

Pease Foundry Company Building

Description

The property at 211 Laird Drive is worthy of inclusion on the City of Toronto Inventory of Heritage Properties for its cultural heritage value or interest. Located on the southeast corner of Laird Drive and Vanderhoof Avenue (one block south of Eglinton Avenue East), the single-storey office and warehouse complex was completed when the assessment rolls were compiled for the Town of Leaside in 1951. The property was occupied by the Pease Foundry Company, manufacturers of heating and plumbing supplies.

Statement of Cultural Heritage Value

The Pease Foundry Company Building has design or physical value as a representative example of a mid 20th century industrial building designed with features of the Art Moderne style. As described in A Guide to Canadian Architectural Styles (1992), the Art Moderne's "aerodynamic forms with rounded corners and horizontal massing accentuated by applied "speed-stripe" markings and the flat roof were especially popular for commercial buildings such as shops, restaurants, gas stations, and bus depots, as well as for industrial development" (page 148). The Pease Foundry Company Building is distinguished by the stepped plan with single- and two-storey sections that balance horizontal and vertical elements and combine solids and voids. The design is highlighted with a curved northwest corner that complements the position of the structure on a corner lot.

Historically, the Pease Foundry Company Building is associated with the ongoing development of Leaside, with Laird Avenue as the major corridor through its industrial core. The origins of the community date to the early 19th century when members of the Lea family established a farm in the area southeast of present-day Bayview Avenue and Eglinton Avenue East. When the Canadian Pacific Railway (CPR) purchased a portion of the acreage as the site of a repair facility and station, the company received permission from the Lea family to name the junction "Leaside". In 1912, the Canadian Northern Railway assembled a 1000-acre tract of land in Leaside and commissioned Montreal landscape architect Frederick G. Todd to lay out a model town on the parcel with distinct sectors for housing and industry. While Leaside was incorporated as a town in 1913, the anticipated growth of the municipality was delayed by the outbreak of World War I. Following the conflict, the Leaside Airfield (established by the Canadian government to train Royal Flying Corps pilots and famous as the terminus for the first airmail flight in Canada in 1918) and the adjoining Leaside Munitions Company became the locations of the community's first industries: the Canadian Wire and Cable Company and Durant Motors. Also in the 1920s, the completion of both the Leaside Bridge over the Don River and the Millwood Road CPR Underpass improved access to the area and attracted housing tracts and new industries. During the subsequent decades, the city directories

document the continuing evolution of the industrial hub of Leaside until 1967 when the municipality was amalgamated with East York to form the Borough of East York.

The Pease Foundry Company Building supports the character of Laird Drive in Leaside as it developed as the area's primary industrial corridor. On the opposite side of the street, the office building formerly associated with Durant Motors at 150 Laird Drive is another important surviving reminder of Leaside's industrial evolution.

Heritage Attributes

The heritage attributes of the Pease Foundry Company Building related to its design or physical value as a representative example of the Art Moderne style applied to an industrial building are found on the exterior walls and flat roofline, with particular attention to the west and north elevations facing Laird Drive and Vanderhoof Avenue, respectively. The complex rises from one storey on the west to two stories at the rear (east). Clad with yellow brick with stone trim, the focal point of the design is the single-storey projecting section that extends along Laird Drive, wraps around the northwest corner, and continues on the Vanderhoof Avenue elevation. The single-storey portion of the plan features continuous floor-to-ceiling windows surmounted by a projecting band of brick that extends to the flat roofline. Entrances are raised at either end of the rounded section of the wall. The transparency and horizontal emphasis of the single-storey section contrasts with the solidity of the two-storey blocks that adjoin it. On the north elevation facing Vanderhoof Avenue, the two-storey wall features three diminutive square window openings set in stone surrounds in the lower floor beneath a trio of flat-headed window openings in a single stone surround. The remainder of the west wall facing Laird Drive rises the equivalent of two stories and is devoid of openings. There are no heritage attributes found on the south elevation, facing a laneway, and the rear (east) portions of the complex, and the latter walls are not included in the Reasons for Listing.