

Holy Rosary Church

Description

The property at 354 St. Clair Avenue West is worthy of inclusion on the City of Toronto Inventory of Heritage Properties for its cultural heritage value. Historical records indicate that Holy Rosary Church was completed on the northwest corner of St. Clair Avenue West and Tweedsmuir Avenue in 1926 and officially opened the following year.

Statement of Cultural Heritage Value

Holy Rosary Church has design value as a well-crafted example of a church designed in the Neo-Gothic style that remained popular for ecclesiastical buildings during the opening decades of the 20th century. The style was distinguished from the earlier Gothic Revival by its scale and lack of polychromatic detailing. The design for Holy Rosary Church was inspired by the 15th century Church of St. Mary the Virgin in St. Neots, England. The spire was not executed. The complex and its grounds were illustrated in the August 1927 issue of Canadian House and Garden.

Holy Rosary Church is an institution of importance to the community. Its origins date to 1882, when the Basilian Fathers acquired the site as a farm for St. Michael's College and the location of quarters for the training of priests (known as a novitiate). The novitiate and a chapel dedicated to Our Lady of the Most Holy Rosary were completed by 1892. The parish was established in 1909 to serve the growing Irish Catholic population in the area around St. Clair Avenue West and Bathurst Street. The current church was completed in 1926, and its design befitted the prominent location at the south end of Forest Hill, an area noted for its architect-designed buildings. A series of memorial stained glass windows were unveiled between 1928 and 1945.

Holy Rosary Church is associated with the practice of Toronto architect A. W. Holmes, who prepared the plans for many Roman Catholic churches in the city. Holmes was trained in England where he was influenced by the work of English architect Augustus Pugin. St. Helen's Church (1909) at 1688 Dundas Street West, St. Clare's Church (1922) at 1118 St. Clair Avenue West, the Church of the Holy Name (1926) at 606 Danforth Avenue, and St. Thomas Aquinas Chapel (1926) at 50 Hoskin Avenue are edifices designed by Holmes that are recognized on the City's heritage inventory.

Contextually, with its distinctive design and placement in a park-like setting, Holy Rosary Church is a landmark on the north side of St. Clair Avenue West between Spadina Road (east) and Bathurst Street (west).

Heritage Attributes

The heritage attributes of Holy Rosary Church related to its design, associative and contextual value as a well-crafted example of Gothic design that is an institutional landmark on St. Clair Avenue West are:

- The scale, form and massing of the structure, which rises one extended storey and features a rectangular plan with a tower at the south end
- The mixture of roughly textured and smooth stone cladding with stone and wood trim
- The shallow-pitched gable roof covering the nave, with stone coping on the gable ends and a tall chimney at the rear (north)
- The tower, where a monumental pointed-arched window opening with stone tracery and stained glass is placed above a band of carved stonework
- The main entrance, which is found at the base of the tower in a flat-headed surround with a hood mould, blind transom and carved spandrels, and contains paired wood doors with panels and inserts
- On all elevations, the medieval-inspired detailing, with buttresses with weatherings and gablets, blind arcades, crenelles, quatrefoils, and cross motifs, with a multi-sided bay on the west elevation and a turret on the east wall
- The west wing that features complementary stone cladding and trim with flat-headed window openings set in stone surrounds and, on the south face, a gabled frontispiece with an enclosed entrance porch