

Thomas Meredith House

Description

The property at 305 George Street is worthy of designation under Part IV of the Ontario Heritage Act for its cultural heritage value, 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 east side of George Street, south of Gerrard Street East, the 2½-storey house form building was first recorded in the tax assessment rolls in 1858. The property was included on the City of Toronto Inventory of Heritage Properties in 2005.

Statement of Cultural Heritage Value

The Thomas Meredith House has design value as a good example of the Italianate style, which is characterized by a hip roof with extended eaves and end chimneys, the placement of the main entrance in a frontispiece, and decorative detailing including quoins. The style first appeared in Ontario (then Upper Canada) in the mid 19th century. Early examples included “Chiefswood” (Pauline Johnson House), completed in Brantford in 1856 where it is identified as a National Historic Site. The design was widely copied after it was promoted in “The Canadian Farmer” journal in 1865. The Thomas Meredith House represents an early example of the style in Toronto.

The house form building has associative value as one of the first residences constructed on George Street following the extension of the street when the Park Lots north of the former Town of York were opened to subdivision in the 1850s. The area became a sought-after residential district with buildings designed in the popular styles of the period. The property at 305 George Street was originally owned and occupied by Thomas Meredith, a grain merchant who had a decade-long association with the Gooderham and Worts Distillery, the company founded in the early 1830s that evolved into one of Toronto’s major manufacturing and financial enterprises. Meredith’s family retained the property at 305 George Street until 1911.

Contextually, the Thomas Meredith House contributes to the character of George Street as it developed as a residential district south of Gerrard Street East. The property stands out for its architectural design and relative rarity as one of the few surviving mid 19th century house form buildings in the area. Apart from the Samuel Platt House (completed 1850) at 337 Jarvis Street, other properties in the vicinity that are recognized on the City’s heritage inventory were built in the late 1800s. The Thomas Meredith house is an important surviving reminder of the elegant 19th century edifices that once typified the residential neighbourhood south of Allan Gardens.

Heritage Attributes

The heritage attributes of the Thomas Meredith House related to its cultural heritage value as a good example of the Italianate style consist of:

- The 2½-storey plan under a hipped roof with extended eaves, a bracketed cornice and, at the four corners, brick chimneys with multiple stacks
- The red brick cladding with brick and wood trim (the west façade on George Street has been painted)
- The polychromatic detailing, where contrasting yellow brick is applied for the window detailing, quoins, and band course (the principal or west façade has been painted)
- The principal (west) façade, which is divided into three bays by a projecting frontispiece with a flat-headed window opening in the upper storey
- The main entrance that is placed at the base of the frontispiece and features a round-arched entry with a paneled wood surround and a multi-paned fanlight (the door has been replaced)
- Flanking the frontispiece, the pairs of symmetrically-organized flat-headed window openings with sills and brick voussoirs that are that are found in both floors
- The continuation of the brick detailing on the side elevations (north and south) and the rear (east) wall
- The east wall, where an entrance is centered in the first storey beneath a round-arched staircase window with brick voussoirs and a tripartite window (this entry has been altered)
- On either side of the east entry, the pairs of window openings in the first floor beneath single window openings (one has been altered) in the second storey