

Heritage Planner's Statement of Significance

Description of Historic Place

The J.J. Duggan House is a two storey red brick building built in 1907. Situated on one half of a lot in the north end of Edmonton's Strathcona district, the building commands a panoramic vista of the North Saskatchewan River and the downtown core. Prominent features of the stately construction include rusticated quoins, a complex roofline with steeply sloped as well as flat sections, and reconstructions of the original ground floor veranda and second floor balcony.

Heritage Value

The heritage value of the J.J. Duggan House lies in its association with prominent Strathcona businessman and politician John Joseph Duggan and its fine representation of upper middle class period architecture.

Born in Ontario in 1868, J. J. Duggan migrated to western Canada in his early twenties to seek his fortune. He worked initially in a British Columbia sawmill before travelling in 1891 to the fledgling settlement of South Edmonton. Family wealth helped the young man establish himself in his adopted home. Duggan's wealthy and influential uncle, Cornelius J. Duggan, founded the first lumber yard in South Edmonton and hired his nephew as agent and manager of the operation. With the development of South Edmonton and the expansion of its hinterland, J. J. Duggan's lumber operation flourished. With success came diversification: in succeeding years, he expanded into a number of business fields, including farming, ranching, agricultural equipment, and real estate. Duggan's economic successes enhanced his social prestige and helped to pave the way to a fruitful local political career. When South Edmonton was incorporated as a town in 1899 and renamed Strathcona, Duggan served on the first Town Council. In 1902 and 1903, he was elected Mayor, a position he also ascended to by acclamation three times between 1908 and 1910. Integral to the economic and political development of early Strathcona, Duggan was also a key contributor to the social and spiritual life of the community. He and his wife, Margaret Belle MacDonald, were essential in forming St. Anthony's Roman Catholic Parish and provided the lay leadership for the congregation. Duggan's impressive achievements as an Irish Catholic in a predominantly Protestant community testifies to the greater tolerance for religious diversity on the western Canadian frontier, where personal initiative and resolution was at least as significant a predictor of success as religious affiliation or familial ties.

In 1907, Duggan built a stately new residence in Strathcona. In its substantial scale and eclectic style, the J. J. Duggan Residence embodies the kind of architecture favoured by Strathcona's upper middle class residents during the period. The building is a robust red-brick construction with an irregular roofline

and a variety of decorative details, including an oculus window in the front gable extension and rusticated quoins. The covered ground floor veranda supported by round pillars and the second floor balcony are well integrated into the architectural scheme and offer expansive views of the river valley and Edmonton's downtown core. The building's excellent location, substantial scale, robust massing, and eclectic architectural detailing served the dual purpose of projecting J. J. Duggan's social prominence and refined aesthetic sensibilities and providing a comfortable, well-appointed living space for his family.

Character Defining Elements

The character-defining elements of the J. J. Duggan Residence include such features as:

- location overlooking North Saskatchewan River and commanding panoramic views of downtown Edmonton;
- robust massing and substantial scale;
- cedar-shingled roof;
- complex roofline;
- red-brick exterior walls, voussoirs, and corbelled chimneys;
- rough-faced quoins;
- oculus window surrounded by circular brick courses divided by four equidistant sandstone blocks;
- fenestration pattern and style, including single-glazed, double hung windows with storm sashes and wood frames and multi-pane transoms over some windows; and
- original interior elements, including hardwood floors, baseboards, trims, mouldings, wainscoting, columns and capitals, doors, hardware, fireplace with rounded masonry construction and decoration, and oak staircase.