

Upper Canada Bible and Tract Societies Building

Description

The property at 104 Yonge Street (formerly known as 102 Yonge 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 west side of Yonge Street in the first block north of King Street West, the three-storey office building was constructed in 1886 following the issuance of a building permit in September 1885. The property was listed on the City of Toronto Inventory of Heritage Properties in 1974, and a heritage easement agreement was registered in 1984. The east façade of the Upper Canada Bible and Tract Societies Building has been incorporated into the commercial complex at the east end of Scotia Plaza.

Statement of Cultural Heritage Value

The Upper Canada Bible and Tract Societies Building is an important surviving example of a late 19th century commercial building in the City's financial district with features of the Second Empire style. The style, identified by its distinctive mansard (or double gable) roof, was introduced to Toronto in the mid 1800s with two prominent institutional buildings: Government House, the Lieutenant Governor's residence on King Street West, and Toronto General Hospital, in its earlier location on Gerrard Street East. While the style was especially popular for residential designs, Second Empire elements were also applied to commercial buildings

The site is identified with the historical development of Yonge Street, south of Queen Street, where businessman and philanthropist Jesse Ketchum operated a tannery in the early 19th century. Ketchum deeded this property to the Upper Canada Bible and Tract Societies, which was founded in 1828 with the purpose of distributing religious books and pamphlets. The organization continued to operate in the current structure, which replaced the original building in 1886. During the early 20th century, the Societies published Bibles in two dozen languages to serve the needs of immigrants arriving in the province.

Historically, the Upper Canada Bible and Tract Societies Building is also related to the practice of two notable firms of Toronto architects. The structure was designed by the partnership of Gordon and Helliwell. The firm gained prominence for their religious architecture, including Bathurst Street Methodist Church (1888) at #736 Bathurst and Parkdale Presbyterian Church (1888) at 250 Dunn Avenue, which are recognized on the City's heritage inventory. In 1910, local architects Burke, Horwood and White prepared plans for a new storefront and cornice when the property was occupied by Dunfield and Company.

The Upper Canada Bible and Tract Societies Building is an important surviving reminder of the late 19th century appearance of Yonge Street as it evolved with structures reflecting

the modest scale and decorative detailing favoured during the period. To the south, the façade of the Robert Fairweather Building (1919), now identified as #100 Yonge, is also preserved along the east side of Scotia Plaza where it is designated under the *Ontario Heritage Act*.

Heritage Attributes

The heritage attributes of the Upper Canada Bible and Tract Societies Building related to its design value as an important surviving example of a late 19th century building with Second Empire detailing in the City's financial district are found on the principal (east) façade and roofline, consisting of:

- The three storey east façade, which is organized into three bays
- The stone cladding with stone and metal trim
- The mansard roof with pedimented dormers
- The fenestration with decorative trim
- The spandrels bas-reliefs of a Bible and scroll