

Heritage Designation Brief



The Albion Hotel

227-233 Hunter Street West

Peterborough Architectural Conservation Advisory Committee

2025

Heritage Designation Status Sheet

Street Address: 227-233 Hunter Street West

Roll Number: 040050127000000

Short Legal Description: PT LT 7 S OF HUNTER STAND W OF
GEORGE ST PL 1 TOWN OF
PETERBOROUGH PTS 1 & 2 45R3536
S/T R605666 ; PETERBOROUGH CITY

PACAC Review Date: November 4, 2025

Heritage Type: Built Structure

Designation Type: Ontario Heritage Act – Part IV

Designated Brief Completed Date: October 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 227-233 Hunter Street West 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:

227-233 Hunter Street West is a rare representative example of a Second Empire row house. It is also one of few buildings in Peterborough of the Second Empire style that still have the mansard roof.

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

227-233 Hunter Street West displays a high degree of craftsmanship in the use of decorative brickwork, the dormer surround at the corner of the building and glasswork in the corner window.

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:

227-233 Hunter Street West is not associated with a theme, event, belief, person, activity, organization, or institution that is significant to the community.

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

This property has the potential to yield information that contributes to an understanding of the commercial community in Peterborough, which is still an active community today.

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

The architect and/or builder of this building are not known.

3. The property has contextual value because it:

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

This property is important in defining, maintaining or supporting the character of the area. As it is the beginning of a row of historic commercial buildings. It also one of few historical axes that leads into downtown Peterborough that still exists today.

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

This property is functionally, visually and historically linked to its surroundings as a commercial building at the west end of Hunter Street.

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

Situated on a corner lot at the beginning of an axis to the downtown core, 227-233 Hunter Street West has a prominent position which makes it easily recognisable. In addition, it being of the Second Empire style sets it apart from other buildings in the downtown area.

Design and Physical Value

The Albion Hotel has design and physical value as a unique surviving example of the Second Empire style in Peterborough. The style originated in France and follows the tastes of Emperor Napoleon III who reigned from 1852 to 1870. Napoleon III 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 in the 1850s and 1860s. 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 residential examples in Canada include Glanmore House National Historic Site in Belleville, Ontario, and the George Brown House National Historic Site in Toronto.

The main features of the Second Empire style are a mansard roof, dormers, elaborate ornamentation, and symmetrical facades. Several of these can be found of 227-233 Hunter Street West. Most notably the mansard roof, the main defining feature of the style. The mansard roof on this building is a concave mansard roof, but they can also be straight, straight with flare, convex, and S-shaped. 227-233 Hunter Street West also has dormers which allow light into the attic space, which the mansard roof allows to serve as a third floor. One of the earliest mentions of the Albion Hotel is on the 1875 map of Peterborough which shows the dormers along the back of the building. In addition, the Albion Hotel has decorative brickwork and is of buff brick construction which is indicative of a Second Empire style building.

Many other examples of the style in Peterborough and beyond were demolished or scaled back in grandeur over the course of the twentieth century.



Unique features on the building include the second storey corner window. The window is made from several single panes of glass to give the glass a curved effect.

The decorative brickwork on the Albion Hotel building provides a frame for each door and window with each surround being connected to the next. Although the work is more understated than other Second Empire properties, it is a unique way to showcase a building. Although most of the dormers have now been removed, one with a unique wooden

surround remains on the corner of the building.



Historical and Associative Value



The Albion Hotel has strong historical and associative value as a prominent commercial and residential building in downtown Peterborough. Built around 1875 after a fire ripped through the original wooden buildings in 1871, this Second Empire row and corner building was originally home to the Albion Hotel. One of the first mentions of the Albion Hotel is in a map of Peterborough from 1875. However, city directories show it as a boarding house for people who worked downtown. The building has associations with the following notable

individuals: Cornelius McGrath, Wellington Bradshaw, Peterborough Decorating Company and C. A. Joseph Duranceau.

Cornelius McGrath was one of the landowners when 227-233 Hunter Street West was occupied by wooden buildings. In July 1871, *The Peterborough Review* reported that a fire ripped through the corner of Aylmer and Hunter Streets. Although the evening was calm, the fire quickly spread from the blacksmith's building to adjacent buildings, such as McGrath's. By the time the fire was out, eight families were left homeless, including the McGraths. Shortly after the fire, McGrath advertises the sale of his land in 1872 in *The Peterborough Review*. In addition, to being the landowner before the building was built, McGrath also lived in the Albion Hotel after it was completed. He was listed as a shoemaker in the 1876 town directory that has him staying at the Albion Hotel.

Although most of his life was spent making shoes, he did have a prominent career in public service. In 1877, Town Council appointed McGrath and Robert Rowe to be the town assessors for that year. McGrath was repeatedly re-elected town assessor, which made him a trusted member of the community. Outside of his public affairs, he also held an esteemed position as head of the Separate School Board for nineteen years. McGrath died in November 1893 from a bronchial infection.

Though this property lacks some of the more illustrious association of other buildings in the downtown core, it has a long history as a home to working and middle-class workers and shop owners. One such example is Wellington Bradshaw. Bradshaw owned and operated a grocery store from the early 1890s to 1908 when he sold his business to Mr. Kennedy of Ennismore. He was born in South Monaghan Township. He married Mary Elizabeth Butcher on October 5, 1892, at St. Luke's Church, Ashburnham. They had no children. Wellington Bradshaw lived a quiet life and died after an operation in Nicholls Hospital on June 24, 1936.

The Peterborough Decorating Company opened in the Albion Hotel in 1907. The store was managed by John C. Ortmiller and sold wallpaper, paint, varnishes and other decorating needs. *The Peterborough Examiner* reported on May 31, 1907 that Ortmiller had run away from Peterborough with around \$100 of the company's money in his pockets. According to the article, Ortmiller was making bookkeeping difficult as he would not keep track of accounts, so it was very hard to keep track of where money was being earned and spent. Just before he absconded, he was noticed in town without his moustache, which is believed to be part of his runaway scheme. The company was most likely dissolved after this incident.

C. A. Joseph Duranceau was a prominent plumber and gas engineer at 227 Hunter Street West. He was born in Quebec and came to Peterborough with his wife in the late 1890s, opening his business shortly after. Before coming to Peterborough, he invented a machine that automatically separated cream from milk and patented his invention in 1886. He stayed in the same place on Hunter Street until he retired in the middle of 1937 when Carew Cycle & Radio took over the premises. His son, J. A. Noah Duranceau, opened a music shop at 231 Hunter Street West while his father was still in business and carried on after his father retired. He died on August 27, 1951, at St. Joseph's Hospital.



Contextual Value

The Albion Hotel has contextual value as a landmark Second Empire-style corner building in downtown Peterborough. The Albion Hotel marks the western edge of the historic Hunter Street West commercial row – often referred to as the Café District. The Aylmer Street façade is one of the few remaining Victorian edifices on the portion of the street which crosses through downtown. This makes it important in defining, maintaining and supporting the character of the area around it. As one of few remaining historical corner buildings on an axis into the downtown, it occupied a prominent position. This makes it an easily recognizable landmark property.

"The short statement of reasons 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

The Albion Hotel at 227-233 Hunter Street West has cultural heritage value as a landmark building on the cusp of the downtown core. It is a rare Second Empire building that still retains its mansard roof, a feature popular in the Victorian era yet with few examples surviving in Peterborough. It is also a unique example of row housing in Peterborough. The property showcases the lives of the working-class in Peterborough in a few of its notable tenants including merchant turn town assessor Cornelius McGrath, grocer Wellington Bradshaw and plumber C. A. Joseph Duranceau. Its location and surroundings make it one of few historical properties on an axis to the downtown core making it a landmark and essential to maintaining and supporting the character of the downtown area.

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:

- Two-story buff brick construction
- Mansard roof
- Dormer window
- Cornices
- Brackets
- Pilasters
- Recessed windows
- Hood moulds
- Ground floor storefronts
- Fenestration
- Original entryways
- Transom windows