

**HERITAGE PROPERTY RESEARCH AND EVALUATION REPORT**



**ANDERSON BUILDING**  
284 KING STREET WEST, TORONTO

Prepared by:

Heritage Preservation Services  
City Planning Division  
City of Toronto

July 2010

## 1. DESCRIPTION



The Anderson Building is shown in the centre of the block on the north side of King Street West between Ed Mirvish Way (to the east, or right) and John Street (on the west, or left)

<b>284 King Street: Anderson Building</b>	
ADDRESS	284 King Street West (north side, between Ed Mirvish Way and John Street)
WARD	Ward 20 (Trinity-Spadina)
LEGAL DESCRIPTION	Plan 216E, Part Block A
NEIGHBOURHOOD/COMMUNITY	King-Spadina
HISTORICAL NAME	Anderson Building
CONSTRUCTION DATE	1915
ORIGINAL OWNER	Anderson-Macbeth Company Limited
ORIGINAL USE	Commercial/Industrial (warehouse)
CURRENT USE*	Commercial (offices) * This does not refer to permitted use(s) as defined by the Zoning By-law
ARCHITECT/BUILDER/DESIGNER	William Fraser, architect
DESIGN/CONSTRUCTION/MATERIALS	Terra cotta cladding & trim
ARCHITECTURAL STYLE	Edwardian Classicism
ADDITIONS/ALTERATIONS	None identified in Building Records
CRITERIA	Design/Physical, Historical/Associative & Contextual
HERITAGE STATUS	Listed on City of Toronto Inventory of Heritage Properties
RECORDER	Heritage Preservation Services: Kathryn Anderson
REPORT DATE	July 2010

## 2. BACKGROUND

This research and evaluation report describes the history, architecture and context of the property at 284 King Street West, and applies evaluation criteria to determine whether it merits designation under Part IV, Section 29 of the Ontario Heritage Act. The conclusions of the research and evaluation are found in Section 4 (Summary).

### i. HISTORICAL TIMELINE

Key Date	Historical Event
1914 June	The Governors of the University of Toronto sell land on King Street West to the Anderson-Macbeth Company Limited <sup>1</sup>
1914 Dec	Building permit #15202 is issued for the structure, with William Fraser identified as the architect
1915 Aug	The building is in place and occupied by the Anderson-Macbeth Company when the tax assessment rolls are compiled
1923	The Anderson Building is first illustrated on the Goad's Atlas for 1910, updated to 1923
1984	The property at 284 King Street West is listed on the City of Toronto Inventory of Heritage Properties

### ii. HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

#### King-Spadina Neighbourhood

The property at 284 King Street West is part of the King-Spadina Neighbourhood, the area that developed north of Front Street West between Simcoe Street and Bathurst Street, with King Street West and Spadina Avenue as its major commercial arteries. The origins of the district date to the late 18<sup>th</sup> century after the founding of the Town of York and the extension of that community westward as New Town. In the early 1800s, the relocation of the Provincial Legislature (Third Parliament Buildings, 1829-32) to Simcoe Place on Front Street West was accompanied by high-end residential development that drew community leaders to the neighbourhood.<sup>2</sup> Founded in 1829, two years later Upper Canada College opened an expansive campus on Russell Square, the tract on the north side of King Street West, west of Simcoe Street. After the private boys' school moved to its present site on Lonsdale Road in 1891, representatives of the University of Toronto (which formed the College's Board of Governors) organized the subdivision and sale of the original property.

In the early 20<sup>th</sup> century when the Great Fire of 1904 destroyed the existing manufacturing district along Front Street near Bay Street, Toronto's industrial sector was re-established in the King-Spadina neighbourhood. The area was chosen for its proximity to the city centre, the availability of streetcar service for workers, and the presence of the steam railways, which had

---

<sup>1</sup> The lands were originally occupied by Upper Canada College, which was founded as a private boys' school in 1829 and, eight years, placed under the control of King's College, the forerunner to the University of Toronto

<sup>2</sup> The institutional character of the area continued through the 19<sup>th</sup> century when Government House, the official residence of the Lieutenant-Governor of Ontario, was completed in 1870 on the southwest corner of King Street West and Simcoe Street, opposite Upper Canada College

arrived in Toronto in the mid-1800s and constructed tracks and shipping facilities. The evolution of King-Spadina in the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries can be traced on the Goad's Atlases, extracts from which are included in Section 6 of this report.

Despite the upheavals of the Great Depression of the 1930s followed by World War II, King-Spadina remained an active industrial area until the 1950s when the combination of large tracts of land, lower taxes and new highways for truck transport drew manufacturers to Toronto's suburbs. Although the clothing industry continued its dominance in the neighbourhood (which was later dubbed the Fashion District) many of the former warehouses stood vacant as the area's industrial zoning restricted other uses.<sup>3</sup> The revitalization of King Street, west of Simcoe began in the 1960s when Toronto entrepreneur Edwin "Honest Ed" Mirvish restored the Royal Alexandra Theatre and converted many of the adjoining warehouses into eating establishments that served the theatre's patrons. By the close of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, Roy Thomson Hall (1982) and the Princess of Wales Theatre (1993) opened on this section of King Street West, which was named Toronto's Entertainment District.

### Anderson Building

The property at 284 King Street West was acquired by Anderson-Macbeth Company in 1914 when representatives of the University of Toronto sold the parcel on the north side of King Street West between Duncan Street (east, now known as Ed Mirvish Way) and John Street (west). Following the issuance of a building permit in December of that year, the five-storey warehouse was in place by the summer of 1915 when the tax assessment rolls were compiled. The Anderson-Macbeth Company occupied the premises until the World War II era, when the other occupants included Phillips Electrical Works. The site was later acquired by Ed Mirvish Enterprises, which had purchased and refurbished the Royal Alexander Theatre at 260 King Street West. The Anderson Building, along with other warehouses in the block between Simcoe Street and John Street, subsequently housed restaurants catering to theatre patrons.

### William Fraser, Architect

William Fraser (1867-1922) was a Scottish-born architect who articulated with John McLeod in Glasgow in the 1880s before studying at the University of London. Fraser practiced in Glasgow until 1907 when he moved to Toronto to work in the architectural office of George M. Miller. The latter firm received numerous commissions from the influential Massey family, enabling Fraser to design the School of Household Science at Victoria College (now Victoria University at the University of Toronto), which was funded by Lillian Massey Treble. Fraser embarked on a solo career in 1911, where he was assisted by Toronto architect Harold Kaplan, who later co-founded the notable architectural practice of Kaplan and Sprachman. As one of the few buildings that Fraser executed in Toronto, the Anderson Building is also described as his best-known work.<sup>4</sup>

### iii. ARCHITECTURAL DESCRIPTION

---

<sup>3</sup> In 1996, the former City of Toronto adopted the King-Spadina Part II Plan, which relaxed land-use controls in the neighbourhood

<sup>4</sup> Biographical Dictionary of Architects in Canada, [www.dictionaryofarchitectsincanada.org/architects/view/783](http://www.dictionaryofarchitectsincanada.org/architects/view/783)

The Anderson Building is designed with features of Edwardian Classicism applied to an early 20<sup>th</sup> century warehouse. Its appearance is the result of the developments of the previous century, when new technologies, specifically steel frame construction and elevators, allowed buildings to grow increasingly taller. These advancements were coupled with the influence of the Chicago's World Columbian Exposition of 1893, which featured the "White City" of Beaux-Arts inspired and classically-detailed buildings. By the close of the 1800s, office buildings and warehouses hid their structural components and, in the case of manufacturers, production facilities behind facades that were embellished with classical elements. Edwardian Classicism emerged as the prevalent style in Canada, when it was particularly favoured for commercial and public buildings in the period leading up to World War I.<sup>5</sup> In Toronto, this rejection of the architectural excesses of the Victorian era in favour of Edwardian Classical dignity, simplicity and order coincided with the Great Fire of 1904, which provided an opportunity for architects to apply the style in the new manufacturing district. Edwardian Classicism is exhibited in the design of the Anderson Building, where the principal facade follows a tripartite with a base, shaft and cornice inspired by the classical column. Highlighted by corner pavilions, the contemporary elements of the building are found in the ample fenestration (a characteristic of both the style and the era),<sup>6</sup> and the application of distinctive terra cotta for both the cladding and decorative detailing. This material was welcomed in Toronto after the Great Fire of 1904 for both its fire resistance and its ornamental appearance, which provided a lookalike but less expensive alternative to stone.<sup>7</sup>

Rising five stories with a long rectangular plan, the Anderson Building has a flat roofline where the cornice along the south edge displays modillion blocks. Glazed terra cotta is applied for the cladding and trim on the principal (south) facade, which is organized in three bays. In the first storey, three large flat-headed commercial windows are centered between entrances with classically-detailed surrounds, with the east (right) entry incorporating a name band. Above a dentilled cornice, the fenestration in the second through the fifth floors is symmetrically placed and comprises flat-headed openings, apart from the trio of round-arched openings in the centre of the fourth storey. The window openings are decorated with hood moulds and keystones, including the exaggerated keystones and impost blocks on the round-headed openings, the colonnettes separating the attic windows, and the paneled spandrels. The outer bays are extended above the roofline as pavilions that incorporate triangular pediments and other classical embellishments. The east and west walls adjoin the neighbouring buildings.

#### iv. CONTEXT

The property at 284 King Street West is located on the north side of the street in the block between Ed Mirvish Way (east, and formerly the south part of Duncan Street) and John Street (west). It is adjoined on the east by the Gillett Building, comprising two warehouses (dated 1901 and 1942-43) at the northwest corner of King Street West and Ed Mirvish Way, while its neighbour to the west is the Princess of Wales Theatre (1993). On the opposite (south) side of King Street West, the Anderson Building overlooks Metro Hall.

### 3. EVALUATION CHECKLIST

---

<sup>5</sup> Maitland, 121

<sup>6</sup> Blumenson, 166

<sup>7</sup> McHugh, 45

The following evaluation applies Ontario Regulation 9/06 made under the Ontario Heritage Act: Criteria for Determining Cultural Heritage Value or Interest. While the criteria are prescribed for municipal designation under Part IV, Section 29 of the Ontario Heritage Act, the City of Toronto uses it when assessing properties for inclusion on the City of Toronto Inventory of Heritage Properties. The evaluation table is marked “N/A” if the criterion is “not applicable” to the property or X if it is applicable, with explanatory text below.

<b>Design or Physical Value</b>	
i. rare, unique, representative or early example of a style, type, expression, material or construction method	<b>X</b>
ii. displays high degree of craftsmanship or artistic merit	<b>X</b>
iii. demonstrates high degree of scientific or technical achievement	<b>N/A</b>

**Representative and Early Example of a Style and Type with a Rare Material and a High Degree of Craftsmanship** – The architectural significance of the Anderson Building comes from its application of terra cotta in combination with an exuberant Edwardian Classical design. The Anderson Building is a rare surviving example of a commercial warehouse with terra cotta cladding in Toronto where, because of the fragility of the material, relatively few examples remain, as documented in the book Terra Cotta: artful deceivers (1990, 94).

<b>Historical or Associative Value</b>	
i. direct associations with a theme, event, belief, person, activity, organization or institution that is significant to a community	<b>X</b>
ii. yields, or has the potential to yield, information that contributes to an understanding of a community or culture	<b>N/A</b>
iii. demonstrates or reflects the work or ideas of an architect, artist, builder, designer or theorist who is significant to a community	<b>X</b>

**Person** - The property at 284 King Street West is associated with Toronto entrepreneur Edwin “Honest Ed” Mirvish, who revitalized King Street West with his restoration of the Royal Alexandra Theatre in the early 1960s. Over the following decades, Ed Mirvish Enterprises acquired many of the warehouses along the street, including the Anderson Building, converting them to commercial uses that attracted theatre patrons. Following the revitalization of the Royal Alexandra, Roy Thomson Hall (1982) opened on the south side of King Street, and Ed Mirvish Enterprises commissioned the Princess of Wales Theatre (1993) at 300 King Street West. Duncan Street between King Street West and Pearl Street was renamed Ed Mirvish Way in recognition of the entrepreneur’s contributions to the cultural life of the neighbourhood.

**Architect** - The design of the Anderson Building was executed by Scottish-born architect William Fraser, who gained attention in Glasgow when he won a competition in 1896 for a memorial commemorating the centenary of poet Robert Burns’ death. In Canada, Fraser was invited to join the firm of George M. Miller and Company, where he worked on projects for the influential Massey family. Fraser assisted Miller with the commission for the highly visible Confederation Life Building on Richmond Street East before he was selected by the Canadian government as one of the practitioners overseeing the reconstruction of Halifax after the

infamous explosion of 1917. In solo practice in Toronto, “his best known work is the Anderson Building, King Street (1915), with a finely proportioned terra cotta facade.”<sup>8</sup>

Contextual Value	
i. important in defining, maintaining or supporting the character of an area	<b>X</b>
ii. physically, functionally, visually or historically linked to its surroundings	<b>X</b>
iii. landmark	<b>N/A</b>

**Context** – Contextually, the Anderson Building contributes to the historical character of the King-Spadina neighbourhood, which developed as the city’s industrial sector following the destruction of the existing manufacturing district in the Great Fire of 1904. Commissioned by the Anderson-Macbeth Company, hat producers, the Anderson Building is part of the collection of surviving early 20<sup>th</sup> century warehouses that were built on Russell Square, which evolved from an institutional precinct housing the original Upper Canada College to an industrial enclave. Following the departure of manufacturing interests from King-Spadina in the decades after World War II, the Anderson Building was one of the warehouses converted to commercial uses as King Street, west of Simcoe, emerged as the centre of the city’s Entertainment District.

**Surroundings** – The Anderson Building is historically, physically, visually and functionally linked to its surroundings on King Street West, where it is an integral member of the surviving group of warehouses between Simcoe Street and John Street that share a complementary scale and appearance, with primarily Edwardian Classical styling. Together with the neighbouring warehouses, the Anderson Building provides a bookend for the Royal Alexandra Theatre at #260 King Street, which is recognized as a National Historic Site.

---

<sup>8</sup> ibid

#### 4. SUMMARY

Following research and evaluation according to Regulation 9/06, it has been determined that the property at 284 King Street West has cultural heritage value. From an architectural perspective, the significance of the Anderson Building relates to its combination of a richly embellished classical design with the rare application of terra cotta cladding. The property is historically associated with architect William Fraser, who designed the building, and businessman Ed Mirvish, who refurbished it along with other warehouses along King Street West, as well as the landmark Royal Alexandra Theatre. Contextually, the Anderson Building contributes to the historical character of the King-Spadina neighbourhood as it evolved from an institutional enclave and an industrial precinct to the city's Entertainment District, and is linked to its surroundings where it is an integral part of the collection of early 20<sup>th</sup> century warehouses on King Street, west of Simcoe Street.

#### 5. SOURCES

##### Archival Sources

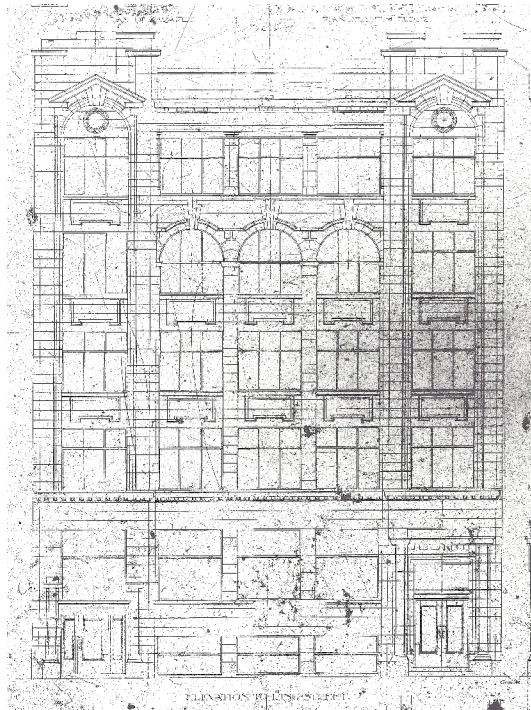
Abstract Indices of Deeds, Plan 216E, Part Block A  
Assessment Rolls, City of Toronto, 1900 ff.  
Building Permit #15202, December 3, 1914, City of Toronto Archives  
Building Records, Toronto and East York, 280-284 King Street West, 1914-47  
City of Toronto Directories, 1900 ff.  
Goad's Atlases, 1884-1923  
Photograph, Library and Archives Canada, Item 25593

##### Secondary Sources

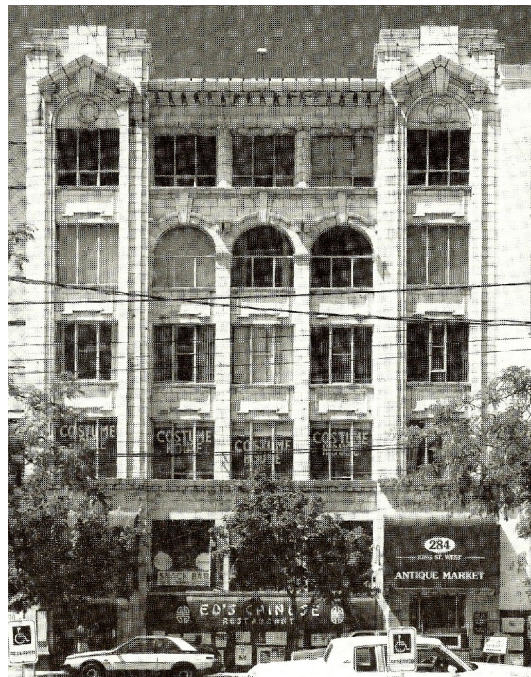
Arthur, Eric, Toronto: No mean city, 3<sup>rd</sup> ed., revised by Stephen A. Otto, 1986  
Blumenson, John, Ontario Architecture, 1990  
Dendy, William, Lost Toronto, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed., 1993  
-----, and William Kilbourn, Toronto Observed, 1986  
Kalman, Harold, A History of Canadian Architecture, Vol. 2, 1993  
Kluckner, Michael, Toronto: the way it was, 1988  
Maitland, Leslie, Jacqueline Hucker, and Shannon Ricketts, A Guide to Canadian Architectural Styles, 1992  
McHugh, Patricia, Toronto Architecture: a city guide, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed., 1989  
Terra Cotta: artful deceivers, Architectural Conservancy of Ontario, 1990  
"William Fraser," entry in Biographical Dictionary of Architects in Canada,  
[www.dictionarofarchitectsincanada.org](http://www.dictionarofarchitectsincanada.org)  
"William Fraser," entry in Dictionary of Scottish Architects,  
[www.scottisharchitects.org.uk](http://www.scottisharchitects.org.uk)



## 6. IMAGES



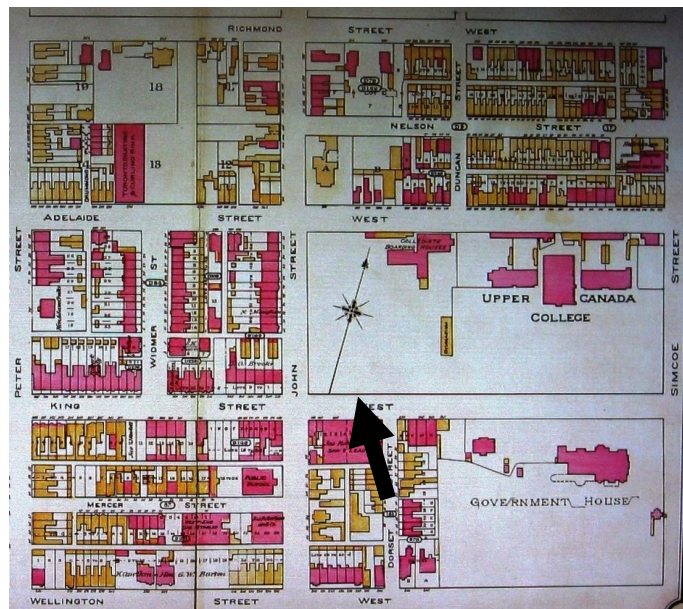
Drawing of the Anderson Building from the 1914 Building Specifications (Source: Building Records, City of Toronto)



Anderson Building (Source: Terra Cotta: artful deceivers, 1990, 94)

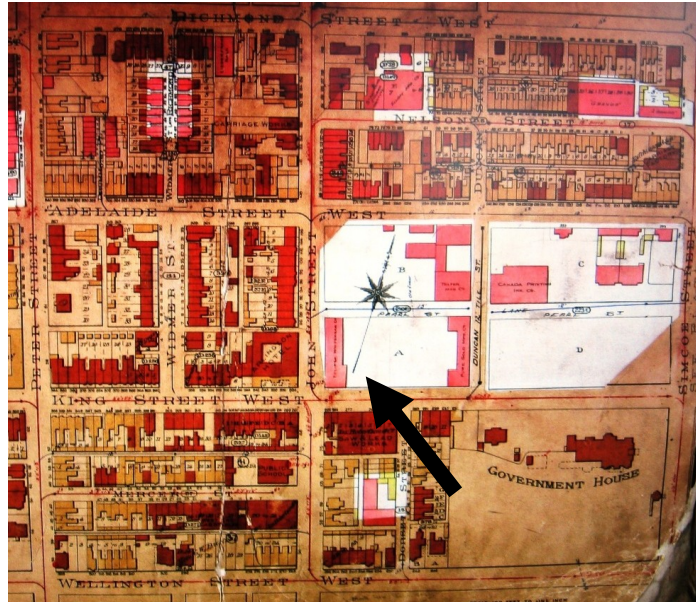


Historical photograph of Upper Canada College, showing the main campus (with the buildings facing south toward King Street West), where the Anderson Building was constructed (Source: Toronto Reference Library, Item B12-34b)

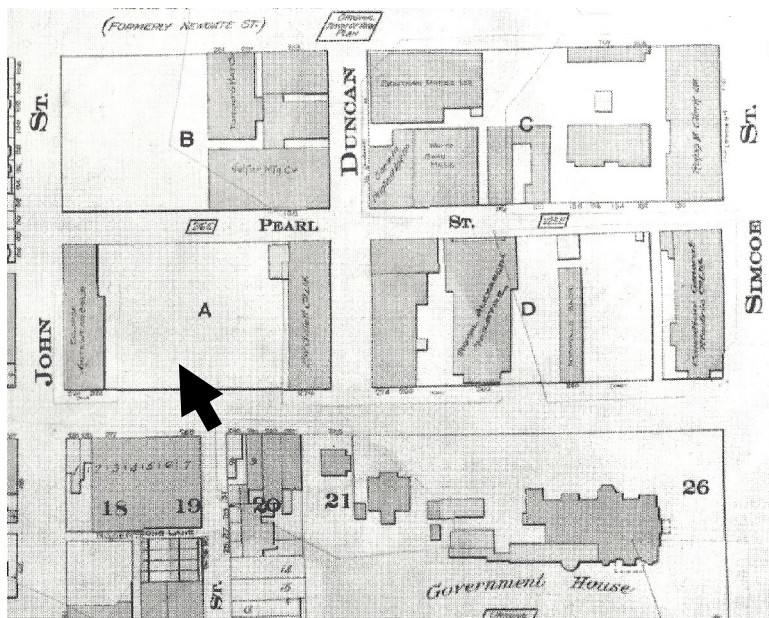


Excerpt, Goad's Atlas, 1884, showing King Street West before the relocation of Upper Canada College. The future site of #284 King is marked by the arrow (Source: City of Toronto Archives)





Excerpt, Goad's Atlas, 1903, showing the removal of most of the buildings associated with Upper Canada College, and the introduction of the first warehouses along King Street West. The future site of #284 King is indicated by the arrow (Source: City of Toronto Archives)



Extract, Goad's Atlas, 1910 revised to 1910, showing the site of the future Anderson Building (Source: City of Toronto Inventory of Heritage Properties)



Excerpt, Goad's Atlas, 1910 revised to 1923, showing the King Street West warehouses with the Anderson Building in place at #284 King (Source: City of Toronto Archives)

**PERMIT** No. 15202

Architect and Building

Toronto, Dec 3 1914

to Mr. Anderson & Man. Beck Ltd

to erect a long Mill Co

North side of King St

in accordance with terms of application on file in the

Estimated cost 50,000 Fee 25.75

condition  
its conform  
of Toronto,

Building Permit #15202 (December 3, 1914) for the Anderson Building at #284 King (Source: City of Toronto Archives)