



Planning and Land Committee Use Report

For the Meeting of June 11, 2015

To: Planning and Land Use Committee **Date:** May 28, 2015

From: Murray G. Miller, Senior Heritage Planner, Community Planning

Subject: **Heritage Designation Application No. 000151 for 1713 Government Street (Yen Wo Society Building)**

RECOMMENDATION

That Council consider the designation of the Heritage-Registered property (exterior and original interior elements) located at 1713 Government Street (Yen Wo Society Building) pursuant to Section 967 of the *Local Government Act* as a Municipal Heritage Site. This report fulfills the requirements of Section 968(5) of the Act.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The purpose of this report is to present Council with information, analysis and recommendations regarding an owner request to designate the Heritage-Registered property (exterior and original interior elements) located at 1713 Government Street (Yen Wo Society Building).

The following points were considered in assessing this Application:

- general consistency with the *Official Community Plan (OCP)*
- Statement of Significance including Victoria's Heritage Thematic Framework.

The Application was reviewed by the Heritage Advisory Panel at its May 12, 2015, meeting and it recommended that Council consider the designation of the Heritage-Registered property located at 1713 Government Street.

BACKGROUND

Description of Proposal

An application to designate the property (exterior and original interior elements) located at 1713 Government Street (Yen Wo Society Building) as a Municipal Heritage Site was received from the Yen Wo Society on April 1, 2015.

Zoning/Land Use

The proposed designation is consistent with the CA-3C Zone, Old Town District, and surrounding land uses.

Condition/Economic Viability

The interior and exterior of the building appears in sound condition, however, the parapet requires seismic strengthening and the exterior fabric requires conservation.

ANALYSIS

The following sections provide a summary of the Application's consistency with the relevant City policies and guidelines.

Official Community Plan

This Application is consistent with the OCP because it contributes to the identification of the heritage value of districts and individual properties using the Victoria Heritage Thematic Framework. The Application also contributes to the goal of protecting and celebrating Victoria's cultural and natural heritage resources and, in accordance with a key strategic direction of the Downtown, aims to conserve the historic character of Old Town and Chinatown.

Statement of Significance

A Statement of Significance, describing the historic place, outlining its heritage value and identifying its character-defining elements, is attached to this report. A key policy of the OCP includes the determination of heritage value using a values-based approach. In this regard, a city-wide thematic framework was developed and incorporated into the OCP to identify the key civic historic themes. This framework functions as a means to organize and define historical events, to identify representative historic places, and to place sites, persons and events in an overall context. The thematic framework recognizes a broad range of values under which city-wide themes can be articulated. A Heritage Value Assessment with consideration of Victoria's Heritage Thematic Framework is incorporated into the Statement of Significance.

Resource Impacts

The applicant has indicated their interest in rehabilitating the exterior of the property and has made enquiries to the Victoria Civic Heritage Trust in relation to its Building Incentive Program and the Parapet Incentive Program.

CONCLUSIONS

The Yen Wo Society Building reflects the multi-cultural origins of coastal settlement in Victoria and plays an important role in the cultural life of Victoria. The building itself makes an important contribution to the Chinatown National Historic Site and has group value in relation to an existing cluster of heritage properties on Government Street and Fisgard Street. Its significance is further enhanced by the original location of the Tam Kung Temple on the top floor of the building, which represents the significant role of the temple in traditional Chinese society. The Tam Kung Temple is the oldest Chinese temple in Canada, located within the oldest Chinatown in Canada.

This Application for designation of the property (including original interior elements identified in the Statement of Significance) as a Municipal Heritage Site is consistent with relevant City policies that seek to maintain and enhance the heritage character of the Urban Core and supports key strategic directions for the Downtown regarding the conservation of the historic character of Old Town and Chinatown. Staff, therefore, recommend that Council consider the designation of the Heritage-Registered property located at 1713 Government Street (Yen Wo Society Building).

ALTERNATE MOTION

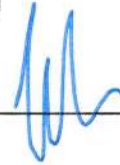
That Committee recommend that Council decline Heritage Designation Application No. 000151 for the property (exterior and original interior elements) located at 1713 Government Street (Yen Wo Society Building) as a Municipal Heritage Site.

Respectfully submitted,


for Murray G. Miller
Senior Heritage Planner
Community Planning

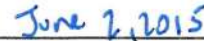

Andrea Hudson, Acting Director
Sustainable Planning and
Community Planning

Report accepted and recommended by the City Manager:



Jason Johnson

Date:

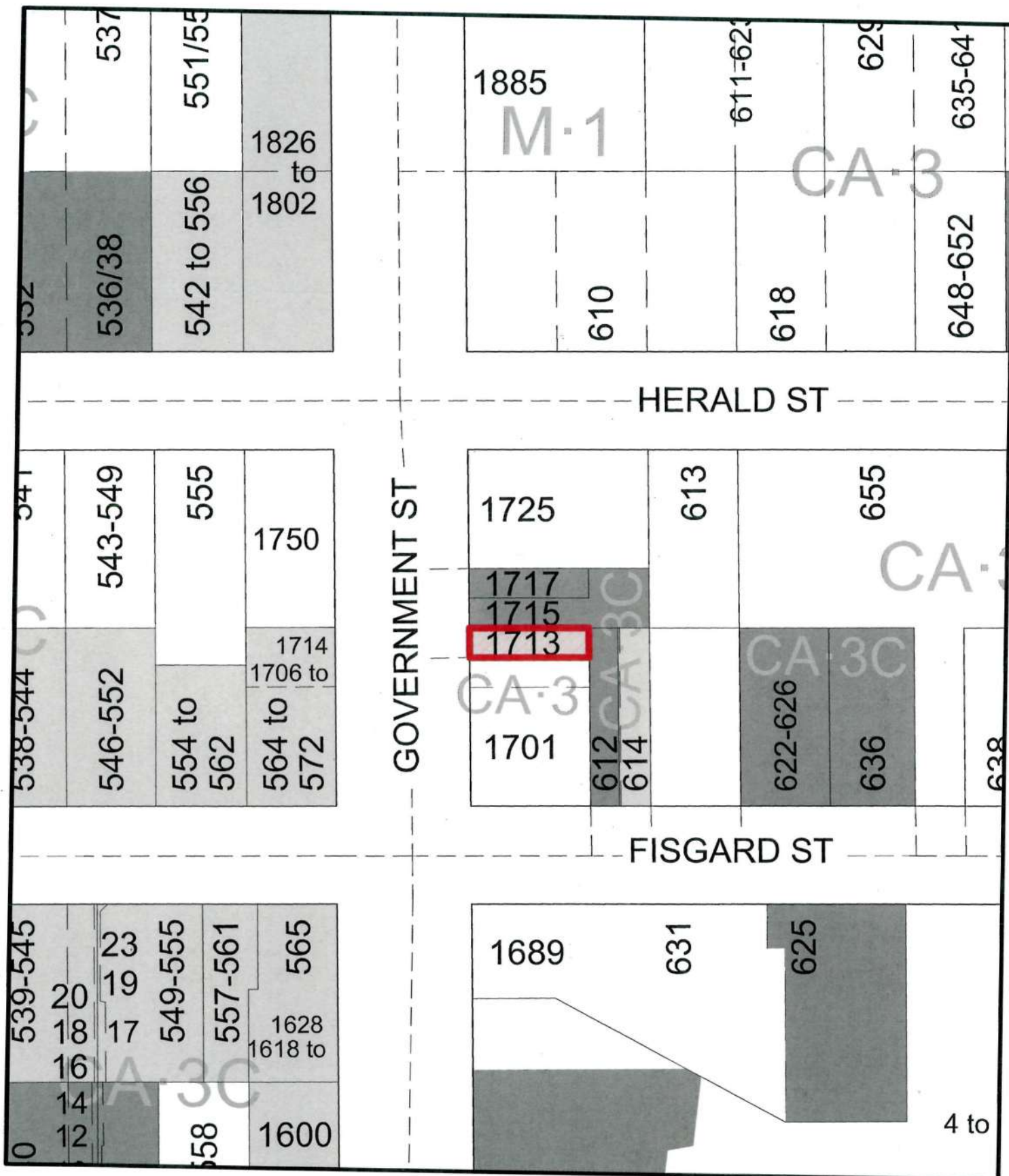

June 2, 2015

MGM:aw

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List of Attachments

- Subject map
- Aerial map
- Photographs
- Statement of Significance
- Letter from the owner, date stamped April 1, 2015.

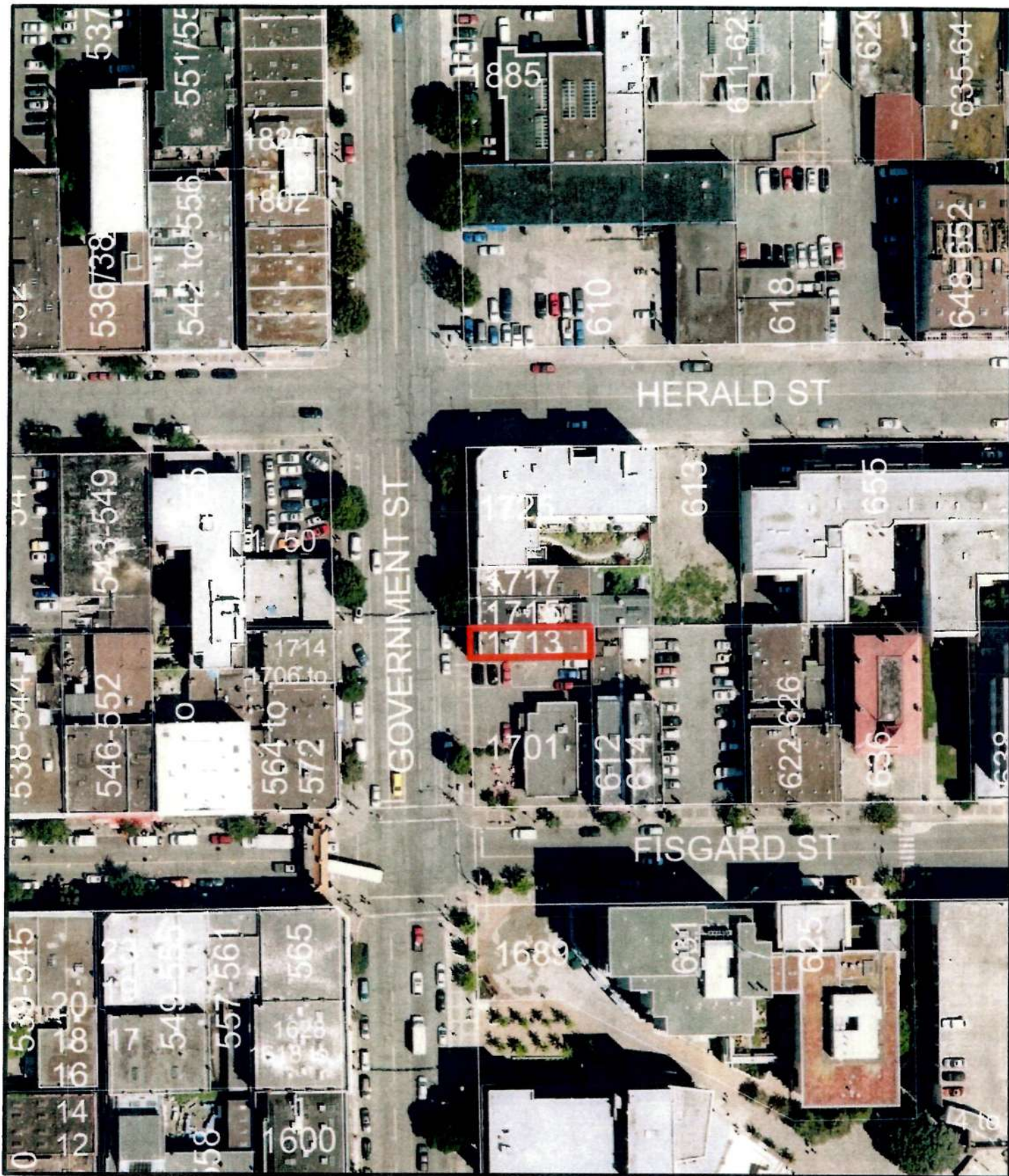


1713 Government Street

Heritage Designation Permit #000151

Designated Registered





1713 Government Street

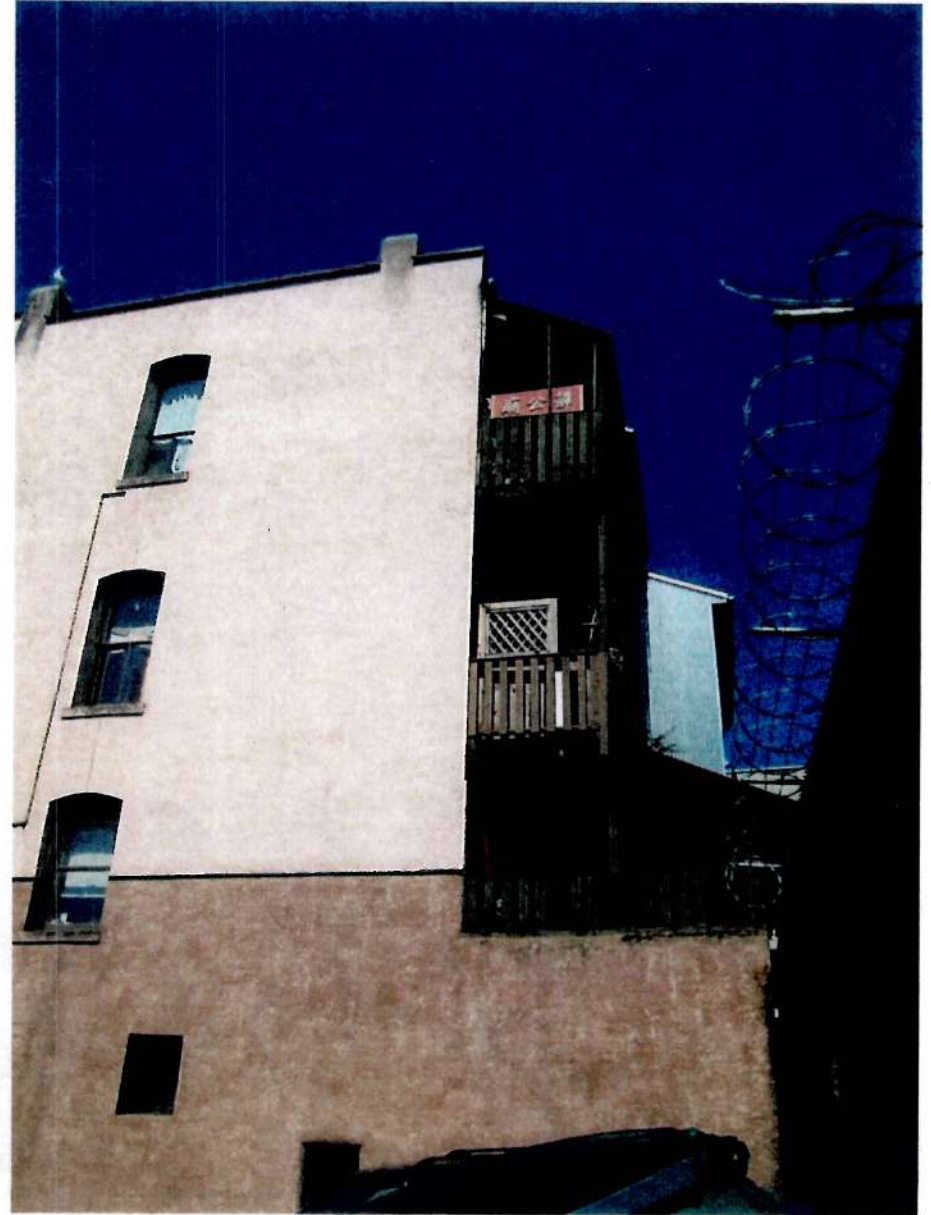
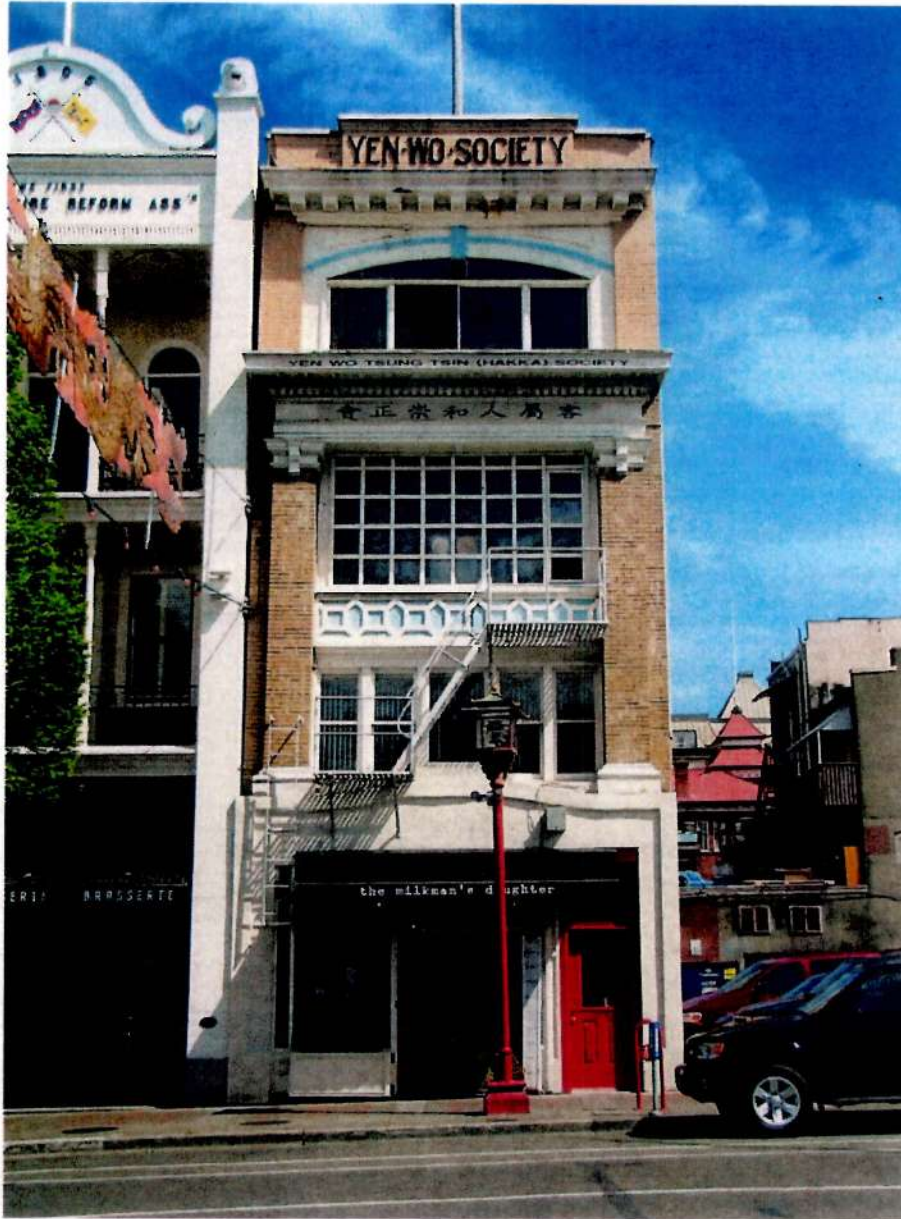
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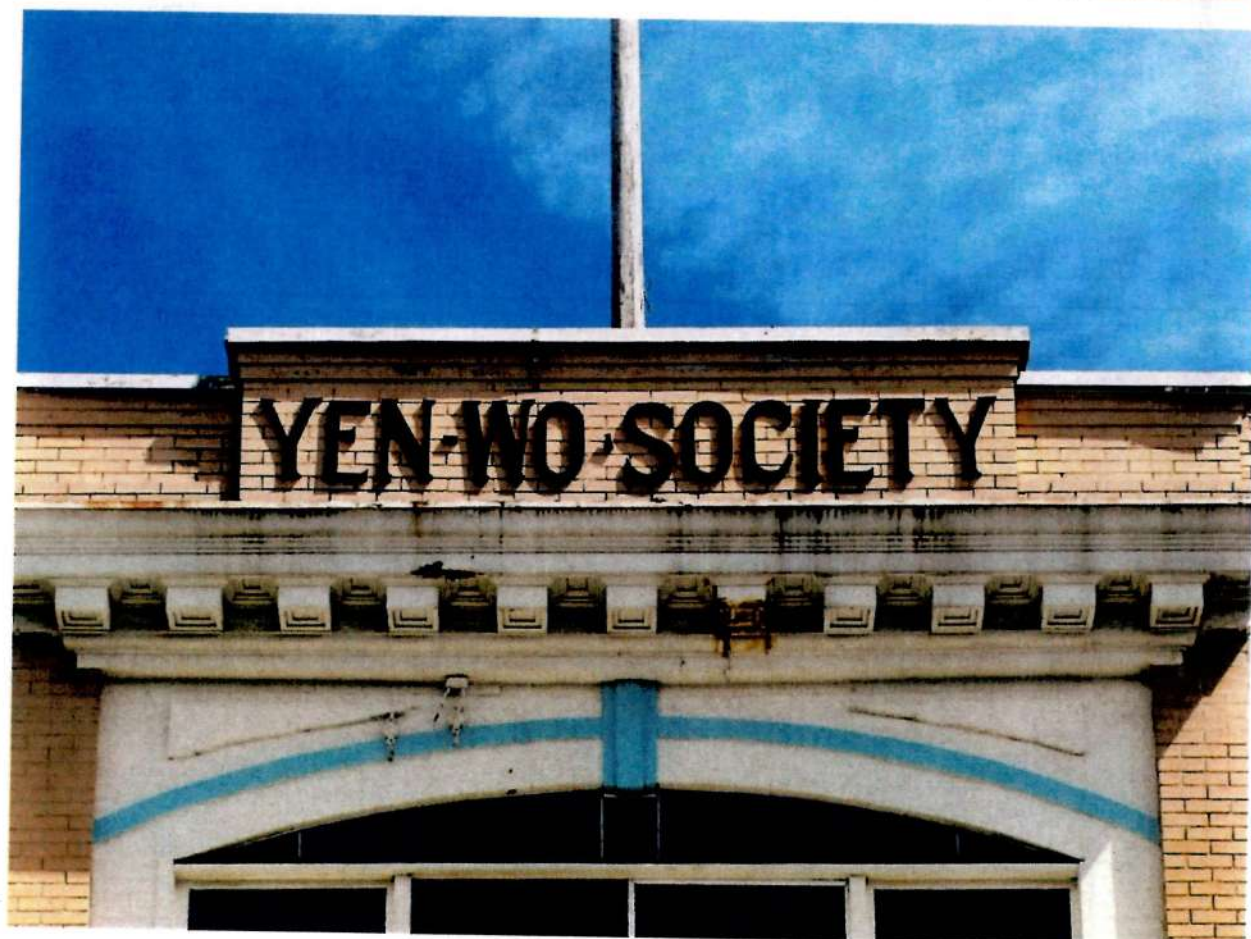
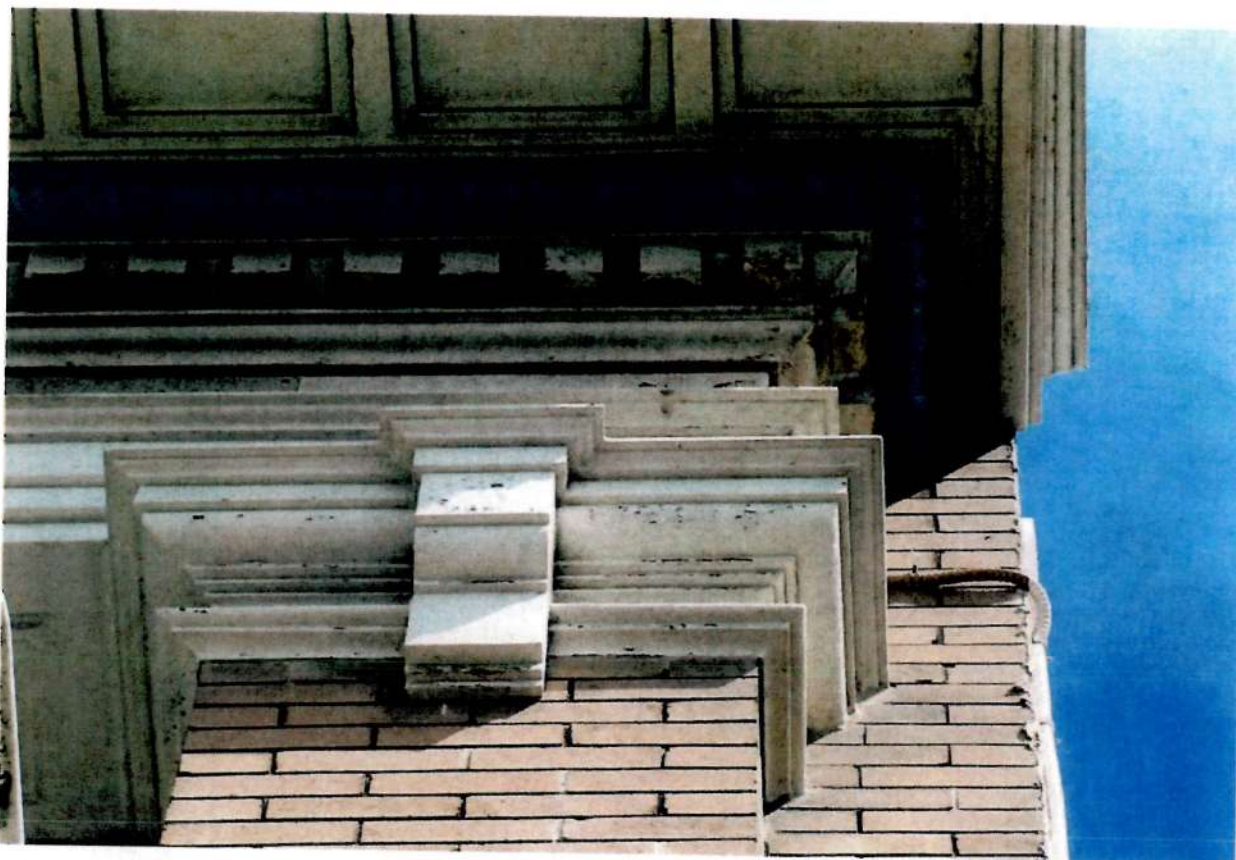
1713 GOVERNMENT STREET - EXTERIOR



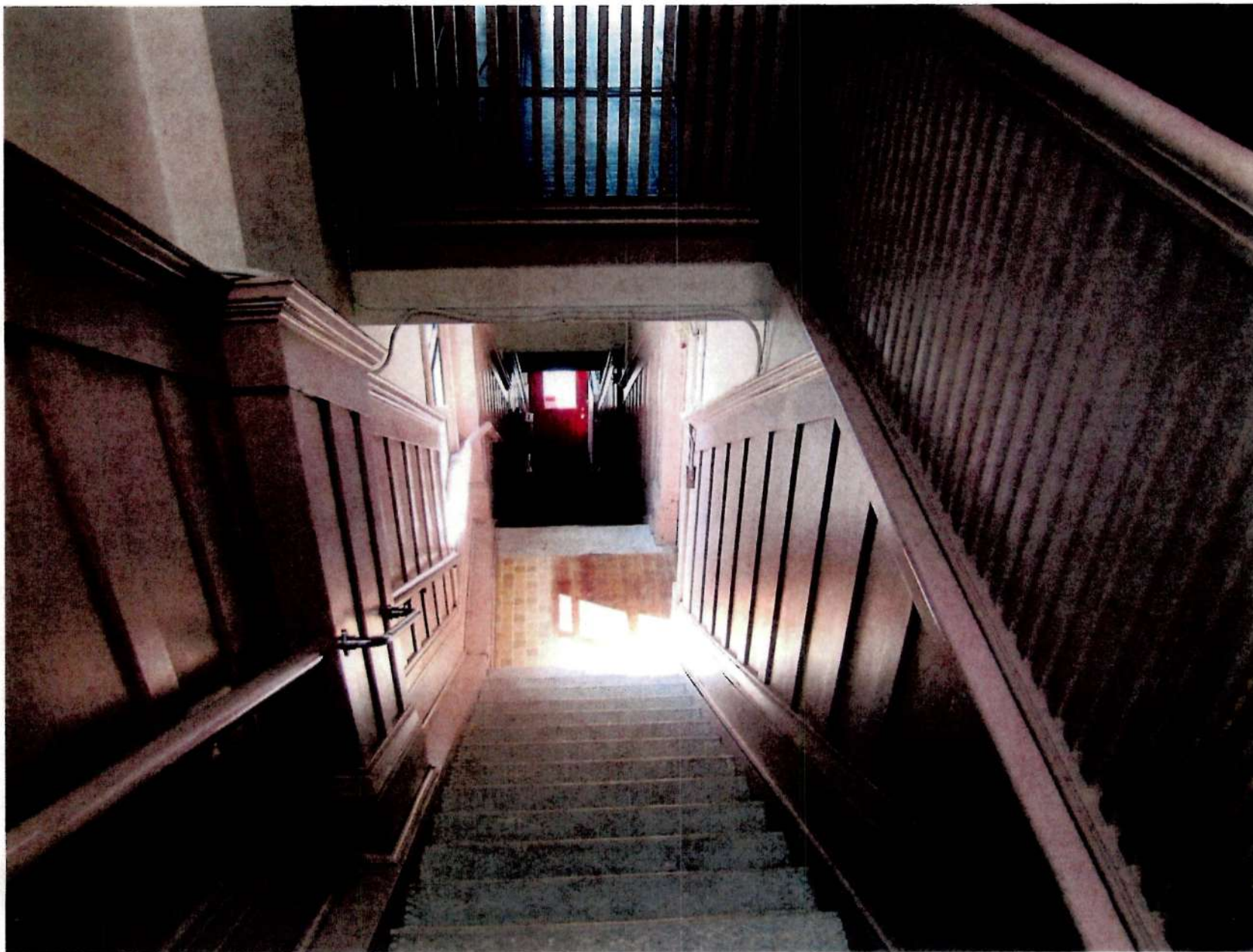
1713 GOVERNMENT STREET - EXTERIOR



1713 GOVERNMENT STREET - EXTERIOR



1713 GOVERNMENT STREET - INTERIOR



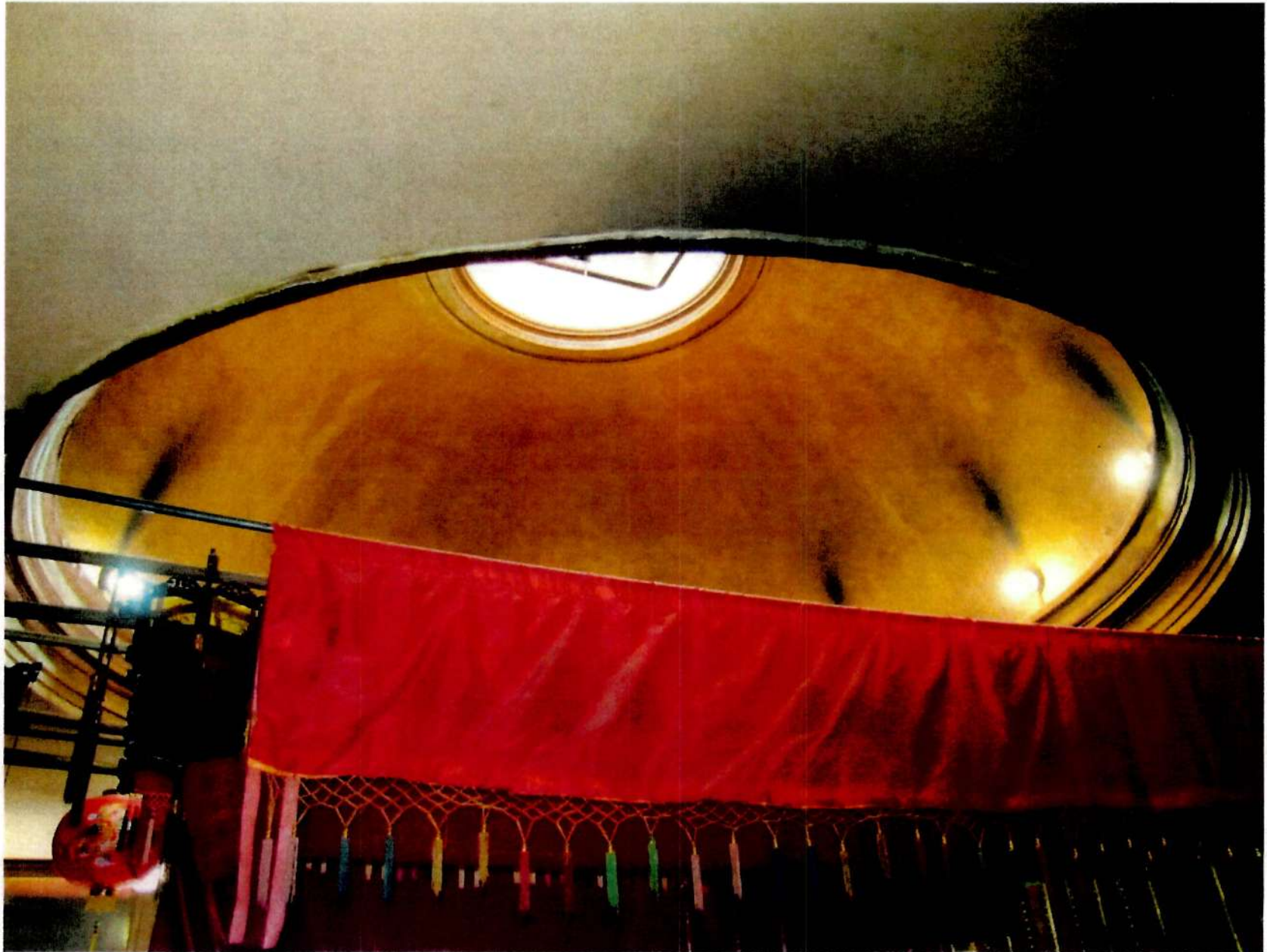
1713 GOVERNMENT STREET - INTERIOR



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1713 GOVERNMENT STREET - INTERIOR



YEN WO SOCIETY BUILDING, 1713 GOVERNMENT STREET

Owners: Yen Wo Society
Architects: L.W. Hargreaves
Date: 1912

Description of Historic Place

The Yen Wo Society Building at 1713 Government Street is a tall, Edwardian-era building on a narrow lot, three storeys in height plus a 'cheater' mezzanine that displays Classical influences as well as typical Chinese features such as a prominent flagpole and recessed balconies on upper floors. At the periphery of Victoria's Chinatown National Historic Site, it is the original location of the Yen Wo Society and the Tam Kung Temple, which still exist on the top floor. The structure is contiguous with the Lung Kong Kung Shaw & the First Chinese Empire Reform Association Building at 1715-1717½ Government Street.

Heritage Value of Historic Place

Theme 1 – Coastal Settlement

Thematic Framework Subtheme 1.2: Multi-Cultural Origins

In the 1850s, escaping political and social turmoil in China, thousands of Chinese migrants from a small region in the southern province of Guangdong arrived at frontier gold rush sites in California, setting up a permanent base in San Francisco. In 1858, the Fraser Gold Rush prompted the movement of Chinese from California to British Columbia and the port town of Victoria was the primary point of entry into the country for the Chinese until the early twentieth century. The Chinese began to settle to the north of the Johnson Street Ravine, which was physically separated from the rest of the emerging downtown commercial district, and established what would become Chinatown.

A further dramatic increase in the local Chinese population in the mid-1880s took place and many Chinese citizens who had been brought to Canada to work on the Canadian Pacific Railway moved to Victoria and Vancouver after the completion of the national system.

The Yen Wo Society Building has heritage value because it reflects the multi-cultural origins of coastal settlement in Victoria and it plays an important role in the cultural life of Victoria.

Theme 4: Community of Neighbourhoods

Thematic Framework Subtheme 4.2: Associations and Organizations

A variety of clubs and organizations have been established to provide mutual benefit, enrich community life and assist those in need. This subtheme focuses on the great variety of these social constructs - temporary and long-lasting, formal and informal, independent and allied with the government.

This building is a reminder of the Hakka population in Victoria's Chinatown and their continuous use of the building suggests territoriality among the Chinese in the historic

area. The Hakka migrated to Guangdong during the Eastern Dynasty but retained their traditional dialect and customs. Victoria was one of the few places overseas the Hakka settled and in 1905 they founded a volunteer association in Chinatown, the Yen Wo Society. These associations, or Tongs, had members with common ancestors and were established to protect the earliest Chinese settlers against Western intolerance and prejudice. Volunteer associations usually had their own buildings, typically with meeting halls and offices on the upper floors and leased storefronts on the ground floor.

Buildings for the more prominent volunteer associations, such as the Yen Wo Society, were sometimes overt in their use of elements of Chinese design such as decorative parapet walls, recessed full-width balconies and tall flagpoles. The Yen Wo Society Building has heritage value because it reflects the variety of organizations that have enriched the cultural life of Victoria.

Theme 5: Cultural Exchange

Thematic Framework Subtheme – 5.1 Architectural Expression

Victoria's Chinatown is expressive of a duality in architecture and cultural landscape. Commercial building façades were designed by non-Chinese architects to project an image of assimilation to Western culture. The Yen Wo Society Building is consistent with this duality. The commercial façade displays Classical Edwardian details such as dominant metal cornices with dentil and modillion detailing and brick pilasters with capitals on upper storeys. Chinese influences include the brick-clad parapet labelled with the name of the association in English, the prominent flagpole and recessed balconies. The building is also significant as an example of the work of architect Lord Wilfrid Hargreaves (1880-1966) who designed a number of buildings for Chinese clients.

The Yen Wo Society Building, as the original location of the Tam Kung Temple, also represents the significant role of the temple in traditional Chinese society. The Tam Kung Temple, which remains today on the top floor of the building, is the oldest Chinese temple in Canada. An early Hakka settler brought a statue of Tam Kung, a deity sacred to the Hakka; this statue was first set up in a roadside shrine near the Johnson Street ravine. The temple was initially established on this site in 1875, through monies pooled by the Hakka to rent a small house at the corner of Government and Fisgard Streets. Two Hakka, Tsay Ching and Dong Bang Sang, purchased 1713 Government Street and the temple was dedicated January 21, 1876. During the Edwardian-era building boom, the original temple was demolished and replaced with the extant brick clad building in 1912 from monies collected by the Yen Wo Association. The Yen Wo Society still owns this building and the temple, which is open to the public, remains on the top floor.

The Yen Wo Society Building has heritage value because it is part of a grouping of early buildings that contributes to the historic character and urban pattern of Victoria's Chinatown National Historic Site, the seminal and oldest intact Chinatown in Canada.

Character-Defining Elements

Key elements that define the heritage character of the Yen Wo Society Building include:

- location on the east side of Government Street, part of a grouping of late-nineteenth and early-twentieth century historic masonry buildings at the periphery of Victoria's Chinatown National Historic Site

- continuous commercial and institutional use
- siting on the front and side property lines, with no setbacks
- commercial and institutional form, scale and massing as expressed by its three-storey height, with 'cheater' mezzanine, rectangular plan, flat roof, and retail storefront facing Government Street
- masonry construction including tan brick cladding at front, red-brick side and rear walls and granite thresholds
- Edwardian-era Classical-influenced elements such as: metal cornices at the second and third floors with dentils and modillions; and Giant Order brick pilasters with metal capitals
- Chinese features such as a tall, central flagpole, brick parapet inscribed with the English name of the society, sidewall chimneys and recessed balconies at second and third storey with blind fretwork balustrades
- windows such as 2-over-2 double-hung wooden sash windows
- original interior elements such as wooden wainscoting, lath-and-plaster walls, and top-floor temple with domed ceiling and glass oculus

(Source: Extracted from the Statement of Significance prepared by Donald Luxton & Associates Inc., June 2008)

Yen Wo Society
1713 Government Street
Victoria BC V8W 1Z4



City of Victoria
1 Centennial Square
Victoria BC V8W 1P6

March 27, 2015

RE: Heritage Designation

To Mayor and Council

The Yen Wo Society houses the oldest Chinese Temple in Canada. We recently had the pleasure Senior Heritage Planner, Murray Miller tour our building and explained to us the significance and the value of heritage designation. We would like to seek Heritage Designation of our building at 1713 Government Street.

Please see attached an Application for Heritage Designation along with a Statement of Significance for our building. We look forward to meeting with you and to receive the Heritage Designation.

Sincerely,



Jackie Ngai
Secretary Treasurer, Yen Wo Society