

## **Timothy Eaton Memorial Church**

### Description

The property at 230 St. Clair Avenue West is worthy of inclusion on the City of Toronto Inventory of Heritage Properties for its cultural heritage value. Historical records indicate that Timothy Eaton Memorial Church was completed in 1915 on the north side of St. Clair Avenue West between Dunvegan Road (east) and Warren Road (west).

### Statement of Cultural Heritage Value

Timothy Eaton Memorial Church has design value as an excellent example of Neo-Gothic styling, the most popular style for churches during the opening decades of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Its design incorporated specific features inspired by the Decorated period of English Gothic architecture, particularly the inclusion of oversized window openings with tracery. The sanctuary was reconstructed in 1938, and the Flora McRae Eaton Building added in 1962.

Timothy Eaton Memorial Church is an institution of importance to the community and associated with the development of the area adjoining St. Clair Avenue West. By the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, the lands on the north side of the thoroughfare, west of present-day Avenue Road, were held by the executors of the Baldwin Estate. When its owners subdivided the lands for future development, restrictive covenants were imposed to control setbacks and architectural appearance. The area developed into a prestigious residential neighbourhood that, by the early 1900s, was accessed by streetcars along St. Clair Avenue West and Avenue Road.

When the Methodist Social Union of Toronto decided to organize a church in the district, it approached members of the Eaton family for support. In addition to his role as the founder of the famous department store and retail chain, Timothy Eaton (1834-1907) was a prominent Methodist. As a memorial to Timothy Eaton, his widow with his son and heir, John Craig Eaton, donated the land for the church and financed the construction of the original structures. The Sunday School building was completed in 1911 and used for worship services until the sanctuary opened four years later. Among the first marriages celebrated at the church was that of Margaret Burden, Timothy Eaton's granddaughter, to the celebrated World War I aviator, Billy Bishop. During the early 1920s, Dr. Ernest Macmillan served as church organist and choir master. MacMillan was later knighted for his contributions to Canadian music and his associations with the Royal Conservatory of Music, the Toronto Symphony Orchestra, and the Toronto Mendelssohn Choir. In 1925, Timothy Eaton Memorial elected to join the newly formed United Church of Canada.

Timothy Eaton Memorial Church is associated with the practice of the Toronto architectural firm of Wickson and Gregg, which prepared the plans for the church and Sunday School. After forming a partnership in 1904, Wickson and Gregg designed local buildings of note, including the Central Reference Library (1907), now known as the Koffler Student Services Centre at the University of Toronto. The firm received the

commission for Timothy Eaton Memorial after completing the designs for “Ardwold,” John Craig Eaton’s Forest Hill residence.

The church contains an important collection of stained glass windows. In 1915, the window depicting “The Light of The World” was installed in the chancel as a memorial to Timothy Eaton. Following the untimely death of Sir John Craig Eaton in 1922, additional memorial windows were introduced to commemorate members of the Eaton family, the clergy and the congregation. Most of the windows were executed by the Robert McCausland Company of Toronto, apart from four large windows along the nave that were designed by artisan Peter Haworth and produced by Pringle of London.

Contextually, with its scale and appearance, Timothy Eaton Memorial Church is a landmark on St. Clair Avenue West at the south end of the Forest Hill neighbourhood and adjoining Poplar Plains.

### Heritage Attributes

The heritage attributes of Timothy Eaton Memorial Church related to its design, associative and contextual value as an excellent example of Neo-Gothic styling that is an institutional landmark on St. Clair Avenue West are:

- The scale, form and massing of its irregularly shaped plan, where the end wall of the long nave faces south toward St. Clair Avenue and is bounded by a tower on the east and an entrance with a porte cochere on the west
- Rising above a stone base with window openings, the cladding of the structure with Credit Valley and Indiana limestone and the application of stone and wood detailing
- The cross-gable roof with stone coping on the gable ends
- The detailing on the principal (south) façade, where monumental Tudor arched window openings are placed in recesses with carved stone detailing and the letters “Timothy Eaton Memorial Church”
- The tower with its crenellated roof, buttressed corners, trefoil designs, Tudor-arched window openings, and entries at the base
- The main entrance, which is placed on the west elevation in a pointed-arch surround with double wood doors with glazed inserts and transoms, and protected by a distinctive porte-cochere with Tudor-arched openings
- On all elevations of the church and the east wing, the placement and detailing of the fenestration, with Tudor-arched, flat-headed and lancet window openings with stone trim
- The medieval-inspired stone detailing highlighting the complex, including buttresses, quoins, turrets, crenelles, crockets, finials, quatrefoils, and crests
- The complementary Sunday School Wing (northwest), with its stone cladding and detailing, gabled roof, entries with frontispieces and wood doors, and window openings that repeat the shape and detailing of those on the church and east wing
- Attached to the east wing by a glazed link, the Flora McRae Eaton Building with its textured stone work and glazed openings