

## **Massey-Harris Office Building**

### Description

The property at 915 King Street West 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 King Street West, west of Strachan Avenue, the building was constructed as the administrative offices for the Massey Manufacturing Company, with additions after the firm became known as Massey-Harris Limited. Historical records indicate that a two-storey building was completed at the north end of the site in 1885, with the third floor and a three-storey south wing added in two stages before World War I. The property was listed on the inaugural City of Toronto Inventory of Heritage Properties in June 1973, and a Heritage Easement Agreement was registered in 1989. The Massey-Harris Office Building has been converted into a residential condominium.

### Statement of Cultural Heritage Value

The Massey-Harris Office Building is a representative example of a late 19<sup>th</sup> century commercial building that was constructed in stages, with the different sections united stylistically by the application of Classical details. Of particular importance are the series of bay windows on the original (north) building, and the sculptural detailing above the main (east) entrance and on the large (north) pediment.

Historically, the property is associated with the Massey family and its manufacturing conglomerate. The company's origins date to 1851 when Hart A. Massey assumed the management of his father's foundry and machine shop in Newcastle, Canada West (now Ontario). Incorporated as the Massey Manufacturing Company in 1870, nine years later the firm moved to a six-acre site in Toronto. Hundreds of workers were employed to produce agricultural implements that were shipped worldwide. A series of mergers culminated in 1891 with the company's amalgamation with its chief rival, the A. Harris, Son and Company. The additions to the office building followed. As Massey-Harris, the firm was the largest producer and exporter of its type in the British Empire in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century. It was known as Massey-Ferguson from 1958 until 1987 when the company was taken over by the Varsity Corporation.

The original (north) portion of the Massey-Harris Office Building was designed by Toronto architect Edward James (E. J.) Lennox. Following an apprenticeship with architect William Irving and a short-lived partnership with Frederick McCaw, Lennox embarked on a solo career in 1881. His association with the Massey family began immediately, as Lennox prepared the plans for this office building and a residence for Hart Massey's son, Charles, on Jarvis Street, as well as supervising the alterations to Hart Massey's neighbouring house, Euclid Hall. With one of the largest practices in Canada, Lennox was selected to design Toronto's third City Hall (now known as Old City Hall) in 1886. While this civic project lasted over a decade, during the 1890s Lennox accepted

additional commissions from the Massey family, including the Fred Victor Mission (named for Hart Massey's youngest son who died in 1890) and the Massey Mausoleum in Mount Pleasant Cemetery (1890-1894).

The south additions to the building were undertaken by George M. Miller, who established his architectural practice in Toronto in 1885. Like Lennox, Miller was known for his association with the Massey family, beginning with his work as a consultant on Massey Hall (originally known as Massey Music Hall) in 1894. During the next decade, Miller designed the City Dairy and Stables (1900 and 1909) on Spadina Crescent for Walter Massey, oversaw further modifications to Euclid Hall (1900), and prepared the plans for the Lillian Massey Household Sciences Building at Victoria College (1908-1912).

The Massey-Harris Office Building is the last surviving example from the complex of industrial buildings that the company developed on both sides of King Street West, west of Strachan Avenue. With its sculptural detailing, the building is local landmark and a reminder of the historical development of the area.

#### Heritage Attributes

The heritage attributes of the Massey-Harris Office Building related to its design value as a representative example of a late 19<sup>th</sup> century commercial building with Classical detailing are found on the east façade, the north elevation, and the rooflines of the latter walls, consisting of:

- The three-storey rectangular plan above a raised rock-faced stone base with window openings and a stone band course
- The red brick cladding with stone trim
- On the principal (east) façade and the north elevation of the original building (with the third-floor addition), the cornice and parapet marking the flat roofline
- On the north elevation facing King Street East, the symmetrical organization of the wall with a central frontispiece that terminates in a triangular parapet
- In the north parapet, a tympanum with intricately carved stonework and a cartouche inscribed "M. H."
- In the first floor of the north wall, the four bay windows that are set into relieving arches with stone trim, and feature wood surrounds with colonettes, cornices and panels, with brick and stone trim above
- In the second storey of the north elevation, the brick piers or pilasters framing flat-headed window openings with sash windows, and the continuous stone sills and lintels
- The third-floor addition, featuring flat-headed window openings with stone lintels and sills
- The long principal (east) façade facing a laneway, where the original (1885) section at the north end repeats the pattern and detailing of the fenestration found on the north elevation

- On the east façade, the frontispiece with a triangular parapet (smaller than the one found on the north elevation) and the main entrance at its base
- The main entrance, which was altered when the building was extended and set in a large smooth stone surround
- Above the entry in the third storey, the placement of a stone plaque inscribed with the Massey-Harris name, and a semi-circular window opening with stained glass
- The east façade of the south additions, consisting of three wide bays divided by brick piers or pilasters in the centre, and three narrower bays at the south end
- On the latter sections of the east façade, the fenestration with brick and stone trim that mixes large semi-circular-headed window openings (first floor, centre section), round-arched window openings (third storey), and flat-headed window openings with sash windows (all floors)

The south elevation, which was altered, and the rear (west) wall, which has no distinguishing features, were excluded from the heritage easement agreement and are not included in the Reasons for Designation.