

Historic Building Appraisal
Peak Depot
No. 102 Old Peak Road, The Peak, Hong Kong

Records suggest that the Peak Depot (山頂倉庫) was built around 1903 as a “Chair Coolie House”, that is, a shelter and quarters for sedan chair coolies at the Tramway Station at Victoria Gap. Around 1910, it became a “Forestry & W.W. Coolies House” serving as offices, workshop and storage-house for emergency equipment and accommodation for waterworks office personnel serving the Peak area. After the Second World War, it was used as “Peak Waterworks Depot”. The building, which has been vacant for quite a while, is still under the management of the Water Supplies Department (WSD). *Historical Interest*

For a good many years after the British occupation of Hong Kong, water supply was a problem for Peak residents who had to rely solely on water from wells and streams prior to 1860. Although the first ever reservoir at Pok Fu Lam was completed in 1863, it was not until 1891, three years after the opening of the Peak Tramway, that water supply to the Peak from the city waterworks commenced. As the population on the Peak increased rapidly (from 500 in 1901 to 2,249 in 1906 and 2,304 in 1911) at the start of the 20th century, the rising demand for water supply outgrew the capacity of the existing pumping engine and mains. A few reservoirs at Wong Nei Chung and Tai Tam were constructed to expand the existing water supply system. It was probably during this time that the building was used as a “Forestry & W.W. Coolies House”.

The building is a two-storey rectangular block constructed in a very simple and functional form planned in a systematical manner. Its stuccoed façade and regularly spaced windows give it a **Neo-Georgian** appearance, but the replacement of the original pitched roof with a flat roof gives it a **Modernist** appearance also. The building is raised off a massive retaining wall built of large granite blocks. The walls are built of local green bricks and rendered. External decorations are minimal except for a horizontal projecting string course at first floor level, and a chimney stack with a decorative appearance. The interior of the building is functional with minimal ornamentation. A straight open riser steel and concrete staircase serves the first floor. *Architectural Merit*

It has to be said that this building is not particularly outstanding architecturally. However, it does have built heritage value and historical value to reflect the history of transportation and water supplies in Hong Kong. As previously mentioned the original pitched roof has been removed. Other alterations include blocked-up windows, probably due to the various uses to which the building has been put. Some windows have been replaced with *Rarity, Built Heritage Value & Authenticity*

modern steel framed windows, but some old wooden casements still exist.

As a purely utilitarian building, the Peak Depot's social value seems to be rather limited, but it has social and local interest. *Social Value & Local Interest*

To its south, Peak Depot is within walking distance of the Victoria Gap Substation (爐峰峽變壓站) and the Peak Tramways Co. Ltd. (山頂纜車有限公司). It is sited beside a rest garden which enjoys the entire view of the Peak Tower (凌霄閣) and is physically close to the Old Peak Café (舊山頂餐廳). *Group Value*

The building is now vacant and abandoned. With its magnificent view, splendid environment and close proximity to the Peak Tower and Peak Café it is a pity some appropriate re-use cannot be found for it. It could possibly, if restored and converted, make a desirable residence. *Adaptive Re-use*