

# **Attachment B**

**Hector Abrahams Architects - Heritage  
Assessment Report - 50-54 Dixon Street**

# 50-54 Dixon Street, Haymarket

## Heritage Assessment

FINAL Version 1.2

19 July 2024



For City of Sydney  
By Hector Abrahams Architects

## Acknowledgment of Country

We acknowledge the Gadigal and Wiradjuri, the original inhabitants of the land on which we work. Nos 50-54 Dixon Street is located on the land of the Gadigal.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples have a connection to place, land, water and community, established over many thousands of years. We recognise the cultural significance inherent in these connections, that sovereignty over this land was never ceded and that it continues to be sacred to its rightful owners.

We pay respect to Elders past and present, and stand with all First Peoples in their quest for justice, truth telling, and reconciliation.

## CONTENTS

1.	Introduction .....	4
2.	Site Description.....	6
3.	History (written by Dr Juanita Kwok) .....	7
3.1.	<i>Contextual Background</i> .....	7
3.1.	<i>50 Dixon Street</i> .....	19
3.1.	<i>52 Dixon Street</i> .....	22
3.1.	<i>54 Dixon Street</i> .....	28
4.	Physical Analysis .....	34
5.	Comparative analysis.....	42
6.	Assessment of Significance .....	48
6.1.	<i>Ability to demonstrate</i> .....	48
6.2.	<i>Assessment against NSW Heritage Assessment Criteria</i> .....	52
6.3.	<i>Statement of Significance</i> .....	63
7.	Listing Recommendations .....	64
8.	Management Recommendations .....	65
8.1.	<i>Obligations arising from significance</i> .....	65
8.2.	<i>Tolerance for change</i> .....	65
8.3.	<i>Conservation of fabric</i> .....	65
8.4.	<i>Interpretation</i> .....	66
8.5.	<i>Future development</i> .....	66
8.6.	<i>Future use</i> .....	66

Version	Authors	Status	Date
Version 1.0	Hector Abrahams Architects and Dr Juanita Kwok	Draft for internal review	18 June 2024
Version 1.1	Hector Abrahams Architects and Dr Juanita Kwok	Draft for review by City of Sydney	24 June 2024
Version 1.2	Hector Abrahams Architects and Dr Juanita Kwok	Final for City of Sydney	19 July 2024



## 1. Introduction

This report has been prepared in response to actions developed in the Haymarket and Chinatown Revitalisation Strategy. The past few years have been challenging for Haymarket and the City heard from the community that it is in need of revitalisation. The City adopted the Haymarket and Chinatown Revitalisation Strategy in December 2023 to outline actions in five priority areas to deliver on the community's vision for the area. The Strategy includes an action to strengthen recognition of cultural heritage, identifying three sites as potentially having cultural significance, linked to the Chinese Australian community. In order to provide a foundational understanding of the key themes from Chinatown's history, the City commissioned GML Heritage in 2022 to provide a Thematic History of Chinatown.

Hector Abrahams Architects (HAA) were engaged by the City of Sydney to investigate the significance of the place. The first stage was to examine the history and potential significance of three places at 90-100 Hay Street, 75-77 Ultimo Road and 50-54 Dixon Street, Haymarket. The findings of the first stage were compiled into standalone historical research reports which informs the second stage. Following the development of the Historical Research reports, HAA was engaged to undertake a heritage assessment of all three sites. HAA's approach to these reports is to work in co-authorship with the Chinese Australian Historian, Dr Juanita Kwok. Dr Kwok was engaged to conduct research and provide a contextual written history for the place and to advise on the place's significance and management.

This report assesses the heritage significance of 50-54 Dixon Street. The purpose of this report is to advise the City of any significance, to make a recommendation on heritage listing as well as management recommendations to conserve significance. This assessment will only make a recommendation on heritage listing within the Sydney LEP 2012.

This report briefly outlines the acquisition of the land and construction of the place by the Goon Yee Tong (the district association for migrants from Tung Koon) and the Loon Fook Tong (the district association for migrants from Tsang Shing). It then discusses these buildings as the meeting place, not only for members of the district associations, but for members of the NSW Chinese Chamber of Commerce and as the publishing address of the early Chinese newspaper, the *Tung Wah Times*. The report identifies other uses of the place and notable figures associated with the building.

A physical description of the place's current external condition is then provided and a comparative analysis investigates other district associations in Australia. The history and comparative analysis inform the assessment of significance which is based on Heritage NSW's *Assessing Heritage Significance Guidelines (2023)* and from which a recommendation is made on whether or not the place should be listed under Schedule 5, part 1 of the Sydney LEP 2012. The report concludes with management recommendations for the place.

This report was prepared by Hector Abrahams, Sioned Lavery and Sherly Robert of Hector Abrahams Architects, and Dr Juanita Kwok, historian. Research using Chinese language sources and Chinese-to-English translations were carried out by historical translator and consultant linguist, Ely Finch. The authors acknowledge Paul Macgregor for his input in section 5. The authors acknowledge and thank descendants and those who lived or worked in Chinatown for sharing their family stories and memories.

### Note on romanisations

There is a distinction between historical and contemporary names for the district associations and districts in China. When known, the historical names for associations and districts have been used. Where the reference is contemporary, the contemporary name has been used.

Historical name	Contemporary pinyin romanisation
Loon Fook Tong	Luen Fook Tong
Tsang Shing	Zengcheng
Tung Koon	Dongguan

## 2. Site Description

The building at Nos. 50-54 Dixon Street, Haymarket is located towards the northern end of Dixon Street and adjacent the northern Chinatown gate. Its land title is Lot A DP 958137, lot B DP 958137 and lot C DP958137. Constructed in 1916, the place is a three-storey masonry building which incorporates a number of architectural styles including a classical pediment and some Greek detailing.

50-54 Dixon Street has been owned and used by the Goon Yee Tong, the Loong Yee Tong and the Loon Fook Tong associations for over 100 years. Besides its use as a meeting place and residential accommodation for members, particularly those newly arriving from or departing to the home district in China, the building was home to two significant Chinese Australian institutions – the NSW Chinese Chamber of Commerce and the *Tung Wah Times* newspaper. The building is also distinguished for housing early restaurants, the *Eastern Restaurant* and *Lean Sun Low Cafe*, both of which opened in the 1950s and were instrumental in the development of the restaurant culture of Dixon Street. Today the building continues to be owned by the district associations and the ground floors are leased to restaurants.



Figure 1. Aerial view showing 50-54 Dixon Street, Haymarket indicated in red. Source: Nearmap. Annotated by HAA.

### 3. History (written by Dr Juanita Kwok)

#### 3.1. Contextual Background

The great majority of Chinese migrants who came to the Australian colonies for the goldrushes in the early 1850s came from counties in the Pearl River Delta, in the vicinity of the provincial capital of Canton. As Dr Michael Williams' research shows, they maintained strong ties to their villages.<sup>1</sup> People tied by native place, languages and kinship established associations to support and sponsor others from the same place or of the same surname. These associations included the Goon Yee Tong, for people from Tung Koon (Dongguan) County, and the Loon Fook Tong (Luen Fook Tong), for people from the Tsang Shing (Zengcheng) County.

The Goon Yee Tong was established by at least 1857, as the influential merchant Way Kee is known to have been Treasurer of the association from 1857 to 1889.<sup>2</sup> In the late 19th century, after the goldrushes had ended, the Chinese population in the Australian colonies was still largely a rural-based population. In NSW, people from Tung Koon were concentrated in rural towns such as Tamworth, Newcastle, Bathurst, Camden and Liverpool, where they mainly worked as market gardeners or storekeepers. A notice published in the *Chinese Australian Herald* in December 1902 indicates that the Goon Yee Tong association was established by Tung Koon natives to organise bone repatriation and engage in charitable endeavours.<sup>3</sup> A 1906 article in the *Tung Wah Times* named N. Lean Fore as the director of the organisation with responsibility for bone repatriation.<sup>4</sup>

People from Tsang Shing were concentrated in towns such as Wellington and Newcastle, and in Victoria and New Zealand, where they were also largely engaged in market gardening and storekeeping. The district association for people from Tsang Shing was called the Loon Fook Tong. These two district associations merged to create a joint Tung Koon-Tsang Shing association called the Loong Yee Tong.

Evidence given in the 1891 *Report on the Royal Commission on alleged Chinese gambling and immorality and charges of bribery against members of the police force* shows that the Loong Yee Tong was in existence from at least 1891. Way Shong, Treasurer of the Loong Yee Tong, who was amongst the many Chinese community members interviewed for the 1891 Commission, stated he knew of two Chinese societies in Sydney – the Goon Yee Tong and the Loong Yee Tong.<sup>5</sup> Way Shong stated that the objects of the Loong Yee Tong are to “provide a fund for sick people and people who are unable to pay their passages home”. He also spoke of funds donated to the hospital and sent to Hong Kong for buying coffins to put on board the boats so that if any Chinaman died at sea his body would not be thrown overboard.<sup>6</sup> Another interviewee, Pow Chee stated that “the Loong Yee Tong belongs to two districts, and I think about 80 or 90 percent of [the migrants from] those districts belong to the Society”.<sup>7</sup>

#### Early development of the area

The buildings which occupy 50-54 Dixon Street are part of 15 acres of Gadigal land at the head of Cockle Bay, granted to John Dickson in 1813. The grant was subsequently sub-divided and in 1830 and 1833 allotments were sold in Sussex, Goulburn and Dickson (sic) Streets (see figure 2).

<sup>1</sup> See WILLIAMS, M. 2018. *Returning Home With Glory: Chinese Villagers around the Pacific, 1849 to 1949*, Hong Kong University Press.

<sup>2</sup> People from Tung Koon were concentrated in rural NSW in towns such as Tamworth, Newcastle, Orange, Bathurst, Camden and Liverpool. Their district association, t

<sup>3</sup> The *Chinese Australian Herald*, 27 December, 1902, 5, <https://trove.nla.gov.au/newspaper/article/169055770>

<sup>4</sup> 1906 '敬告本邑梓友', *Tung Wah Times (Sydney, NSW: 1901 - 1936)*, 30 June, 5. , viewed 21 Feb 2024, <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article247428605>

<sup>5</sup> *Report of the Royal Commission on alleged Chinese gambling and immorality and charges of bribery against members of the police force*, appointed August 20, 1891, presented to Parliament by command, Hathi Trust, accessed 6 December 2023, <https://babel.hathitrust.org/cgi/pt?id=coo1.ark:/13960/t59c7hk45&seq=49>

<sup>6</sup> Way Shong, 22 September 1891, *Report of the Royal Commission on alleged Chinese gambling*.

<sup>7</sup> Pow Chee, 12 October 1891, *Report of the Royal Commission on alleged Chinese gambling*.





Figure 2. 1844 plan of John Dickson's grant showing allotments sold in 1830 and 1833. 50-54 Dixon Street indicated in red at lots 20 and 21. The former has been sold but the later yet to be sold. Source: Mitchell Library [SLNSW\_FL3710912]. Annotated by HAA.

Dove's Plan 1880 plan shows two plots where 50-54 Dixon Street stands today. The northern plot was a yard with two single-storey wooden buildings with shingle roofs at the west entrance, three two-storey brick or stone buildings with shingle roofs to the south, and one single-storey wooden structure with a slate or metal roof in the eastern corner (figure 3).

The southern plot was a timber yard with a wood and iron shed along the northern edge of the plot, as well as a single-storey wooden structure with slate or metal roof in the north east corner (figure 3). It is unknown when these structures were demolished.

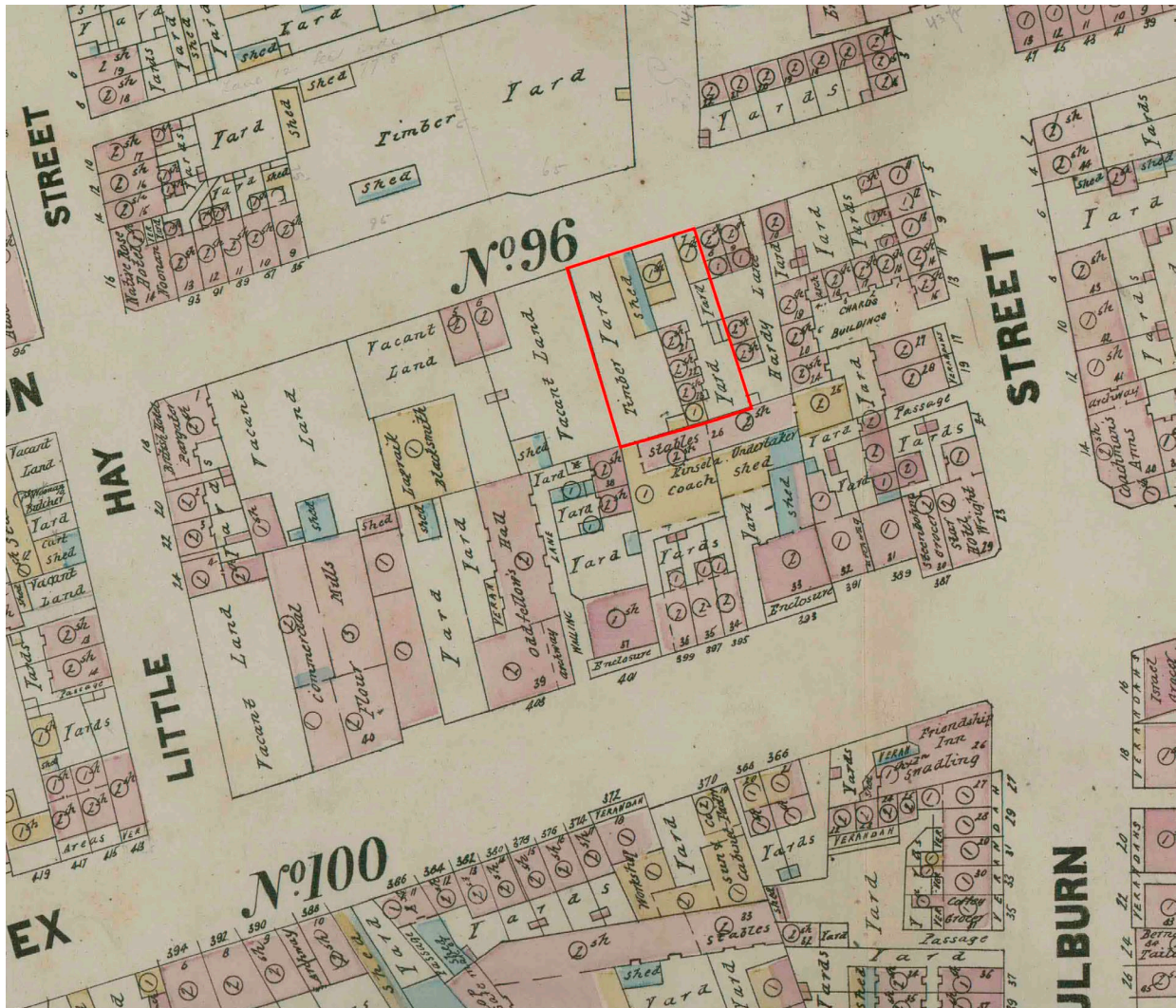


Figure 3. 1880 Dove's Plans of Sydney with the location of 50-54 Dixon Street highlighted in red. Source: City of Sydney Archives (A-00880144). Annotated by HAA.

In 1900, the title for 50-54 Dixon Street was transferred to Dugald Thomson.<sup>8</sup> By that time, buildings on Dixon Street were run-down. A photograph showing the rear view of a row of conjoined brick cottages at 37-47 Dixon Street, Haymarket, reveals the state of nearby buildings on Dixon Street at the turn of the century (see figure 4).

<sup>8</sup> (Assessment book, Lang ward 1914, 88)





Figure 4. City of Sydney, Print - Dixon Street Haymarket, circa 1901 (01/01/1901 - 31/12/1901). Source: City of Sydney Archives [A-00040934].

In 1908, Sydney Municipal Council resumed terrace houses, mills and workshops spread over four acres bounded by Ultimo, Thomas, Hay, Quay and Engine Streets to make way for new market buildings designed by the City Architect. The first Municipal Market building opened in

1909 and the second in 1910.<sup>9</sup> These developments were reported in the *Chinese Australian Herald* in March 1909, with the comment that numerous Chinese firms were expected to move in light of the market's relocation.<sup>10</sup> From 1910, Chinese firms which had previously been centred around Campbell Street, Haymarket in proximity to the Belmore Markets, began to open stores in Hay, Dixon, Quay, Harbour Streets and Ultimo Road close to the new Municipal Markets.

### 50-54 Dixon Street – clubhouses for the Tung Koon “Goon Yee Tong”, Tung-Jaang “Loong Yee Tong”, and Tsang Shing “Loon Fook Tong”

In an oral history interview conducted sometime around 1991, businessman Leslie Chang, whose family were from Tung Koon recalled:

*When the Tung Koon people came to Sydney, there were so many of them, they decided to join forces with people from the neighbouring county of Jaang Sheng [sic]. They put their money together and bought three shops in Dixon Street, the rent from which was to be used for charitable and educational purposes.<sup>11</sup>*

Maxwell Yip, Secretary of the Goon Yee Tong stated:

*I was told by my late Uncle Henry Lum Yip that money was raised by donations from businessmen, market gardeners and anyone willing to contribute towards the purchasing of 50-52-54 Dixon Street. Goon Yee Tong and Ling Fook Tong [sic] formed a combined association called Ling Yee Tong [sic].<sup>12</sup>*

50-54 Dixon Street was in fact purpose-built on purchased land using funds raised from members of the associations. In 1907, nine rounds of donations for the Loong Yee Tong were published in the *Tung Wah Times* newspaper.<sup>13</sup> By early 1916, sufficient funds had been raised for the Goon Yee Tong and the Loon Fook Tong to purchase land in Dixon Street. On 11 February 1916, land title for two blocks of land at 50-54 Dixon Street was transferred from Dugald Thomson to Goon Yee Tong representatives, Chee Sung and Gilbert Yet Ting Quoy and Loon Fook Tong representatives Fung Nam and James Kwong Sing.<sup>14</sup> That same year, a building application was made to the Council and a plan submitted by G. L. Quoy (likely Gilbert Yet Ting Quoy), for a three-storey building at 50-54 Dixon Street to house three stores and dwellings (see Figure 5).<sup>15</sup> Gilbert Yet Ting Quoy was a leader of the Tung Koon community. He was the lessee of produce business, Lee Sang & Co. which occupied the Municipal building at 90 Hay Street. The pediment of the building at 50-54 Dixon Street shows the date of its completion as 1916. See Figure 6.

<sup>9</sup> Description, City of Sydney, *Glass Negative - Fruit and vegetable markets, Haymarket, circa 1920 (01/01/1920 - 31/12/1920)*, [A-01001328]. City of Sydney Archives, accessed 11 Jan 2024, <https://archives.cityofsydney.nsw.gov.au/nodes/view/1726756>

<sup>10</sup> 1909 '決議改建街市', *Guang yi hua bao = The Chinese Australian Herald (Sydney, NSW: 1894 - 1923)*, 13 March, 2. viewed 21 Feb 2024, <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article168080171>

<sup>11</sup> CHANG, THELMA AND LESLIE, "In a Nutshell" in, Gock Yen, Mavis, Yen Siaoman, and Richard Horsburgh. *South Flows the Pearl*. Sydney: Sydney University Press, 2022, 47.

<sup>12</sup> Chinese Community of Sydney in the Past, facebook group. Post by Anthony Ah Kee, 22 May 2022. Accessed 21 February 2024, <https://www.facebook.com/groups/1535721703222852>

<sup>13</sup> For example, 1907 '東增聯義堂第一次捐款芳名', *Tung Wah Times (Sydney, NSW: 1901 - 1936)*, 27 July, 7. , viewed 21 Feb 2024, <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article246930263>.

<sup>14</sup> Land Titles, Vol. Fol. 1323-162; 1830, 1900, 1916.

<sup>15</sup> *Dixon St (50-54) G L Quoy three stores (01/01/1916 - 31/12/1916)*, [A-00580341]. City of Sydney Archives, accessed 08 Feb 2024, <https://archives.cityofsydney.nsw.gov.au/nodes/view/1449673>

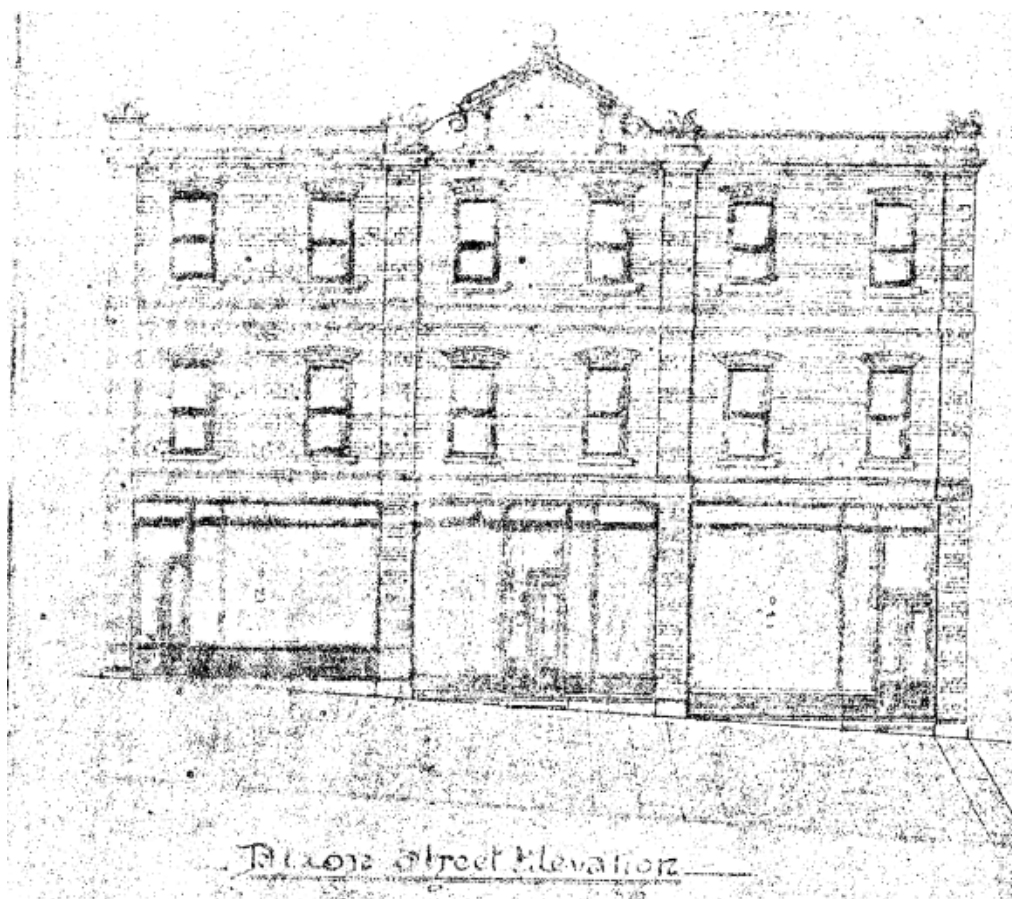


Figure 5. Part of Plan showing front of Dixon Street (50-54) G L Quay three stores (01/01/1916 - 31/12/1916), Source: City of Sydney Archives [A-00580341].



Figure 6. Pediment of 50-54 Dixon Street showing the date 1916. Source: Juanita Kwok, January 2024.



A plaque at the entrance to the building at 50-54 Dixon Street reads in English *Loong Yee Tong Inc.* See Figure 7.

The Chinese characters read:

增城聯福堂  
東增聯義堂會所  
東莞公義堂

In translation:

Tsang Shing “Loon Fook Tong”,  
Tung Koon Goon Yee Tong, and  
Tung-Jaang Loong Yee Tong clubhouse.”

[“Quotation marks indicate a coined romanisation”]



Figure 7. Loong Yee Tong plaque, 50-54 Dixon Street. Source: Juanita Kwok, January 2024.

According to Daphne Lowe Kelley, former President of the Luen Fook Tong and the Loong Yee Tong:

The original access to the upper floors of 50-52 Dixon St was internally through each building. However, as this was not always convenient to the lessee shop-owners, a decision was made to build a separate stairway to access the upper floors to LFT and GYT. I can't remember the exact year but it was after 1995 when Loong Fook Tong Inc was registered. The street plaque was added at that time.<sup>16</sup>

Signs are painted in Chinese on the exterior of 50-54 Dixon Street. See Figure 8.

The signs read from right to left:

東莞公義堂  
東增聯義堂  
增城聯福堂

They translate, respectively, to:  
Tung Koon Goon Yee Tong,  
Tung-Jaang Loong Yee Tong, and  
Tsang Shing “Loon Fook Tong”



Figure 8. Chinese signs on the exterior of 50-52 Dixon Street. Source: Juanita Kwok, January 2024.

<sup>16</sup> Daphne Lowe Kelley, pers. comm. 18 June 2024.



There are two additional faded painted signs on the exterior of the building. A sign above 52 Dixon Street (see Figure 9) appears to read:

中華總商會

This translates as *Chinese Chamber of Commerce*, though the third and fourth characters are not clear.<sup>17</sup>



Figure 9. Photograph of faded calligraphy on upper floor of 52 Dixon Street. Source: Juanita Kwok, January 2024.

---

<sup>17</sup> Translation by Ely Finch.



A sign above 54 Dixon Street (see Figure 10) reads:

"聯新樓"<sup>18</sup>

This translates as *Lean Sun Low*.

The Chinese Chamber of Commerce at 52 Dixon Street and the Lean Sun Low restaurant at 54 Dixon Street are discussed later in this report.

Earlier photographs of 50-54 Dixon Street show that the signs on the exterior of buildings at 50, 52 and 54 Dixon Street have been repainted over the years. See Figures 11 and 12.



Figure 10. Chinese sign on the exterior of 54 Dixon Street reads "Lean Sun Low". Source: HAA, March 2024.

---

<sup>18</sup> Translation by Ely Finch.



Figure 11. 1979 View of 50-54 Dixon Street showing Chinese signs on the façade indicated in red. Source: City of Sydney Archives [A-00008201]. Annotated by HAA.



Figure 12. 1984 photograph showing part of 50-54 Dixon Street and the Chinese characters on 50 Dixon Street that have since been painted over. Source: City of Sydney Archives [A-00058682]



There has been a change to the joint ownership of the three buildings between the two associations. According to Daphne Lowe Kelley “the land on which the buildings known as 50, 52 and 54 Dixon Street are located was purchased in the name of four trustees, two of whom were from Dongguan [sic] and two from Jung Seng [sic]. A short while after the three adjoining buildings were completed, 54 had a change of trustees when Charlie Young replaced the two Jung Seng trustees.”<sup>19</sup>

The land title record confirms that in August 1917, the title for 54 Dixon Street was transferred from Chee Sung, Gilbert Yet Ting Quoy, Fung Nam and James Kwong Sing to Chee Sung, Gilbert Yet Ting Quoy and Charlie Young.<sup>20</sup> With this transfer, joint trusteeship of 54 Dixon Street ceased and trustees were exclusively from Tung Koon. Upon the death of Chee Sung in 1927, 54 Dixon Street was transferred to Gilbert Yet Ting Quoy and Charlie Young, the remaining trustees.<sup>21</sup> In 1930, it was further transferred to Yet Quork Yan, Chung Lun, Charley Foo On and Noble Lean Fore as joint tenants.<sup>22</sup> The loss of joint trusteeship of 54 Dixon Street has, since 1917, disadvantaged the members of the Luen Fook Tong.<sup>23</sup>

According to Lowe Kelley, the societies were only registered as incorporated associations in 1995. When they registered, 50 and 52 Dixon Street were registered as belonging to the joint association. No.50 and 52 Dixon Street are still owned by the joint association of the Loong Yee Tong. The Goon Yee Tong is no longer an incorporated association, but a company limited by guarantee.<sup>24</sup>

---

<sup>19</sup> Chinese Community of Sydney in the Past, facebook group. Post by Anthony Ah Kee, 22 May 2022, comment by Daphne Lowe Kelley.

<sup>20</sup> Land Titles, Vol. Fol. 2782-50, 1917.

<sup>21</sup> Land Titles, Vol. Fol. 2782-50, 1927.

<sup>22</sup> Land Titles, Vol. Fol. 2782-50, 1930.

<sup>23</sup> Daphne Lowe Kelley, pers. comm. 27 April 2024.

<sup>24</sup> Daphne Lowe Kelley, pers. comm. 27 April 2024.

### 3.1. 50 Dixon Street



Figure 13. 50 Dixon Street, with Canton Restaurant on the ground floor. Source: Juanita Kwok, 2024.

Although 50 Dixon Street was built as a clubhouse for the Tsang Shing Loon Fook Tong Association, the earliest land title for 50 Dixon Street lists Salvation Army (General) William Bramwell Booth as leasing the building in 1918.<sup>25</sup> 50 Dixon Street is listed in the 1919 Sands Directory as the Salvation Army Women's Home.<sup>26</sup> The Assessment Books do not stipulate which floor/s was leased for this purpose. While it is established that the Salvation Army worked and recruited amongst the Chinese community, particularly on the tin fields of Northern NSW in the 1870s - early 1920s, there appears to be little written on this early history of the Salvation Army Women's Home and any relationship between the Chinese Australian owners of the building and the Salvation Army. The Salvation Army Women's Hostel was not established at its long-term address at 471 South Dowling Street, Surry Hills until 1924.

The Sands Directory of 1922 lists 50 Dixon Street as occupied by W. & G. Ping, Manufacturers agents.<sup>27</sup> William and George Ping dissolved their partnership in 1925 when George Ping retired and William Ping carried on the business until 1933.<sup>28</sup> In 1923, Ho Hing & Co. Importers was also listed at 50 Dixon Street.<sup>29</sup> Upon the death of Chee Sung in 1927, land at 50 Dixon Street was

<sup>25</sup> Land Titles, Vol. Fol. 2782-51, 1918.

<sup>26</sup> 1919 Part 1 - City Street Directory - A-Gou (01/01/1919 - 31/12/1919), [A-01136885]. City of Sydney Archives, accessed 09 May 2024, <https://archives.cityofsydney.nsw.gov.au/nodes/view/1899634>;

<sup>27</sup> Sands Directory, 1922 part 1 City St Directory, Call No. A-01136237, (50)

<sup>28</sup> Advertising (1925, December 4). *The Daily Telegraph* (Sydney, NSW: 1883 - 1930), 11. Retrieved February 20, 2024, from <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article245063064>; Sands Directory, 1932-33 Part 1 City Street Directory - A-Mar (39)

<sup>29</sup> Sands Directory, 1923a part 1 City St Directory, Call No. A-01136236, (49)

transferred to surviving joint trustees Gilbert Yet Ting Quoy, James Kwong Sing and Ping Nam.<sup>30</sup>

Between 1920 and 1928, the ground floor of 50 Dixon Street was occupied by the Eastern Residential House, advertising accommodation “for Eastern tourists, merchants, travellers and students, both interstate and country”.<sup>31</sup> An advertisement from 1920 names the proprietors (葉秉樑 and 葉秉棟). They share the same surname ("Yip/Yet"), and first character of their given name, suggesting that they are brothers or cousins.<sup>32</sup>

A building survey of 50-54 Dixon Street conducted in 1945 recorded 4 to 6 persons in residence in each building. The type of business was described as Chinese stores, bulk stores, Chinese Club with 30-40 at Club meetings.<sup>33</sup> It is not clear which club this referred to.

### The district association in recent times

Today the Loon Fook Tong is named the Zengcheng Association of Australia. According to Lowe Kelley, in the last 40 years or so, as a result of the committees conducting meetings in Chinese, the membership has few English-speaking descendants from the older families. In recent years, there are now some committee members who have both Chinese and English.<sup>34</sup>

In 2016, King Fong conducted a walking tour of Chinatown which included a visit to 50 Dixon Street. Photos taken upstairs at 50 Dixon Street (see Figures 14 and 15) and posted on Facebook show framed photographs hanging on a wall. According to Daphne Lowe Kelley, these are photographs of the members of the NSW Chinese Chamber of Commerce for different years.<sup>35</sup>

The photographs on display, along with any other records, documents and ephemera, are an integral part of the history of this building and are a rich source of information about the associations, their members and activities.

---

<sup>30</sup> Land Titles, Vol. Fol. 2782-51, 1927.

<sup>31</sup> Advertising (1922, May 20). *Tung Wah Times (Sydney, NSW : 1901 - 1936)*, 6. Retrieved February 20, 2024, from <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article227656590>;

Advertising (1928, October 6). *Tung Wah Times (Sydney, NSW : 1901 - 1936)*, 1. Retrieved February 20, 2024, from <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article224803806>.

<sup>32</sup> 1920 'Advertising', *Tung Wah Times (Sydney, NSW : 1901 - 1936)*, 25 December, 6. , viewed 21 Feb 2024, <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article227013534>.

<sup>33</sup> *Building Survey Card - Chinese stores and club, 50-54 Dixon Street Haymarket, 1945 (01/01/1945)*, [A-00508333]. City of Sydney Archives, accessed 08 Feb 2024, <https://archives.cityofsydney.nsw.gov.au/nodes/view/959411>

<sup>34</sup> Daphne Lowe Kelley, pers. comm. 27 April 2024.

<sup>35</sup> Pers. comm. Daphne Lowe Kelley, 2 March 2024.





Figure 14. “Inside the native place of the Duan Guan [sic] people”, posted by Michael Williams, 10 September 2016 on the Chinese Australian History Facebook page, accessed 20 March 2024, (3) Chinese Australian History | Inside the native place association of the Duan Guan people. | Facebook



Figure 15. Photos of former Presidents of the Loong Fook Tong, courtesy of Daphne Lowe Kelley



### 3.1. 52 Dixon Street



Figure 16. Photo showing 50 and 52 Dixon Street. Source: Juanita Kwok 2024.

52 Dixon Street was the address of the joint Tung Koon-Tsang Shing association, the Loong Yee Tong. Contemporary newspaper accounts shed little light on the purpose of the association. Historian Mei-Fen Kuo writes that “the Loong Yee Tong’s main objective was to collect money “to put coffins on board ships passing to and from China.”<sup>36</sup> The Sands Directory shows that the earliest tenants of the building were the *Tung Wah Times* newspaper and the NSW Chinese Chamber of Commerce. Members of the Goon Yee Tong and the Loon Fook Tong were associated with both the *Tung Wah Times* and the NSW Chinese Chamber of Commerce.

#### The *Tung Wah Times* (1902-1936)

From 1918, the address of the *Tung Wah Times* newspaper was given as 52 Dixon Street.<sup>37</sup> Its publisher was J. Young of Dixon Street, Haymarket.<sup>38</sup> Published from 1898–1902 as the *Tung Wah News*, then as the *Tung Wah Times*, it was the second Chinese newspaper to be established in Sydney after the *Chinese Australian Herald*, which began publication in 1894.<sup>39</sup> Mei-Fen Kuo argues that the Chinese press has special distinction as:

<sup>36</sup> KUO, M.-F. 2018. Jinxin: The remittance trade and enterprising Chinese Australians, 1850–1916. In: BENTON, G., LIU, H. & ZHANG, H. (eds.) *The Qiaopi Trade and Transnational Networks in the Chinese Diaspora*. Abingdon, Oxon and New York: Routledge.

<sup>37</sup> *Sands Directory*, 1918 part 1 City St Directory, Call No. A-01136241, (49)

<sup>38</sup> Advertising (1918, May 4). *Tung Wah Times (Sydney, NSW : 1901 - 1936)*, 8. Retrieved February 8, 2024, from <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article227019117>; “Advertising”, *Tung Wah Times*, 28 June 1919, 1, <https://trove.nla.gov.au/newspaper/article/227015723>

<sup>39</sup> YONG, C. F. 1977, *The New Gold Mountain*, 117.

*The only foreign-language press in Sydney to publish without interruption over three decades from the 1890s to the 1920s ... no foreign-language newspapers of any stamp could match the record of continuous circulation of Chinese-language newspapers in Sydney from the 1890s into the 1950s.*<sup>40</sup>

Besides associations based on native place or lineage, Chinese people established organisations which were aligned to their social, commercial and political ideals. Chinese diaspora migrants in Australia sought to modernise China, but had different ideas on how this might be achieved. For example, the Yee Hing Society, active from the gold rush times, sought the overthrow of imperial rule in China. The *Tung Wah News* encouraged Chinese in Australia to set up the Chinese Empire Reform Association (CERA), which promoted Chinese intellectuals Kang Youwei and Liang Qichao's advocacy of reform of the imperial system and later the establishment of a constitutional monarchy in China. In 1900, supported by the NSW Chinese Chamber of Commerce, the *Tung Wah Times* became the official organ of the Chinese Empire Reform Association.<sup>41</sup> Gilbert Yet Ting Quoy was an office bearer of the CERA along with other well-known merchants in the Sydney Chinese community, including Thomas Yee Hing, Ping Nam, C. Leanfore, Henry Fine Cheong, Goon Ick, W.R.G. Lee and George Bew.<sup>42</sup>

Ting Quoy also launched a campaign through the *Tung Wah Times* newspaper in 1908 and 1909 advocating the need to establish schools to teach Chinese language. Along with Ping Nam, Leong Cheong, Lee Chun, John Hoe and Lean Fore, Ting Quoy taught at the first Sydney Chinese School which was established at the Loong Yee Tong clubhouse at 52 Dixon Street in the early twentieth century. The school lasted for more than half a century.<sup>43</sup>

In 1914, the *Tung Wah Times* boasted the largest circulation of any Chinese newspaper in the Commonwealth, New Zealand and the Pacific Islands.<sup>44</sup> The *Tung Wah Times* ceased publishing in 1936, but it is unclear why. The *Tung Wah Times* was located in 52 Dixon Street until at least 1933.<sup>45</sup>

### **The NSW Chinese Chamber of Commerce**

In 1917, 52 Dixon Street was also the headquarters of the NSW Chinese Chamber of Commerce<sup>46</sup>, which was a successor to earlier merchants' associations, the Lin Yik Tong (Chinese Commercial Association, 1892-1903) and the Chinese Merchants Society (1903-1912), established by Tsang Shing merchants Thomas Yee Hing and Ping Nam. According to historian C.F. Yong, the NSW Chinese Chamber of Commerce was formed in 1913 in order to send a representative to Peking for the election of the first Parliament. The first President of the NSW Chinese Chamber of Commerce was Ping Nam, a merchant in the firm of On Chong & Co.<sup>47</sup> Ping Nam was publisher of the *Tung Wah Times* in 1912, and one of the joint title-holders to 50-52 Dixon Street in 1927.<sup>48</sup> The constitution of the NSW Chinese Chamber of Commerce, which stated that the sole aim of the Chamber was to maintain and promote trade, prevented Chinese labouring and farming classes from joining.<sup>49</sup> The Chamber defended the commercial interests of Chinese merchants against organisations such as the *Anti-Chinese League* and the *Retail Grocers and Storekeepers Association* which ran public campaigns in the early nineteenth century to dissuade the public from patronising Chinese stores. Amongst the influential

---

<sup>40</sup> KUO, M. F. 2013, *Making Chinese Australia*, 1.

<sup>41</sup> Fitzgerald, J. (2007). *Big white lie: Chinese Australians in white Australia*. University of New South Wales Press.

<sup>42</sup> YONG, C. F. 1977, *The New Gold Mountain*, 120-121.

<sup>43</sup> YONG, C. F. 1977, 214; KUO, *Making Chinese Australia*, 229; Pers. comm. with Mei-Fen Kuo, 1 May 2024.

<sup>44</sup> Advertising (1914, September 19). *Tung Wah Times (Sydney, NSW : 1901 - 1936)*, 1. Retrieved February 20, 2024, from <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article227973558>

<sup>45</sup> *Sands Directory*, 1932-33 part 1 City St Directory, Call No. A-01136227, (39).

<sup>46</sup> *Sands Directory*, 1918 part 1 City St Directory, Call No. A-01136241, (49)

<sup>47</sup> Yong, C.F., 1977, 86-88.

<sup>48</sup> Land Titles, Vol. Fol. 2782-51, 1927.

<sup>49</sup> Yong, C.F., 1977, 90-2.



businessmen who were members of the Chinese Chamber of Commerce was Gilbert Yet Ting Quoy, who was President of the Chamber in 1924.

According to Yong, “five round-table meetings were held in the headquarters of the NSW Chinese Chamber of Commerce at 52 Dixon Street which culminated in the formation in 1917 of the first Chinese Australian shipping line, the China-Australia Mail Steamship Line.”<sup>50</sup> With funds raised from shares sold to Chinese in Australia and the Pacific, the Line purchased three passenger ships to sail between Shanghai, Canton, Hong Kong and Australia. According to Yong, there was aggressive competition from established British and Japanese shipping companies, coupled with losses resulting from the Australian government requisitioning the ships for the war effort. He writes,

“Amidst accusations of poor administration and the disintegration of the entente between rival factions, the line suffered irrecoverable losses and the business was wound up in 1924”.<sup>51</sup>

The NSW Chinese Chamber of Commerce was dissolved in 1965.<sup>52</sup>



Figure 17. (1928, October 13). “New South Wales Chinese Chamber of Commerce Anniversary Picnic Committee”, *Tung Wah Times* (Sydney, NSW : 1901 - 1936), 5. Source: <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-page24098979> Reproduction by NSW State Library, courtesy of Ely Finch.

<sup>50</sup> Yong, C. F., 97-109.

<sup>51</sup> YONG, C. F. 1977, *The New Gold Mountain*, 106-9.

<sup>52</sup> Dictionary of Sydney, NSW Chinese Chamber of Commerce, accessed 13 May 2024, [https://dictionaryofsydney.org/organisation/new\\_south\\_wales\\_chinese\\_chamber\\_of\\_commerce](https://dictionaryofsydney.org/organisation/new_south_wales_chinese_chamber_of_commerce)



### The Eastern Restaurant

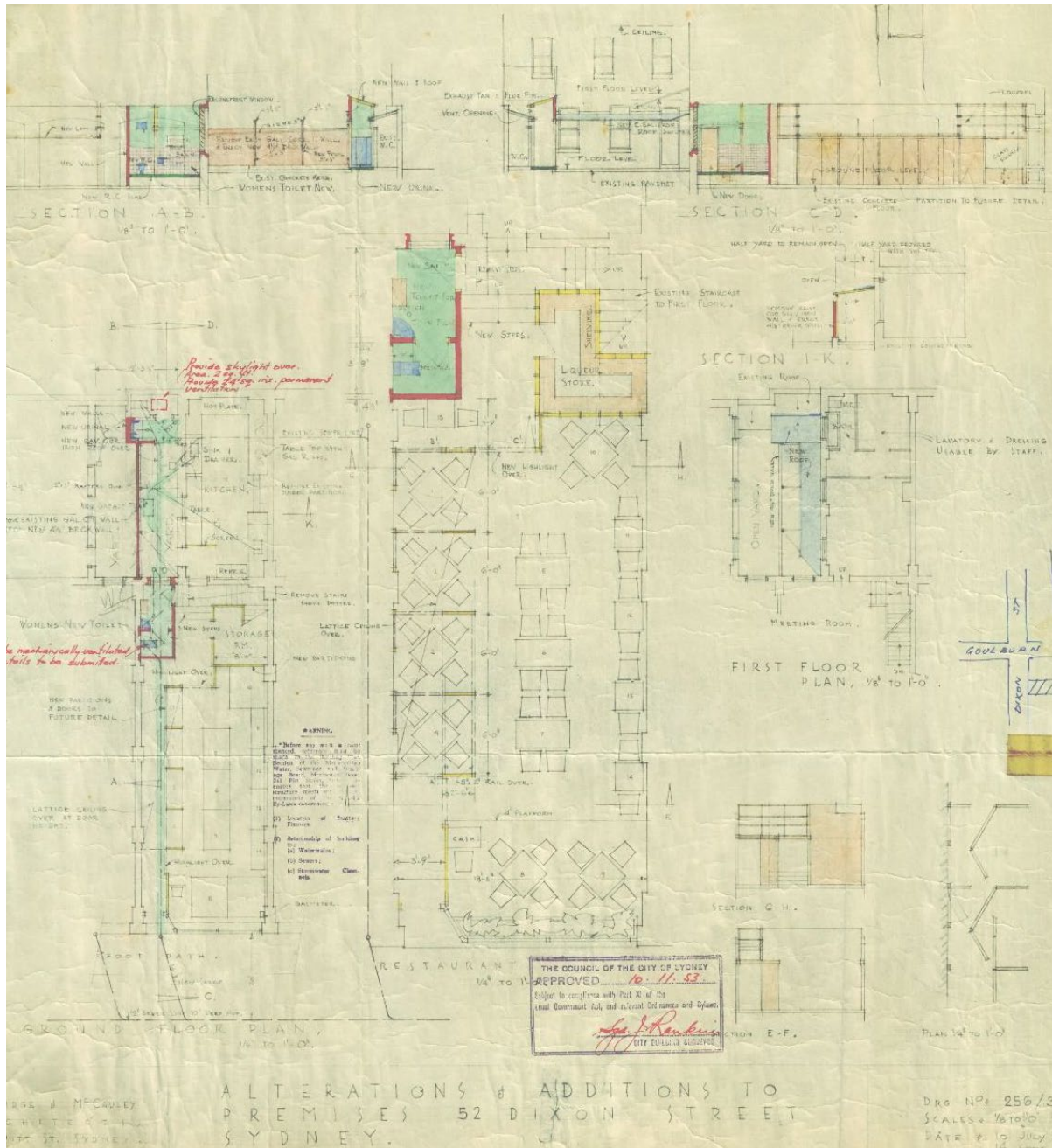


Figure 18. 1953 Plans for Alterations and Additions to 52 Dixon Street, Haymarket. Source: City of Sydney Archives [A-00558224].

In 1950 and 1952, applications were made to make alterations to the shopfront of 52 Dixon Street and in 1953 Council approved the conversion of 52 Dixon Street into a restaurant.<sup>53</sup> The City Archives contains plans of 52 Dixon Street in 1953 showing the restaurant layout on the ground and first floor of the building. See Figure 18.<sup>54</sup>

The Eastern Restaurant (in Chinese “Doong Shan”) on the ground floor of 52 Dixon Street. was run by Victor Peter Gogan (Lowe Hing Choy, born in Coonamble) and his wife Louie Lee

<sup>53</sup> City Council Applications (1953, September 30). *Construction (Sydney, NSW : 1938 - 1954)*, 24. Retrieved February 8, 2024, from <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article222898664>

<sup>54</sup> *Dixon St (52)* (01/01/1953 - 31/12/1953), [A-00558224]. City of Sydney Archives, accessed 21 Feb 2024, <https://archives.cityofsydney.nsw.gov.au/nodes/view/1414776>

(Wong Loy Day, born in Stuart Town, NSW). The story behind the Googan name is that the name of Peter's father, Lowe Goo Gun (born in Tong Mei village, Tsang Shing), was recorded as Googan. Peter Googan was bilingual, which allowed him to deal easily both with his Australian suppliers and customers and with Chinese businesses. The chefs brought out from Hong Kong to work in his restaurant lived upstairs from the restaurant. Peter had an import/export licence which allowed him to import such items as crockery, various foodstuffs and a noodle machine to make wonton wrappers.

The restaurant had modern, square, coloured linoleum tiles on the floor, but also had a feature wall decorated with antique carved wooden decorative panels from Quong Tart's tearoom in the Queen Victoria Building, given to the Googans by the McEvoy family, descendants of Quong Tart. Peter's eldest daughter Gwenda recalls waitressing at the restaurant still wearing her school uniform. There were around 16 tables in the restaurant, though if there were banquets, guests could go upstairs to dine.

The Eastern was the first Chinese restaurant to obtain a liquor licence until 10pm, at a time when liquor service in hotels ended at 6pm (see Figure 19). The liquor licence and the English menu attracted non-Chinese customers. Gwenda recalls that at the time of the big flood in Maitland in the mid-1950s, customers queued up to support a flood relief fundraiser held at the Eastern. The restaurant's signature dish was "Doong Shan Faan" a rice lined bowl filled with a combination of chicken, pork and prawn tipped onto a plate and served with an egg-white and milk sauce.<sup>55</sup>

The Eastern Restaurant was in business from the mid-50s to the late 60s.

In the 1960s at least, the upper floors of 52 Dixon Street provided dormitory accommodation. In an interview with Lance Lai conducted by Christopher Cheng for the Australians with Chinese Heritage Oral History Project, Lance discussed how he and his family lived on the top floor of 52 Dixon Street before moving to 54 Dixon Street, above their family-run restaurant Lean Sun Low. Lance described the first and second floors of 52 and 54 Dixon Street as a "commune" for people from Tung Koon.<sup>56</sup>

In 1988, the Luen Fook Tong made a building application for internal fit-out for a shop and office at 50-52 Dixon Street.<sup>57</sup> In the 1990s, the Eastern August Moon Restaurant operated across both 52 and 54 Dixon Street.<sup>58</sup>

Today, the Luen Fook Tong have their office at 52 Dixon Street and committee meetings are still held there, but the three flights of stairs make it difficult for older members. Functions are now held off-site, such as the recent Chinese New Year celebrations at Fitzroy Hall and Woodstock Community Centre and Park in Burwood.<sup>59</sup> The current arrangement is that Goon Yee Tong has a sub-lease from Loong Yee Tong for 50 Dixon Street and Luen Fook Tong has a similar arrangement for 52 Dixon Street.<sup>60</sup> The ground floor of 52 Dixon Street is currently leased as a Chinese BBQ restaurant.

---

<sup>55</sup> Author's interview with Gwenda Bau, 20 January 2024.

<sup>56</sup> "Lance Lai Interviewed by Christopher Cheng for the Australians with Chinese Heritage Oral History Project." By Christopher Cheng, 2023, <https://nla.gov.au/nla.obj-3183559394/listen>.

<sup>57</sup> *BA (Building Applications) 50 - 52 Dixon St Sydney Eastern Restaurant - Internal Fitout Shop & Office - \$30000 - 12 05 88 LUEN FOOK TONG SOCIETY* (12/05/1988 - 25/02/1993), [A-00661100]. City of Sydney Archives, accessed 21 Feb 2024, <https://archives.cityofsydney.nsw.gov.au/nodes/view/1478464>

<sup>58</sup> *DEVELOPMENT APPLICATION - 50 - 52 Dixon St Sydney - Erect Top Hamper & Under Awning Signs - \$133 80 - 29 04 96 - Eastern August Moon Chinese* (11/06/1996 - 27/01/2000), [A-00672244]. City of Sydney Archives, accessed 21 Feb 2024, <https://archives.cityofsydney.nsw.gov.au/nodes/view/1489726>

<sup>59</sup> Pers. comm with Daphne Lowe Kelley, 2 March 2024.

<sup>60</sup> Pers. comm. Daphne Lowe Kelley, 2 March 2024.



Figure 19. Dixon Street Chinatown, circa 1960, photographer unknown, Facebook post by Chinese Heritage Association of Australia, posted 23 June 2020, accessed 23 February 2024, <https://www.facebook.com/photo/?fbid=2872483332873777>



### 3.1. 54 Dixon Street



Figure 20. 50-54 Dixon Street, foregrounding 54 Dixon Street. Source: Juanita Kwok, January 2024.

54 Dixon Street was built as the clubhouse of the Tung Koon Association. Over the more than 100 years that the Goon Yee Tong has owned the building, it has also fulfilled an important role in providing accommodation for people from Tung Koon, who were either arriving or returning to China. In 1918, a building application was approved to make alterations to 54 Dixon Street, to build partitions to create six rooms on the first and second floor of 54 Dixon Street by Council.<sup>61</sup>

As Leslie Chang recalled:

*In the early days there were also dormitories in the upstairs of the Dixon Street buildings for Tung Koon and Tsang Shing people passing through Sydney. Under the constitution of the society the shops can only be leased to a Tung Koon person at a very reasonable rental.*<sup>62</sup>

On the ground floor of 54 Dixon Street in 1920 was the China Trading Co., which was advertised as “Importers, exporters, Eastern Merchants and indent agents”.<sup>63</sup> As indent agents, the company distributed goods on receipt of purchasing orders. An advertisement from 1921 showed the company sold imported rice, ginger, sauce, peanuts, silks and teas and sought to buy shark fins and beche-de-mer.<sup>64</sup>

A Chinese restaurant called Lean Sun Low which had opened on the ground floor of 54 Dixon Street by December 1922, advertised banquets, meals, Chinese cakes, barbecued meats and welcomed birthday, marriage and other celebrations.<sup>65</sup> In the 1950s, the Lean Sun Low Café was run by the Lai family. Historian Shirley Fitzgerald wrote:

*Alan Lai, who had arrived in Sydney as a teenager in 1951 and lived in Dixon Street, was at the time running Lean Sun Low... He recalled that in the 50s, girls would walk past holding their noses, and the only Aussies who came in were often drunk and reluctant to pay the bill.*<sup>66</sup>

---

<sup>61</sup> Dixon St (54) Jim Le Ling partition (01/01/1918 - 31/12/1918), [A-00551744]. City of Sydney Archives, accessed 09 Feb 2024, <https://archives.cityofsydney.nsw.gov.au/nodes/view/1417942>

<sup>62</sup> CHANG, THELMA AND LESLIE, “In a Nutshell” in, Gock Yen, Mavis, Yen Siaoman, and Richard Horsburgh. *South Flows the Pearl*. Sydney: Sydney University Press, 2022, 47.

<sup>63</sup> Advertising (1920, October 23). *Tung Wah Times (Sydney, NSW : 1901 - 1936)*, 7. Retrieved February 19, 2024, from <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article227018088>

<sup>64</sup> Advertising (1921, July 13). *Daily Commercial News and Shipping List (Sydney, NSW : 1891 - 1954)*, 2 (Weekly Summary). Retrieved February 9, 2024, from <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article159593337>

<sup>65</sup> Advertising (1922, December 9). *Tung Wah Times (Sydney, NSW : 1901 - 1936)*, 4. Retrieved February 19, 2024, from <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article227655088>

<sup>66</sup> Fitzgerald, S. (1997). *Red tape gold scissors: The story of Sydney's Chinese*. Sydney, State Library of New South Wales Press, 149, citing Graham Shirley.





Figure 21. 1979 Street view showing Lean Sun Low Café and Eastern Restaurant on the ground floor of 50-54 Dixon Street, Haymarket to the left. Source: City of Sydney Archives [A-00011720].

Amongst the Chinese community, however, Lean Sun Low was very popular for its wonton (short soup). Irene Moss, born in Dixon Street in 1948, recalled her childhood:

*Mum and Dad used to work quite hard packing tomatoes. And sometimes when Mum didn't have time to cook a meal, she would give me a couple of bob and, because she knew the people at Lean Sun Low pretty well, I'd go in there and they'd know what to get me - a little bowl of wonton soup. I used to do that quite a lot.<sup>67</sup>*

Fashion designer Jenny Kee, whose father was a produce agent at the markets, also recalled going to the Lean Sun Low Café after visiting her father's office upstairs at the markets in the early 1950s. "On the way home, we always stopped by the Lin [sic] Sun Low Café to have our billy cans filled with a savoury rice porridge called juk."<sup>68</sup> A 1959 photograph titled "Chinese in Sydney" shows the street number 54 at the top of the glass door. The restaurant in the photograph is Lean Sun Low. See Figure 22.

According to Lance Lai's recollections, his father Lai Kum Hung was in his early twenties when he was sponsored to come Australia around 1954. Lance's mother Eileen Hung Wah Lai arrived in Australia when she was fourteen. There were many people like the Lai family, who moved from their villages to Hong Kong and then to Australia, and on arrival lived for cheap rent at 52 and 54 Dixon Street until finding a place to rent in the suburbs. According to Lance, his father Lai Kum Hung became an elder in the community and was President of the Goon Yee Tong in

<sup>67</sup> Shun Wah, Annette and Aitken, Greg, *Banquet: Ten Courses to Harmony*, Sydney, Doubleday, 1999, 130.

<sup>68</sup> Chinese Community of Sydney in the Past, Facebook post by Anthony Ah Kee, 29 May 2018, accessed 9 February 2024, (1) Chinese Community of Sydney in the past | Jenny Kee describes her childhood impressions of Haymarket Chinatown in the early 1950s: | Facebook

the 1980s. Along with others such as Henry Tsang, King Fong, Bernard Chan and Stanley Wong, Lai Kum Hung was one of the founders of the Chinatown Mall and his name is inscribed on the northern archway.<sup>69</sup>

The Lean Sun Low Café continued operating into the early 1990s when an application was made to build a new shop front for the restaurant.<sup>70</sup> In 2000, the restaurant operating across both 52 and 54 Dixon Street, was called the Eastern August Moon (see Figure 23).



Figure 22. Chinese in Sydney, October 1959/ Photographs by Ivan. Source: Mitchell Library [ON 388/Box 085/Item 047]

<sup>69</sup> "Lance Lai Interviewed by Christopher Cheng for the Australians with Chinese Heritage Oral History Project." By Christopher Cheng, 2023, <https://nla.gov.au/nla.obj-3183559394/listen>.

<sup>70</sup> *BUILDING APPLICATION - 54 Dixon St Sydney - New Shopfront To Restaurant Lean Sun Low - \$8000 - 28 12 90 - Jackson Design (28/12/1990 - 19/10/1993)*, [A-00661361], City of Sydney Archives, accessed 09 Feb 2024, <https://archives.cityofsydney.nsw.gov.au/nodes/view/1478725>





Figure 23. c.2000 View of 50-54 Dixon Street showing Eastern August Moon Chinese Restaurant on the ground floor. Source: City of Sydney Archives [A-01129462].

The ground floor of 54 Dixon Street is currently leased for retail and dining whilst the Goon Yee Tong Ltd occupies Level 1 of 50 Dixon Street, Haymarket. Its website describes the association as:

*A registered non-profit Chinese society based in Sydney, Australia. It was founded over a century ago by Chinese migrants from the district of Dongguan, Guangdong province in southern China.<sup>71</sup>*

The current arrangement is that Goon Yee Tong has a sublease from Loong Yee Tong for 50 Dixon Street and Luen Fook Tong has a similar arrangement for 52 Dixon Street.<sup>72</sup>

<sup>71</sup> Goon Yee Tong Ltd website, accessed 21 February 2024, <https://goonyeetong.org.au/en/about/>

<sup>72</sup> Pers. comm. Daphne Lowe Kelley, 2 March 2024.

## Community appreciation

A discussion about the buildings at 50-54 Dixon Street took place amongst participants of the Chinatown Heritage Study Stakeholder Workshop, hosted by the City of Sydney on 5 April 2024. Daniel Ma, who also spent his childhood growing up in Chinatown, would like to see the building at 50-54 Dixon Street preserved. Making reference to 58 Hay Street [the Wing Sang Headquarters Building] which was lost to redevelopment and can no longer communicate its stories in the same way, Daniel commented, “*Buildings are stories in themselves*”. Daniel expressed the opinion that without the building and its internal fabric, its history is meaningless. However, some participants of the workshop did not believe that the buildings needed to be retained and that their significance could be interpreted in other ways.

The participants expressed that the building is important as it is the only building where clan societies have operated continually for over 100 years. More recently the composition of the association has changed leading to different appreciations of the place. For instance:

*More recent arrivals (post-Tiananmen) from China have little appreciation of the history of the district, and the racism and exclusion experienced by 19th and early 20th Century migrants. The White Australia legislation reduced the Cantonese population. The mainland Chinese (who settled in large numbers from the late 1980s) did not experience the racism and the feeling of being in an isolated minority. Different waves experienced Chinatown differently, and many have no sentimental attachment to the building let alone a historical one.<sup>73</sup>*

Notwithstanding recent changes, the associations remain very strong. For instance, Man-Yee Leanfore, who has a family connection to the building both through her own (Ho) family and her late-husband’s family, would like for the story of the place to be told and the history to be recognised.

---

<sup>73</sup> Brad Powe, Chinatown Heritage Study Stakeholder Workshop, hosted by the City of Sydney on 5 April 2024.



## 4. Physical Analysis



Figure 24. External view of 50-54 Dixon Street. Source: HAA, 2024.



The physical analysis of the building at nos.50-54 Dixon Street is limited to the external façade of the building's Dixon Street frontage. Internal access to the building was not provided.

The building at nos.50-54 Dixon Street is a three-storey masonry building. Two brick pilasters divide the façade into three vertical bays. Each bay corresponds to the three individual lot boundaries upon which the single building was built. The ground floor awning, a painted cement band at the second floor level and a cornice and parapet at the roof level creates a visual division indicating each floor. Atop the building is a parapet with a central pediment and inscription 'AD 1916' indicating the date of completion of the building (figure 25).



Figure 25. Pediment and architrave detailing on 50-54 Dixon Street. Source: HAA, 2024.

The ground floor of the building has been significantly altered by the introduction of contemporary food and retail premises with contemporary fit outs.

The façade of the upper floors consists of 12 equidistant windows. A noteworthy feature of the façade are the Chinese characters written across the first floor exterior. The Lean Sun Low sign painted in Chinese characters on the exterior of 54 Dixon Street appears to be original, as does the very faded Chinese Chamber of Commerce sign on 52 Dixon Street. The signs painted on the exterior of the building between 50 and 52 Dixon Street appears in later photographs dating from 1984 (see figures 8 to 12).

The ground floor is sublet to eateries, the above floors are believed to be owned and occupied by the district associations. Internal configurations, surviving fabric and contemporary use are unknown. Signage on the ground floor door of 54 Dixon Street indicates that the above floors are available for commercial office or retail shop lease, with street level advertising allowed.



50 Dixon Street



Figure 26. View of 50 Dixon Street. Source: HAA, 2024.



The ground floor of 50 Dixon Street hosts the *Canton* restaurant and is characterised by contemporary glazed maroon tiles, kitchen window and main entrance. A plaque with Chinese characters is located at the edge of the tiled façade.

The first floor brick façade has been painted grey, covering the original Chinese writing shown in figure 12, while the second floor retains its original brick finish.

Each floor comprises of two window openings with exposed arched brick lintels and bullnose brick sills. The first floor comprises of two double hung windows with opaque glazing and metal framing, and the second floor has four-panel transparent glazed sliding windows with metal frames. The top left window on the second floor is fitted with an external grill mesh. Air conditioning units sit above the awning (figure 27).



Figure 27. View of the upper floors of 50 Dixon Street. Source: HAA, 2024.



52 Dixon Steet



Figure 28. View of 52 Dixon Street. Source: HAA, 2024.



No.52 Dixon Street's ground floor facade is embellished with contemporary grey stone cladding and shopfront windows for the *Skewer BBQ* restaurant. A stairway installed in circa 1995 leading to the first floor, is located on the northern side of the shop. A plaque indicating the names of the district associations is positioned on the wall to the left of the stairway on the ground floor, and was mounted in circa 1995.

The awning at 52 Dixon Street has been set back to accommodate the Chinatown gates abutting the building (figure 29). On the first and second storeys, the building is a face brick finish with two window openings with arched brick lintels and bullnose brick sills per floor. These four-panel glazed sliding windows have metal frames and are modern additions to the building, dating to some time after 1979 (figure 11). The first floor windows have internal metal grills. The northern window on the second floor is fitted with an external grill mesh (figure 28).

The Chinese characters on 52 Dixon Street are obstructed by the addition of electrical conduits (figure 29). Air conditioning units sit above the awning. Metal embellishments with Chinese motifs can be seen on the pilaster between 52 and 54 Dixon Street (figure 29).



Figure 29. View of 52 Dixon Street. Source: HAA, 2024.



### 54 Dixon Street



Figure 30. View of 54 Dixon Street. Source: HAA, 2024.




On the ground floor, 54 Dixon Street is currently occupied by *Super Emoji* juice shop. A door identifying the district associations is located north of the juice shop. Signage over the door shows the logo of the *Goon Yee Tong Limited* association (figure 30). It is assumed that the doorway leads to a stairwell to the above floors.

The ground floor façade is clad with grey tiles and contains three steps leading to a setback glazed shopfront. On the first and second floor, the façade comprises of four window openings with arched brick lintels and bullnose brick sills, two at each floor. The windows are double hung with frosted glass panels and metal frames. The old Lean Sun Low sign painted on the exterior of 54 Dixon Street is obstructed by the addition of electrical conduits (figure 30). Air conditioning units are located above the awnings.

## 5. Comparative analysis

The creation of district associations across Australia is a historic process which continues today with a number of new associations being created in the late 20<sup>th</sup> century and early 21<sup>st</sup> century.<sup>74</sup> This comparative analysis focuses on the district associations founded in the 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> century, in order to understand the historical significance, rarity and representativeness of 50-54 Dixon Street.



Image	Address	Description
<b>New South Wales</b>		
	Sydney, NSW	<b>Chin Wah Benevolent Association<sup>75</sup></b> It is unclear when this Association was established, but it has existed since at least 1913. Information on the functions of the association and its address is unknown.
	158 George Street, Redfern	<b>Chung Hwa National Association<sup>76</sup></b> It is unclear when this Association was established, but it has existed since at least 1913. Information on the functions of the association and whether it is extant is unknown. Historical aerials indicate that the building had been demolished by 1975.
 <p>Figure 31. Dixon House building. Source: Google Street view, October 2015.</p>	417 Sussex Street, Haymarket	<b>Yiu Ming Hung Fook Tong</b> The Yiu Ming Hung Fook Tong was founded in 1880 for the Ko Yiu people in Sydney. <sup>77</sup> Today, the place is known as Dixon House. It is unclear if the building was purpose-built for the District Association or if it leased space within the building. The exact functions of the Tong or whether the Tong continues to use the building is unknown.

<sup>74</sup> Alexandra Wong, Kay Anderson, Ien Ang and Donal McNeill, "Sydney's Chinatown in the Asian Century: From ethnic enclave to global hub", Western Sydney University, July 2016, p.47,

<sup>75</sup> "International Chinese Business Directory of the world for the year 1913", International Chinese Business Directory Co., Inc., San Francisco, California, USA, p.1225, [https://babel.hathitrust.org/cgi/pt?id=uc1.\\$b440600&seq=9](https://babel.hathitrust.org/cgi/pt?id=uc1.$b440600&seq=9)

<sup>76</sup> "International Chinese Business Directory of the world for the year 1913", p.1225

<sup>77</sup> "Sydney's Chinatown in the Asian Century: From ethnic enclave to global hub", p.47.




Image	Address	Description
 <p data-bbox="204 819 564 902">Figure 32. Chinese Youth League building. Source: Google Street view, September 2020.</p>	<p data-bbox="603 315 804 376">10 Dixon Street, Haymarket</p>	<p data-bbox="890 315 1342 344"><b>Chinese Youth League of Australia</b></p> <p data-bbox="890 365 1390 656">The Chinese Youth League was founded in 1939 in an attempt to gather patriotic Chinese youth to form an association to fight the Japanese invasion in China. The league assisted in providing jobs, meals and accommodation to stranded Chinese seamen who jumped ship or came to Sydney as refugees during WWII.</p> <p data-bbox="890 676 1378 835">The league is also known for its efforts in fighting the white Australian policy. The building is extant and the league conducts activities and sports events for Chinese youth in Sydney.<sup>78</sup></p>
 <p data-bbox="204 1438 564 1520">Figure 33. Kwong War Chong building at 84 Dixon Street. Source: HAA, 2019.</p>	<p data-bbox="603 949 804 1010">84 Dixon Street, Haymarket</p>	<p data-bbox="890 949 1246 978"><b>Kwong War Chong Building</b></p> <p data-bbox="890 999 1385 1357">The Kwong War Chong building was erected in 1909 for Philip Lum Chun Lee’s company ‘Kwong War Chong &amp; Co.’ The ground floor of the building was a general store. The above floors served as an early community centre for the Zhongshan (Chungshan) people in Sydney, and as a meeting place for the ‘Tong Sen Tong’, a society for the Long Du people.<sup>79</sup> The place is no longer used by the associations.</p> <p data-bbox="890 1377 1362 1507">The place is listed on the NSW State Heritage Register (Listing No. 02089) and on the Sydney LEP (Item no. I2293)<sup>80</sup></p>

<sup>78</sup> Chinese Youth League of Australia website, <https://www.cyl.org.au/>

<sup>79</sup> “Former Kwong War Chong Building received heritage listing”, The China-Australia heritage corridor, <https://www.heritagecorridor.org.au/news-and-blogs/former-kwong-war-chong-building-received-heritage-listing>

<sup>80</sup> “Kwong War Chong”, State Heritage Inventory, <https://www.hms.heritage.nsw.gov.au/App/Item/ViewItem?id=5067050>





Image	Address	Description
 <p data-bbox="204 734 571 819">Figure 34. Chungshan Society at 50 Albion Street, Sydney. Source: Google Street view, 2024.</p>	<p data-bbox="603 309 858 376">50 Albion Street, Surry Hills</p>	<p data-bbox="890 309 1386 342"><b>Chungshan Society of Australia Inc.</b></p> <p data-bbox="890 360 1386 622">Founded in 1983, the Chungshan society offers migration services for Chinese immigrants from Zhongshan. The society also conducts tours to attend winter camps and cultural exchanges in Zhongshan, particularly for the descendants of the Zhongshanese in Sydney.<sup>81</sup></p> <p data-bbox="890 640 1386 707">The organisation continues to operate out of this address.</p> <p data-bbox="890 725 1386 819">This building is located within the Reservoir Street &amp; Fosterville Heritage Conservation Area.<sup>82</sup></p>
 <p data-bbox="204 1149 571 1234">Figure 35. Sze Yup Temple in c.2005. Source: City of Sydney Archives [A-01154329].</p>	<p data-bbox="603 857 858 925">2 Edward Street, Glebe</p>	<p data-bbox="890 857 1106 891"><b>Sze Yup Temple</b></p> <p data-bbox="890 909 1386 1070">The Sze Yup Temple was funded and built by Chinese immigrants from the four Sze Yup districts of Kwangtung in 1898, as a place of worship and as a cultural centre.</p> <p data-bbox="890 1088 1386 1256">The place provided accommodation for Chinese travellers and migrants, material assistance, and conducted bone repatriation for deceased Chinese people in Sydney.<sup>83</sup></p> <p data-bbox="890 1274 1386 1402">The place is listed on the NSW State Heritage Register (Listing No. 00267) and on the Sydney LEP (Item no. I680)<sup>84</sup></p>
 <p data-bbox="204 1724 571 1809">Figure 36. Yiu Ming Temple. Source: State Heritage Inventory [#01297].</p>	<p data-bbox="603 1433 858 1500">16-22 Retreat Street, Alexandria</p>	<p data-bbox="890 1433 1106 1467"><b>Yiu Ming Temple</b></p> <p data-bbox="890 1485 1386 1783">Construction of the Yiu Ming Temple began in 1908. It functioned as a temple as well as a cultural and social centre for the community. The place assisted new arrivals with funding, provided accommodation and employment opportunities for the people from Gaoyao and Gaoming districts. The temple also organised</p>

<sup>81</sup> “Xiao Yu RUAN”, The China-Australia Heritage Corridor website, <https://www.heritagecorridor.org.au/people/xiao-yu-ruan>

<sup>82</sup> E-Planning Spatial Viewer website, <https://www.planningportal.nsw.gov.au/spatialviewer/#/find-a-property/address>

<sup>83</sup> “Sze Yup Temple”, The Glebe Society website, <https://glebesociety.org.au/buildings/sze-yup-temple/>

<sup>84</sup> “Sze Yup Temple”, State Heritage Inventory, <https://www.hms.heritage.nsw.gov.au/App/Item/ViewItem?itemId=5045668>

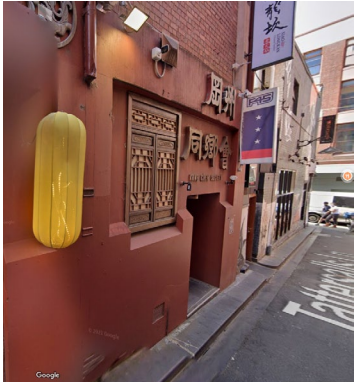

Image	Address	Description
		<p>bone repatriation of deceased society members.</p> <p>The place is listed on the NSW State Heritage Register (Listing No. 01297) and on the Sydney LEP (Item no. I28)<sup>85</sup></p>
<b>Victoria</b>		
 <p>Figure 37 Num Pon Soon Society Building at 200-202 Little Bourke Street, Melbourne. Source: Victorian Heritage Database.</p>	<p>200-202 Little Bourke Street, Melbourne</p>	<p><b>Num Pon Soon Society Building</b></p> <p>The place was purpose-built in 1861 for Sam Yup Society (later the Num Pon Soon Society) the district association for people from the three Sam Yup districts. It is the earliest surviving Chinese community building in Victoria. It is significant for its historical and social association with Chinese immigrants, their customs and traditions.</p> <p>The place is listed on the Victorian Heritage Register (Listing No. H0485).<sup>86</sup></p>
 <p>Figure 38. Ning Yang Society building. Source: Google Street view, 2024.</p>	<p>208 Little Bourke Street, Melbourne</p>	<p><b>Ning Yang Society</b></p> <p>The Ning Yang Society (also known as Taishan Society) was formed in c.1909.<sup>87</sup> The place was built for the people of the Ning Yang (Sim Hing) district of Canton.<sup>88</sup> The district association is located in the upper floors.</p>

<sup>85</sup> “Yiu Ming Temple”, State Heritage Inventory, <https://www.hms.heritage.nsw.gov.au/App/Item/ViewItem?itemId=5044695>

<sup>86</sup> Victorian Heritage database report, ‘Num Pon Soon Society Building’ <https://vhd.heritagecouncil.vic.gov.au/places/780>

<sup>87</sup> “Ning Yang Society”, Chinese-Australian Historical Images in Australia, <https://www.chia.chinesemuseum.com.au/biogs/CH01855b.htm>

<sup>88</sup> “Ning Yang Woikwon- New Chinese Society”, The Herald (Melbourne, Vic. :1861-1954, 16 June 1909, p.1, <https://trove.nla.gov.au/newspaper/article/242065980?searchTerm=Ning%20Yang%20Society#>

Image	Address	Description
 <p data-bbox="204 705 560 817">Figure 39. Kong Chew Society building at 4 Tattersalls Lane, Melbourne. Source: Google Street view, 2024.</p>	<p data-bbox="603 315 858 376">4 Tattersalls Lane, Melbourne</p>	<p data-bbox="890 315 1145 344"><b>Kong Chew Society</b></p> <p data-bbox="890 360 1393 757">Founded in c.1850, the Kong Chew Society functioned as a welfare and mutual aid organisation for the people of the Guangdong province of China. The society still exists as a registered organisation.<sup>89</sup> It is the earliest See Yup (now known as Siyi) association in Australia. People from the Siyi region migrated overseas and created district associations known as “Kong Chew” to illustrate their ancestry and ties to their home region.<sup>90</sup></p>
 <p data-bbox="204 1162 560 1245">Figure 40. See Yup Temple at 76 Raglan Street, Melbourne. Source: Victorian Heritage Database.</p>	<p data-bbox="603 862 858 922">76 Raglan Street, South Melbourne</p>	<p data-bbox="890 862 1209 891"><b>See Yup Society Temple</b></p> <p data-bbox="890 907 1377 1137">The See Yup Society Temple was constructed in 1866 to support the Chinese people of four See Yup districts<sup>91</sup> who arrived in Melbourne in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>92</sup> The place is the principal centre of worship and death registry of the Cantonese in Victoria.</p> <p data-bbox="890 1153 1393 1227">The place is listed on the Victorian Heritage Register (Listing No. H0219).<sup>93</sup></p>

<sup>89</sup> Australian National University Archives, ‘Kong Chew Society’, <https://archivescollection.anu.edu.au/index.php/kong-chew-society>



<sup>90</sup> Kong Chew Society website, <https://www.kongchewsociety.com.au/about-us/>

<sup>91</sup> Paul Macgregor, in email to authors, June 2024.

<sup>92</sup> “The search for Ah Loong: A Chinese Grandfather Rediscovered”, My China Roots Traceable, <https://www.mychinaroots.com/blog/stories/the-search-for-ah-loong-a-chinese-grandfather-rediscovered/>

<sup>93</sup> Victorian Heritage Database report, ‘See Yup Temple’, [http://vhd.heritage.vic.gov.au/search/natrust\\_result\\_detail/66652](http://vhd.heritage.vic.gov.au/search/natrust_result_detail/66652)



Image	Address	Description
<b>Perth</b>		
 <p>Figure 41. Chung Wah Association building. Source: Chung Wah Association website.</p>	128 James Street, Northbridge	<p><b>Chung Wah Association</b></p> <p>Established in 1909, the Chung Wah Association is the largest and oldest surviving non-profit organisation in WA. The association was formed to support the social welfare of the Chinese migrants in Perth and continues to operate at the same location.<sup>94</sup></p> <p>The place is listed on the WA State Register (Place No. 02027)<sup>95</sup></p>
<b>Darwin</b>		
 <p>Figure 42. Chung Wah Society building. Source: Google Street view, November 2021.</p>	6 Litchfield Street, Darwin City	<p><b>Chung Wah Society</b></p> <p>Established in 1911, the Chung Wah Society was built as a social and sporting club for the Chinese population in Darwin. The place promotes cultural education, social interests and welfare of the members. It also functions as a Chinese temple. The place continues to operate at the same location.<sup>96</sup></p>

### Comparative analysis conclusion

Since the 1850s, Chinese migrants in Australia have built both temples and association buildings as a way of providing a meeting place for the local community and for offering services and assistance in various aspects of life. The majority of purpose-built district association buildings still in use today are located in Victoria. Within NSW, there is a mix of purpose built, leased and multi-use buildings including temples. The building at nos. 50-54 Dixon Street is a rare example in NSW of a purpose-built building constructed primarily for the use of the district associations and continues to be owned and used by these associations.

<sup>94</sup> Chung Wah Association website, <https://www.chungwah.org.au/en/about-us/>

<sup>95</sup> "Chung Wah Association Hall", Govt. of Western Australia Heritage Council, <https://inherit.dph.wa.gov.au/Public/Inventory/Details/26f3e0a6-c7d9-4642-8e8c-640d7cedef06>

<sup>96</sup> Chung Wah Society website, <https://www.chungwahnt.asn.au/>

## 6. Assessment of Significance

### 6.1. Ability to demonstrate

Guidelines from the NSW Heritage Office emphasise the role of history in the heritage assessment process. A list of state historical themes has been developed by the NSW Heritage Council, in *New South Wales Historical Themes Table showing correlation of national, state and local themes, with annotations dated 4 October 2001*.

The table below identifies fabric, spaces and visual relationships that demonstrate the relevant historic themes in evidence at 50-54 Dixon Street.

Australian Theme	NSW Theme	Notes	Discussion
2 Peopling Australia	Ethnic influences	Activities associated with common cultural traditions and peoples of shared descent, and with exchanges between such traditions and peoples	The building at 50-54 Dixon Street is evidence of cultural traditions of the Chinese diaspora, specifically the establishment of district associations by migrants in their place of settlement.
2 Peopling Australia	Migration	Activities and processes associated with the resettling of people from one place to another (international, interstate, intrastate) and the impacts of such movements	The Goon Yee Tong, the Loong Yee Tong and the Loon Fook Tong facilitated the migration of people from the Zengchen and Dongguan district of Guangdong to Australia throughout the 20th century. These associations assisted newly arrived members by providing temporary accommodation and services. Assistance was also provided to those making return trips back to China. The associations were also responsible for making arrangements for deceased members.
3 Developing local, regional and national economies	Communication	Activities relating to the creation and conveyance of information	52 Dixon Street is associated with the influential Chinese ' <i>Tung Wah Times</i> newspaper'. Its circulation extended throughout the Commonwealth, New Zealand and Pacific Islands.



Australian Theme	NSW Theme	Notes	Discussion
3 Developing local, regional and national economies	Transport	Activities associated with the moving of people and goods from one place to another, and systems for the provision of such movements	The district associations at 50-54 Dixon Street arranged bone repatriation of deceased Chinese migrants to China. In 1920, the China Trading Co., at 54 Dixon Street imported and distributed goods from China.
4 Building settlements, towns and cities	Land tenure	Activities and processes for identifying forms of ownership and occupancy of land and water, both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal	Historical occupancy of the building at 50-54 Dixon Street by the Chinese Chamber of Commerce, and the continued use and ownership by each district associations, is indicated by painted signage on the façade.
4 Building settlements, towns and cities	Accommodation	Activities associated with the provision of accommodation, and particular types of accommodation – does not include architectural styles – use the theme of Creative Endeavour for such activities.	<p>The upper floor of 50-54 Dixon Street provided accommodation for members of the Associations and boarders. Some specific examples cited in the Report are: 50 Dixon Street briefly provided residential housing for tourists, merchants, travellers and students, between 1920 and 1928.</p> <p>52 Dixon Street provided dormitory accommodation for the people of the Tung Koon districts during the 1960s.</p> <p>54 Dixon Street provided temporary accommodation for people who were arriving at Sydney from the Tung Koon and Tsang Shing district, and those returning to China.</p>

Australian Theme	NSW Theme	Notes	Discussion
6 Educating	Education	Activities associated with teaching and learning by children and adults, formally and informally.	52 Dixon Street was the location of the Sydney Chinese School, at which at which Cantonese was taught for over half a century.
7 Governing	Welfare	Activities and process associated with the provision of social services by the state or philanthropic organisations	<p>In 1919, 50 Dixon Street was leased by the Salvation Army and opened as the Salvation Army Women's Home. It predates the the Salvation Army Women's Hostel at 471 South Dowling Street, Surry Hills which opened in 1924.</p> <p>The district associations at 50-54 Dixon Street provided support for newly arrived migrants such as temporary accommodation, provided services for members, most likely arranging remittances and assisted with bone repatriation of deceased members.</p>
8 Developing Australia's cultural life	Social institutions	Activities and organisational arrangements for the provision of social activities	The restaurants at 50-54 Dixon Street such as the Eastern Restaurant and the Lean Sun Low café were dining hubs, not only for members of the district associations, but for the broader Chinese Australian community and for non-Chinese diners. These two restaurants played a key part in pioneering the restaurant culture of Dixon Street for which it became famous.
9 Marking the phases of life	Birth and Death	Activities associated with the initial stages of human life and the bearing of children, and with the final stages of human life and disposal of the dead.	The district associations arranged the bone-repatriation and also provided funds for the purchase of coffins for deceased Chinamen at sea.



GML's *Chinatown Thematic History* (2023) was developed to provide key historical themes to guide understanding of the development of Chinatown. The following table identifies the relevant themes from GML's report.

GML main theme	GML sub-theme	Discussion
Theme 1: Evolving Chinatown	Creating 'Chinatown'	The restaurants on the ground floor of 50-54 Dixon Street played a key role in popularising the Chinese food culture of Dixon Street.
Theme 2: Living and working in Chinatown	Burgeoning businesses	The restaurants at the ground floor of 50-54 Dixon Street were family-run Chinese restaurants. The ground floor premises have a long history of being leased as restaurants and continue to operate as restaurants today.  In the 1920s, 54 Dixon Street was also the location of the China Trading Co., a company that imported and distributed a variety of food items from China.
	Return to the flowery land	The district associations at 50-54 Dixon Street provided funds for their members travelling back to their home countries and likely assisted with sending remittances to their hometowns. Bone repatriation was also arranged by the district associations.
Theme 3: Belief, Culture and Community	Clan houses, clubs and associations	The building at nos. 50-54 Dixon Street was purpose-built to function as two individual and one joint clubhouse for the people of the Tung Koon and Tsang Shing districts.
	The taste of Chinatown	The restaurants on the ground floor of 50-54 Dixon Street played an important role in the popularisation of Chinese food culture in Dixon Street.

## 6.2. Assessment against NSW Heritage Assessment Criteria

### Criterion A Historic Significance

*An item is important in the course, or pattern, of NSW's cultural or natural history (or the cultural or natural history of the local area).*

The building at nos.50-54 Dixon Street is a purpose-built three-storey building for the Tung Koon (Dongguan) and Tsang Shing (Zengcheng) associations, which are key social organisations for the Chinese Australian community in Sydney. The building also housed several other historically significant Chinese Australian organisations, The *Tung Wah Times* Newspaper, the NSW Chinese Chamber of Commerce, and a number of restaurants which were instrumental in developing the restaurant culture of Dixon Street. A plaque on the building and the painted Chinese characters are evidence of these historical uses.

### District Associations

The building at nos. 50-54 Dixon Street is associated with the following district associations, the "Loon Fook Tong" at 50 Dixon Street, for people from Tsang Shing County, the "Goon Yee Tong" at 54 Dixon Street for people from Tung Koon County; and between 50 and 54 Dixon Street, a joint clubhouse at 52 Dixon Street, the "Loong Yee Tong". These clubs have occupied this address for over 100 years.

Funding was raised by members of these district associations for the purchase of land at 50-54 Dixon Street and construction of the building which was completed in 1916. The historical role of the district associations was to provide funds for the sick, assist the aged in returning to China, raise funds for charity, both in Australia and China, provide accommodation and assist with the settlement of new persons arriving from their districts and those returning. The associations also most likely arranged the transfer of members remittances to China. The district associations also arranged bone-repatriation, donated money to hospitals and ensured the purchase of coffins for deceased Chinamen at sea. The place thus demonstrates the strong links between members in Australia and their native places.

The role of the association is significant in maintaining the Chinese Australian community's links with their hometown and facilitated the settlement of Chinese immigrants in Australia. Historian Mei-Fen Kuo has characterised Sydney in the late 19th to early twentieth century as "a hub of Chinese mobility" and "a centre of community mobilisation and identity formation".<sup>97</sup> The building at nos. 50-54 Dixon Street was central to this phenomenon.

### NSW Chinese Chamber of Commerce, 52 Dixon Street, Haymarket

52 Dixon Street was the long-term (over two decades) headquarters of the NSW Chinese Chamber of Commerce which was significant for its role in promoting trade and defending the commercial interests of Chinese Australians from anti-Chinese movements and organisations such as the Anti-Chinese League and the Retail Grocers and Storekeepers Association, which ran public campaigns in the early nineteenth century to dissuade the public from patronising Chinese stores.

Members of the Chamber established the first Chinese Australian shipping line, the China-Australia Mail Steamship Line, which operated from 1917 to 1924 between Shanghai, Canton, Hong Kong and Australia.

### Eastern Restaurant, 52 Dixon Street, Haymarket (1953-66)

As the first Chinese restaurant to obtain a liquor licence until 10pm, the Eastern Restaurant is significant as one of the earliest Chinese restaurants to popularise Chinese food in Sydney. Its English menu made Chinese food accessible to non-Chinese customers, demonstrating the

---

<sup>97</sup> KUO, M. F. 2013, *Making Chinese Australia : Urban elites, newspapers and the formation of Chinese Australian Identity*, Melbourne, Monash University Publishing.

adaptation of Chinese culture and community within the Australian context. Together the restaurants including the Eastern Restaurant and Lean Sun Low helped to develop the restaurant culture of Dixon Street.

Significance indicator	Assessment
Association with an event, or series of events, of historical, cultural or natural significance	Not applicable.
Demonstration of important periods or phases in history	<p>The district associations are directly associated with and facilitated the settlement of Chinese migrants from the Tsang Shing and Tung Koon districts.</p> <p>The raising of funds to have a purpose-built district association building demonstrates the increasing number of Chinese migrants in the area during the early 20<sup>th</sup> century</p> <p>Restaurants of 50-54 Dixon Street helped develop the restaurant culture of Dixon Street. The Chinese Chamber of Commerce evidences the success of Chinese owned business in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century. It played a key role in maintaining and promoting trade and defended the rights of Chinese merchants during the early 20<sup>th</sup> century.</p>
Association with important cultural phases or movements	<p>The building at 50-54 Dixon Street played a key role in facilitating the migration of people from the Tsang Shing and Tung Koon districts and the establishment of Chinatown in proximity to the municipal markets.</p> <p>The <i>Tung Wah Times</i>, at 52 Dixon Street, operated as an organ of the Chinese Empire Reform Association (CERA) which advocated reform of the imperial system and later the establishment of a constitutional monarchy in China. The <i>Tung Wah Times</i> had a wide circulation across NSW and Sydney.</p>



Significance indicator	Assessment
<p>Demonstration of important historical, natural or cultural processes or activities</p>	<p>The China Trading Co., on the ground floor of 54 Dixon Street is demonstrative of historical trading processes as it operated as an import export company, selling imported rice, ginger, sauce, peanuts, silks and teas and buying shark fins and beche-de-mer.</p> <p>The district associations provided community services such as bone-repatriation, accommodation for new arrivals and charitable events in the local area. The associations also most likely arranged remittances to China.</p> <p>The upper floors of 50-54 Dixon Street were intended as temporary accommodation for association members moving between China and Australia, however, in some cases, they accommodated individuals, or families for years. This pattern of domestic life can be seen in other buildings in Dixon Street, such as the Kwong War Chong Building which at times housed the Lee and Pang families, and 96 Hay Street which housed members of the Ma family.</p>
<p>Symbolism and influence of place for its association with an important historical, natural or cultural event, period, phase or movement</p>	<p>The place is symbolic to the local Chinese Australian community, of the historical process of establishing district associations by the Chinese diaspora in Australia.</p> <p>The district associations at 50-54 Dixon Street, the Eastern Restaurant and Lean Sun Low café supported employment and migration into Chinatown and the development of the dining culture centred on Dixon Street.</p>

## Criterion B Historical Association

*An item has strong or special association with the life or works of a person, or group of persons, of importance in NSW's cultural or natural history (or the cultural or natural history of the local area).*

The three-storey building at nos. 50-54 Dixon Street has historical association with the “Loon Fook Tong”, “Loong Yee Tong” and “Goon Yee Tong” District Associations of the Tsang Shing and Tung Koon Counties. The place is also associated with the following organisations:

### Notable Figures

The place is associated with a number of prominent figures in the Chinese Australian community, particularly Ping Nam and Gilbert Yet Ting Quoy.

Ping Nam was a well-known merchant, one of the founding members, and the first president of the NSW Chinese Chamber of Commerce. He was also the publisher of the Tung Wah Times, as well as an office bearer of the CERA.

Gilbert Yet Ting Quoy, a Sydney Chinese merchant, along with Ping Nam, campaigned for the establishment of the Sydney Chinese school which existed at 52 Dixon Street for over half a century.

### *Tung Wah Times, 52 Dixon Street*

52 Dixon Street was the publishing address for the Chinese newspaper ‘*Tung Wah Times*’ from 1918 until at least 1933 but likely until 1936. The newspaper is significant for being the second Chinese newspaper in Sydney and for having had the largest circulation of any Chinese newspaper in the Commonwealth, New Zealand and Pacific Islands. It is demonstrative of the diverse political affiliations of the Chinese Australian community. Chinese newspapers promoted political interests of different factions within the community. The *Tung Wah Times* operated as an organ of the Chinese Empire Reform Association (CERA) which advocated reform of the imperial system and later the establishment of a constitutional monarchy in China.

### NSW Chinese Chamber of Commerce, 52 Dixon Street

Formed in 1913, the Chinese Chamber of Commerce had its headquarters at 52 Dixon Street from 1918 to 1965. The place is also associated with a number of prominent figures in the Chinese Australian community, particularly Ping Nam and Gilbert Yet Ting Quoy.

### Salvation Army Women’s Home, 50 Dixon Street

There is potential for the place to have historical association with the Salvation Army Women’s Home which was present in the building between 1919 and 1921. It could have significance as one of the earliest women’s refuges. However, further research is needed to substantiate this.

Significance indicator	Assessment
<p>A key phase(s) in the establishment or subsequent development at the place or object was undertaken by, or directly influenced by, the important person(s) or organisation</p>	<p>The presence of the district associations at 50-54 Dixon Street has assisted the local community for over 100 years.</p> <p>The NSW Chinese Chamber of Commerce played a key role in maintaining and promoting trade in NSW and the local area, and defended the rights of Chinese merchants during the early 20<sup>th</sup> century.</p> <p>Ping Nam and Gilbert Yet Ting Quoy played significant roles in the functioning of the <i>Tung Wah Times</i>, the Chinese Empire Reform Association, the NSW Chinese Chamber of Commerce and the Sydney Chinese School.</p> <p>The Lean Sun Low Café and Eastern Restaurant were popular Chinese family-run restaurants that served the area in the 20<sup>th</sup> century.</p>
<p>An event or series of events of historical importance occurring at the place or object were undertaken by, or directly influenced by, the important person(s) or organisation</p>	<p>The NSW Chinese Chamber of Commerce and <i>Tung Wah Times</i> were important organisations located at 52 Dixon Street, with influence across NSW and beyond.</p>
<p>One or more achievements for which the person(s) or organisation are considered important are directly linked to the place or object</p>	<p>The <i>Tung Wah Times</i> is significant for having had in 1914, the largest circulation within Sydney, the Commonwealth and Australasian region of any Chinese newspaper.</p> <p>Ping Nam and Gilbert Yet Ting Quoy played significant roles in establishing the Sydney Chinese School at 52 Dixon Street.</p>



### Criterion C Aesthetic /Creative/technical achievement

*An item is important in demonstrating aesthetic characteristics and/ or a high degree of creative or technical achievement in NSW (or the local area).*

The building at nos. 50-54 Dixon Street is aesthetically significant in providing an understanding of the historical streetscape of Dixon Street It is a good example of a late Federation building and it is this style that represents the founding architectural character of Dixon Street

The Chinese signage on the façade is a distinctive characteristic of the Chinatown area.

Significance indicator	Assessment
Recognition as a landmark or distinctive aesthetic natural environment	The late Federation aesthetic is distinctive to this building and is a defining character of Dixon Street.
Recognition of artistic or design excellence	Not applicable.
Represents a breakthrough or innovation in design, fabrication or construction technique, including design/technological responses to changing social conditions	Not applicable.
Distinctiveness as a design solution, treatment or use of technology	Not applicable.
Adapts technology in a creative manner or extends the limits of available technology	Not applicable.

## Criterion D Social, cultural and spiritual

*An item has strong or special association with a particular community or cultural group in NSW (or the local area) for social, cultural, or spiritual reasons.*

The Loon Fook Tong, Goon Yee Tong and Loong Yee Tong district associations have owned and/or used 50-54 Dixon Street for over 100 years and has ongoing social significance for members of the Tsang Shing County and Tung Koon districts. Although many of the historical functions of the district associations have ceased, such a bone repatriation, the district associations continue to hold sociable and charitable activities at the place.

The place is symbolic of Chinese migration and settlement in Australia and is also evident of the Chinese diaspora's practice of maintaining, over many generations, strong ties to their home country. The building contributes to the local identity of the two communities within Sydney.

A number of moveable heritage items at the upper floors of 50 Dixon Street were identified in the 2016 photographs (figures 14 and 15), and may be held in the premises today. This is unconfirmed and needs further investigation. Items including photographs of members of the NSW Chinese Chamber of Commerce and presidents of Loong Fook Tong and other ephemera are apparent in the photographs. The display and safe keeping of these items are integral to the continued social significance of the place, should they be found upon further investigation.

The restaurants located at 50-54 Dixon Street including the Eastern Restaurant and Lean Sun Low, were popular places for eating and socialising amongst the local community and are remember fondly by older members of the Chinese Australia community.

Significance indicator	Assessment
Highly regarded by a community as a key landmark (built feature, landscape or streetscape) within the physical environment	Not applicable.
Important to the community as a landmark within social and political history	Not applicable.
Important as a place of symbolic meaning and community identity	As the meeting place of the district associations, the place symbolically represents the historic migration of Chinese people to Australia and their contributions to the development of Chinatown around the Haymarket area. It is also evidence of the support provided by the district associations to their members through various services and social activities.
Important as a place of public socialisation	Properties 50-54 Dixon Street have continually functioned as clubhouses for the district associations, where the communities have gathered for over 100 years.
Important as a place of community service (including health, education, worship, pastoral care, communications, emergency services, museums)	Not applicable.
Important in linking the past affectionately to the present	<p>The building at nos.50-54 Dixon Street continues to be owned by the district associations.</p> <p>There may be moveable heritage items, in particular photos of past committee members, located in the upper floors of 50 Dixon Street. There is photographic evidence of these items from 2016 but due to limitations in the inspections it is unsubstantiated if they remain at the place. These items are demonstrative of the continual link between the past and present by the local community.</p>



## Criterion E Research potential

*An item has potential to yield information that will contribute to an understanding of NSW's cultural or natural history (or the cultural or natural history of the local area).*

Lack of access to the interiors of 50-54 Dixon Street poses a limitation to the understating its research potential. Photographs of interiors taken in 2016 indicate that there were a number of moveable heritage items in the building, particularly photographs of members of the NSW Chinese Chamber of Commerce and presidents of Loong Fook Tong association, however their current location is unsubstantiated. These photographs and other records of the district associations membership and activities hold high research potential.

As the location of the moveable heritage items remains unsubstantiated, they cannot be assessed under this criterion.

Significance indicator	Assessment
Comparative analysis	Not applicable.
Potential to improve knowledge of a little-recorded aspect of an area's past or to fill gaps in our existing knowledge of the past	The site may have some archaeological potential.
Potential to inform/confirm unproven historical concepts or research questions relevant to our past	Not applicable.
Potential to provide information about single or multiple periods of occupation or use	There may be moveable heritage items at 50 Dixon Street, which may possess research potential for furthering understanding of the historical occupation by the district associations, the NSW Chinese Chamber of Commerce and other functions. However, their current location is unconfirmed.
Potential to yield site-specific information that would contribute to an understanding of significance against other criteria	Not applicable.

## Criterion F Rare

*An item possesses uncommon, rare, or endangered aspects of NSW's cultural or natural history (or the cultural or natural history of the local area).*

A small number of purpose-built district association buildings are known to have been erected in several parts of Australia since the late 19<sup>th</sup> century. The building at nos.50-54 Dixon Street is one of a handful of buildings in the country that continue to exist and function as district associations and have done so for over 100 years. Within Sydney or NSW, there is potential that the building at nos.50-54 Dixon Street is one of the last remaining original purpose-built district association buildings from the early 20<sup>th</sup> century.

Moveable heritage items, such as framed photographs of members of the organisations that operated at 50-54 Dixon Street, may be located within the building. This collection is likely rare as no other collection has been identified. They have the potential to provide an understanding of the cultural history of the area, particularly, the membership and operation of the NSW Chinese Chamber of Commerce, the *Tung Wah Times* and the district associations. It is important that the location of the photographs and any other records or ephemera pertaining to these organisations is ascertained and that the contents are documented and preserved.

Significance indicator	Assessment
Rare surviving evidence of an event, phase, period, process, function, movement, custom or way of life in an area's history that continues to be practised or is no longer practised	Within NSW, the building at nos. 50-54 Dixon Street has potential to be one of the last remaining purpose-built district association building that is still owned and used by the associations.
Evidence of a rare historical activity that was considered distinctive, uncommon or unusual at the time it occurred	Not applicable
Distinctiveness in demonstrating an unusual historical, natural, architectural, archaeological, scientific, social or technical attribute(s) that is of special interest.	Not applicable
Demonstrates an unusual composition of historical, natural, architectural, archaeological, scientific, social or technical attributes that are of greater importance or interest as a composition/collection	Not applicable

## Criterion G Representative

*An item is important in demonstrating the principal characteristics of a class of NSW's cultural or natural places; or cultural or natural environments (or a class of the local area's cultural or natural places; or cultural or natural environments).*

The late Federation building at nos.50-54 Dixon Street is one of a handful of buildings on Dixon Street that is representative of the historical scale, materiality and composition of the old Chinatown streetscape.

Significance indicator	Assessment
A class of places or objects that demonstrate an aesthetic composition, design, architectural style, applied finish or decoration of historical importance.	The late Federation building at 50-54 Dixon Street is representative of the historical streetscape of Dixon Street particularly its composition scale and architectural style.
Representative of a class of places that demonstrate a construction method, engineering design, technology, or use of materials, of historical importance	Not applicable.
Representative of a class of places that demonstrate an historical land use, environment, function, or process, of historical importance	Not applicable.
Representative of a class of places that demonstrates an ideology, custom or way of life of historical importance	Not applicable.



### 6.3. Statement of Significance

The building at 50-54 Dixon Street has historical significance as key social organisations for the Chinese Australian community, and for enabling its members to maintain links to their hometowns. The three-storey building at 50-54 Dixon Street was jointly funded and purpose-built in 1916 by leaders of the Tsang Shing (Zengcheng) and Tung Koon (Dongguan) counties. It was built to house the Loon Fook Tong (Luen Fook Tong) clubhouse at 50 Dixon Street for people from the Tsang Shing County; the “Goon Yee Tong” clubhouse at 54 Dixon Street for people from Tung Koon County; and between the two clubhouses, at 52 Dixon Street, a joint clubhouse, the “Loong Yee Tong”. The three district associations have occupied 50-54 Dixon Street for over 100 years. The associations played a vital role in the Chinese Australian community by offering services to assist with settling in Sydney or returning to China, arranged bone-repatriation, provided accommodation, conducted charitable events and most likely arranged the transfer of members’ remittances to China.

52 Dixon Street has historical association with the *Tung Wah Times* newspaper (1902–1936), the second Chinese newspaper to be established in Sydney. In 1914, the *Tung Wah Times* boasted the largest circulation of any Chinese newspaper in Australasia. The coexistence of a number of different Chinese newspapers indicates the diverse political affiliations of Chinese diaspora and the newspapers’ role in shaping Chinese Australian identity. 52 Dixon Street was also the meeting place for members of the NSW Chinese Chamber of Commerce (1913-1965), which promoted overseas trade and defended Chinese Australian commercial interests from anti-Chinese campaigns. Historian Mei-Fen Kuo has characterised Sydney in the late 19th to early twentieth century as “a hub of Chinese mobility” and “a centre of community mobilisation and identity formation”.<sup>98</sup> 50-54 Dixon Street was central to this development.

The form and aesthetics of the building are consistent with those of early 20<sup>th</sup> century buildings pertaining to Chinatown and thereby contribute to the understanding of the historical streetscape of Dixon Street. The Chinese signage on the façade is significant as markers of the historical uses of the building.

The district associations continue to play a social role amongst their respective communities. The historical uses of the place such as the popular restaurants which occupied the ground floors are remembered fondly by the local Chinese Australian community.

The place is representative of early purpose-built district association buildings built across the country to serve the increasing Chinese diaspora in Australia. The building at nos. 50-54 Dixon Street is likely to be the last surviving example of a purpose-built district association building in Sydney or NSW, continually owned by the associations for over 100 years.

---

<sup>98</sup> KUO, M. F. (2013). *Making Chinese Australia : Urban elites, newspapers and the formation of Chinese-Australian Identity*. Melbourne, Monash University Publishing.

## 7. Listing Recommendations

Under its Local Environmental Plan (2012), the City of Sydney is required under 5.10(a) to “conserve the environmental heritage of the City of Sydney”. For a place to be heritage listed it needs to substantially meet at least one of NSW Heritage’s criteria (2023) for assessing significance. The significance assessment of 50-54 Dixon Street has found that the place meets six criteria at least at a local level, and therefore warrants protection under the Local Environmental Plan. The significance assessment has demonstrated that the place has importance to Sydney with its distinct history in the Haymarket precinct, its representing of the significant role of Chinese in Australia and the current regard held for the buildings by the community. Therefore, the place should be listed under Schedule 5, Part 1 of the City of Sydney LEP 2012.

## 8. Management Recommendations

The following recommendations are drawn solely from a consideration of the significance of the place and good heritage practice.

Given that the historical and social significance of the place is particularly important, these recommendations are framed with an understanding that heritage conservation is a social contract, requiring responsibility to be shared by the owners and consent authorities for the mutual benefit of all stakeholders, including the Chinese community.

As such, these recommendations are written with consideration of possible future ambitions of the owners, while striving to achieve the best heritage outcome for the place, and with an expectation that the consent authority, in representing the community's interest, will assist/support the owners in managing and conserving the significance of the place, where possible.

### 8.1. Obligations arising from significance

The high cultural significance of the place identified in the statement of significance obliges its conservation and good management (Burra Charter Article 2).

In the Burra Charter, significance is embodied in the place, where place means site, area, land, landscape, building or other work, group of buildings or other works, and may include components, contents, spaces and views. Place also includes fabric, setting, use, associations, meanings, records, related places, and related objects. (Burra Charter Article 1).

This place has been in continual ownership by the district associations for over 100 years and should, where practicable, continue to do so.

Markers of historical use such as the painted Chinese signage on the façade, should be conserved.

### 8.2. Tolerance for change

There is limited tolerance for change to original fabric on the first and second floors of the building façade. The internal layout and extent of original internal fabric is unknown.

There is a greater tolerance for change to non-original fabric particularly on the ground floors which are currently occupied by food retail stores. Retail signage should not be located above the awning.

Internal changes to the building for service upgrades and access, including lifts and reconfiguration of any original staircases is appropriate, but should consider impacts to any significant fabric or floor plans (if applicable).

### 8.3. Conservation of fabric

The façade contributes to understanding the historical streetscape of Dixon Street. The Chinese characters painted on the façade communicate historical association with the district associations. It is recommended that the following fabric be conserved to support these significances:

- All original fabric on the façade including face brick finish, lintels and sills, cornices, and pediment, entablature and associated embellishments.
- The plaque on the ground floor facade of the building denoting the names “Loon Fook Tong”, “Goon Yee Tong”, and “Loong Yee Tong”.
- The Chinese characters painted onto the façade of the upper floors, indicating the names of the district associations, the NSW Chinese Chamber of Commerce and Lean Sun Low restaurant.



## 8.4. Interpretation

Where the opportunity arises, the paint to 50 Dixon Street should ideally be removed to restore the original face brick finish. The Chinese characters should also be repainted by a calligrapher, with careful attention to retaining the calligraphic style, and intrusive elements such as electrical conduits on the facade removed.

There may be movable heritage items in the upper floors of 50 Dixon Street. It is recommended that further investigation of the interiors be carried out in order to confirm the existence of this collection. If confirmed, the moveable heritage items have high interpretative value and therefore it is advised that the collection be professionally photographed, catalogued and made accessible to professionals for research.

The significance of the place is not independent of the history and development of Chinatown in the Haymarket area, and as such, interpretive strategies for 50-54 Dixon Street should be considered within an overall interpretation strategy for Chinatown.

It is recommended that the City of Sydney and the owners work together in considering additional interpretive strategies for the place such as:

- Setting up a plaque(s) identifying the history and significance of the place.
- Creation of digital archives/ websites showcasing the history and significance of Chinatown, identifying 50-54 Dixon Street as a place of significance in the area.

A heritage interpretation plan must be provided in the event of altering the building for change of use and/or major developments.

## 8.5. Future development

Additions and alterations to 50-54 Dixon Street is acceptable but must ensure retention of the façade and any significant interiors (if existing), and be sympathetic to the existing building in terms of style, colour and materiality. Future development must also be sympathetic to the overall Dixon Street streetscape, nearby heritage items, and locality statements for the area.

The setback and scale of any vertical additions to the place must be sufficient to maintain the readability of the existing form and scale of the principal building.

## 8.6. Future use

As much as practicable, it is recommended that the place continues to be used and accessed by the district associations and their members. Where necessary, development/ upgrading of the place to support this use is acceptable.

Other appropriate uses include but may not necessarily be limited to office, retail and commercial use, but these should not preclude use of the place as clubhouses by the district associations and their members.

Prior to any proposed major development including change of use, respectful and purposeful engagement with members of the district associations and with the Chinese Australian community, including descendants of early committee members is recommended.