

# PACKARD BUILDING

4026-4032 Sainte-Catherine Street West

Category: 1



Front North Façade



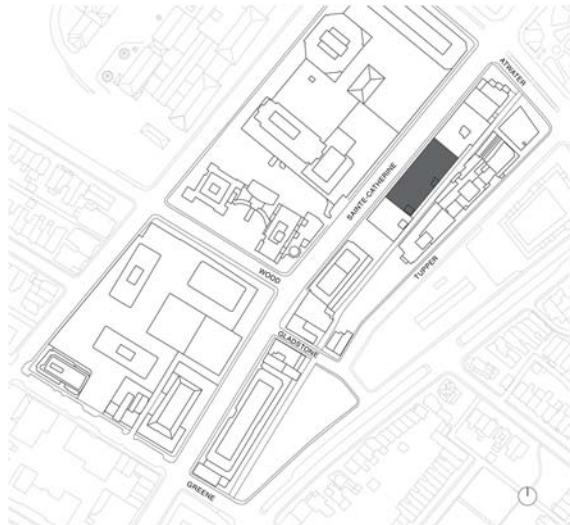
South Façade: Garage Entrance



North Façade: Entrance Portico



South Façade



Key Plan

**Description**

This is a three-storey, 15 bay commercial building, designed in a neoclassical style with art-deco influences. Completed in 1929, to the designs of David Jerome Spence (1873-1955), the building was purpose-built to house the showroom and service garage of Packard Montreal Motors Limited.

David Jerome Spence was an American-born architect. He studied at M.I.T. in Boston and at the Ecole des Beaux-Arts in Paris. He came to Montreal in 1901, to start a practice with his former classmate, Samuel Arnold Finley (1874-1933), which lasted until 1913. For many years, he was a sole practitioner, until he formed a partnership with Frederick David Mathias (1913-1997). This practice continued until 1952. He worked on a number of important commissions in Montreal, including the Linton Apartments, the Black Watch Armoury (both with Finley); the Belgo Building; the Insurance Exchange Building and the Seagram Building (now known as Marlet House). The Packard Building is an interesting contribution to his legacy.

After the first World War, during the 1920s, car ownership was increasing in popularity. The automobile industry grew as the demand for cars increased. By 1929, when the building was erected, there was over a million cars in Canada. Packard was an automobile company founded in 1899 in Detroit, Michigan. From its foundation until the Great Depression, it was considered to be a luxury brand. In 1936, the company started to produce a more affordable car, the *Model 120*, to appeal to upper-middle class families. Even during the financial crisis, approximately 760,000 cars were sold during this decade in Canada. The Packard Building stands as a symbol of this trend that completely transformed Canadian cities.

Packard was not the only brand to choose Sainte-Catherine Street to establish its garage; many other garages were built near-by, including the building further to the west, at 4100 Sainte-Catherine Street.

The development of this new typology of building to sell cars required the use of new construction techniques using concrete for structural purposes. The Packard Building has a concrete structure allowing long spans and large openings so that natural light could penetrate deep into the interior.

The building also showcases an unusual combination of neoclassical composition and elements for the entrance portico, combined with art-deco details that whimsically reference the function: at the parapet, centred on the entrance portico is a Packard radiator, cast in bas-relief.

It should be noted that the building's façade elements were removed in May 2012 and stored in the building for future reinstatement. A permit for this work was issued on June 4, 2012.

**Heritage Values**

**Historical Values:** 4026-4032 Ste-Catherine Street is linked to the development of the automobile industry, and the commercialization of Ste-Catherine Street in the 1920s.

**Architectural Values:** 4026-4032 Ste-Catherine Street is notable for its industrial character, with neo-classical elements. The cast stone in which the building is clad is remarkable for the quality and detailing of its casting.

**Environmental Values:** The siting of 4026-4032 Ste-Catherine Street speaks to its commercial vocation, and contributes to the streetscape.

<b>Heritage Character Defining Elements</b>	<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>▪ The building faces Sainte-Catherine Street, with no setback.</li> <li>▪ Hierarchy of the facades: the front façade facing Sainte-Catherine Street is articulated; the lane façade is not.</li> </ul> <p><u>Exterior:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Symmetrical composition around the 3 bay entrance.</li> </ul> <p>[The 3 bay service entrance was treated as an annex to the main composition. At a later date, 3 more bays of a different dimension, were added to the west.]</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Finely cast stone for the front façade</li> <li>▪ Articulated central bays that form the primary entrance to the building: the entrance portico:, Scamozzi Ionic columns and flanking pilasters support entablature with wrought iron balustrade; the top of the parapet in these bays have a raised portion, surmounting a Packard radiator grille. Swags and garlands further emphasize the importance of the entrance.</li> </ul> <p>[Copper spandrel panels: These are a replacement from the first decade of the 21th century. The original panels were more elegantly detailed.]</p>
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<b>Date of Construction</b>	1929
<b>Persons of Significance</b>	Architect: David Jerome Spence Contractor: A.C. Johnston
<b>Stylistic Influences</b>	Neoclassical with art-deco influences
<b>Building</b>	
<i>Number of stories</i>	3
<i>Plan/Footprint</i>	Rectangular (26 metres wide x 60 metres long)
<i>Height</i>	12 metres
<b>Architectural Elements</b>	
<i>Foundations</i>	Concrete
<i>Walls</i>	<p>The north (front) façade is articulated. The south façade is secondary. The east and west facades are party walls.</p> <p>Front Façade:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Lower portion: Unit masonry of finely cast concrete. Large vitrines on Sainte-Catherine Street.</li> <li>▪ Upper portion: Unit masonry of finely cast concrete. Large openings of industrial sash windows with decorative copper spandrel panels. The bas-relief treatment emphasizes the verticality.</li> </ul>
<i>Roof</i>	Flat roof with asphalt coating, incorporating parking (non-original)
<i>Windows</i>	Large openings, with steel industrial sash windows. Some windows are awning-type, most are non-operable
<i>Others (entrance, porch, chimneys...)</i>	Neo-classical entrance portico: Scamozzi Ionic columns and flanking pilasters support an entablature with a denticulated cornice, topped by a wrought iron fence.

<i>Construction Methods</i>	Concrete structure with brick infill and pre-cast facing masonry
<b>Composition</b>	The front façade is divided vertically in 15 bays. The original construction had a 3 bay entrance, symmetrical disposed with 3 bays on each side. The 3 bay service entrance was treated as an annex to the main composition. At a later date, 3 more bays, of a different dimension, was added to the west.
<b>Context</b> <i>(setbacks, surroundings, landscape, landmark status)</i>	No setbacks. The building borders the sidewalk of Sainte-Catherine Street. The façade is in continuity with the facades of the buildings on both sides. The back of the building faces a lane.  The building has been designated as a <i>Category 1</i> building by the City of Westmount.
<b>Additions/Alterations</b>	1956: Montreal Buick Limited sign by General Advertising Limited 1965: Alteration to Montreal Buick Building by E.R. Drucker for Glenco Investments Ltd 1965: Roof parking by David Oberman Architect for Glenco Investments Ltd 1976: Renovation of the building by Schertzer Scoler Architects for Glenco Investments Ltd
<b>Integrity</b>	High: although many of the pre-cast masonry elements of the upper part of the front façade have been dismantled and stored, this intervention was permitted by the city under the condition that reinstatement will be done in the future.

### Historical Images



Architect's Drawing of the Front Façade  
Source: Microfiche, Westmount City Hall



Contemporary Photo of the Front Façade  
Source: Grand répertoire du patrimoine bâti de Montréal, Ville de Montréal



Aerial photograph: 1936  
Source: Westmount City Hall

**BIBLIOGRAPHY:**

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