

Heritage Value

The heritage value of 493 Main Street lies in its continuous use as a public building since about 1865 – first as a hotel and later as the Town Hall; in its association with the commercial development of Mahone Bay; and, in the capacity of its remaining neo-classical and late Victorian features to represent evolving architectural style in Mahone Bay.

The site of 493 Main Street was clearly marked as the “Hotel Lot” (Lot 20) on the 1860 Plan of Division of John Mader’s large mill land estate property. Four men – Henry Ernst, James Zwicker, Henry Zwicker, and Edward James – had bought Lot 20 in 1848 and sold it in 1865 with “buildings and improvements” to Peter Jodrey. After Jodrey’s insolvency, the property was sold to Ebenezer Frail in 1875. By 1884, when Ebenezer’s widow, Jane Frail, put her properties in trust before she remarried, the hotel was referred to as “Laurie House.” It was known as Laurie House or the Millett Hotel throughout the ownership of James Benjamin Millett 1884 until 1900. By 1904 it was known as the Aberdeen Hotel and remained so until its sale in 1934 to the Town of Mahone Bay for use as its Town Hall.

In its history as a hotel, 493 Main Street was at the centre of commercial and social life of the growing town. It outgrew its original one-quarter acre lot and spread to include an adjoining one-eighth acre lot where a huge barn and stable were erected. In its more recent history as Town Hall, the building continues as a focus for its citizens.

The building at 493 Main Street is one of four five-bay Georgian structures in the Town of Mahone Bay. Although the central Georgian section has lost many of its early features – the original six-over-six windows, the central door with transom and sidelights, and the two chimneys have all disappeared – those that remain establish the neo-classical style popular in the late 1800’s. The early twentieth century is evoked by the two major additions – the front tower and the rear ell – which were built at a time when railroad expansion brought increased commercial activity and tourist travel.

Character Defining Elements

Character-defining elements of 493 Main Street relate to architectural features characteristic of neo-classical/Georgian and late Victorian building styles:

- symmetrical five-bay façade;
- simple cornices over windows;
- two-over-two windows;
- friezeboard, baseboard, corner pilasters and return eaves;
- belts of decorative shingling on tower;
- gable roof lines on main section;
- roof lines on rear ell;
- moulded roof-line trim throughout.