

Historic Building Appraisal

No. 22 Lee Yick Street

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.22 is one of the surviving shop-cum-residence buildings in the market. It is not known when the shop house was built. It probably has an age of over 90 years. The building was owned by a villager in Tung Tau Tsuen (東頭村) of Yuen Long. It was rented to a Chau (周) family for residential purpose and selling sugar cane. The house has been left vacated since then.

The shophouse cum residence at No.22 Lee Yick Street is a long and narrow building with its entrance facing the street. 44 shop houses of similar type are along the street. The building is connected to others along the street. It shares with its two neighbouring buildings a common wall on either side. It is a two-storey building of Qing vernacular style with a front façade of recessed ground floor entrance and a projected balcony above. The ground floor probably had a shop hall in its front portion for trading with a counter and shelves for displaying its commodities and a workshop, storage, processing area at the back. The upper storey with bedrooms and service facilities was for accommodation purpose. It is constructed of green bricks, concrete and iron bars with its walls to support its pitched roof of timber rafters, purlins and clay tiles. Its walls are plastered and painted. The fence of the balcony is missing now temporarily fenced with wooden stripes. The floor and the roof of the

**Architectural
Merit**

balcony show signs of rotting. The entrance on the ground floor is of ceiling-high wooden planks.

It is a shop house building to witness the history of the Yuen Long Kau Hui. **Rarity**

It has some built heritage value.

**Built Heritage
Value**

The authenticity of the building is basically kept.

Authenticity

It has group value with other shop houses, Yuen Kwan Yi Tai Temple (玄關二帝廟), Tai Wong Temple (大王古廟) and other historic buildings in the market. **Group Value**

The market had its market days on the 3rd, 6th and 9th days of each of the three ten-day periods of every lunar month for the buying and selling of agricultural produce including rice, vegetables, sugar cane, wine, bean curbs, fish, meats, soy sauce, spices, farming and kitchen utensils, furniture and all kinds of daily necessities. Farmers, boat people and traders came as far as from the coastal districts of Guangdong (廣東) province. The market operated from 6 in the morning until dusk. Two entrance gates, one in the east, Tung Mun (東門), and one in the south, Nam Mun (南門), were locked up after the market hours to guard against theft and robbery. The market was managed by the Kwong Yu Tong (光裕堂), a trust of a branch of the Tangs in Kam Tin. The market fell into decline with the competition of other markets especially the Yuen Long New Market (元朗新墟) in its southwest opened in 1915. **Social Value,
& Local
Interest**