

James Cooper House

Description

The property at 582 Sherbourne Street is worthy of designation under Part IV of the *Ontario Heritage Act* for its cultural heritage value or interest, and meets the criteria for municipal designation prescribed by the Province of Ontario under the three categories of design, historical and contextual value. Located on the northeast corner of Sherbourne Street and Linden Street, the three-storey house form building was completed in 1882 according to archival sources. The dwelling was originally occupied by James Cooper, a partner in the firm of Sessions, Carpenter and Company, manufacturers of shoes and boots. The property was listed on the inaugural City of Toronto Inventory of Heritage Properties in June 1973.

Statement of Cultural Heritage Value

The James Cooper House has design value as a well-crafted example of a late 19th century residential building with Second Empire features, one of the most popular architectural styles of the period. The style was introduced to Toronto in the mid 19th century with the appearances of Toronto General Hospital on Gerrard Street East and Government House, the official residence for the lieutenant governor on the site of present-day Roy Thomson Hall, both designed by local architect Henry Langley. Identified by the distinctive mansard (double-gable) roof, Second Empire designs usually exhibited exuberant decorative detailing, including a variety of materials and trim.

Historically, the James Cooper House is associated with institutional uses. While Sherbourne Street originated in the mid 1800s as a residential district that attracted many of the City's community leaders, by the turn of the 20th century its large-scale mansions were converted for other purposes. Historical records indicate that James Cooper was the only residential inhabitant of #582 Sherbourne, which was subsequently occupied by the Keeley Institute for Nervous Diseases, an organization that dealt with alcohol rehabilitation. In 1910, the property was acquired by the Knights of Columbus Toronto Council, which was founded the previous year as a branch of the Catholic fraternal service organization. Dedicated to the principles of charity, unity, fraternity and patriotism, the Knights of Columbus occupied the Sherbourne Street property for nearly a century, where the building was the setting of fundraising events, musical performances, and various entertainments.

The James Cooper House is a landmark on Sherbourne Street. Its immediate neighbour to the north at #592 Sherbourne was constructed in 1882 and first occupied by Charles H. Gooderham, a member of the family connected to the Gooderham and Worts Distillery. The latter building was also transformed for other uses, and is known historically as the Selby Hotel. Directly south along Sherbourne Street, Our Lady of Lourdes Church (1884) at #520, the Hotel Isabella (1890-1891) at #556, and the semi-detached houses (1888) at #572-578 are other important edifices that are recognized on the City's heritage inventory.

Heritage Attributes

The heritage attributes of the James Cooper House related to its design value as a well-crafted example of a late 19th century residential building with features of the Second Empire style are found on the exterior walls and roof, consisting of:

- The three-storey rectangular plan above a raised stone base with window openings
- The brick construction with red brick cladding and brick, sandstone, metal and wood trim
- The mansard roof (which adds the third storey), with extended eaves with brackets and modillion blocks, the slate cladding, the pressed metal cornice with dentils, the stone-detailed brick chimneys on the north and south ends, and the dormers on the east and south slopes
- The detailing on the dormers, with pediments, dentils, brackets and, on the central dormer on the east slope, a round window
- The contrasting stone details, consisting of the quoins and pilasters with capitals on the corners of the walls and the bays, and the string courses extending between the first and second stories and at the height of the window heads in the first and second floors
- The organization of the principal (east) façade with a central entrance flanked on the left (south) by a single-storey bay window with a swan's neck pediment and other Classical detailing
- The entrance, which is raised and set in a segmental-arched stone surround with double wood doors and a transom
- Above the entry, the monumental round-arched opening set in a stone surround with corbels, rosettes and a keystone
- The treatment of the bay window and the tall segmental-arched window openings in the first and second stories, which are placed as single openings or in pairs and set in stone surrounds with dripstone hood moulds and brackets.
- The continuation of the pattern and detailing of the fenestration on the side elevations (north and south), with the addition of a two-storey rounded bay window on the north wall and a two-storey three-sided bay window on the south
- The stone, wood and metal detailing on the window openings

The rear (west) wall of the house, the two-storey assembly hall (dating to 1911) attached to the west end, and the subsequent additions are not included in the Reasons for Designation.