

The properties at 596 and 598 Markham Street are worthy of inclusion on the City of Toronto's Heritage Register for their cultural heritage value.

Description

Located on the west side of the street, north of Lennox Street, the properties at 596-598 Markham Street contain a pair of 2½-storey semi-detached house form buildings. Archival records indicate that buildings were under construction in September 1891 for Thomas Death, with 598 Markham occupied by manufacturer A. J. Robertson the following year. In 1963, these were the first properties on the west side of Markham Street acquired by local entrepreneur Edwin "Honest Ed" Mirvish whose son, David Mirvish opened a private art gallery on-site.

Statement of Cultural Heritage Value

The properties at 596-598 Markham Street have cultural heritage value for the design of the late 19th century house form buildings as representative examples of their type displaying features from the popular styles of the late Victorian era, including the Gothic Revival and Italianate. The houses are distinguished by the unique architectural detailing, and retain their integrity with original surviving features.

The Thomas Death Houses are historically linked to Mirvish Village, the famed artists' enclave created by Ed Mirvish and his family on Markham Street between Bloor Street West and Lennox Street. Originally acquired for additional parking for the nearby "Honest Ed's" retail complex, the houses were saved and converted as an artists' enclave with studios as well as restaurants and unique shops. Mirvish Village became a cultural and tourist destination in Toronto, including the properties at 596-598 Markham Street where David Mirvish operated the largest private art gallery in Canada in this location.

Contextually, Thomas Death Houses at 596-598 Markham Street assist in defining, maintaining and supporting the character of Mirvish Village, which consists of the collection of preserved detached, semi-detached and multi-unit house form buildings dating to the late 19th and early 20th centuries that contribute to this special area within the Palmerston neighbourhood.

The properties at 596-598 Markham Street are also visually, historically, physically and functionally connected to their setting on the west side of Markham Street in Mirvish Village where they complement the neighbouring house form buildings in scale, setback and vintage detailing.

Heritage Attributes

The heritage attributes of the buildings known historically as the Thomas Death Houses on the properties at 596-598 Markham Street are:

- The setback, placement and orientation of the buildings on the west side of Markham Street, north of Lennox Street
- The scale, form and massing of the 2½-storey rectangular plans
- The materials, with the brick cladding (now painted) and the brick, stone and wood detailing
- The hipped roof
- The principal (east) elevations, which feature an asymmetrical design with the three-storey, multi-sided, bay window on the northeast corner, and the two-storey bay window on the left (south) side of the wall that is surmounted by the gabled wall dormer with wood detailing, incorporates the flat-headed door opening in the attic level, and provides access to the balcony
- The detailing of the bay windows, with the flat-headed window openings with the stone and wood trim that are separated by brick panels with floral designs
- The west addition, which was designed to showcase the Frank Stella mural entitled "Damascus Gate, Stretch Variation" (1970)