

The property at 48 Laurel Avenue is worthy of designation under Part IV, Section 29 of the Ontario Heritage Act for its cultural heritage value, and meets Ontario Regulation 9/06, the provincial criteria prescribed for municipal designation under all three categories of design, associative and contextual value.

Description

The property at 48 Laurel Avenue is located on the west side of the street between St. Clair Avenue East (south) and Danforth Road (north) in the Toronto neighbourhood of Scarborough Junction. Originally part of Lot 27 in Concession C of Scarborough Township, in 1891 the Detroit realtor and railway developer, C. W. Harrah laid out a residential subdivision with side streets named for trees, including Laurel Avenue. The house form building at 48 Laurel Avenue was in place in 1901 when Irving Graves, a foreman on the railway section in Scarborough Junction was the first tenant on the property owned by Toronto resident, Abraham Gowler. In 1919, 48 Laurel was acquired by Albert R. Vivian (1894-1961), a member of a well-known Scarborough family of cattle dealers and butchers who owned the site for over 40 years.

A recognized heritage property in Scarborough where it is known historically as the Vivian House for its long association with a well-known Scarborough Junction family, 48 Laurel was listed on the city-wide Inventory of Heritage Properties (now known as the Heritage Register) following the amalgamation of the current City of Toronto in 1998.

Statement of Significance

The Vivian House at 48 Laurel Avenue has cultural heritage value for its design as an Ontario House, a distinctive style that originated in the early 1800s in response to provincial legislation that taxed dwellings according to the number of stories and is identified by its central gable peak that was originally designed to light and ventilate while concealing the upper floor. The Vivian House is an early 20th century version of the Ontario House that represents the evolution of the style where the upper storey is no longer concealed, but the prototypical centre gable remains as the prominent feature of the design.

The property at 48 Laurel Avenue has associative value for its role in the evolution of the Scarborough Junction community. After the Grand Trunk Railway (1852) and the Toronto and Nipissing Railway (1871) laid their lines across Scarborough Township and created a junction near St. Clair Avenue East and Midland Avenue, a hamlet developed west of the latter intersection. Scarborough Junction was described as the most populous village in the township at the end of the 19th century when the residential subdivision including Laurel Avenue was opened on the former farmland. The Vivian House was among the first residential buildings completed on Laurel Avenue, and remains one of the oldest surviving house form buildings from the period when Scarborough Junction was flourishing as a railway community.

Contextually, the Vivian House is valued for its historical and visual links to its setting on Laurel Avenue where it is one of the oldest surviving houses in this early residential subdivision in Scarborough Junction. The Vivian House and the neighbouring Graves House at 23 Laurel and the Walton House at 41 Laurel are early 20th century residential buildings that reflect the initial development of the street after 1900 and are recognized on the City of Toronto's Heritage Register.

Heritage Attributes

The heritage attributes of the building known historically as the Vivian House on the property at 48 Laurel Avenue are:

- The setback, placement and orientation of the house form building
- The scale, form and massing of the two-storey building
- The materials, with the exterior brickwork and detailing (which is currently concealed by synthetic siding but documented in archival images)
- The rectangular-shaped plan under the gable roof with the chimneys at the north and south ends and the centre gable on the east elevation that retains the king post
- The symmetrical organization of the principal (east) elevation, with the main entrance centred in the first (ground) floor and the flat-headed window openings in the first and second stories (the window opening near the apex of the gable has been covered)
- The main entrance, with the flat-headed transom
- The single-storey full-length open verandah where the roof with the extended eaves is supported on brick piers, and the classical detailing includes the centre pediment and the tapered posts on the piers flanking the main entrance
- The side walls (north and south), which are visible from the street, with the single-storey bay window on the south wall