

Heritage Society Fundraising for Phase 2

A group of residents became aware of an original home, the oldest building still standing, built in 1912. It was scheduled for demolition. The new owner, a developer, had no need for the house. We decided to get together and formally organize the Beaumont & District Heritage Society, in an effort to save the home as a heritage resource. Our goal has been to save this heritage home, to help us promote and preserve our history. We knew that we would need to move it to a new location, if it was to be saved.

In order to make this dream a reality, we needed to do some serious fundraising. We needed enough money to build a new basement, and to move the house. We set a goal of raising \$100,000 for Phase 1. We surpassed that goal, raising \$130,000 in cash donations, pledges and a provincial matching grant. Some donations were conditional on the house being moved, which did not take place until Sept 7th of this year. With \$100,000 in the bank, we were able to pay for the basement construction, the move, repair the wood base, and we have a few items from Phase 1 to finish off.

We need further funding, for Phase 2 to go forward. Our goal is to raise another \$100,000 that will allow us to finish the project and have the facility ready for the public, hopefully by September 2020. It depends a lot on how quickly we can raise the funds that we need.

Part 1 – The St. Jacques Heritage House Museum

The St. Jacques Heritage Museum project is an amazing opportunity to establish our own heritage center. It will be an interactive facility, where children, families and groups come and experience history for themselves. Beaumont does not have a heritage facility, like most other communities in Alberta. It has been a challenge for our schools to meet curriculum expectations locally. They must travel to other communities and facilities. One example, the Dr. Woods Museum in Leduc can allow only one class at a time and requires bussing.



We hope to complete our project as soon as possible. The house will accommodate tours, include historic displays, and a functioning replica wood stove in the kitchen that will be used for baking and cooking, French Canadian recipes and more. In the living room we can have storytelling and traditional music, played on a 130-year-old Bell & Co. (Canadian) piano.

The house will be available for group bookings, like music classes and birthday parties, with meeting space in our expanded basement. The house dimensions are 28 feet by 28 feet, and we have constructed a 12-foot extension to the basement, making it 28 feet by 40 feet. It will be large enough to include a meeting room, handicap and regular washrooms, an office for the Heritage Society, and a Family History room dedicated to genealogy research. A handicap elevator will provide access between the main floor and the basement. The Museum will be used for special events such as Canada Day, on weekends, and we can help share the history of the indigenous people, and the Papaschase Cree IR 136 of 39.9 square miles, that was located just north of Beaumont. During the week it will be available for private bookings by schools and community groups.

Part 2 - The St. Jacques Family

French was the first European language spoken in Alberta. Many of the early families of Fort Edmonton, also called *Fort-des-Prairies* by French-Canadian trappers and *coureurs des bois*, were of French descent. By the spring of 1883 more than 20 families lived in the Beaumont area, while Edmonton-Strathcona had a population of roughly 1,500. Beaumont is one of four official bilingual communities in Alberta, and our museum will help to promote & preserve our French roots.

As a colonizing agent, Father Jean-Baptiste Morin was mandated to recruit more French-Canadian colonists to the west. Over 9 years, he made 28 trips through Canada and the United States. A traveler passing through the Beaumont area might not have noticed there was much of a community, a few farmsteads, widely separated by trees, with a small church and business center at the top of a hill.

In 1905 Joseph St. Jacques decided to move from his home in Quebec and come West with his two brothers and a brother-in-law. The latter three remained in Saskatchewan and Joseph came to Alberta.

On November 7, 1910 he married Nellie Vallée in St. Vital church in Beaumont. He bought a farm of 80 acres just east of the church, also at the top of the hill. His farm was typical of the early settlers in Beaumont, and Alberta.



Joseph and Nellie St. Jacques had four children. On their farm they had cattle, chickens and other farm animals. Their cows provided them with milk and cream and butter. In 1912 Joseph built their two-story house, on the south side of 50th Avenue, east of St. Vital church and the cemetery. It measured 28 feet by 28 feet and had a pyramid style roof. Two barns were in the back, one behind the other, south and west of the house.

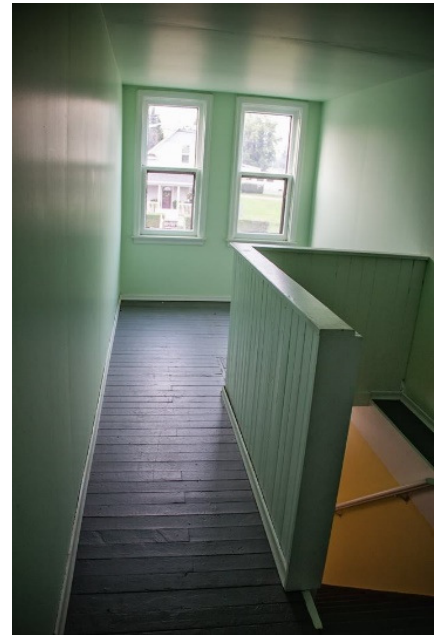


The basement was cut out of the ground and one large tree was cut down and used to support the center of the main floor. The house rested on a total of four such posts, with this main one resting on a partially buried bolder in the dirt floor. The chimney ran the entire height of the house, from the basement to the second floor.

In the south west corner of the basement was the coal chute. Just outside the south east corner of the house a cistern existed to provide the family with water as there was no indoor plumbing or even electricity, until the 1950's. Eventually cement was added to provide support for the foundation.

The main floor consisted of a kitchen and main bedroom that shared access to the chimney, on the east side, as well as a smaller bedroom and living room on the west. Stairs in the living room led to the top floor of the home, and in its early days it was one large unfinished room.

Joseph and Nellie's son Raymond lived in the home and raised his own family of seven children. Records show that renovations were made around 1950 or thereabouts, when the roof style was changed to A-frame, two upstairs bedrooms were defined, and water and electricity was added. Robert St. Jacques, the youngest child, became the third-generation owner of the home, and continued to live in the house after selling it to the developer, handing the keys over to the Beaumont & District Heritage Society on July 31st, 2018.



The site that the house has been moved to is city land, known as Parc Beacon Park, and part of the southern portion of the original 80-acre St. Jacques family farm. Heritage gardens and play areas will be developed to help beautify the property.

The Beaumont & District Heritage Society is pleased to be partners with the City of Beaumont. We look forward to honouring and preserving Alberta's indigenous and French history together.

Outcomes and Evaluation

Once completed, our Heritage facility will inevitably become a hub for a wide variety of heritage activities in Beaumont. Two key areas will be to provide a permanent resource for our many schools to do their learning locally, as well as helping residents learn how to research their family history. Community groups will have the opportunity to rent our meeting room, and even parts of the house for music, the arts and other educational activities as well.

The gardens and lawn will be developed and maintained with heritage plants, primarily by volunteers. Every year the City of Beaumont is a participant in the Communities in Bloom program, and the judges will be invited to visit the site and to share tips on how we can do better with our floral arrangements, trees and shrubs, environmentally and historically.

Residents of Beaumont have been looking forward for a long time to having their own historical resource center. As our programming develops, we know our Society membership will grow and flourish, and other communities and visitors to our city will be spreading the word of what we have to offer the region at large. The interactive atmosphere of our project is what we believe is our biggest asset. Visitors will be eager to return, again and again, because of the involvement and interest in the past that we will be able to encourage.



St. Jacques Heritage Museum Sponsor Levels

Benefactor - \$25,000+

Homesteader - \$5,000+

Founder - \$1,000+

Pioneer - \$25+

If you would like to be a sponsor, please call:

Carole Hudson at 780-932-8031

President, Beaumont & District Heritage Society