

Historic Building Appraisal

Tung Yick Store

Nos. 20A & 21 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.

Tung Yick Store (同益棧) is at Nos.20A and 21of Lee Yick Street (利益街), one of the busiest streets of the market. The Store was an inn to provide residential need for long distant traders. The exact year of construction of Tung Yick Store is not known, but it is believed that it had existed before the British takeover of the New Territories in 1899.

When the British army started to take over the New Territories, an organization called Tai Ping Kung Kuk (太平公局, Great Peace Public Council) was established by indigenous people to fight against the British. Three local gentries Tang Yi-shek (鄧儀石), Tang Ching-shi (鄧青士) and Ng Lai-shek (伍礪石) invited a military expert Chin Zhang (錢壯) from Guangzhou (廣州) to take charge of the plan for attack. Chin stayed in the inn at the time.

The inn is a two-storey Qing (清) vernacular building of a narrow and lengthy plan. It was constructed of green bricks with blocks of granite for its bases, window and door frames having its walls to support its pitched roof of timber rafters, purlins and ceramic tiles. The bricks are laid in one header-course for every nine stretcher-courses (九順一丁). Its recessed entrance has a big name board above the lintel flanked by two tiny bared square windows. Under the eave are wall friezes of calligraphy and paintings of floral pattern. An iron gate of

*Architectural
Merit*

western style is installed at the entrance. The pitched roof is with corrugated metal sheets.

It is the only inn left in the market to capture the past glory of the market. *Rarity*

A very special building of high built heritage value. *Built Heritage Value*

There are some alterations to the building. *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.