

Statement of Significance

Felix Casorso House

1583 Highway 33 - Kelowna, BC



Prepared by Elana Zysblat, CAHP :: Ance Building Services :: June 2019

Statement of Significance



Description of the Historic Place

The Felix Casorso House is an early twentieth-century Foursquare Style farmhouse with a full-width front porch located at the intersection of Highway 33 and Loseth Road in the Rutland area of Kelowna. The wood-frame, two-and-a-half-storey house faces south, with its back to Highway 33.

Heritage Values of the Historic Place

Constructed between 1908 and 1914, the Felix Casorso House is valued as a reflection of the earliest agricultural development of the Rutland area of Kelowna. Significance lies in the association of this place with the Belgo-Canadian Land Company (BCLC), one of the major early speculative agricultural companies in the Okanagan. A major landowner at the time, the BCLC irrigated, planted, and planned to further develop 10,000 acres in Rutland between 1908 and 1914. Constructed on BCLC lands, this house is an important example of the type of residential construction that was deemed preferred for important company men and their families. It represents a sense of permanence for the company as it established its foothold on the land through other improvements such as dams, irrigation networks, orchards, and other crops. These heritage values are also relevant to the association of this place with the Land and Agricultural Company of Canada (L&A), which purchased the BCLC's lands in 1914, and which was controlled by most of the same shareholders as the BCLC's.

The property further possesses significance for its long-term historical association with members of the Casorso family, who were the first Italian immigrants in the Okanagan Valley, having arrived in Kelowna with Father Pandosy in 1884. Joseph and Felix Casorso, two brothers of eight in the family, purchased the L&A's land and real estate holdings in 1924. Felix Casorso lived in the subject house, and Joseph

lived at the nearby Belgo house. From these properties the Casorso brothers formed the Black Mountain Cattle Company and the Belgo Cooperative Growers Association, and continued to farm the surrounding orchards, crops, and range to great acclaim and success. As the home of Felix Casorso until 1972 (his death) and his wife, Veronica, until 1978, this house holds important associations for the community to the contributions and impact of the pioneer Casorso family on the agricultural and ranching economy of the Okanagan and British Columbia and on the cowboy/rodeo legacy in Kelowna. It is also noteworthy that Felix Casorso was a founding trustee of the Black Mountain Irrigation District, which still exists today.

Aesthetically, the subject house is valued for its vernacular Foursquare design, a trending design in residential architecture in Kelowna and widely popular in house plan catalogues in the early 1900s. This house is also valued for its long-term ownership pattern, having been owned by only two families since it became privately owned in 1924. The house was purchased from the Casorso family in 1978 by the Sandana family, who have contributed to the agricultural heritage of this place by maintaining its presence as a farm house on the land, and through their fruit growing and raising of livestock on the lands around the home.

Character-defining elements

- Original location of the house in the Rutland area of Kelowna
- Situation of the house on the lot, with the front façade oriented toward the south
- The farm-sized, relatively large surviving property (1.66 acres)
- Continuous residential and agricultural use since construction
- Residential form, scale and massing
- Wood-frame construction
- Single-storey hipped roof addition at rear
- One interior and one exterior brick chimney (now clad in river rock)
- Physical and associative relationship with the Belgo House nearby
- Landscaped rural setting, with surviving elements of the BCLC, L&A and Casorso Brothers agricultural enterprises on the land, including the barn, farm shed, and cherry shack
- Half a dozen mature trees on the property ranging from 30-125 years old

Character-defining elements of vernacular Foursquare design, including:

- Two-and-a-half-storey height
- Box form
- Symmetrical cubic plan
- Hipped roof
- Full-width open front porch with square columns and balusters
- Window and door openings related to its original design
- Original wood windows, where surviving
- Original horizontal wooden siding beneath the stucco and shingle cladding

Archival Photographs



Mr. Felix Casorso and subject house in the butte country, Black Mountain district. c. 1925-1926.
Source: BC Archives Item I-52490



Looking north over the Casorso property, alfalfa fields main road orchards and bee-hives in the distance. c. 1925-1926. Source: BC Archives Item I-52422

Current Photographs (all photos in document provided by Kim Sandana)



Front elevation (south)



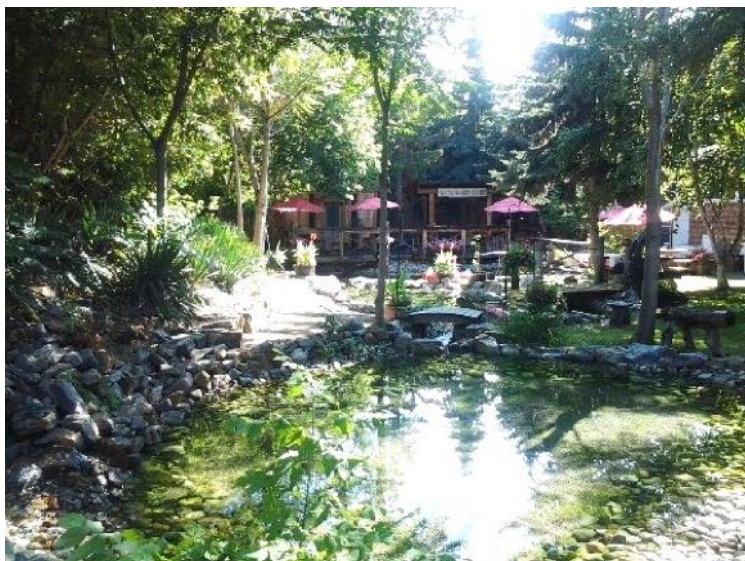
Front (south)
and side (east)
elevations



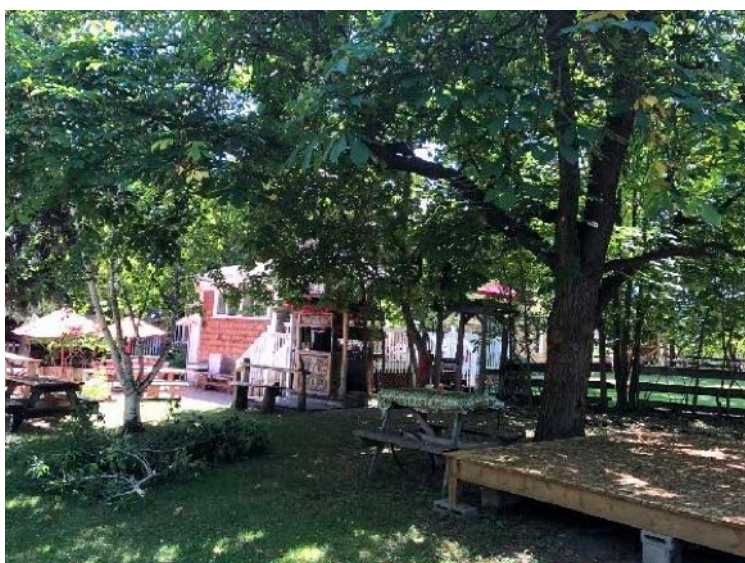
Rear elevation (north)



Side elevation (west)



Views off the property, landscaping and accessory buildings



Heritage Evaluation (as per the Kelowna Heritage Register Evaluation Criteria)**A. Architectural History:**

Style or type of building, structure or landscape; design attributes; construction methods/materials; notable designer or buildings.

Criterion	Grade	Points	Rationale
A.1. Style and/or Type	G	12	The Four-Square Style of house is a relatively common style for this time period in Kelowna. There are approximately 12 Foursquare Houses on the Kelowna Heritage Register.
A.2. Design	G	10	<p>The design of this house is typical of a Foursquare design of this time period:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Square floor plan • Bi-lateral symmetry • Front porch • Hipped roof <p>However, some typical elements of this style are missing, such as a front dormer window.</p>
A.3. Construction	F/P	0	The construction of this house is typical for its age and design.
A.4. Designer / Builder	F/P	0	It is speculated that the house was constructed by M.J. Curts, but this is unsubstantiated. The designer or architect is also unknown. The house may be a "pattern house", chosen from a catalogue.
Subtotal Score		22	

B. Cultural History:

Historical association with important people or events; historical patterns within the city's history.

Criterion	Grade	Points	Rationale
B.1. Historical Association	E	35	<p>This historic place has associations with the following notable people, organizations, and events:</p> <p>Farming – this is a strong example of development associated with early agriculture in this area. It is a reminder of the large orchard homesteads that characterized Rutland in the early twentieth century.</p> <p>Belgo-Canadian Land Company (BCLC) – this company owned 10,000 acres in this area, and it is believed that they constructed this house in 1907/08. The BCLC was one of the early speculative companies to develop, irrigate, and subdivide this land for farming, and their actions here opened the doors for the agricultural prosperity and subsequent development of the Rutland area.</p> <p>Casorso Brothers – Felix and Joseph Casorso purchased the house in 1925, and it became Felix's home until his death in 1973. The Casorso family were the first Italian pioneer family in Kelowna, having arrived with Father Pandosy in 1884. These two of the eight Casorso Brothers started the Black Mountain Cattle Company at this place. Felix Casorso was instrumental in helping to establish the Black Mountain Irrigation District (BMID) in this area, which still oversees the local water system. The many Casorso families in the Kelowna area were master farmers and ranchers, representing the area on many provincial boards and councils related to agricultural regulation and development.</p> <p>Sandana Family – The Sandana family purchased this home in 1978 from the Casorso family.</p>
B.2. Historical Pattern	E	30	<p>This house has considerable significance related to the early agricultural history of Kelowna and the Rutland area. Being a product of early agricultural speculation and land development, it speaks to the economic foundation of what caused this area to boom in the early twentieth century. Its location and situation in the landscape reflect the early orchard homesteads that dotted this area at the time. Given the fact that much of the original context is being lost due to residential development in the area, the retention of this home as a reminder of the early agricultural development pattern of this area is valid.</p>
Subtotal Score		65	

C. Context:

Context of each resource within the historical landscape or neighbourhood; compatibility with other buildings and groupings of buildings; symbolic importance as a local landmark.

Criterion	Grade	Points	Rationale
C.1. Landscape / Site	G	5	The context of the house in relation to the nearby geographic features such as Black Mountain is authentic and intact. There are remaining features of the Casorsos' residence and farming activities remaining on the property, such as several mature trees, and outbuildings including the Barn, Farm Shed, and Cherry Shack (which was moved from the other side of the highway in approximately 2003). These elements help to retain a sense of the past and reflect the agricultural significance and history of this place within rapidly developing and urbanizing surroundings.
C.2. Neighbourhood	G	6	The house has physical and historical associations with the Belgo House, approximately three kilometres away. Both are of a similar design, and both have associations with the Belgo-Canadian Land Company.
C.3. Visual / Symbolic Importance	G	8	The house is a visual reminder of the agricultural roots of the area, and stands as a symbolic oasis of this bygone time in its rapidly urbanizing surroundings. Stylistically the house becomes more important in this context, as it reflects the preferred style and design of farmhouses in the early twentieth-century in this area, a style that is no longer relevant or seen in the newly built homes nearby. It creates a visual historic counterpoint to the modern development.
Subtotal Score		19	

D. Integrity:

Degree to which the resource has been altered since originally constructed and designed. The reversibility of alterations was also taken into account.

Criterion	Grade	Rationale
D.1. Integrity & Condition	G	The house retains a solid integrity to its original design and form. While some materials and finishes have been modernized or altered over time (i.e. siding, and cladding on foundation) these could easily be removed to reveal authentic historical materials which remain underneath. The current roofing material is not authentic to the original design, but practicality in terms of fire safety should be considered when conservation decisions are made regarding reverting to a historical material which may compromise the safety and longevity of the building. The three or four modern windows that have been added could be replaced with original windows (which may still exist on the property) or new historically sensitive windows.
Subtotal Score	-8	

Category	Score	Total allowed
A. Architectural History	22	40
B. Cultural History	65	35
C. Context	19	25
D. Integrity	-8	0
Subtotal	98	-30
Final Score	68	
Eligibility	Group A Heritage Register	

Research Resources

Author unknown. September 25, 1906. Kelowna – The Orchard City of Far-Famed and Lovely Okanagan Valley. Vancouver Daily World newspaper. – Provides contextual background about the early development of Kelowna.

Author unknown. November 16, 1908. Fruit Company to do Business in B.C. The Victoria Daily Times newspaper. – Incorporation of the Belgo-Canadian Fruit Lands Company in Antwerp. Demonstrates that the house couldn't have been built by this company in 1907/08.

Author unknown. June 17, 1910. News of the Valley. The Orchard City Record newspaper. – illustrates the timing of major works of the Belgo-Canadian Lands Company around the Black Mountain area.

Author unknown. July 7, 1910. Belgian Capital Invested in Western Canada. The Orchard City Record newspaper. – Article related to the level of investment and irrigation works of the Belgo-Canadian Fruit Lands Company in the area.

Author unknown. November 1, 1910. In the Heart of B.C. Fruit Belt – The Fertile Districts of the Famous Okanagan Valley. Vancouver Daily World newspaper. – Provides insight into the favourability of the land and the major irrigation projects being undertaken.

Author unknown. February 2, 1911. The Orchard City Record newspaper. – Reference to "Belgo-Canadian camp" suggests that the company hadn't established permanent community at this point.

Author unknown. February 2, 1911. The Orchard City Record newspaper. – Reference to "Belgo-Canadian camp" suggests that the company hadn't established permanent community at this point.

Author unknown. August 14, 1912. Kelowna Entertains Delegates of Irrigation Association. The Kelowna Orchard City Record newspaper. – Mention of "Belgo-Canadian camp" as site visited by delegates.

Author unknown. August 24, 1912. Kelowna, Orchard City of the Beautiful Okanagan Valley. The Calgary Herald newspaper. – Mentions the irrigation work of the BCLC.

Author unknown. March 15, 1924. Casorso Brothers Buy Up Famous Okanagan Farm. The Province newspaper. – Shows the Casorsos' real estate investment and renown as prominent stockmen.

Author unknown. September 25, 1927. Corn Competition in Kelowna District Won by Felix Casorso. The Province newspaper. – Demonstrates the acclaimed farming skills of Felix Casorso, who grew his corn on the Black Mountain Buttes.

Author unknown. February 6, 1932. The Times Colonist newspaper (Victoria). – Social pages piece showing Felix Casorso's association to the Black Mountain Irrigation District and his reputation as a rancher.

Author unknown. January 3, 1933. Recent Marriage. The Province newspaper. – Article makes reference to their Belgo House residence.

Author unknown. February 22, 1960. Prominent Okanagan Rancher Dies. The Vancouver Sun newspaper. – Provides biographical information about Joseph Casorso.

Boam, Henry J. 1912. British Columbia: its history, people, commerce, industries, and resources. Pg. 326-327. – A historical perspective on the BCLC's operations in 1912.

BC Archives: Indexes to births (1854-1903), marriages (1872-1938), deaths (1872-1993), colonial marriages (1859-1872) and baptisms (1836-1888), archival photographs

City of Kelowna Heritage Register - Statements of Significance for Second and Third Casorso Houses and Block

Chataway, Peter. As built elevations, floor plans, site plan and tree plan

Dauncey, Lorri. Heritage Significance Overview – For Inclusion on the Heritage Register.

Loseth, Diane and Rampone, Don. May 6, 2019. Farmers Fed Valley, World. The Daily Courier newspaper.

Loseth, Diane and Rampone, Don. May 13, 2019. Kelowna Cowboy Faced Bears, Rattlesnakes, Horses. The Daily Courier newspaper. – Biographical information about Felix Casorso.

Zacharias, Rand. October 2, 2017. The Casorso Family Homes of Kelowna — An Italian Adventure. Website: <https://owlcation.com/humanities/An-Italian-Adventure> - Historical information about the Casorso family and their earliest residences.

Site photographs - Sandana family