

**Historic Building Appraisal**  
**Village School, No. 1 Tung Tau Tsuen,**  
**Ha Tsuen, Yuen Long, N.T.**

The building at No. 1 Tung Tau Tsuen, Ha Tsuen (廈村東頭村) is a village *Historical Interest* school for the poor set up in the 1930s. Funds for the construction of the school were donated by five brothers of a family who were 25th generation descendants of the Ha Tsuen Tang Clan. The brothers were born into a family which belonged to Yau Kung Tong (友恭堂, “Hall of Fraternal Reverence”) – a descent group with its own corporate ancestral estates through which large scale economic activities were undertaken. The five brother were, in the sequence of their years of birth, Tang Pui-cheong (鄧培昌) (1883-1962), Tang Sui-cheong (鄧瑞昌) (1888-1960), Tang Yee-cheong (鄧懿昌) (b. 1892), Tang Hin-cheong (鄧鏗昌) (b. 1894) and Tang Yi-cheong (鄧彝昌) (b. 1902).

The five brothers belonged to Ha Tsuen’s landlord-merchant elite. The eldest one, Tang Pui-cheong (鄧培昌), engaged in oyster farming in Deep Bay, which was an important business of the Ha Tsuen Tangs for centuries. His brother, Tang Sui-cheong (鄧瑞昌) entered on mercantile life by opening a number of grocery shops in urban Kowloon. He also owned a factory for the manufacture of fodder for livestock and two industrial workshops, namely, Sui Luen Weaving Mill (瑞麟織造廠) near Boundary Street and Sui Luen Towel Mill (瑞麟毛巾廠) in Fuk Wing Street, Sham Shui Po. Tang Hin-cheong (鄧鏗昌) was a teacher of the school at No. 1 Tung Tau Tsuen for a period of time after the war. Tang Yi-cheong (鄧彝昌) was the owner of Tung On Cheong Bakery (同安祥餅家) in Yuen Long town.

The village school stands on a trustee lot owned by Tang Mi Kai Tso (鄧湄溪祖) named in commemoration of Tang Mi Kai (鄧湄溪), 13th generation descendent. It was named after a well-respected ancestor of the Ha Tsuen Tang Clan, namely, Tang Fong-chun (鄧芳春) (1805-1889), 22nd generation descendant, who was the great grandfather of the aforesaid five brothers. Before and shortly after the Pacific War, a wooden plaque bearing the Chinese name of the school (as follows, reading from right to left, 校學費免民貧春芳) was hung on the top of the main doorway of the school. This wooden plaque was salvaged when the school ceased operation several decades ago. It is carefully stored in the home of a local villager as a tangible reminder of the village’s history.

The village school was mainly for students of both sexes in Tung Tau Tsuen (東頭村) and the nearby villages such as Lo Uk Tsuen (羅屋村) and Hong Mei Tsuen (巷尾村) who share a common genealogical relationship to the same founding Tang ancestor. The books studied were the Chinese classical texts such

as *Three Character Classic* (三字經) and *Thousand-Character Writing* (千字文) as well as Chinese textbooks written on modern lines were used for instruction. The building has two floors. The upper floor was classrooms and the lower floor was classroom, kitchen, washroom and the living room of teachers who came from Tung Tau Tsuen or neighbouring villages.

When the Japanese swept through South China in the late 1930s, the village school began to provide accommodation for the war refugees. After Hong Kong fell to the Japanese at the end of 1941, nearly all children ceased to attend school for a few years. After the war, the school resumed operation for a short while and then closed down in 1947/48. Afterwards, for about a decade, the building was used as residence and inhabited by three refugee families. One of the three refugee families was surnamed Fong (方) whilst further information on the other two families is unknown. Still later, it became a small factory. Afterwards, the factory moved out and the building has since become a place to store trash.

This two-storey house is a typical vernacular construction built in a square plan adjacent to the entrance gate of Tung Tau Tsuen, with its front façade facing northeast. It is constructed of green bricks with its walls supporting its pitched roof of timber rafters, purlins and clay tiles. Purlins are used to support timber slabs as ground floor's ceiling. For the upper floor, part of the external wall at the back are painted in light blue, and internally the rooms are subdivided by partitions.

***Architectural  
Merit***

As the house stands on a land lot with little gradient, part of the ground floor is below the level of its adjacent road. The front façade has four windows, two at the ground floor and two at the upper floor. The main door is at the southeast façade, together with one window for each floor. The back (southwest) façade has a backdoor below the ground level, and a raised platform leads to doors for rooms at upper floor.

The house has no ornament and architectural merit. Besides, it seems that the house has been dilapidated for a long time. The wooden ceiling of the ground floor is suffering erosion, and the rooms are stuffed with trash and miscellaneous materials. At the upper floor some wooden pillars have been erected to provide temporary support to the wall and roofs.

This type of vernacular house is common at the rural village in the New Territories. As it had been used for residential and industrial purposes, there have been alterations of the interiors such as latter-day partition and painting; however, the external appearance has kept its architectural authenticity to a large extent.

***Rarity,  
Built Heritage  
Value &  
Authenticity***

The house has considerable social value and local interest. It had been used as the School at Tung Tau Tsuen. The founding ancestor of the Ha Tsuen Tang clan was Tang Hung-chih (鄧洪贄), the 9th generation descendant of the Kam Tin Tangs who moved from Kam Tin to Ha Tsuen in the 14th century. Tung Tau Tsuen was formerly inhabited by households of five other clans, namely, Siu (蕭), Wu (胡), Wong (黃), Yip (葉) and Yung (翁) who have migrated to elsewhere. Today, all inhabitants belong to the clan of Tang.

The building is close to some historic buildings, such as a declared monument known as Yeung Hau Temple at Tung Tau Tsuen (東頭村楊侯宮) and Shi Wang Study Hall (士宏書室) (Grade 3) at San Wai Tsuen.