ONTARIO HERITAGE TRUST

An agency of the Government of Ontario

FIDUCIE DU PATRIMOINE ONTARIEN

Un organisme du gouvernement de l'Ontario

Peter J. Leack, A.M.C.T.
City Clerk

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Corporation of the City of St. Thomas

NOTICE OF HERITAGE DESIGNATION BY-LAW

TAKE NOTICE THAT the Council of the Corporation of the City of St. Thomas has enacted the following heritage designation by-law pursuant to the Ontario Heritage Act, R.S.O. 1990, as amended, on the 21st day of July, 1998:

1. 36-44 St. Catharine Street By-Law No. 136-98

A copy of this heritage designation by-law may be seen in or obtained from the office of the City Clerk, City Hall, 545 Talbot Street, St. Thomas, Ontario during normal office hours (8:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.) Monday to Friday.

DATED at St. Thomas, Ontario this 1st day of August, 1998.

P.J. Leack,
City Clerk

CITY OF ST. THOMAS

BY-LAW NO. 136-98

A by-law to designate 36-44 St.Catharine Street,
in the City of St. Thomas, as a building
of historic and architectural value.

WHEREAS pursuant to the Ontario Heritage Act, R.S.O. 1990, c. 0.18, the Council of a municipality may by by-law designate a property including buildings and structures thereon to be of historic or architectural value or interest;

AND WHEREAS notice of intention to designate the property at 36-44 St.Catharine Street, St. Thomas, Ontario, has been duly published and served, and no notice of objection has been received to such designation;

NOW THEREFORE THE COUNCIL OF THE CORPORATION OF THE CITY OF ST. THOMAS, ENACTS AS FOLLOWS:

1. There is hereby designated as being of historic and architectural value or interest the property known as 36-44 St.Catharine Street in the City of St. Thomas, all of which is described in Schedule "A" attached hereto, for the reasons set out in Schedule "B" attached hereto.

2. The City Clerk is hereby authorized to cause a copy of this by-law to be registered upon the title to the property described in the aforementioned Schedule "A" in the proper Land Registry Office.

3. The City Clerk is hereby authorized to cause a copy of this by-law to be served upon the owner of the aforesaid property and upon the Ontario Heritage Foundation and to cause notice of this by-law to be published in the St. Thomas Times-Journal.

4. This by-law comes into force on the day it is finally passed.

READ a First and Second time this 21st day of July, 1998.

READ a Third time and finally passed this 21st day of July, 1998.

Peter J. Leack, City Clerk

Stephen J. Peters, Mayor

SCHEDULE "A"

FIRSTLY:

Part of Lot 1, west of St. Catharine Street and north of Curtis Street, Plan 101, City of St. Thomas, County of Elgin, more particularly described as follows:

Commencing at the southeast angle of Lot 1;

Thence north along the east limit of Lot 1, 43 feet;

Thence west parallel to the south limit of Lot 1, 120 feet to a point;

Thence south parallel to the east limit of Lot 1, 43 feet more or less to the south limit thereof;

Thence east along the south limit of Lot 1, 120 feet to the place of commencement.

SECONDLY:

The north 42 feet of the east 120 feet of said Lot 1 on the west side of St. Catharine Street; and

The easterly 90 feet 1 inch of the westerly 105 feet 1 inch of said Lot 1.

THIRDLY:

Lot. 2, Lot 3, Lot 4, and all of Lot 5, Plan 101, City of St. Thomas, County of Elgin, except the westerly 15 feet thereof and except the lands established as a public highway and included in By-Law No. 176-68, registered as instrument number 130657.

Being the lands lastly described in instrument number 367359.

SCHEDULE "B"

Architectural Details of the Public Utilities Commission Building
St.Catharine Street, St.Thomas

The Public Utilities Commission building is an example of Modern Classicism architecture where building forms are simplified to a reduced and economic form. It is a reflection of early 1920's architecture and a prominent style for public buildings at the time.

The PUC building has symmetrical facades, flat roof, prominent entablatures, and stone trim as characteristic of Modern Classicism. The building design is simple and rectangular in its floor plan. Its facades are similar but dissimilar, detailed and prominent on the street faces and reduced on the remaining facades. A concrete base 3'-0" in height founds the building and sets its first floor.

The main entrance to the building is centred in the symmetrical east facade which faces St.Catharine Street The entrance contains a pair of wood doors with a wood transom terminating at a stone pediment. The stone pediment has a top which is curved on three sides and meets the brick face of the building. Two stone supports, one on each of the pillasters, holds the pediment in place. The wood doors contain 3/4 glazed panels. The entrance is flanked by stone pilasters which project from the brick face of the building. A light exists at mid height in each of the pillasters. The original name of the building appears in the head of the entrance below the stone pediment. Engraved in the stone head on three lines are the words:

"HYDRO - ELECTRIC
COMMISSION
OF ST THOMAS"

Seven stone stair risers exist from the sidewalk to the main entrance. The first 5 risers from the building are flanked by rectangular stone base rising from grade and terminating at the top of the concrete base. The bottom two risers splay to meet the grade and meet the outer faces of the flanking stone base. A keystone exists at the midpoint above the pediment.

The keystone above the main entrance is made up of two squares, an inner square approximately 8" x 8" and an outer square. The outer square is rotated 45 degrees. The inner square is inscribed in the outer square, its corners meet the midpoints of the sides of the outer square. Three similar keystones also exist on the north facade centred between the windows, level with the head keystone of the windows. The inner square projects approximately 1/2" from the outer square.

Two windows exist on the first floor of the east facade, one on each side of the main entrance centred between the main entrance and the north and south corners respectively. The glazing is made of a rectangular lower section and a semi-circular top. The rectangular section of the window consists of 5 vertical mullions and 4 horizontal mullions creating 30 panels of glass. A vented section is located 1 glazed panel from the top of the rectangular section and is 4 sections wide and 2 sections high.

The semi-circular top section consists of semi-circular muttons. The inner semi circle is one section of glass and spans 2 vertical mullions of the rectangular section. The mid and the outer semi-circle of glazing is divided by muttons at the top or midpoint and also at 45 and 135 degrees creating sections of glazing.

The rectangular section of each semi-circular window is flanked at its top corners by rectangular keystones creating the start and end points of a triple header stack brick course spanning the semi-circular sections. The brick facade has been constructed as a raised panel revealing the window from the main building approximately 3". The reveal consists of a brick header course which surrounds the semi-circle and continues its reveal through the concrete base foundation to grade. A tapered keystone exists at top point of each semi-circular window and a stone sill spans the window base, extending to the brick reveal face.

All second floor windows consist of a continuous stone belted course spanning the raised brick panels at the window sill on the east facade and the north facade. The windows are set in pairs separated by stack brick course. Each window of the pair is divided with two vertical mullions and three horizontal mullions creating twelve panels of glass. The centre six panels of glass make up a vented section. A soldier course head exists at the window head and is continuous for all facades of the building. Square stone keystones, 8" x 8" exist at the top left and the top right corners of the paired windows interrupting the brick soldier head. This is common for all second floor windows.

All second floor paired windows are centred over the first floor windows or building entrances. The stone belted course is replaced by stone sills for the paired windows and project beyond the brick approximately 3" on the south and west facades.

An entablature exists on the prominent north and east facades. The entablature is made up of three sections, the cornice, the frieze and the architrave. The cornice and the frieze terminate at the edge of the raised panels while the architrave is continuous to the corners of the their facades. The frieze of the north entablature is randomly interrupted by three sets of triple insulators which once carried electrical wire into the building.

Brick coursing continues above the entablature and is approximately 30" in height. The raised panel continues as well and terminates at the parapet. The parapet is constructed of interlocking ceramic tile sections approximately 24" in length. The parapet is continuous on all four facades of the building, only being interrupted by the chimney located 30" from the south east corner of the building on the south face. The chimney cap is constructed of stone.

The north facade has four rectangular windows with semi-circular tops on the first floor spaced equally. The second window from the north east corner of the building is a second entrance to the building set into the design of the rectangular and semi-circular window. The rectangular window has been reduced to 1 horizontal mutton above the pediment to accept the entrance.

The entrance door is flanked by two small rectangular windows. A detailed stone pediment with a flat top is located over the door and is supported by two stone brackets flanked at the edges of the small windows. The door is a single door and the flanking windows begin midway the door and terminate at the head of the door. The flanking windows are approximately 14" wide and have stone sills. Paired windows also exist on this facade's second floor and are centred over the first floor windows and entrance door. The door sill is set approximately 18" below the interior floor line, and as similar to the main entrance door, is flanked by stone bases. Three stone risers exist from the sidewalk to the door.

The south facade is reduced in detail compared to its opposite face, the north facade. The south facade does not include the raised panel feature, although the first floor windows have the 3" brick reveal continuous of its perimeter. This facade also lacks the belted course and the square keystones between the first floor windows. A small rectangular window exists between the first and second first floor windows, nearest the east facade. The head is arched and trimmed with a header course and stone sill. Four glazing panels 2/2 exist in the window.

The west facade is also reduced in detail from the east facade. While this facade is symmetrical about the east west axis, it is dissimilar from the east facade. This facade was the service entrance for the building. A concrete ramp accessing the basement of the building is located directly below the north window on this facade. A rectangular window with semi circular top similar to all windows on the first floor exists above the access ramp. A service entrance loading dock is located on the south side of the west facade. The entrance consists of two man doors with a transom approximately 6' high. The opening has a brick soldier header course and a 8" x 8" keystone at its top corners. Located above both the window and the entrance are the paired windows and corner keystone, similar to all windows located on the second floor.

Historical Details

In 1906, the Hydro Electric Power Commission of Ontario was established which would provide for the transmission and supply of electrical power to municipalities from Niagara Falls. A year later, the Corporation of the St. Thomas authorized a contract with the Commission for the supply of electric power. The City assumed its proportionate share of costs for the building and operation of a transmission line.

An extravagant switch-throwing ceremony, which included the presence of Sir Adam Beck, was held on March 24th, 1911, to proclaim the delivering of hydro-electric energy over the transmission line into St. Thomas. By this time, hundreds of homes were already wired for electricity.

Because of increased demand for electricity in the City, the need for a power station was immediate.

In 1916, the St.Catharine Street hydro sub-station #1 was erected by Ponsford, a local builder. The design and specifications were overseen by the Hydro Electric Power Commission. From this station, power distribution was controlled by operators who could cut power to different areas, controlling and distributing power at correct levels.

Installation of the electric transformers and regulating machinery occurred in 1917. The building took on its role of a power distribution centre immediately upon final completion. In 1918, a truck ramp was added to the rear of the building to provide access to the stores area in the basement of the building.

In 1921, the City's hydro department staff moved to the building. By 1930, the staff had been relocated to Talbot Street. In 1952, a new Public Utilities Commission office and administration building was officially opened at 36 St. Catharine Street, an adjoining property.

Outdated by 1990's power distribution standards, the sub-station was declared as surplus and sold to a private owner.