



ELIZABETH BELL RESIDENCE

11219 - 70 STREET NW

CITY OF EDMONTON HISTORIC RESOURCE MANAGEMENT PROGRAM

Edmonton

DESCRIPTION OF HISTORICAL PLACE

The Elizabeth Bell Residence is a one-and-a-half storey dwelling in the Edmonton neighbourhood of Bellevue. The 1913 home is one of the first residences constructed in the area and one of the last of that era still standing. It was built on what was Graham Street, later renamed to 70 St NW. Bellevue was created when River Lot 28 was subdivided in 1906.

The Elizabeth Bell Residence is valued for its association with early residential development in the Bellevue/Highlands neighbourhood, as an example of vernacular architecture in the Bellevue neighbourhood, and for its association with architect W.D. Cromarty.

HERITAGE VALUE

The land that Edmonton was developed on was used by Indigenous peoples for millennia, 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 vast 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.

Bellevue is a reference to the French term for "beautiful view," as the neighbourhood is located atop the banks of the North Saskatchewan River. Bellevue sits on what was once River Lot 28, owned by John Fraser. Ownership transferred to J. A. MacDougall and then to McGrath, Hart and Co. John Fraser was the son of Colin Fraser, a Scottish fur trader, and Nancy Beaudry, a metis woman who was at one point the Edmonton's oldest resident. John's sisters, Betsy and Flora, resided with their husbands on the adjacent lots 30 (William Borwick) and 32 (James Guillion). The land was subdivided in 1906. The area remained sparsely populated with homes until decades later.

A register of applications and permits for new buildings shows that contractor William J. Marchen applied for a building permit for a "frame house" at Lot 6, Block 11, in Bellevue, on East





Graham Street (now 70 Street NW) in June 1912. The house was designed by architect W.D. Cromarty. Elizabeth Bell purchased the lot on East Graham Street at a value of \$800 on October 15, 1912. The Certificate of Title indicates that Elizabeth initially co-owned the property with Marchen. In 1913, a new title was re-issued to Elizabeth Bell only.

Elizabeth Bell was born in about 1860 in England. She immigrated to Canada in 1889 with her husband John and daughter Eunice, born around 1880. By the time she purchased Lot 6, Block 11, in 1912, she was a widow. The 1916 census lists Elizabeth as living at 11219 - 70th Street with her daughter, Eunice Townsend, a teacher, and her son-in-law, William Townsend. 1915 attestation papers show that William, then a mechanic, enlisted to fight in the First World War. He returned to Canada in 1919 after demobilization efforts. In 1917, the address was listed as vacant and there was no "Bell, Elizabeth (wid)" found in the directory. Interestingly, the Henderson Directories list William Townsend as living down the street, at 11231 70 Street, from around 1917 to 1921.

Not much is known about Elizabeth Bell; however, her name appears in the Edmonton Journal in August, 1915. A news story under the headline "Police Court News" details a man named Norman McNeil "being charged with false pretenses in that he had induced a widow, Mrs. Elizabeth Bell, to sign an indenture of lease, dated May 12 last, of lot 6, block 11, in the Bellevue subdivision." The charge was dismissed.

A 1917 Edmonton Bulletin notice indicated that at the age of 56, Elizabeth Bell married James Pringle at her home of 11219 - 70 Street. The notice indicated that after the wedding, the couple would be moving to Bear Lake, near Grande Prairie, where Elizabeth's new husband was a "successful and well-to-do rancher." It appears her daughter Eunice eventually moved up north too, as the 1931 Census shows Eunice in Peace River with her three children.

After the Bell/Townsend family left, the house was inhabited by many different people in the following decades. Fredrick Broadbent, who worked at Empress Theatre, lived there for seven years between 1921 and 1928. James Barclay lived at the residence between 1932 and 1940. Wilfred Barret, a truck driver for Dairy Supplies, owned the house between 1941 and 1950. Between and after these dwellers, the house was lived in for only a couple of years at a time before being passed down to someone else. It's possible this house was rented to tenants, as the inhabitants changed many times throughout the years. The longest known owner and inhabitant of the house is the current owner, who has lived in the home since 2008.

The one-and-a-half storey Elizabeth Bell Residence is valued for its vernacular design, including its form, scale, and massing. It features a high-gable roof with flush verges and eaves, with a small shed dormer on the north side. The shed dormer is clad in wooden shingles and contains a two-sash window with a plain lintel and sill. There is also a painted brick chimney located near the top of the south roof elevation. The dwelling is clad in wooden clapboard siding on the main floor and wooden shakes on the upper floor, with a plain frieze dividing the levels and corner boards. There is an offset front entrance with single-pane windows on either side of the door, above which is a gable peak with wooden shakes. The front door also features a decorative lintel. The front bay window has three casings, with plain lintels and sills. There is also a centre window on the upper floor of the





front facade with a plain lintel and sill. The south facade contains two small windows with plain lintels and sills, while the north facade contains one larger window with plain lintel and sill.

The dwelling was designed by architect W.D. Cromarty (1884-1960). Cromarty was born in Liverpool, England, and educated there as well. He emigrated to Canada in 1911 and spent about a year in Vernon, BC, before joining the Alberta Association of Architects and working in Edmonton from 1912 to 1916. While in Edmonton, Cromarty practiced under his own name for two years and taught at the newly-established Department of Architecture at the University of Alberta from 1913 to 1916. While in Edmonton, Cromarty designed both residential and commercial buildings. Unfortunately, few of his Edmonton work is still standing.

In 1916, Cromarty moved to Ottawa to design military hospitals and work for the Soldiers Resettlement Programme after World War I ended. He was appointed Director of the Town Planning Division of the Federal Parks Branch in 1921. Cromarty assisted with the planning and design of Lindenlea, a new housing subdivision in Ottawa, and wrote about town planning. In 1928, he was appointed Chief Architect with the Federal government's Architectural Division (formerly the Department of the Interior). There, he played a large role in the design of all buildings in Canada's National Parks. A notable work attributed to Cromarty is the Upper Hot Springs Bath Houses in Banff, built in 1932. When the Architectural Division was disbanded in 1936, Cromarty became head of the Historic Sites Division, where he established an architectural design unit within the Historic Parks & Sites Branch. In his role, he influenced the design process for National Parks buildings. William Cromarty retired in 1950 and passed away in St Catharines, Ontario, in 1960.

CHARACTER DEFINING ELEMENTS

Key character-defining elements of the 1914 Elizabeth Bell Residence include:

- + Form, scale, and massing;
- + One-and-a-half storeys;
- + High-gable roof with flush verges and eaves;
- + Small shed dormer on north side of roof, clad in wood shingles, with two-sash window with plain lintel and sill;
- + Wooden clapboard cladding on main floor and wooden shakes on upper floor;
- + Centre window on upper floor;
- + Plain frieze and corner boards;
- + Offset front entrance foyer with single-pane windows on either side of the door with wooden shakes in gable peak;
- + Decorative lintel above front door;
- + Front bay window with plain lintels and sills and three casings;
- + Two windows on south elevation with plain lintels and sills;
- + One window on north elevation with plain lintel and sill;
- + Brick chimney located near the top of south roof elevation; and
- + Rear mudroom (1960s addition).

Designated as a Municipal Historic Resource through Bylaw 21479 in May 2026.

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