

Church of St. Mary the Virgin and St. Cyprian

Description

The property at 40 Westmoreland Avenue 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 west side of Westmoreland Avenue in the first block north of Bloor Street West, according to archival records the church was completed in 1914. The property was listed on the City of Toronto Inventory of Heritage Properties in 1973, and a Heritage Easement Agreement was registered in 2006. Deconsecrated in 2002, the church has been converted into a residential condominium.

Statement of Cultural Heritage Value

The Church of St. Mary the Virgin and St. Cyprian has design value as an excellent example of Neo Gothic design that was popular for institutional buildings after 1900. The style was distinguished from the late 19th century Gothic Revival by its reduced scale and more restrained interpretation of design elements associated with early medieval English architecture. While the Church of St. Mary and Virgin and St. Cyprian exhibits the crenellated tower and Tudor-arched openings characteristic of Neo-Gothic designs, it is particularly noteworthy for its distinctive brickwork.

Historically, the site is associated with an institution of importance to the community. The Anglican parish of St. Mary the Virgin was founded in 1888, followed by the construction of its first church on Delaware Avenue the next year. The current church building officially opened in 1914. It was renamed the Church of St. Mary the Virgin and St. Cyprian in 1966, following the amalgamation of the congregation with that of St. Cyprian's Anglican Church (1906-1907) in nearby Seaton Village.

The church is identified with the practice of architect W. A. Langton, who prepared the plans. After apprenticing with Toronto architects Darling and Curry, Langton relocated to Boston in 1882 where he worked for H. H. Richardson, the American architect best known for popularizing the Romanesque Revival style known as "Richardsonian Romanesque" and identified by oversized arches and sandstone cladding. Langton did not specialize in this style following his return to Toronto in 1886, but accepted commissions that employed the popular architectural motifs of the period. Langton was recognized for his efforts with other members of the Architectural Guild of Toronto in forming the Ontario Association of Architects, and for his role in establishing a school of architecture at the University of Toronto.

Positioned on a residential street north of Bloor Street West, the Church of St. Mary the Virgin and St. Cyprian is a local landmark. Nearby, the Bloor-Gladstone Branch of the Toronto Public Library (completed 1913) at 1101 Bloor Street West and the Paradise Theatre (1937 and replacing an earlier theatre dating to 1910) at 1006 Bloor Street West are other notable buildings that are recognized on the City's heritage inventory.

Heritage Attributes

The heritage attributes of the Church of St. Mary the Virgin and St. Cyprian related to its design value as an excellent example of Neo Gothic design are found on the exterior walls, roof and tower, consisting of:

- The plan, where the body of the church is anchored by a flat-roofed tower at the southeast corner, an entrance wing at the northeast corner, a transept at the southwest end, and a large northwest wing designed for the chapel and vestry
- The cladding, with two-tone red brick that adds a horizontal emphasis to the design, and the trim with brick and complementary red sandstone.
- The raised stone base where segmental-arched window openings have brick voussoirs
- The steeply-pitched gable roof covering the main body of the church, with a triangular dormer at the west end of the south slope that incorporates a pointed-arch window
- The principal (east) façade formed by the gable end wall
- On the east façade, beside a single brick buttress, the three-part bay window that displays segmental-arched window openings with brick and stone trim, buttresses, and a corbelled cornice
- In the upper part of the east wall, the trio of pointed-arch window openings with brick and stone detailing that contain stained glass
- On the side elevations (north and south), the sections of the walls that are extended and covered by flat roofs and display pairs of pointed-arch window openings between buttresses
- The transept on the south elevation, with a gabled roof and chimney, and a pointed-arch window opening on the south face
- The rear (west) wall, featuring a three-part chancel window beneath the gable end of the roof
- At the northeast corner of the church, a single-storey entrance wing with a cross-gable roof, Tudor-arch window openings and, on the east face, a Tudor-arch doorcase displaying brick mouldings, a stone hood mould, and a transom and double doors (the original doors and transom have been removed, and a similar entrance is found on the east face of the tower)
- The tower, which is the focal point of the design and incorporates buttresses with gables, Tudor-arch window openings on the south and west walls, pointed-arch window openings on all faces, and a flat roof with crenellated parapets and a chimney.
- At the base of the tower, the foundation stone from the 1889 church and the cornerstone marked “1913”
- At the northwest end of the complex, the chapel and vestry wing that is covered by a steeply pitched gable roof with an end chimney
- On the chapel and vestry wing, the gabled entrance porch that is placed on the west side, and the walls with Tudor- and pointed-arch window openings
- The gabled frontispiece with a monumental three-part opening containing stained glass that extends the north wall of the vestry wing