

## **Eclipse Whitewear Building**

### Description

The property at 322 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 northeast corner of King Street West and John Street, the Eclipse Whitewear Building is a four-storey factory (1903) that was listed on the City of Toronto Inventory of Heritage Properties in 1984.

### Statement of Cultural Heritage Value

The Eclipse Whitewear Building is significant as one of the earliest warehouses constructed on the former Upper Canada College campus on Russell Square, where the company produced children's and ladies' underwear for over half a century.

The property at 322 King Street West is connected historically with the architectural firms that designed and restored the building. The original plans were prepared by the Toronto architectural firm of Gregg and Gregg, headed by brothers William Rufus Gregg and Alfred Holden Gregg, who executed many well-known buildings both in partnership and working with other practitioners. In 1970, the Eclipse Whitewear Building was acquired by two internationally significant architects, South African-born A. J. (Jack) Diamond and American Barton Myers, who refurbished the warehouse for the firm's offices during their short-lived partnership.

Following the property's restoration by Diamond and Myers, it was acquired by 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 Eclipse Whitewear Building, converting them to commercial uses that served the patrons of the Royal Alexandra Theatre. After 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.

While the Eclipse Whitewear Building is characteristic of the early 20<sup>th</sup> century warehouses of its vintage, it stands out with its Edwardian Classical detailing and repetition of the round-arched motif in the south entrance and the arcade of window openings above it and along the John Street elevation.

Contextually, the Eclipse Whitewear Building contributes to the historical character of the King-Spadina neighbourhood, which developed as the city's new manufacturing sector after the Great Fire of 1904. By World War I, the former Upper Canada College campus at Russell Square on King Street, west of Simcoe Street, was transformed from an institutional precinct to an industrial enclave of warehouses, including the Eclipse Whitewear Building at the west end of the block. Following the departure of industries from King-Spadina in the decades after World War II, the Eclipse Whitewear Building was converted to commercial uses as this section of King Street West became the core of the city's Entertainment District.

The Eclipse Whitewear Building is visually, functionally, historically and physically linked to its surroundings on King Street West where it anchors the northeast corner of John Street. As a collection of surviving early 20<sup>th</sup> century warehouses that share a complementary scale and styling, primarily with Edwardian Classical features, the Eclipse Whitewear Building and its neighbours bookend the Royal Alexandra Theatre, a National Historic Site at 260 King Street West.

### Heritage Attributes

The heritage attributes of the property at 322 King Street West are:

- The four-storey warehouse with a raised base with segmental-arched window openings
- The scale, form and massing of the long rectangular plan
- The brick cladding (now painted), and the brick, stone and wood detailing
- The cornice dividing the lower storey from the upper floors, and the corbelled brickwork along the flat roofline
- The organization of the principal (south) façade into three bays, with the projecting centre section
- The main entrance, which is elevated in the centre of the first floor and protected by a classically-detailed round-arched hood supported on columns with a name band (restored) above
- The secondary entrance in the outer (east) bay, which is protected by a round-arched hood and surmounted by a transom window
- The fenestration in the centre section and outer bays, combining flat-headed openings in the first floor, segmental-arched openings in the second and third stories and, in the upper floor, round-arched openings with corbelled brick detailing
- The piers organizing the window openings in the upper stories
- On the west elevation on John Street, the symmetrical placement of the fenestration with segmental-arched openings
- The commemorative plaque for the original Toronto General Hospital (situated northwest of King Street West and John Street in the early 19<sup>th</sup> century), which is mounted at the west end of the south wall