

# Heritage Designation Brief



## **Peterborough Hardware Company Building**

368 George Street North/140-142 Simcoe Street

Peterborough Architectural Conservation Advisory Committee

2025

## Heritage Designation Status Sheet

Street Address: 368 George Street North  
140-142 Simcoe Street

Roll Number: 040100063000000

Short Legal Description: LT O PL 100 TOWN OF  
PETERBOROUGH ; PETERBOROUGH  
CITY

LT L PL 100 TOWN OF  
PETERBOROUGH; LT M PL 100  
TOWN OF PETERBOROUGH ;  
PETERBOROUGH CITY

PACAC Review Date: October 6, 2025

Heritage Type: Built Structure

Designation Type: Ontario Heritage Act – Part IV

Designation Brief Completed Date: September 2025

Designation Brief Completed by: Emily Hamilton

Comments:

## **STATEMENT OF CULTURAL HERITAGE VALUE OR INTEREST**

The subject property has been researched and evaluated to determine its cultural heritage significance under Ontario Regulation 9/06 of the Ontario Heritage Act R.S.O. 1990 (the Act). 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 368 George Street North/140-142 Simcoe Street meets criteria and has cultural heritage value or interest and merits designation under the Act.

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

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

368 George Street North/140-142 Simcoe Street is an example of a late Victorian Italianate style commercial building. Uniquely, and showcasing the versatility of the style, the building has decorative elements often found in the Romanesque Revival style.

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

The properties display a high degree of craftsmanship in the exterior architectural features which are executed to a high standard of quality. Specific features with particular merit include the decorative brickwork, large arched windows, keystone, hoods, and the heavy ornamental cornice.

#### **c. 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:**

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

This property has strong associative value through its association with the Peterborough Hardware Company and the businesspeople who founded it: Robert B. McKee, Robert S. Davidson, Harry Phelan and R. H. Fortye. All men were active in the business and civic life of the city in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

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

This property yields information that contributes to an understanding of the development of the downtown core as the commercial centre of Peterborough. Its large scale and decoration represent the progress made throughout the nineteenth century.

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

The building demonstrates the work of architect John E. Belcher, who designed many important late nineteenth and early twentieth century buildings and landscapes in Peterborough. His designs represent an integral part of the built fabric of downtown Peterborough. Belcher designed many local landmarks, including Market Hall.

The builder, J. J. Hartley, who implemented Belcher's design, is responsible for many landmark structures in Peterborough's downtown, including the YMCA.

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

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

This property is important in maintaining and supporting the character of George Street North in the downtown core. This building is crucial in defining the character of the commercial downtown core. It is one of the largest and most ornate Victorian Italianate commercial buildings in the core. The Simcoe Street façade of the building is one of few remaining Victorian buildings on this stretch of Simcoe Street.

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

As a Victorian Italianate style commercial building with ground level storefronts, 368 George Street North/140-142 Simcoe Street is visually, functionally and historically linked to its surroundings. Though constructed in a later period than most of its surrounding buildings, it includes many of the same decorative elements, thus creating a cohesive landscape.

**c. is a landmark:**

This building is a landmark in the downtown core. It stands taller than its surrounding buildings and has more prominent windows and decorative elements. It has significant frontage on two major streets, George Street and Simcoe Street.

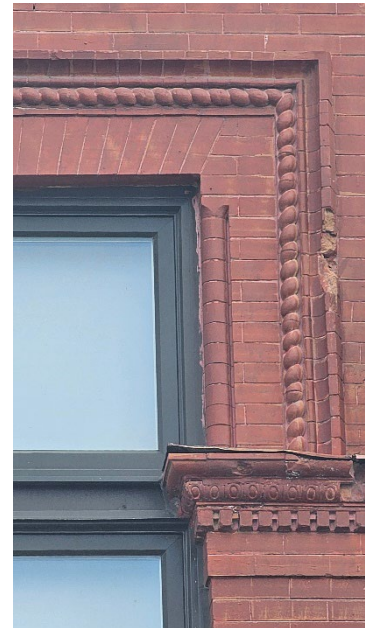
## Design and Physical Value

368 Geroge Street North/140-142 Simcoe Street has strong design and physical value as a late Victorian commercial building in downtown Peterborough designed in the Italianate style with decorative elements borrowed from the Romanesque Revival style. It reflects the work of two men who made major contributions to Peterborough's built landscape, architect John E. Belcher and bricklayer J. J. Hartley.

The building was constructed in the Italianate style from 1893-1894. The style was the most common choice for buildings in the downtown core from the 1860s on. Other examples of the style from this period include Market Hall and the Commerce Building. Examples from the 1880s and 1890s are often larger and more decorated than earlier examples. The original design of the building included a mansard roof, which is typical of the Second Empire style, however the Second Empire style was beginning to fade in popularity in the 1890s.

The Italianate Style was one of several historicist architectural styles which emerged in the early eighteenth century in the United Kingdom that drew on sixteenth century Italian Renaissance architecture. The style was originally inspired by the design of Tuscan country villas and details like the campanili – square, hip roofed towers that often-overlooked Italian village squares or piazzas. Architect Charles Barry popularized the style in the 1830s using the Italianate design vocabulary in the design of a variety of public buildings. The Italianate style came to North America in the late 1840s where architects like Alexander Jackson Davis produced pattern books of Italianate and Gothic Revival designs for domestic architecture. The style first appeared in Ontario in the 1860s. It arrived in more remote urban centres in the 1870s and continued to be popular until the 1890s. It became widely popular for a choice of domestic architecture at the beginning of the 1860s partly because of its adaptability. The catalogue of design elements could be incorporated into buildings of all sizes and types. In addition, with no rigid historical antecedents to follow, as the Georgian and Neoclassical styles required, architects were afforded more creativity and adaptability. By the end of its popularity at the close of the nineteenth century, a 'pure' Italianate design would be an unusual building in most urban centres.

A main aspect of the Italianate style is that while it is not ornate, it is highly decorated. One defining feature that became ubiquitous are paired eave brackets. Other common features include tall, narrow windows, arched windows, paired windows, quoins,



overhanging eaves, and cupolas. This property features key elements of the style including rounded windows, the heavy ornamental cornices, and the decorative brickwork.

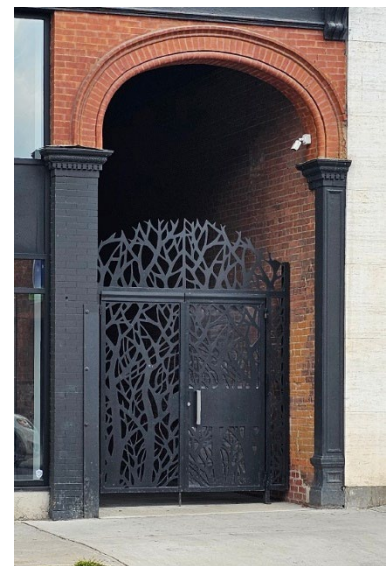


Although the building is Italianate at its core, being a later example, it reflects how the style was becoming eclipsed in popularity by the Romanesque Revival style. The Romanesque Revival style began in Germany around 1830 where it quickly spread to the United States and England. Many saw the style as being primitive compared to the Gothic Revival style. When it originally came to North America, it was primarily used for religious and public buildings due to its austere looking nature. It was characterized by big arches and columns. It began to be represented among residential and commercial

sectors when Henry Hobson Richardson put his own take on the style closer to the 1850s. 368 George Street North/140-142 Simcoe Street is adorned with decorative features that resemble those typical of the Romanesque style, including pilasters with decorative capitals, arches with voussoirs and keystones, and the use of terra cotta.

At the time of construction, it was reported that the building was built with steel joists embedded in the floor to support the heavy hardware machinery. This eliminated the need of supporting pillars throughout the building to hold up the floor, allowing large expanses of floorspace to go uninterrupted.

The Simcoe Street façade of the building is more understated in its decoration. While on George Street, the pilasters create a three-dimensional effect around the windows, on Simcoe Street, they span the building from the second to third storeys. Also of note on the Simcoe Street façade is the arched entryway to the back courtyard. The arch is decorated with terra cotta and columns on either. Each column features a decorative capital.



## Historical and Associative Value

368 George Street North/140-142 Simcoe Street was constructed in 1893-1894 for the newly established Peterborough Hardware Company. The building was designed by prominent local architect John E. Belcher and the brickwork was laid by well-known local bricklayer J. J. Hartley. It was home to the hardware company from its completion until 1936.

On May 30, 1893, *The Daily Review* reported that the buildings at 368 George Street North/140-142 Simcoe Street had been demolished to make way for the new premises of the newly formed Peterborough Hardware Company. The Peterborough Hardware Company was founded in 1893 by the merger of two previously existing hardware companies: McKee & Davidson and Fortye & Phelan. These two companies amalgamated to lower the cost of hardware. The founders of the company were Robert B. McKee, Robert S. Davidson, Harry Phelan and R. H. Fortye.

Robert B. McKee was born in Peterborough around 1845. He started in the hardware trade at the age of sixteen, first beginning in Lakefield and then in Peterborough. Eventually, McKee partnered with Robert S. Davidson and opened McKee & Davidson in 1871. Upon the Peterborough Hardware Company's formation, McKee was elected president. He died on December 17, 1904.

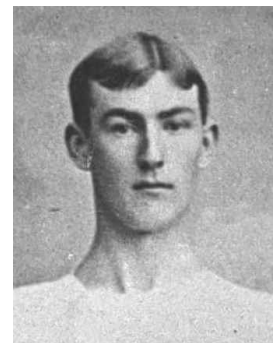
Robert S. Davidson was born in Smith Township around 1848. He began his business career at Nicholls and Hall's general store on George Street. When the Peterborough Hardware Company was founded, he was elected treasurer, due to his aptitude for finance. Additionally, he was a member of the Town Trust Committee and a founding member of the Nicholls Hospital Trust. Davidson was also a town alderman for nine years. He died on August 1, 1901.



Harry Phelan, pictured left, was born in Peterborough around 1857. When Peterborough Hardware Company was formed, he was elected vice-president. Additionally, Phelan sat on town council. He was first elected in 1895, serving until his retirement in 1899. However, he came out of retirement twice before his death. First in 1907 for a four-year term and for a second time in 1918 until his death. While he was an alderman, he sat on the Hunter Street Bridge Committee and the Public Work Committee. He died as a serving alderman on April 13,

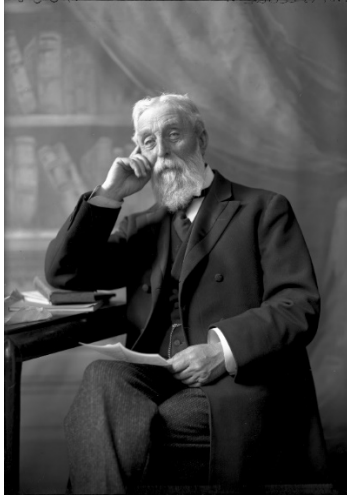
1920.

R. H. Fortye, pictured right, was born in Peterborough. He was elected secretary of the newly formed Peterborough Hardware



Company. He left the company in 1931 to become bookkeeper for the Colonial Weaving Company. He died on July 9, 1936.

For the new building, the company employed prominent local architect John E. Belcher and bricklayer J. J. Hartley.



John Edward Belcher was one of Peterborough's most prolific architects of the time. Belcher was born in 1834 in Cork, Ireland. After his formal education at Queen's College Cork, he articulated under his father architect Samuel R. Belcher. Belcher spent several years with the Cork Harbour Board and worked as an engineer in Liverpool before emigrating to Canada in 1858. He settled in Peterborough



working as a civil engineer and by 1870 was undertaking ecclesiastical architectural commissions. In 1885, he was appointed diocese architect by the Roman Catholic Diocese of Peterborough. In 1878, Belcher was appointed town and county engineer, a post he held until 1897, overseeing a diverse range of designs for bridges, waterworks systems, and public buildings. His legacy includes over thirty institutional and commercial buildings in Peterborough, numerous residences and dozens of other commissions throughout the region. His work includes several landmark buildings and civic improvements including the Market Hall and Clock Tower, Sacred Heart Church, Peterborough Collegiate, the Morrow Building and the design of Jackson Park. Belcher was active in the community and the architectural profession and in 1899 served as president of the Ontario Association of Architects. Belcher died in Peterborough in 1915 and was buried in Little Lake Cemetery.

John James Hartley was a prolific bricklayer, builder and contractor in Peterborough. He began his professional life as a contractor and was responsible for many prominent buildings such as the Commerce Building, YMCA and the Crystal Building at 410-412 George Street North. He served on town council for 1881 and again from 1883-1890. Outside of his professional and civic affairs, he was president of the Bricklayers Union and sat on the Board of Education. He died on July 24, 1930, at his home, 234 Antrim Street.

The Peterborough Hardware Company occupied 368 George Street North/140-142 Simcoe Street until April 1936 when the company liquidated. In October 1936, Pattenick's, a small Cobourg-based chain of department stores, opened at this address.

After Pattenick's, a series of other department stores and ladieswear stores operated at this address, namely Dave's Surplus Circus, Mountain Furniture Co. and Second Fiddle.

### **Contextual Value**

The subject property at 368 George Street North/140–142 Simcoe Street has significant contextual value as a contributing property to the historic commercial character of Peterborough's downtown core. Forming part of the near-continuous row of late nineteenth-century commercial buildings along the east side of George Street, between Brock and Simcoe Streets, the property reinforces the established streetscape through its scale, massing, and architectural expression.

The building is a landmark within this row, distinguished by its greater height, expansive windows, and elaborate decorative detailing, while still retaining the Italianate features typical of Peterborough's historic downtown architecture. Its unusual L-shaped plan and dual frontages on both George and Simcoe Streets contribute to its prominence and further enhance its visual presence in the area.

The property is visually, functionally, and historically linked to its surroundings. Visually, it contributes to the cohesive appearance of the historic commercial streetscape on George Street and serves as a defining element when viewed along Simcoe Street, where it stands on an axis to the downtown core. Functionally and historically, the building reflects the enduring commercial character of downtown Peterborough, with its use remaining largely unchanged since the time of its construction. Built as a hardware store, throughout the middle of the twentieth century, it continued a row of department stores and ladieswear stores on this stretch of George Street.

*"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**

368 George Street North/140-142 Simcoe Street has cultural heritage value as a landmark late-Victorian commercial building in Peterborough's downtown core. Like most commercial buildings in the core, it is an example of the Italianate style, though uniquely has elements of the Romanesque Revival style. This combination of styles allows the building to seamlessly continue the commercial core, while standing as a landmark property. The building's massing and large expanses of windows showcase the progress made in building technology in the Victorian era.

The building was constructed in 1893-1894 to house the Peterborough Hardware Company. It is the work of prominent local architect John E. Belcher. The brickwork was done by local contractor J. J. Hartley. It has strong associative value as the long-time home of the Peterborough Hardware Company from its time of completion until 1936. The company was founded by prominent local business and politicians, including R. B. McKee, R. S. Davidson, R. H. Fortye, and Harry Phelan.

## **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 the construction materials of brick and their related building techniques.

### **Exterior Elements:**

- Three-story brick construction
- Flat roof
- Cornice
- Brackets
- Rounded windows
- Decorative brickwork
- Window hoods
- Pilasters
- Capitals
- Moulding
- Coursing
- Keystones
- Voussoirs
- Fenestration

- Ground floor storefront
- Continuation of a commercial row