

## Heritage Designation Brief

“Hi-Tops”



**415 George Street North**

Peterborough Architectural Conservation Advisory Committee

October 2018

Heritage Designation Status Sheet

Street Address:	415 George Street North
Roll Number:	040060048000000
Short Legal Description:	PT LT 1 N OF HUNTER ST AND W OF GEORGE ST PL 1 TOWN OF PETERBOROUGH AS IN R447163 CITY OF PETERBOROUGH
PACAC Application Review Date:	October 4, 2018
Heritage Type:	Built Structure
Designation Type:	Ontario Heritage Act – Part IV
Designation Brief Completion Date:	September 2018
Designation Brief Completed by:	Emily Turner
Comments:	

## STATEMENT OF CULTURAL HERITAGE VALUE OR INTEREST

The subject property has been researched and evaluated in order to determine its cultural heritage significance under Ontario Regulation 9/06 of the Ontario Heritage Act R.S.O. 1990. A property is eligible for designation if it has physical, historical, associative or contextual value and meets **any one** of the nine criteria set out under Regulation 9/06 of the Act. Staff have determined that 415 George Street North has cultural heritage value or interest and merits designation under the *Ontario Heritage Act*.

### 1. The property has design value or physical value because it:

#### **i. is a rare, unique, representative or early example of a style, type, expression, material or construction method:**

415 George Street North is an excellent, representative example of mid-Victorian commercial architecture in downtown Peterborough with its red brick, three-storey construction that is consistent with the wider landscape of the commercial core. It also features rare and unique components, including ogee-topped windows on the second and third stories.

#### **ii. displays a high degree of craftsmanship or artistic merit:**

The building displays a high degree of craftsmanship in its unusual ogee-topped sash windows and wooden hood moulds. The front elevation is a well-executed Victorian storefront in red brick, including elements such as the extended cornice and decorative brickwork.

#### **iii. demonstrates a high degree of technical or scientific achievement:**

There are no specific technical or scientific achievements associated with this property.

### 2. The property has historical value or associative value because it:

#### **i. has direct associations with a theme, event, belief, person, activity, organization or institution that is significant to a community:**

415 George Street North has cultural heritage value as a longstanding Chinese restaurant in Peterborough, operating successively as the Paris Café (1918-1955) and Hi-Tops Restaurant (1956-2013). The building currently houses Real Thai Cuisine.

In its role as a Chinese restaurant, the building has important historical connections to the city's Chinese community and the Hum family who operated the restaurant from 1918 to 2013.

**ii. yields, or has the potential to yield, information that contributes to an understanding of a community or culture:**

The subject property yields information regarding the commercial development of mid-nineteenth and twentieth century Peterborough. It also yields information on the growth of Peterborough's Chinese community and their role in the development of local downtown businesses.

**iii. demonstrates or reflects the work or ideas of an architect, artist, builder, designer or theorist who is significant to a community:**

The building may be the work of local bricklayer and contractor David Carlisle.

**3. The property has contextual value because it:**

**i. is important in defining, maintaining or supporting the character of an area:**

The property maintains the commercial character of the surrounding area, which is dominated by nineteenth-century three- and four-storey brick structures built to the lot line. The building is a contributing heritage resource to the historic cultural landscape of Peterborough's commercial downtown.

**ii. is physically, functionally, visually or historically linked to its surroundings**

The subject property is historically and physically linked to its surroundings as part of the three-storey commercial row of buildings along the west side of George Street. In particular, the building is physically and visually linked to 413 George Street North, the Lech Building, a designated property of which it is a continuation. The subject property shares specific architectural features with the Lech Building, including the ogee-topped sash windows and wooden hood moulds. It also continues the pattern of windows set between pilasters surmounted by a cornice which is characteristic of commercial architecture in downtown Peterborough.

**iii. is a landmark. O. Reg. 9/06, s. 1 (2).**

The storefront of 415 George Street North has operated as a restaurant 1918 and is recognized as a local landmark, specifically as the former Hi-Tops Restaurant which was located in the building from 1956 to 2013. Its distinctive architectural features also make it a well-known building and easily recognized building in the city's downtown.

## Design and Physical Value

415 George Street North is an excellent example of mid-Victorian commercial architecture constructed the Italianate style in downtown Peterborough. Its three-storey, red brick construction is consistent with the wider landscape of the commercial core in style, proportions, and age. It is a representative example of the new style of commercial buildings that developed during the 1860s and possesses unique design features not found in other commercial buildings in Peterborough from this era.



The Italianate commercial style of architecture grew in popularity during the 1860s to become the defining architectural style of many downtowns in cities and towns

across North America. The style drew on a vocabulary rooted in the urban forms of the Italian Renaissance and incorporated Italianate architectural details into three- or four-storey compact buildings erected in a densely-packed commercial frontage. Architectural elements included: ornate window surrounds; tall windows; pilasters; the division on the street facing façade into multiple bays; a decorative, bracketed cornice, usually made of cast iron; and a defined storefront on the ground level.

415 George Street North is a representative example of Italianate commercial architecture erected in the mid-1860s. It is a three-storey building with a well-executed eastern elevation which includes an extended cornice, decorative brickwork and windows set between pilasters. It also features rare and unique components which set it apart from other, similar buildings in the commercial core. Of particular note are the ogee-topped sash windows with wooden hood moulds. These are unique in the downtown streetscape but are reflective of wider architectural trends in the early 1860s when the ogee arch was finding increased popularity as a result of mid-



Victorian eclecticism. During the nineteenth century, this form was especially associated with Venetian architecture and was used in Italianate buildings, although it was not particularly common.

### Historical and Associative Value

415 George Street North has historical and associative value in its role as a commercial property in Peterborough's downtown core and in its important associations with the city's early Chinese community.



The current brick structure, which spans both 413 and 415 George Street North, was constructed between 1866 and 1868 to replace an older frame building which had served as a grocery store and bakery. Its construction came as part of the 1860s redevelopment of much of George Street after the 1861 fire which had destroyed a significant portion of the downtown. The property was purchased by William Cluxton and Robert Rowe

in 1864 before being sold to William Lech after the completion of the building. Lech operated his furrier business out of both sides of the building, before selling the northern half in about 1875. Lech's Furriers continued to operate in 413 George Street North until 2008.

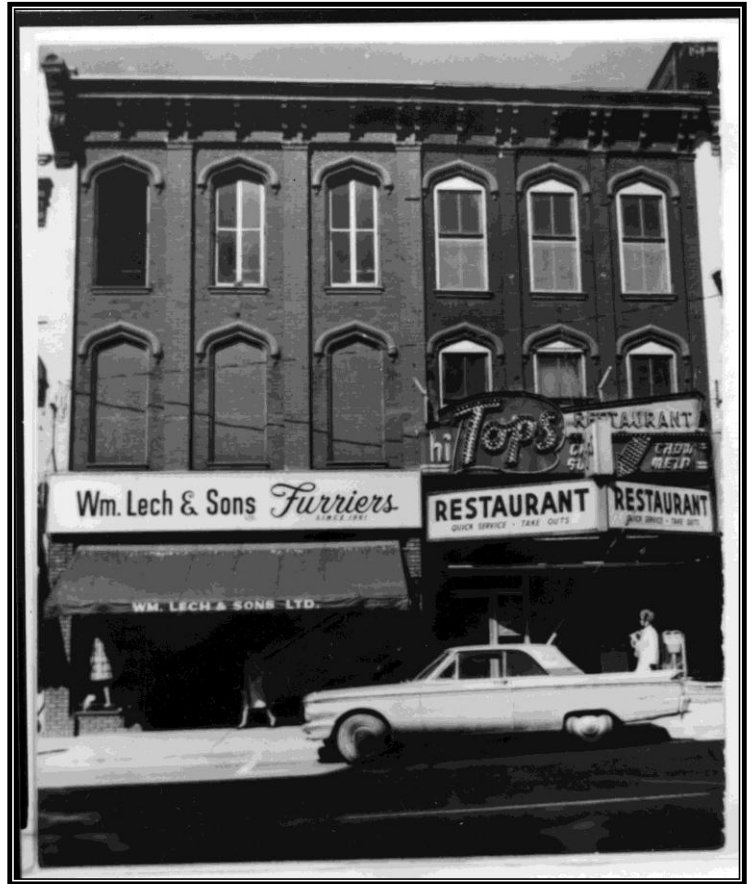
After its sale by Lech, the subject property housed a range of businesses throughout the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Initially a shoe store after Lech's sale, it was, over the years, successively a grocery store, billiards hall, confectioner, and baker.

In 1910, the store was converted into a theatre and operated in this capacity until 1918, first as the Princess Theatre and then the Tizit Theatre after 1916. In 1918, it became the Paris Café, a Chinese restaurant operated by Hum Hoy. Several generations of the Hum family continued to operate a Chinese restaurant in the building until 2013, changing its name to Tops Restaurant in 1956 and then to Hi-Tops Restaurant the following year.



As both the Paris Café and Hi-Tops Restaurant, 415 George Street North has important historical connections with both the Hum family and the history Peterborough's early Chinese community as a whole.

Throughout the first half of the twentieth century, this small but growing community had a significant stake in the local restaurant business: between 1906 and 1942, no less than 13 Chinese restaurants opened in Peterborough, of which the Paris Café/Hi-Tops was the longest running, with 95 years in business in the same location. In its longstanding role as a Chinese restaurant, this property yields significant and important information about the minority Chinese community in Peterborough, their role in the development of downtown businesses, and the way in which these businesses assisted in their immigration to Canada in the early twentieth century.



The first Chinese immigrant in Peterborough, Lee Sam, arrived in the city in 1892 and began his career in the city by operating a hand laundry. Due to pervasive racist attitudes and federal restrictions on Chinese immigrants in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, Chinese labour in small cities such as Peterborough was primarily centred on the development of small, local businesses, including laundries, restaurants, and grocery stores.

Particularly in these smaller centres, Chinese immigrants were often shut out of the labour market due to the racist attitudes of this period; the establishment

of their own businesses was a route to employment in predominantly white communities. Not only did the development of these businesses



provide new Chinese immigrants with opportunities to work within Canada's growing merchant class, they also provided assistance to family members immigrating to the country by creating job opportunities for them when they

arrived, with many immigrants bringing their families to Canada to work at their new businesses.

The Tan family, whose name was anglicized to both Hum and Tom, arrived in Peterborough in 1906 and began to develop a range of restaurant businesses, establishing six different Chinese restaurants in Peterborough between 1906 and 1951. Two of these, in particular, became extremely successful: the Dominion Café, later the Deluxe Café, which operated at 328 George Street for 67 years between 1906 and 1973; and the Paris Café, later Hi-Tops, located at 415 George Street North. These restaurants provided important business opportunities and employment for the growing and increasingly successful Chinese community; Hum Hoy, who established the Paris Café in 1918, first came to Canada to work at the Dominion Café in 1909.

The Paris Café continued to be operated by the Hum family until its closure in 2013 and provided an opportunity for Hum Hoy to bring other members of his family to Canada to work at the restaurant. After his retirement in 1948, it was taken over by his son Henry Hum who remodeled the restaurant in 1956 and renamed it Tops Restaurant. It was later taken over by his son, Paul Hum, and grandson, Edward Hum.

### Contextual Value

The subject property is historically and physically linked to its surroundings as a continuation of the three-storey commercial row of buildings that characterizes Peterborough's downtown core. It forms an important part of the



1860s reconstruction of George Street after the 1861 fire that destroyed a considerable section of the city's commercial core.

In 1861, a significant portion of George Street was destroyed by fire, leading to the reconstruction of large sections of the city's commercial downtown. This reconstruction corresponded with a period of rebuilding along many

commercial main streets in Canada where frame structures were replaced with brick ones. Many of these new downtown streetscapes featured three- or four-storey buildings constructed to the lot line in the Italianate style with heavy,



decorative cornices and ornate window surrounds. As in the case of George Street in Peterborough, these rows of commercial buildings developed as continuous blocks of distinctive structures which nevertheless maintained continuity through their consistent style, scale, massing, and window rhythm that created a uniform architectural vocabulary along a compact commercial frontage. 415 George Street North is an integral element of this nineteenth-century streetscape in Peterborough as part of unified commercial frontage defined by architecturally-unique structures constructed with a similar style, massing, and scale.

Specifically, 415 George Street North forms part of a continuous block between Hunter Street West and Brock Street with an uninterrupted line of historic buildings. These buildings include, to the south:

407-409 George Street North (Pappas Billiards), constructed in 1867; 413 George Street North (the Lech Building), constructed between 1866 and 1868; and, to the north: 417-419 George Street North (the Old Examiner Building) constructed in 1875; 421-423 George Street North, likely erected in the 1840s; and 425-427 George



Street North (the Chambers-Potvin Building), constructed between 1870 and 1871. Taken together, these buildings form part of a Victorian commercial landscape that defines the character of downtown Peterborough.

Architecturally, the subject property is a direct continuation of its neighbour at 413 George Street North, the Lech Building, of which it was originally the northern half. Because they were originally constructed as part of the same building, 415 George Street North shares specific architectural features with the Lech Building including the ogee-topped sash windows and wooden hood moulds; the two sides also share the same cornice which runs between both halves of the building. 415 George Street North also continues the pattern of windows set between pilasters surmounted by a cornice which is characteristic of commercial architecture in downtown Peterborough.

415 George Street North is also a landmark building in downtown Peterborough because of its unique stylistic features as well as its longstanding place as the location of Hi-Tops Restaurant. It is recognized as

an iconic location within the community because of its long history as a popular Chinese restaurant.

*"The short statement of reason for designation, including a description of the heritage attributes along with all other components of the Heritage Designation Brief constitute the "Reasons for the Designation" required under the Ontario Heritage Act. The Heritage Designation Brief is available for viewing in the City Clerk's office during regular business hours."*

## **SHORT STATEMENT OF REASONS FOR DESIGNATION**

415 George Street North has cultural heritage value or interest as a mid-Victorian commercial building in downtown Peterborough. Constructed between 1866 and 1868, the building features ogee-topped windows with wooden hood moulds which are both architecturally well-executed and unique to the architecture of the downtown. It is also an integral part of the downtown streetscape through its continuation of the three- and four-storey brick row of commercial structures along George Street, as well as through its structural and visual continuity with its neighbour, the Lech Building. It holds important association with the city's Chinese community as the longstanding location of Hi-Tops Restaurant. The building is a landmark property, due to its architectural distinctiveness and its history as a popular Chinese restaurant.

## **SUMMARY OF HERITAGE ATTRIBUTES TO BE DESIGNATED**

The Reasons for Designation include the following heritage attributes and apply to all elevations and the roof including all façades, entrances, windows, chimneys, and trim, together with construction materials of wood, brick, stone, plaster parging, metal and glazing, their related building techniques and landscape features:

### **Exterior Elements:**

- Three-storey brick structure
- Commercial Italianate style
- Flat roof, sloping to the rear of the building
- Construction to the east lot line of the property
- Contiguosness to the abutting buildings to the north and south
- Balanced composition of window openings on east elevation
- Extended cornice
- Decorative brickwork, including:
  - Dog tooth course
  - Recessed wall planes framed by pilasters
  - Pilasters
- Fenestration, including:
  - Original ogee-topped window openings
  - Ogee-topped two-over-two sash windows
  - Wooden ogee-shaped hood mould

## Appendix A

- Wooden window trim and brick mould
  - Window sills
  - Window openings and their associated elements including sash, moulding, jambs and trim
- Viewshed from the property along George Street