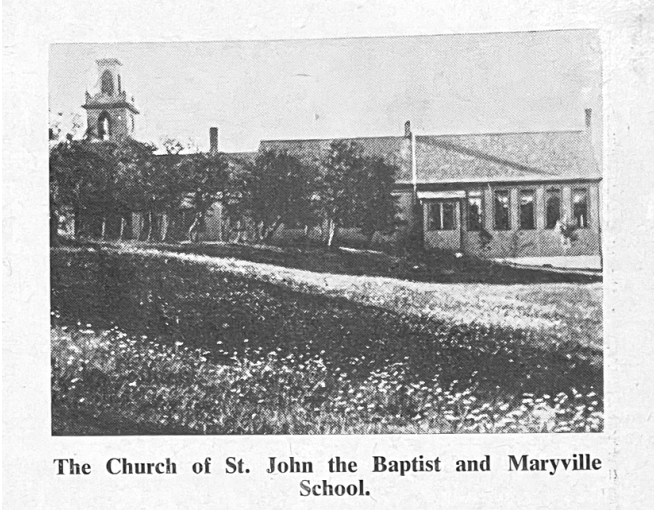


Figure 12: The [original] Church of St. John the Baptist on Mumford Road showing the tower in which the statue of St. John the Baptist was originally kept (St. Lawrence Church, 1953)



Figure 13: Statue of St. John the Baptist, brought from Rome by Archbishop Walsh (FBM Consulting, 2022)

Second World War Onwards / Sister Pius Memorial School

Despite Canada's distance from the front lines of the WWII, the fear of bombings remained, and the federal government established the office of Air Raid Precautions [A.R.P.], which educated and encouraged volunteers to prepare and assist their communities in the event of air raids on Canadian soil (Coquitlam Heritage, 2019). This saw the Old Church briefly repurposed as an emergency hospital [see Figure 7] (St. John the Baptist Church, 1945). After WWII, the Old Church was repurposed again as a retreat and lunch room for the Sisters of Charity who taught in the parochial school (St John the Baptist Church, 1979). The Old Church appears to have been demolished sometime between 1967 and 1978 [see Figures 3 & 4].

The aforementioned parochial school was opened in November of 1946 by Rev. Martin as a three-room school in the church basement (Shea, 2021; St John the Baptist Church, 1979). It took the name Sister Pius Memorial School and served 125 students ranging from grades one through four (Shea, 2021). Rev. Martin had persuaded the local order of nuns [known as the Sisters of Charity] to teach there, eventually hiring lay-teachers to cope with growing enrollment (St John the Baptist Church, 1979). The first principal of the school was Sister Margaret Agnes (St John the Baptist Church, 1979). The school in the basement would go on to grow by one classroom each year. Soon the fundraising call would ring out and in 1948 Rev. Martin would oversee the construction of a dedicated six-room school building for the church, which was built as a two-storey rear addition at a cost of \$16,000 (Shea, 2021; St John the Baptist Church, 1979). In 1968, the school was renamed St. John the Baptist School, and on January 1st, 1969, Armdale was annexed by the City of Halifax. In August of the same year the Halifax City School Board accepted St. John the Baptist School into the public school system. In 1972, declining enrollment and unsatisfactory condition of the school building finally prompted the Halifax School Board to close the school and transfer the remaining students to nearby schools.

In 2021, a letter was sent to parishioners by the Roman Catholic Archdiocese announcing the closure of St. John the Baptist Church, citing declining attendance, financial restraints, and a decline in available priests (Shea, 2021). The church's final mass was held at 4:00pm on Sunday September 26, 2021 (MacInnis, 2021).



Figure 14: Sister Pius Memorial School (St John the Baptist Church, 1979)

A Note Regarding the Sisters of Charity

It is important to note that the Sisters of Charity of Saint Vincent de Paul of Halifax, as they were later known, were responsible for staffing the Maritimes' only residential school, the Shubenacadie Indian School from 1930 to 1967 (Parks Canada, 2021; Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, 2019). The Sisters also expanded to British Columbia in the 1920s, founding a number of institutions and staffing the Kootenay Indian Residential School from 1936 onward (Archdiocese of Halifax, 1949; Archdiocese of Vancouver, n.d.). At Shubenacadie Indian School, Mi'kmaw and Wolastoqkw children who had been separated from their families "were subjected to harsh discipline; malnutrition and starvation; poor healthcare; physical, emotional, and sexual abuse; medical experimentation; neglect; the deliberate suppression of their cultures and languages; and loss of life," (Parks Canada, 2021). The indigenous children mandated to attend Kootenay Indian Residential School were similarly subjected to "cruel and sometimes fatal treatment" according to the Lower Kootenay Band (MacVicar, 2021).

Important / Unique Architectural Style or Highly Representative of an Era

The church building at 1102 Purcell's Cove Rd exhibits a Spanish Mission Revival style [to learn more about this style please see the Architectural Merit section of this report]. Our research indicates this church is the only such example of an ecclesiastical building in the Spanish Mission Revival style in all of Atlantic Canada, and it has historically been reported as such (Evening Mail, 1929). The nearest identified example of a Spanish Mission Revival Church in Canada is the St. Theresa Roman Catholic Church (Shrine of the Little Flower) located at 2559 Kingston Road in Toronto, Ontario. The Toronto church displays more traditional materiality for the style, with stucco-clad walls and red clay-tiled roof. The materiality of St. John the Baptist, in translating the Spanish Mission Revival style to the local wooden building tradition, in-effect makes the church even more unique and potentially one-of-a-kind in Canada.

Significance of Architect or Builder

Architect

St. John the Baptist Church was designed by architect David Francis Saxton [b. 1889; d. 1962] (St John the Baptist Church, 1979). An architect of local significance, Saxton worked as a draughtsman, architect, and instructor (Rosinski, 1994). He operated his own architectural practice from 1920 to 1927, at which point he closed his practice and joined the firm of C.A. Fowler and Co. as a draughtsman (Rosinski, 1994). In 1934, he began working for the Nova Scotia Department of Highways and Public Works. In 1941, he started work as an instructor for the Halifax Trade Training Centre and the Nova Scotia Technical College (Rosinski, 1994). In the mid 1950s, he returned to working for the Department of Highways and Public Works and remained with them for the rest of his career (Rosinski, 1994). He formally retired in 1959 but continued working with Sidney P. Dumaresq and then Keith L. Graham until his death in 1962 (Rosinski, 1994). He is most notable for his role in designing the massive emergency housing project known as the Governor McCall Apartments immediately following the Halifax Explosion.

Documentation of David F. Saxton's body of work is limited but the following buildings can be attributed to him:

J.W. O'Neal's "Semi-Ready Tailors" [1920], 1571 Barrington Street, Halifax:

This small but deep two-storey commercial building was originally built for a local tailor. The building is easily identified by its datestone and parapet. Its shopfront has been heavily modified over the last century.



Figure 15: Google Street View photo of 1571 Barrington St compared with a plan of the front elevation of J.W. O'Neal's "Semi Ready Tailoring" on Barrington (Saxton, 1920b)

Infectious Diseases Hospital [1918], Morris Street [now University Avenue] and Robie Street:

This hospital building stood on what is now the site of the IWK Health Centre's Newman Memorial Gardens.

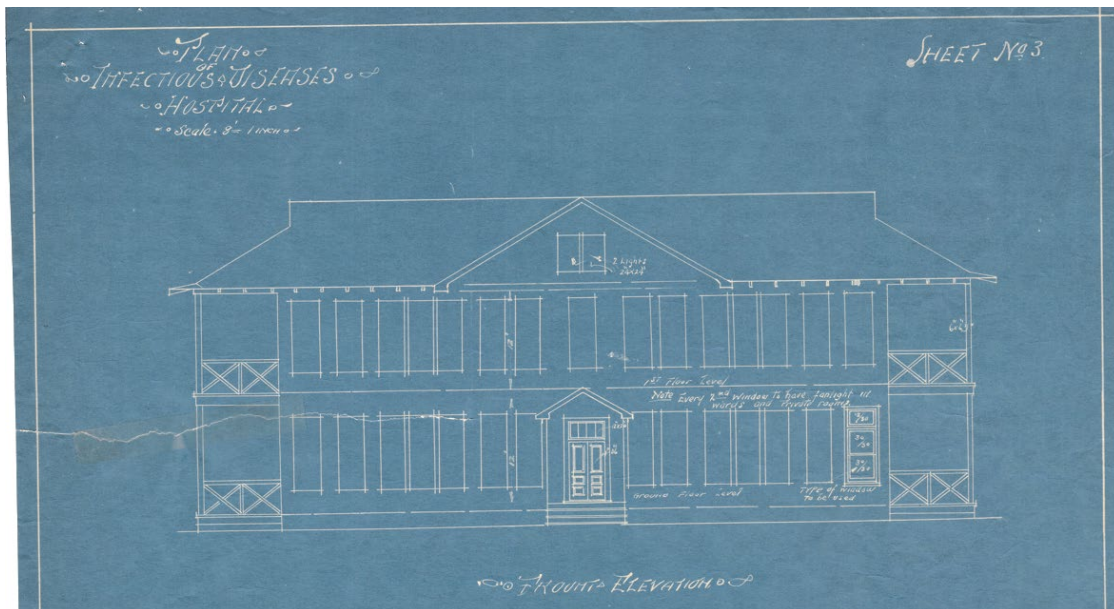


Figure 16: Plan of front elevation of infectious diseases hospital (Saxton, 1918)

Governor McCall Apartments [1918], Former Exhibition Grounds:

Following the massive destruction of the Halifax explosion, the Halifax Relief Commission deemed it necessary to rapidly construct temporary housing on a large scale to house those whose homes were destroyed by the explosion. The former exhibition grounds in the North End were chosen as the site of these new apartments, which housed approx. 2500 to 3000 people.



Figure 17: Governor McCall Apartments (Gauvin & Gentzel, 1918)

Residence for T.J. Walsh Esq. [1920], 6466 Jubilee Rd, Halifax:

This home on the southeastern corner of Beech and Jubilee was designed for Thomas J. Walsh, a local house painter, as well as his wife Henrietta and their three sons (Government of Canada, 1921b; NSPOL, 1920). The house has received significant modifications over the last century.

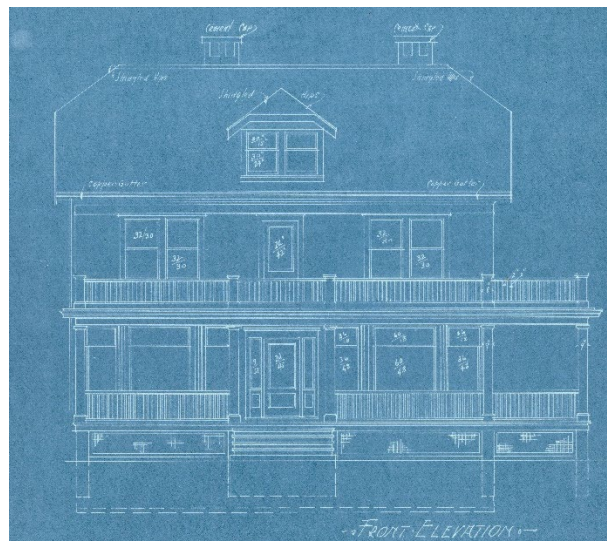
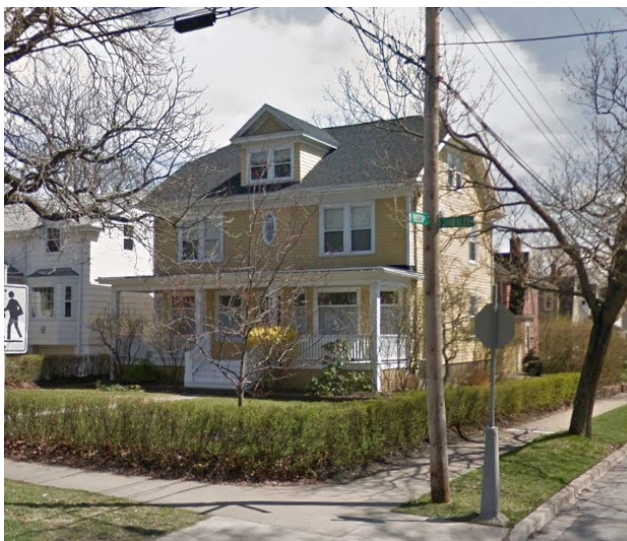


Figure 18: Google Street View photo of 6466 Jubilee Rd compared with a plan of the front elevation of a residence for T.J. Walsh Esq. (Saxton, 1920a)

Builder

The construction of St. John the Baptist Church was led by builder Richard A. Carmichael [b. 1880, d. 1962] (Government of Canada, 1921a; St John the Baptist Church, 1979). Carmichael worked initially as a carpenter and stair builder before working as an architect from 1907 to around 1912 (Rosinski, 1994). At this point, it appears he left Halifax and later opened an architect's office in New Glasgow in 1914 (Rosinski, 1994). Carmichael resumed work in Halifax during WWI as an architect and builder (Rosinski, 1994). In 1923 he began teaching architectural drawing classes at Nova Scotia Technical College and from 1932 to 1952 he taught manual training at the St. Patrick's Home for Boys (Rosinski, 1994). He died in 1962 (Rosinski, 1994).

Architectural Merit

Construction Type or Building Technology

The church building at 1102 Purcell's Cove Road is of heavy timber framed construction. The construction type and technology typical of other churches built in this time period. The roof is supported by large douglas-fir trusses, and the church is built atop a board-formed concrete foundation [an early style of poured concrete foundation notable for its texture]. The exterior of the church is faced in white Dutch lap siding. Windows are wood-framed and the roof is asphalt shingled. All of the church's windows are equipped with storm windows to protect them from the elements, and most of these storm windows feature an early form of wired glass. A two-story addition was added to the rear of the church building in 1948 for use as a parochial school (Shea, 2021).

Style

The church building was designed in a Spanish Mission Revival style, drawing inspiration from the architecture of the Spanish Missions in California. This revival style derives its influence from churches built in what is now California [at the time part of "New Spain"] by Spanish missionaries. From the mid 1700s through to the late 1800s these missionaries colonized indigenous lands and forcibly converted indigenous peoples to Christianity. These churches themselves took inspiration from the architectural styles of the Spanish homeland but greatly simplified them due to a lack of available highly skilled labour. The Spanish Mission Revival style was most popular from the 1890s to the 1920s (National Parks Service, 2019). This style is most known for its thick, generally unadorned walls, use of round/roman arches in both windows and arcades, decorative parapets, red-clay gabled and hipped roofs with projecting eaves, higher wall-to-window ratio, and adobe or stucco finishing.

In 1102 Purcell's Cove Road we see this style has been translated from its traditional materials of stone, stuccoed brick, and [most commonly] adobe, to a typical timber construction which better reflects the locally available building materials. The most prominent influences of Spanish Mission Revival style exhibited by St. John the Baptist Church include the following:

- The hall-church layout with dual belltowers
- The belltowers' octagonal, almost minaret-like design [borrowing from Moorish designs]
- The projecting eaves
- The decoratively shaped parapets above the gable roofline and above the main entrance
- The thorough use of round/roman arches in windows and mouldings
- The exposed heavy-timber roof trusses visible from the interior

Character Defining Elements

Character defining elements of the church building at 1102 Purcell's Cove Road include, but are not limited to:

- Original Spanish Mission Revival church building
- Moderately pitched gabled roof with projecting eaves and a decorative parapet at the western gable end
- Apse with skylight at rear
- Board-formed concrete foundation pierced by pairs of single-hung, one-over-one windows with storm sashes
- Dual towers of Moorish-inspired octagonal design surmounted by belfries with octagonal domed roofs
- Towers feature narrow rectangular windows and round-headed niches with label moulding, spherical label stops and statues of St. John the Baptist and St Jean de Brebeuf
- Central row of four round-headed windows with large semi-circular label moulding terminating in spherical label stops
- Double central door with semicircular transept, label moulding, spherical label stops, and decoratively shaped parapet above
- Flanking single doors with semicircular transept, label moulding and spherical label stops (a later modification)
- Six buttresses either side
- Four sets of stained-glass windows per side
- Each set of stained-glass windows consisting of a pair of round-headed windows surmounted by a single circular window, framed by a semi-circular label moulding with spherical label stops, all windows having wired glass storm sashes
- Large round oriel window on the western elevation with three stained glass windows and a semi-dome roof



Figure 19: Western elevation (May 3, 2022)



Figure 20: Southern elevation (May 3, 2022)



Figure 21: Northern elevation (May 3, 2022)



Figure 22: Southeast elevation showing the apse skylight and oriel window (May 3, 2022)



Figure 23: Closeup of Spanish Mission Revival details, including decoratively shaped parapets and Moorish octagonal belltowers (May 3, 2022)



Figure 24: Sister Pius Memorial School at the rear of the church (May 3, 2022)



Figure 25: Interior of the church looking east towards the altar [February 2022] (FBM Consulting, 2022)



Figure 26: Interior of the church looking west towards the entrance [February 2022] (FBM Consulting, 2022)

Architectural Integrity

Layout and Additions

With respect to layout and the impacts of any additions or modifications, St. John the Baptist Church maintains a very good level of architectural integrity. The 1948 main addition for the parochial school was added in a non-invasive fashion with only a small hallway connection to the rear of the church basement, causing minimal impact to the original church structure and zero impact to its character defining elements (Shea, 2021). The church has also had modifications made to the main entry sometime after 1979 (St John the Baptist Church, 1979). The narthex has been widened to accommodate a pair of front-facing flanking doors, and these doors appear to have been taken from the sides of the original narthex or have at least received the same stylistic treatment with semi-circular transoms and label mouldings with spherical label stops, blending in completely with the rest of the building [see Figure 27]. The two small windows which were removed to accommodate the enlarged narthex appear to have been re-used [including all mouldings] on either side of the enlarged narthex.

Condition

With respect to condition, St John the Baptist Church at 1102 Purcell's Cove Road maintains a very good level of architectural integrity. The concrete foundation appears to be in good condition. The roof is in fairly good condition on the northern side [see Figure 21] and slightly poorer condition on the southern side [see Figure 20]. The siding is in good condition with only one noticeable area of fungus on the northern side of the northern belltower [see Figure 21]. The wood-frame windows, owing to the protection of their storm sashes, generally exhibit only mild paint flaking and no obvious rot. The label mouldings are generally in excellent condition with only very minimal paint flaking on some label stops and no obvious signs of rot.

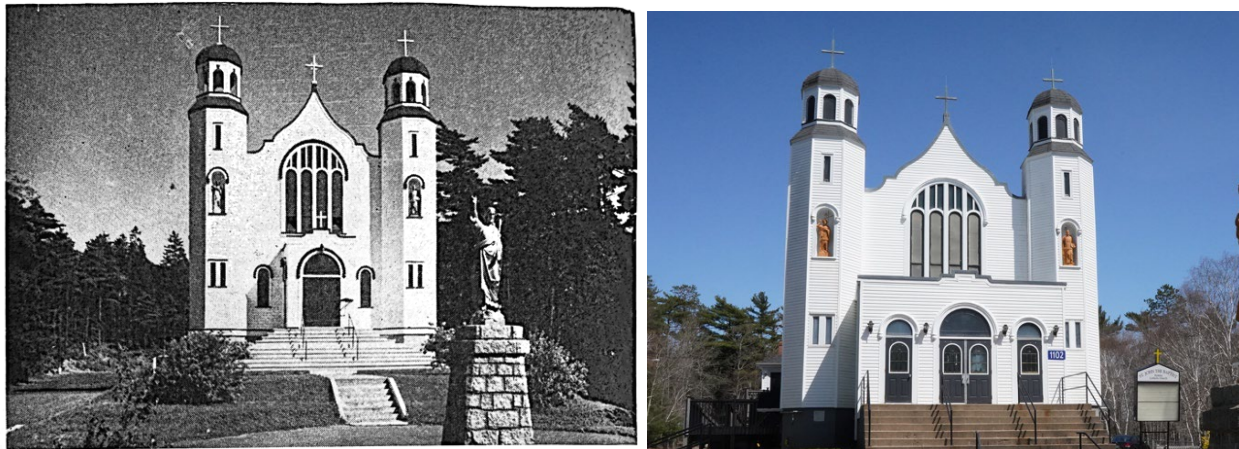


Figure 27: Comparison of front entrances before and after modification (St. John the Baptist Church, 1945)

Relationship to Surrounding Area

St. John the Baptist Church bears a strong relationship to both its own lot and to its broader surroundings. It has for much of its history been the tallest and most prominent architectural work in the local vicinity and has served not only as a focal point for the area's Catholic population but as a visual focal point for the community at large. Its impressive scale and highly unique architectural style make it a substantial contribution to Halifax's wealth of architectural history. Moreover, the site itself is intricately linked with the story of the Old Church and its generous donor and community faithful, who together made it possible to transform an artifact of war into a place of worship. Through the church's own artifacts, including the organ, sourced from St. Joseph's of North-End Halifax, and the statue of St. John the Baptist, sourced from St. John's Rest, the church retains historical ties to both the Halifax Explosion and the first Catholic Church in Dutch Village. The New Church itself tells a story of shifting demographics as people began leaving the city and developing the mainland.

Directly across from the church, along Purcell's Cove Road and Braeburn Road, one finds an impressively intact neighbourhood of houses from this period of rapid development in the early 1900s. This neighbourhood, known as the Brae Burn Subdivision, was created in 1914 and contained a total of 27 parcels for home-building [see Figure 28] (Pickings, 1914). One of the original houses of this subdivision, which still stands at what is now 1107 Purcell's Cove Road, served as the original rectory for the church [see Figures 29 and 30] (St. John the Baptist Church, 1945).

Directly beside the church, lies St. George's Greek Orthodox Church, which is so situated because the large parcel of land on which it sits was originally "Egan's Grounds" having been conveyed to the Roman Catholic Episcopal Corp by the heirs of John Egan's son Edmund in 1968 (NSPOL, 1968). The parcel was then sold to Rocca Construction, a developer seeking to build a motel (Delefes, 1993). Rocca Construction failed to secure the necessary rezoning however, and they sold the lot to the Greek Orthodox Church, who themselves were looking to relocate from the cramped quarters of the former St. Luke's Hall on the southeast corner of Queen Street and Morris Street (Delefes, 1993; NSPOL, 1975).

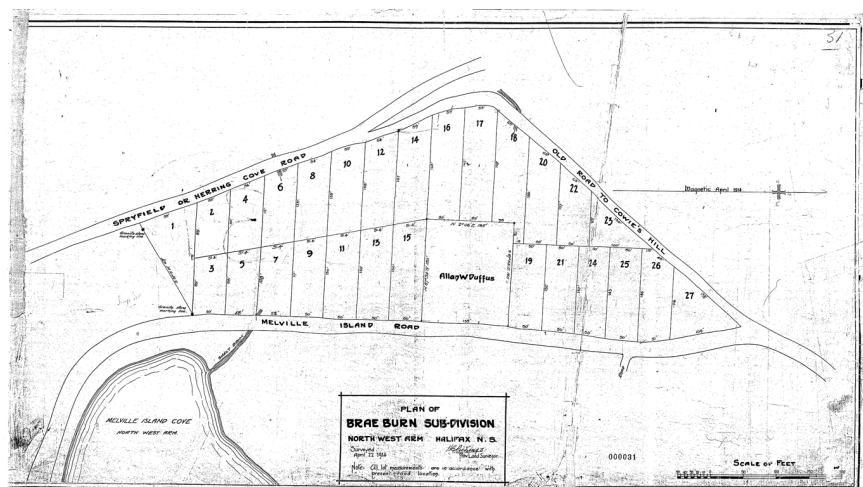
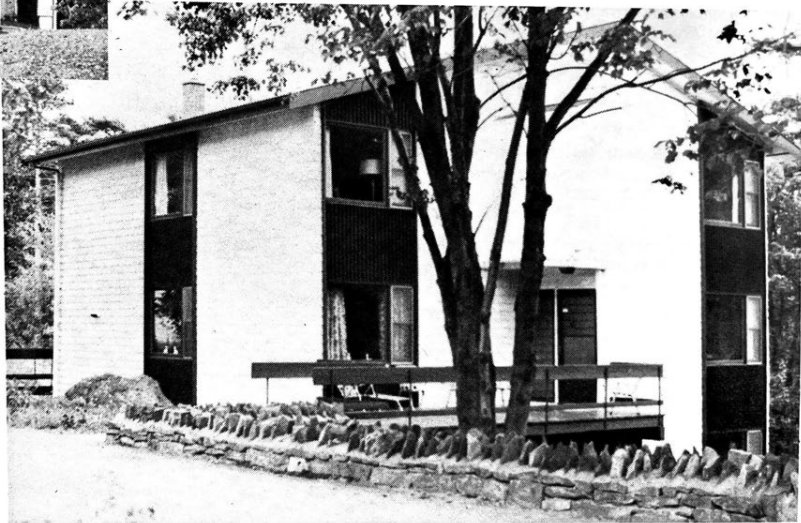


Figure 28: Brae Burn Subdivision plan (Pickings, 1914)



The Old Rectory
1927-1969



The New Rectory
Built 1969

Figure 29: The old and new rectories contrasted (St John the Baptist Church, 1979)

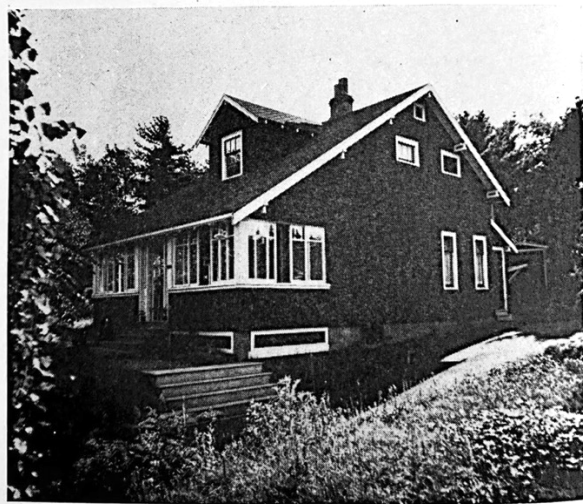


Figure 30: The original rectory of the new church, located across the street at what is now 1107 Purcell's Cove Rd, with its est. 1945 appearance contrasted with its present appearance [May 3, 2022] (St. John the Baptist Church, 1945)



Figure 31: Relation of the church building to its parcel and the new rectory (May 3, 2022)



Figure 32: Immediate surroundings looking north from the church lot. Note the houses of Brae Burn subdivision. (May 3, 2022)



Figure 33: Immediate surroundings looking south from the church lot. Note the houses of Brae Burn subdivision. The original church rectory is highlighted by a white arrow. (May 3, 2022)



Figure 34: The new rectory located to the south of the church (May 3, 2022)

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