Historic Building Appraisal

Consulat Général de France Residence

No. 8 Pollock's Path, The Peak, Hong Kong

Historical Interest

The house in No. 8 Pollock's Path (普樂道), once known as "The Ridge", was one of the historic residential buildings for Europeans erected on The Peak. Based on land records, it is concluded that the house was built sometime between 1907 and 1909. The following six houses viz: "Mount Gough", "The Ridge", "Brookhurst", "Burrington", "Bicton" and "Kirkendoa" owned by six different parties were erected on a number of adjoining land sections by 1909. Five of these Peak houses have been redeveloped, leaving "The Ridge" as the last remaining one on the site.

The parcel of land on which "The Ridge" stands was one of different land sections carved out from an original land lot, namely, Rural Building Lot No. 1 which was first leased by Henry Lardner Dennys in 1878. A new lease was granted to him in 1888, as the Government wanted to reserve land for the construction of a public road along the southern side of the original land lot. The Rural Building Lot No. 1 was subsequently carved into different sections held by different owners. The parcel of land on which "The Ridge" stands was carved out and the site was delineated in 1907 as R.B.L. No. 1 Section B Subsection 2.

Henry Lardner Dennys was a rather well-known solicitor in Hong Kong. He was appointed as the Chief Justice's clerk in 1873 and the Crown Solicitor in 1896, and was promoted as Acting Crown Solicitor in 1902. He also took up the position as a member of the Land Court in the same year. Alfred Bryer, who was an Honorary Secretary of St. John's Cathedral in 1907 and a Visiting Justice to Po Leung Kuk (保良局) in 1908, held this parcel of land before it was assigned to The Eastern Extension Australasia and China Telegraph Company Limited on 23 October 1907. Land records show that "The Ridge" was in existence by the end of 1909.

Throughout most of its history, especially the first half of the 20th century, the house known as "The Ridge" was owned by The Eastern Extension Australasia and China Telegraph Company Limited (also called The Eastern Extension Company Limited), forerunner of The Cable and Wireless Limited. Established in 1873, The Eastern Extension Company Limited was a major player in the industry of telecommunication in early Hong Kong.

In 1955, the house was sold to Wallace Harper, an American motor vehicle dealer and founder of Wallace Harper & Company Limited. The land was later transferred twice in 1962 and 1974 to Hong Kong Reality and Trust Company Limited and to Sun Key Investment S.A. respectively. It was bought by the Government of the Republic of France in 1981, and has been renamed and used

as Consulat Général de France Residence (法國總領事住宅) ever since.

Architectural Merit

The house in No. 8 Pollock's Path is a single-storey mansion with a basement. The plan is asymmetrical with an octagonal shaped room on the southeast corner, splayed corners, canted bays and the main entrance set in an internal angle of two walls. A single-storey servants' wing is built on at angle on the west side. The architectural style is **Queen Anne Revival**, made popular in England in the late 19th century by the architect **Richard Norman Shaw**. When he retired in 1896, Shaw was hailed as the leading British architect, and his work was internationally known through publications by Hermann Muthesius and others.

The house is a mixture of classical features such as projecting cornices, columns, arched window heads and features derived from Dutch architecture such as Dutch gables and tall chimney stacks. The roof is flat. The servants' quarters are built on a platform supported by a granite retaining wall. Internally the house displays classical style arches, columns and cornices. The basement has rugged whitewashed walls and vaulted ceilings.

Rarity, Built Heritage Value & Authenticity

This style of architecture is very rare in Hong Kong and the house should be regarded as having considerable built heritage value. Unfortunately the windows are modern aluminum units and the brick walls have been painted. Originally the walls would probably have been exposed red brickwork with the architectural features picked out in white or stone colour.

Social Value & Local Interest

The Ridge was one of the earliest residential buildings on the Peak. Quite a few historical figures have lived there or been associated with it. As French consular premises it has local interest as well as immunity from requisition by the Hong Kong Government.

Group Value

Located on the Peak, the house occupies the highest point amongst other residential buildings which enjoys a wonderful 360 degree scenery of the Victoria Harbour, the Aberdeen Channel and East Lamma Channel. It is physically close to a number of graded buildings namely the Peak Depot (山頂倉庫), Peak Police Station (山頂警署), Peak Fire Station (前山頂學校), Maternity Block of Old Victoria Hospital (舊域多利醫院), Matilda and War Memorial Hospital (明德醫院) and Old Peak Café (舊山頂餐廳).

Adaptive Re-use

The rather rambling floor plan of this building is not very adaptable. Probably the best use is residential for which the house was originally intended.