

Victoria-Royce Presbyterian Church

Description

The property at 152 Annette Street is worthy of designation under Part IV, Section 29 of the Ontario Heritage Act, 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 northwest corner of Annette Street and Medland Street, the building was completed in 1892 as West Toronto Junction Presbyterian Church. The site was listed on the City of Toronto Inventory of Heritage Properties in 1983.

Statement of Cultural Heritage Value

Victoria-Royce Presbyterian Church is a well-designed example of the Romanesque Revival style, which was popular for religious and residential buildings in the late 19th century. Inspired by French and Spanish architecture from the 11th and 12th centuries, the revival style is recognized by its oversized round-arch motifs, rugged surfaces, and ornate detailing. Victoria-Royce Presbyterian Church is distinguished by its corner tower and the decorative brickwork, particularly the ogee designs and cross motifs that highlight the door and window openings.

Victoria-Royce Presbyterian Church has associative value as an institution of importance to the community. In 1884, a Presbyterian congregation was organized in the West Toronto Junction, which worshipped in temporary quarters until a wood church was completed the next year. Following the construction of the current brick church in 1892, the edifice was renamed Victoria Presbyterian Church to commemorate Queen Victoria's Diamond Jubilee in 1897. The congregation amalgamated with Royce Avenue Presbyterian Church in 1969 and retained the Annette Street premises. Victoria-Royce Presbyterian Church was closed in June 2006.

The church is also associated with the architectural partnership of Wilm Knox and John Elliot, who practiced in Toronto from 1888 to 1892. Knox, who trained as an architect in his native Scotland, and the Canadian-born Elliot had previously worked for the notable Chicago architectural firm of Burnham and Root, whose early projects embodied the popular Romanesque Revival style (known in the United States as Richardsonian Romanesque). In Toronto, Knox and Elliot (in association with local architect Beaumont Jarvis) employed a Romanesque Revival design to win a prestigious competition for the Confederation Life Company's headquarters. This highly publicized commission led to others, including the West Toronto Junction Presbyterian Church. The church was one of the last projects in Toronto completed by Knox and Elliot, who returned to Chicago for the World's Columbian Exhibition.

Contextually, Victoria-Royce Presbyterian Church is a neighbourhood landmark at the northwest corner of Annette Street and Medland Street in West Toronto. It contributes to

Annette Street where a series of church complexes line the boulevard. Among the group, Keele Street Church of Christ (1890) at 99 Annette, Annette Street Baptist Church (1888) at 200 Annette, and High Park-Alhambra United Church (1908) at 260 High Park Avenue (at the southwest corner of Annette Street) are also recognized on the City's heritage inventory.

Heritage Attributes

The heritage attributes of Victoria-Royce Presbyterian Church associated with its cultural heritage value as a well-designed late 19th century church with Romanesque Revival styling that is a neighbourhood landmark are:

- The scale, form and massing
- The red brick cladding with brick, stone, wood, copper and glass trim
- The near-square plan, rising one extended storey above a raised base with window openings
- The steeply-pitched cross-gable roof
- Under the cross-gables on the south, east and north facades, the oversized round-arched tripartite window openings with voussoirs and hood moulds, where the large central openings are flanked by smaller versions
- At the southeast corner, the square tower with the steeply-pitched hipped spire with gabled dormers, the round-arched window openings, the corbelled brickwork, and the Classical detailing
- At the base of the tower, the south and east entrances where paired wood doors and transoms with leaded glass are placed in oversized round-arched openings
- On the east façade, the secondary entrance (north) that is placed in the segmental-arched surround with brick detailing
- On the south façade, the gable-roofed entrance porch (west) that is placed beneath the trio of diminutive flat-headed window openings with a continuous stone label and sill
- The west elevation, with a round window opening beneath the apex of the gable
- The leaded glass in some of the window openings
- At the northwest corner of the church, the Sunday School building with the three-storey plan and flat roof, the red brick cladding with stone trim, the pedimented east façade, the flat-headed window openings, and the entrance porch (east) with Arts and Crafts detailing

The interior with the hammer beam roof is not included in the Reasons for Designation.