

John McKay Store

(Formerly located 36 King Street West and now located at 11 Adelaide Street West)

Description

On the property with the confirmed municipal address of 40 King Street West, the portion containing the John McKay Store 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. The John McKay Store was constructed in 1898 at 36 King Street West, with alterations to the street-level façade completed in 1926 for Wood Gundy. The principal five-storey façade of the building was relocated to 11 Adelaide Street West as part of the development of Scotia Plaza during the 1980s. The property was listed on the City of Toronto Inventory of Heritage Properties in 1976, and a Heritage Easement Agreement covering the John McKay Store façade in its new location was registered in 1984. The remainder of the property at 40 King Street is not included in the Reasons for Designation.

Statement of Cultural Heritage Value

The John McKay Store has design value as an excellent example of the Renaissance Revival style with decorative terra cotta detailing applied to a late 19th century commercial building. Among the signature elements of the style are the placement of different window types in the stories and the Classical embellishments. The heritage easement agreement for the John McKay Store describes its architectural features as “an example of rare craftsmanship that enhances the streetscape of the City’s downtown core.”

Historically, the John McKay Store is associated with the practice of Toronto architect S. G. Curry. During a career exceeding thirty years, Curry formed partnerships of various durations with many of Toronto’s leading architects, among them Frank Darling, Henry Sproatt, John Pearson, Francis S. Baker, Ernest Rolph and W. F. Sparling. Curry received the commission for the John McKay Store while he was practicing alone. The alterations to the property, commissioned by Wood Gundy and undertaken by the Toronto firm of Marani, Lawson and Paisley in 1926, received an award from the Ontario Association of Architects.

The John McKay Store is one of the few surviving 19th century edifices in the core of Toronto’s financial district. As part of the development of Scotia Plaza in the 1980s, the John McKay Store was relocated from King Street West to the north side of the complex on Adelaide Street West. Within the block bounded by Yonge Street, King Street West, Bay Street and Adelaide Street West, the Bank of Nova Scotia Building at 44 King Street West, the National Club at 303 Bay Street, and the facades of the Robert Fairweather Building and the Upper Canada Bible and Tract Societies Building on Yonge Street were also preserved. All of the above-noted properties are recognized on the City’s heritage inventory.

Heritage Attributes

The heritage attributes of the John McKay Store related to its design value as an excellent example of Renaissance Revival styling with decorative terra cotta applied to a late 19th century commercial building are found on the façade, now facing north onto Adelaide Street West, consisting of:

- The first storey (altered in 1926) with its Indiana limestone cladding, the Doric entablature with triglyphs and, at either end, the entrances with bracketed entablatures, marble trim and fluted pilasters
- Above the first floor, the cladding of the upper stories with decorative terra cotta
- The window surrounds on the flat-headed openings in the second and third floors
- The round-arched openings in the fourth storey that are placed in pairs and trios
- The two-storey pilasters in the Ionic order that organize the openings in the third and fourth floors
- At the fourth storey, the textured Ionic columns between the window openings that support linked arches with keystones and concave shell inserts
- In the attic level (fifth floor) beneath the cornice, the cartouches inscribed “1848,” “1898” and “JKB.”

The remainder of the property identified as 40 King Street West is not included in the Reasons for Designation.