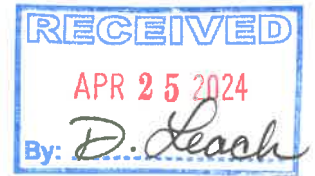


PAST PERFECT

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April 11, 2024

Mackinac Island City Council
Mackinac Island Historic Preservation Commission
7358 Market Street
Mackinac Island, Michigan 49757

Dear Members of the Mackinac Island City Council and the Mackinac Island Historic District Commission:

Please allow this to serve as comment for the public record on the demolition request for Thuya Cottage/Red House at 6948 Main Street, Mackinac Island, Michigan.

My firm is Past Perfect, Inc. and I have been consulting to the Mackinac Island Historic District Study committee surveying, photographing, and writing the historic district study report for the possible designation of the East End Mission Historic District. I also worked for the island in 2011 on the team that created the historic district study reports that resulted in the designation of the Mackinac Island Downtown Market/Main Historic District and the West End Historic District.

I hold a BA in the History of Art from Michigan State University and a MS in Historic Preservation from the School of the Art Institute of Chicago. I have been a consultant in the field of Historic Preservation and Cultural Resources since 1997. I am certified as an Architectural Historian 36 CFR 61 by the State Historic Preservation Office in Michigan. The work of Past Perfect includes National Register of Historic Places Nominations, historic resource inventories and surveys, Section 106 review for above-ground cultural resources, as well as Federal and State Historic Preservation Tax Credit certification applications. I served on the City of Grand Rapids Historic Preservation Commission for six years, including two years as chairperson. Currently, I serve on the board of the Michigan Historic Preservation Network.

I have worked with numerous teams on the rehabilitation of historic buildings and neighborhoods all over the state. I have seen first-hand buildings and structures of all styles, ages, and conditions and with a variety of goals and budgets be renovated or restored. Many times, retaining a resource and renovating is less expensive and costly to the environment than wholesale demolition and rebuilding. The historic materials and patina simply cannot be recreated today. Of course, buildings must be adapted and demolition is sometimes necessary,

but in this case, I would urge careful consideration. Thuya Cottage is a significant contributing resource to the potential East End Mission Historic District, as well as to the National Historic Landmark Status of the entirety of Mackinac Island. I hope that you will deny the request to demolish this historic resource.

History and Significance of Thuya Cottage/Red House:

Like most Michiganders and many throughout the nation, we know the island is special not only for its incredible natural beauty, but for its deep and layered eras of human history. Today above-ground built resources remaining from the 18th and 19th century are the most emblematic of what people know and love about Mackinac Island, helping to teach history through experience and drive the economy of tourism to the island.

Built around 1830 per historic photographs and its architectural style, Thuya Cottage or the "Red House" is one of the earliest structures in existence on the east end of the island. The additions at the rear are pre-1882. Thuya Cottage retains a remarkable degree of historic integrity in its materials and setting. Historic photographs show the house in much the same configuration as it appears today. Thuya Cottage is significant as a contributing resource to the East End Mission Historic District. It is significant under the Secretary of the Interior Standards for Historic Significance Criteria B for its association with the Dr. John Bailey family, as well as Criteria C for its architectural significance.

It was the home of Dr. John Read Bailey (1833-1910) for a number of years. Bailey was appointed acting assistant surgeon at Fort Mackinac and Indian physician to the Chippewa and Odawa at the Michilimackinac Agency in 1854. After the Civil War, he again served as post surgeon, as well as the island's only doctor for many years. In 1890 Dr. Bailey opened the National Park Drug Store on Main Street next door to Fenton's Bazaar, which he operated with his pharmacist son, Matthew. Throughout his fifty-year residency on the island Dr. Bailey was an active civic participant. He was an early supporter of the creation of the National Park to protect the island's natural "curiosities" from tourists, later was a member of the Mackinac State Park Commission, twice served as Village president, and was active in projects to improve the municipal and commercial conditions on the island.

Per Tom Chambers, longtime islander and local historian, the original name was "Thuya," which appeared over the old front door in small etched glass panels. In the later 1800s, Matthew G. Bailey (1864-1942), the son of the Dr. John R. Bailey, owned the house. At age 21 Matthew became president of the village of Mackinac Island and in 1900 helped secure the city charter for Mackinac Island, becoming its first mayor. He also ran Bailey's Drug Store. In 1885 Matthew married Sarah Gibson, and they had four children, Guy, Marion C, Sara, and Robert M. The Baileys lived in Thuya for a few more decades, and later moved across the street to Bay View Cottage. Around 1930, Tom and Ann Chambers purchased the Red House. They were children of "Cannonball" Bill Chambers of British Landing. Tom was a Great Lakes captain, and Ann would run a tourist home (B&B) in the house after she retired as school cook from Thomas W. Ferry

school. In 1969 they sold the cottage to Tom Chamber's mother Mary Duffina and her husband Ray Summerfield. It was sold to Frank Nephew around 1985. J. A. Van Fleet, author of *Old and New Mackinac* (1870) and *Summer Resorts of the Mackinac Region* (1882), both early guidebooks of the area, is said to have lived at Thuya as well for a short period of time.

A demolition on the island must be considered only in dire circumstances or the historic preservation ordinance is of no protection. By design the criteria must be stringent – to allow a demolition of a contributing resource to a historic district there must be an extreme safety risk (with documentation and not due to overdue maintenance), or proof that demolition will make way for something to the betterment to the community on the whole –for example, a hospital or public infrastructure that cannot be located anywhere else – not simply to be replaced with another residential structure. This demolition would not be neutral, but actually harm the community by removing an important building that contributes to the feeling, association and charm of the island that makes it historically significant and is in large part what drives the economy and its high land values. If renovated much of the original materials can be reused or replaced in kind – just as so many rehabilitations of historic buildings on the island have as well. Recently an islander reminded me that even the 2 x 4 framing is special – they are very likely nearly 200-year-old 2 x 4s and clear, or almost clear pine, sawed from logs cut on Boise Blanc Island, and milled at Mill Creek. They are likely fastened with hand-forged nails sourced from a local blacksmith; and the sheathing, if used, is also probably clear or almost clear pine in widths we hardly ever see anymore, like 1 X 16 or 1 X 20 boards.

Working on the island I have gained a great respect for the local community and the care people have for each other and the island. I have learned too that the tightly knit island culture is both endearing and challenging for those who live and work here. I hope decision makers will keep in mind that denying a demolition will not deny the use of this property to its owners. Sensitive renovation can occur which retains the character-defining features of the structure. There is not sufficient reason per the ordinance to demolish this important historic resource.

Thank you for considering my comments. I appreciate your public service on the City Commission and Historic District Commission to Mackinac Island.

Sincerely,



Jennifer Metz