

Historic Building Appraisal
Homi Villa,
Castle Peak Road, Tsuen Wan, N.T.

Homi Villa is believed to have been built in the 1930s a residence for Mr. Jehangir Hormusjee Ruttonjee (律敦治), a well known Indian merchant in Hong Kong who had large land holding in Sham Tseng at Castle Peak Road between the 1930s and 1950s. Ruttonjee's father, who came to Hong Kong in 1880, established the firm of H. Ruttonjee & Son, Ltd. Mr. J.H. Ruttonjee was admitted into the company in 1905 and actively managed the firm as Manager Director in 1921 after the retirement of his father. In 1931, J.H. Ruttonjee moved his business to Sham Tseng and established the Hong Kong Brewers and Distillers Ltd. He was closely associated with Hong Kong's public affairs, including the establishment of the Ruttonjee Sanatorium and the Hong Kong Anti-Tuberculosis, Chest and Heart Diseases Association.

***Historical
Interest***

The house remained the property of the Ruttonjee family until being bought by the Hong Kong Government after the Second World War and then used as government staff quarters; for example, it served as the residence of Sir Philip Haddon-Cave, the then Colonial Treasurer (renamed the Financial Secretary in 1985) of Hong Kong between 1971 and 1982. It was converted into the Airport Core Programme Exhibition Centre in 1995, which was opened to the public and has become a hot spot of Tsuen Wan tourism, following the use of Hong Kong International Airport in Chek Lap Kok.

Architecturally, the original Homi Villa was constructed in Neo-Classical colonial style with an open balustraded verandah all round and a curved flight of steps leading up to the main entrance. The house is located on a promontory overlooking the Ma Wan Channel with a spectacular sea view. Classical architectural details include white stucco-work, classical columns and ornamental balustrading to the verandahs and roof parapets. The plan of the original building is Palladian, completely symmetrical set on a central axis featuring splayed fireplaces in the side rooms and a canted projecting bay at the rear. Renovations, alterations and additions for the Exhibition Centre have not detracted from the elegant appearance of Homi Villa and should be judged successful. As an example, although altered and adapted, of a 1930s colonial country residence, Homi Villa is a rare example of its kind in this part of the New Territories and has obvious built heritage and architectural value.

***Architectural
Merit

Rarity &
Built Heritage
Value &
Authenticity***

Standing in isolation it cannot be said to have group value and its past social value is somewhat limited. It is however of some local interest and because of its striking white appearance, it was once also known as Pak Lau (白樓), which means white house.

***Social Value &
Local Interest***