

Canadian General Electric Building

Description

The property at 214 King Street West 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 categories of design and contextual value. Located on the north side of King Street West in the first block west of Simcoe Street, the six-storey warehouse was constructed in two sections in 1917 (east) and 1919 (west). The property was listed on the City of Toronto Inventory of Heritage Properties in 1984, and a Heritage Easement Agreement was registered two years later.

Statement of Cultural Heritage Value

The Canadian General Electric Building is a typical example of the tall buildings erected in the King-Spadina neighbourhood that developed as the City's industrial sector after the Great Fire of 1904. For the large warehouses built during this period, Classical features were applied to add monumentality and organize the oversized window openings. On the principal façade, the wall was usually divided horizontally into three parts, with a base, shaft and cornice modeled on a Classical column.

Historically, the Canadian General Electric Building is associated with the practice of Toronto architects Burke, Horwood and White. The origins of the partnership dated to 1894, when Edmund Burke, formerly a principal in the family firm of Langley, Langley and Burke, and his former apprentice, John C. B. Horwood, formed the firm of Burke and Horwood. The pair's first commission of note was the Robert Simpson Department Store, rebuilt immediately after a fire destroyed the original structure. Joined by Murray White in the early 20th century, the firm of Burke, Horwood and White designed various types of buildings. Among their commercial and industrial projects were the Pilkington Glass Factory and Warehouse (additions, 1909) at 15-31 Mercer Street, the Ryrie Building (1913-1914) at 229 Yonge Street, and the Wesley Building (1913-1915, and now known as the CHUM-City Building) at 299 Queen Street West, which are recognized on the City's heritage inventory.

The Canadian General Electric Building supports the character of the King-Spadina area, where most of the buildings along the north side of King Street West, west of Simcoe Street, are recognized on the City's heritage inventory. The Canadian General Electric Building and its neighbours, the Union Building at #212 King and the Nicholls Building at #220 King, form a complementary group of warehouses that are linked by their shared historical development, Classical appearance, and height and setback.

Heritage Attributes

The heritage attributes of the Canadian General Electric Building related to its design value as an early 20th century warehouse with Classical detailing associated with the development of the King-Spadina area as the City's industrial sector are found on the

principal (south) façade, the side elevations (east and west), and the flat roofline above, consisting of:

- The six-storey plan above a stone base
- The brick cladding with brick, stone and metal detailing
- The stone cornice and parapet with polychromatic diamond-shaped brickwork along the south roofline that wraps around the south ends of the side elevations (east and west)
- The organization of the principal (south) façade into six bays by brick piers, with the larger piers on the ends and in the centre rising to the cornice level where they display stone capitals and decorative wreaths and garlands
- The decorative detailing, with an ornamental stone cartouche placed at the junction of the base and the central pier, and the moulded stone band course extending above the first floor
- The main entrance, which is set back behind the stone base on the first floor
- The placement and detailing of the fenestration on the south facade, with flat-headed window openings with spandrels and, at the second-floor level, a decorative metal railing
- The side elevations (east and west), where the treatment introduced on the south façade is continued in the first (south) bays, followed by the functional arrangement of punched windows in the remainder of the walls