

Historic Building Appraisal

Law Ancestral Hall

Po Sam Pai, Tai Po, N.T.

Po Sam Pai (布心排) on the northern shore of Plover Cove (船灣) is a **Historical Interest** multi-clan village of the Hakka (客家), which was first inhabited by the Chans (陳), the Laus (劉) and the Fans (范) in the late seventeenth century. Law Wan-ching (羅運清) moved with his son Tai-yuen (太原) from Yantian (鹽田) of Shenzhen (深圳) to Sam Mun Tsai (三門仔) of Plover Cove in the late nineteenth century. They worked as fishermen but later abandoned the trade because they lost their boat. They moved to Po Sam Pai where Wan-ching involved in hawking and Tai-yuen worked as a cook in Kowloon. In the 1920s Tai-yuen ran a grocery in Tai Po Kau Railway Station (大埔滘火車站) called Law Yik Lee (羅益利). The business was flourishing that Tai-yuen bought land to build a house for him and his three sons and an ancestral hall. The residential house is on the other side of Ting Kok Road (汀角路) opposite the ancestral hall. The Law Ancestral Hall (羅家祠) was built in 1938, two years after the completion of the house.¹ The ancestral hall, according to land records, is managed by the clan's trust named "Lo Yu Cheung Tong" (羅豫章堂).

The ancestral hall is a Qing (清) vernacular design building having a **Architectural Merit** two-hall-one-courtyard plan of three bays. The open courtyard is between the entrance and main halls. Side chambers are on either side of the entrance and main halls. The building is constructed of grey brickwork, mud bricks and rubble with its walls to support its pitched roofs of timber rafters, purlins and clay tiles. The walls are plastered and the floors cement-screeded. A finely-carved wooden altar is at the end wall of the main hall housing a big soul tablet of the Law ancestors for worship. Photographs of some of the ancestors are also on display at the altar. The name of the hall is engraved on a piece of stone above the lintel of the recessed entrance. The ridges are each with a pair of red *ruilong* (夔龍, geometric dragon) at its two ends for decoration. Wall frieze paintings of auspicious subjects including cocks, deer, cranes, lotus, phoenix and others are at the entrance and main halls.

It is an ancestral hall of the Laws to witness their settlement in Po Sam Pai, and has some built heritage value. The wall paintings are found above the main entrance. The deteriorated structure of the courtyard was repaired in 2007. The authenticity of the building is kept. **Rarity, Built Heritage Value & Authenticity**

¹ According to land records, the family name "羅" is romanised as either "Law" or "Lo".

Before the 1960s the Laws had the Dim Dang (點燈, literally meaning lighting the lantern) ritual held at the hall for their new born baby boys of previous year from the first to the fifteenth days of the Chinese New Year by lighting lanterns. The lanterns would be burnt on the last day. At the Chung Yeung Festival (重陽節), they would have ancestral worship at the hall before they have grave-sweeping at their ancestors' graves nearby. In the 1940s, the side chambers of the hall were used as the study rooms of Tai-yuen's three sons. They were then used as storerooms to keep their farming implements. ***Social Value, & Local Interest***

The Law Ancestral Hall has group value with Yu Cheung Tong (豫章堂, Grade 3), the residential building of the Laws, on the other side of Ting Kok Road. ***Group Value***