

## Historic Building Appraisal

No. 542 Tai Kei Leng

Shap Pat Heung, Yuen Long

First known as Shui Dai Ba Tsuen (水打壩村), the village in which No.119 is situated was renamed “Tai Kei Leng” (大旗嶺) around the 1920s or 1930s. People from the Siyi (四邑) region, i.e. Xinhui (新會), Kaiping (開平), Enping (恩平) and Taishan (台山); and Hakkas from Shenzhen (深圳) settled in the village in the 1910s-30s because of the higher social stability and economic prosperity of Hong Kong when compared with the mainland. The birthplace of Wong Kung-yam (黃恭任), the builder of No.542, is Dubu (都斛) of Taishan. *Historical Interest*

Kung-yam was an overseas Chinese who ran a laundry in Canada with his brothers Kung-shing (恭盛) and Kung-yun (恭潤). They founded a trust named Tung Yi Tong (同義堂) in Canada and participated in land investment in Yuen Long through the trust’s account in the Hong Kong and Shanghai Banking Corporation from the early to the late 1920s. Kung-yam came to Hong Kong in 1927 and lived in Yuen Long Kau Hui. Then, he settled his family in Tai Kei Leng and built the house in the early 1930s. After the house was completed, Kung-yam returned to Canada. It was after the Second World War that he retired and came back to Hong Kong.

The building contractor was Wong Wah (黃華), who was also in charge of the construction of a number of village houses in Lung Tin Tsuen, such as Nos. 21 and 22 of that village.

The house is a two-storey residence built in the typical **Qing Vernacular** style. The house has plain rendered and painted walls with regularly spaced windows. The windows are steel framed with projecting hood mouldings for weather protection. The front façade is recessed to form a covered porch over the front entrance. The roof over the main part of the building is pitched and covered with Chinese tiles. The rear part of the building has a semi-pitched roof also covered with Chinese tiles. The overall appearance of the roof as viewed from the gable side looks rather odd. A curiously shaped annex in the form of a chevron in plan has been built on to the southwest corner, and a small detached two storey block built at the northwest corner. A temporary structure has been erected between these two annexes along the west wall of the house. A narrow gateway with a triangular pediment at the side of the front portico gives access to the yard on the west side of the house. *Architectural Merit*

The house with its rather peculiar additions stands apart from the other old houses nearby. It does not have much architectural merit being a simple village house of vernacular style. Being only 70 years old its heritage value is rather limited. Due to the annexes built on to it, the authenticity has been diminished.

***Rarity,  
Built Heritage  
Value &  
Authenticity***

The social value of the house lies in its role as the family residence of Wong Kung-yam who built it out of the proceeds of his laundry business in Canada. As the other buildings nearby are of mixed style or modern style, No. 542 has local interest as a typical Qing vernacular house.

***Social Value  
& Local  
Interest***