



# BARKER/MYREN RESIDENCE

11214 - 97 STREET NW

## CITY OF EDMONTON HISTORIC RESOURCE MANAGEMENT PROGRAM



### DESCRIPTION OF HISTORICAL PLACE

The Barker/Myren Residence is a one-and-a-half-storey residential building located midblock on the west side of 97 Street NW, between 112 Avenue NW and 113 Avenue NW in Edmonton's Spruce Avenue neighbourhood. Built in 1925, the Barker/Myren Residence is notable for its association with early residential development in the Spruce Avenue neighbourhood and for being a former residence of artist Ronald Myren.

### HERITAGE VALUE

The Barker/Myren Residence is valued for its association with early residential development in the Spruce Avenue neighbourhood, as well as for its association with Ronald L. Myren, an artist known for his oil paintings of Alberta landscapes.

The land that Edmonton was developed on was used by Indigenous peoples for millenia, as the North Saskatchewan River Valley and ravine systems were a source of shelter, travel, trade, materials, and food. In the fur trading era, the Hudson's Bay Company (HBC) established a fort on the north side of the river. When the HBC sold its Rupert's Land territory to the Dominion of Canada in 1870, it retained reserve lands around its trading properties, including a 3,000 acre reserve around Fort Edmonton that became known as the Hudson's Bay Reserve. In 1876, the Canadian government signed Treaty 6 with Indigenous leaders in what is now Saskatchewan and the following year Indigenous chiefs in the Edmonton region signed adhesions to the treaty. Edmonton is also part of the Métis homeland. The river lot rural settlement pattern established along the North Saskatchewan River in the early 1870s was brought to the Edmonton area by the Métis and a number of the original river lot claimants were Métis.

What is now the Spruce Avenue neighbourhood featured stands of trees and wetlands prior to settlement. The upper portion of Rat Creek, later filled in, drained the area eastwards towards Kinnaird Ravine into the North Saskatchewan River. The Hudson's Bay Reserve covered most of the area, but the portion of the neighbourhood between 97 Street and 101 Street was outside of the reserve, part of a quarter section surveyed as part of the Dominion Land Survey.

In 1905 local businessmen John McDougall and Richard Secord subdivided this land east of the reserve and north of the historic river lots as the Norwood Subdivision. Lots in the subdivision were primarily 33 feet wide and intended for working class homes for the rapidly growing city. McDougall served as mayor of Edmonton both before and after establishing Norwood, and after his second mayoral term he served as an MLA in the Alberta legislature. The Central McDougall neighbourhood and John A. McDougall School are named after him. Secord served as an alderman in the Town of Edmonton and then as a North-West Territories MLA. In this capacity he introduced the bill that incorporated Edmonton as a city in 1904. The Secord





neighbourhood and École Richard Secord School are named after him. More recently attention has been drawn to the fact that McDougall and Secord speculated on Métis scrip. Scrip were coupons for settlement land issued to Métis people in exchange for extinguishing their Indigenous land claims. Speculators, however, took advantage of the scrip program, often convincing the Métis to sell their scrip certificates in ways that financially benefitted the speculators but further impoverished Métis families.

The road now called 97 Street was originally surveyed as a range road in the Dominion Land Survey work of the 1880s. Presumably because it headed north towards the Sturgeon River, it became known as the Sturgeon Trail. In their Norwood Subdivision, McDougall and Secord called it Sturgeon Road. They planned for it to be a prominent route into the city from the north by establishing a 116 foot wide road right-of-way for it when all the other streets in the subdivision were only 66 feet wide. This width is what allows the treed median in the section of 97 Street that runs past the Barker/Myren Residence. Soon after the subdivision, City officials renamed the road Namayo Avenue, the name of the connecting road to the south, to facilitate wayfinding. Namayo is an anglicized version of the word namêw (ᑎᑦᑦ), meaning “sturgeon” in Plains Cree. In 1914 almost all street names in Edmonton were changed to numbers.

In 1912 the Hudson’s Bay Company subdivided the northern portion of its reserve following City Beautiful design principles and began selling lots. Very little development occurred in the area before the local economy fell into deep decline beginning in 1913. When development picked up again after the First World War, proximity to streetcar lines on 95 Street and 111 Avenue resulted in development along 97 Street and 101 Street.

Charles and Mabel Barker moved from their home in Westmount (which is also now a designated Municipal Historic Resource, the Charles Barker Residence) to 11214 - 97 Street NW in 1925. A permit had been issued for the house, valued at \$3,000, in April 1925. The Barkers raised their family there and owned the house for fifty years. They had two daughters, Audrey and Claudia, as

well as a son named Winston, who passed away at the age of 24 in 1939. Charles died in 1969, and Mabel continued to live in the house until her passing in 1971. Audrey kept the house until 1976, when it was sold to Ronald and Joan Myren.

Charles Barker was born in England in 1887 and immigrated to Canada in 1906. Mabel (née Ashwell) was born in Strathroy, Ontario in 1882. The two were married in Strathroy in 1912 and soon after moved to Edmonton, where they spent their early years as a family in Westmount. In 1925, they built and moved into the house on 97 Street NW. Charles was in the hardware business until his retirement in 1957. In her memoir, *Lilies of My Field*, Charles and Mabel’s daughter Claudia Bain details the early days of living at 11214 - 97 Street NW: “there were many vacant lots and fields near our house... Dad would often take us for a walk in the sunny fields just west of our home. This was typical prairie: dry grass... willow bushes, and a wide blue sky.” Bain’s memoir also notes that the front porch was originally open, but was glass-enclosed soon after the Barkers moved in. The family lived in a shack on the lot while the house itself was being constructed.

Ronald Myren (1937-2000) was born in Galloway, British Columbia, and studied at the Alberta College of Art (now Alberta College of Art and Design). He worked at the Edmonton Art Gallery (now the Art Gallery of Alberta) from 1966 to 1980 in various roles. Myren was a landscape artist, known for his paintings of landscapes around Alberta. Much of his work was done with oil paints and showcased the area west of Edmonton. Myren’s brushwork was a distinguishing feature of his work, creating the feeling of density and lushness. He also tended to work with a reduced field of vision, offering a different relationship between the viewer and the landscape. Myren had several solo and group exhibitions throughout Canada over the course of his career, from the 1960s through to the late 1990s. His work is a part of several permanent collections throughout Edmonton and Alberta. Myren also taught drawing and painting for several years at the Edmonton Art Gallery and University of Alberta Extension Department. He lived at 11214 - 97 Street NW for nearly two decades, from the early 1970s until 1994. He lived at the home with his wife, Joan Myren, and their son.





The Barker/Myren Residence is a one-and-a-half storey residential dwelling with a medium-gable roof and centre dormers on the front and back of the residence.

The Craftsman-influenced building is clad in horizontal wood siding and has original windows, some with six-over-one panes and some with twelve-over-one panes. The storm windows are also original. The Barker/Myren Residence also has a central enclosed front porch with a balcony on the upper floor.

The house appears to have been designed by the Barkers, and bears resemblance to a previous home the family lived in, at 10834 - 125 Street NW (also a designated Municipal Historic Resource, the Charles Barker Residence).

## CHARACTER DEFINING ELEMENTS

Key character-defining elements of the 1925 Barker/Myren Residence include:

- + Form, scale, and massing;
- + One-and-a-half storeys;
- + Craftsman design influences;
- + Medium-gable roof;
- + Gable dormer with projecting eaves on front elevation leading to a balcony;
- + Shed dormer on rear elevation;
- + Projecting eaves with wood soffit, exposed rafters, and plain frieze;
- + Projecting verges with wood soffit and plain frieze;
- + Horizontal wood siding;
- + Six-over-one-paned windows with two-by-two storm windows;
- + Plain flat window trims with lintel;
- + Enclosed centre front porch with multi-light transom windows; and
- + Central brick chimney.



*Designated as a Municipal Historic Resource through Bylaw 21436 in April 2026.*

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