

Historic Building Appraisal

No. 16 Nam Mun Hau

Yuen Long Kau Hui, Yuen Long

Yuen Long Kau Hui (元朗舊墟, literally, Yuen Long Old Market) is in the north-east of the present Yuen Long town centre with Nam Pin Wai (南邊圍) and Sai Pin Wai (西邊圍) in its south and west. The market lied along three streets where shops of mixed trades were located. Cheung Shing Street (長盛街) is the longest one. The other two shorter streets, Lee Yick Street (利益街) and Wine Street (酒街), form a parallel pair. There were two entrance gates to the market – Tung Mun Hau (東門口) and Nam Mun Hau (南門口), which were locked up after the market hours to guard against theft and robbery. Two temples, inns and pawnshops were also in the market. *Historical Interest*

Yuen Long Kau Hui was established during the reign of Kangxi emperor (康熙) under the leadership of Tang Man-wai (鄧文蔚). Tang was a 23rd generation member of the Kam Tin Tang Clan who attained a jin-shi (進士) degree and then decided to move the market from Tai Kiu Tun (大橋墩) to the present site. During the 18th and 19th centuries, the market was a hub of commercial activities of the Hong Kong region. Farmers, boat people and traders came as far as from the coastal districts of Guangdong province (廣東省) to buy and sell agricultural produce and daily necessities.

No. 16 Nam Mun Hau (南門口) is at the southern mouth of the old market with Cheung Shing Street on its left. The site was originally of the Tangs (鄧) but later sold to the Lungs (龍). It is said that a stone house was built at the site by the Lungs. The stone house was replaced by the present one due to the increase of their population. It is not known when it was built. It was probably built in the 1930s.

The Lungs had a transport company called Tai Kee at Yuen Long New Market (元朗新墟) providing transport service for shops delivering goods to different places. They also processed sugar at their house and sold the refined sugar in the old market and later in the new market. The sugar refinery was closed before the Second World War. A number of the Lungs emigrated to Canada in the early 1980s, whilst some of the younger members moved to the urban areas. They would come back at the Chinese New Year and at celebrations with their parents still residing in the house.

The house is a Chinese Eclectic building with its entrance facing the street. The building is connected to a building on its left. It is a two-storey building of two bays with a front façade of recessed ground floor and a projected balcony above. The entrance is at the left bay. The balcony is fenced with interlocking *Architectural Merit*

circular patterns. It is probably constructed of green bricks and concrete with its walls and columns to support its pitched roof of timber rafters, purlins and clay tiles. Its external walls are plastered and painted. The interiors are partitioned with its walls painted. A parapet is at the roof end of the front façade with a pediment in the middle. The weathered semi-circular and right-angled base pediment is with plastered moulding of a dragon, birds, cloud and other patterns. Wall frieze paintings of landscape are above the doorway with a name board of Tai Kee (泰記) on the wall above the entrance.

It is a residential building to witness the settlement of the Lungs and history of the Yuen Long Kau Hui. **Rarity**

It has some built heritage value. **Built Heritage Value**

Its authenticity is kept. **Authenticity**

It has group value with other historic buildings in the old market, including Tai Wong Old Temple (大王古廟), Yuen Kwan Yi Tai Temple (玄關二帝廟), Chun Yuen Pawn House (晉源押) and other shop-cum-residence buildings. **Group Value**

Market days fell on the 3rd, 6th and 9th days of each of the three ten-day periods of every lunar month; on these days, the place would be bustling with traders involved in the buying and selling of agricultural produce (e.g. rice, vegetables, sugar cane, wine, fish, meats, soy sauce, spices), farming and kitchen utensils, furniture and all kinds of daily necessities. **Social Value, & Local Interest**

The market operated from 6 a.m. until dusk. It was managed by Kwong Yu Tong (光裕堂), a trust of a branch of the Kam Tin Tang Clan. The market was getting less prosperous and shops were closing down since the early 20th century, in face of competition of other markets especially when the Yuen Long New Market (元朗新墟) in its southwest opened in 1915.