

## **1233-1235 Queen Street East - Notice of Intention to Designate a Property under Part IV, Section 29 of the Ontario Heritage Act**

Date: August 31, 2022

To: Toronto Preservation Board

From: Senior Manager, Heritage Planning, Urban Design, City Planning

Wards: 14 - Toronto-Danforth

### **SUMMARY**

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This report recommends that City Council state its intention to designate the property at 1233-1235 Queen Street East under Part IV, Section 29 of the Ontario Heritage Act for its cultural heritage value.

The property at 1233-1235 Queen Street East comprises a factory complex located at the southeast corner of Queen Street East and Leslie Street. Constructed in 1920-1921, the earliest structure on the property is a two-storey main street mixed-use/commercial building that originally housed a billiards room and barber with apartments at the second storey. After Yeat Lum Lee purchased the property in 1947 the principle structure was converted for use as the headquarters and factory of Lee Food Products Ltd. The food product manufacturing company operated at its Leslieville location for more than 70 years.

Additions from 1948, 1950, and c.1956, as well as a steel tank from 1960, reflect the expansion of this significant Canadian company. Known especially for their widely distributed China Lily brand of soy sauce, Lee's company helped to popularize Chinese ingredients among Canadian households, beginning at a time when Chinese residents continued to face systemic barriers in many aspects of Canadian society.

Staff have completed the Research and Evaluation Report for the property at 1233-1235 Queen Street East and determined that the property meets Ontario Regulation 9/06, the criteria prescribed for municipal designation under Part IV, Section 29 of the Ontario Heritage Act, on the basis of its design/physical, historical/associative, and contextual values. As such, the property is a significant built heritage resource.

In March 2022, the City of Toronto received Site Plan Approval, Official Plan Amendment, and Zoning By-law Amendment applications to facilitate the redevelopment of 1233-1243 Queen Street East and 77 Leslie Street for an 8-storey mixed-use building. The proposed development would include the demolition of all structures at 1233-1235 Queen Street East.

In June 2019, the More Homes, More Choice Act, 2019 (Bill 108) received Royal Assent. Schedule 11 of this Act included amendments to the Ontario Heritage Act. The Bill 108 Amendments to the Ontario Heritage Act came into force on July 1, 2021, which included a shift in Part IV designations related to certain Planning Act applications. Section 29(1.2) of the Ontario Heritage Act now restricts City Council's ability to give notice of its intention to designate a property under the Act to within 90 days after the City Clerk gives notice of a complete application.

The property owner provided a waiver to extend the 90-day timeline to September 30, 2022 so this Notice of Intention to Designate report must be considered by City Council before that date. Designation enables City Council to review proposed alterations or demolitions to the property and enforce heritage property standards and maintenance.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

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The Senior Manager, Heritage Planning, Urban Design, City Planning recommends that:

1. City Council state its intention to designate the property at 1233-1235 Queen Street East under Part IV, Section 29 of the Ontario Heritage Act in accordance with the Statement of Significance: 1233-1235 Queen Street East (Reasons for Designation) attached as Attachment 3 to the report (August 31, 2022) from the Senior Manager, Heritage Planning, Urban Design, City Planning.
2. If there are no objections to the designation, City Council authorize the City Solicitor to introduce the Bill in Council designating the properties under Part IV, Section 29 of the Ontario Heritage Act.

## **FINANCIAL IMPACT**

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There are no financial implications resulting from the adoption of this report.

## **DECISION HISTORY**

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On February 3, 2016, City Council adopted Item TE13.8, Final Report - Queen Street East/Ashbridge Precinct Planning Study - City-Initiated Official Plan Amendment and Urban Design Guidelines. City Council requested the Senior Manager, Heritage Preservation Services, City Planning to research and evaluate properties on Queen Street East in the Ashbridge Precinct, located between Leslie Street to Coxwell Avenue, for inclusion on the City's Heritage Register.

<http://app.toronto.ca/tmmis/viewAgendaItemHistory.do?item=2016.TE.13.8>

## BACKGROUND

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### Heritage Planning Framework

The conservation of cultural heritage resources is an integral component of good planning, contributing to a sense of place, economic prosperity, and healthy and equitable communities. Heritage conservation in Ontario is identified as a provincial interest under the Planning Act. Cultural heritage resources are considered irreplaceable and valuable assets that must be wisely protected and managed as part of planning for future growth under the Provincial Policy Statement (2020) and A Place to Grow: Growth Plan for the Greater Golden Horseshoe (2020). Heritage Conservation is enabled through the Ontario Heritage Act. The City of Toronto's Official Plan implements the provincial policy regime, the Planning Act, the Ontario Heritage Act and provides policies to guide decision making within the city.

Good planning within the provincial and municipal policy framework has at its foundation an understanding and appreciation for places of historic significance, and ensures the conservation of these resources are to be balanced with other provincial interests. Heritage resources may include buildings, structures, monuments, and geographic areas that have cultural heritage value or interest to a community, including an Indigenous community.

The Planning Act establishes the foundation for land use planning in Ontario, describing how land can be controlled and by whom. Section 2 of the Planning Act identifies heritage conservation as a matter of provincial interest and directs that municipalities shall have regard to the conservation of features of significant architectural, historical, archaeological or scientific interest. Heritage conservation contributes to other matters of provincial interest, including the promotion of built form that is well-designed, and that encourages a sense of place.

The Planning Act requires that all decisions affecting land use planning matters shall conform to the Growth Plan and shall be consistent with the Provincial Policy Statement, both of which position heritage as a key component in supporting key provincial principles and interests.

<https://www.ontario.ca/laws/statute/90p13>

The Provincial Policy Statement provides policy direction on land use planning in Ontario and is to be used by municipalities in the development of their official plans and to guide and inform decisions on planning matters, which shall be consistent with the Provincial Policy Statement. The Provincial Policy Statement articulates how and why heritage conservation is a component of good planning, explicitly requiring the conservation of cultural heritage and archaeological resources, alongside the pursuit of other provincial interests. The Provincial Policy Statement does so by linking heritage conservation to key policy directives, including building strong healthy communities, the wise use and management of resources, and protecting health and safety.

Section 1.1 Managing and Directing Land Use to Achieve Efficient and Resilient Development states that long-term economic prosperity is supported by, among other

considerations, the promotion of well-designed built form and cultural planning, and the conservation of features that help define character. Section 2.6 Cultural Heritage and Archaeology subsequently directs that "significant built heritage resources and significant cultural heritage landscapes shall be conserved". Through the definition of conserved, built heritage resources, cultural heritage landscape and protected heritage property, the Provincial Policy Statement identifies the Ontario Heritage Act as the primary legislation through which heritage conservation will be implemented.

<https://www.ontario.ca/page/provincial-policy-statement-2020>

A Place to Grow: Growth Plan for the Greater Golden Horseshoe (2020) builds on the Provincial Policy Statement to establish a land use planning framework that supports complete communities, a thriving economy, a clean and healthy environment and social equity. Section 1.2.1 Guiding Principles states that policies in the plan seek to, among other principles, "conserve and promote cultural heritage resources to support the social, economic, and cultural well-being of all communities, including First Nations and Metis communities". Cultural heritage resources are understood as being irreplaceable, and are significant features that provide people with a sense of place. Section 4.2.7 Cultural Heritage Resources directs that cultural heritage resources will be conserved in order to foster a sense of place and benefit communities, particularly in strategic growth areas.

<https://www.ontario.ca/document/place-grow-growth-plan-greater-golden-horseshoe>

The Ontario Heritage Act is the key provincial legislation for the conservation of cultural heritage resources in Ontario. It regulates, among other things, how municipal councils can identify and protect heritage resources, including archaeology, within municipal boundaries. This is largely achieved through listing on the City's Heritage Register, designation of individual properties under Part IV of the Ontario Heritage Act, or designation of districts under Part V of the Ontario Heritage Act.

Section 27 of the Ontario Heritage Act gives municipalities the authority to maintain and add to a publicly accessible heritage register. The City of Toronto's Heritage Register includes individual heritage properties that have been designated under Part IV, Section 29, properties in a heritage conservation district designated under Part V, Section 41 of the Act as well as properties that have not been designated but City Council believes to be of "cultural heritage value or interest."

<https://www.ontario.ca/laws/statute/90o18>

Ontario Regulation 9/06 sets out the criteria for evaluating properties to be designated under Part IV, Section 29 of the Ontario Heritage Act. The criteria are based on an evaluation of design/physical value, historical and associative value and contextual value. A property may be designated under section 29 of the Act if it meets one or more of the provincial criteria for determining whether it is of cultural heritage value or interest.

<https://www.ontario.ca/laws/regulation/060009>

The Ontario Heritage Toolkit provides guidance on designating properties of municipal significance, including direction on the purpose of designating heritage properties and information about how the Provincial Policy Statement and the Ontario Heritage Act provide a framework for the conservation of heritage properties within the land use planning system. In June 2019, the More Homes, More Choice Act, 2019 (Bill 108)

received Royal Assent. Schedule 11 of this Act included amendments to the Ontario Heritage Act (OHA). The Bill 108 Amendments to the OHA came into force on July 1, 2021, which included, amongst other matters, amendments to the listing and designation processes. Guidance from the Province related to the implementation of Bill 108 Amendments is forthcoming.

[Ontario Heritage Tool Kit \(gov.on.ca\)](https://www.gov.on.ca)

The City of Toronto's Official Plan contains a number of policies related to properties on the City's Heritage Register and properties adjacent to them, as well as the protection of areas of archaeological potential. Indicating the integral role that heritage conservation plays in successful city-building, Section 3.1.5 of the Official Plan states that, "Cultural heritage is an important component of sustainable development and place making. The preservation of our cultural heritage is essential to the character of this urban and liveable City that can contribute to other social, cultural, economic and environmental goals of the City."

Policy 3.1.5.4 states that heritage resources on the City's Heritage Register "will be conserved and maintained consistent with the Standards and Guidelines for the Conservation of Historic Places in Canada, as revised from time to time and adopted by Council."

Policy 3.1.5.6 encourages the adaptive re-use of heritage properties while Policy 3.1.5.26 states that, when new construction on, or adjacent to, a property on the Heritage Register does occur, it will be designed to conserve the cultural heritage values, attributes and character of that property and will mitigate visual and physical impacts on it.

<https://www.toronto.ca/city-government/planning-development/official-plan-guidelines/official-plan/>  
<https://www.historicplaces.ca/media/18072/81468-parks-s+g-eng-web2.pdf>

## **COMMENTS**

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In February 2016, City Council adopted the Final Report - Queen Street East/Ashbridge Precinct Planning Study City-Initiated Official Plan Amendment and Urban Design Guidelines. It was noted in the report and related Urban Design Guidelines that it was anticipated that there were several properties within the Ashbridge Precinct that are of heritage interest. It was recommended that Heritage Planning research and evaluate properties within the study area for inclusion on the City's Heritage Register. As such, City Council requested the Senior Manager to research and evaluate properties on Queen Street East in the Ashbridge Precinct, located between Leslie Street to Coxwell Avenue, for inclusion on the City's Heritage Register. The Cultural Heritage Resource Assessment associated with the Council request has not yet commenced.

In March 2022, the City of Toronto received Site Plan Approval, Official Plan Amendment, and Zoning By-law Amendment applications to facilitate the redevelopment of 1233-1243 Queen Street East and 77 Leslie Street for an 8-storey mixed-use building. The proposed development would include the demolition of the existing buildings, including the subject property at 1233 Queen Street East.

The site is across the street from the landmark designated property Duke of York Hotel, originally known as the Marion Hotel built in 1870 at 1225 Queen Street East.

Staff have completed the Research and Evaluation Report for the property at 1233 Queen Street East and determined that the property meets Ontario Regulation 9/06, the criteria prescribed for municipal designation under Part IV, Section 29 of the Ontario Heritage Act, on the basis of its design/physical, historical/associative, and contextual values. As such, the property is a significant built heritage resource.

The application site also includes the adjacent properties at 1243 Queen Street East and 77 Leslie Street. While the structure at 1243 Queen Street East was built in association with the Lee Food Products Ltd. factory in 1970, it does not contribute to the physical value of 1233 Queen Street East as a factory conversion and location of an influential Chinese business. A stand-alone, one-storey buff brick structure at 77 Leslie Street was constructed in 1951 and is only associated with Lee Food Products Ltd. through a later acquisition for the expansion of the factory. Staff have concluded that the properties at 1243 Queen Street East and 77 Leslie Street have insufficient design/physical value, historical/associative value, or contextual value to merit individual designation under Part IV Section 29 of the Ontario Heritage Act or to be referenced as heritage attributes of the factory complex.

### **1233-1235 Queen Street East**

#### **Research and Evaluation according to Ontario Regulation 9/06**

While the research and evaluation of the property referenced above is, in staff's determination, sufficient to support the designation of the property at 1233 Queen Street East, it should be noted that access to the City of Toronto Archives remained restricted during the preparation of this report due to the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic. New and additional relevant information on the subject property, further expanding on its heritage value, may be forthcoming following public access to these archival records and may provide further information to be incorporated in the final version of a Part IV designation by-law.





Figure 1: 1233-1235 Queen Street East, 2022. (Heritage Planning)

### 1. DESCRIPTION

1233-1235 Queen Street East - China Lily Factory	
ADDRESS	1233-1235 Queen Street East
WARD	14 - Toronto-Danforth
LEGAL DESCRIPTION	PLAN 214 PT LOTS 35 TO 36 PLUS ROW
NEIGHBOURHOOD/COMMUNITY	Leslieville
HISTORICAL NAME	China Lily Factory
CONSTRUCTION DATE	1920-1921
ORIGINAL OWNER	Henry and Sarah Darby; Yeat Lum Lee
ORIGINAL USE	Mixed-use/commercial building, including a billiards room; food production factory
CURRENT USE	Vacant
ARCHITECT/BUILDER/DESIGNER	Unidentified; 1948 and 1950 additions to east by C.R. Worsley
DESIGN/CONSTRUCTION/MATERIALS	Brick
ARCHITECTURAL STYLE	Vernacular
ADDITIONS/ALTERATIONS	For Lee Food Products Ltd./China Lily: east additions in 1948 and 1950; west addition in c.1955; steel tank in 1960
CRITERIA	Design/physical, historical/associative, contextual
HERITAGE STATUS	N/A
RECORDER	Heritage Planning: Tatum Taylor Chaubal
REPORT DATE	September 2022

## 2. BACKGROUND

This research and evaluation section of the report describes the history, architecture, and context of the property at 1233-1235 Queen Street East, and applies evaluation criteria as set out in Ontario Regulation 9/06 under the headings of historical/associative, design/physical, and contextual value to determine whether they merit designation under Part IV, Section 29 of the Ontario Heritage Act. A property may be designated under Section 29 of the Act if it meets one or more of the provincial criteria for determining whether it is of cultural heritage value or interest. The application of the criteria is found in Section 3 (Evaluation Checklist). The results of the research and evaluation are found in the Conclusion of the report. Maps and Photographs are located in Attachment 1. The archival and contemporary sources for the research are found in Attachment 2. The Statement of Significance is contained in Attachment 3.

### i. HISTORICAL TIMELINE

Key Date	Historical Event
	The area now known as the City of Toronto is the traditional territory of many nations including the Mississaugas of the Credit, the Anishnabeg, the Chippewa, the Haudenosaunee and the Wendat peoples, and is now home to many diverse First Nations, Inuit and Métis peoples. Toronto is covered by Treaty 13 signed with the Mississaugas of the Credit (1805), and the Williams Treaties (1923) signed with multiple Mississaugas and Chippewa bands.
1793	John Graves Simcoe, Lieutenant Governor of Upper Canada, established the Town of York as Upper Canada's capital.
1884	The area between Queen Street, the Don River, Danforth Avenue, and Greenwood Avenue was annexed by the City of Toronto.
1913	Municipal directories show a Chinese laundry in the location of the subject property through 1938.
1920-1921	The earliest existing portion of the subject property was constructed for Henry and Sarah Darby as a pool room and barber shop, with apartments on the upper storey. It was identified as Melba Billiard Parlors from 1926 to 1947.
1947	Yeap Lum Lee purchased the building at 1235 Queen Street East to serve as a headquarters and factory for Lee Food Products Ltd.
1948	Lee commissioned a small addition to the east of the earliest building, designed by C.R. Worsley.
1950	Worsley designed another addition north of the 1948 structure, containing food preparation and packing spaces.
c.1956	An annex was constructed to the west of the earliest building, at the corner of Queen Street East and Leslie Street.
1960	A steel tank was added to the rear of the property.
1962	Yeap Lum Lee died, and his family took over operation of Lee Food Products Ltd.



1970	The adjacent property at 1243 Queen Street East was constructed as part of the factory.
2020	Lee Food Products Ltd. relocated their operations from 1233-1235 Queen Street East.

## ii. HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

The following section outlines the history and facts related to the properties, which are the basis for determining "Historical and Associative Value" according to O. Reg. 9/06 Criteria.

The community of Leslieville arose in the 1850s and 1860s, centred on the industries of market gardening and brickmaking. After the City of Toronto annexed the area in 1884, its growth intensified, with lands subdivided for residential development as the original industries remained active. Infrastructural improvements in the 1890s through 1910s, including railway and streetcar service, further increased the population. The 1913 Goad's Atlas shows that the area around Queen Street East and Leslie Street included both industrial lands and residential development as well as early commercial buildings along Queen Street, with a hotel at the southwest corner of the intersection.

Beginning in the 1913 municipal directory, a Chinese laundry was identified just east of Leslie Street at 1229 Queen Street East, on the site of the subject property. As Chinese Canadian historian Arlene Chan has pointed out, "laundries are the oldest Chinese businesses in Canada, dating back to the 1858 gold rush in British Columbia."<sup>1</sup> The first Chinese immigrant in Toronto, Sam Ching, arrived in 1878 and worked as a laundryman. By 1911, there were 301 Chinese laundries in the city.<sup>2</sup> In the year that a laundry was first documented at the subject property, at least 8 other Chinese laundries east of the Don Valley and west of Greenwood Avenue appeared in the directory. According to Chan, by 1921, "over half of the 2134 Chinese recorded in Toronto did laundry work." Most of the city's Chinese population at that time consisted of men; the Chinese Immigration Act of 1885 had set a "head tax" on Chinese immigrants to Canada, producing "bachelor societies" of men who worked to save money for their families to follow. The government raised the amount of this tax from \$50 to \$100, and then \$500. The Chinese Exclusion Act of 1923 went so far as to forbid all Chinese immigration to Canada until its repeal in 1947. These policies generated significant economic challenges and social discrimination against Chinese communities in Canada. Chinese laundry businesses were condemned by labour organizations and trade guilds, and suffered from racist media coverage. The Chinese laundry industry declined through the 1930s and 1940s.

On the subject property, in 1931, the Leslie Cigar Store was identified at 1227A, an address not previously listed. Beginning that year, the laundry at 1229 was identified more specifically as Yum Chin laundry through 1936, and as Chong Kee laundry in

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<sup>1</sup> Arlene Chan, "Against All Odds: The Chinese Laundry," *The Ward: The Life and Loss of Toronto's First Immigrant Neighbourhood*, Eds. John Lorinc, Michael McClelland, Ellen Scheinberg, Tatum Taylor, Coach House Books, 2015.

<sup>2</sup> Chan.

1937 and 1938. The building at the corner of Queen Street East and Leslie Street appear to have been demolished in the late 1930s.

The earliest surviving structure on the subject property at 1233-1235 Queen Street East was constructed in 1920-1921 for Henry H. Darby, a salesman, and his wife, Sarah. Building permit drawings show a barber shop and pool room on the first storey, and apartments on the second storey. The property first appeared in the municipal directory in 1923 as housing H.R. Doherty (barber), Frank Blaylock (restauranteur), Thomas L. Barker (billiards), and Henry Darby. By the time of the 1926 directory, the establishment at this address was known as Melba Billiard Parlors, including twelve tables and a refreshment counter; it also continued to house a series of barbers. Located at 1235 was the Melba Apartments which likely refers to the upper storey of the same building.

Yeap Lum Lee purchased the building at 1233-1235 Queen Street East in 1947. Born in Kwungtung, China, Lee moved to Canada in 1913 in his late 20s. Like many Chinese immigrants at this period, he settled first on the West Coast, then moved to Saskatoon where he opened a grocery store in 1930. Several years later, Lee moved to Brampton, where he operated a hotel and, according to his obituary in *The Globe and Mail*, "experimented in making soy sauce until objections to the odor forced his move to a farm in Dixie, which he operated before setting up his business in Toronto." At the Queen Street East building, Yeap Lum Lee established Lee's Produce Co., later Lee Food Products Ltd., and began by growing bean sprouts. The proximity to a heavy industrial corridor along Eastern Avenue may have been a factor in choosing this location.

In 1948, Lee engaged architect C.R. Worsley to design a small addition east of the earlier building, at the rear of the lot. Two years later, Worsley designed another addition north of the 1948 structure. Plans show a cooking space in the basement of this new building, and a packing space on the first level. The original building included offices on the first storey, and continued to have apartments on the second floor at this time. By 1956, a one-storey annex had been added to the property's western edge and was used for storage. Along with his business partner, Joe Wing, Lee expanded Lee Food Products Ltd. to manufacture a variety of Chinese food products under the brand name China Lily. They distributed their China Lily bean sprouts, chow mein noodles, canned meats and vegetables, and most notably soy sauce, widely across Canada as well as internationally. Building records show that in 1960 the steel tank to the rear of the property was added; it held 4000 gallons of Amino Acid, a substance used in food production and, specifically, an important component of soy sauce.

At the time of his death in 1962, Lee was active in Toronto's Chinese community, including as vice-president of the Lee Association, "one of the largest Chinese family associations in Toronto." His obituary memorialized him as "one of Toronto's Chinese industrialists."<sup>3</sup> The Lee Food Products Ltd. carried on; Marilyn Lee Wong, Lee's daughter, along with Lee's wife, Sui Hung Lee, became owner and president of Lee's Food Products until her death in 2013. The easternmost addition to the factory complex, a separate property at 1243 Queen Street East, was constructed in 1970. Building records indicate that the first floor of the 1920-1921 building at 1235 Queen Street East

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<sup>3</sup> "Yeap Lum Lee: Began Business By Growing Bean Sprouts," *The Globe and Mail*, 23 Feb. 1962, P. 4.

was substantially renovated in 1973, though it is unclear whether these alterations affected the building's exterior.

Drawings from this time provide insight into how the earliest structure was being used to accommodate food manufacturing processes: bean sprout cultivation occurred in the basement, while the first floor housed operations for soy sauce bottling, packaging, and can labelling, along with a lunch room and ladies' dressing room for employees. No longer residential, the second storey included another lunch room, a men's dressing room, and offices, including one for an inspector. Later alterations to the factory complex appear to have been limited with the exception that in 1979, the c.1956 structure to the west of the earliest building was severely damaged by a vehicular collision, and portions of the masonry walls had to be reconstructed.

The company continued to flourish in the following decades, and soy sauce had become a mainstream ingredient. A compiled "History of Tofu and Tofu Products" for 1985-1994 notes the influence of China Lily as one of the only producers of soy sauce in Canada, with most of its output remaining in the country: "In 1986, according to Statistics Canada data, 2,503 tonnes of soy sauce were produced by 6 firms. The value was \$2,161 per tonne for a total of \$5,411,000. In 1988 Canada imported 5,280 tonnes of soy sauce valued at \$4 million, primarily from China, the United States, Hong Kong, and Japan. Exports were 58 tonnes valued at \$65,000. The major Canadian producers are China Lily and Sun Fresh in Toronto, Wong Wing and VH in Montreal, and Golden Dragon in Vancouver. The value of Toronto production is currently estimated to be about \$5 million."<sup>4</sup>

Lee Food Products Ltd. moved to Scarborough in 2020, leaving the subject property vacant. Soon after the relocation, news of China Lily soy sauce shortages reached media from farther afield; CBC in British Columbia covered the story, and *The Economist* featured an article titled, "A beloved Canadian soy sauce runs out: China Lily soy sauce has become an essential part of Indigenous cuisine in British Columbia." Indeed, dietitian Lise Luppens has studied the contemporary diets of Indigenous people in British Columbia, and has noted that "many of her Indigenous clients included many items as 'traditional food' or 'Indian food' that would not officially be recognized as such. These foods included rice, chow mein, China Lily soya sauce, and bologna."<sup>5</sup>

The importance of China Lily soy sauce as a beloved ingredient among West Coast Indigenous communities demonstrates the reach and staying power of Lee's brand. When the company began distributing its products in the late 1940s and 1950s, this would have been one of the first opportunities for Canadians to access Chinese ingredients in grocery stores outside of Chinatown and try them at home. The products manufactured for over 70 years at 1233-1235 Queen Street East played a significant role in popularizing Chinese ingredients among Canadian households, beginning at a

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<sup>4</sup> William Shurtleff and Akiko Aoyagi, "History of Tofu and Tofu Products (1985-1994)", Soyinfo Centre, 2022, <https://www.soyinfocenter.com/pdf/285/Tof2.pdf>.

<sup>5</sup> Lise Luppens and Elaine Power, "Aboriginal isn't just about what was before, it's what's happening now': Perspectives of Indigenous peoples on the foods in their contemporary diets," *Canadian Food Studies*, Vol. 5. No. 2, pp. 142-161.

time when Chinese residents continued to face systemic barriers to their acceptance in Canadian society.

### **iii. ARCHITECTURAL DESCRIPTION**

The following section provides an architectural description and analysis related to the property, which will establish the basis for determining "Design and Physical Value" according to O. Reg. 9/06 Criteria.

The property at 1233-1235 Queen Street East consists of a factory complex located at the southeast corner of Queen Street East and Leslie Street. The earliest portion of the property is a two-storey red brick, flat-roofed structure, constructed as a mixed-use/commercial building in 1920-1921. Typical for this typology and era, the building's architectural details include stone quoins, a wood cornice above the ground storey, bay windows at the second floor, and dentil corbelling and dog tooth brickwork at the roofline. Yeat Lum Lee acquired the building in 1947 and converted it into the headquarters and factory for Lee Food Products Ltd., which manufactured Chinese food products under the brand name China Lily. Infill brick in a different shade reflects alterations made after that time to the ground-level openings, which now include a central door with a transom window, and asymmetrically placed horizontal windows to either side, at the upper portion of the first storey. The former China Lily sign was locally recognizable but has recently been removed.

One-storey, flat-roofed additions in a modest vernacular style, located to the east and west of the 1920-1921 structure, represent the factory's expansion in response to increased demand for China Lily ingredients. To the east, the consolidated 1948 and 1950 additions face onto Queen Street East with a recessed double entry, and a bump-up with red metal coping and red railings above the roofline. To the west, the c.1956 annex addresses Queen Street East with a simple, symmetrical façade. Along Leslie Street, the building's west elevation features a regular rhythm of windows behind larger secondary frames affixed to the brick exterior. In addition to their shared red brick, the factory structures' bright red palette of doors and window trim visually unites them. This colour, considered auspicious and popular within the Chinese community, was likely added for Lee Food Products Ltd. A steel tank was constructed in 1960, located at the southwest corner of the c.1956 addition and rising above its height.

The Lee Food Products Ltd. factory also included the adjoining properties at 1243 Queen Street East and 77 Leslie Street (see Comments above.)

### **iv. CONTEXT**

The following section provides contextual information and analysis related to the property which is the basis for determining 'Contextual Value' according to O. Reg. 9/06 Criteria.

The area along Queen Street East in Leslieville primarily features fine-grained, mixed-use buildings dating from the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, with commercial use at grade and residential use above. This character is less consistent in the immediate vicinity of the subject property, with a pair of semi-detached residences

to the east, a four-storey retirement residence to the north, and the historic Duke of York Hotel to the west across Leslie Street. The block to the south along Leslie Street features low-scale townhouses, detached, and semi-detached homes.

### 3. EVALUATION AND APPLICATION OF O.REG 9/06 CRITERIA

The following evaluation applies Ontario Regulation 9/06 made under the Ontario Heritage Act: Criteria for Determining Cultural Heritage Value or Interest. The criteria are prescribed for municipal designation under Part IV, Section 29 of the Ontario Heritage Act, and the City of Toronto also uses these criteria when assessing properties for inclusion on the City of Toronto's Heritage Register. There are three categories for a total of nine criteria under O. Reg 9/06. A property may be designated under Section 29 of the Act if it meets one or more of the provincial criteria for determining whether it is of cultural heritage value or interest.

The evaluation table is marked "N/A" if the criterion is "not applicable" to the property or "✓" if it is applicable to the property, with explanatory text below.

#### DESIGN OR PHYSICAL VALUE

Design or Physical Value	
i. is a rare, unique, representative or early example of a style, type, expression, material or construction method	✓
ii. displays high degree of craftsmanship or artistic merit	N/A
iii. demonstrates high degree of scientific or technical achievement	N/A

*The property is a rare, unique, representative or early example of a style, type, expression, material or construction method*

As a unique example of a 1920s mixed-use building converted to a food manufacturing factory at mid-century, the subject property holds physical value. The earliest portion of the building, constructed in 1920-1921, features stone quoins, bay windows at the second floor, and dentil corbelling and dog tooth brickwork at the roofline. A wood cornice above the ground storey and shingles below the second-storey windows appear to have been added for Lee Food Products Ltd. One-storey additions to the east and an annex to the west, dating respectively to 1948, 1950, and c.1956, represent the expansion of the factory in response to increased demand for China Lily ingredients. The bright red palette of doors and window trim unites the structures within the factory complex; this colour, considered auspicious and popular within the Chinese community, was likely added for Lee Food Products Ltd.

#### HISTORICAL OR ASSOCIATIVE VALUE

Historical or Associative Value	
i. has direct associations with a theme, event, belief, person, activity, organization or institution that is significant to a community	✓
ii. yields, or has the potential to yield, information that contributes to an understanding of a community or culture	✓

iii. demonstrates or reflects the work or ideas of an architect, artist, builder, designer or theorist who is significant to a community	N/A
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*The property has direct associations with a theme, event, belief, person, activity, organization or institution that is significant to a community*

The subject property has direct associations with the Chinese community in Toronto, which both predate and are reinforced by the existing structures. From 1912 through 1937, this lot housed a Chinese laundry, reflecting the occupation of a large proportion of the city's Chinese population at that period. The site's connection with the Chinese community evolved and strengthened when Yeat Lum Lee established his influential Lee Foods Products business at this location in 1947. Adapting a 1920-1921 mixed-use building to serve as his company's headquarters and factory, Lee and his business partner, Joe Wing, soon found success in manufacturing Chinese foodstuffs. They distributed their China Lily brand of bean sprouts, chow mein noodles, canned meats and vegetables, and most notably soy sauce, widely across Canada as well as internationally. The products manufactured for over 70 years at 1233 Queen Street East played a significant role in popularizing Chinese ingredients among Canadian households, beginning at a time when Chinese residents continued to face systemic barriers to their acceptance in Canadian society.

*The property yields, or has the potential to yield, information that contributes to an understanding of a community or culture*

The property has the potential to yield information that contributes to an understanding of Toronto's Chinese community, prior to and following the 1947 repeal of the Chinese Exclusion Act of 1923. The property's adaptation and expansion over time for Lee Food Products Ltd. accommodated the growth, requirements, and business practices of this prominent Chinese food producer, and the property may provide insight into their manufacturing processes.

## CONTEXTUAL VALUE

Contextual Value	
i. is important in defining, maintaining or supporting the character of an area	N/A
ii. is physically, functionally, visually or historically linked to its surroundings	✓
iii. is a landmark	N/A

*The property is physically, functionally, visually or historically linked to its surroundings*

The property is visually and historically linked to its surroundings due to its unique form as a 1920s Main Street commercial building converted to a factory, and its long history for a century situated at a prominent corner in Leslieville and 75 years of association with the well-known China Lily brand.



## **CONCLUSION**

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Staff have completed the Research and Evaluation Report for the property at 1233-1235 Queen Street East and determined that the property meets Ontario Regulation 9/06, the criteria prescribed for municipal designation under Part IV, Section 29 of the Ontario Heritage Act, on the basis of its design/physical, historical/associative, and contextual values. As such, the property is a significant built heritage resource.

The Statement of Significance (Attachment 3) for 1233-1235 Queen Street East comprises the Reasons for Designation, which is the Public Notice of Intention to Designate.

## **CONTACT**

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## **SIGNATURE**

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Mary L. MacDonald, MA, CAHP  
Senior Manager, Heritage Planning  
Urban Design, City Planning

## **ATTACHMENTS**

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Attachment 1 – Maps and Photographs  
Attachment 2 – List of Research Sources  
Attachment 3 – Statement of Significance (Reasons for Designation)

**MAPS AND PHOTOGRAPHS:  
1233-1235 QUEEN STREET EAST**

**ATTACHMENT 1**



Figure 2: Location of 1233-1235 Queen Street East, indicated by the arrow. Note: This location map is for information purposes only; the exact boundaries of the property are not shown. North is located at the top of the map. (City of Toronto mapping)



Figure 3: Site plans showing the subject property at 1233-1235 Queen Street East in relation to the other properties within the proposed development site (left), and the construction dates of the components of 1233-1235 Queen Street East (right). Note: These maps are for information purposes only; the exact boundaries of the property are not shown. North is located at the top of the maps. (City of Toronto mapping, annotated by Heritage Planning)



Figure 4: 1903 Goad's Atlas of the City of Toronto; future location of 1233-1235 Queen Street East indicated by the arrow.



Figure 5: 1913 Goad's Atlas of the City of Toronto; future location of 1233-1235 Queen Street East indicated by the arrow.



Figure 6: 1924 aerial photograph; location of 1233-1235 Queen Street East indicated by the arrow. Note appearance of the earliest extant portion of the property.



Figure 7: 1954 aerial photograph; location of 1233-1235 Queen Street East indicated by the arrow. Note additions on the east elevation.





Figure 8: 1956 aerial photograph; location of 1233-1235 Queen Street East indicated by the arrow. Note addition on the west elevation.



Figure 9: 1965 aerial photograph; location of 1233-1235 Queen Street East indicated by the arrow.



Figure 10: 1969, 1970, and 1971 aerial photographs; note addition of 1243 Queen Street East to the east in the 1971 photograph.



Figure 11: 1978 aerial photograph; location of 1233-1235 Queen Street East indicated by the arrow.



Figure 12: 2005 aerial photograph; location of 1233-1235 Queen Street East indicated by the arrow.





Figure 13: Letterhead of Lee's Produce Co., 1951. (City of Toronto Building Records)

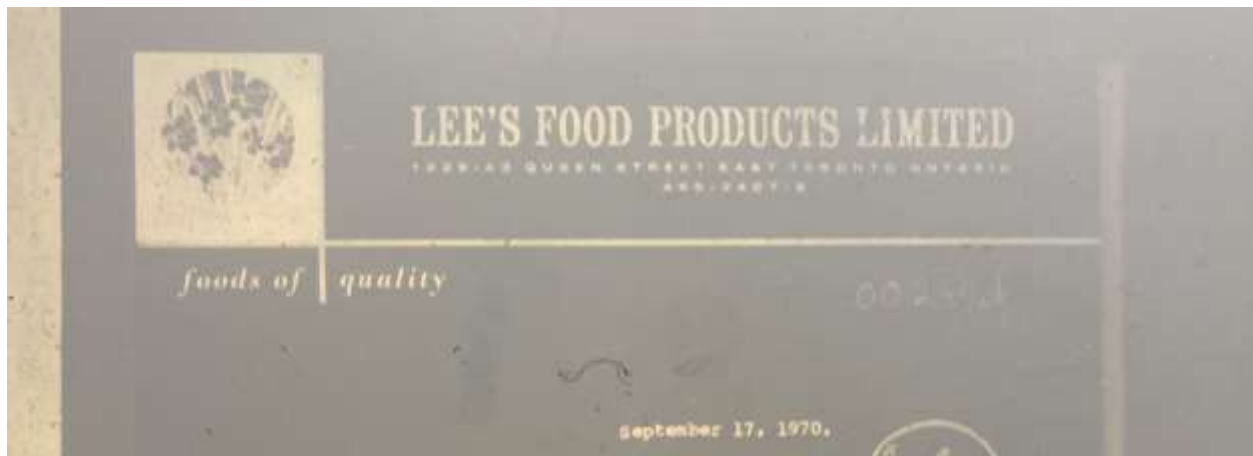


Figure 14: Letterhead of Lee's Food Products Ltd., 1970. (City of Toronto Building Records)

<b>Plan a Chinese Dinner at Home</b>	
<b>CHINA LILY BRAND</b>	
<b>BEAN SPROUTS</b>	20-oz. Tin. <b>17¢</b>
<b>CHOP SUEY VEGETABLES</b>	20-oz. Tin. <b>33¢</b>
<b>CHOP SUEY WITH BEEF</b>	20-oz. Tin. <b>39¢</b>
<b>CHOP SUEY WITH CHICKEN</b>	20-oz. Tin. <b>45¢</b>
<b>CHOP SUEY WITH PORK</b>	20-oz. Tin. <b>39¢</b>
<b>CHOW MEIN NOODLES</b>	4-oz. Tin. <b>24¢</b>
<b>SOYA SAUCE</b>	5-oz. Btl. <b>21¢</b>
<b>RED ROSE GREEN TEA</b>	8-oz. Pkg. <b>51¢</b>
<b>UNCLE BEN'S RICE</b>	28-oz. Pkg. <b>49¢</b>

Figure 15: Clip from a Dominion Stores Limited advertisement, *Toronto Daily Star*, 16 June 1955, P. 11.



Figure 16: China Lily soy sauce stocked in a grocery store, November 2020. (Photograph by Jeff Mushum Johnstone, via Facebook)



Figure 17: The iconic yellow and black China Lily soy sauce bottle. (Real Canadian Superstore)

## A beloved Canadian soy sauce runs out

China Lily soy sauce has become an essential part of indigenous cuisine in British Columbia



Figure 18: Media coverage of the China Lily shortage, January 2021. (*The Economist*)



Figure 19: Drawings of the earliest portion of the subject property, showing layout of barber shop and pool room on the ground floor, 1920. (City of Toronto Building Records)

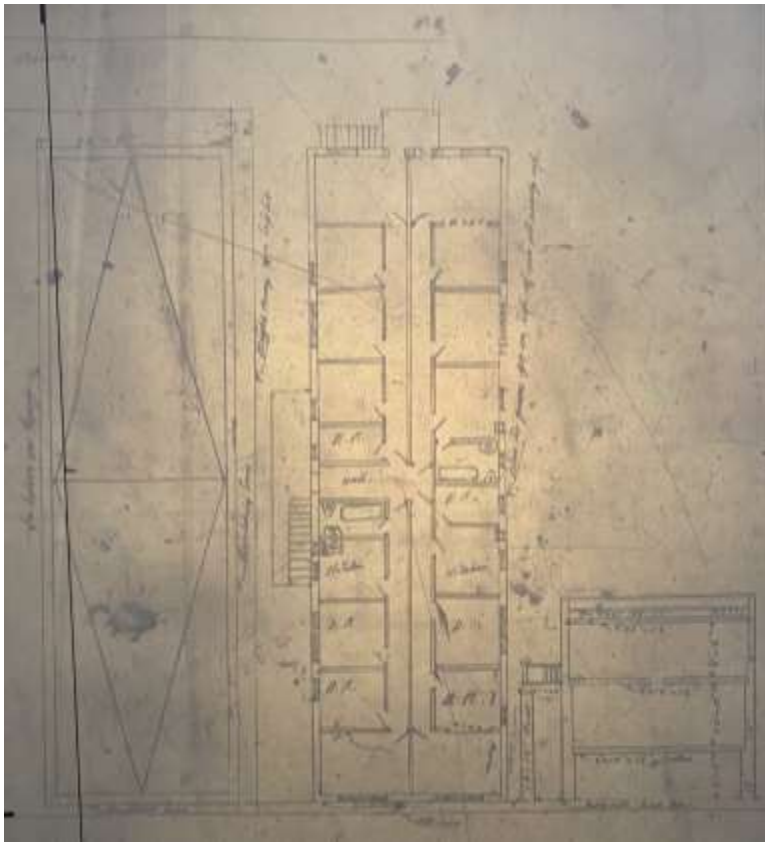


Figure 20: Drawings of the earliest portion of the subject property, showing layout of apartments on the second floor, 1920. (City of Toronto Building Records)



Figure 21: Drawing of the earliest portion of the subject property, showing exterior of the ground floor, 1920. (City of Toronto Building Records)



Figure 22: Drawing of the rear east addition to the subject property for Yeat Lum Lee, by C.R. Worsley, 1948. (City of Toronto Building Records)

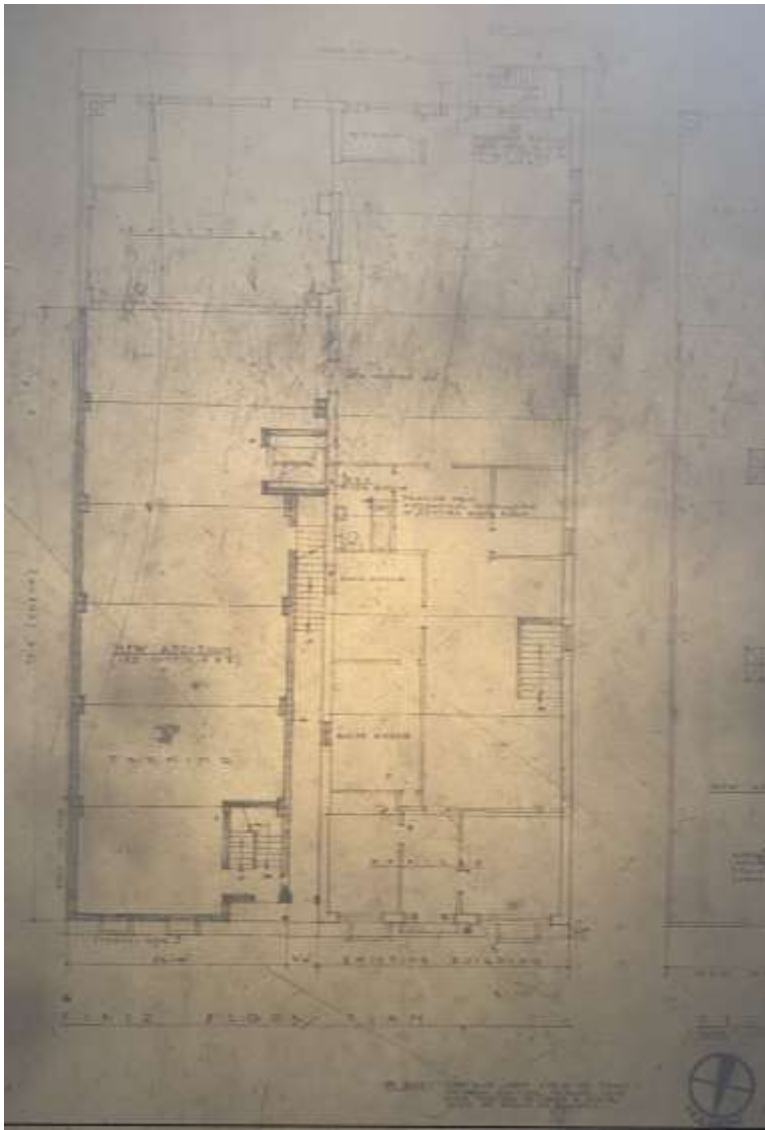


Figure 23: Drawing of the second east addition to the subject property for Yeat Lum Lee, by C.R. Worsley, 1950. (City of Toronto Building Records)



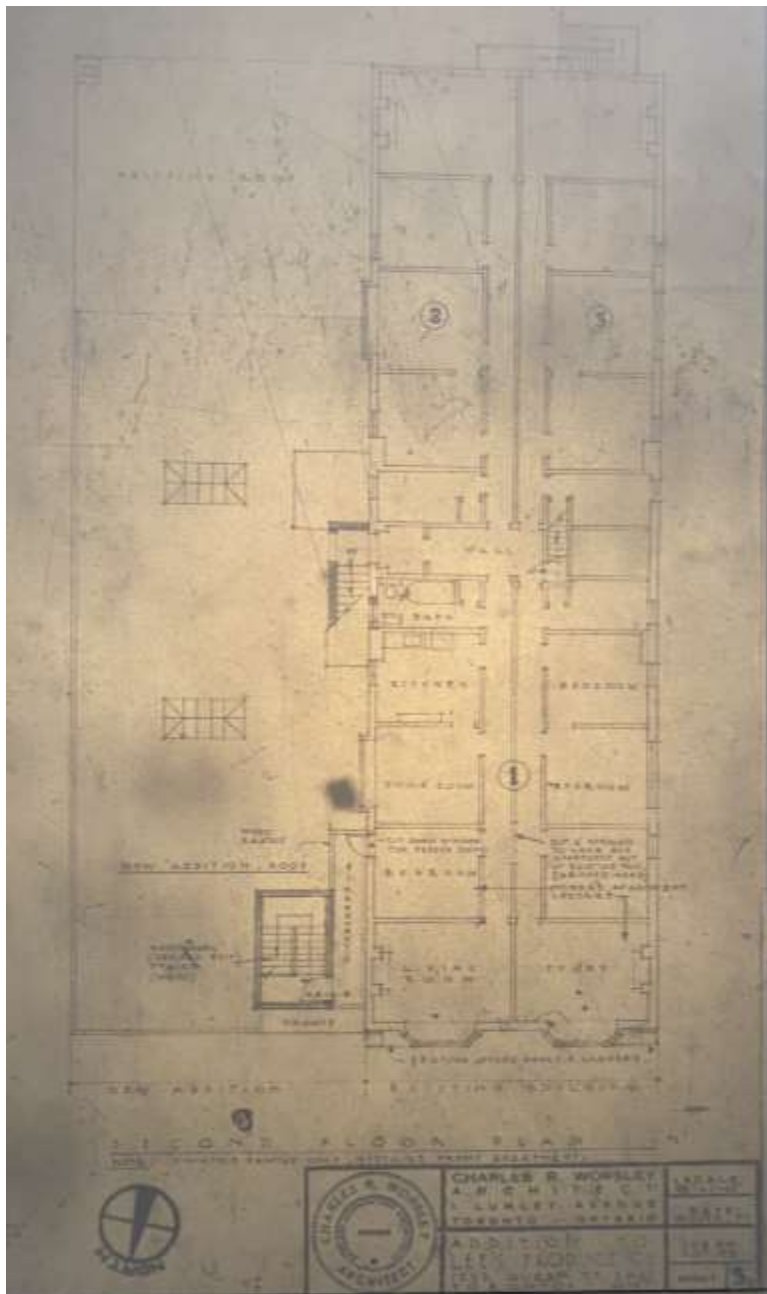


Figure 24: Drawing of the second east addition to the subject property for Yeat Lum Lee, by C.R. Worsley, 1950. Note apartments still present on second storey of 1920-1921 building. (City of Toronto Building Records)

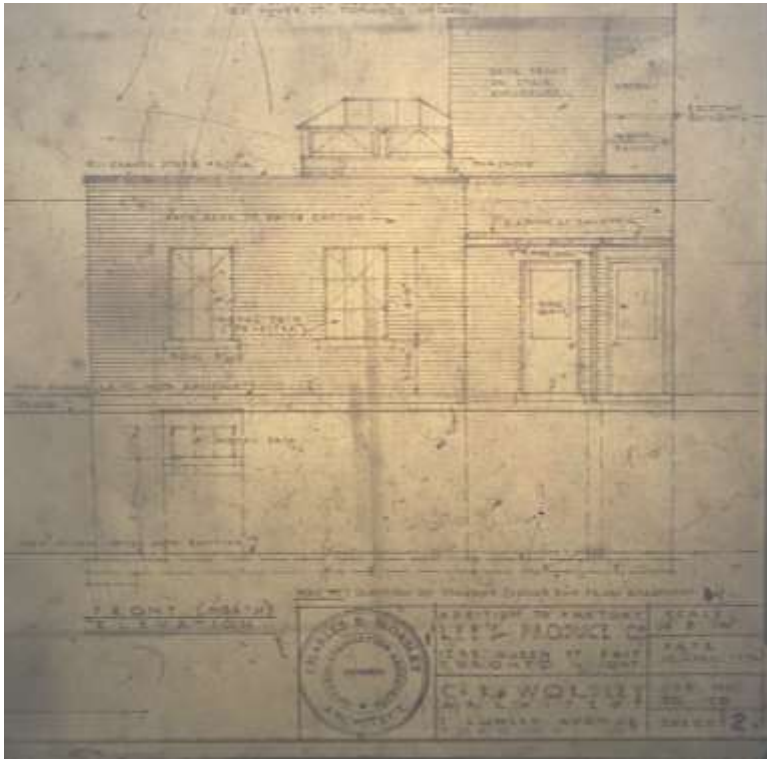


Figure 25: North elevation drawing of the second east addition to the subject property for Yeat Lum Lee, by C.R. Worsley, 1950. (City of Toronto Building Records)

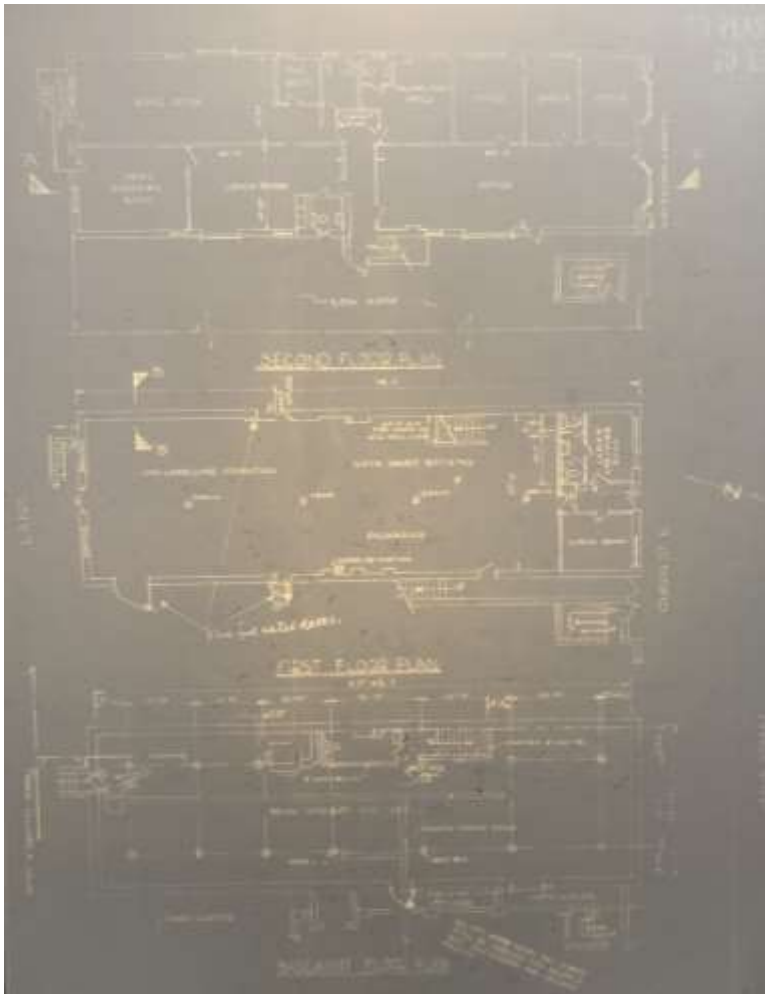


Figure 26: Plans showing the uses of the 1920-1921 building, 1970. (City of Toronto Building Records)



City of Toronto Archives, Fonds 1488, Series 1230, Item 2536

Figure 27: Southeastward view of the subject property, c.1920-1926. The 1920-1921 portion of the extant factory complex is visible at centre with a sign reading Melba Billiards; a barber's pole is also visible. A Chinese laundry occupies the building next door. (City of Toronto Archives, Fonds 1488, Series 1230, Item 2536)



Figure 28: Subject property with China Lily signage, by Sally Hunter, 2010  
(<https://www.flickr.com/photos/gingermaddy/4865643333/in/set-72157623562345892/>)





Figure 29: North elevation of the 1920-1921 structure, with the 1950 addition visible at left, 2022. (Heritage Planning)



Figure 30: Details of the 1920-1921 structure, 2022. (Heritage Planning)





Figure 31: North elevation of 1233-1235 Queen Street East along Leslie Street, 2022. (Heritage Planning)



Figure 32: North elevation of 1233-1235 Queen Street East along Leslie Street, showing the c.1955 addition, 2022. (Heritage Planning)





Figure 33: West elevation of 1233-1235 Queen Street East along Leslie Street, showing the c.1955 addition, 2022. (Heritage Planning)



Figure 34: Southwest corner of the subject property, showing the c.1956 addition and 1960 steel tank, with the oldest (1920-1921) structure visible beyond, 2022. (Heritage Planning)





Figure 35: Northeastward view of the rear of the subject property, with the oldest (1920-1921) structure visible at left, 2022. (Heritage Planning)



Figure 36: View of the subject property from February 2018. (Google Street View)



## 1233-1235 QUEEN STREET EAST

**Archival Sources**

- Aerial photographs, City of Toronto mapping, 1939, 1954, 1965, 1978, 2005, 2015, 2020
- City of Toronto Building Records, Building Permits for 1233 Queen Street East
- Goad's Atlas of the City of Toronto, 1880, 1889, 1903, 1913, 1924.
- Toronto City Directories, 1850-1969 (<https://www.torontopubliclibrary.ca/history-genealogy/lh-digital-city-directories.jsp>).

**Secondary Sources**

- Arlene Chan, "Against All Odds: The Chinese Laundry," *The Ward: The Life and Loss of Toronto's First Immigrant Neighbourhood*, Eds. John Lorinc, Michael McClelland, Ellen Scheinberg, Tatum Taylor, Coach House Books, 2015.
- Arlene Chan, "Chinese Head Tax in Canada," *The Canadian Encyclopedia*, 2016, <https://www.thecanadianencyclopedia.ca/en/article/chinese-head-tax-in-canada>.
- "Leslieville Timeline," Leslieville Historical Society, <https://leslievillehistory.com/leslieville-timeline/>.
- Leslieville Urban Design Guidelines, City of Toronto, June 2014, <https://www.toronto.ca/legdocs/mmis/2014/te/bgrd/backgroundfile-70398.pdf>.
- Lise Luppens and Elaine Power, "Aboriginal isn't just about what was before, it's what's happening now': Perspectives of Indigenous peoples on the foods in their contemporary diets," *Canadian Food Studies*, Vol. 5. No. 2, pp. 142-161.
- Tanya Mok, "Toronto soy sauce factory shuts down and neighbourhood wonders what's coming next," *blogTO*, 18 Nov. 2020, [https://www.blogto.com/eat\\_drink/2020/11/toronto-soy-sauce-factory-shuts-down-neighbourhood-wonders-whats-coming-next/](https://www.blogto.com/eat_drink/2020/11/toronto-soy-sauce-factory-shuts-down-neighbourhood-wonders-whats-coming-next/).
- "Yeat Lum Lee: Began Business By Growing Bean Sprouts," *The Globe and Mail*, 23 Feb. 1962, P. 4.
- William Shurtleff and Akiko Aoyagi, "History of Tofu and Tofu Products (1985-1994)", Soyinfo Centre, 2022, <https://www.soyinfocenter.com/pdf/285/Tof2.pdf>.

**(REASONS FOR DESIGNATION)****1233-1235 QUEEN STREET EAST - CHINA LILY FACTORY**

The property at 1233-1235 Queen Street East is worthy of designation under Part IV, Section 29 of the Ontario Heritage Act for its cultural heritage value, and meets Ontario Regulation 9/06, the provincial criteria prescribed for municipal designation, under the categories of design/physical value, historical/associative value, and contextual value.

**Description**

The subject property consists of a food manufacturing factory complex, built incrementally at the southeast corner of Queen Street East and Leslie Street. The earliest structure on the property is a two-storey red brick structure, constructed as a mixed-use/commercial building in 1920-1921. In 1947, Yeat Lum Lee acquired the building and converted it into the headquarters and factory for Lee Food Products Ltd., known for its China Lily brand of products. The facilities grew to include additions to the east, dating to 1948 and 1950, and an addition to the west, constructed in c.1956, along with a steel tank to the southwest in 1960.

**Statement of Cultural Heritage Value**

As a unique example of a 1920s mixed-use building converted to a food manufacturing factory at mid-century, the subject property holds physical value. The earliest portion of the building, constructed in 1920-1921, features stone quoins, a wood cornice above the ground storey, bay windows at the second floor with shingles below, dentil corbelling and dog tooth brickwork at the roofline, and parapet coping tiles. One-storey additions to the east and an annex to the west, dating respectively to 1948, 1950, and c.1956, represent the expansion of the factory in response to increased demand for China Lily ingredients. The bright red palette of doors and window trim unites the structures within the factory complex; this colour, considered auspicious and popular within the Chinese community, was likely added for Lee Food Products Ltd.

The subject property has direct associations with the Chinese community in Toronto, which both predate and are reinforced by the existing structures. From 1912 through 1937, this lot housed a Chinese laundry, reflecting the occupation of a large proportion of the city's Chinese population at that period. The site's connection with the Chinese community evolved and strengthened when Yeat Lum Lee established his influential Lee Foods Products Ltd. business at this location in 1947. Adapting a 1920-1921 mixed-use building to serve as his company's headquarters and factory, Lee and his business partner, Joe Wing, soon found success in manufacturing Chinese foodstuffs. They distributed their China Lily brand of bean sprouts, chow mein noodles, canned meats and vegetables, and most notably soy sauce, widely across Canada as well as internationally. The products manufactured for over 70 years at 1233-1235 Queen Street East played a significant role in popularizing Chinese ingredients among Canadian households, beginning at a time when Chinese residents continued to face systemic challenges to their acceptance in society. The property also has the potential to yield information that contributes to an understanding of Toronto's Chinese

community, prior to and following the 1947 repeal of the Chinese Exclusion Act of 1923. The property's adaptation and expansion over time for Lee Food Products Ltd. accommodated the growth, requirements, and business practices of this prominent Chinese food producer, and the property may provide insight into their manufacturing processes.

Due to its unique form as a 1920s commercial building converted to a factory, situated at a prominent corner, and its long history of association with the well-known China Lily brand, the property can be considered a cultural landmark.

## **Heritage Attributes**

### **Design and Physical Value**

The following heritage attributes contribute to the cultural heritage value of the property at 1233-1235 Queen Street East as a unique example of a factory conversion:

- The property's legibility as an incrementally developed complex, including its scale, form, and massing as a two-storey, flat-roofed former mixed-use/commercial building a one-storey additions to the east, an annex to the west, and a steel tank to the rear
- The exterior red brick on the oldest structure and the additions
- The red palette of doors and window trim that visually unites the oldest structure and additions
- Details on the oldest structure that reflect both the original design and alterations made for Lee Food Products Ltd., including stone quoins, a wood cornice above the ground storey, bay windows at the second floor with shingles below, dentil corbelling and dog tooth brickwork at the roofline, and parapet coping tiles

### **Historic and Associative Value**

The following heritage attributes contribute to the cultural heritage value of the property at 1233-1235 Queen Street East as the former headquarters and factory for Lee Food Products Ltd.:

- The property's legibility as an incrementally developed complex, including its scale, form, and massing as a two-storey, flat-roofed former mixed-use/commercial building a one-storey additions to the east, an annex to the west, and a steel tank to the rear
- The property's siting and orientation at the southeast corner of Queen Street East and Leslie Street
- The red palette of doors and window trim that visually unites the oldest structure and additions

### **Contextual Value**

The following heritage attributes contribute to the cultural heritage value of the property at 1233-1235 Queen Street East as a cultural landmark:

- The property's legibility as an incrementally developed complex, including its scale, form, and massing as a two-storey, flat-roofed former mixed-use/commercial building a one-storey additions to the east, an annex to the west, and a steel tank to the rear
- The property's siting and orientation at the southeast corner of Queen Street East and Leslie Street