

REASONS FOR DESIGNATION: 284 KING STREET WEST ATTACHMENT NO. 13
(STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE)

Anderson Building

Description

The property at 284 King Street West 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. Located on the north side of King Street West between Ed Mirvish Way and John Street, the Anderson Building (1915) is a five-storey warehouse that was listed on the City of Toronto Inventory of Heritage Properties in 1984.

Statement of Cultural Heritage Value

The architectural significance of the Anderson Building comes from its application of terra cotta in combination with an exuberant Edwardian Classical design. The Anderson Building is a rare surviving example of a commercial warehouse with terra cotta cladding in Toronto where, because of the fragility of the material, relatively few examples remain, as documented in the book Terra Cotta: artful deceivers (1990, 94).

The design of the Anderson Building was executed by Scottish-born architect William Fraser, who gained attention in Glasgow when he won a competition in 1896 for a memorial commemorating the centenary of poet Robert Burns' death. In Canada, Fraser was invited to join the firm of George M. Miller and Company, a practice best known for its projects for the influential Massey family. Fraser assisted Miller with the commission for the highly visible Confederation Life Building on Richmond Street East before he was selected by the Canadian government as one of the practitioners overseeing the reconstruction of Halifax after the infamous explosion of 1917. While Fraser specialized in educational buildings after opening a solo practice in 1911, one of his most prominent commissions was for the Anderson-Macbeth Company.

Historically, the property at 284 King Street West is also associated with Toronto entrepreneur Edwin "Honest Ed" Mirvish (1914-2007), who revitalized King Street West with his restoration of the Royal Alexandra Theatre in the early 1960s. Over the following decades, Ed Mirvish Enterprises acquired many of the warehouses along the street, including the Anderson Building, converting them to commercial uses that attracted theatre patrons. Following the revitalization of the Royal Alexandra, Roy Thomson Hall (1982) opened on the south side of King Street, and Ed Mirvish Enterprises commissioned the Princess of Wales Theatre (1993) at 300 King Street West. Duncan Street between King Street West and Pearl Street was renamed Ed Mirvish Way in recognition of the entrepreneur's contributions to the cultural life of the neighbourhood.

Contextually, the Anderson Building contributes to the historical character of the King-Spadina neighbourhood, which developed as the city's industrial sector following the destruction of the existing manufacturing district in the Great Fire of 1904. Commissioned by the Anderson-

Macbeth Company, hat producers, the Anderson Building is part of the collection of surviving early 20th century warehouses that were built on Russell Square, which evolved from an institutional precinct housing the original Upper Canada College to an industrial enclave. Following the departure of manufacturing interests from King-Spadina in the decades after World War II, the Anderson Building was one of the warehouses converted to commercial uses as King Street, west of Simcoe, evolved as the centre of the city's Entertainment District.

The Anderson Building is physically, functionally, visually and historically linked to its setting on King Street West, where it is an integral member of the surviving group of warehouses between Simcoe Street and John Street that share a complementary scale and appearance, with primarily Edwardian Classical styling. Together with the neighbouring warehouses, the Anderson Building provides a bookend for the Royal Alexandra Theatre at #260 King, which is recognized as a National Historic Site.

Heritage Attributes

The heritage attributes of the property at 284 King Street West are:

- The five-storey warehouse
- The scale, form and massing of the long rectangular plan
- The glazed terra cotta, which is applied for the cladding and trim on the south facade
- The organization of the principal (south) façade into three bays with corner pavilions that extend above the flat roofline
- The cornice with modillion blocks along part of the south roofline, as well as the dentilled cornice above the first floor
- In the first storey, the flat-headed openings, with three tall windows centered between entrances with classically detailed surrounds, with a name band incorporated above the east (right) entry
- The symmetrical placement of the fenestration in the second through the fifth floors, with flat-headed window openings, apart from a trio of round-arched openings in the centre of the fourth storey
- The decorative detailing, with the shaped spandrel panels, the keystones and imposts on the round-arched window openings, the colonnettes separating the attic windows and, on the corner pavilions, the triangular pediments and other classical embellishments