

John Irwin House

Description

The property at 21 Grenville Street is worthy of inclusion on the City of Toronto Inventory of Heritage Properties for its cultural heritage value or interest. The 2½-storey house form building is located on the south side of Grenville Street between Yonge Street and Bay Street. According to city directories and tax assessment rolls, the site was first recorded in 1873 when the residence was owned by John Irwin and occupied by W. D. Hale, a civil engineer.

Statement of Cultural Heritage Value

The John Irwin House has design or physical value as one of the last surviving examples of a house form building in this area, and for its Second Empire stylistic features. As one of the most popular architectural styles of the era, which was introduced to Toronto in the 1866 designs for Government House (now demolished), the Second Empire is identified by its distinctive mansard (double-gable) roof.

The contextual value of the John Irwin House relates to its historical link to its surroundings as part of the area east of Queen's Park that historical records indicate opened for residential development after 1860. The neighbourhood remained largely residential until the close of the 19th century when commercial and industrial uses were introduced. In 1922, some of the houses on Grenville Street were demolished for a right-of-way that extended Bay Street northward and opened the area to major landmarks including Eaton's College Street Store and Maple Leaf Gardens.

Heritage Attributes

The heritage attributes of the John Irwin House that relate to its design or physical value as a representative example of a house form building with features of Second Empire styling are found on the principal (north) façade facing Grenville Street, the east elevation of the main body of the house, and the mansard roof above the latter walls. Extending 2½ stories above a raised base, the structure is covered by a mansard roof, which projects over the bay window on the north façade and incorporates a pair of segmental-arched dormers on the north slope and twin brick chimneys on the east end. The red brick cladding is embellished with contrasting buff brick that is applied for the quoins marking the corners of the walls, the string courses extending above the foundation and between the first and second stories, and the hood moulds highlighting the window openings.

The north façade is divided into two bays, with the main entrance placed on the right (west) beside a two-storey three-sided bay window. Single segmental-arched window openings are placed above the entry and on the east elevation.

The west wall (which is concealed by the adjoining building) and the rear (south) addition are not included in the Reasons for Listing.