



Historic Place:
THE JOHN SNOW RESIDENCE AND STUDIO

Other Names:
John Snow Residence
John Snow Residence/Studio

Location: Calgary
Built: 1912 To 1912
Designation Status: Provincial Historic Resource
Date of Designation: 2003/07/21
Object Number: 4665-0841

Related Listing(s):

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

Description of Historic Place: The John Snow Residence and Studio is a two-storey home located on a portion of a single lot in the Mount Royal district of southern Calgary. The building was constructed in 1912 and features a hipped roof, front verandah, and a later Maxwell Bates designed one-storey wood frame addition at the back of the house.

Heritage Value: The heritage value of the John Snow Residence and Studio lies in its association with artist John H. Snow and its connection to the establishment and development of Calgary's Mount Royal district.

John H. Snow is a renowned Alberta artist, famed for his modern, expressionistic oeuvre of paintings, sculptures, and lithographs. A banker by trade, Snow began his artistic career in earnest following his service as a navigator during the Second World War. Between 1946 and 1948, he studied under famed Alberta artist and architect Maxwell Bates at the Provincial Institute of Technology. In 1951, he purchased the house that now bears his name; two years later, he acquired two lithographic presses and some limestone blocks from the Western Lithographic and Printing Company and installed them in the basement. Snow often collaborated in his lithographic works with Bates, a close friend and colleague who designed the studio addition at the rear of Snow's home. Over the decades of his artistic career, Snow developed into a master lithographer, marrying striking, non-naturalistic colours and distorted forms in his work. Though he achieved his greatest renown with his lithographs, Snow also worked in other mediums, including painting and sculpture. He is considered a key figure in the provincial art scene, one of several innovators who introduced Alberta to the impulses and ideals of modern art. His work is represented in public, private, and corporate collections throughout Canada. Snow received the Alberta Order of Excellence in 1996. He passed away in 2004.

The John Snow Residence and Studio was built in 1912 and reflects the development of the Mount Royal district of Calgary. Following the arrival of the Canadian Pacific Railway (C.P.R.) into Fort Calgary in 1883, the settlement grew rapidly, being incorporated as a town the next year and as a city in 1893. Much of the early development in Calgary occurred on the vast tracts of land retained by the Canadian Pacific Railway. Initial construction took place north of the tracks; by the turn of the twentieth century, the C.P.R. was beginning to survey the area south of the tracks for residential development. Substantial residential construction occurred in the Mount Royal area during the building boom of the early 1910s and part of the district evolved into a luxury neighbourhood, embellished by the ideals of the "city beautiful" movement, including green spaces, roads contoured to the land, and treed lots. Closer to the railway tracks and the district's working class neighbourhood, the homes were more modest. It was in this humbler section of Mount Royal that the John Snow Residence and Studio was built in 1912.

The John Snow Residence and Studio is not architecturally unique, representing typical building materials and styles of the time and period. The home embodies elements of the Shingle style in its hipped roof, shingle cladding, and reduced ornament. The addition designed by Bates is also unremarkable, incorporating materials and a style common to vernacular architecture around 1960. The home is part of a historic streetscape in the Mount Royal District. The John Snow Residence and Studio now serves a new generation of artists, used to house authors - including Timothy Findley and Robert Kroetsch - from the University of Calgary's Writers in Residence program.

Source: Alberta Tourism, Parks, Recreation and Culture, Historic Resources Management Branch (File: Des. 2108)

Character-Defining Elements: The character-defining elements of the John Snow Residence and Studio include such features as:

- mass, form, and style;
- hipped roof;
- upper storey facade of shingle cladding and lower storey facade of horizontal bevelled wood siding, corner boards, and trim;
- central hip dormer flanked by hipped eave returns;
- covered porch with front bay window;
- original entry glazed wood door and original side-entry wood door;
- wood frame (Maxwell Bates) addition with open beam structure, low gable roof and vertical cedar cladding;
- fenestration pattern and style, including original double hung wood windows;
- original interior elements, including maple and fir floorings, crown mouldings, fireplace, door and window trims, hot water radiant units, and stair handrails and balusters;
- artifacts associated with John Snow, including lithographic presses.

THEME(S)

Expressing Intellectual and Cultural Life : Learning and the Arts

SIGNIFICANT DATE(S)

Date of Construction: 1912

ASSOCIATED ARCHITECT/BUILDER

Architect: Maxwell Bates

Builder:

CONTEXT

HISTORICAL CONTEXT

When the Canadian Pacific Railway arrived at the site of Fort Calgary in 1883, a boomtown quickly sprang up outside the fort. Development was so rapid that Calgary was incorporated as a town in 1884, and a city in 1893. It was then CPR policy to retain vast tracts of land around the various stations it had erected along the rail line for future development by the CPR Land Department. This was the case with Calgary, where, because the CPR chose this center as a divisional point, the real estate retained was quite substantial. Indeed, the CPR controlled much of the development in the emerging downtown core of the city north of the tracks. It also held much land south of the tracks, which, after the turn of the 20th century, it began to survey into blocks and lots to accommodate the growing population.

To the west of 14th Street S.W., the land along the flats was subdivided into a standard grid pattern with dwellings for working class people, many of whom were CPR employees. The CPR held off development of the more hilly area east of 14th Street, however, until 1909. Then, with the population of Calgary growing by over 4,000 per year, the CPR decided to develop this area into something the city had hitherto lacked, an exclusive upper-class neighbourhood within walking distance of the downtown core. Contour streets were thus surveyed, and caveats placed on the various large properties that were laid out. These prohibited commercial development and required that all dwellings constructed in the district be valued at 3,000 dollars or more. To add to the mystique of elegance, the streets were given names rather than mundane numbers. At first, this district between 5th and 14th Streets, between 17th and 28th Avenues was known as American Hill, due to the large number of American businessmen who were coming to reside there. The neighbourhood, however, was officially given the more British sounding name of Mount Royal, with many of the streets renamed after features familiar to eastern Canadians.

Although many of the residences in Mount Royal were veritable mansions, more modest dwellings were constructed as well, in particular along the streets closer to the rail yards. Because of the overwhelming demand for space, the lots nearer the tracks were usually only 33' in width, which contrasted with the larger surveyed lots on the hills to the south, which could accommodate more elaborate dwellings. One

of homes to be constructed on the north side of Mount Royal was at 915-18th Avenue S.W. This was a two-story wood frame dwelling with hipped roof and front veranda, built in 1912 for Charles P. McCallum of Armstrong and McCallum, a real estate and investment firm.

Over the next 40 years, ten other parties would occupy the residence until, in 1951, it became the home of John H. and Beulah Snow and their family. Snow had served in the armed forces during World War II, and upon his return to Calgary, had studied art at the Provincial Institute of Technology. One of his instructors in life drawing was the noted artist and architect Maxwell Bates. After graduation, Snow concentrated on lithography, a pursuit facilitated by his acquisition of two lithographic presses and some limestone blocks from the Western Lithographic and Printing Company in 1953, which he installed in the basement of his home. With Bates as mentor, Snow began to establish a reputation as a fine-art lithographer, and eventually produced 410 pieces, with showings in western Canada and the United States. Much of his work was undertaken in the basement of his house. During 1959-61, Bates undertook to design a special studio adjoining the house. Here, many of Snow's later works would be produced.

Today, Snow's works are held in collections of the Alberta Government House Foundation, the Alberta Foundation for the Arts, the National Gallery of Canada, the Glenbow Museum, the Edmonton Art Gallery, the Medicine Hat Museum and Art Gallery, and in many private collections. The quality of his work was recognized in 1996, when his name was added to the Alberta Order of Excellence.

HISTORICAL SIGNIFICANCE

The historical significance of the John Snow House lies primarily in its facilitation of studio space for the noted artist and lithographer, John H. Snow, who has a strong regional and a certain national reputation. An associate of Maxwell Bates, Snow has had showings throughout western Canada, and in a major exhibit in the United States. The house is also important in its representation of the development of the Mount Royal District in south Calgary in the early 20th century, a district intended by the CPR to be upper class, with homes for the burgeoning city's nouveau riche. The Snow House represents the development of the north portion of this district, where the homes nearer the tracks and close to a working class neighbourhood were not as large or elegant and the mansions on the hills to the south.

DESCRIPTION OF RESOURCE

Area of Historic Place: 0.069 acres / 0.028 hectares / 279 square metres (Area)

Description of Boundaries: Plan 4453 L, Block 14, portion of Lot 7

Contributing Resources:

Buildings: 1

Functional Category and Type:

Original Function(s):

Residence : Single Dwelling

Current Function(s):

Residence : Single Dwelling

LEGAL DESCRIPTION/GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

ATS Legal Description:

Mer	Rge	Twp	Sec	LSD
5	1	24	9	15

PBL Legal Description (Cadastral Reference):

Plan	Block	Lot	Parcel
4453 L	14	7 (ptn.)	

Latitude/Longitude:

Latitude	Longitude	CDT	Datum Type
51.03680	-114.08276	GPS	NAD 83

UTM Reference:

Northing	Easting	Zone	CDT	Datum Type
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ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Cross-reference to collection: 8192

Website Link:

<http://hermis.cd.gov.ab.ca/ARHP/Details.aspx?DeptID=1&ObjectID=4665-0841>

Location of Supporting Documentation: Alberta Tourism, Parks, Recreation and Culture, Historic Resources Management Branch, Old St. Stephen's College, 8820 - 112 Street, Edmonton, AB T6G 2P8 (File: Des. 2108)

