

Historic Building Appraisal

No. 96 Apliu Street,
Sham Shui Po, Kowloon

The building at No. 96 Apliu Street is a 3-storey Tong Lau 唐樓 *Historical Interest* (Chinese residence, shophouse) built between 1929 and 1936. It stands on Section B of N.K.I.L. No. 1215. According to the *Government Gazette* in 1929, the public auction for the sale of N.K.I.L. No. 1215 (the lot number before being sub-divided) was held in April 1929. In November 1936, the government re-arranged the house numbers of Apliu Street, to the effect that what was “No. 145 Apliu Street” has become “No. 96 Apliu Street” – a street number has since been adopted until now.

Sham Shui Po (深水埗) was originally a rural area. There was once a pier nearby built close to rocky cliffs where the deep water allowed easy anchorage of boats. Thus the name Shum(deep) Shui(water) Po(pier). The earlier reclamations were done at the expense of the owners of large lots. From 1912, the government started to develop the area by building new roads, reclaiming land and filling the water tunnel to link scattered flat lands together. A second reclamation scheme was begun in 1919, which attracted more people to move into the area. Apliu Street (鴨寮街) originates from a village having a cluster of duck sheds which was cleared in 1909 for the construction of the Street and the works was completed in 1920.

The earliest recorded owner of No. 96 Apliu Street was **Mr Wong Yiu Tung** (黃耀東) who was a well-known businessman and landowner in Sham Shui Po. **Mr Wong**, together with other residents, donated money to build **Sham Shui Po Public Dispensary** (深水埗公立醫局) (Grade 2 building) for the benefits of the locals. This property was re-registered under the names of two members of the Wong family, namely, Mr Wong Kam Pun (黃錦洋) and Mr Wong Kam Chu (黃錦儔) in 1942, when the Japanese authority set up the House Registration Office to re-register deeds which were registered by the British administration and to register subsequent transactions affecting land.

The building at No. 96 Apliu Street is also long associated with a traditional family-owned textile retail trade which is important to the social and economic development of Sham Shui Po. The existing retail shop, known as Maxington Textile Ltd. bearing Chinese characters “萬興泰紡織品有限公司” has been operating at the ground floor for many years, while the upper floors have been used as residence and store.

No. 96 Apliu Street is in the form of **Verandah Shophouse**. It was built *Architectural*

on an elongated rectangular plan with narrow frontage facing southwest. The upper floor verandahs project over the pavement supported on columns with column capitals to form a covered walkway in front of the shop on the ground floor. The construction is a reinforced concrete frame structure with brick partitions internally. The building is painted in white, with the Chinese name of the textile retail shop painted in red vertically on the columns at the ground floor. *Merit*

The front façade presents a rather elegant appearance in Neo-classical style with pseudo-classical or Mannerist type features replacing pure classical features. One of the special architectural features is **a pair of classical circular columns** at the balcony of the first floor, which is not usual for pre-war shophouses. Other original features include the square-shaped columns on the ground floor and their stylish-decorated capitals and plinths, the balustrades at the first floor balcony, and the parapet and decorative column heads at the roof.

This type of shophouse is now becoming rarer in Hong Kong due to redevelopment and urban renewal. There are alterations and addition, e.g. the balcony at the first floor and the roof are enclosed by modern metal-framed windows, but it is in fact one of the few remaining shophouses at this street kept in rather authentic condition, which makes it more worth preserving. *Rarity, Built Heritage Value & Authenticity*

This is a good example of a family-owned Tong Lau 唐樓 where a family business was, and still is, being operated on the ground floor while its store and residential accommodation are located on the upper floors, thus signifying the history of the area being an old district with mixed residential and commercial/ retail uses with many light industries which were set up in the area in the 1920s, and greatly expanded in the 1930s. *Social Value & Local Interest*

The building is within a walking distance with a number of other historic buildings, such as the Sam Tai Tsz Temple (三太子宮) (Grade 2), Mo Tai Temple (武帝廟) (Grade 2), Pak Tai Temple (北帝廟) (Grade 3) and the row of shophouses at Nos. 117-125 (odd numbers) Nam Cheong Street (南昌街 117-125 號的雙數門牌號) (Grade 3). *Group Value*