

Historic Building Appraisal
No. 4 Second Lane,
Tai Hang, Causeway Bay, H.K.

Tai Hang (大坑) takes its name from *tai hang* (big stream) that formerly *Historical Interest* flowed down the hillside near here and out into the harbour between East Point and North Point. It is one of the old villages of Hong Kong Island. The village is a multi-clan one settled by the Hakka families of Wong (黃), Cheung (張), Li (李), Chu (朱) and Ip (葉). The first three are said to be the oldest families. The population of Tai Hang at the 1911 Census was 1,574 persons. Besides some farming and fishing, the inhabitants kept some of the first dairy farms on the Island, long before the Dairy Farm started in 1886, and also in laundry work. The name of the main street of Tai Hang, Wun Sha Street (浣紗街, which means ‘washing cloth’, refers to this early line of business.

No. 4 Second Lane is one of the remaining historic buildings of the land around Tung Lo Wan (銅鑼灣), formerly known as Tang Lung Chau (燈籠洲). The incense burners placed outside the Tin Hau Temple of Causeway Bay (銅鑼灣天后古廟) and the couplets in the Lin Fa Temple (蓮花宮, “Lotus Palace”) are evidence to this old name. Formerly situated not far from the shore, reclamation began there in the 1880s. With the construction of the causeway joining Kellet Island and the shore of Tang Lung Chau, Tung Lo Wan got its new English name, Causeway Bay, from the new causeway.

Although records indicate that the site was already occupied as early as 1912, judging from appearance, it is likely that the building was erected in the **1930s** when the stripped classical style gained popularity. The first registered owner of the house lot is **Ip Yau** (葉有) who is believed to be a member of the Ip clan with a long history in Tai Hang Village. The upper floors of the building are used as living accommodation. The ground floor has been used as a vehicle repair workshop for over one decade. An old shop sign in terrazzo finish bearing Chinese characters “油糖” (i.e. edible oil and sugar) is indicative of the former existence of a grocery store of daily necessities.

No. 4 is the end house of a block of four houses. It has three elevations: *Architectural Merit* the rear elevation faces Second Lane, the front elevation faced Shepherd Street, and the side elevation faced Ormsby Street. It is a three stories high houses with what seems to be a staircase bulkhead on the roof extended to form a penthouse. The architectural style is the stripped classical style of the 1930s. The walls are finished with grey Shanghai plaster which has been grooved with artificial joint to imitate stonework.

There is a wide projecting cornice at first floor level and another at

parapet level. The Shepherd Street elevation has a projecting bay with concave returns and Art Deco chevron mouldings and other motifs under the windows. There is a shopfront on the Shepherd Street side used as a vehicle repair workshop. There are bands of high level wooden windows above the shopfront fascias. There is a narrow backyard on the Second Lane side with a roof of corrugated sheeting and steel double doors opening on to the street.

The facades have been carefully designed to follow classical proportions, but the classical order has been omitted and ornamentation is confined to the projecting bay. The house looks as if it was once part of a terrace but the adjoining houses have been rebuilt or remodelled so that No. 4 now stands as a poignant reminder of what used to be. As such it has been robbed of its architectural significance and merit.

This type of building is becoming very rare now as older property makes way for redevelopment. There is nothing in the vicinity of the same type. **Rarity**

The building seems to have kept much of its original appearance. Apart from replacement on the roof, there seems to have been few alterations. The condition of the interior is not known. **Built Heritage Value Authenticity**

No. 4 Second Lane is significant in the evolution of Hong Kong's social, cultural and commercial development. The social value of the building lies in the fact that it is a pre-World War II commercial-cum-residential shophouse. The remaining shop signage in terrazzo finish gives us a glimpse into the past. Its presence reminds us of the past and serves as an important counterpoint against future development. **Social Value, & Local Interest**

No.4 Second Lane has group value with the other old buildings in its environs, such as the Tin Hau Temple of Causeway Bay (銅鑼灣天后古廟, Declared Monument) and Lin Fa Temple (蓮花宮, "Lotus Palace"). **Group Value**

The best use is probably that for which it is being used at present. **Adaptive Re-use**