

# 4192 Sainte-Catherine Street West

Category: 1



North (Front) Façade: Ste-Catherine Street West



West Façade, Greene Avenue



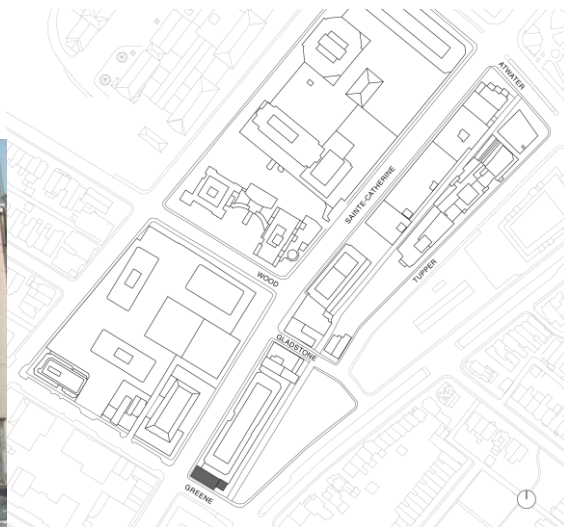
Front Façade: Detail of the Entrance, Showing Damage to the Entablature and Columns, Probably due to Water Infiltration



Front Facade Insignia at the Top of the Parapet



South (Rear) Façade



Key Plan

<p><b>Description</b></p>	<p>This is a two-storey institutional building, designed in the beaux-arts style. Completed in 1904 to the designs of Edward and W. S. Maxwell, the building was purpose-built to house a branch of the Royal Bank of Canada.</p> <p>Edward Maxwell (1867-1923) was the senior partner of what was to become the premier architectural firm in Canada during the first decades of the 20th century. The practice began after Edward Maxwell finished his job as supervising architect for the construction of the Montreal Board of Trade. The firm enlarged to include his brother, William Sutherland Maxwell (1872-1952), upon his return in 1902 from architectural studies at the École des Beaux-Arts, Paris. The Maxwells worked across Canada. Some of their iconic buildings include: the Chateau Frontenac tower, the Montreal Museum of Fine Arts, the Saskatchewan Legislature, and numerous residences and country estates. They also had a long-standing relationship with a number of Canadian banks, designing their branches across Montreal. The one at 4192 Saint-Catherine Street West stands as testimony to their architectural talents.</p> <p>The building is also an interesting example of bank design at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. The use of neoclassical language, composed into a two storey entrance, gives an image of monumentality and solidity to the building.</p> <p>The bank is also associated with the growth of the city of Westmount, after the beginning of the new century. Between 1895 and 1914, as the town evolved from a rural settlement, the population increased six-fold. The first suburban branch of the Royal Bank of Canada was opened in Westmount in 1894, but due to the population explosion, the building rapidly became too small. In 1903, the Maxwell brothers were hired to design the new bank at the corner of Sainte-Catherine Street and Greene Avenue. This specific corner was chosen because it was at the literal crossroads of retail activity. This was fostered no doubt by the electric streetcar lines running on both streets since 1890.</p>
<p><b>Heritage Values</b></p>	<p><b>Historical Values:</b> 4192 Ste-Catherine Street is linked to the development of the commercial area at the crossroads of Greene Avenue and Ste-Catherine Street at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. It is the product of the office of the Maxwell Brothers, the most prominent architectural firm in Canada in the beginning decades of the 20<sup>th</sup> century</p> <p><b>Architectural Values:</b> 4192 Ste-Catherine Street is notable for its monumental Beaux-arts architecture, achieved within a two storey volume. The building is notable for the quality of its composition and detailing.</p> <p><b>Environmental Values:</b> The siting of 4192 Ste-Catherine Street speaks to its commercial vocation, and contributes to the streetscape, providing a landmark anchor at the street corner.</p>
<p><b>Heritage Character Defining Elements</b></p>	<p>The key elements which contribute to the heritage character of this site are as follows:</p> <p><u>Setting:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Building facing Sainte-Catherine street with no setbacks, referencing its commercial character</li> <li>- Hierarchy of the facades: the front façade facing Sainte-Catherine Street is highly articulated, the one facing Greene Avenue is less so and the lane façade is not.</li> </ul>

Exterior:

- Symmetry of the front façade and its composition, featuring a two-storey glazed entrance, framed by doric pilasters. Within this framework is a secondary element composed of ionic pilasters, supporting a carved entablature. [Within this is a single storey entrance portico, also of stone, which contains the entrance doors. This portico replaces an original portico. It is of a different stone and is not itself a heritage character-defining element.]
- Symmetry and composition of the west façade, a simplified version of the front façade, consistent with a secondary elevation;
- Montreal grey limestone foundations with ashlar finish
- Miramichi sandstone with an ashlar finish on both the north and the west facades; the giant pilasters are rusticated;
- Neo-classical elements (ionic columns and pilasters, with sculpted capitals, entablature with carved inscription: 'The Royal Bank of Canada; carved coat-of-arms at parapet; door and window trim). In keeping with the beaux-arts influence, the carvings are emphasized and lush.

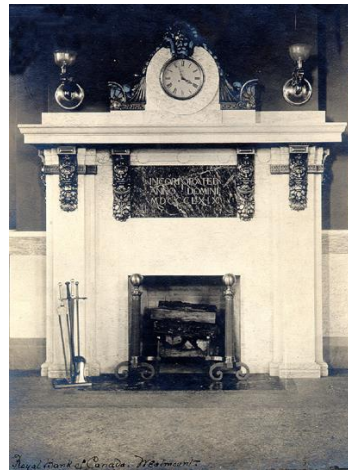
<b>Date of Construction</b>	1904
<b>Persons of Significance</b>	Architects: Edward Maxwell (1867-1923) and William Sutherland Maxwell (1874-1952) Contractor: John Quinlan and Co Original owner: The Royal Bank of Canada (original name was the Merchants Bank of Halifax, founded in 1869)
<b>Stylistic Influences</b>	Beaux-arts
<b>Building</b>	
<i>Number of stories</i>	2 + basement
<i>Plan/Footprint</i>	Main volume: Rectangular 10 metres x 21 metres Extension: Rectangular 6,5 metres x 7 metres
<i>Height</i>	11 metres
<b>Architectural Elements</b>	
<i>Foundations</i>	Montreal grey limestone ashlar finish
<i>Walls</i>	The front north façade facing Sainte-Catherine Street and the west façade facing Greene Avenue are articulated. The south façade is secondary. The east façade constitutes a party wall. The two articulated facades are clad with ochre-coloured Miramichi sandstone with an ashlar finish. In addition, some of the pilasters feature rusticated joints. The rear façade and the extension are clad with red clay brick.
<i>Roof</i>	Flat roof covered with tar and gravel
<i>Windows</i>	Non-operable windows (non-original) carved window surrounds
<i>Others (entrance, porch, chimneys...)</i>	- Two-storey high ionic columns frame the main entrance and support a lintel with the name of the bank. The capitals feature unusual carved elements. -Denticulated Entablature

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Coat-of-arms carved at the parapet level, centred above the entrance doors. The Royal Bank of Canada used this insignia from 1902-1962.</li> <li>- Copper flashing</li> </ul>
<i>Construction Methods</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Load-bearing brick walls</li> <li>Some structural steel elements</li> </ul>
<b>Composition</b>	The compactness and the unity of the building are achieved by means of the proportions of its classical details. The building projects an image of monumentality.
<b>Context</b> <i>(setbacks, surroundings, landscape, landmark status)</i>	No setbacks. The building is in line with the sidewalk of Sainte-Catherine and of Greene. The façade is in continuity with the facade of the buildings on the east side. The back of the building faces a lane.
<b>Additions/Alterations</b>	1961, 1972, 1979
<b>Integrity</b>	<p>High</p> <p>Both the interior and the exterior of the building retain most of the original qualities. Some minor changes were made without affecting the overall appearance. The composition of the windows on the front façade doesn't respect the original composition. The ornate stone doorway with a pediment was replaced by one of lesser details using grey limestone instead of yellow Miramichi sandstone.</p> <p>Unusually for commercial buildings on Ste-Catherine Street, where most original interiors have been destroyed, the bank retains its original plan and many interior finishes. The plasterwork is noteworthy.</p>

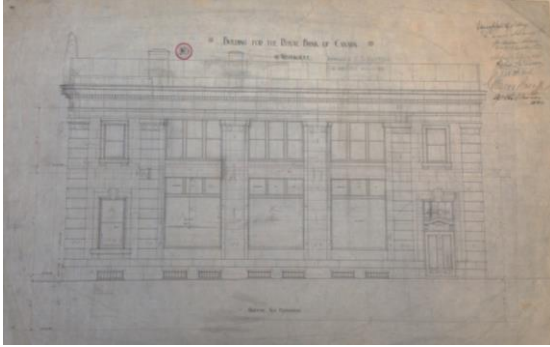
### Historical Images



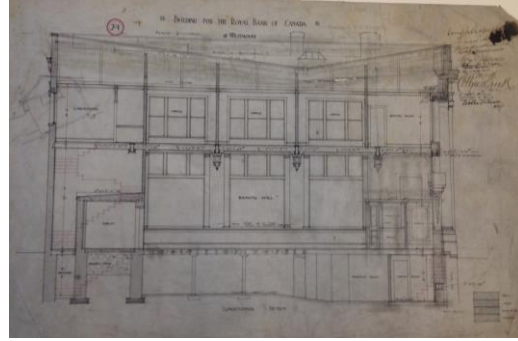
North (Front) Façade, Showing the Original Entrance Portico (1904)  
Source: Canadian Architecture Collection, McGill University



Mantelpiece (Year unknown)  
Source: Canadian Architecture Collection, McGill University



Drawing of the Façade Facing Greene Avenue  
Source: Canadian Architecture Collection, McGill University



Section  
Source: Canadian Architecture Collection, McGill University

**BIBLIOGRAPHY:**

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