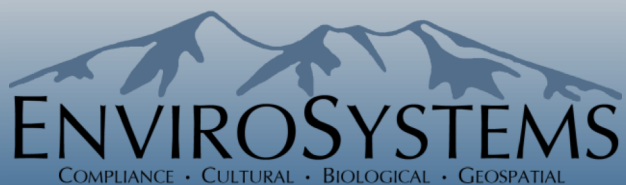


Phase I Cultural Resource Study for 820 North Beaver Street, Flagstaff, Arizona



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INTRODUCTION

EnviroSystems Management Inc. (ESM) conducted a Phase I Cultural Resource Study for Green Mountain Construction to support the proposed demolition of the property at 820 North Beaver Street (*Figure 1*). The property is located within the Mount Elden Heights Addition in Block 94 and lots 21 and 22 (Parcel # 101-04-020). This Phase I report complies with Flagstaff Zoning Code 10-30.30.050. The property does not lie within an existing historic district or overlay. The property was constructed between 1925 and 1929, and since it is more than 50 years old a Phase I Cultural Resource Study is required under the Flagstaff Zoning Code. The property currently serves as a rental for several residents. The proposed work will include demolition of the main house and detached garage. 820 N. Beaver Street is recommended not eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places or the Flagstaff Register of Historic Places under any criteria, and the proposed work does not affect a designated or eligible cultural resource.



Figure 1. Overview map showing the property at 820 North Beaver

PROPERTY HISTORY

County records indicate that the land that later became the Elden Heights Addition was originally held by the Santa Fe Pacific Railroad Company. Block 94 was likely acquired by George J. Babbitt (1860–1920) around 1916, coinciding with early mapping and subdivision efforts in the surrounding area (Plat maps from 1916 and 1919). Newspaper articles from April 7, 1911, and September 19, 1919, describe Babbitt's plans to divide and sell portions of the property, suggesting ongoing development activity during this period. Following George Babbitt's death in 1920, lots 5–12, 16, 17, and 21–24 were deeded to his wife, Philomena Babbitt (1865–1948). On July 15, 1921, Philomena sold lots 19–22 to Mrs. L. E. Wilson for \$1.00. This nominal amount suggests that the transaction may have involved personal, financial, or other special circumstances not reflected in the public record.

By late 1925, ownership of Lots 21 and 22 had transitioned to D. E. Ward (*Photograph 1*), though the sequence of recorded documents is unusual. A mortgage of \$1,500 from George Harrington to Ward was executed in November 1925 but not recorded until December 18, 1925. On that same day, the deed conveying the property from Mrs. Wilson to Ward was also recorded, though it bore an earlier execution date of December 9, 1925. The fact that Ward secured a mortgage prior to the recording of the deed suggests that the deed may have been executed earlier and only later submitted for recording, a common occurrence during this period.



Photograph 1. D.E. Ward, accessed from family search.com

The county assessor's office lists the property's construction date as 1915, based on information provided by the owner in 1969 (Theodore Lessman). However, the land was not subdivided and turned into lots until 1916, and even as late as 1919. The 1925 Flagstaff Plat Map depicts building footprints within lots 23, 24, and a small portion of 22 (perhaps by accident), but does not clearly show development on Lot 21 or Lot 22, the present location of 820 North Beaver Street (*Figure 2*). It is unclear whether the map incorrectly locates the structure in Lot 23 or depicts a different residence altogether. It is more likely that the mapped structure represents the home of Harold and Elsie Linn, known to have lived at 824 N Beaver. Therefore, the property ownership records

showing mortgages in 1925 and 1928 in conjunction with the 1925 plat map strongly suggest a construction date of 1925–1929. Furthermore, the Craftsman Bungalow styles exhibited by the property corroborate this date of construction.

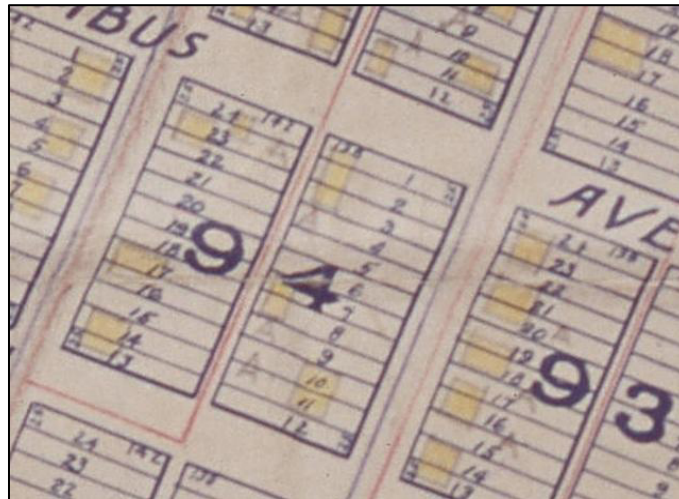


Figure 2 1925 Plat map of Flagstaff showing Block 94

Newspaper accounts from 1911 and 1919 provide important context for understanding the early development of the Elden Heights Addition (*Figure 3*, *Figure 4*). These articles reveal a surveying and subdivision of lands north of George Babbitt’s residence and emphasizes the coordinated and highly intentional effort by prominent Flagstaff landowners, financial interests, and the local press to promote this new residential district at a moment when the city was experiencing a period of rapid growth following World War I. The 1911 article announces the promise of “many choice locations for new homes,” suggesting early promotional activity tied to the Babbitt family’s landholdings. By 1919, marketing had become even more assertive: advertisements describe the sale of lots as a limited “opportunity,” highlight the ease of purchase through favorable payment plans, and assure buyers of modern improvements such as cement sidewalks. The language is clearly crafted to appeal to working families eager to own homes, and it reflects a broader push by local developers, bankers, and newspaper publishers to stimulate investment and settlement in newly platted neighborhoods like Elden Heights.

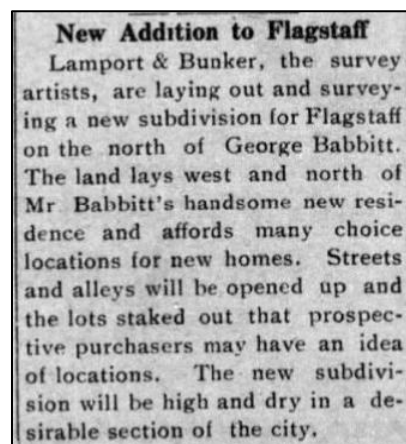


Figure 3. Coconino Sun, April 7, 1911



Figure 4. Coconino Sun, Friday September 19, 1919

Articles from the mid-1920s identify D. E. Ward, a carpenter employed by the Flagstaff Lumber Company, as participating directly in this building momentum. On December 4, 1925, the *Coconino Sun* reported that “D. E. Ward is building a handsome two-story home just north of the Fort Valley Road opposite the end of North Beaver Street,” indicating that Ward was constructing a residence in the immediate vicinity shortly after acquiring Lots 21 and 22. Ward later secured a second mortgage for \$1,500 on May 7, 1928, likely reflecting refinancing associated with construction progress or the completion of the dwelling. When viewed alongside the earlier promotional efforts surrounding Elden Heights, these records suggest that Ward’s construction activity was part of a broader, well-organized effort to capitalize on Flagstaff’s postwar expansion and to transform subdivided railroad lands into a desirable residential district.

CONSTRUCTION SUMMARY

The Coconino County Assessor lists the construction year for 820 North Beaver Street as 1915, a date attributed to a statement by the property owner, Theodore Lessman, in 1969. However, multiple independent lines of evidence strongly contradict this date. First, historical tract and subdivision records show that the land comprising Block 94 of the Elden Heights Addition was not subdivided into individual lots until 1916, with additional mapping and lot sales continuing into 1919. A structure cannot predate the creation of the lot on which it sits, making a 1915 construction date impossible.

Further evidence comes from the 1925 Flagstaff Plat Map, which depicts building footprints on Lots 23 and 24, and a small portion of Lot 22, but shows no development on Lots 20 or 21, the location of 820 North Beaver. The building footprint shown on Lot 23 almost certainly represents the nearby residence of Harold and Elsie Linn at 824 N. Beaver, rather than the subject property. If a house had already existed on Lot 21 in 1925, it would almost certainly appear on this map, which was prepared specifically to illustrate existing improvements within the townsite. The tract book shows two \$1,500 mortgages tied to D. E. Ward—the first in Nov. 1925 and the second in May 1928—which is consistent with financing and completion of a modest bungalow in that era. Together with the absence of any footprint on the 1925 plat, the first confirmed occupancy in 1929 (Wallace family), the evidence converges on a 1925–1929 construction window rather than the assessor-listed 1915 date.

Finally, the architectural character of the house itself corroborates a late-1920s construction date. The dwelling exhibits the massing, proportions, materials, and simplified detailing of a vernacular cross-gabled Craftsman bungalow, a style widely built in Flagstaff between 1924 and 1930 and first becomes visible in an aerial image from 1939 (*Photograph 2*). Taken collectively, the subdivision timeline, the 1925 plat map, mortgage records, newspaper accounts, earliest directory listings, and architectural evidence all converge on a construction window between 1925 and 1928, making the assessor-listed 1915 date demonstrably inaccurate.



Photograph 2. 1939 Aerial photo of the property

OCCUPANTS

The 1929 Flagstaff City Directory lists George and Annie Wallace, along with their son George Jr., as occupants of 820 North Beaver Street. D. E. Ward and his wife Laura are listed next door at 818 North Beaver, which corresponds to Lots 19 and 20. The Wallaces were likely renting the 820 residence while the Wards lived at 818. Beginning in 1931, only Laura Ward appears in the directories. D. E. Ward's 1937 death certificate indicates the couple had separated, and he was likely residing elsewhere, possibly at the Nackard Hotel. Ward was also mentioned in a 1927 *Coconino Sun* article as the victim of a roadside robbery by three men described as "tramps." Ward defended himself, injuring one assailant with a wrench; another fired a shot that passed through his car's windshield (The Coconino Sun, March 11, 1927; Appendix A).

The property was sold to Theodore (1899–1979) and Esther Lessman (1904–1995) in 1948 (*Photograph 3*). Theodore and Esther had moved to Flagstaff in 1937, and Theodore worked for the Southwest Lumber Company as a heavy-equipment mechanic until his retirement in 1965. Newspaper accounts portray the Lessmans as deeply devoted to both their large, close-knit family and their community, particularly through long-standing involvement in the Calvary Lutheran Church and its associated societies. The property remained in the Lessman family's ownership until 2000.



Photograph 3. Lessman 50th Anniversary, Arizona Daily Sun, January 31, 1974

ARCHITECTURAL CONTEXT

820 North Beaver Street is a one-and-one-half-story, cross-gabled vernacular Craftsman bungalow with a later mid-century rear addition (Photograph 4; McAlester:567–578). The building is constructed with a wood floor system. The primary massing consists of a rectangular wood-frame structure oriented with its narrow end toward the street and capped by a moderately steep front-facing gabled roof. Behind this front block, the roof shifts to a perpendicular side-gabled form, creating the cross-gable configuration typical of vernacular bungalow designs adapted to interior room arrangements.



Photograph 4. West Elevation from Beaver Street

The house sits close to the street, consistent with early Flagstaff townsite development patterns, and exhibits simple wood siding and minimal ornamental detailing characteristic of working-class residential construction from the late 1920s.

The primary (west) façade is defined by its prominent front gable and an integrated porch set beneath the main roof plane. The porch is supported by slender, wooden posts rather than the more elaborate battered piers or tapered columns associated with high-style Craftsman architecture. This simplified treatment reflects a local, utilitarian interpretation of the bungalow aesthetic. The porch entry is slightly off-center, a common feature of Craftsman-era dwellings, and the low porch foundation is consistent with modest residential construction practices of the period.

Exterior walls were originally clad in narrow, horizontal wood lap siding, portions of which remain intact beneath the later asbestos-cement shingle siding applied during the mid-twentieth century (*Photograph 5*). The exposed historic siding exhibits the narrow reveal, board width, and finish consistent with late-1920s vernacular Craftsman bungalow construction in Flagstaff. The present asbestos shingles obscure the original wall material and introduce a heavier, more uniform texture not characteristic of the building's initial design intent.



Photograph 5. Original siding beneath the asbestos siding

Window and door trim is narrow and unadorned, painted in a contrasting color. The original windows and fenestration pattern consisted of wood-framed, double-hung sash windows—reflecting the simple, functional rhythm typical of modest working-class dwellings of the era. However; the windows themselves have all been replaced with modern vinyl.

The roof retains moderately wide eaves and rafter tails. The roof does not have knee braces, or decorative bargeboards associated with architect-designed Craftsman buildings. The steeper roof pitch, compared to lower-slope California bungalows, is consistent with adaptations for snow loads at Flagstaff's high elevation. Modern asphalt shingles cover the roof, replacing earlier roofing materials.

The east elevation displays a substantial non-historic addition, likely constructed between the 1940s and 1960s (*Photograph 6*). This addition spans the full width of the structure and incorporates a shallow-pitched roofline and an enclosed porch or utility space with a centered rear door and a series of horizontally proportioned windows that contrast markedly with the original fenestration. Siding, trim, and foundation details differ from those of the 1920s construction and reflect mid-century building practices, including slab-on-grade foundations and standardized window units. This addition significantly enlarges the building footprint and alters the original rear massing, though it remains visually subordinate from the primary street-facing façade.



Photograph 6. East elevation showing later addition

CONDITION

The earliest documented condition rating for 820 N. Beaver Street appears on the 1969 County Assessor Property Record Card, which noted approximately 59% depreciation/obsolescence and a “2 of 4” physical condition. Current on-site observations indicate continued deterioration, with differential settlement, drainage deficiencies, localized structural distress most evident along the south and west (front) elevations, and plane irregularities visible along the east (rear) elevation. The rear enclosed porch/utility volume (a mid-century addition) demonstrates construction details and movement distinct from the historic cross-gabled core.

The lot exhibits minimal clearance between finished grade and the base of the cladding in several locations, particularly on the south side. The owner reports recurrent stormwater drainage and flooding, consistent with observed conditions that promote prolonged wetting at the perimeter, seasonal freeze-thaw movement, and capillary moisture into sill/framing.

Field evidence supports differential settlement—that is, uneven downward movement concentrated on the south side and at the front porch line (*Photograph 7; Photograph 8*). On the west (front) elevation, the right side of the porch appears to be pulling away from the principal mass, a classic symptom of isolated porch support movement relative to the main foundation. On the south elevation, subtle out-of-level conditions are suggested by misaligned trim and waviness in the wall plane. On the east (rear) elevation, the non-historic appended volume reads as structurally independent—with shallow roof intercepts and plane irregularity—suggesting movement and/or shallow support (e.g., slab-on-grade) in the addition.

Finally, the later application of asbestos-cement shingles has, in places, protected the underlying historic wood lap siding; however, incomplete coverage, open joints, and lifted edges create pathways for water intrusion at the wall assembly. Where asbestos shingles are installed over original wood siding without a ventilated drainage plane, trapped moisture can lead to localized deterioration of the hidden wood sheathing and siding, especially along low-clearance walls and at additions where flashing is vulnerable. In addition, asbestos is a regulated hazardous material; any repair or removal must follow state and federal abatement requirements, which can add substantial cost to rehabilitation.



Photograph 7. South elevation showing differential settlement



Photograph 8. West elevation showing settlement at porch

GARAGE

The proposed demolition also includes removal of the detached garage located at the rear of the property. According to County Assessor records, the garage was constructed in 1970, well outside the period of significance for the main dwelling (c. 1925–1928). As a result, the garage does not contribute to the historic character of the property. Its design, materials, and placement are inconsistent with the vernacular Craftsman bungalow form of the main residence, and its presence has, if anything, diminished the historic integrity of setting and feeling. Although the garage is now more than fifty years old, its demolition would not impact the property’s ability to convey historic significance, nor does it rise to the threshold requiring a comprehensive evaluation for historic eligibility.

ASPECTS OF INTEGRITY

Despite major alterations (mid-century rear addition; asbestos-cement siding; modern roofing), 820 N. Beaver retains some physical characteristics that partly convey its identity as a vernacular, cross-gabled Craftsman bungalow. Integrity is strongest at Location and Setting (street presence). Design and Feeling/Association; Materials and Workmanship are diminished due to modifications to the siding, rear addition, and settlement of the foundation.

1) Location — Retains Integrity

The dwelling remains on its original site within the historic Flagstaff townsite grid. No evidence suggests relocation. The house's position relative to the street and neighboring parcels reads as historic.

2) Design — Diminished

The cross-gabled bungalow massing remains intact from the street view of the west elevation. The integrated front porch, modest overhangs, boxed eaves, and simple trim collectively reflect a vernacular Craftsman design. The mid-century rear addition significantly alters the rear volume and introduces a shallow roof intercept.

3) Setting — Generally Retains Integrity

The house continues to read within a residential block of early townsite parcels, close to the street with small side yards—patterns consistent with historic development. Modern accretions (utility lines, vehicles, yard storage) are typical of a working residential setting and do not fundamentally compromise the historic spatial relationships. The 1970s garage partially diminishes the property's integrity of setting.

4) Materials — Diminished

Non-historic asbestos-cement shingles, modern roofing, and the rear addition diminish material integrity. However, the original narrow wood lap siding survives beneath, preserving critical historic fabric. Historic wood double-hung sash windows have all been replaced with modern vinyl windows.

5) Workmanship — Partially Retains Integrity

The building's workmanship is expressed in its framing proportions, boxed eaves, modest carpentry, and original wood sash. Later work (rear addition, asbestos siding, modern flashing) is plainly visible and of lesser craft quality, but it has not erased the expression of the original workmanship.

6) Feeling — Retains Integrity

From the public right-of-way, the house still conveys the look and scale of a modest 1920s Craftsman-influenced bungalow: cross-gabled massing, integrated porch, simple trim, and close street setback. This overall impression persists despite condition issues and later rear alterations. The 1970s garage partially diminishes the property's integrity of setting.

7) Association — Retains Integrity

The property continues to embody its historic associations with Flagstaff's late-1920s residential expansion and working-class housing patterns. Documentary links (mortgages, directory entries) and the building's extant form support the association with this developmental context.

SIGNIFICANCE

NRHP Criterion A / FRHP Criterion A (Events/Patterns)

While the dwelling is representative of the 1920s residential build-out and the Elden Heights subdivision activity, the record assembled to date does not demonstrate that this specific property

is directly and significantly associated with an event or development pattern that rises to the level of exceptional importance at the local, state, or national scale. The house reflects a common architectural style. Previous studies have identified the Craftsman bungalow style as a significant phase in Flagstaff's early history (Woodward et al. 1993). However, the property at 820 N. Beaver does not appear to be the site of a defining event nor the best surviving example of that theme. The structures condition and significant modifications have diminished the property's ability to convey this level of significance.

Finding: Not eligible under NRHP Criterion A / FRHP Criterion A.

NRHP Criterion B / FRHP Criterion B (Persons)

Known owners/occupants—e.g., D. E. Ward (carpenter), the Wallace family (1929 renters)—illustrate typical residents of the period, but available documentation does not indicate a significant association with a person of recognized importance in Flagstaff's, Arizona's, or the nation's history where this property is the principal location of that person's productive life.

Finding: Not eligible under NRHP Criterion B / FRHP Criterion B.

NRHP Criterion C / FRHP Criterion C or D (Design/Construction)

As constructed, the house embodied the distinctive characteristics of a vernacular, cross-gabled Craftsman bungalow (front-gable street block; perpendicular side-gable rear mass; integrated porch; boxed eaves; narrow wood lap siding; simple sash and trim). However, its ability to convey that significance has been diminished by:

- A substantial mid-century rear addition with a shallow roof tie-in that alters rear massing.
- Installation of asbestos-cement shingles over original wood lap siding, suppressing historic materials and texture.
- Modern roofing, replaced windows, and other incremental alterations; and
- Differential settlement and drainage-related distress (porch separation, uneven wall planes), which further compromise design/material integrity.

Although original wood lap siding survives beneath the asbestos and the primary cross-gable massing remains readable from the street, the cumulative effect of non-historic alterations and current condition reduces the property's integrity of materials and workmanship to a level below typical NRHP/FRHP thresholds for Criterion C when evaluated against other, better-preserved Craftsman bungalows in Flagstaff.

Finding: Not eligible under NRHP Criterion C / FRHP design-based criterion at this time.

NRHP Criterion D / FRHP Criterion E (Information Potential)

The resource is a standing residence; there is no indication that it is likely to yield important information in prehistory/history (e.g., as an archaeological site) beyond what is typical for similar properties.

Finding: Not eligible under NRHP Criterion D / FRHP Criterion E.

REVERSIBILITY OF IMPACTS

Although some impacts to integrity are theoretically reversible (e.g., asbestos shingle removal to reveal historic lap siding; drainage corrections; foundation stabilization), doing so would require structural engineering, geotechnical work, hazardous-materials abatement, and extensive envelope rehabilitation. Given the house's ongoing differential settlement (south and west perimeters), porch separation, non-historic rear addition with problematic roof tie-in, and asbestos-cement siding concealing deterioration risk, the time, effort, and financial resources required to restore the property to a condition that would convey significance are disproportionate to any reasonable economic return the house could produce. In short, fully reversing the integrity and condition issues would impose a substantial economic burden that deprives the owner of reasonable use or return under current and foreseeable market conditions.

MANAGEMENT

820 N. Beaver Street is recommended not eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places or the Flagstaff Register of Historic Places under any criterion, the proposed work does not affect a designated or eligible cultural resource.

PRIMARY SOURCES USED

Arizona Memory Project (Online)
Colorado Plateau Archives NAU
Coconino County Records
Historic Newspapers (*Arizona Daily Sun*)
Index to Deeds
Index to Mortgages
Coconino County Assessor's Office

REFERENCES CITED

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Flagstaff Man Makes Getaway from Bandits

Navajo county officers are searching for three unidentified men who Thursday morning staged a daylight holdup, relieving D. E. Ward of Flagstaff of \$20 when he stopped his car on the highway shortly after 9 o'clock in the morning on the Winslow-Holbrook road, three miles east of St. Joseph.

The robbers, believed to be tramps, made good their escape, presumably by picking up a ride, although one of their number was suffering from a head wound inflicted by Ward when he struck the man with a wrench, he reported to Sheriff Divelbess.

One of the bandits fired at Ward when he wielded the wrench which felled one of their number, the bullet going through the windshield of his car, and Ward reported the last he saw of the trio two of them were engaged in reviving their companion who had been knocked unconscious by the blow.

In their haste while searching Ward, the bandits overlooked \$285 in currency which he had in his inside coat pocket.