

Historic Building Appraisal

No. 27 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.27 is one of the residential buildings in Yuen Long Kau Hui. It is not known when the building was built. It probably has an age of over 100 years. According to land records, the building was owned by the Tangs (鄧) of Hung Uk Tsuen (洪屋村) in Ping Shan (屏山), Yuen Long, in the 1920s. A shop called Kung Wo (公和?) was housed at the building in 1923-30 owned by a Fong Yau (方祐). The building was owned by Chan Kam-kwan (陳錦坤) after 1946.

Chan Kam-kwan was a successful merchant who had a number public and welfare services in Yuen Long. Born in Dongguan (東莞) of Guangdong (廣東) province in 1915, he came to Hong Kong before the Japanese Occupation (1941-45) and worked in a butcher's shop called Yan Wo (仁和) near Hop Fat Street (合發街) in Yuen Long. He was engaged in a number of businesses after the war including a fish pond, a café, a barbecue shop and two restaurants. Eventually, he became the chairmen of Un Long Butchers Slaughter-House (元朗肉商聯會屠場) and Yuen Long Association of Butchery (元朗肉行商會). He was also a director of Pok Oi Hospital (博愛醫院) in 1964. It is said that Chan Kam-kwan and his descendents moved to Canada in the 1970s, and the house has been taken care of by his relatives in Hong Kong.

The residential building at No.27 Lee Yick Street is a long and narrow building with its entrance facing 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 upper storey usually 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 balcony is fenced with vase-shaped green glazed ceramic balustrades.

*Architectural
Merit*

It is a residential building to witness the 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.