

Appendix A – Report IPGPL25-051

Heritage Designation Brief



The Morrow Building Addition

450 George Street North

Peterborough Architectural Conservation Advisory Committee

2025

Heritage Designation Status Sheet

Street Address	450 George Street North
Roll Number:	040100083000000
Short Legal Description:	PART LOT 1 NORTH OF BROCK STREET & EAST OF GEORGE STREET AS IN R531779, T/W R531779; PETERBOROUGH
PACAC Application Review Date:	September 9, 2025
Heritage Type:	Built Structure
Designation Type:	Ontario Heritage Act – Part IV
Designation Brief Completion Date:	June 2025
Designation Brief Completed by:	Heritage Preservation Office Staff
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 two** of the nine criteria set out under Regulation 9/06 of the Act. Staff have determined that 450 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:**

450 George Street North exhibits the same high degree of craftsmanship and design as its neighbour, the Morrow Building, to the south.

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

The building displays a high degree of craftsmanship in the brickwork and the front elevation is well executed extension of the Second Empire features of the Morrow Building.

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

There are no 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:**

450 George Street North is associated with two of Peterborough's most prominent businessmen of the nineteenth century, George A. Cox and James Stevenson.

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

The subject property has the potential to yield additional information regarding the mid-nineteenth and early twentieth century social life of Peterborough.

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

The building was designed by John E. Belcher, one of Peterborough's most prominent architects and former city engineers who was responsible for the design of many local commercial and public buildings including the Market Hall and Clock Tower. The building was constructed by John Carlisle and Arthur Rutherford, two of the city's most accomplished builders.

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 brick structures built to the lot line. The building is a contributing heritage resource to the historic cultural landscape of the downtown.

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

The subject property is historically and physically linked to its surroundings as a continuation of the commercial row of buildings now defined by the Morrow Building on the corner of Brock and George Streets. The property is an integral part of the urban, commercial landscape of the historic downtown of the City and acts as a link to the downtown commercial area.

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

450 George Street North has value as a landmark based on its association and adjacency with the Morrow Building.

Design and Physical Value



450 George Street North was constructed in 1882 for George A. Cox and James Stevenson as an addition to 442-448 George Street, the Second Empire structure designed by John E. Belcher for R. A. Morrow in 1880. On November 11, 1882, *The Daily Review* announced the two-storey building for two single stores was constructed in the same style as the Morrow Building with the exception of the mansard roof.

The contracting firm of Carlisle and Rutherford completed both structures. While the second floor is a precise continuation of Belcher's design for the Morrow Building, the two storefronts represent an evolution in construction technology. Where the Morrow Building's ground floor is a series of load bearing masonry arches, 450 George Street North uses a single brick pier to separate the storefronts which in turn use structural cast iron to create large areas of glass.

450 George Street North was constructed by prominent local architect John E. Belcher in the Second Empire style. The style originated in France and follows the tastes of Emperor Napoleon III who reigned from 1852 to 1870. He wanted to revolutionize France after years of instability from previous governments. With the Emperor's stamp of approval, public support for this new style grew quickly. It was heavily utilized in Georges-Eugène Haussmann's largescale rebuilding of Paris. This increased its popularity across France. Despite the French Second Empire falling in 1870 in the aftermath of the Franco-Prussian War, its eponymous architectural style was just gaining traction in North America. This lavish and grand style was favoured for public buildings and remained popular until the end of the Victorian era. Notable examples include Cox Terrace at 332-334 Rubidge Street, Peterborough, and the Office of the Prime Minister and Privy Council building (formerly known as the Langevin Block) in Ottawa. Despite its popularity, many Second Empire buildings were later demolished or had their decorative elements removed in following decades. The defining features of the Second Empire style are a mansard roof, dormers, elaborate ornamentation, and symmetrical facades.

The style was used in four grand corner blocks in Peterborough's downtown core, but the Morrow Building is the only one which survives today. The Cox Block on the southwest corner of George and Brock Streets was reduced in height and decoration in the 1950s, the Cluxton Block on the southwest corner of George and Hunter Streets was demolished in 1974 for the CIBC branch, and the Bank of Toronto Building on the southeast corner of George and Hunter had its mansard roof and other Second Empire embellishments removed in the 1920s.

The building features a second story of long, rectangular double-hung windows framed by pilasters with ornate brick capitals supporting paired wooden brackets. These brackets carry the roof cornice on 450 George which is a continuation of the base of the mansard roof of the Morrow Building. Each window is capped with an ornate metal hood matching the detailing of the Morrow Building. A plain entablature beneath the roof cornice is detailed with simple brick dentils beneath.

Historical and Associative Value

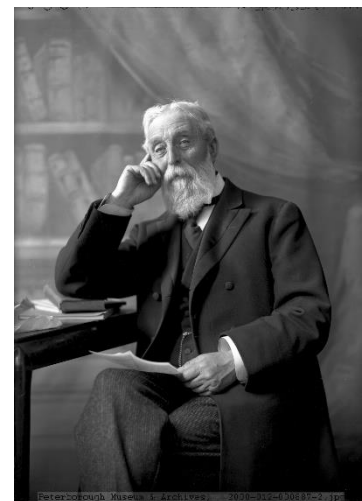


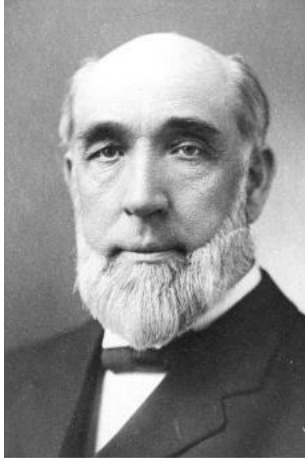
450 George Street North has historical and associative value as an important commercial building in Peterborough, yielding information on life in the city in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. It has strong value through its association with prominent business and political figures such as George A. Cox and James Stevenson. It has significant value as the work of prominent local architect and civil engineer, John E. Belcher. Belcher,

Cox and Stevenson all contributed to Peterborough's expansion in the nineteenth century.

The building was constructed in 1882 as an addition to the neighbouring Morrow Building. The Morrow Building was constructed in 1878-1879. It was financed by Robert A. Morrow and designed by prominent local architect John E. Belcher. The building served as the town post office from its completion until 1888. The addition was not commissioned by Morrow, but by George A. Cox and James Stevenson.

In 1882, Cox and Stevenson retained Belcher to expand his earlier design. John Edward Belcher was born in 1834 in Cork, Ireland. He trained as an architect under his father and was formally educated at Queen's College Cork. Belcher immigrated to Canada in 1858 and settled in Peterborough where he became county and later town engineer. He began to accept ecclesiastical commissions in the 1870s and by the 1880s had established himself as the region's foremost architect and civil engineer. He was responsible for several landmark buildings and civic improvements. Some of his notable remaining works include the Market Hall and Clock Tower, Sacred Heart Church, Peterborough Collegiate and the Carnegie Library. In 1899, Belcher served as president of the Ontario Association of Architects. Belcher died in Peterborough in 1915 and was buried in Little Lake Cemetery.





George Albertus Cox was born in 1840 in what was then the Colborne District, Upper Canada. He would become one of the wealthiest financiers in Canada as founder, president, vice president or director of several corporations in Canada and abroad. He first came to Peterborough in 1858 as an agent for the Montreal Telegraph Company. Cox rose to prominence in town as an agent for the Canada Life Assurance Company. He served seven one-year terms as mayor of Peterborough between 1872 and 1886 and by the 1880s, he owned fully ten per cent of Peterborough's real estate.

His financial ambitions made him a central figure in the architectural, industrial and financial growth of the town. He financed the construction of numerous commercial and residential buildings and championed the establishment of the Edison Electric Company (later Canadian General Electric) in Peterborough. In 1878, he rescued the Midland Railway from bankruptcy and following its reorganization leased the system to the Grand Trunk markedly improving rail access to Peterborough. In 1884, Cox founded the Central Canada Loan and Savings Company and by end of the century had developed a tightly interwoven network of companies that included British America Assurance and Western Assurance, Imperial Life Assurance, National Trust, Dominion Securities, Manufacturers' Life and the Temperance and General Life Assurance Company.

A lifelong Liberal, Cox ran unsuccessfully twice in the riding of Peterborough West. In 1896, Prime Minister Wilfred Laurier appointed Cox to the Senate. He died in Toronto in 1914. In 1990, Cox was declared a Person of National Historic Significance.

Cox was a generous philanthropist, donating to many causes in both Peterborough and Toronto. Locally, he and his wife Margaret, donated their house known as Hazelbrae to be Dr. Barnardo's Peterborough home for British home children and he donated land to Charlotte Street Methodist Church for their new church building which later became Trinity United Church. In Toronto, he was a supporter of Toronto General Hospital and Victoria University at the University of Toronto.

Cox's partner in the construction of this building was his political rival, James Stevenson. Stevenson was born in Ireland in 1829 and came to Peterborough in 1843. He began his career in Peterborough as a merchant, selling tin, coal, stoves and sewing machines.

His political career began in the mid-nineteenth century when he was first appointed mayor of Peterborough. Overall, he served ten one-year terms as mayor. Stevenson also served as Member of Parliament for Peterborough West from 1887 to 1895. He ran against George A. Cox in his first election and won with only sixteen votes between them. He ran again in the Dominion Elections of 1891 and won against Richard Hall with



ease. He was a personal friend of Sir John A. Macdonald. His most notable achievements in public office were securing the Edison General Electric Company and the Trent Valley Canal for Peterborough. Like Cox, Stevenson was involved in philanthropic endeavors. He was a founding member of the Peterborough Horticultural Society and sat on the board of education for over fifty years. He died in 1910 and was buried in Little Lake Cemetery.

At the time of completion, Cox envisioned the corner of George and Brock Streets as the commercial center of Peterborough. His business interests were consolidated in the Cox Block on the south-west corner of the intersection which he had expanded to four stories in the Second Empire style in 1880 (now largely dismantled). This would be short lived as a decade later the Post Office and Bank of Commerce moved south to the corner of Water and Hunter Streets.

The building is also associated with a number of long time tenants including James Carey, a shoemaker whose store was located at 450 George Street North from 1893 to 1916. F. R. J. MacPherson's plumbing company was located here from 1919 until 1949. In 1948, George Dormer opened the Sugar Bowl Grill which was a popular location with high school students from nearby Peterborough Collegiate Vocational School.

Contextual Value



The subject property is historically and physically linked to its surroundings as a continuation of the three storey commercial row of buildings now defined by the Morrow Building on the corner of Brock and George Streets. The property is an integral part of the urban, commercial landscape of the historic downtown of the City and acts as a link to the downtown commercial area. In addition, as 450 George Street North is associated with the Morrow Building it serves Peterborough as a landmark in the downtown core. The

Second Empire style is becoming a rare sight in Peterborough which make 450 George Street North a gem in Peterborough's downtown core. Although it is missing a mansard roof, its contribution to the Morrow building enhances its landmark status.

"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

450 George Street North has cultural heritage value as a Second Empire property in the downtown core that is associated with three prominent citizens of Peterborough: businessmen George A. Cox and James Stevenson and architect John E. Belcher. It has design and physical value as a well executed extension of the Morrow Building's ornate brickwork and finishes in the Second Empire style. In addition, 450 George Street North adds to Peterborough's downtown core as a historic commercial building. Although missing a defining feature of the Second Empire style; the mansard roof, it provides flow and symmetry to the Morrow Building which increases its landmark status.

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 facades, 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:

- 2 storey brick structure
- Construction to the west lot line of the property
- Contiguosness to the abutting building to the south
- Balanced composition window openings on the west elevation
- Decorative brickwork
- Ground floor cornice
- Galvanized metal window hoods
- Brackets at the upper cornice.
- recessed wall planes framed by pilasters with brick columns
- pilasters
- Fenestration, including:
 - Original window openings
 - Wooden window trim and brick mould
 - Window sills
 - Window openings and their associated elements including sash, moulding jambs and trim on east elevation