

# Heritage Designation Brief



**The Canadian Chicle Company**

**387 George Street South**

Peterborough Architectural Conservation Advisory Committee

2025

## Heritage Designation Status Sheet

Street Address: 387 George Street South

Roll Number: 040030140000000

Short Legal Description: PT BLK A PL 83 PETERBOROUGH, PTS  
1 & 2, 45R4741 ; PETERBOROUGH

PACAC Review Date: October 7, 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 387 George Street South 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:**

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

387 George Street South is a unique example of early twentieth-century industrial architecture in Peterborough, blending elements of Late Victorian and Early Edwardian industrial design with characteristics of the Chicago School, particularly in its restrained ornamentation and emphasis on function. Its rectangular massing and symmetrical façades represent typical industrial building practices of the period, while its location in a predominantly residential area makes it a rare surviving example of this building type outside the city's primary commercial core.

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

The property demonstrates a high degree of craftsmanship through its carefully executed structural brickwork, designed to meet both functional and safety requirements of the time. The evenly spaced pilasters and window openings create a balanced and ordered façade, while the deliberate termination of the pilasters below the roofline to provide space for signage reflects a thoughtful integration of architectural design and commercial identity.

#### **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:**

The subject property has direct associations with three companies of national renown: the Canadian Chicle Company, Western Clock (Westclox) Company and the Canadian Crayon Company. Built by the Chicle Company, it is associated with the company's founding director Senator Frank P. O'Connor. O'Connor was a generous philanthropist and later founded his own confectionery business, Laura Secord Chocolates, which is still in operation today.

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

The property has the potential to yield information about Peterborough's industrial and manufacturing history, particularly the development of small- and medium-scale production facilities outside the city's main industrial and commercial centres. It reflects patterns of industrial growth that continue to shape the city today, providing insights into the role of manufacturing in the life and economy of the community.

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

The architect of this building is not known.

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

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

Although it is not directly important in defining the overall character of the south end of George Street, which is predominantly residential, 387 George Street South contributes a contrasting and distinctive element to the area. As one of the few surviving purpose-built industrial buildings in its surroundings, it underscores the historic intermingling of industrial and residential uses that characterized Peterborough's growth in the early twentieth century.

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

The property is physically, functionally, and historically linked to its surroundings through its continuous commercial and industrial use since construction in 1910. At the time of its construction, the south end was the

industrial centre of the city, and the building now contributes to the row of commercial buildings along George Street South into the residential neighbourhood south of downtown.

**iii. is a landmark:**

This property is a landmark at the south end of George Street. It is one of the tallest and one of the few purpose-built commercial buildings in its surrounding area which allows it to have a prominent position.

## Design and Physical Value



387 George Street South has significant design and physical value as a representative example of the Edwardian Industrial style, in that its form reflects its use as a manufacturing building. Its massing is rectangular with symmetrical facades, a straightforward expression of its industrial function. On October 26, 1910, *The Daily Review* reported that the City of Peterborough sold the property to the Canadian Chicle Company for \$300 for the

purpose of constructing a factory. The building was completed shortly thereafter, purpose-built for industrial production at a time when Peterborough's economy was rapidly expanding.

The structure is comprised of heavy timber beams and structural brick, a typical construction system for industrial buildings of the period. This type of construction responded both to fire by-laws of the early twentieth century and to the need for long, open interiors that could accommodate large machinery and production lines. The generously sized, evenly spaced windows maximized daylight and provided ventilation, reducing reliance on artificial lighting and improving working conditions.

Architectural details, though modest, enhance its design significance. The brick pilasters create a sense of rhythm and balance across the facades, but unlike many comparable buildings, they terminate below the roofline, leaving an unbroken frieze band. This feature was deliberately designed to accommodate signage and advertising, allowing the building itself to serve as a billboard for the company's products. Such integration of commercial identity with architectural form was a hallmark of industrial design in the early twentieth century.



## Historical and Associative Value

387 George Street South has strong historical and associative value through its direct associations with Peterborough's local manufacturing industry. Its first three occupants nationally renowned manufacturers that based their operations in Peterborough: the Canadian Chicle Company, the Western Clock Company (Westclox), and the Canada Crayon Company.



The factory was built in 1910-1911 for the Canadian Chicle Company. They originally exclusively produced chewing gum but eventually began to make chocolate as well. The company was founded in Peterborough in 1909. Its founding director was Frank P. O'Connor.



Frank Patrick O'Connor was born in Deseronto, Ontario, in 1885. After quitting school at the age of 14, he moved to Peterborough to work for Canadian General Electric. He was among the founders of the Canadian Chicle Company in 1909. In 1913, he left the company and moved to Toronto where he founded Laura Secord Chocolates. A devout Roman Catholic and dedicated philanthropist, he donated generously to the Hospital for Sick Children in Toronto and St. Joseph's Hospital in Peterborough. In 1930s, he donated an estimated \$500,000 to the Roman Catholic Archdiocese of Toronto. In 1935, Prime Minister William Lyon Mackenzie King appointed him to the senate. In

recognition of his philanthropy and service to the Church, Pope Pius XI appointed him a Knight Commander of the Pontifical Equestrian Order of St. Gregory the Great in 1937. He died in Toronto in 1939.

During its time as the candy factory, the building was hit by fire on November 2, 1915. The damage to the building was minimal, but the stock, suffered greatly. In 1916, the company expanded into the United States. By 1919, the company had outgrown these premises relocated to the old Lundy Shovel and Tool factory at 270-280 Perry Street. After the Chicle Company vacated, the factory became the first Peterborough premises of the Western Clock Company.

The Western Clock Company (Westclox) was founded in Peru, Illinois. By 1910, their clocks, specifically their patented “Big Ben” alarm clocks, were being sold in Canada. In 1912, they opened a sales office in Toronto. The company’s Canadian subsidiary was incorporated in 1919.



Westclox purchased the building in 1920. They had begun their operations in Peterborough in the Barrie Building at 310-314 George Street North before needing larger premises. Parts were made at their Peru, Illinois factory and shipped to Peterborough for assembly. The “Big Ben” or “Little Ben” alarm clocks were the main product manufactured here. They soon outgrew this factory as well and in 1921, 15 acres of land in East City on Hunter

Street and Armour Road were purchased to build a purpose-built factory. The factory at 387 George Street South was once again left vacant.

In 1927, James W. Gravestock purchased the factory for his Canada Crayon Company. The Canada Crayon Company started in Toronto when its founder, James W. Gravestock, began making wax crayons. Gravestock was interested in settling in Peterborough after visiting for a fishing trip. He secured 387 George Street South through conversations with the Peterborough Chamber of Commerce and partnering with the American Crayon Company to obtain the site.



When the company took up operation, the factory was larger than their operation needs.



In 1928, the company went to Ottawa to ask for protection against hefty duties. Most of the raw materials used to make crayons carried large duties, with some as high as forty percent. However, if a pack of crayons was imported from the United States the import duty was only seventeen and a half percent. The company warned that an increase in these duties would result in a higher price being paid by the Canadian consumer. Eventually in

1931, a seven and a half percent increase on duties for imported carpenters chalk and railroad crayons was introduced.

By the end of 1932, the crayon factory had outgrown the factory. At the time every effort was made to keep the crayon factory in Peterborough. However, with the company unwilling to build their own factory, the Canadian Crayon Company and Gravestock moved to Lindsay, where the Canadian headquarters of Crayola remains.

### **Contextual Value**

387 George Street South has significant contextual value as one of the few surviving industrial buildings on the south end of George Street, an area that has historically been characterized by residential development. While the north end of George Street emerged as a centre of commercial and industrial activity, the south end retained a largely domestic scale. This makes 387 George Street South unique within its setting, standing out as a purpose-built industrial building in a predominantly residential neighbourhood. Its scale, materials, and form would have distinguished it sharply from the surrounding houses at the time of its construction.

The building's height further reinforces its prominence. Rising above nearby residences, it has long served as a visual marker within the streetscape, contributing to its recognition as a local landmark. 387 George Street South retains a sense of historical distinctiveness, embodying a period when industrial production and residential life were interwoven in Peterborough.

In addition to its landmark qualities, the property is visually, functionally, and historically linked to its surroundings. Visually, it contributes to the mixed character of George Street by standing as one of the few remaining non-residential historic structures in the area. Functionally and historically, it preserves the memory of an earlier landscape in which factories and workshops were integrated into residential neighbourhoods in the city's south end.

*"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**

387 George Street South is a landmark industrial building in Peterborough's south end. It is one of few surviving industrial buildings in this area, which was once the industrial centre of the city. Built in 1910-1911 for the Canadian Chicle Company, it showcases key features of Edwardian industrial buildings such as symmetry, evenly spaced windows, and tapered pilasters, allowing space of advertisement and signage.

It has strong historical associations with past occupants including the Canadian Chicle Company, Western Clock (Westclox) Company and the Canadian Crayon Company. A relatively small structure for a factory, these companies all soon outgrew the building and moved to larger premises. One of the founders of the Canadian Chicle Company, Senator Frank P. O'Connor, later went on to found Laura Secord Chocolates.

## **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 red brick construction
- Flat roof
- Radiating voussoirs
- Symmetrical massing
- Entrances
- Rusticated stone foundation
- Fenestration
- Pilasters