

Historic Building Appraisal
St. Joseph's Home for the Aged - Villa
No. 35 Clear Water Bay Road, Ngau Chi Wan, Kowloon

St. Joseph's Home for the Aged (聖約瑟安老院) was established by the Little Sisters of the Poor (安貧小姊妹會, a French-based charity body) in 1926. The compound of the home at its peak contained more than ten buildings or structures with different construction years. The Villa was once owned by Chan King-yue (陳廣如, 1863 – 1924),¹ who was a Compradore of Douglas Laprik and Co. and one of the Founding Directors of the Chinese Commercial Union (華商公局).² The premises was sold to the Little Sisters of the Poor in 1926. *Historical Interest*

The Villa dates from about 1919. It is a single storey bungalow bearing simple Neo-classical colonial influence in design, featuring a colonnaded verandah and a raised arched semi-basement for ventilation. The roof is flat but originally may have been a Chinese tiled pitched roof. The front verandah is formed by eight square Doric columns which support the entablature on segmental arches. The entablature has a moulded cornice and a plain parapet wall above. The verandah is served by double entry steps. There are ornamental balustrade panels between the columns and louvred wooden shutters or jalousies to the windows. The plan is symmetrical and is twice reduced in width by indents or offsets on the sides. *Architectural Merit: Villa*

The Gate House was built in the mid-1930s. Its design is also Neo-classical, resembling a triumphal arch forming an impressive entrance to the site. The front and rear facades feature wide five-centred arches with moulded architraves and Mannerist keystones and ornamental cartouches in the spandrels. The archways are flanked on either side by coupled pilasters of the Doric Order. The parapet is set above a moulded cornice and has a central tablet on the front facade inscribed with "JMJ" which stands for "Jesus, Mary & Joseph", a recurring motto of the Little Sisters. Single-storey annexes are built on to either side of the Gate House. *Gate House*

Dormitory A was built in 1932-1933. It is a two-storey building influenced by the Modernist style featuring a linear plan, horizontal banding, rounded corners and plain round columns known as *pilotis*. A local adaptation is the Chinese tiled pitched roof. The streamlined balconies and rounded corners are features of the "Liner Style" of the 1930s, so called because of the resemblance to ocean going liners of the period. *Dormitory A*

¹ The name Chan King-yue (陳廣如) was recorded in a memorial dated 1919 from the Land Registry Office, Hong Kong. However, according to the records of the Chinese Commercial Union and old newspapers, apart from 陳廣如, Chan was also known as 陳廣虞 and served as the Chairman of the organisation in the 1900s and 1910s, for instance.

² The Chinese Commercial Union was established in 1900. It is now known as The Chinese General Chamber of Commerce (香港中華總商會).

Originally, the compound also comprised a St. Joseph's Chapel and Dormitories B and C which, however, have been demolished.

The three remaining buildings appear to be authentic with minor alterations and additions. Taken together they form an interesting group with significant built heritage value. ***Rarity, Built Heritage Value & Authenticity***

Originally the St. Joseph's Home for the Aged had considerable social value being a home for elderly people with no-where to live and no-one to look after them. During the 1930s it served as a refuge for refugees from Mainland China fleeing from the Japanese invasion. The home was the first purpose-built home for the aged in Hong Kong and therefore a pioneer in this field of social services. It was relocated to a new site in 2004. ***Social Value & Local Interest***

It is within walking distance of other historic buildings, including Man Fat Nunnery (萬佛堂), Sam Shan Kwok Wong Temple (三山國王廟) (both Grade 3), and the Headquarters Building (總部大樓), RAF Officers Mess (職員宿舍連食堂) and Annex Block No. 2 (職員宿舍第二座) of the ex-Royal Air Force Station (Kai Tak) (前皇家空軍基地(啟德) (all Grade 1). ***Group Value***