

165 LA VERENDRYE STREET – KITTSON HOUSE
G. Couture (Contractor), 1878



Originally located at the corner of Provencher Boulevard and Rue du College, the oldest residential district in St. Boniface, the Alexander Kittson house was prominently situated along the wide main street of the French-speaking community.

Educated at the College in St. Boniface, Alexander Kittson, at the age of twenty-six, was elected in 1879 to the provincial legislature to represent the Metis community of Ste. Agathe. He also owned a real estate company and served as the treasurer of the newly-formed municipality of St. Boniface. When he died of smallpox in 1883, the funeral was a major event, with a newspaper describing Kittson as “an exemplary young man of steady habits, obliging and very much esteemed.”

Alexander Kittson’s prominence was attributable in part to his father, Norman W. Kittson, who was instrumental in breaking the Hudson Bay Company’s monopoly of the fur trade in the isolated Northwest Territory. In 1844, the senior Kittson opened a trading post for the American

Fur Company at Pembina and soon some of the colonists were bringing their furs to this southern location. New lines of communication with the south opened, creating a renewed interest by Eastern Canada in the welfare of the colony. Norman Kittson launched the first regular steamboat service on the Red River and later backed the colony's first railway which originated from St. Paul, Minnesota and terminated on Provencher Boulevard, near his son's house. He was also a territorial legislator and later a Mayor of St. Paul. Norman Kittson's home in St. Paul has been designated a historic site by the Historic Sites Committee of the St. Paul Planning Board.

Alexander Kittson's two-storey frame house, built in 1878 by local contractor George Couture, is typical of designs based upon carpenter's pattern books that were used throughout North America. The house originally had a clapboard exterior with a verandah that extended across the front, wrapped partially around the sides, and had a porch floor continued to the rear. The gable at the front of the house contained a doorway which led out to the balustraded roof of the porch. Both the exterior and interior have been greatly altered although some original elements remain.

Alexander Kittson's widow remarried and lived in the house until 1914. During the 1930s and 1940s, Marius Benoist, a prominent St. Boniface musician, raised his family here. In 1947 the house was moved to its new location on Rue La Verendrye, three blocks away from its original site. It is in an excellent state of repair, and still serves as a residence.