

GEORGE STEPHEN HOUSE

1440 DRUMMOND STREET



George Stephen House, 2017 © Thomas1313 Wikimedia Commons

NEIGHBOURHOOD

The Square Mile

THE SITE

In 1880, George Stephen, the first president of the Canadian Pacific Railway, commissioned architect William Tutin Thomas to construct a mansion on Drummond Street. Thomas was a well-established Montreal architect; he also designed the Shaughnessy House (now part of the Canadian Centre for Architecture) in 1874.

In 1888 the house was occupied by Robert Meighen, George Stephen's brother-in-law. From 1926 to 2012, the building was a private club for businessmen known as the Mount Stephen Club. It was enlarged several times – first in 1927 to the south in greystone that replicated the original winter garden, second a further addition to the south, then to the north as well as to the rear in the 1950s.

STATUS

The Mount Stephen Club was officially classified as a historic monument by the Quebec government in 1975, including an area of protection. The building was also designated a National Historic Site by the Canadian government in 1971.

VALUES

Historic value

- by association with George Stephen, a Scots-born businessman who immigrated to Montreal in 1850 and made his fortune in the textile industry, then became an influential financier and president of the Bank of Montreal in 1876. He had a significant impact on Canada's history and economy as the first President of the Canadian Pacific Railway from 1881 to 1888.

Architectural value

- by its ornamentation and its integrity – the house is a remarkable example of late 19th-century bourgeois architecture

Cultural value

- the private club was a part of Montreal business life – particularly in the anglophone community

CHARACTER-DEFINING ELEMENTS

- relationship to the street and definition of private grounds by an elaborate wrought-iron fence
- the skillful use of greystone (Montreal limestone) – cut stone¹
- Renaissance-inspired ornamentation of the building including window surrounds, the balustrades and the portico²
- the domestic nature of the interior plan
- the opulent interior finishes³ including Cuban mahogany staircase, marble fireplaces, stained-glass windows

INTERVENTION

Following the closing of the private club in 2012, the building was sold. The site as a whole was converted into a hotel, the Mount Stephen House was reused as restaurant and meeting spaces and a new tower of hotel rooms constructed behind the house. The hotel Le Mount Stephen was opened in 2017.

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IMPACT

Despite the building having heritage status both provincially and federally (and the project being followed by government representatives), during construction, the foundations of the house were affected and an exterior wall became unstable. The project demonstrated the vulnerability of even so-called protected sites and the need for expertise, vigilance and oversight during the process of any intervention on a historic site.

SOURCES

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Rémillard, François and Brian Merrett, *Mansions of the Golden Square Mile 1850-1930*, Montreal, Meridian Press, 1987.

Biographies:

George Stephen

http://www.biographi.ca/en/bio/stephen_george_15E.html

William Tutin Thomas

<http://dictionaryofarchitectsincanada.org/node/1356>

Le Mount Stephen Hotel

<https://lemay.com/en/what/projects/mount-stephen-hotel-complex>

<https://www.lemountstephen.com>

Canada's Historic Places

<http://www.historicplaces.ca/en/rep-reg/place-lieu.aspx?id=9100&pid=0>

Grand répertoire du patrimoine bâti de Montréal

http://patrimoine.ville.montreal.qc.ca/inventaire/fiche_bat.php?affichage=fiche&civique=&voie=128&est_ouest=&appellation=&arrondissement=0&protection=0&batiment=oui&zone=oui&lignes=25&type_requete=simple&id_bat=9839-86-4478-01&debut=0

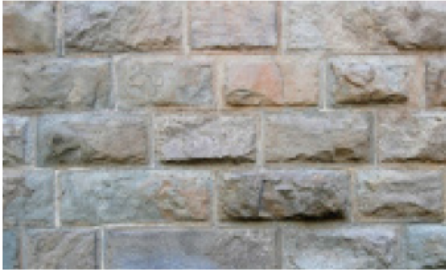
Répertoire culturel du Québec, ministère de la Culture et des Communications

<http://www.patrimoine-culturel.gouv.qc.ca/rpcq/detail.do?methode=consulter&id=92445&type=bien#.WqAXL2rwapo>

NOTES

1. Cut stone

Bossage



Any projection left intentionally on the face of the stonework for ornamental purposes.

Source: [Glossaire. Vocabulaire de l'architecture québécoise](#)

Cut stone



Stone which is cut uniformly on all its exposed surfaces.

2. Balustrade

A railing system, generally around a balcony, consisting of balusters and a top rail.



(Sources: <http://www.ontarioarchitecture.com> et [Glossaire. Vocabulaire de l'architecture québécoise](#))

Portico

A covered porch area adjacent to a main entrance



3.



Living room, Mrs. George Stephen's house,
Montreal, QC, 1884
Wm. Notman & Son, 1884, II-73825, © McCord
Museum

<http://collections.musee-mccord.qc.ca/en/collection/artifacts/II-73825>