

Heritage Value

The heritage value of 674 Main Street lies in its preservation as an example of early domestic architecture in Mahone Bay; its historic character and unique setting; its association with Philip Hyson; and its association with Mahone Bay's shipbuilding industry.

The house at 674 Main Street is considered to be the oldest example in Mahone Bay of the one-and-one-half storey Neo-classical wood structure that was typical of early settlement dwellings in this area. This domestic vernacular building style continued in use for many years. Nails, hinges and forgework found in the building suggest a possible construction date in the late eighteenth or early nineteenth century. This time frame corresponds to the fifty-year period that John Philip Hyson and his heirs owned and farmed this property. Although there is no specific evidence that Hyson built the house, it is known locally as "The Hyson House."

Philip Hyson, born in 1737 in Hering, Palatinate, was one of the original "foreign Protestants" who settled the Mahone Bay area starting in 1754. He married Maria Magdalena Zwicker, eldest daughter of Peter Zwicker, Senior. Hyson was a farmer who acquired many properties in the area.

While other early Mahone Bay dwellings are set close to the street, the house at 674 Main Street sits at the end of a long driveway amid large open lawns. The spacious setting creates a sense of earlier days when this was a country farmhouse. Another heritage home, built circa 1885 in a somewhat grander style, stands immediately next door. Together the two properties represent a continuum of life from frugal settlement days to the prosperous shipbuilding years on the Mahone Bay waterfront.

The simplicity and lack of embellishment reflect the frugality of its early owners – farmers and later blacksmiths. A blacksmith's shop, possibly marine, stood for many years at the front corner of the property directly opposite the wharves and shipyards which thrived in the shipbuilding boom of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Charles Andrews, blacksmith, owned the property for almost fifty years. Recent additions accommodate modern living while preserving the historic character of the house as seen from the street.

Character-Defining Elements

Character-defining elements of 674 Main Street relate to its Neo-classical architecture and historical associations, and include the following:

- Symmetrical five-bay façade
- Windows and door set tight to low eaves
- Six-over-six sash windows
- Narrow eaves with no returns
- Plain corner boards and window trim
- Large central chimney
- Wood cladding
- Location on a waterfront lot, generous set-back from street and open spaces
- Historic interior features such as fireplaces including one open hearth with bake oven; key components of original floor plan; massive chimney foundation with bake oven in the cellar, original front door, wood trim and moldings, and original wide hemlock wainscoting