

Historic Building Appraisal
No. 70 San Wai Tsuen,
San Tin, Yuen Long, New Territories

San Wai Tsuen (新圍村), literally meaning “new walled village”, consists of Sheung San Wai (上新圍) and Ha San Wai (下新圍). Initially, the village was called Fuk Hing Lei (福興里), literally meaning “lucky and prosperous lane”. Most of the villagers of San Wai Tsuen acquired wealth by working overseas. The United States and Canada were their main destinations. The villagers participated in the construction of railways in North America around the Xuantong (宣統, A.D. 1909-1911) reign of the Qing dynasty. They sent their income back to San Wai Tsuen through sailors, *xunyangma* (巡洋馬) and money shops in Sheung Wan (上環).

*Historical
Interest*

The house at No. 70 San Wai Tsuen (新圍村) was built by Li Lam (李霖) in the 1930s as a residence for his family. At that time, many villagers of San Wai Tsuen lived by remittances sent from relatives who worked overseas. With the remittances, the house at No.70 was built although apparently Li Lam never lived there. His family migrated to North America after the Second World War and the house was sold.

No. 70 San Wai Tsuen is a typical two-storey **Qing Vernacular** style village house with Western influence. The main part of the house is built of grey-green bricks with a pitched roof of Chinese tiles. Window openings with moulded window hoods for weather protection are regularly spaced in the flush gable end walls. Unfortunately the original windows (probably steel framed) have been replaced with modern aluminum units. The front of the house consists of a flat roofed portico and verandah supported on columns. The columns, first floor verandah balustrading and parapet wall to the roof show Western classical influence. Classical urns and a central pediment are featured to the parapet. By contrast the rear façade is plainer with no decorations except for the parapet wall to the flat roof over the rear part of the house. There are several windows in the rear wall but all are modern aluminium replacements. A water tank and chimney stack can be seen on the roof. As access was not permitted, the condition of the interior is unknown.

*Architectural
Merit*

Village houses combining Chinese and Western architectural features are not uncommon in rural villages in the New Territories, so that No. 70 San Wai Tsuen is not rare, but it is fairly well preserved and a good example of this style with built heritage value. Apart from the modern replacement windows, it retains its authentic appearance.

*Rarity,
Built Heritage
Value &
Authenticity*

As the house only seems to have been used for residential purposes, its social value to the local community is relatively low. The front façade of the house is

*Social Value
& Local*

particularly interesting with its Western neo-classical appearance.

Interest

Probably the best use for the house is residential for which it was originally intended. Adaptive re-use would probably affect its authenticity.

*Adaptive
Re-use*