MUNICIPALITY OF PORT HOPE

HERITAGE DESIGNATION

Address: 28-32 Walton Street

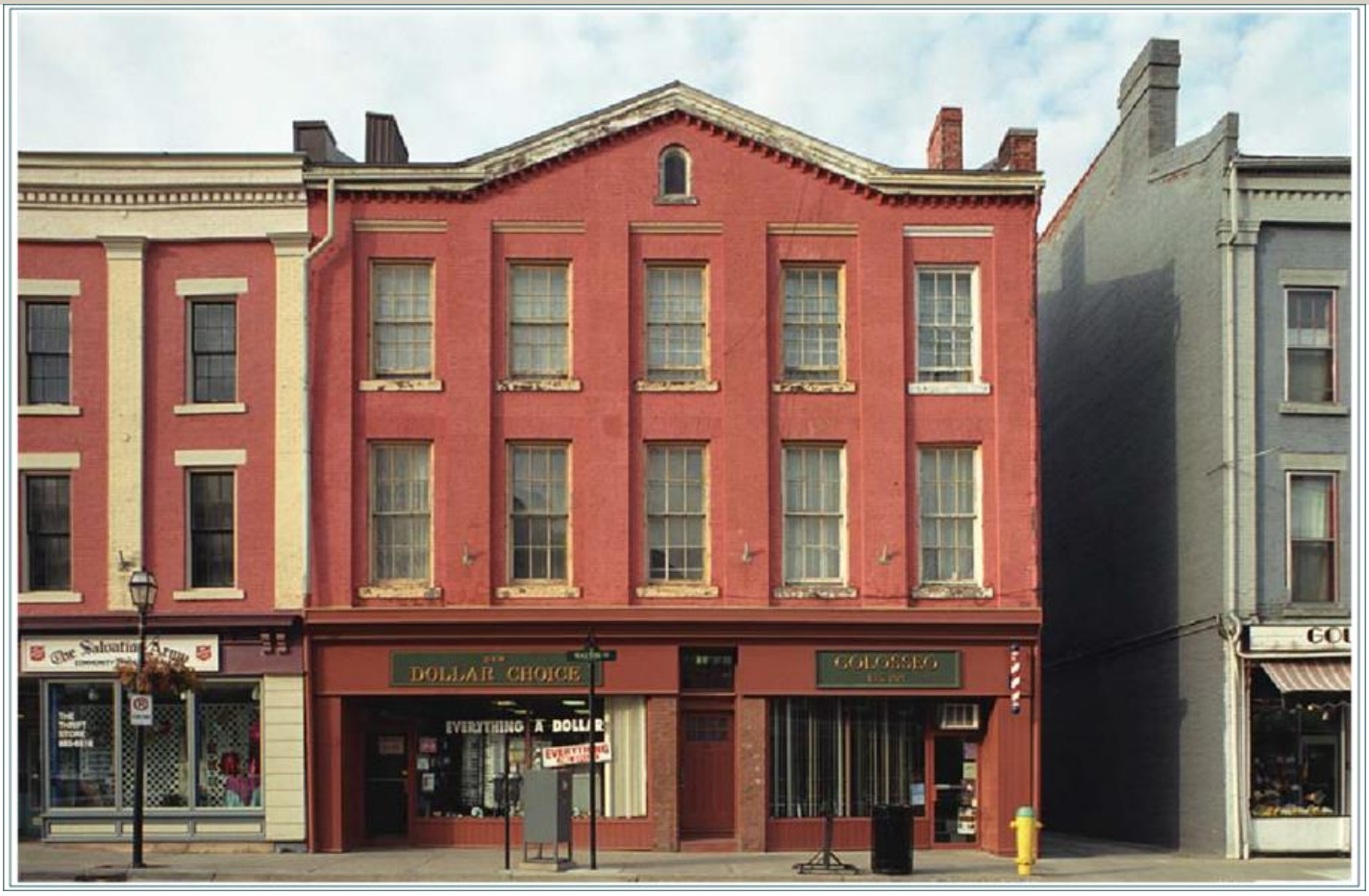
Known as: North American Hotel

Architectural Style: Walton Street Heritage District

Date Built: Circa 1844

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

Lot Description: PT TOWN PLOT 72



Architectural Description

This block is a brick three-storey hotel building built to a special design in a favoured position as a focal point to the end of Queen Street. Of particular merit originally with its arcaded lower storey, this building retains the central gable with recessed panels to the front creating a simple pilastered design of five bays, complete with brick cornice and end chimneys, original sash in the upper storeys. The centre gable houses a semi-circular gable window with radiating voussoirs and a wooden lugsill. The ten bays are located in the recessed sections and are framed by plain trim surround heads with flat structural openings. The windows are double hung sash type with six over six panes.

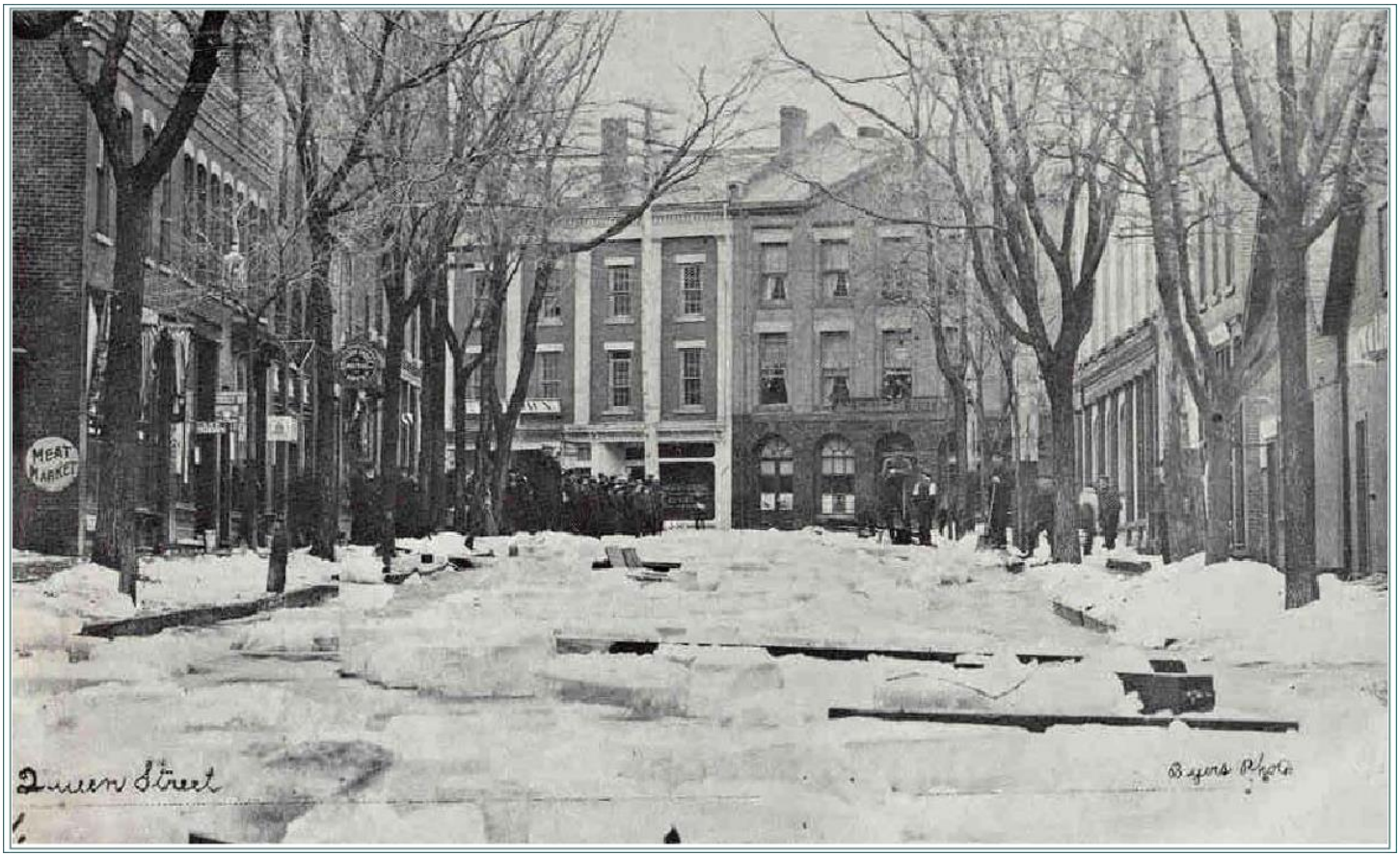
Historical Abstract

The North American Hotel Block is situated on land originally granted by the Crown to Jonathan Walton and Elias Smith in 1797. In 1815, the land was further divided by Walton & Smith, with Elias Smith retaining most of what is now the downtown area of Port Hope. The lot on which this block stands was sold by Elias Smith to his son John David in 1816. J.D. Smith then sold the empty lot to John Lynn in 1844. Upon purchase of the land, Lynn erected the structure that was to be known as the North American Hotel. The E.P. Smith Block, next door to the west, was also being constructed in the same year. A disastrous fire in the spring of 1850 burnt this first structure and its neighbour to the ground. A new building was erected on this main street site and occupied as a hotel until 1911. In directory listings of 1851, under the proprietorship of T.W. Hastings, the hotel and its services were described as "North American hotel and general stage agency, Walton st. - a livery stable is attached to the premises, horses and carriages are furnished when required. The editor noted, "This is a most comfortable and well arranged house."

In 1857, John Lynn erected his house on Ridout Street (258 Ridout Street). In addition to being the fire warden in 1847, by 1857, Mr. Lynn is listed in business directories as a distiller on Cavan Street with the business name of Lynn and White residing on Ridout Street.

John S. Smart purchased the building in 1919 and is responsible for renovating it to its present condition, with two storefronts and apartments above. The ground floor was dramatically altered with the removal of the original arcading and replaced with a then modern glass finish called Vitrolite. The westernmost section of the building was leased by the Great Atlantic and Pacific Tea Company in 1929 and was occupied by the same company for about 30 years.

Archival Photo



A view of the North American Hotel as a focal point from Queen Street with its original arcaded lower storey.

In an announcement that appeared in the local paper in 1844, John Lynn describes the hotel as: "His bar is supplied with the best liquors that can be procured, his table supplied with the best meats the country affords, and travellers and others are well attended with obliging servants.

His stables and sheds are good and comfortable and punctually attended with hostlers. He is prepared to furnish on the shortest notice, buggies, wagons or sleighs and cutters to suit the convenience of the public. During the season of navigation he will carry by his different modes of conveyance passengers and goods to and from steamers free of charge.

The North American is situated in the most delightful portion of the town there being no object to obstruct the view between it and the beautiful waters of the great lake Ontario; standing on its palisades a person can observe every vessel that passes along the Lake, or in and out of the harbour."