

80 bpNichol Lane: Coach House Books

Description

The property at 80 bpNichol Lane (at the rear of 401, 403 and 405 Huron Street) is worthy of designation under Part IV, Section 29 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, associative and contextual value. The site contains two surviving coach houses that were constructed behind the house form buildings on Huron Street. The north coach house was built behind the residences at 403 and 405 Huron Street by 1890 when it was illustrated on Goad's Fire Insurance Atlas. According to the 1912 Atlas updated to 1913, the south coach house was in place behind the property at 401 Huron. As the location of Coach House Books, the north and south coach houses were included on the City of Toronto Inventory of Heritage Properties in 2004.

Statement of Cultural Heritage Value

The north and south coach houses have design value as representative examples of late 19th century outbuildings. They were associated with the large-scale house form buildings that were constructed along Huron Street as part of an upscale residential neighbourhood south of Bloor Street West. The coach houses were built behind the semi-detached houses at 401, 403 and 405 Huron Street, which are now part of the group of properties occupied by Campus Co-op and recognized on the City's heritage inventory. The two coach houses now form part of the complex of interconnected buildings occupied by Coach House Books.

The property has associative value as the setting of Coach House Books, the independent publisher and printer of Canadian post-modern literature. Founded in 1965, the company has published hundreds of distinctive Canadian books, periodicals, posters, post cards, and other print material, including works by celebrated Canadian authors such as Michael Ondaatje, Anne Michaels, Guy Maddin and the late bpNichol (Barrie Phillip Nichol, 1944-1988), for whom the laneway is named. Excluding the ground floor of the north coach house, these buildings have been maintained and operated by Coach House Books for over 40 years.

Contextually, the north and south coach houses extend along the west side of bpNichol Lane, south of Bloor Street West, where they support the character of the residential neighbourhood. The site is part of an enclave of heritage properties that are associated with the historical development of the area and recognized on the City's heritage inventory, with the William Crowther House (1889) at 150 St. George Street, the Campus Co-op Houses (1890) at 395-405 Huron Street, and St. Thomas's Anglican Church (1892) at 383 Huron Street.

Heritage Attributes

The heritage attributes of the north and south coach houses related to their design, associative and contextual value as outbuildings occupied by Coach House Press that contribute to the Huron Street neighbourhood are:

North Coach House

- The scale, form and massing
- The 1½-storey rectangular plan
- The red brick cladding, with brick and wood detailing
- The gable roof with slate cladding and, on the east and west slopes, oversized gabled wall dormers
- On the east elevation facing bpNichol Lane, the oversized segmental-arched window openings in the upper storey with brick flat arches and wood detailing, and the stable door openings in the lower floor
- On the west elevation facing Huron Street, the single door opening in the right (south) bay, where a paneled wood door is surmounted by a glass transom and a brick flat arch

South Coach House

- The scale, form and massing
- The 1½-storey rectangular plan
- The red brick cladding, with brick and wood detailing
- The gable roof with slate cladding, a dormer on the east slope and, at the midpoint of the ridge line, a decorative wood roof ventilator
- On the east elevation facing bpNichol Lane, the single oversized flat-headed window opening in the upper storey with a brick flat arch and wood detailing
- On the west elevation facing Huron Street, the single-storey door opening in the left (north) bay, with a brick flat arch and a paneled wood door with round-headed glass inserts

Excluded from the Reasons for Designation are the single-storey flat-roofed building attached to the south wall of the south coach house (which was built as the coach house for 399 Huron Street and subsequently altered), the single-storey flat-roofed addition at the south end of the latter building, and the wood structure currently linking the north and south coach houses at the second-storey level.