

Address: 895 Academy Close

Description of historic place:

The Athlone Apartments is a two-storey apartment block with separate garage in the Streamline Moderne style located one block to the south from St. Ann's Academy and to the north of Beacon Hill Park in Victoria's Fairfield neighbourhood.

Heritage value:

The historic place, built in 1940, is valued for its architecture, its association with modern technology, and what it says about changes in public taste.

The historic place has been called one of the most sophisticated pieces of Streamline Moderne design in Victoria. Built in three sections, it represents a change in thinking from classical designs and illustrates the new alliance between art and technology that was characteristic of modernist architecture. Designs in Art Deco and Streamline Moderne were popular in Europe after the *L'Exposition Internationale des Arts Decoratifs et Industriels Modernes* in Paris in 1925. The style made its way to North America in the 1930s where its sleek lines soon rose above major American cities.

There is historic value in the garage, built at the same time as the apartment block. Given the association of the Streamline Moderne style with speed and the technological advances of the time - ocean liners, aircraft, automobiles - it is logical that the automobile would be accommodated in a structure as elegant as the residence. The two structures work together as a definitive statement of the modernist ethos.

It is also valued as an example of the work of S. Patrick Birley, a prolific early local modernist architect, whose Victoria commissions include the Sussex Hotel, the Salvation Army Citadel and several residences.

Character-defining elements:

The heritage character of the Athlone Apartments is defined by the following elements:

- characteristics of the Streamline Moderne style including the three stair towers, the pattern of three tall leaded glass stairwell windows, the flat roof with galvanized iron coping, curved stucco stair balustrades, stainless steel canopies, grooved parapet, grooved door surrounds
- rear entrances opening to park side of building without apparent lot line between rear landscaping and public space to the south
- continuation of rear landscaping across the street to Beacon Hill Park
- set right to lot line with no setback
- corner location
- landmark status
- spatial relationship between the building, Beacon Hill Park, and St. Ann's Academy
- neon tubing along top
- light fixtures
- flat-roofed garage along eastern edge of property
- siting on the lot
- metal signage to suites



895 Academy Close, north elevation, 2007