

Historic Building Appraisal

No. 19 Hing Hon Road, Hong Kong

Erected around 1917, No.19 Hing Hon Road (興漢道) is a typical Chinese tenement house with a European-style façade reflecting Western influence on architecture in Hong Kong during the colonial era. Not much seems to be known about its early history, but since 1951 it has been the property of a Ng (吳) family. *Historical Interest*

The history of Hing Hon Road dates back to the 1860s when a large plot of land (I.L. 757) on a government lease of 999 years, on which Hing Hon Road stands, was purchased by a Chinese individual named **Choy Akün** on 7 January 1862. It is not unknown as to what was built on I.L. 757 immediately after the purchase, but evidently, **Choy Akün** was also the landlord of “Rose Villas” which used to be located at No. 66 Bonham Road (I.L. 760).

Since its location is sandwiched between the Chinese quarter down the slopes and the wealthy Western quarter in its immediate neighbourhood, Hing Hon Road was a favourite residential area for well-to-do Chinese. A few prominent Chinese families once inhabited on this road. They include, for example, the Chaus (i.e., the ancestors of Chau Kai-bong (周啓邦) who is the son of Chau Sik-nin (周錫年, 1903–1985, prominent businessman and social leader) and the grandson of Chau Siu-ki (周少岐, acting Legislative Councillor in the years 1921, 1923 and 1924).

No.19 Hing Hon Road is a three-storey house in the **Italianate Renaissance** style. The street façade has three arched openings to the ground floor, three rectangular openings to the first floor, and three arched openings to the third floor. The openings are separated by simple Tuscan Order classical columns. The windows are wooden casements with ornamental ironwork grilles in Western and Chinese patterns. The main entrance door has a modern aluminium gate, but the old ironwork grille to the fanlight opening still survives. The façade is finished with a dull grey rendering possibly Shanghai plaster. Projecting band courses indicate the first and second floor levels. There is a simple projecting cornice at parapet level with a stepped ziggurat shape central pediment and matching corner posts. Access to the interior was not allowed, but a plan obtained from the Land registry shows a long narrow layout with a staircase at one side. *Architectural Merit*

Redevelopment appears to be taking place all around the old building so that it has become a rare surviving piece of built heritage. Its external appearance does not appear to have been altered very much so that it remains fairly authentic. *Rarity, Built Heritage Value & Authenticity*

The social value of this tenement building lies in the visual reminder it provides of the type of house that was built in the early 20th century as affluent Chinese moved up to the Mid-Levels area. It is definitely of local interest.

***Social Value
& Local
Interest***

It is physically close to the University of Hong Kong where declared monuments such as the Main Building (本部大樓), Hung Hing Ying Building (孔慶熒樓) and Tang Chi Ngong Building (鄧志昂樓) stand. Other buildings in the surroundings graded by the Antiquities and Monuments Board include the Fung Ping Shan Building (馮平山樓) and King's College (皇仁書院). No. 2 Hing Hon Road is another item of historic interest nearby.

Group Value

A suitable adaptive re-use may be difficult to find for this old residential building. Its best use would be to continue as a residential building.

***Adaptive
Re-use***