

Harriett Brown House

Description

The property at 306 Sherbourne Street is worthy of designation under Part IV of 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, associative and contextual value. Located on the southwest corner of Sherbourne Street and Gerrard Street East, the 2½-storey house form building was built in 1871 and altered to its present appearance in 1890. The property was listed on the City of Toronto Inventory of Heritage Properties in 1976.

Statement of Cultural Heritage Value

The Harriett Brown House has design value as an excellent example of a house form building updated in the Queen Anne Revival style. As one of the popular architectural styles introduced at the close of the 19th century, the Queen Anne Revival took medieval and classical motifs from 16th and 17th century British architecture and reinterpreted them in response to local materials and needs. The highly elaborate style is recognized by its picturesque compositions, mixture of materials, and variety of design elements that often featured a distinctive corner tower.

The property is associated with the historical development of the neighbourhood around Allan Gardens. In 1819, William Allan (1770-1853), a prominent politician and the first postmaster of the Town of York, acquired one of the 100-acre park lots north of the community as the location of his country estate named “Moss Park.” In the mid 19th century, Allan engaged the noted Toronto architect John Howard to lay out a residential subdivision on part of his lands with access along “Allan’s Lane”, later renamed Sherbourne Street. Allan reserved the area near the northeast corner of Sherbourne Street and Gerrard Street East for a horticultural garden. After Allan donated this site to the Toronto Horticultural Society in 1858, the City acquired and expanded the property as a municipal park that was officially named Allan Gardens in 1901. A landmark in Toronto, Allan Gardens is designated under Part IV of the *Ontario Heritage Act*.

Following Allan’s death, his son and heir slowly divested the remainder of the Moss Park estate, beginning with the section between present-day Dundas and Gerrard Streets. John Brown, a stationer, purchased the vacant lot on the southwest corner of the latter intersection. The tax assessment rolls dated April 1871 indicate that a detached house was under construction on the site. Following Brown’s death, his widow retained the property. Extensive alterations were underway in September 1890 that resulted in the division of the existing structure into a pair of semi-detached houses with separate entrances on Sherbourne Street and Gerrard Street East. Harriett Brown occupied the section facing Sherbourne Street and rented the half known as 193 Gerrard Street East to a series of tenants.

Contextually, the Harriett Brown House anchors the southwest corner of Sherbourne Street and Gerrard Street East, across from Allan Gardens. The adjoining properties at 189 and 191 Gerrard Street East are also recognized on the City's heritage inventory, as well as those at 205 and 207 Gerrard, east of Sherbourne. The Harriett Brown House is an important surviving reminder of the grandeur of the residential buildings that characterized the neighbourhood as it developed in the late 19th century.

Heritage Attributes

The heritage attributes of the Harriett Brown House related to its design value as an excellent example of the Queen Anne Revival style are:

- The scale, form and massing of the 2½-storey irregularly-shaped plan
- The buff brick cladding, with brick, stone, wood and terra cotta trim
- The cross-gable roof with tall brick chimneys, gabled dormers, and cross-gables with extended eaves, bargeboard and paired brackets
- On the north and east facades, the wood cornices with brackets that divide the first and second stories
- At the northeast corner, the two-storey tower with flat-headed window openings under a polygonal roof
- The north façade on Gerrard Street East, where the central entrance is placed inside a brick arch and features a flat-headed door opening with a transom and sidelights
- On the north façade, at the west end, the two-storey bay window with the segmental-arched window openings, voussoirs, vermiculated keystones, stone sills and decorative ironwork
- The east elevation on Sherbourne Street, where a section of the wall is angled for the placement of a round-arched door opening
- The fenestration on the east elevation facing Sherbourne Street, with the combination of oval, round-arched, flat-headed and segmental-arched openings featuring brick voussoirs and corbelled sills or stone labels and sills
- On the east wall, the treatment of the flat-headed window openings at the south end of the second storey with stone hoods, brick piers with terra cotta capitals, and ogee brackets
- The west elevation with no openings that faces the neighbouring property at #191 Sherbourne
- The rear (south) wall, which is visible from Sherbourne Street, with the flat-headed openings with brick and stone trim