

# STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

*Revised by City of Victoria, 2021*



*Pre-restoration photograph courtesy of Salient Group, 2020*



*Historic Photograph*

**HERITAGE RESOURCE NAME:** Yates Block

**CIVIC ADDRESS:** 1244 Wharf Street, Victoria, BC

**HISTORIC ADDRESS:** 90 Wharf Street

**LEGAL DESCRIPTION:** Lot A, VIP86556

**YEARS OF CONSTRUCTION:** 1882 / 1892 / 1896

**ORIGINAL OWNER:** James Yates

**ORIGINAL TENANT:** Turner, Beeton & Company

**ARCHITECTS:** John Teague (1882/1892) / Alexander C. Ewart (1896)

**BUILDERS:** Henry Carrel, masonry; (William D.) McKillican & (Walter) Anderson, carpentry; Charles Ball; ironwork (1882) / (Moses) McGregor & (George) Jeeves (1892) / Thomas Catterall (1896)

## Description of the Historic Place

The Yates Block is a commercial building located at the western foot of Yates Street, on the waterfront within Victoria's Old Town. Situated on a sloping embankment between Wharf Street and the Inner Harbour, it is a masonry building three storeys in height facing Yates Street, and five storeys on its waterside elevation.

## Heritage Value of the Historic Place

The Yates Block is valued for its association with the late nineteenth century development of Victoria's Old Town gateway economy, and for its Victorian-era architecture, as designed by architects John Teague and A.C. Ewart.

The Yates Block remains as a significant landmark in the early development of Victoria's Old Town. Originally constructed in 1882, it is an early surviving representation of the Victorian-era commercial warehouses that lined the Inner Harbour, linked with the development of Commercial Row, the original locus for commercial and retail activities in Victoria. The harbor

embankment allowed for a connection at the lower level to waterfront wharfs, while commercial frontages could be accommodated at street level. Commissioned for local businessman James Yates, the building was constructed in three stages between 1882 and 1896; its asymmetrical composition attests to the variety of tenants who occupied and adapted this building throughout its history, including: Turner, Beeton & Company Ltd., a pioneer dry goods supplier; W.H. Malkin, grocers; and McQuade's Ship Chandlers, one of the earliest marine suppliers in Victoria. The evolving function and physical appearance of the Yates Block over time is a chronicle of the city's changing reliance on the harbour, from shipping to tourism. The building remains a symbol of Victorian-era prosperity and represents Victoria's rapidly-expanding gateway economy of the nineteenth century.

The Yates Block is additionally valued for its late Victorian vernacular architecture, built in three stages with blended Italianate and Romanesque elements, as designed by architect John Teague (in 1882 and 1892) and A.C. Ewart (in 1896). Born in Cornwall, England, Teague settled in Victoria in 1860, where he lived and worked until his death. Teague served the city as councillor in 1885, and as mayor for two terms, 1892 and 1893. During his prolific career, Teague designed over 350 buildings, mostly in Victoria. He was adept at current architectural styles, ranging from Italianate to Queen Anne Revival. For many years, he was the architect for the Royal Navy at the Dockyard and Hospital at Esquimalt and his clients included most of the city's leading businessmen, for whom he designed commercial and residential buildings. Teague was responsible for the initial, 1882 design of the Yates Block and its expansion in 1892. Its 1896 expansion was designed by a former employee of Teague's, architect Alexander Charles Ewart. The construction and enlargement of the Yates Block reflect both the developing economy and the shifting architectural styles of the late nineteenth century. The original portion, the lower level, exhibits Teague's penchant for the Italianate style, which was in vogue in the 1880s, while the rounded arches over the windows of the upper level display a later Romanesque influence.

### **Character-Defining Elements**

The elements that define the heritage character of the Yates Block are its:

- prominent waterfront location, and the relationship between the building and the Inner Harbour;
- continuous commercial use;
- commercial form, scale, and massing as expressed by its free-standing form, with four unobstructed façades, designed with an elaborate front façade and utilitarian side and rear façades, three storeys in height along the street and five storeys facing the water;
- masonry construction, with lower harbour warehouse levels constructed of rubble stone, and brick walls with stone trim, rough-dressed on the third floor;
- late Victorian architectural features including segmental-arched window openings on the two main floors and the rear elevation; arched window hoods with keystones; vertical pilasters; a grand central arched entryway with tapered carved pilasters and capitals and foliate carved plaque above; inset entry door assembly with coffered paneling, double glazed doors with sidelights, multi-lite arched transom and mosaic tile floor; and third storey front façade windows with blind round-headed arches in rough-dressed stone;

- iron fire shutters on the lower levels facing the harbour;
- original fenestration including double-hung wooden-sash, two-over-two windows on the front façade and six-over six on the rear.
- The restored sheet metal pediment located at the roof level of the east (front) elevation and centered above the main entrance
- The restored sheet metal cornice\*<sup>1</sup>
- Once restored, the two consoles (scroll brackets) and entry cornice accentuating the main entrance of the building<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> The Salient Group is planning to undertake the restoration of the pediment and cornice as part of a comprehensive rehabilitation of the building in 2021 (See Heritage Alteration Permit with Variances No. 00023).

<sup>2</sup> The consoles and entry cornice are proposed to be restored in a future phase of work