

Historic Building Appraisal
No. 1A Lee Yick Street
Yuen Long Kau Hui, Yuen Long, N.T.

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 lies 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 in 1685 and then decided to move the market from Tai Kiu Tun (大橋墩) to the present site. A wooden plaque, commemorating Tang's academic success, is still hung in the entrance gatehouse of Wing Lung Wai (永隆圍). 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. 1A Lee Yick Street is one of the surviving old buildings in Yuen Long Kau Hui. The year of construction of the building is not known, but judging from its appearance it is believed to have more than one hundred year's history. The land lot on which the house stands is held under Government Lease. The 75-year lease, renewable for 24 years, was granted on 1 July 1898 – the date of the commencement of the Second Convention of Peking (in Chinese: 展拓香港界址專條) under which the New Territories was leased to Britain. The first recorded owner of the lot was Tang Yat Wa, but his personal background (e.g. trade or business, if any) is not known.

Located at a corner site, the building at No. 1A Lee Yick Street shares a common wall with the shophouse at No. 47 Cheung Shing Street. It is a two-storey building of Qing vernacular style with a recessed front façade. The ground floor probably was a shop hall for trading with a counter and shelves for displaying its commodities. The upper storey was probably for living accommodation or purely storage purpose. It is constructed of green bricks with *Architectural Merit*

its walls supporting its pitched roof of timber rafters, purlins and clay tiles. Its external walls are built of fair-faced green bricks. One air vent, with stylistic grille pattern, is situated on the ground floor of the façade facing Lee Yick Street. The interior has no partitions and its walls are painted. The doorframe is of concrete. A pair of wooden doors are installed at the entrance. The building appears to be vacant and its entrance is blocked up.

This building reminds people what the Yuen Long market town was like hundred years ago. Historic houses of the old market have been disappearing over time due to redevelopment, and this building compliments the other old buildings in the neighbourhood. **Rarity**

It should be considered as having built heritage value. This building witnesses the history of a once vital market, where a centuries-old atmosphere survives despite the transformation of Yuen Long from a market town into a modern new town. **Built Heritage Value**

Although the built structure is dilapidated and semi-derelict, 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 has been getting less prosperous and shops have been 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.