

Historic Building Appraisal

No. 119 Tai Kei Leng,

Shap Pat Heung, Yuen Long

First known as Shui Dai Ba Tsuen (水打壩村), the village in which No.119 is situated was renamed “Tai Kei Leng” (大旗嶺) around the 1920s or 1930s. People from the Siyi (四邑) region, i.e. Xinhui (新會), Kaiping (開平), Enping (恩平) and Taishan (台山); and Hakkas from Shenzhen (深圳) settled in the village in the 1910s -30s. *Historical Interest*

No. 119 Tai Kei Leng was built by Lam Bing-tak (林炳德), a native of Guanju (管嘴) of Gujing (古井), Xinhui, who migrated to Hong Kong in the 1920s. He later emigrated to New York to work in a restaurant. He built the house for his wife and daughters, and stayed there for no more than two years before he returned to New York. Bing-tak stayed in New York until he died in 1956. He remitted money to his family once or twice a year.

The wedding banquet for Bing-tak’s only son was organized in the foreground of the house in 1949. The house is still regarded as the old home (祖屋) of the Lam family. Bing-tak’s daughter-in-law now lives in the house.

The house is built in a mixed style of Chinese and Western architecture known as Chinese Eclectic. The house has grey brick walls with a pitched roof of Chinese tiles over the main central part of the building. Windows are regularly spaced, steel framed, with granite surrounds and semi-circular hood mouldings forming decorative pediments. The rear part of the house has a flat roof with a decorative parapet wall featuring urn-shaped balusters and corner posts with applied plaster floral motifs. The front façade is most spectacular. It is built in imitation of Baroque Classical Revival featuring an open portico and verandah above with rusticated white-painted square columns, green glazed urn-shaped balustrading and moulded cornices. The façade is crowned by a pierced and broken pediment with floral decorations, flanked by corner parapet posts capped with ball-shaped ornamental finials and decorated with applied plaster floral motifs. The side panels of the parapet have green glazed urn-shaped balustrading. Internally, the original wooden doors and staircase can be seen, as well as a beautifully carved folding wooden partition on the ground floor. The walls are plain painted brickwork and the floors are finished with diagonal tile-patterned screeds. *Architectural Merit*

Although mixed style architecture is commonly seen in rural areas, this particular house stands out because of its striking front façade. The house has *Rarity, Built Heritage*

obvious built heritage value and appears to have retained its original authentic appearance. *Value & Authenticity*

The social value of the house lies in its role as the old home of the Lam family, and the cross cultural influence displayed by its architecture. The distinctive style of the house makes it special in the village. *Social Value & Local Interest*