



***HERITAGE ASSESSMENT REPORT: 322 McNaughton Terrace  
(Former Austin Airways Ltd. Office.)***

*Prepared by: City of Greater Sudbury Heritage Advisory Panel*

*Date: November 15, 2011*

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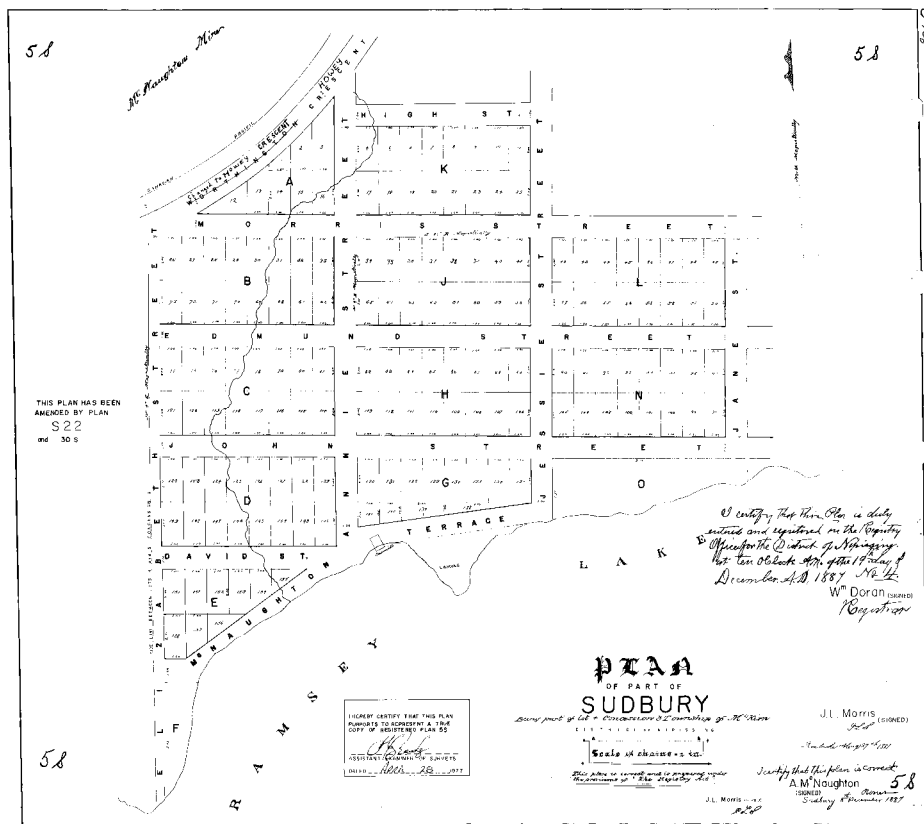
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# 1. Background

The City of Greater Sudbury recently acquired the property at 322 McNaughton Terrace. The site was the last remaining privately owned property along the west shore of Lake Ramsey and was purchased with the intention of incorporating it into Bell Park.

The existing building on the site has been identified as possibly having heritage value due to its long association with bushplane aviation in Sudbury and northern Ontario. Specifically, the building served as the offices for Austin Airways Ltd. from the mid 1930's until it was taken over by Ramsey Airways in the early 1980's. They used the building until the mid 1990's after which it was converted to a duplex.

The purpose of this report is to assess the cultural heritage value of the building and was prepared by City of Greater Sudbury Heritage Advisory Panel in accordance with the Ontario Heritage Act.



The subject site is located on the north part of Block F, Plan 5 S, which was registered 1887.

## 2. The Site and Surrounding Neighbourhood

322 McNaughton Terrace is legally described as Part 1 of Reference Plan 53R16533, Concession 3, Lot 4 in the Township of McKim and is located on the south side of McNaughton Terrace, east of Elizabeth Street, in the community of Sudbury. The site, which is owned by the City of Greater Sudbury, is approximately 493 m<sup>2</sup> in area, has approximately 20 m of frontage on McNaughton Terrace and also has frontage and dock facilities on Ramsey Lake. The site is situated within a transition area between the established residential neighbourhood to the north, Bell Park to the south and Ramsey Lake to the east. This neighbourhood was established with the registration of Plan of Subdivision 5-S in 1887. The subject site is located on the north half of Block F in the southwest corner of that plan.

The surrounding neighbourhood to the north can best be characterized as prominent low density residential with homes dating from the 1920's, 30's and 40's. This area is comprised of many large estate homes that were home to some of Sudbury's wealthiest citizens in the early part of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, probably due to the views of and access to Lake Ramsey. To the south of the subject site is the Sudbury Rowing Club and the gateway to Bell Park.



*Aerial view of site and surrounding neighbourhood.*

The site is currently occupied by a residential duplex building and is the only residential building on the south side of McNaughton Terrace, which is otherwise, a waterfront park and walkway. For most of its existence, however, the building served as an office, terminal and lounge for Austin and Ramsey Airways, which operated float and ski planes from the site on Ramsey Lake.



*Looking west  
on  
McNaughton  
Terrace  
(Source  
Google Maps).*

*Looking  
southeast  
on  
Elizabeth  
Street (Source  
Google Maps).*



*Looking north  
on Elizabeth  
Street (source  
Google Maps).*



### 3. History of the Building

By 1935, Ramsey Lake had become an important air base for the City of Sudbury and multiple aircraft could normally be seen on the ice during the winter and on floats in the lake during the summer<sup>i</sup>. It was at this time that Jack Austin made a deal with Al “Skipper” Chalmers of Sudbury Boat and Canoe to establish a base for Austin Airways on their Ramsey Lake property. Initially, the Austin Airways base consisted of a dock and small shack. The main office was later moved to a converted house on the property in 1937, now known as 322 McNaughton Terrace. This Ramsey Lake location was Austin Airways’ main base of operations for the next 20 years.<sup>ii</sup>



*Austin Airways  
Building in  
1930s/40s*

The converted air depot was a one storey brick building that included many modern facilities for the time, including administration offices, passenger waiting rooms, rest rooms and a two way radio room. At the time the building was constructed, the executive officers were C.C. Austin (president), J.A. Austin (secretary treasurer) and Phil Sauve (operations manager).<sup>iii</sup>

After its renovation in 1937, the building at 322 McNaughton Terrace continued to operate as a float plane terminal and offices for the next several decades. During that time, two major additions significantly altered the building.

The first alteration to the building involved the construction of a second floor over the entire footprint of the original building. According to a minor variance application submitted in 1982, the second storey was constructed in the late 1940’s to house the Canadian Weather Service office until its relocation to the Sudbury Airport.<sup>iv</sup>

In the years since the building was constructed, the surrounding residential neighbourhood has grown and the site is now zoned residential under the City’s Zoning By-law. As a result of this, the building needed a minor variance in order to expand. In 1982, a minor variance application was made to expand



*Austin Airways building with second storey addition in 1982.*

the existing charter aircraft business and tourist outfitting operation by constructing a 14 ft. by 29ft., two storey addition with a full basement. The application met with significant resistance from the surrounding residential property owners, including a petition with several hundred people in opposition to the expansion. The opposition was mainly due to the aircraft noise associated with the operation.

The addition was constructed in 1983, at which time ownership had changed from Austin Airways to Ramsey Airways, which was a new company established by a former Austin pilot. The site continued to serve as an office for Ramsey Airways until that operation ceased in the mid 1990's, after which it was converted to a duplex and was used in that capacity until its purchase by the City in 2011.

### ***3.1 Status of the Building***

As mentioned this building started out as a one storey brick residence and was converted in 1937 to an office building and float plane terminal. Since that time it has been heavily altered with by two additions and a conversion to its present residential use.

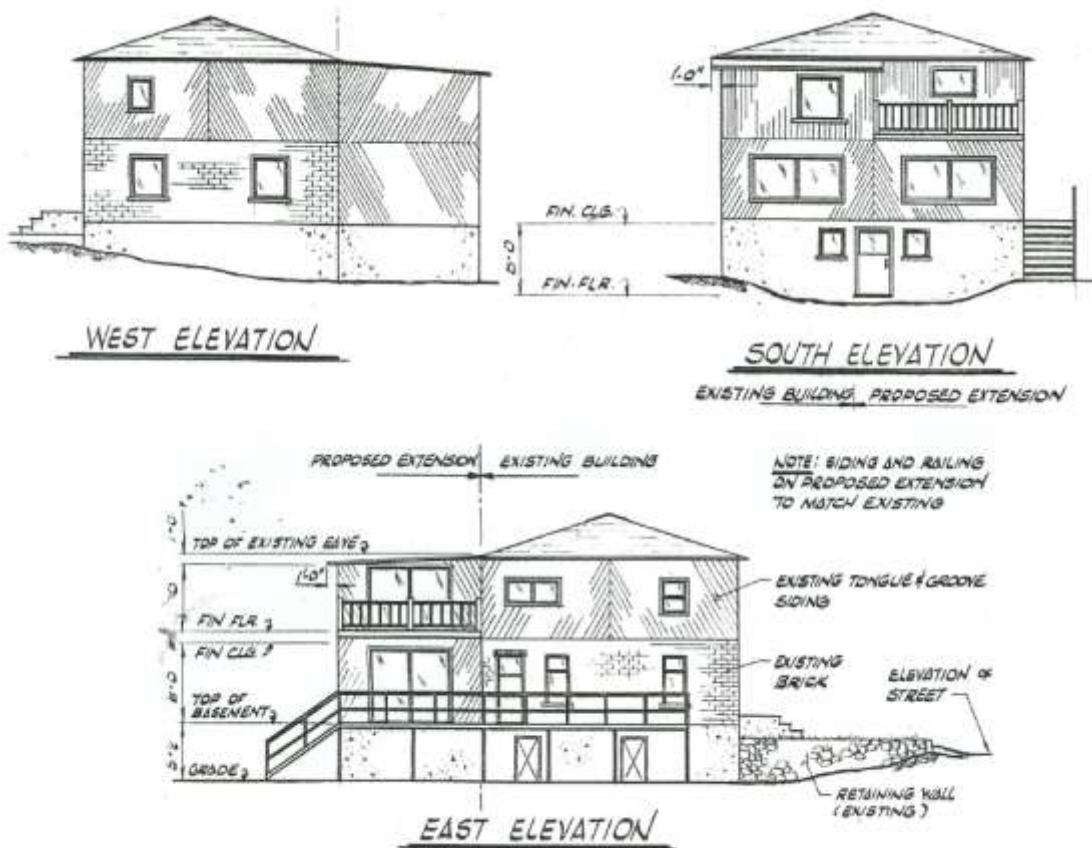
The original structure was a one storey building measuring approximately 25 ft. by 29ft. The exterior was red brick with a cottage style roof. In the late 1940's the second storey addition was put on to house weather offices. The exterior on the second storey was stucco in the 1980s and is now clad in vertical siding.

In 1983, a second addition was constructed onto the building. The addition was made to the south elevation and is approximately 14 ft. by 29 ft. and extends up the full two storeys with a basement. The exterior of the addition is clad in vertical siding with a concrete block basement. At some point after 1983, a deck was installed off the second storey on the south side.

The interior of the ground floor is a three bedroom apartment with one full bathroom, a kitchen and hookups for laundry facilities. The walls are clad in drywall and there is acoustical tile on the ceiling. The floors are covered in carpet and linoleum.

The second floor is a two bedroom apartment with a large open kitchen and living room area. There is a full bathroom on the second floor and a one piece bathroom on the main floor. There is also a sauna off of the main living room and access to the second storey deck. The walls are clad in drywall and the floors are hardwood.

There are three separate basements with three separate entrances that are only accessible from the exterior of the building. One basement is a small room that houses the HVAC system for the building.



*Elevation Drawings showing 1983 addition from 1982 Minor Variance Application.*



The second basement appears to have housed airplane parts and includes a workbench area. The third basement is part of the 1983 addition and appears to have been used for storage. The entrance to this basement is below grade and there was evidence of flooding.



*Current photos of the site. Clockwise from top left, fireplace in second storey apartment, stairway to second storey, basement workbench, access to HVAC room and basement under 1983 addition.*



*Current photos of the site. Clockwise from top left, bedroom in first floor apartment, first floor apartment Kitchen, second storey apartment kitchen, first floor apartment bathroom and former sauna off of second floor living room.*

In comparing the current exterior of the building to the photo of the original Austin Airways terminal from 1937, it would appear that the only remaining original features are the brick façade on the ground floors of the north and west elevations and the two windows on the north elevation. The rest of the exterior has been heavily altered.

In terms of the interior of the building, it too has been heavily altered by its conversion into two apartments and it is very difficult to discern if there are any original features left from its use as the Austin Airways office/terminal. There are some remaining doors that appear to be original along with some of the fixtures in the main floor one piece bathroom.

The only area of the building that is still recognizable as an air terminal is the central basement, where there is evidence of a work bench and shelves used for the storage and repair of airplane parts.

### ***3.2 Ties to Bush Plane Aviation***

Commercial aviation began in northern Ontario essentially in response to the needs of the mining and forestry industries. By the 1920s, communities throughout southern Canada were linked by rail and road, but much of the North remained inaccessible except by aircraft. In the absence of tarmac, lakes and rivers, even frozen muskeg, served as runways for bush planes equipped with floats or skis. Bush flying was a major factor in the economic development of northern Ontario bringing in professional workers ranging from surveyors and geologists to doctors and missionaries, doing aerial reconnaissance for forest fires, and servicing the residents of remote communities. Although it was not the first airline to operate in northern Ontario, Austin Airways was the longest-lived, successfully making the transition from bush flying to regional passenger service.<sup>v</sup>

Jack and Charles Austin, brothers in their early twenties, signed an agreement along with pilot Leigh "Cap" Capreol on February 21, 1934, which led to the establishment of Capreol and Austin Air Service. The company offered freight and passenger services, sold airplanes and aircraft supplies, tested planes, and provided flying instruction. The firm began with two small biplanes, one of them modified to act as an air ambulance.<sup>vi</sup>

In the 1930's, Ramsey Lake was the centre of airplane activity in the City. Several operators were in the area and regular flights to Chapleau or Timmins were available at certain times of the year.

Jack and Charles Austin were the first to offer scheduled services from Lake Ramsey with fabled pilots like Rusty Blakey, who joined the airline in 1937.<sup>vii</sup> Blakey had received his instruction the previous year

at the flying school established by Austin in Sudbury and was considered a "natural" at the controls of an aircraft (his instructor had let him fly solo after only a few hours of instruction). During his forty-nine years as a commercial pilot with Austin Airway's, Rusty Blakey logged an estimated thirty thousand hours of flying time and could proudly state that in all those years he never crashed a plane, never jettisoned a cargo, and never lost a passenger.<sup>viii</sup>

The significance of Austin Airways and Thurston "Rusty" Blakey is already commemorated by an Ontario Heritage Trust plaque that is located on the shore of Lake Ramsey at Science North.



*Ontario Heritage Trust Plaque commemorating Austin Airways and Rusty Blakey at Science North boardwalk.*

## 4. Cultural Heritage Value Assessment

### 4.1 Heritage evaluation criteria

The *Ontario Heritage Act* establishes the legislative framework for the protection of heritage properties, including archaeological sites. Section 29 of the *Ontario Heritage Act* gives the Council of a local municipality the ability to designate, by by-law, a property to be of cultural heritage value or interest if the property meets criteria that have been established by regulation.

The criteria that municipalities across Ontario must use when deciding to designate a property to be of cultural heritage value or interest are set out in subsection 1.(2) of O.Reg 9/06, which states:

*“A property may be designated under section 29 of the Act if it meets one or more of the following criteria for determining whether it is of cultural heritage value or interest:*

1. *The property has design value or physical value because it,*
  - i. *is a rare, unique, representative or early example of a style, type, expression, material or construction method,*
  - ii. *displays a high degree of craftsmanship or artistic merit, or*
  - iii. *demonstrates a high degree of technical or scientific achievement.*
  
2. *The property has historical value or associative value because it,*
  - i. *has direct associations with a theme, event, belief, person, activity, organization or institution that is significant to a community,*
  - ii. *yields, or has the potential to yield, information that contributes to an understanding of a community or culture, or*
  - iii. *demonstrates or reflects the work or ideas of an architect, artist, builder, designer or theorist who is significant to a community.*
  
3. *The property has contextual value because it,*
  - i. *is important in defining, maintaining or supporting the character of the area,*
  - ii. *is physically, functionally, visually or historically linked to its surroundings, or*
  - iii. *is a landmark.”*

Based on the above criteria, City of Greater Sudbury staff developed a ranking system to rate the cultural heritage value of a property. Properties that meet 7 to 9 of the above criteria have significant cultural heritage value and are worthy of possible designation under Part 4 of the Ontario Heritage Act. Properties that meet 4 to 6 of the above criteria have moderate cultural heritage value and are worthy of possible listing in the City's register of heritage properties. Properties that meet 1 to 3 of the above criteria have low cultural heritage value and are worthy of possible documenting and recording.

## 4.2 Responding to the criteria

The Heritage Advisory Panel met on November 15<sup>th</sup>, 2011 with staff to review the property and consider it in light of the Ontario Heritage Act criteria. The results of this evaluation are as follows:

*The property has design value or physical value because it,*

- i. is a rare, unique, representative or early example of a style, type, expression, material or construction method,*
- ii. displays a high degree of craftsmanship or artistic merit, or*
- iii. demonstrates a high degree of technical or scientific achievement.*

The Heritage Advisory Panel determined that the building at 322 McNaughton Terrace does not meet the above criteria.

*The property has historical value or associative value because it,*

- i. has direct associations with a theme, event, belief, person, activity, organization or institution that is significant to a community,*
- ii. yields, or has the potential to yield, information that contributes to an understanding of a community or culture, or*
- iii. demonstrates or reflects the work or ideas of an architect, artist, builder, designer or theorist who is significant to a community.*

The Heritage Advisory Panel determined that the location of the site at 322 McNaughton Terrace has a strong association with bush plane aviation in the City of Sudbury and northern Ontario that is significant to the community. The Panel further determined that the building did not meet the other two criteria.

*The property has contextual value because it,*

- i. is important in defining, maintaining or supporting the character of the area,*
- ii. is physically, functionally, visually or historically linked to its surroundings, or*
- iii. is a landmark.*

The Heritage Advisory Panel determined that the building at 322 McNaughton Terrace does not meet the above criteria; however, the site is a significant land mark due to its aviation history.

Based on the above assessment the Heritage Panel has determined that the building at 322 McNaughton Terrace has a low physical heritage value.

The Panel did determine that the site is an important part of the history of aviation in Sudbury and northern Ontario.

## 5. Conclusion and Recommendation

Using the criteria set out in the Ontario Heritage Act, the Heritage Advisory panel has determined that the building is of low heritage value; however, the site has significant and important ties to bush plane aviation in Sudbury and northern Ontario. Recognizing that building has limited heritage value but the site has possibilities for recognizing Sudbury's aviation history, the Municipal Heritage Panel recommends:

- That the building at 322 McNaughton Terrace be documented for inclusion in the City's archives;
- That the Ontario Heritage Plaque and sculpture should be relocated from the Science North location to the site at 322 McNaughton Terrace; and
- The future plans for the extension of the Ramsey Lake boardwalk should take into account and express the significance of the site to aviation in Sudbury including but not limited to:
  - dock rehabilitation/integration;
  - public art;
  - official designation of the area (Austin Airways and Rusty Blakey); and
  - street furniture

## References

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- <sup>i</sup> “Ramsey Lake Becoming Important as Air Base” *Sudbury Star*. March 27, 1935. p.13.
- <sup>ii</sup> Millberry, L. “Austin Airways: Canada’s oldest airline.” *Canav Books*. Toronto. 1984
- <sup>iii</sup> “Complete Modern Air Depot”. *Sudbury Star*. November 22, 1937. p.8.
- <sup>iv</sup> Application for Minor Variance or Permission to the Committee of Adjustment Regional Municipality of Sudbury by W.B. Plaunt and Son Ltd. September 27, 1982. City File A103/82.
- <sup>v</sup> Erin Semande, Researcher, Acquisitions and Conservation Services, Ontario Heritage Trust, 2011
- <sup>vi</sup> See above
- <sup>vii</sup> Wallace, C.M. and Thomson, A. “Sudbury Rail Town to Regional Capital.” *Dundurn Press*. Toronto. 1993.
- <sup>viii</sup> Erin Semande, Researcher, Acquisitions and Conservation Services, Ontario Heritage Trust, 2011