

Metropolitan Church Parsonage

Description

The property at 51 Bond Street is worthy of designation under Part IV of the *Ontario Heritage Act* for its cultural heritage value or interest, and meets the criteria for municipal designation prescribed by the Province of Ontario under the three categories of design, historical, and contextual value. Located on the south side of Shuter Street between Bond Street (west) and Church Street (east), the construction of the 2½-story Metropolitan Church Parsonage (1906) is documented in historical records. The property was listed on the City of Toronto Inventory of Heritage Properties in 1983, and City Council has granted authority to enter into a Heritage Easement Agreement.

Statement of Cultural Heritage Value

The Metropolitan Church Parsonage is architecturally significant as a good example of Neo-Gothic design, the style popularized for institutional buildings after 1900 and distinguished from the earlier Gothic Revival by its reduced scale and lack of polychromatic detailing. Elements drawn from late medieval English architecture were applied for the exterior decorative detailing and continued on the interior of the Parsonage.

Historically, the Parsonage is associated with Metropolitan United Church to the south, which was built in 1872 as Metropolitan Wesleyan Methodist Church and restored after a fire in 1928. The church was known as the “Cathedral of Methodism” in Toronto and, with the adjoining Parsonage, has continually fulfilled an important role in servicing the social and spiritual needs of the surrounding community and the underprivileged.

Businessman and philanthropist Chester D. Massey of the Massey-Harris Company provided the funding for the Parsonage. The son of company co-founder, Hart Massey, Chester eventually assumed the presidency of Massey-Harris (later Massey Ferguson), the largest producer and exporter of agricultural implements in the British Empire. The Massey family was linked to charities associated with the Methodist Church, including the Fred Victor Mission, which was established in memory of Chester’s younger brother.

Metropolitan Church Parsonage is also linked to the practice of the notable Toronto architectural firm of Sproatt and Rolph, which prepared the plans in association with S.G. Curry. Sproatt and Rolph began a 40-year partnership in 1896, including the interval from 1905 to 1907 when Samuel Curry was associated with the firm. With plans underway for the Parsonage, Chester Massey engaged the architects to design the alterations to his residence at 519 Jarvis Street, which were completed in 1907. The firm received other commissions from the family-run Massey Foundation, including the Birge-Carnegie Library and Burwash Hall at Victoria University in 1911. Hart House, which was named in recognition of the Massey patriarch and completed in 1919 according to Sproatt and Rolph’s designs, is recognized as one of the best examples of Neo-Gothic design in Canada.

Contextually, the Metropolitan Church Parsonage is part of a complex of buildings associated with Metropolitan United Church that occupy the city block bounded by Queen Street East (south), Church Street (east), Shuter Street (north), and Bond Street (west). Opposite the Parsonage on the north side of Shuter Street, St. Michael's Cathedral is another important institutional landmark in the locality.

Heritage Attributes

The heritage attributes of the Metropolitan Church Parsonage related to its design value as a good example of the Neo-Gothic style are found on the west, north and south exterior walls and the roof, the stone wall enclosing the north and west elevations, and the interiors described below, consisting of:

Exterior

- The squared and coursed rock-faced sandstone cladding with cut and combed limestone window and door surrounds and capstones
- The moderately pitched gable roof with chimneys on the west (front) and east ends and at the centre
- The 2½-storey asymmetrical H-shaped plan with crow-stepped gables capping the wings
- On the principal (west) facade, the two-storey projecting and buttressed porch with crenellations in the gable parapet wall
- The porch gable, which is nested within the large gable capping the south half of the elevation and features a large chimney asymmetrically placed behind the south porch return
- Reached by limestone steps, the entrance to the porch where the stone surround displays a four-centered arched opening, quoins and carved foliated corbels
- Inside a set of double doors, the interior of the porch, with stone walls, an oak cornice moulding and a floor clad with terra-cotta square tiles
- The west entrance, with a glazed oak entrance door that mimics the design of the windows, with a steeply sloped and projecting wood sill at the base of the glazing
- Above the west entrance, the carved recessed date panel showing "1906"
- Over the west entry, the three nine-light casement windows that are divided by stone mullions and set in a stone surround with quoins
- The treatment of the above-noted openings, with steeply sloped and projecting stone sills, and astragal mouldings in the wood frames
- The window openings above the basement level, which have stone mullions, sill design and astragals
- On the south side of the west facade, the two sets of three nine-light window openings with wood casement windows that are asymmetrically placed and not aligned above each other
- At the peak of the gable, the single narrow louvered vent to the attic peak of the gable

- On the north side of the west facade, the pairs of window openings in both stories, with six-over-six wood sash windows in the first floor and nine-light casement windows above
- The organization of the north elevation facing Shuter Street around a central courtyard walled in stone
- The projecting wings on the right and left, which are fronted with gable ends slightly asymmetrical in design and have openings with casement and sash windows similar to others on the building
- On the south elevation overlooking Metropolitan United Church, the large gable with a projecting crenellated two-storey bay window at the east end
- At the west end of the south wall, the smaller projecting two-storey square bay window under a gable with crenellations
- On the south wall, the first- and second-storey window openings where multiple sets of wood sash windows are set in a six-over-nine pattern and separated by stone mullions
- The stone wall enclosing the west and north sides of the Parsonage, composed of rock faced sandstone and peaked limestone capstones
- The two endposts and the two square gateposts that are capped with pyramidal capstones, and the spheres topping the gateposts

The east (rear) wall of the Parsonage and the Community House (built in 1930) to which it is attached are excluded from the heritage easement agreement and are not included in the Reasons for Designation.

Interior

- The first-floor hall, living room and dining room, the second-floor hall, and two second-floor bedrooms with fireplaces that are included in the Reasons for Designation and described below
- The quarter-sawn oak doors with five raised panels and brass or oiled bronze hardware
- In the entrance hall, which is located inside the west entrance and runs east-west through the building, the ceiling and staircase
- The ceiling, with three intersecting vaults and an oak dentil cornice
- The oak staircase, with two octagonal newel posts marking the landings, which winds around the two octagonal full-height columns with capitals of carved grapes that divides it from the hall
- Under the stairs, the oak doorcase crowned with four carved heads
- The living room, which is located on the south side of the first floor and features a cornice with dentils and an oak fireplace with carved panels
- East of the living room, the dining room with its oak wainscoting, the ceiling with oak beams and a cornice and, on the east wall, a fireplace with fluted columns

- Above the entrance hall, the second-floor hall with its wood chair rail, door surrounds, cornice and barrel-vaulted ceiling
- The southwest bedroom and the southeast bedroom, featuring wood detailing with plate rails and cornices, fireplaces with wood and tile, and bay windows
- In the southwest bedroom, the dentil mantle shelf marking the fireplace and the chair rail
- In the southeast bedroom, the pilaster decoration