

**FHBRO HERITAGE CHARACTER STATEMENT  
SIR GEORGE-ÉTIENNE CARTIER HOUSE  
456 TO 462 NOTRE DAME STREET EAST, MONTREAL, QC**

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FHBRO Number: **05-107**  
DFRP Number: **07137**  
Resource Name: **Sir George-Étienne Cartier House**  
Address: **456 to 462, Notre Dame Street East, Montreal, Quebec**  
FHBRO Status: **“Recognized” Federal Heritage Building**  
Construction: **1836-1838**  
Designer: **Unknown**  
Original Function: **Residence (middle-class house)**  
Current Function: **Museum and Sir George-Étienne Cartier National Historic Site of Canada**  
Modifications: **Removal of approximately three metres of the “east house”; installation of a flat roof with false mansard front; construction of a square floor at attic level (behind the false mansard roof) crowning the two adjacent buildings, and closing of the porte-cochère by a window (1893); fires that occurred in 1901 and 1947 and conversion to a hotel (1872) destroyed most of the historic substrate of the interior of the “east house” (in particular, the characteristic 19th-century features were lost); various preservation and restoration work outside and inside the “east house” and the “west house”, including restoration of the porte-cochère, repairs to the slate roof, and installation in the “east house” of an elevator, bathrooms and a ventilation system (1983-1984).**  
Custodian: **Parks Canada Agency**

**Description of Historic Place**

Sir George-Étienne Cartier House is made up of two adjacent houses: the “east house” and the “west house.” The houses were originally separate but now form a single building. The facades facing Notre Dame Street and Berri Street are made of cut stone and contrast with the rear wall, which is rubble stone. The projecting windowsills and a porte-cochère topped with a segmented arch are to be noted on the Notre Dame Street side. The building has a large false mansard roof that has several dormers in the slate-clad slope, decorated with a pavilion roof with a rooftop terrace. The “east house” contains an exhibit on Sir George-Étienne Cartier, a middle-class Montrealer and politician, while the “west house” depicts the way of life of the Cartier family in the 1860s. Sir George-Étienne Cartier House is located on the northeast edge of the district of Old Montreal. The designation is confined to the footprint of the building.

**Heritage Value**

Sir George-Étienne Cartier House was designated a “Recognized” Federal Heritage Building because of its historical importance, its architectural value and its prominence in its surroundings.

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**FEDERAL HERITAGE BUILDINGS REVIEW OFFICE  
National Historic Sites Directorate, Parks Canada  
25 Eddy Street, 5<sup>th</sup> Floor, Gatineau, QC K1A 0M5  
Telephone: 819-997-6740 / Fax: 819-953-6146 / Web Site: [www.parkscanada.gc.ca/federalhb](http://www.parkscanada.gc.ca/federalhb)**

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Historical value:

Sir George-Étienne Cartier House is a very good specimen illustrating the establishment of urban middle-class society and the evolution of the City of Montreal in the early 19th century. It also recalls the political career and work of Sir George-Étienne Cartier, one of the Fathers of Confederation.

The house is directly associated with a person of national significance, namely Sir George-Étienne Cartier. Cartier, an influential political figure, helped shape many institutions that were forerunners of the institutions that today govern Quebec and Canada as a whole. He also helped consolidate the geographic and economic bases that led to the acquisition of the Northwest Territories, the creation of the Province of Manitoba and British Columbia's entry into Confederation. In addition, he politically supported the construction of the Canadian Pacific Railway.

Sir George-Étienne Cartier House is a very good illustration of the evolution of the neighbourhood in which the house stands because of the different functions it has had over the years, from a middle-class home in a residential area to a hotel on a commercial street to its current use as a museum in the heart of a tourist district.

Architectural value:

Sir George-Étienne Cartier House is a very good example of a Neo-Classical building that underwent architectural modifications as its functions changed through the years. The result is a cohesive, harmonious building that incorporates Second Empire and Queen Anne Revival elements. Sir George-Étienne Cartier House has a very good functional design based largely on its adaptation of the London model and terrace homes. Sir George-Étienne Cartier House was built of very good materials that were assembled with care, as witnessed by their longevity.

Environmental value:

The historical relationship between Sir George-Étienne Cartier House and its surroundings has changed over the years as new buildings with a variety of functions have been added to the neighbourhood and the traffic system has changed. Nevertheless, the urban character of the house and its presence on the street front remain intact, because the close connection between the facade and the sidewalk has been maintained, the historical connection between the house and the railway station has been preserved, and the porte-cochère opening is still in use. Sir George-Étienne Cartier House is well known in Montreal because of its historical associations, its use as a museum and its designation as a National Historic Site of Canada. The house is often used to illustrate tourist brochures and has even been studied in a publication dedicated to the heritage of the City of Montreal.

**Character-defining Elements**

The following character-defining elements of Sir George-Étienne Cartier House should be respected:

Its good aesthetic design, which bears witness to its architectural development:

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- the features associated with the Neo-Classical style, such as the starkness and formality of the composition characterized by overlaid courses of stone, the jambs of the exposed, cut one-piece lintels and the slight setback on the facade indicating the transition from the basement to the ground floor, the smooth stone and thin joints on the Notre Dame sides, the spare ornamentation on the sides, and some interior decorative elements, such as the square-section balustrades;
- subtle decorative elements that are in keeping with the style of the original houses, in particular the windowsills, the porte-cochère topped with a segmented arch in which the radiating stones form a stepped outside edge, and the concave mouldings of the firewall consoles;
- Second Empire elements, in particular the false mansard roof with dormers in the slope, decorated with a partial pavilion roof and clad with grey slate cut in a point or fish-scale pattern and laid in two bands, one at the top of the slope and one in the middle;
- Queen Anne Revival elements like the monochrome roof and dormers with a pediment and a spandrel decorated with a stylized sunburst; and,
- interior details, such as the plaster walls and decorative mouldings, whose colours are consistent with the period during which the Cartier family lived in the house, original hardware, and those elements that reflect the domestic use of the house.

Its very good functional design, its construction and its very good materials, as reflected in:

- the porte-cochère and its current use as a reception area for visitors;
- the main entrance of the “west house”, which has an inner vestibule that forms a shelter;
- the seamless addition of a square floor at attic level topped with a false mansard roof;
- a vaulted brick room adjacent to the kitchen that was apparently used as a strong room or coal storage;
- the numerous cupboards that still exist in the interior rooms;
- the wood doors lined with metal on the inside that were used to close off the fireplaces of the two secondary bedrooms and keep out cold drafts;
- the partition separating the office from the dining room, which has a heating hopper that can be closed off with a panel in the summer and used to install a stove halfway down the wall to heat the adjoining rooms in the winter; and,
- the cut stone of the Notre Dame Street and Berri Street facades, the stone and brick of the party walls and the brick floor surrounding the hearth in the original kitchen along the party wall of the Perry House.

The manner in which the building reinforces the harmonious and homogeneous urban character of Notre Dame Street today between Bonsecours and Berri streets, and the building’s value as a landmark, as evidenced in:

- its visual prominence because of its profile, height and muted colours; and,
- the close relationship between the facade of the building and the sidewalk, preservation of the link with the nearby railway station and use of the porte-cochère.

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For guidance on interventions, please refer to the *Standards and Guidelines for the Conservation of Historic Places in Canada*. For further information contact FHBRO.

November 2006

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