

The properties at 774 Yonge Street (including the addresses at 774½ and 776 Yonge Street) are worthy of designation under Part IV, Section 29 of the Ontario Heritage Act for their cultural heritage value, and meet Ontario Regulation 9/06, the provincial criteria prescribed for municipal designation under the three categories of design, associative and contextual value.

Description

Located on the west side of Yonge Street in the first block south of Bloor Street West, the William Luke Buildings (1883) are a pair of three-storey commercial buildings. The properties at 774 Yonge Street (including the addresses at 774½ and 776 Yonge Street) were included on the City of Toronto's Heritage Register (formerly known as the Inventory of Heritage Properties) in 1974.

Statement of Cultural Heritage Value

The William Luke Buildings have cultural heritage value for their design as excellent and highly crafted representative examples of late 19th century commercial buildings with features of the Italianate style, which was popularized in the late Victorian era and identified by its ornate detailing with exaggerated classical features. The William Luke Buildings are set apart from others in this block and along Yonge Street by the exuberant detailing in the upper stories, particularly the elaborate window trim and the corbelled brickwork beneath the metal cornice with its classical motifs.

The associative value of the properties at 774 Yonge Street is derived from their role in the historical development of Yonge Street as the street evolved in the late 19th century. The William Luke Buildings were part of the second generation of commercial structures that featured narrow frontages, tall facades, and distinctive architectural detailing, especially in the upper stories to draw attention to their height and prominence in the street. Dating to the era when Toronto's first department stores opened further south near the intersection of Queen Street and changed the role of Yonge Street in Toronto, the William Luke Buildings contributed to the revitalization of Yonge as it emerged as the city's predominant "main street" in the late 1800s.

Contextually, the William Luke Buildings are valued for their contribution to the character of Yonge Street, south of Bloor Street West, which is typified by the surviving buildings, both individual and in groups that date to the late 19th century when Yonge Street became Toronto's main commercial corridor. The William Luke Buildings are an integral part of the blocks along Yonge that include the Oddfellows' Hall (1892) at 450 Yonge, the Bank of Montreal Building (1887) at 496 Yonge, the Scottish Ontario and Manitoba Land Company Stores at 664-680 Yonge, and the intact group of commercial buildings adjoining the Yonge and Wellesley intersection, all of which are included on the City's Heritage Register.

The contextual value of the William Luke Buildings also relates to their historical, visual and physical links to their surroundings on Yonge Street where, with their height, colourful brickwork and richly embellished detailing of the upper stories, they stand out in the streetscape.

Heritage Attributes

The heritage attributes of the William Luke Buildings on the properties at 774 Yonge Street (including the addresses at 774½ and 776 Yonge Street) are:

- The placement, setback and orientation of the buildings on the west side of Yonge Street, south of Bloor Street West where the principal (east) elevations face Yonge Street
- The scale, form and massing of the pair of three-storey buildings, including the first-floor storefronts, with the long rectangular plan under the flat roof with a chimney (south)
- The materials, with the red brick cladding, the brick and stone detailing on the piers and for the window trim, and the metal cornice
- On the principal (east) elevations above the first storey of each building, the brick piers with corbelled brickwork and classical detailing
- On the east elevation of each building, the pairs of flat-headed window openings in the second storey, which have stone lintels and keystones and are separated by decorative stonework
- Separating the second- and third-storey openings on both buildings, the spandrel panels with corbelled brickwork and, on the building at 776 Yonge, the lozenge motifs
- In the third storey of each building, the pairs of round-arched window openings with the stone sills and, on the window heads, the brick mouldings and ogee arches that are connected by string courses with brackets
- The elaborate metal cornice with brackets and agraffes that extends across both buildings above the cornice line with the corbelled brickwork and brackets