

St. Ann's Rectory

Description

The property at 120 First Avenue is worthy of inclusion on the City of Toronto Inventory of Heritage Properties for its cultural heritage value. Located on the north side of First Avenue in the first block east of De Grassi Street, St. Ann's Rectory was completed as the priest's residence for the neighbouring St. Ann's Church in 1914 when it was recorded on the City's tax assessment rolls.

Statement of Cultural Heritage Value

St. Ann's Rectory is a well-designed example of an early 20th century residential building that was designed to complement the neighbouring St. Ann's Church at 711 Gerrard Street East. The plans for the church followed Beaux Arts principles with a monumental temple front inspired by the 16th century church of S. Atanasio del Greci in Rome. The design for the rectory reflects the Edwardian Classical style favoured for residential buildings in the World War I era, and complements the church with its stone cladding and the Classical embellishment on the entrance porch.

The rectory was constructed as the priest's residence for St. Ann's Church, which was the second church completed for the parish on Gerrard Street East. St. Ann's Parish was established in 1908 to serve Roman Catholic parishioners in Riverdale, the area on the east side of the Don River that was annexed by the City of Toronto in 1884. With bridges across the waterway in place, the City introduced streetcar service along Gerrard Street East and Broadview Avenue to the Danforth to connect Riverdale with downtown Toronto. Residential development proceeded slowly through the late 19th century, and the area became fully accessible in 1918 with the opening of the Prince Edward Viaduct.

St. Ann's Rectory is associated with the practice of Toronto architect Arthur W. Holmes, who received the commission for both the church and residence. Holmes received his architectural training in the office of the notable English architect G. E. Street. Immigrating to Toronto, he acquired work as a draughtsman for architect Joseph Connolly, whose projects for Roman Catholic churches throughout Ontario included St. Mary's Church (1885-1899) in Toronto. Holmes entered into a brief partnership with A. A. Post before establishing a solo practice in 1900. Until his retirement in 1940, Holmes was widely regarded for his ecclesiastical designs for the Roman Catholic Archdiocese of Toronto. Among his projects of note were the church and rectory for St. Helen's Parish (completed between 1908 and 1911) along Dundas Street West in Brockton and St. Augustine's Seminary (1910-1913) on Kingston Road in Scarborough. Near the end of his career, Holmes prepared the plans for St. Michael's College on the University of Toronto's St. George Campus. His designs for St. Ann's Church and Rectory were executed in 1914.

Contextually, St. Ann's Rectory faces south onto First Avenue where it stands behind (south) and to the east of St. Ann's Church. On the opposite (south) side of First Avenue, St. Matthew's Anglican Church (1889) is another important institutional building in Riverdale. While St. Ann's Rectory forms part of the residential streetscape along First Avenue, its setback from the boulevard and stone cladding distinguish it from the neighbouring housing stock. In appearance and location, St. Ann's Rectory complements the church, which anchors the southeast corner of Gerrard Street East and De Grassi Street where its principal façade faces north toward Gerrard, the major commercial thoroughfare in the area.

Heritage Attributes

The heritage attributes of St. Ann's Rectory related to its cultural heritage value as a well-crafted example of an early 20th century residential building that is related through its design, associations and context to St. Ann's Church are:

- The scale, form and massing
- Above a stone foundation, the 2½-storey near square plan
- The stone cladding and detailing
- The hip roof with extended eaves and brackets, hipped dormers and, near the southeast and northwest corners, tall stone chimneys
- The design of the principal (south) façade, which is symmetrically organized into three bays with a central entrance
- The main entry, where a flat-headed door surround with a transom is protected by a raised porch
- The open porch, with the stone staircase, and the flat roof with cornice moulding that is supported on Ionic columns
- On the south façade, the flat-headed window openings with corbelled sills and, in the first floor, hoods with brackets
- The fenestration on the side elevations (east and west), which is visible from the street
- On the west elevation, the verandah with Classical detailing (now enclosed), which is connected by a covered passageway to the adjoining St. Ann's Church