

Historic Building Appraisal
Bank of China Building
No. 2A Des Voeux Road Central, Hong Kong

Construction of the 17-storey old **Bank of China Building** (中國銀行大廈) at No. 2A Des Voeux Road Central (德輔道中) was completed in **1951**. The foundation stone of the building was laid on 15 March 1950 by **Zheng Tieru** (鄭鐵如), also known as **Shou J Chen** (鄭壽仁), who was manager of **The Bank of China Hong Kong Branch** (中國銀行香港分行). On November 19, 1951, the Branch moved into this premises, marking the Branch's **fourth move**. *Historical Interest*

The Bank of China Hong Kong Branch commenced operation on September 24, 1917 in rented premises at No. 47 Bonham Strand East (文咸東街). Pei Zu-yi (貝祖詒), the first branch manager, headed a team of eight staff members. In February 1919, the Branch moved to No. 20 Connaught Road Central (干諾道中) and then on September 1, 1921, to its six-storey building built on rented land at No. 4, Queen's Road Central (皇后大道中).

The Bank of China Hong Kong Branch occupied this site for almost 40 years before moving into the Bank of China Tower at No. 1 Garden Road. When the new tower was opened in 1990, the ground floor of the building has been used as the Bank of China (Hong Kong) Central District Branch (中區支行).

The 17-storey old Bank of China Building is not only used by the bank but also some Chinese enterprises. The 1st to 12th floors have been used as bank offices, Hong Kong and Macau Authority (中國銀行港澳管理處) and some Chinese enterprises such as China Resources Company (CRC) (華潤集團). The 13th to 15th floors have been used by the China Club since 1990.

This 17-storey building was designed by the well known architectural practice **Palmer and Turner** and constructed by the equally well known firm **George Wimpey & Co. Ltd.** It was at the time it was built the tallest building in Hong Kong equipped with the latest advanced building services. The architectural style of the building is **Art Deco** believed to be influenced by similar buildings in Chicago and Shanghai. All four façades of the building are visible due to its island site. The façades feature set-backs (stepped recessions and projections in the walls) and are strongly emphasized vertically by mullions and columns rising up to unite the bands of windows at the various floor levels. The facing is granite and ornamentation is limited to the carved cappings to the columns, stylised frieze decorations and ornamental panels adjacent to and below windows. Stylised stone lions are placed on either side of the main entrance and also on the side elevation. *Architectural Merit*

The old Bank of China Building represents the early Art Deco style used for banking tower buildings in Central. Another famous one was the old HSBC building next to the BOC building which has been demolished. It therefore has considerable built heritage value. Although the façades still retain their original appearance, the interior has undergone extensive alterations and renovations to suit changing office use, technological requirements and customers' taste.

**Rarity,
Built Heritage
Value &
Authenticity**

The Bank of China is regarded as one of the leading banks in the world due to its solid foundation, fine reputation and prudent approach in handling a comprehensive range of business activities. Because of its prominent position it is a well known local landmark in Central.

**Social Value
& Local
Interest**

The Bank of China Building is very important as an integral component of a significant architectural, historical and functional complex of Central district. It is physically close to the Former Supreme Court (舊最高法院大樓) (now Legislative Council building), the St. John's Cathedral (聖約翰座堂) and the Former French Mission Building (前法國外方傳道會大樓), etc.

Group Value

Functionally, it is located along the "banking belt" of Central. The headquarters of Hong Kong & Shanghai Banking Corporation Limited (香港上海匯豐銀行大廈) and the Standard & Chartered Bank (渣打銀行) are found nearby. Headquarters of East Asia Bank, Bank of China Tower (中銀大廈), Citibank Tower, Bank of America Tower (美國銀行中心) are also located in close proximity.

As far as is known there are no plans to close down or move the Bank of China (Hong Kong) Central District Branch. The question of adaptive re-use therefore does not really arise. However, presumably the building could be used for commercial offices if the bank ever moved out.

**Adaptive
Re-use**