

Samuel Caplan House

Description

The property at 15 Beverley Street is worthy of inclusion on the City of Toronto Inventory of Heritage Properties for its cultural heritage value. The two-storey row house (built in 1858 and subsequently altered) is located on the east side of Beverley Street in the block south of Stephanie Street. While it is the end unit of a row of three houses identified as 15, 17 and 19 Beverley Street, the properties at 17 and 19 Beverley Street are not included in the Reasons for Listing.

Statement of Cultural Heritage Value

The property at 15 Beverley Street has associative value for its connections to the internationally recognized architect, Frank Gehry. Born as Ephraim Goldberg in Toronto in 1929, Gehry resided in the city until 1947 (apart from a brief sojourn to Timmins, Ontario) when his family relocated permanently to Los Angeles, California. During his formative years in Toronto, Gehry primarily resided at 15 Beverley Street, which was owned by his maternal grandparents, Samuel and Lillian Caplan, from 1925 until the 1950s. His grandfather operated a hardware store nearby on Queen Street West, and the property was in walking distance to the synagogue where Gehry celebrated his bar mitzvah and other institutions associated with his childhood. In biographies, articles and interviews, Frank Gehry has described the impact of the years he spent at this address in Toronto on his architectural career, particularly his close relationship with his grandmother who encouraged his creativity. He recalls his fascination with the live carp his grandmother purchased for Sabbath suppers, which were stored temporarily in the family's bathtub and later inspired the form and liquidity of Gehry's works such as the Barcelona Fish Sculpture (1992).

Contextually, the house form building at 15 Beverley Street is visually and historically linked to Beverley Street in the Grange neighbourhood. The specific block it occupies on the east side of the street, south of Stephanie Street, contains a range of residential buildings that together reflect the evolution of the area from the mid 19th century to the early 20th century. 15 Beverley was one of the earliest houses built on Beverley Street, north of Queen Street, which is evident in its modest appearance compared with the row houses (1891) at 29-39 Beverley, the neighbouring semi-detached houses (1891) at 45 and 47 Stephanie Street, and the detached house form building (1905) at 27 Beverley. Overall, the block is indicative of the transitional development of the Grange neighbourhood where the unassuming buildings that represented the first generation of houses constructed on the Park Lots were replaced or joined over time by more elaborate edifices that reflect the residential context in scale, form and massing.

While Gehry's architectural creations are celebrated throughout the world, it is fitting that his inaugural work in Toronto is the transformation of the Art Gallery of Ontario

(completed in 2008), which is located literally up the street from his grandparents' Beverley Street abode. The fact that the setting of Gehry's architectural debut in Toronto is in such close proximity to his childhood residence is unique and highlights the associative and contextual values of the property at 15 Beverley Street.

Heritage Attributes

The heritage attributes of the property at 15 Beverley Street that relate to maintaining the appearance of the building relative to the period of Frank Gehry's association with it are:

- The scale, form and massing
- Above the raised base with window openings, the two-storey rectangular plan
- The red brick cladding with brick, stone and wood detailing
- The gable roof, with extended eaves at the west end where a cornice with brackets wraps around the south corner
- On the west façade on Beverley Street, the main entrance that is raised and placed in the left (north) bay, and the segmental-arched window openings in both stories
- The south elevation, which faces a laneway and is visible from Beverley Street