

## Historic Building Appraisal

### No. 128 Pok Fu Lam Road, Hong Kong

Built around 1931, the building at No. 128 Pok Fu Lam Road (named “Jessville”) was built as a family residence. It was named after **Jessie Tam** (杜佩珍), the wife of **William Ngar Tse Thomas Tam** (otherwise known as Tam Ngar Tse 譚雅士 or 譚夏士). Mr. Tam was a barrister, community leader and philanthropist who held many public appointments. Notably, he was Chairman of Po Leung Kok Board (香港保良局) in 1936-1937 and Unofficial Member of the Legislative Council in 1939-1941. During the Japanese Occupation (1941-1945), he served as a member of the Chinese Rehabilitation Committee (香港善後處理委員會) and the Chinese Co-operative Council (香港華民各界協議會). Nowadays, the Jessie and Thomas Tam Foundation (譚雅士杜佩珍基金會) and the Thomas Tam Centre (安家舍), inaugurated by the Honorable Mrs. Betty Tung (董趙洪聘) in 1997, are active in contributing to the well-being of Hong Kong. Mr. Tam lived in the residence until his death in 1979.

**Historical  
Interest**

“Jessville” is a two-storey **Classical Revival** residence of **Italian Renaissance** style with certain modern **Art Deco** influences. The plan of the building is **Palladian**, strongly symmetrical set on a central axis featuring a central entrance porch leading into central rooms or halls with side rooms on either side. An L-shaped servants’ annex is connected to the house at the north corner. The exterior of the façades is finished with what appears to be grey terrazzo or Shanghai plaster. Classical features and elements include columns set on pedestals, entablatures, pediments, overhanging eaves or cornices decorated with dentils, ornamental balustrading, classical urns and a central dome or cupola. A small pavilion in contrasting Chinese style is situated in the centre of the flat roof. Tall ornamental railings and gates protect the mansion from intruders.

**Architectural  
Merit**

**Built Heritage  
Value &  
Authenticity**

Italian Renaissance style is quite rare in Hong Kong, and the absence of alterations make “Jessville” a rarity and valuable piece of built heritage. Its social value lies in it being a representative example of a pre-WW2 residence of a wealthy family in the Pok Fu Lam area.

**Rarity,  
Social Value  
& Local  
Interest**

The building is physically close to a number of historic buildings including the Douglas Castle 德格拉斯堡 (the present University Hall, which is a Declared Monument) in No. 144 Pok Fu Lam Road, the “Bethanie” 伯達尼修院 in No.139 Pok Fu Lam Road and the “Alberose” 玫瑰邨 at Nos. 132A & 132B Pok Fu Lam Road.

**Group Value**

Now vacated and under pressure from redevelopment, “Jessville” has probably outlived its use as a residence, its pre-war style of architecture unsuited to modern living. A suitable adaptive re-use needs to be found for the building to reflect its past glory and architectural value to the community.