

Statement of Significance

11 Centre Street West – Richmond Hill Temperance Hall

The Richmond Hill Temperance Hall at 11 Centre Street West is recommended for designation under Part IV, Section 29 of the Ontario Heritage Act as a property of cultural heritage value or interest, as described in the following Statement of Significance.

Description of Property:

The Richmond Hill Temperance Hall is a 1 ½ -storey front-gabled frame building located on the north side of Centre Street West, west of Yonge Street. The property is located within the historic centre of Richmond Hill village.

Design and Physical Value:

Dating to 1876, the building at 11 Centre Street West has design value as a rare surviving example of the Victorian Temperance Hall building typology, which was widely applied to Temperance Halls throughout Ontario in the mid- and late-19th century. While converted to residential use in 1909, the building remains legible as a Temperance Hall, and has retained its original scale, form, massing, and orientation towards Centre Street, as well as its simple rectangular plan, front-gabled roof, and the symmetrical organization of bays on its front (south) elevation. The simplicity and sparsity of the building's design and material palette is also representative of the Temperance Hall typology, and reflects the values of restraint, discipline and frugality that were central to both the Temperance Movement, and the Protestant denominations from which it originated.

Historical and Associative Value:

The Richmond Hill Temperance Hall has historical value for its direct associations with the Temperance Movement and several fraternal Temperance orders active in Richmond Hill in the 19th and early 20th centuries. The hall was constructed by members of the International Order of Good Templars in 1876, and was used as a community gathering space for different Temperance groups for over 30 years.

Advocating for the avoidance of alcohol as a way of achieving societal good, the Temperance Movement was a significant international movement in the 19th and early-20th centuries. The Temperance Movement is also significant in its early support of equal rights for all human beings, regardless of gender, ethnicity, religion, or socio-economic background, as evidenced in the movement's admittance of female members as early as the mid-1800s. The Temperance Movement is also directly linked to Richmond Hill's history as a "dry" town from 1906 to 1962.

The property also yields information about the genesis, growth, and decline of the Temperance Movement in Richmond Hill and nationally during the 19th and 20th centuries, which contributes to a broader understanding of the community, its history, and societal trends and forces during this period.

Contextual Value:

Located on the north side of Centre Street, west of Yonge Street, the Richmond Hill Temperance Hall has contextual value for defining, maintaining, and supporting the 19th and early 20th century village character of the surrounding area. This village character is typified by low-rise commercial and institutional buildings on Yonge Street, such as the nearby Methodist Church (1881), and Old Post Office (1936), along with fine-grained residential built form from the 19th and early 20th centuries along Centre Street West.

The property also has contextual value for its functional, visual, and historical links to the Methodist Church (1881) at the northwest corner of Yonge and Centre streets. Built within 5 years of each other and approximately 50 metres apart, the two buildings would originally have functioned as an important nucleus for Richmond Hill's closely linked Temperance and Methodist communities in the late 1800s.

Heritage Attributes:

Design and Physical Value

The heritage attributes that contribute to the value of the property as a rare surviving example of the Victorian Temperance Hall building typology are:

- The 1 ½ -storey massing and rectangular plan;
- The front-gabled roof;
- The frame construction;
- The symmetrical 3-bay organization of ground-floor openings on the building's front (south) elevation; and
- Flat-headed window openings on the building's south, east, and west elevations.

Historical and Associative Value

The heritage attributes that contribute to the historical value of the property as a public meeting place for the Temperance Movement, and for its associations with the Temperance Movement and several fraternal temperance orders is:

- The 1 ½ -storey massing and rectangular plan;
- The front-gabled roof;
- The symmetrical 3-bay organization of ground-floor openings on the building's front (south) elevation; and
- The simplicity and sparsity of the building's design, representative of the values of restraint, discipline and frugality central to both the Temperance Movement, and the Protestant denominations from which it originated.

Contextual Value

The heritage attributes that contribute to the contextual value of the property for defining and maintaining the 19th and early 20th century village character of the surrounding

area, and for its visual, historical, and functional links to the Methodist Church to the east are:

- The building's scale, siting and orientation on the north side of Centre Street West, west of Yonge Street; and
- The house's modest material palette and architectural features, which contribute to the historical character of Richmond Street and Richmond Hill's Village Core more broadly.

Note: the building's 1970s rear (north) addition is not considered to possess any significant heritage attributes.