

City of Afton, Minnesota  
**Heritage Preservation Commission**  
**LOCAL PROPERTY DESIGNATION**

**DRAFT**

**NAME OF PROPERTY:**

*Historic Name:* Reverend Simon Putnam House  
*Other Names:* Congregational Church Parsonage  
*SHPO Inventory No.:* WA-AFC-065  
*Parcel No:* 22.028.20.11. 0028

**LOCATION:**

*Street & No.:* 3192 St. Croix Trail South  
*City/Town:* Afton  
*State, County, Zip:* Minnesota, Washington County, 55001

**PROPERTY OWNER:**

*Owner Name:* Thomas D. & Donna M. Dematteo  
*Owner Phone/Cell:*  
*Street & No.:* PO BOX 40  
*City/State/Zip:* Afton, Minnesota 55001

**CLASSIFICATION:**

<i>Ownership of Property</i>	<i>Category of Property:</i>	<i>Number of Resources within Property</i>	
		<i>Contributing</i>	<i>Noncontributing</i>
X private	X building(s)	2	buildings
public	district		sites
	site		structures
	structure		objects
	object		
		2	0 <b>TOTAL</b>

*Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register of Historic Places:* 0      *Open to the Public:* Yes

**FUNCTION or USE:**

*Historic Functions:* Residential, Ecclesiastical  
*Current Functions:* Residential, Commercial

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**SIGNIFICANCE:**

*Historic significance:* Associated with activities, processes, events, trends or persons of importance to the community, state or nation.

*Narrative Statement:*

Simon Putnam was born on November 17, 1821 in Sutton, Massachusetts. He married Julia Bacon and had a son, Myron, born in Hopkinton, Massachusetts on April 29, 1845. He is listed on the 1857 Minnesota census as a preacher, age 34. Listed with him was Julia Putnam (32) and Myron L. Putnam (12). Research indicates he was in Afton at least the previous year, as he is cited in the Minnesota Farmers' Diaries in 1856 as having preached there. And by that year he was on the original board of trustees of School District #24, located in Afton village, which was organized in 1856.

By 1859 Putnam had built his home, also known as the parsonage, on the northwest corner of the intersection of Washington Street (now St. Croix Trail South) and 32<sup>nd</sup> Street South. He taught school in the kitchen of his home. His house was used for both educating the young people of Afton and holding religious services until separate structures were built. A new brick school was constructed circa 1867.

Led by Putnam, the Congregationalists organized in Afton on June 24, 1858. The denomination had 13 members and for 10 years met in homes or the schoolhouse. The Congregational Church on Washington Street (present day St. Croix Trail South) was not completed until September of 1868.

Reverend Putnam held "war meetings" to raise volunteers to fight the "Godless rebels" when the Civil War broke out. He enlisted in Company E of the Third Infantry Regiment on October 12, 1861 and brought his sixteen-year-old son Myron. Too young to be issued a military musket, Myron entered as a musician and was issued a drum. In a losing battle in Murfreesboro, Tennessee, the Putnam's company and most of the rest of the Third Minnesota surrendered. Myron and Simon returned to Minnesota according to the terms of their Confederate parole. Myron, however, went on to participate in the Battle of Wood Lake, part of the US-Dakota War, and was discharged in July 1863, having developed a chronic illness. He died at the age of eighteen shortly thereafter (Martens). Simon was promoted to Full Chaplain on September 9, 1863 and was mustered out on September 11, 1864 at Afton. Illness contracted during the war also claimed Simon. Father and son are buried at Mount Hope Cemetery on the bluff overlooking the Village of Afton and the St. Croix River Valley.

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*Architectural significance:* Possessing distinctive characteristics of a style, place period, method or materials of construction, builder or architect.

*Architectural Classification:* Residential building  
*Materials Used:* Wood frame, asphalt singles  
*Foundation:* Sheathed in cement  
*Walls:* Thin-lap and shiplap wood siding  
*Roof:* Asphalt shingles

*Narrative Description:*

The Reverend Simon Putnam House is located on a large lot at the northwest corner of the intersection of 32<sup>nd</sup> Street South and St. Croix Trail South. The lot supports the house, a collection of 1 and 1½ story components located near the street intersection, and a barn-like structure to the west and north of the residence.

The main massing of the folk cottage is a 1½ story front-gabled temple-form with two recessed and end-gabled 1-story wings. Adjacent and to the south of the main gabled end is an enclosed 1-story porch. There are gabled and shed additions to the west off the back of the cottage, all leading to a complex and changing profile from each direction.

The house is wood frame and sheathed in narrow lap wood siding. Like the amorphous nature of the architectural forms, the fenestration displays a variety of window types, sizes and proportions. However the house still retains a variety of original divided light windows and some luxury in the diamond-cut glass transom over the centered plate glass window.

While the corner porch, once open is now enclosed, the cottage still evokes a pioneer charm in its ability to expand as the need for more room grew without aesthetic concern or balance. The house now contains an antique business.

To the back of the site is an early 2-bay white barn. The simple end-gabled structure retains its original divided light window, sliding barn doors and shiplap siding. The barn probably appeared more coordinated and connected to the homestead when the house, as originally rendered, was painted white.

**SIGNIFICANCE STATEMENT:** Built in 1958, the simple folk cottage at 3192 St. Croix Trail South was the home of the Reverend Simon and Julia Putnam and is also significant was both the Parsonage of Afton's Congregationalist Church and one of the earliest buildings to hold school instruction before a dedicated school house was built.

**OTHER ITEMS OF SIGNIFICANCE:**

*Related Historic Contexts:*

Town site Development in Washington County 1839-1955  
Immigration and Ethnicity in Washington County ca. 1838-1920  
Early Agriculture and River Settlement 1840-1870

*Significant Person(s):*

Reverend Simon Putnam

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Railroads and agriculture Development 1870-1940	
<i>Period of Significance:</i> 1859 when the house was built to Putnam's death circa 1865	<i>Cultural Affiliation:</i>
<i>Significant Dates:</i> 1859 date of construction	<i>Architect/Builder(s):</i> Unknown

**GEOGRAPHICAL DATA:**

*Acreage of Property:* 0.861

*Legal Description of Property:* LOTS 7-11 015 SUBDIVISIONNAME AFTON LOT 7 BLOCK 15 SUBDIVISIONCD 19040

*Boundary Justification:* Washington County tax records, Afton Village boundaries

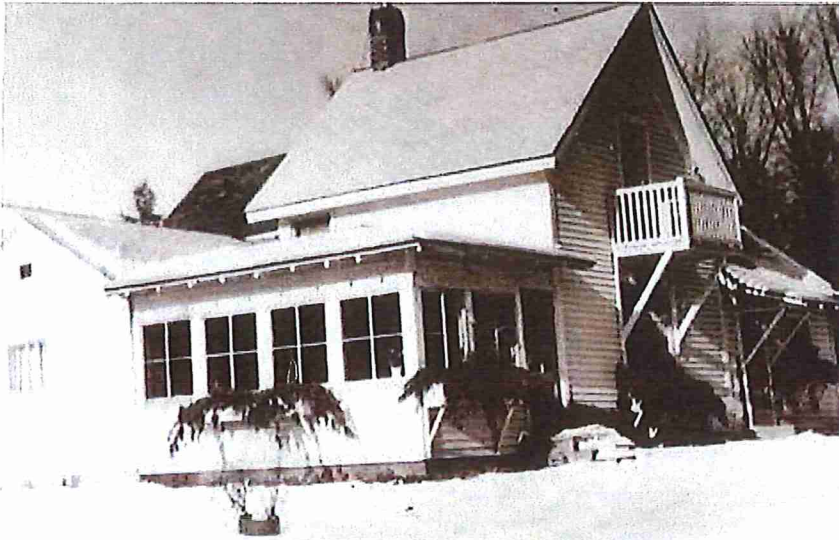
**PHOTOGRAPHIC DOCUMENTATION:**

*Historical Photographs:*



*Reverend Simon Putnam*

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*20<sup>th</sup> century photograph of the Reverend Simon Putnam House*

***Current Photographs:***



*The Reverend Simon Putnam House sits on the northwest corner of the intersection of 32<sup>nd</sup> Street South and St. Croix Trail South. Architecturally it is a folk cottage that has grown through time with additions to the north and west.*

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*The porch to the south of the front gable elevation was once open but is now enclosed.*



*The north-facing elevation displays some of the cottage's complex growth of lean-tos and additions.*

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*South-facing elevation.*



*To the west and north of the cottage is a two stall barn-like structure that appears to date back to the turn-of-the-century.*

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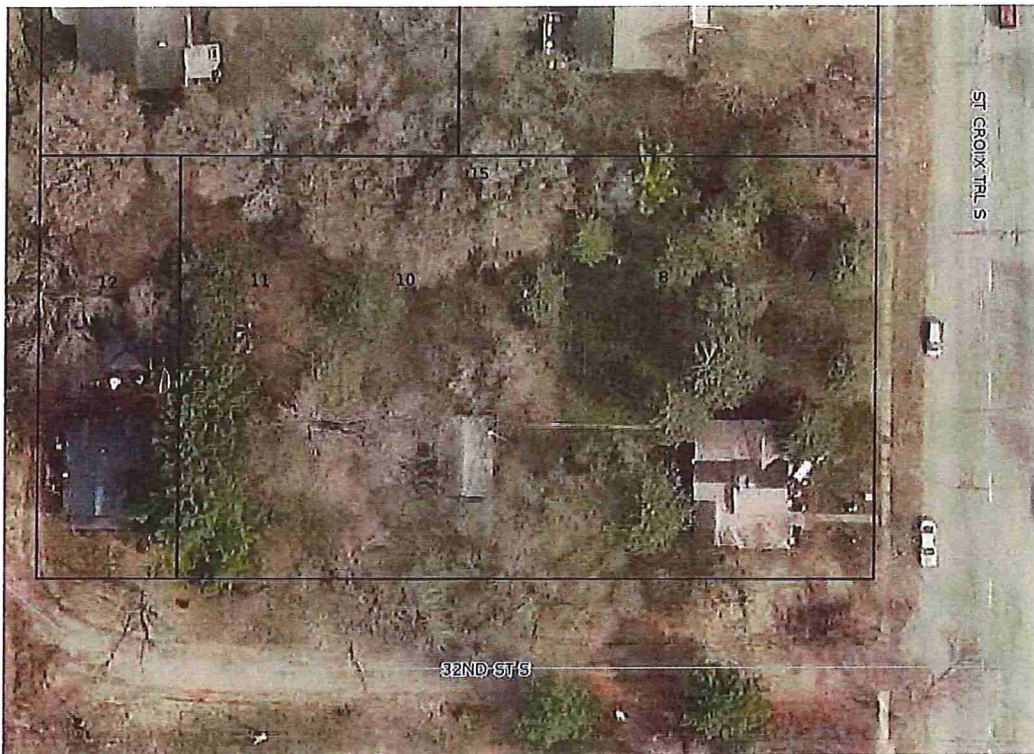


*The barn displays some if not all of its original fenestration.*

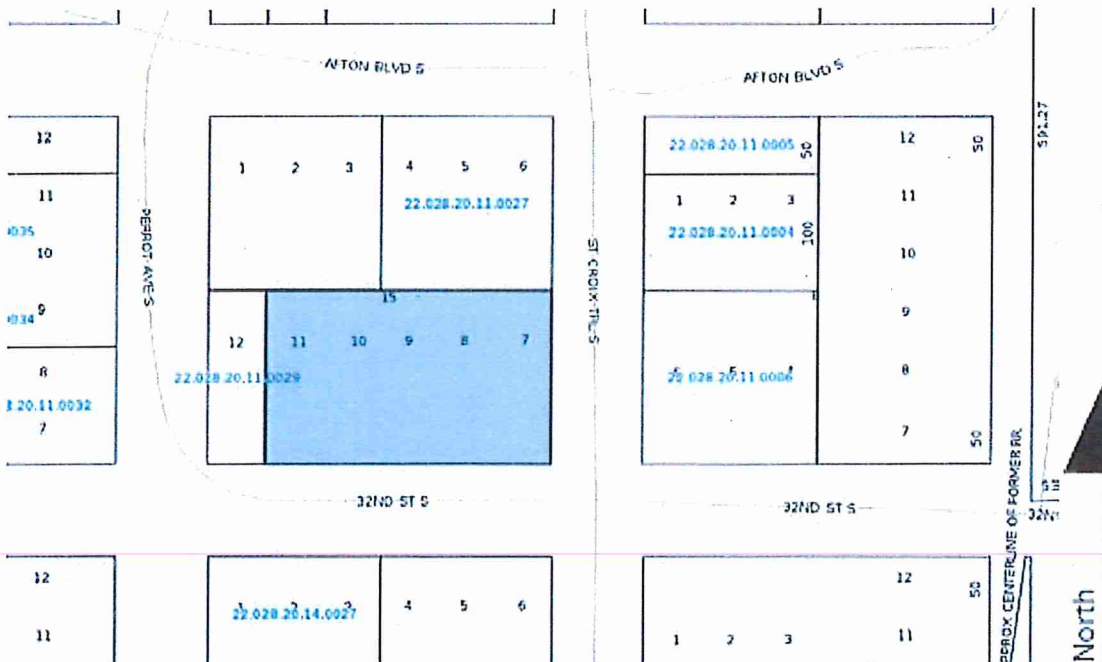
**AERIAL PHOTOGRAPH(S) AND SITE MAP(S) OF THE PROPERTY:**



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*Aerial photograph of the complex roof of the cottage with the barn to the west of the house.*



*Parcel Map of the Reverend Simon Putnam property at the northwest corner of 32<sup>nd</sup> Street South and St. Croix Trail South.*

**MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHIC SOURCES:**

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***Published:***

Blondo, Steven. Minnesota Architecture-History Inventory Form City of Afton Flood Protection and Sanitary Sewer Improvements, Afton, Washington County, Minnesota. 2015.

Grant, Evelyn Bolles. History of Valley Creek and Surrounding Afton Township. Article written for Valley Creek Women's Club, January 1963.

Loehr, Rodney C. Minnesota Farmers' Diaries. Sources for Northwest History. Minnesota Historical Society. Collections.mnhs.org/MNhistorymagazine/articles/18/v18i03p284-297.pdf. accessed March 29, 2016.

Martens, Ken. *The Perilous St. Croix River Valley Frontier*: History Press, 2014.

Robb, Edwin G. *Afton Remembered*. Afton Historical Society Press: Afton, 1996.

Zellie, Carole. Washington County Historic Contexts. 1999.

***Unpublished:***

Afton Historical Museum. Various archives. Fall/Winter 2015-2016.

**FORM PREPARED BY:**

Name/Title: Thomas R. Zahn & Associates LLC  
Street & No.: 807 Holly Avenue  
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Telephone No.: 651-221-9765  
Date Prepared: March 30, 2016

**STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICER COMMENT:**

Review and comment by the State Historic Preservation Officer pursuant to Minnesota Statute \_\_\_\_\_; Subd. \_\_\_\_.

Date Submitted to SHPO: \_\_\_\_\_ Date of SHPO Comment: \_\_\_\_\_

**AFTON CITY COUNCIL REVIEW / APPROVAL:**

Designation of property pursuant to: \_\_\_\_\_

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Date of Action: \_\_\_\_\_