MUNICIPALITY OF PORT HOPE

HERITAGE DESIGNATION

Address: 50 John Street

Known as: Y.M.C.A (Young Men's Christians Association)

Architectural Style: Gothic Revival

Date Built: Circa 1874

Date Designated: October 23, 1989 to By-Law No. 91/89, SCHEDULE B-13

Lot Description: PLAN 19 PT LOT 2 PT LOT 3; PT TOWN LOT 55 LOT 57



Architectural Description

This is an interesting attempt to make a commercial lot adapt to an institutional building. The narrow frontage precluded much architectural countenance so it was left to the detail to make the brick building stand out from its commercial neighbours. This would account for the rather bizarre arrangement of the facade.

The main floor of the two-storey front contains round arched main entrance (asymmetrically placed) and secondary flat-arched entrance at left. Between are brick pilasters enclosing a plain window and transom. The second storey has a central projecting panel into which a circular window with quatrefoil glazing is placed. Twinned narrow lights, symmetrically placed, complete the composition. Separating the two storeys is a band course. The cornice is moulded and at centre is an unusual peak with applied ornament. The roof is of the shed type. The rear of the brick building adopts a more conventional hall form with side, steeply pitched roof with regular fenestration. The most notable feature is the buttresses that run along the side elevation.

A lively and eclectic composition, the Hall is unconventional in detail but blends attractively within the streetscape. On its own it stands as a significant architectural design but it is also an integral part of the John Street commercial streetscape. It has historical significance as well, as home to the YMCA, Salvation Army and Orange Hall.

Historical Abstract

There were twenty-four land transactions that occurred on part of lots number two and three on the west side of John Street by 1851. One makes reference to a brewery being located on the site at one time. The building has been home to several town institutions, notably the YMCA who built the structure in 1874, the Salvation Army (1912-1936) and the L.O.L. (Orange Hall) until 1972.

In 1874, prominent local businessman, William Craig, President of the Young Men's Church Association purchased the land to be used for construction of the local branch of the YMCA. The Young Men's Christian Association originated in London, England in 1844. The YMCA in Canada got its start in Montreal, Quebec in 1851. This was also the first YMCA to open in all of North America.

The YMCA was the first organization outside of the church to offer religious discussions and activities. Later physical activities would be added to YMCA offerings in addition to Bible study, reading rooms, libraries and public lectures. At Confederation in 1867, twenty-one YMCA's operated in the Maritimes, Quebec and Ontario often being held in large halls, churches or homes rather than buildings designed specifically for YMCA use. The first Canadian YMCA building was constructed in Pictou, Nova Scotia. When the Port Hope branch of the YMCA was constructed in 1874, it was only the tenth "Y" to be built in Canada. Several of the YMCA's constructed in Canada during this period were designed in a Gothic style often reserved for churches and ecclesiastical buildings.

The local chapter of the YMCA was started in 1867. By 1873, the local membership had grown to 145, and rented quarters were too small. At the time of its construction, the

entrance from John Street opened into a corridor that led to the lecture hall at the rear. The lecture hall measured thirty by sixty feet and was capable of seating four hundred people. A door to the left inside the entrance led into the Library and Reading Room. A stairway from the corridor led to an upper floor where two rooms were used for games, recreation and meetings. The contractor responsible for construction of the building was Peter Rice Randall. He was born in Ontario in 1822 and had established himself as a carpenter and builder during the prosperous 1850's in Port Hope. During this period, he is known to have constructed residences such as the Regency style house on Little Hope Street (10 Little Hope Street). In 1874, he was the superintendent overseeing the construction of the Methodist Church on South Street. He served as Mayor of Port Hope from 1879-1882.

Along with William Craig, he was a fellow member of the Baptist congregation. The painting and decorating of the YMCA was completed by Richard Fogarty, whose recent work in 1871 included the Old Firehall on Walton Street (19-23 Walton Street).
In March 1904, the building was reopened after renovations that included changing the lecture hall into a gymnasium, and the upper rooms to a classroom and public reading room. Financial problems led to the sale of the property to the Salvation Army in 1912. The second floor was then converted to an apartment. The Salvation Army then sold the building to the Loyal Orange Lodge in 1936. In 1972, the property was sold and it has had a variety of uses since the 70's including being used as a Canadian Tire Warehouse, a private home, and an antique market.



Architectural Detail

The rear extension of the YMCA measuring thirty by sixty feet was used as the lecture hall.