

Historic Building Appraisal
St. Paul's Primary Catholic School
Wong Nei Chung Road, Happy Valley, Wan Chai, Hong Kong

The building of St. Paul's Primary Catholic School, located in Happy Valley, was previously an orphanage in the name of "Le Calvaire"(加爾利略山會院) operated under "Sisters of St. Paul de Charters"(沙爾德聖保祿女修會). The building was completed towards the end of 1907 and the orphanage was opened on 6 January 1908 by the Governor, Sir Frederick Lugard (盧押) accompanied by Bishop Pozzoni (師多敏主教). *Historical Interest*

The "Sisters of St. Paul de Charters", which was founded in France, had been working steadily in Hong Kong since they first arrived in 1848. The Sisters saw at once that the most urgent need was the rescue of babies, mostly girls who were abandoned by their parents.

During the Japanese Occupation of 1941-1945, the site was used as a police station and a jail. In 1946, the orphanage ceased to operate and the building was used solely as a primary school from then on. The present school name, St. Paul's Primary Catholic School (聖保祿天主教小學), was adopted in 1960 when the school began receiving Government subsidies.

This church-like building was designed in **Gothic Revival** style by the well known local architectural firm of **Leigh and Orange**. Gothic features are found in the tall narrow pointed-arch lancet windows with geometric and curvilinear tracery. Some windows however are flat topped with label mouldings which is more Tudor than Gothic. The walls are plainly rendered and painted with polychromatic so-called "bandaged brickwork" featured on the columns to the open arcaded verandahs. The pitched Chinese tiled roof is a local adaptation. Internally, Gothic architecture gives way to **Classical Revival** featuring elegant white painted columns supporting entablatures, pediments and moulded cornices. Carved ornamental brackets in the classical style can be seen on the second floor verandah. Doors are panelled and glazed with matching fanlights. There is certain **Art Nouveau** influence in the ornamental ironwork to the balustrading to the verandahs and **Arts and Crafts** influence in the fireplace mantelpiece in the ground floor meeting room. *Architectural Merit*

The building is a rare and elegant piece of built heritage. Some modifications are evident such as modern floor finishes and building services installations, otherwise the building has not been altered too much and retains much of its authenticity. The external façade would look better if it were *Rarity, Built Heritage Value & Authenticity*

painted natural stone colour rather than white, which is the wrong colour for Gothic architecture.

The social value of the building lies in the historical role it has played in the fields of education and social welfare. Situated on a raised platform facing the Happy Valley sports ground, the School enjoys a marvelous view with the scenery almost unchanged since it was first built.

*Social Value
& Local
Interest*

To the left of the school is St. Paul's Secondary School (聖保祿中學) opened in 1960, which was also established by the Sisters of St. Paul de Chartres. It is physically close to other historic buildings, namely St. Margaret Mary's Church (聖瑪加利大堂), Shing Kwong Church (聖光堂) and Po Kok Girls' Middle School (寶覺女子中學).

Group Value

The building has been put to various uses since it was built proving that it is adaptable. As far as is known there are no plans to close the school so that the question of adaptive re-use does not arise at present.

*Adaptive
Re-use*