

July 16, 2014

Toronto Preservation Board
100 Queen Street West
Toronto, ON M5H 2N2

PB3315.1

Dear Chair and Members,

Re: Item PB33.15 – Heritage Evaluation – 484 Spadina Avenue – Waverley Hotel

I support the inclusion of The Waverly Hotel in Toronto's Inventory of Heritage Properties. This is a unique property whose social and cultural attributes are significant in the our city's history. Heritages values must speak to the physical structures as well as to the social activities that take place within these structures.

Having reviewed the criteria prescribed for designation under the Ontario Heritage Act, I note that Section 1(2.1) of Regulation 9/06 provides for "historical or associative value" and "contextual value".

Contextual value refers to historical linkages to its surroundings and in this instance pertains to the adjacent Silver Dollar which has already been recommended for designation. Of importance are the criteria outlined under "historical or associative value" which states the following:

- i. *direct associations with a theme, event, belief, person, activity, organization or institution that is significant to a community;*
- ii. *yields, or has the potential to yield, information that contributes to an understanding of a community or culture;*
- iii. *demonstrates or reflects the work or ideas of an architect, artist, builder, designer or theorist who is significant to a community*

Other properties which have been afforded designation have included as part of the rationale for designation information about the occupants and owners. Two examples in Ward 20 come to mind.

1. 67 St. George Street was adopted as a heritage property in 1976. Sir John A. MacDonald, Canada's first prime minister purchased this home in 1876 and lived there from 1876-78. Subsequently, the property was bought and occupied by the Oliver Mowat, Ontario Prime Minister who retained ownership until 1902. Hon. Arthur Strugis who succeeded Mowat as Ontario's prime minister also lived there. The house was sold to Knox College in 1910.
2. Heritage designation was recently approved (2010) for 97 St. George Street. John Downey was the law partner of Oliver Mowat. In 1894 the house was sold to the Albert Nordheimer, president of the largest sheet music publisher in Canada and who also served as consul-general for the Netherlands.

One of the purposes of these examples is to illustrate that in addition to the significance of the buildings themselves, the fact of ownership by persons who were important in Canadian history are also essential.

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The Waverly Hotel

The Waverley Hotel offers an example of a building that has been significant in our city's history. The hotel opened in 1900 and has operated continuously as one of Toronto's oldest hotels. It has provided affordable housing – short and long term – to many people in the cultural industries among other groups of persons.

It has been the site of movie shoots, including being used as the opening scene of a film based on Elmore Leonard's novel, Killzone. It was used in music videos by artists such as K-OS and Julian Penti (aka Paul Banks).

As noted already, the Waverly is adjacent to the Silver Dollar and its designation reinforces the heritage value of that site too.

People who lived at the Waverly

Various documents have provided information on previous Waverly residents, even if notorious, such as James Earl Ray who is purported to have hidden there after the assassination of Martin Luther King Jr.

Perhaps one of the most significant persons who lived at the Waverly during the 1970's was Milton Acorn. Also known as the "People's Poet", Milton Acorn won the Governor General's Award for literature in 1975 for *The Island Means Minago* (NC Press). Acorn passed away in 1986 and has published nearly twenty highly acclaimed volumes of poetry. As part of the Toronto Legacy Project, a plaque recognizing that Milton Acorn lived at the Waverly Hotel is on its wall. Please see the attached photo of the plaque.

Community support

I have undertaken a short canvass of persons within the literary community and they believe that because the Waverly was Milton Acorn's home, it should be designated.

I also understand that the adjacent residents' association supports designation.

Conclusion

I have concluded that the staff report is incomplete. It has not provided an assessment of how this does not fit the criteria.

Sincerely,

Ceta Ramkhalawansingh

Attachment: Photo of Milton Acorn Plaque

