

Historic Building Appraisal
Nos. 1 and 3 Playing Field Road,
Mong Kok, Kowloon

The exact year of construction of the premises at Nos. 1 and 3 Playing Field Road (運動場道) cannot be ascertained, but from a review of land records, it is believed that it was built around 1932. The building was re-registered by the Japanese authorities in 1942. *Historical Interest*

The land lot on which this premises stands is held under Government Lease and the 75-year lease was granted on 13 April 1931. The first lessee of the lot was Tsang Wing but his personal background is not known. Interestingly, the lot and the premises thereon have been owned by the Tsang family throughout. Over the past decade, the ground floor has been rented for use by Chi Kee Restaurant (志記海鮮飯店).

Nos. 1 & 3 are adjoining shophouses of four-storey high built at the junction of Playing Field Road and Portland Street. The two houses share a party wall and a common staircase and have a service lane at the rear. The south elevation facing Playing Field Road is a plain painted stucco facade, with a central staircase enclosure flanked by six large rectangular windows which may originally have been open balconies now enclosed by metal windows. There are projecting horizontal bands at each storey level supported on corbels and a wide overhanging eaves with a rounded corner at roof level supported on cantilevered brackets. The top of the staircase enclosure, which has two square windows, has a small balcony with bolection mouldings, cantilevered brackets, pierced panels of interlaced tracery, and an arched doorway-cum-window. The balcony is protecting by a projecting canopy, surmounted by an elliptical shaped pediment with the year 1932 on the centre panel, flanking Art Deco style geometric posts, four foliated console shaped buttresses, and a bulky looking flagpole on the top. At ground floor level, the main entrance is fitted with a pair of modern stainless steel security gates. There are modern shopfronts on either side with colourful signboards. *Architectural Merit*

The Portland Street elevation is the side elevation of No. 1. It is stepped back twice to form a narrow open yard which is enclosed by a high wall topped by unclimbable railings. A two-storey high verandah projects over the pavement on square rusticated stucco columns and extends from the corner of the building to about halfway along the facade. The verandah is built in trabeated (beams and columns) classical design with brackets and projecting beam ends in imitation of timber construction. The ornamentation consists of

paneled balustrades with bolection mouldings and pierced grilles of interlaced and cross-braced tracery, stylised vertical palm leaf capitals to the columns, aphid stucco sways or festoons and geometric Art Deco appliqués under the sways. There is an open balcony at third floor level over the verandah flat roof in similar style protected by wide overhanging eaves. The stepped back elevations are rather drab being finished in plain grey stucco, with tall narrow modern aluminum windows protected by flat concrete canopies or hoods. A section of the parapet at roof level has pierced decorative grilles of interlaced tracery.

Shophouses are now becoming very rare due to redevelopment and urban renewal. It is a rare example of pre-war shophouse in the district.

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

A few original wooden windows survive but most windows are modern aluminum or metal replacements. Many of the open verandahs have been enclosed and some parapets have had the ornamental grilles removed. Rooftop structures and windows mounted room coolers also mass the overall appearance.

This part of Mong Kok has always been a commercial-cum-residential area. Nos. 1 & 3 are significant in the evolution of Hong Kong's social, cultural and economic development. The building's presence reminds us of the past and serves as an important counterpoint against development.

***Social Value
& Local
Interest***

The shophouses are within walking distance of other historic buildings, such as the Old Kowloon Police Headquarters (舊九龍警察總部), Nos. 190 to 204 Prince Edward Road West (太子道西), Nos. 210 and 212 Prince Edward Road West (all Grade 2), Nos. 177 and 179 Prince Edward Road West (Grade 3), No. 729 Nathan Road (彌敦道) (Grade 3), and Lui Seng Chun (雷生春, Grade 1).

Group Value