MUNICIPALITY OF PORT HOPE

HERITAGE DESIGNATION

Address: 115 Walton Street

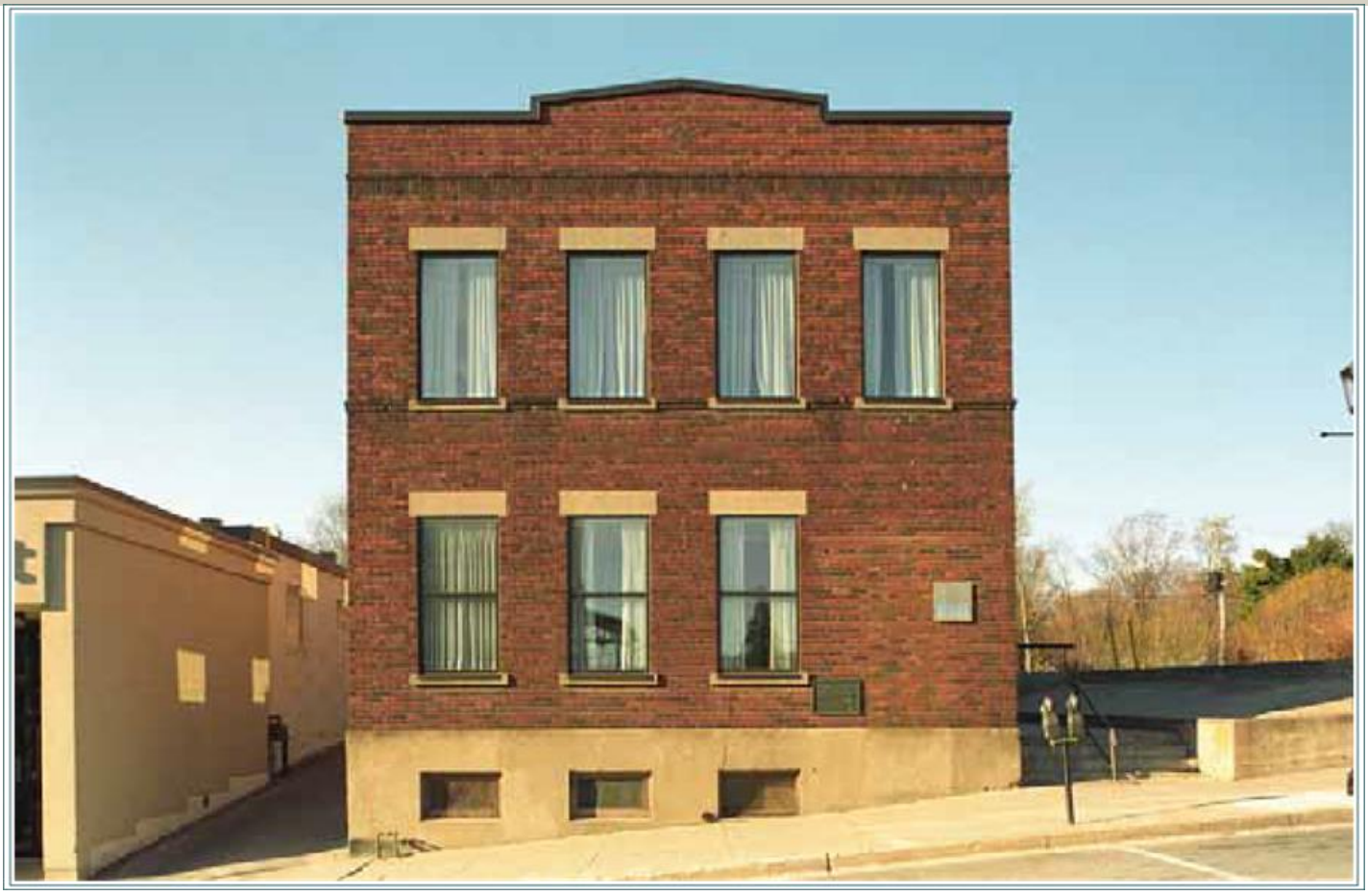
Known as: Bell Canada Block

Architectural Style: Walton Street Heritage District

Date Built: Circa 1924 (refacing Circa 1945)

Date Designated: October 6, 1997 to By-Law No. 44/97

Lot Description: PART TOWN PLOT LOT 56



Architectural Description

This block is the refacing of an older two-storey building circa 1924. The adjoining circa 1845 house, latterly used as a dentist's office and apartment, was destroyed by a gas explosion in the mid-1970's. The neighbouring building, a circa 1840 house also owned by Bell Canada, was demolished shortly afterwards.

Historical Abstract

The first telephone in operation in Port Hope connected the Queen's Hotel at Walton and John Streets (81 Walton Street) to the Grand Trunk Railroad Station. Over the years the exchange expanded as residents quickly adapted to the new technology. In 1882, Bell established an exchange in the insurance office of Tom Long at the corner of Queen and Walton (Robertson Building, 35 Walton Street). Initially only six lines were in operation. A year later the number of lines had increased to fifty-three, a remarkable number when you consider the telephone was only invented in 1876.

All calls were operater assisted, and as the number of calls increased, there was a need for a dedicated location. In 1924, Bell erected the building located at 115 Walton Street to house the telephone system. Originally the building was twenty-eight feet by forty-four feet but as the exchange expanded there were three additions added and finally a third storey.