

Heritage Designation Brief

“The Cressman House”



487 Hunter Street West

Peterborough Architectural Conservation Advisory Committee

September 2018

Heritage Designation Status Sheet

Street Address:	487 Hunter Street West
Roll Number:	030050173000000 030050126000000
Short Legal Description:	LTS 1, 2, 25, 26 PL 148; PETERBOROUGH
Owners' Mailing Address:	487 Hunter Street West Peterborough ON K9H 2M9
PACAC Application Review Date:	September 6, 2018
Heritage Type:	Built Structure
Designation Type:	Ontario Heritage Act – Part IV
Designation Brief Completion Date:	August 16, 2018
Designation Brief Completed by:	Emily Turner
Comments:	

STATEMENT OF CULTURAL HERITAGE VALUE OR INTEREST

The subject property has been researched and evaluated in order to determine its cultural heritage significance under Ontario Regulation 9/06 of the Ontario Heritage Act R.S.O. 1990. A property is eligible for designation if it has physical, historical, associative or contextual value and meets **any one** of the nine criteria set out under Regulation 9/06 of the Act. Staff have determined that 487 Hunter Street West has cultural heritage value or interest and merits designation under the *Ontario Heritage Act*.

1. The property has design value or physical value because it:

i. is a rare, unique, representative or early example of a style, type, expression, material or construction method:

This property is a unique example of a house constructed in the Prairie Style in Peterborough. While made popular in the United States through the work of Frank Lloyd Wright and executed in some areas of Canada, this property is the only example of the style in Peterborough.

ii. displays a high degree of craftsmanship or artistic merit:

The property displays a high degree of craftsmanship and artistic merit in both its interior and exterior architectural features which are executed to a high standard of quality. Specific features with notable merit include two banks of stained glass windows featuring stylized floral motifs, the interior woodwork in the dining room, foyer and stairway, and the significant overhanging roofs over the front and side entrances. The property also includes a matching coach house.

iii. demonstrates a high degree of technical or scientific achievement:

There are no specific technical or scientific achievements associated with this property.

2. The property has historical value or associative value because it:

i. has direct associations with a theme, event, belief, person, activity, organization or institution that is significant to a community:

The subject property has direct association with prominent Peterborough businessman, Alva W. Cressman and his family. Cressman, originally from Norwich in Oxford County, moved to Peterborough in 1898 and opened a successful department store at 385-393 George Street North. His younger son, Frederick Christie Cressman, enlisted in the RAF during the First World War and was killed in December 1917. He is commemorated on the

Peterborough Citizen's War Memorial. The property is also associated with Ian McRae, the Works Manager of CGE from the mid-1940s to the mid-1960s, who oversaw the Peterborough factory's wartime production, its conversion back to civilian manufacturing after 1945, and its entry into nuclear power.

ii. yields, or has the potential to yield, information that contributes to an understanding of a community or culture:

The property has the potential to yield additional information regarding the suburban development of Peterborough in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

iii. demonstrates or reflects the work or ideas of an architect, artist, builder, designer or theorist who is significant to a community:

487 Hunter Street West was designed by Toronto architect Stephen Burwell Coon, as part of the partnership S.B. Coon and Son. The firm, which operated between 1914 and 1950, was well-known for its educational architecture but also completed a number of residential projects in Toronto and the surrounding area. The firm had competency in a wide range of styles, but the subject property is a rare Prairie style commission.

3. The property has contextual value because it:

i. is important in defining, maintaining or supporting the character of an area:

The property maintains and supports the character of the Old West End, the area in which it is located. Comprised primarily of late nineteenth and early twentieth century residential properties constructed for upper and upper-middle class families, the house maintains a pattern of stately homes constructed in fashionable architectural styles with wide lawns, mature trees and significant setbacks. The property is a contributing heritage resource to the historic cultural landscape of late nineteenth and early twentieth century suburban Peterborough.

ii. is physically, functionally, visually or historically linked to its surroundings

The property is historically and physically linked to its surroundings as part of the major wave of suburban development that occurred in the Old West End neighbourhood in Peterborough between 1890 and 1920. It is historically linked to its surroundings as part of the upper and upper-middle class development of the area's suburban landscape. While architecturally distinctive from the surrounding properties, the house was designed to integrate within the wider architectural landscape and includes design

elements included in some of the surrounding properties in order to create a harmonious, cohesive streetscape.

iii. is a landmark. O. Reg. 9/06, s. 1 (2).

The property is a landmark within Peterborough as the only Prairie style property in the city. In a more localized context, it is a landmark within the Hunter Street West neighbourhood where it encompasses four lots and is visible from multiple vantage points within the Old West End neighbourhood.

Design and Physical Value

487 Hunter Street West has significant design and physical value as the only Prairie style residence in Peterborough. Constructed between 1915 and 1916,



this property is significant both within the local context and within the wider landscape of early twentieth century architecture in Canada as a whole, where relatively few Prairie style buildings were constructed. The style, which developed during the first two decades of the twentieth century, is most closely associated with the work of Frank Lloyd Wright in the Chicago area. The style is characterized by flat or hipped roofs, overhanging eaves, windows grouped in

horizontal bands, the use of neutral colours to integrate with the landscape, and minimal ornamentation. It is also marked by the emphasis on horizontal massing and lines which were intended to integrate houses constructed in the style into the relatively flat landscape of the American Midwest. It was introduced in Canada through publications such as *House Beautiful* magazine and by Canadian architect Francis Conroy Sullivan who studied under Wright before setting up a practice in Ottawa where he designed a number of houses and public buildings in the style. Prairie Style houses in Canada are generally characterized by a more compact format with a greater emphasis on vertical elements than in their American counterparts where horizontal lines and massing were the key defining elements. Constructed in 1915, 487 Hunter Street West is typical of this trend that the horizontal lines evident in



the house's exterior are nevertheless integrated into a design with a clearer focus on vertical massing than in American examples. This is particularly notable because of the large lot which would have allowed for the extended horizontal massing of a more typical American-style Prairie house.

The house employs the characteristic neutral colour palette of the Prairie Style through the use of buff brick, cream stucco, stone detailing, and wooden features painted in brown and beige. The wide, overhanging eaves are typical of the style,



as is the lack of ornamentation and hipped roof. The house displays a high degree of technical achievement through the use of significant overhangs above the front and side doors which are consistent with Prairie style design. The horizontal lines on the house's exterior are achieved through horizontal bands of windows on each storey, stone coursing, low brick walls on the north and east elevation, and the selective use of stucco to define the second storey.

The house also retains many of its original interior features including carved wooden paneling, a wide, main staircase offset from the centre of the house, and interior doors. Like the exterior of the house, the interior employs natural materials and minimal embellishment consistent with the Prairie style, although it does not follow the more open plan layout pioneered by Wright. The dining room, foyer, and staircase, in particular, are notable for their retained original features. These include: the wooden beams with shallow pendants in the dining room; interior wooden doors with glass panels; and the tiled entranceway. The basement of the house retains an original stone fireplace.

The interior stairwell contains two sets of stained glass windows featuring floral designs executed in opalescent glass. While minimal, they are also more figurative than typical Prairie style stained glass and are reflective of wider trends in early twentieth-century stained glass design in their use of abstracted floral and decorative motifs.



The property also features a coach house which matches the construction and finish of the house. Originally intended for two vehicles, the building is designed with offset doors on the north and south elevation, where two driveways once entered the property from Homewood Avenue and Hunter Street West.

Historical and Associative Value

The property has historical and associative value through its first owner, Alva W. Cressman. Cressman, originally from Norwich, Ontario, moved to Peterborough with his wife Clara and their children in 1898 and opened Cressman's Department Store, a higher market retail establishment similar to a millinery and clothing store he had operated in Norwich. The store, located at 385-389 George Street N, was operated by Cressman until 1927 when it was sold to Eaton's, a year after his wife's death. His older son, Henry Whiting Cressman, moved to Vancouver that year and Alva followed him in 1928; the property on Hunter Street W was sold to local surgeon, Dr. Herbert Maxwell Yelland. Both father and son died in Vancouver in 1934 but were interred in the family plot at Little Lake Cemetery.

Cressman was an extremely prosperous member of the Peterborough community and lived in a

number of large houses in the city's developing western suburbs with his family before the construction of the house on Hunter Street West between. The Cressmans had a daughter, Jessie, as well as two sons, Henry and Frederick, both of whom assisted their father in managing the store. Frederick, the younger son, also served with the British Royal Naval Air Service (RNAS) at RNAS Stannergate (Dundee) during the First World War. He was one of a significant group of Canadians who enlisted in the RNAS during the First World War and were engaged in marine patrols using large amphibious aircraft, known as flying boats, developed at RNAS Felixstowe. He was buried at sea after his death in a seaplane accident on December 24, 1917. He is commemorated on the Peterborough Citizens War Memorial as well as the Chatham Naval

THE STORE THAT NEVER DISAPPOINTS

Saturday Specials

at

Cressman's

2 yards for 25c.

20c. Ribbons
12 1/2 c.
Neck and Hair Ribbons, 4 inches wide, splendid quality, pure silk, suitable to all the popular shades. Saturday Soap at—

Long Kid Gloves
All colors. Peter's best Kid will fit all lengths and sizes. 2.00 to 3.75

Hose Supporters
Warranted C. & C. Hose Supporters, patent straps, best quality elastic, all colors, regular 35c. Saturday Soap at— .25

5 Linen Toilet Mats
19c
10 inch fringed Linen Toilet Mats in white ground with red and blue checks. Regular value 7c each. Sat. Soap 5 for— .19

Fancy Hose 17c.
Pair
Assorted Plain and Embroidered colors, also black and white, a splendid line of foot wear made of fine quality cotton, washed but and back. Regular 25c. Sat. Soap— .17

50c Bath Towels 36c pair
Good Turkish Towels with heavy linen pile, in liberal sizes, regular value 50c. Saturday Soap per pair— .36

3 yards Embroidery 19c
Millions of Embroidery and Insertion, fine open work, Swiss patterns, regular 10 to 15c a yard. 3 yard ends Saturday for— .19

6 yards Embroidery 25c
Fine open work Swiss Embroidery and Insertion, different widths, worth from 8 to 10c yard, 6 yard ends. Saturday Soap at— .25

Sample Blouses 95c
2-50 White Lawn Blouses, an entire traveler's samples, all laundered fresh; elegantly trimmed with lace and insertion and embroidery. Saturday Soap— .95

\$1.25 Bed Spreads for 89c
Oriental and conventional patterns in raised effects, Martellins and Roman makes, large size, regular \$1.25. Saturday Soap while they last for— .89

2 1/2 yards Steamloom 19c
11c Steamloom, good strong thread, smooth finish in 2 1/2 yard ends, manufacturer's clean-up of mill ends bought at right prices. Saturday Soap per end— .19

D and A Corsets 39c
3 dozen only Veribest Corsets, splendid quality corset with hose supporters attached. Saturday Soap— .39

W. B. Corsets 98c
21 pair left, 82 lines of W. B. and odd D and supporters attached. Saturday Soap— .98

Print Wash Suits 1.19
Black and white, linen and white and dark print Suits, neatly trimmed and made, reg. \$1.25. Saturday Soap only— .19

White Lawn Suits 1.45
Nest and pretty Summer Wear, elegantly trim and Insertion and Cluster Trunks. Regular 2.00. Saturday Soap— .1.45

White Wash Suits 1.90
Plain Mercantile Vesting, with silk trim, reg. \$2.00 and small very charming effect, reg. \$1.80. Saturday Soap— .1.90

1.00 Lawn Blouses 45c
8 different designs in various styles of make, trimmed with lace and insertion also embroidery and pin tucks. Regular 1.00. Saturday Soap at— .45

New Plaid Belts
Just arrived for fall— several lines of the popular plaid Silk Belts, pretty fast— Saturday Soap— \$1 to \$2

18c Vic. Lawn for 11 1/2c
A special line of extra quality Victoria Lawn, smooth clear fabric, 40 inches wide, always sold at 18c. Saturday Soap— .11 1/2

75c. Kimonos 46c.
Fine Colored Muslin Kimonos with lawn facings, also white muslin, prettily trimmed with facings of polka dots. Regular price .75. Saturday Soap— .46

Collar and Blouse Pins
New lines, consisting of the Bow Knot, Maple Leaf, Enamel Crescents and Gold Hourv pins, Saturday, .10 to .25 prices

Cressman's



Memorial in Chatham, England, the latter of which commemorates Royal Navy personnel who were lost or buried at sea.

The property was also the home of CGE Works Manager Ian McRae between 1945 and 1952. McRae held the position of Works Manager at CGE beginning in 1941 and oversaw the Park Street factory's wartime production. After 1945, he moved the factory back to civilian manufacturing and subsequently, in 1955, helped move CGE into the nuclear power business. The Park Street factory was chosen as the site for the engineering department that would support the Atomic Energy of Canada Limited's development of the Nuclear Power Demonstration. By 1956, McRae had become CGE's General Manager of the Civilian Atomic Power Department.

The property also has historical significance as a rare Prairie style house designed by Toronto architect Stephen Burwell Coon as part of the partnership S.B. Coon and Son. The firm was primarily known for designing schools and, by the 1930s, was one of the province's most prolific firms with regard to educational architecture. However, Coon also designed a number of stately

homes for wealthy clients in Toronto and surrounding area. 487 Hunter Street West appears to be the only house he designed in the Prairie style and one of the few commissions he completed outside of Toronto.



Contextual Value

487 Hunter Street West is historically and physically linked to its surroundings as part of the suburban

Old West End neighbourhood. It is located in an area of 2- and 3-storey brick homes and maintains the proportions, sizing, and materiality of the houses in the surrounding area, most of which were constructed in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century. Its placement within a large, landscaped lot is consistent with the overall arrangement of buildings within the neighbourhood. It is a key contributing structure to the overall landscape of the Old West End.

While constructed in a style not found elsewhere in the immediate neighbourhood or in the city as a whole, the design of this property is sympathetic to the character of the surrounding properties through the use of a classically-inspired symmetry on the street-facing façade. While the rear of the property exhibits the typical asymmetrically and naturalistic massing of the Prairie style, the symmetry on the street facing side, which is atypical of Prairie style design, allows the property to fit within the wider context of a late-nineteenth and

early twentieth century neighbourhood where the majority of the properties were constructed in Victorian or revival styles.

The property is a landmark within the neighbourhood due to its size and stylistic distinctiveness. The property encompasses four city lots, the entirety of which has been retained and conveyed together since 1915, having been originally severed from the George A. Cox Estate. It is the largest property in the Old West neighbourhood and its size and location allow it to be viewed from Hunter Street West, Belmont Avenue and Homewood Avenue. These important views contribute to its landmark status within the neighbourhood. As the only Prairie style house in Peterborough, its unique architectural character also makes it a landmark within the city as a whole.



"The short statement of reason for designation, including a description of the heritage attributes along with all other components of the Heritage Designation Brief constitute the "Reasons for the Designation" required under the Ontario Heritage Act. The Heritage Designation Brief is available for viewing in the City Clerk's office during regular business hours."

SHORT STATEMENT OF REASONS FOR DESIGNATION

487 Hunter Street West has cultural heritage value or interest as the only Prairie style house in Peterborough and in its connection with local businessman Alva W. Cressman. It is an excellent and rare example of the Prairie style constructed in Canada which placed a greater emphasis on vertical massing than in American examples. It retains its original exterior and interior features virtually intact, including built elements on the property outside of the house such as the carriage house, which display a high degree of craftsmanship executed by an architect, S.B. Coons, who did not usually work in the Prairie style. Despite its stylistic distinctiveness, it is nevertheless an integral part of the Old West End neighbourhood due to its size, massing, and materiality as well as its carefully conceived design, executed in such a way as to be sympathetic to the overall character of the turn-of-the-century neighbourhood as a whole.

SUMMARY OF HERITAGE ATTRIBUTES TO BE DESIGNATED

The Reasons for Designation include the following heritage attributes and apply to all elevations and the roof including all façades, entrances, windows, chimneys, and trim, together with construction materials of wood, brick, stone, stucco, concrete, plaster parging, metal, and glazing, their related building techniques and landscape features:

Exterior Features

- Two-and-a-half story buff brick residential building with cream stucco on the second storey
- Symmetrical front elevation
- Asymmetrical massing
- Hipped roof
- Soffits and fascia
- Brick chimneys on south, east and west elevations
- Decorative brickwork
- Stone courses
- Rustication on doors and window surrounds
- Wide overhanging eaves with wooden moulding
- Buff brick outbuilding including hipped roof, original windows, offset doors, and original hardware
- Bow windows on north elevation
- Bay windows on east elevation including cream stucco
- Front dormer with bank of five windows and overhanging roof

- Rear dormer with single window and overhanging roof
- Front entrance including:
 - Buff brick knee walls with stone coping
 - Central stairs
 - Asymmetrical arrangement of doors and side window
 - Pilasters
- Overhanging roofs at north and west elevations including:
 - Decorative wooden ceiling
 - Wooden moulding
 - Original light fixtures
 - Decorative braces
- Knee wall on west elevation
- Covered porch on east elevation including:
 - Buff brick piers and knee walls,
 - Wide overhanging roof and associated moulding
 - Stone courses and steps
 - Flat roof
- Fenestration including:
 - Original window openings
 - Window openings and their associated elements including sash, moulds, jambs, and trim
 - Original wooden windows
- Unobstructed view of the property from Homewood Avenue, Belmont Avenue, and Hunter Street W
- View of the surrounding neighbourhood from the house and grounds
- Orientation of the house relative to the streets and gardens

Interior Features

- All original wooden elements including:
 - Paneling and trim
 - Interior doors, including glass
 - Dining room ceiling with decorative beams and shallow pendant posts
- Original stained glass
- Main staircase and associated decorative elements including:
 - Handrail and spindles
 - Newel posts with pendants
- Stone basement fireplace
- Patterned, tiled floor at main entrance
- Original hardware including door and window handles