

Historic Building Appraisal
Nos. 86 and 88 Stanley Main Street,
Stanley, Hong Kong

Stanley – named in 1845 in honour of Lord Stanley, the British Secretary of State for the Colonies at that time – was a prosperous place long before the arrival of the British. Archaeological remains have shown that the area is likely one of the earliest inhabited places in Hong Kong. Its name was Chek Chue (赤柱) – and still is to the Chinese community. A legend goes that the origin of the name lies in its early notoriety as a base for pirates. The local people began to call the place ‘Chark Chu’ (賊住) – ‘Robbers’ Lair’ – and the pronunciation eventually evolved to become Chek Chu. When the British first came to Hong Kong in 1841 Stanley was already a thriving village with a population of 2,000 having a good bazaar with shops of various kinds well stocked to supply the wants of Chinese seafaring people. *Historical Interest*

For many years, Stanley has been a scenic and holiday resort for local and overseas visitors. Nos. 86 and 88 Stanley Main Street is situated in one of the busiest economic centres of Stanley. It is the site of a landmark restaurant now known as The Boathouse. The first restaurant operator named Stanley French Restaurant has been around since 1979 and discontinued operations in 1999. It comprises in fact two semi-detached houses before being converted into the present restaurant. The two houses combine to each other at different levels to keep the restaurant operating. The corner house at No. 86 accommodates the main dining area and the bar of the restaurant, whilst the house at No. 88 is the kitchen and outdoor dining area.

The corner site No. 86 Stanley Main Street (with an area of 992 square feet based on crown lease) was sold by public auction on 27 May 1940 to Ms Cheung Yue (張如) at the realized premium of \$1,650. When she bought the Stanley Main Street site, she was residing with her husband, She Tat-cheong (佘達昌), in Seymour Road, Mid-Levels. Mr She was a merchant and manager of the Hong Kong & Shanghai Taxicab Co. Ltd. When Mr She died aged 72 at Hong Kong Sanatorium & Hospital in 1953, he bequeathed an estate in the amount of \$228,600 – a big sum in those days. At one time, the house was given the name of 泳廬 (literally, Wing’s Villa). Decades later, in June 1987, Ms Cheung assigned the house at No. 86 Stanley Main Street to several descendants of the family, who, like their forebear, succeeded in business.

No. 88, which had a different owner, is held under Government Lease which commenced on 26 January 1841, so this must be one of the earliest lots

sold by the British on Hong Kong Island. The earliest recorded lessee of the lot was a married woman named Chan Lau Shi (陳劉氏) who sold the lot in April 1938 to Ms Kwan Shuk-yee (關淑儀), then living in Shouson Hill Road. Ms Kwan Shuk-yee owned the property until April 1972, when she sold it to Mr Ching King-sing (程景聲), a teacher of St. Teresa's School (聖德蘭學校) in Stanley, and Ms Gloria Chu Wing-ngah (朱詠雅), married woman. Mr Ching and Ms Chu kept the property until June 1985 when they sold it to a company.

No. 88 Stanley Main Street had been built on pre-war: when it was re-registered by the House Registration Office set up by the Japanese military government it was described as a Chinese-style, tiled-roofed residence owned by Ms Kwan Shuk-yee (關淑儀). The existing house at No. 88 Stanley Main Street was built in 1948 (architect C. T. Wong) to replace the pre-war house. The corner house at No. 86 Stanley Main Street was built in 1951 and designed by Chau & Lee Architects (周李建築工程師事務所).

The two houses are built to an L-shaped plan on a roughly north-south axis. They are of RCC frame with slabs and beams. The external walls are rendered and painted in yellow in 2015. A distinctive feature on the façade is the horizontal lineal façades. The roofs of both houses are flat with safety panels around the parapet. The other features as found now include circular porthole windows on the walls of both houses.

**Architectural
Merit**

There are two separate door entrances to the house in No. 86. Tall narrow transomed windows and ventilation openings are provided in bands protected from the weather by continuous horizontal projections (typhoon canopies) with white trim to the edges, which give the house a cheerful and appealing look. There is a chimney above roof level. The house at No. 88 is smaller and its west side is an alley leading to back alley of a high-rise tower. On no. 88, the restaurant's kitchen is located. The outdoor dining areas are located in No. 88 and the rooftop of No. 86.

Internally, the houses are simple in the minimalist style of the 1950s, without superfluous ornamentation or decoration. In the 1970s, works were carried out to convert them into a restaurant, including G/F reception, manager's office, bar areas, dining areas, kitchen and food preparation areas, and an escape stair passage. No. 86 has a staircase and balustraded landing at first floor level, modest ceiling coves or cornices, and a combination of ceramic tiles and parquet wood flooring. Plumbing and a small garage opening are confined to the rear elevation.

This type of early post-war house is becoming rare now as Stanley Main Street is largely developed with high-rise structures.

**Rarity,
Built Heritage
Value &
Authenticity**

The houses retain their authenticity as structures built in the early 1950s in spite of the various interventions, which include the bricking up of 1/F windows at front and side elevations, the relocation of 1/F east elevation window, and the bricking up of 2/F window. The 2/F aluminum sliding door and the surface mounted conduits and cables on walls are later additions. The interiors, e.g. toilet and kitchen fittings, are modern and most of the original designs and styles has been demolished and replaced by the features brought about by the various theme restaurants. The Art Deco style staircase with old handrails has largely survived, but the fitting out of tread, riser and landing of staircase has been replaced by new tiles. Originally built as residence and then converted into restaurant, the houses demonstrate their adaptability.

The restaurant at Nos. 86 and 88 Stanley Main Street is an ideal locality to appreciate the beautiful sceneries of the coastline of Stanley Bay, the panoramic sea view and the sunset from there. It is situated at a roundabout at the end of Stanley Main Street which is famed for its bars, thus its nickname *jiu-ba-jie* (酒吧街) ('bars street') which has become firmly part of the local tourist itinerary for many years. The Boathouse is a recommended spot in a number of tourist guides.

**Social Value
& Local
Interest**

It is an iconic building of Stanley Main Street. It has been used as a set in TV shows and films, for example, the film *Alan and Eric: Between Hello and Goodbye* (雙城故事) which was the directorial debut of a famed director Peter Chan Ho-sun (陳可辛). The film is well-received in the Chinese community both local and overseas. It was crowned best film at the Hong Kong Film Directors' Guild in 1991 and it won best actor at the Hong Kong Film Awards for Eric Tsang (曾志偉).

Stanley has often been seen as somewhat out-of-the-way and seemingly remote from the city, but it retains enough of its appeal as a main tourist destination. The Boathouse is within easy walking distance from the Murray Building, the Blake Pier, and the local Tin Hau Temple across the street which attract an unending stream of visitors.

Group Value