

Heritage Value

The property at 578 Main Street is valued as a community museum; as a reflection of how the shipbuilding industry stimulated the local economy; as an example of residences adapted to accommodate changes in owners' lives; and as an illustration of Lunenburg House local style of architecture.

This historic property is recognized for its long association with the Begin family who owned and lived in the house from 1874–1959; specifically its association with Benjamin Begin and his son, Charles. Benjamin Begin operated a sail-making business in a long, one-storey ell once located at the rear of the house. In 1910 the ell was shortened and a second storey added to form expanded living areas including a kitchen. At this time Benjamin's son, Charles, relocated the family sail making business to the waterfront across the road. Charles Begin worked as a rigger on the original famed "Bluenose" schooner and some of his tools and equipment were used on the "Bounty" replica which was built in nearby Lunenburg for the 1960 MGM film "Mutiny on the Bounty."

578 Main Street exemplifies the late nineteenth century vernacular architectural style known as "Lunenburg House." As the only Lunenburg House on the town's primary commercial street with a full two-storey "bump," it is valued for having retained its overall proportions and appearance.

This property is valued for its current use as a museum with collections and exhibits related to the history of the community. The Mahone Bay Founders Society arose from enthusiasm generated during the community's 225th anniversary celebrations in 1979. The Society is dedicated to preserving the history of the town and area of Mahone Bay. In 1988 the Society purchased the Begin house and undertook the work of renovating the building and establishing the museum. The Settlers Museum now houses the Nova Scotia Museum's Inglis/Quinlan collection of ceramics and antiques, and also features a permanent exhibit on the settlement of the area.

Character-Defining Elements

Character-defining elements of 578 Main Street relate to the following:

- Features of late nineteenth century Lunenburg House style architecture including: the "Lunenburg bump" formed by five-sided Scottish dormer over enclosed entry; six-over-six sash windows with prominent molded hoods; medium pitched gables with returning eaves; central chimney; wood shingle cladding; wood trim such as plain corner pilasters and frieze running under the eaves; symmetrical three-bay front façade; side-lights at the main entrance
- Features pertaining to its social prominence and relationship to the shipbuilding industry such as the rear ell; proximity to former shipbuilding sites; imposing terraced setting above street level
- Features pertaining to its use as a community museum
- Historic interior features such as open hearth with bake oven; dry-painted designs dating from late 1800's on ceilings in entry hall and parlour; and, original layout of parlour, entry hall, stairs and keeping room