A Brief History of Dr. E. L. Trudeau’s House, additions and corrections June 4, 2018

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The two-story house at 118 Main Street (formerly 5 Church Street or 105 Main Street) was built in 1894 for Dr. E. L. Trudeau and his family. Designed by New York City architect J. Lawrence Aspinwall for his cousin Trudeau, it replaced the doctor’s first house on the same site which had burned. Situated on the southwest corner of Church and Main Streets, its lot now borders a new parking garage for the Hotel Saranac on the west; next to it on the south stands Dr. Trudeau’s former Saranac Laboratory, which is now a museum, built on the site he provided, “convenient for Dr. Baldwin, and for me.”

Designed in Colonial Revival style, the Trudeau house had a hipped roof and clapboard siding that was painted a dark red, perhaps the same standard red as the trim on the laboratory, which was finished first; the house had, and still has, white trim. Its severe rectangular (almost square) mass—with an apparently original, narrower two-story, two-room block to the rear—was later relieved by decorative shutters, which were removed by the time a photo was taken in April, 1929. (85.228) It is believed that the original clapboard siding was removed when the present blue aluminum siding was installed; Mary Hotaling retrieved a sample clapboard, now in Historic Saranac Lake’s collection. Mary recalls that the siding was replaced because the house had been newly painted in dark red and the paint had failed.

There was an open, half-round, front entry porch on the north (Main Street) side with a railing on the roof edge; projecting bay windows (without foundations) on the west end of the living room and the east (Church Street) side of what was likely the dining room; and an oval window in the center of the second floor on the west side. A rectangular first-floor porch on the west sheltered a side entry, set back behind the living room bay window from the front of the house and extending to the rear wall. At one time there was a railing on the roof of the dining room bay and, at a later time, on the roof of the open side porch. (86.562K)

A clause in the deed requires that the fence surrounding the property is required to be maintained. The only fragment (or facsimile) of the original occurs on the Main Street side of the property and on that section the original pipe railings have been replaced by wooden ones. This fence also ran along the north side of the Saranac Laboratory’s front yard and disappeared one day after HSL acquired the laboratory. The current railing has been extended along either side of the entry walk, but in Trudeau’s day it simply surrounded the property. At some point Medical Associates made the front porch into an entry ramp, so that the door is handicapped-accessible.

As was their custom, the Trudeaus spent the summer at Paul Smith’s Hotel. “When we returned to Saranac Lake in the fall of 1894 we occupied our new house, which had just
been completed, and we have lived there ever since,” wrote the doctor. (Autobiography, 265.) At this time the family consisted of Dr. Trudeau, his wife Lottie and their two sons, Ned and Francis, plus some help, at least one or two of whom probably lived in, and probably a dog.

A photo, circa 1894, taken from Church Street south of the Saranac Laboratory shows the laboratory and the back of the Trudeau house. The house had three chimneys, two in the main block of the house and one at the back, inside the south wall of the rear section. To the left of the chimney, the back of the house has an exterior door with no porch, but a flight of stairs to the ground and apparently a bulkhead basement door just to its right. Around the back corner of the main block of the house toward the west, part of the open, first-floor side porch can be seen. (Adirondack Collection, Saranac Lake Free Library, P84.179)

The first Sanborn map, 1899, shows an almost square two-story dwelling with a semi-circular entry porch on Main Street and a rectangular two-story block at the rear of the house on the Church Street side. This looks like an addition, with its flatter roof not a part of the hipped roof of the main square block, but it is apparently an original part of the house, as the earliest known photos show it. By 1899 there had already been a first-floor addition to the rear of the house on the west, interior, side of the lot. It extended beyond the back line of the original house and had two porches, the earlier one at the front of the addition and one across the rear (not the same porch seen in the photo). The Sanborn map labeled the addition “Drs Off.” This addition occupied part of the footprint of the original west porch, which now served as an entry to the office directly from Main Street.

Around the turn of the century, the idea of sleeping out for the treatment of tuberculosis became current. A secluded and rather narrow second floor porch was added across the back of the notch between the original back block of the house and the added doctor’s office wing; it was apparently accessed from a window (not a door) in the second principal bedroom on the second floor. It’s not clear if this was part of the original design of the house; because sleeping porch use did not begin until around 1900, it’s more likely that it was added on top of an original interior space, or perhaps one added at the time of the “Drs Off” addition, as changes to the foundation in the cellar seem to show.

According to the series of Sanborn maps, the house maintained the same configuration through 1962, long after E. L. Trudeau’s death in 1915 and his wife’s death in 1923, with a single exception: in 1924 the rear block of the original house was labeled “Dentist,” a label that disappeared on the next map, dated 1931. The Trudeau’s last and only surviving child, son Francis, practiced medicine from the same house after he returned from service in WWI. He and his son, Frank, the last of the Trudeau doctors in Saranac Lake, hung out their shingle there together in 1953. Sometime after Francis’s sudden death in 1956, his widow and Frank’s mother, Helen Garretson Trudeau, moved into the spacious rooms on the second floor of the Trudeau house.
A very faded survey map (property of Medical Associates) created in 1966 shows the same configuration as that of the Sanborn maps, without the details. It was likely drawn to show the transfer of the adjacent Saranac Laboratory property to Paul Smith’s College from Frank Trudeau and his brother Ned, to whom it had reverted when Frank closed the Trudeau Sanatorium. A photocopy has been made and traced by hand to preserve the information, and copies supplied to Medical Associates and Historic Saranac Lake.

According to the Building-Structure Inventory Form, the medical wing was added to the first floor in 1973, but no documentation has been found to confirm this date. It may have been after Helen Trudeau’s death in October 1982 that Wareham DeLair made some undated drawings, but it’s unclear what--if anything--was built from them (property of Medical Associates).

Frank Trudeau practiced from the family house until he retired in 1985. That year his partners and successors, Medical Associates, called upon Baird Edmonds to design a one-story addition which was built to the rear of the original house along the east, Church Street, side. This addition can be identified by its concrete block foundation. Another, smaller addition on the west side, enclosing the side porch, may have been built at the same time, where a section of block foundation can be seen from the driveway.

From that time on there seem to have been many changes of personnel and reorganization of offices with little record left behind. Dr. Leonard J. Seidenstein, an ophthalmologist, rented office space in the building from 1946-1956. His office can be identified by the glass block wall still in place between rooms on the west side of the building. Rich Hanpeter made some drawings and sketches for reorganization of interiors of offices in 1993-94, but it’s not clear what changes were actually made. At some later date, he did supervise the complete change-out of all the historic windows for more energy-efficient modern wood windows with the same muntin configuration as the originals.

During the Medical Associates years, plans for both floors were posted to indicate fire exiting. In these, the “Drs. Off.” addition housed L. Tuggle, K. Frank-Dixon, L. O’Connor, Lee Demerse, and “Billing.” The back room on the left, street, side was labeled Federman, perhaps for the use of patients who couldn’t climb the stairs to their second floor office, and the right side rear room in that wing was the in-house laboratory. There was a computer room in the center of the house, and seven exam rooms filled the rest of the space. There are four small toilet rooms on the first floor, none of them handicapped-accessible.

The second floor remains the same size it was in the original house.

There are two bathrooms on this floor, one more modern full bath in the center of the west side with the oval window, and one which was probably the house’s original
bathroom in the center of the east side; it has been reduced in size by new partitions and no longer has a bathtub, but it retains a marble-topped sink. There are three exam rooms on this level, the two large and sunny original bedrooms at the rear, and one small exam room at the front, next to the stair hall.

Lee Demerse, who once managed the building and is still working for Medical Associates in the office at the rear of the old addition, says there may be as many as 5 heating zones. Lee says that the 1985 addition has electric heat. If there are 2 meters, then one is likely for that addition.

Medical Associates continued to occupy the Trudeau house until closing their practice there at the end of 2017.

Rooms, first floor

Front hall and staircase
The wide front door on Main Street with Colonial Revival moldings and a large window on each side opens into a front hall which was once larger, until being enclosed by a receptionist’s booth on the left, east side. The main staircase with its elaborate railing crosses from right up to the left, directly in front of the door, beginning at a two-step stile. Stepping up and then down the stile accesses the first floor hallway leading directly away to the rooms on the south.

Lawrason Brown described the Trudeaus’ home: “The front door was never locked and from a small entrance hall you entered directly into a large and tastefully furnished living room. . . . They were always ‘at home’ to their friends in the evening, and it was not unusual for six or more to gather there to discuss affairs of the laboratory, or the sanatorium, of the church, and of the day.”

Living room
The large living room to the right is accessed through a double doorway now partially filled in, but without the French doors that once hung there, indicated by hardware remaining in the floor. The room has an elaborate Colonial Revival fireplace and a west-facing bay window. This was once full of large plants, as shown in the often-reproduced photo of Dr. Baldwin and Dr. Trudeau reading medical journals together. (Adirondack Collection, Saranac Lake Free Library, photo P84.277)

“Near a bay window filled with evergreen plants stood his desk, and in front of it was a large cane-seated mahogany chair in which he always sat. [Is this the big carved chair in the John Black room?] . . . A fire on the hearth was always crackling, and the dark red walls, the thick carpet and rugs gave one the impression of good taste, comfort and simple luxury. The family life during the winter centered about this room and the adjoining dining room.” (L. Brown)
“After Dr. Baldwin had been in Saranac Lake a year or so and had recovered his health sufficiently to do some work,” Francis Trudeau wrote years later, “he came to father one evening and asked what he could best do to help.” Trudeau replied, “Go home and learn to read German, so we can follow what they are doing for tuberculosis in Europe.’ . . . In a very few months Dr. Baldwin had sufficiently mastered the language to be able to get the gist of the German medical journals on anything related to tuberculosis. For years, every evening at eight o’clock, the front door would gently open and . . . he would settle himself in the big armchair, which always stood to the left of father’s desk. The latest German medical periodical would be produced and the translation would begin. During this time, father would sit erect and motionless in a stiff back chair, drinking in every word, while I would endeavor to study my lessons for the next day. . . . When I could stand it no longer, I would play cards with my mother, who . . . had sat silently knitting before the open fire. . . . Shortly after nine o’clock, mother would quietly say, ‘Time for bed, Francis, dear.’ After much protest I would finally go upstairs, leaving father and Dr. Baldwin still engrossed in their subject.”

For years afterward, Dr. Allen K. Krause remembered, “Baldwin would carry his bundle of the ‘literature’ over to the doctor’s house in the evening, and there read to him what was going on in tuberculosis, particularly in Germany,” and Dr. Trudeau, whose education had given him a command of French which stood him in good stead for the scientific investigations of his later life, would tell him what was happening in France. “Trudeau and Baldwin formed an almost ideal combination for scientific work.”

The large front living room with its impressive fireplace was briefly used as E.L.T.’s office (probably before the “Drs Off” wing was added). After E.L.T.’s death it became first the office of his son Francis, and later, in his son Frank Trudeau’s time, partitioned as Frank’s office and a staff coffee room. By the time the Jan.1931Sanborn maps were made, the main body of the house, as well as the rear wing, is labeled Doctors Office. Frank Trudeau later sold a desk from what was then his own office to Charlie Sporck (ref. Natalie Leduc). Maybe HSL could recover it from Mr. Sporck. The living room’s last use was as a waiting room.

**Dining room**

The bay window on the east side of the house in the room just beyond the staircase identifies what was very likely the dining room. “Dr. and Mrs. Trudeau seldom dined away from home, but just as seldom did they dine alone,” Dr. Brown wrote. Dr. Henry Thomas, a young patient who became a close friend of the Trudeaus, wrote that, as a newly-arrived patient in 1888,

“Dr. Trudeau took me out with him, showed me the village, and then left me with a group of young people—patients and their friends—who were tobogganing.
“The next morning, which was Sunday, he sent his guide over with a note, saying he did not consider it right that a young doctor, engaged to be married, should eat his Sunday dinner alone, and asking me to take dinner with Mrs. Trudeau and himself. “From that time on I . . . was with Dr. Trudeau as much as possible; indeed, I both hunted and went to church with him.”

During Medical Associates’ occupancy, the Trudeaus’ dining room became the business office (Jacquie’s office, according to the inventory.) Small toilet rooms were inserted into the corners of both the living room, to the right of the fireplace, and the dining room. Since both the added toilet rooms are too small to be handicapped accessible, they should be removed and replaced by an accessible toilet elsewhere. In the living room, this will provide access through a second door to the “Drs. Off” wing of the house.

**Kitchen**

On the first floor, in recent years, Dr. Tony Waickman kept his office on the Church Street side of the building, a room with an exterior door which had been added at some unknown time; its brick foundation is unlike any of the other foundation materials in the house. By its size and location, this room may have been Dr. Trudeau’s library (but where was the fireplace?), the original kitchen of the house or a service pantry, part of the kitchen complex. On the other hand, since the cook-stove--which would have burned wood or coal--would have required a chimney, the kitchen may have been placed in the far back room of the original house where one of the chimneys was located, and where cooking smells were less likely to permeate the family’s living spaces.

If this room with the outside door to Church Street is kept as a common entry space, a new, accessible toilet room may be created within it, without taking up rentable office space.

Location of the kitchen, pantries and laundry in the original house may not be known for certain until some demolitions reveal marks in the floor under added modern materials, or the underside of the flooring can be examined from the cellar for possible changes.

The location of the back stairs (now removed) which Helen Trudeau referred to has been found in the long narrow closets on the first and second floors above the basement stairs, now covered by flooring.

Dr. Handler’s office space (which has not been located) was also used as office space for Dr. Francis Trudeau.

The 1979 waiting room (not located) was a kitchen pantry and cold room for food storage.

**Library?**
Dr. Walter B. James, too, remembered the Trudeaus’ front door unlocked, “and every evening for many, many years in his cozy library there was an informal gathering of the younger and older doctors, who sat at his feet, and the discussion was almost always of matters in some way related to the disease that had brought them there. These gatherings . . . constituted a school in the truest sense, and a school that reminds one of what we read in the history of the early days of learning.” The large living room doesn’t sound like the “cosy library” described here. Perhaps there was another, smaller room with a fireplace on the first floor, underneath the back bedroom with its fireplace.

**Office addition**

Friends were not the only ones who came to Trudeau’s door: “All the patients, rich and poor, came straight to my house and insisted upon seeing me. At certain seasons almost every train would bring someone who wanted to consult me or wanted to go to the Sanitarium. . . . For several years I was deluged with patients of all kinds.” This pressure must have caused Dr. Trudeau to build the “Drs. Off.” addition which appears on the first 1899 Sanborn map only five years after the house and new stone laboratory were constructed. In 1924 the Sanborn map shows that the footprint remained the same, while the only change was occupation of the first, probable, addition by a dentist. The main body of the house is shown as a dwelling, and the rear wing is still a “Drs Off.” The Inventory form from 1979 says that “Helen Delahant’s back room office was originally a waiting room and screening clinic for TB patients. Entrance was 105 Main Street.”

**Rooms, second floor**

**Large front bedroom**

The Trudeaus were an upper-class couple who may have kept separate bedrooms customarily, or because Dr. Trudeau was often sick and coughing. Or uses may have changed over the years as the couple aged and their health and family circumstances evolved. The large front room with fireplace may have been the couple’s bedroom, Dr. Trudeau’s bedroom, or a private sitting room. In contrast to the more formal fireplace mantel on the first floor, this mantel has rustic trim and false graining. This bedroom opens through double French doors on the west to the second cure porch attached to the house, which indicates use by Dr. Trudeau, the only patient in the household. That the large front room upstairs was E. L. Trudeau’s bedroom is confirmed by the inventory. The present small service kitchen at the top of the stairs was probably a closet and dressing room.

In 1915 the bedroom of E. L. Trudeau became a memorial room, according to the inventory.
At some point, the inventory shows, the “upstairs became a home for indigent old nurses kept charitably.”

After the Trudeaus’ deaths and some time after that of their son, Francis, his widow, Helen, moved into the rooms on the second floor, where she lived until she died in the winter of 1978-79. The large front bedroom served as Helen’s living room. After Helen Trudeau’s occupancy, the large front bedroom became another waiting room. Toward the end of the Medical Associates’ occupancy, an office was partitioned off in the northwest corner of the waiting room to be rented to another medical professional.

**Large rear bedroom**
Because of its direct access to the first, rear, cure porch, the large rear bedroom with a simple fireplace mantel seems likely to have been Dr. Trudeau’s room. But according to the inventory, and despite the location of the porch, the second large bedroom was Lottie’s (and then Helen’s) bedroom. In the last years of Medical Associates, the fire-exiting plans indicate that Drs. Jay and Dorothy Federman, who share their practice, also shared this room as an office.

**First sleeping porch**
The large rear bedroom has direct access to the first cure porch built on the house, probably c. 1900. Around the turn of the century, the medical recommendation of sleeping out for the treatment of tuberculosis became current. A secluded and rather narrow, second-floor open porch was added across the back of the notch between the original back block of the house and the first added Doctors Office wing. From historic photos, it appears that it was accessed through a large window, the same size as the one there now, rather than a door. There is no evidence to show exactly when it was built (whether it was original to the part of the house beneath it or whether it was added on top of it later, though the roof appears in photos as an addition). The Sanborn map from October 1899 shows the main block of the house is present with its two-story probable addition on the south and half-round front porch as shown in the earliest photographs. Already by this time, the “Drs Off” addition had been built, covering part of the formerly open porch on the west side and including another porch on the west end. Notably, this addition appears to include the slight extension to the south—in the notch at the back of the house—that supports the first, second-floor cure porch. This porch was apparently never glassed in, as the second porch was. Dr. Trudeau may have upgraded from one porch to another as medical ideas changed, or as he needed easier access.

**Second sleeping porch, chronologically**
Off the front bedroom to the west is a pair of French doors and behind them another single door, acting as a storm door, leading to a roughly half-hexagon second-floor cure porch, which—as can be seen from photographs—was added later on top of the porch below. Between 1908 and 1916 the Sanborn maps note that the open first floor porch on
the west side of the house was now a two-story one. In the late winter of 1910 in a letter to Dr. Lawrason Brown, whose house was across the street, Dr. Trudeau wrote: “Poor Lottie has been sick with grippe once and the rest of the time tied to my bed post so that she has not been away from Saranac either since you left!” Then he passed on a message: “Lottie is sitting on the porch opposite my bed and sends you her love & hopes she will soon see you coming in and out of the house opposite.” (Rare Romance, 221.) Since Dr. Trudeau died in 1915, this porch is likely the one he used in the years of illness he endured near the end of his life.

At some point (by 1931, according to historic photograph P82.153) a post was added to support the front corner of this porch. Later the porch below was enclosed, and enlarged, and the post may be enclosed in the addition, which now helps to support the sleeping porch. In these additions, it appears that doors, windows and some decorative elements were relocated and reused.

At some point the upper porch was rather awkwardly widened toward the west, with this addition supported by wooden brackets. Medical Associates used this porch to store files. The weight of these files may have compromised the porch’s structure; it needs to be checked.

**Bathroom**
Across the hall in the center of the house is a large bathroom with a marble sink and toilet, but without a bathtub. The room was probably larger yet, with a tub, before being reduced in size by modern partitions, and was likely the main bathroom in the house, or even the only one.

**Back stairs**
Somewhere in this section, along the central hall, there was very likely a back stairway for the use of nurses and housekeeping help.

**Two back bedrooms**
The pair of sunny bedrooms in the rear attached block of the original house would likely have been built for the boys, Ned and Francis. At 21, Ned was in medical school, but as he was still unmarried his parents likely kept a bedroom for him, while the much younger Francis, age about 7, was being tutored at home. Since Ned was away at school most of the time, his room was likely used for guests, such as Lawrence Aspinwall, who visited his cousin often, or Dr. Eugene Hodenpyl. As Dr. Trudeau reported in a letter on May 20, 1902, Dr. Hodenpyl, who had tutored him in laboratory techniques in New York and become a valued friend, was in Saranac Lake, “ill, in bed in Ned’s room.”

**Attic**
The attic has two dormers on the west side and two on the east, to light the unfinished attic, which is reached by a pull-down staircase in the second-floor hall ceiling, and has a
wide-plank floor. Charred wood in the roof structure straight ahead and to the left of the stair near the front chimney is evidence of a fire pointed out by Lee Demerse. By the time of the 1931 photo, the original wooden roof shingles were replaced by metal roofing. The roofing now is dark gray asphalt shingles.

**Foundation**
The various foundations tell the story of additions to the Trudeau house. The original house and its earlier additions are all of rough stone, probably granite. The most recent additions—the last medical wing on the east and the enclosed first-floor porch on the west--are plain concrete block, with one small, older section of the enclosed west porch parged.

**Basement**
The internal stairs to the basement have been closed off; stairs from the first to the second floor were once located above them, but now are long narrow closets. There is a cellar with two 270 gallon oil tanks under the east side of the original house where the boiler is located. There are two exterior bulkhead doors to the cellar, one on the Church Street side of the building and the other, access to a crawl space, in the notch at the rear of the house.

**Sources**

Architectural drawings and map in possession of Medical Associates.

Building-Structure Inventory Form, September 24, 1979, written by Ursula Trudeau.

Conversations with Lee Demerse, Medical Associates employee.  
Conversation with Ned Trudeau, Francis B. and Helen Trudeau’s grandson.

Fire exiting plans for first and second floors posted by Medical Associates.

Historic photographs, Adirondack Collection, Saranac Lake Free Library.

National Register nomination for Church Street Historic District.

A Rare Romance in Medicine, the Life and Legacy of Edward Livingston Trudeau.


Visits to and tours of the Trudeau House.


Walter B. James, “Dr. Trudeau, the Physician,” <i>Johns Hopkins Hospital Bulletin</i>, April 1916, 98.

Trudeau, 248-249.