

HERITAGE DESIGNATION REPORT ON THE MEMORIAL TOWER SAULT MEMORIAL GARDENS

Location:

The Sault Memorial Gardens is located on the south side of Queen Street East, civic number 269, within the block bounded by Queen Street East on the north side, Bay Street on the south, Bruce Street on the east and Dennis Street on the west.

G.I.S. Coordinates:	X: 704,285.394
	Y: 5,154,637.452

Reason for Designation:

The Sault Memorial Gardens, which was constructed between 1946 and 1949, is a late Canadian example of the Moderne Style. The building incorporates a Memorial Tower, which contains records of the men and women who served in the Armed Forces in the two World Wars and in Korea. The imaginatively designed Memorial Tower is the visual focus of the arena and is a significant component of the streetscape along Queen Street.

Historical Value:

The Moderne Style of architecture originated in Europe and the United States in the 1920s and spread to Canada in the depression years of the 1930s. Utilised primarily in commercial buildings, the style incorporated a functional, streamlined design, reflective of the machine age, and utilised contemporary building materials such as concrete, glass and stainless steel. Its simplicity represented a reaction to the more abstract, expensive and richly decorated designs of the earlier Art Deco style. Though the Moderne Style was waning in popularity in the post-war period, the Sault Memorial Gardens is an important late example of the style; as such it was registered with DoCoMoMo (Documentation and Conservation of the Modern Movement) international inventory by the Ontario working party in 1994.

For over half a century, the Memorial Gardens has functioned as the community's main entertainment venue for large events, such as the Memorial Cup, the Labatt's Briar and numerous concerts, and has served as a public skating facility and as the home of the Sault Ste. Marie Greyhounds, the city's entry in the Ontario Hockey League. Because the building commemorates those who fell in the World Wars, it is the site of the annual Remembrance Day service.

Architectural Value:

The Memorial Gardens was designed by Stinson Kennedy Sinclair in association with engineer G. Graham Reid. Though the Gardens was Sinclair's only arena design, Reid appears to have specialized in arena designs, having been involved in projects in Buffalo, Oshawa, Toronto and Windsor. Sinclair became assistant chief architect for the Department of Public Works in Ontario in the latter part of the 1930s; the Memorial Gardens was his first commission after

discharge from the Royal Canadian Air Force in 1945. It has been suggested that the design of the Memorial Tower was inspired by the aircraft control towers with which he would have been familiar at bases in England. Sinclair died suddenly in 1947, two years before the completion of the Gardens.

The main elements of the Moderne Style are well illustrated by the front exterior facade and Tower. The elliptical main entrance is divided by the Memorial Tower. Its curved facade is marked by horizontal banding and vertical inset glass blocks that provide decorative elements; the facade is surmounted with encircling metal ship rails behind which is a terrace which was once open during social events held at the arena. The interior of the foyer copies the curves and rounded corners of the facade and provides access to the interior of the Tower. The Tower is constructed of reinforced concrete and surrounded by fin-like buttresses, three of which are segmented by inset glass tile blocks. Rising 20.1 metres (66 feet) from ground level, the Tower is capped by a glassed-in lamp cupola containing a 3,000 watt light. Originally the light was to be lit perpetually, as a reminder of the eternal flame, but is now lit only for special events. The facade and tower are the key elements of the Gardens that reflect the Moderne Style though some alterations have compromised the building's architectural integrity. Notable changes include the replacement of inset glass-block tiles, removal of the stainless steel sign that once graced the facade and alterations to the foyer.

The main arena is of typical construction for a building of this type and has been altered in a number of ways to enable the building to conform to current fire and access requirements and to improve its efficiency. At the southern end of the arena, the end truss is filled in with a sculptural relief of human figures reflecting war and peace and with stained glass in honour of veterans.

Contextual:

As noted in the Municipal Heritage Committee's designation report on the Cenotaph, few symbolic objects are as common throughout Canada as are war memorials. Though the predominant custom for First World War commemoration was to erect a cenotaph, plaque or other monument, it is apparent that there were other choices for commemoration. These include the dedication of public buildings, a practice that became common after the Second World War. The hockey arena in particular was an appropriate choice for commemoration and appeared in many communities as new modern facilities were needed. The Sault Memorial Gardens followed this trend, though the choice of architectural style and the incorporation of a Memorial Tower in the structure, was unusual. The Memorial Tower of the Gardens is, therefore, a unique alternative to the more traditional means of recognising the fallen of the World Wars. As such it is not just a structure of concrete and glass but an icon - an image, a symbol, of the sacrifices made by local men and women in the service of their country and the world.

Visually, the Tower is a focal point of the streetscape along Queen Street between Bruce and Dennis Streets and because of its height, it dominates a more extensive area of the city.

Summary:

- The arena and, most particularly, the Memorial Tower, stand as a continuing memorial to those who died in World War I and World War II.
- It is a outstanding example of a significant architectural style, employed in North America in the last century and, as such, has been internationally recognised.
- The building, and the Tower which is a defining component of it, is a continuing reminder of community life and of the activities that have been carried on within it.
- Its occupation of a downtown city block and the visual dominance of the Tower, make it an important component of the streetscape along Queen Street.