

Historic Building Appraisal
Bridges Street Market,
No. 2 Bridges Street, Sheung Wan, Hong Kong

Bridges Street Market was built under the auspices of the Urban Council to replace the old markets which had been destroyed during the period of Japanese occupation, with a view to meeting the demand of the rising population. It was designed by the Architectural Office of the Public Works Department. The building cost was \$145,000. On 30 April 1953, the market was opened in the presence of a group of distinguished guests, including the Secretary for Chinese Affairs and the Chairman of Urban Council. The robe-cutting ceremony was performed by Ms. Wong Yick-mui (黃亦梅), wife of Ngan Shing-kwan (顏成坤) who was a business tycoon and community leader of the day. *Historical Interest*

Bridges Street Market was the first of its kind built in Hong Kong's urban areas after the Second World War. It contained 59 stalls, auxiliary rooms on the two main floors and a staff quarters in a penthouse. The 26 stalls on the G/F were for the sale of fish and poultry; on the same floor there were also an ice store, two general stores and a scalding room. The 33 stalls on the 1/F were mostly for the sale of beef, pork, fruits and vegetables: in addition, there was a general store. A penthouse - which comprised a flat for the caretaker with bed-living room, kitchen and toilet and a room for coolies - was located at the back of the building and was reached from the 1/F by a small staircase.

Bridges Street Market partly falls on I.L. 3226, which was the old site of American Congregational Mission Preaching Hall (now named as China Congregational Church, 中華基督教會公理堂). The Mission was founded by an American missionary, C.R. Hager, and the premises at No. 2 Bridges Street was the property of a Chinese convert Mr. Wen Qingxi (溫清溪) (1834-1915). Dr. Sun Yat-sen (孫逸仙) lived and received baptism at the church premises at No. 2 Bridges Street and given the name "Yat-sun" (日新), which was later changed to "Yat-sen" (逸仙) as per the advice of Dr. Sun's teacher Au Fung-chi (區鳳墀) (1847-1914). In 1901, the church was relocated to No. 68 Bridges Street.

The area around Bridges Street was bombed and damaged by Allied airmen during the period of Japanese occupation. After the war, the area lied in ruins. Rehabilitation and reconstruction was called for. The Urban Council saw a benefit to build a market for the inhabitants nearby and the unlicensed hawkers of meat and fish. After deliberations, it was decided that a new market

was built in Nos. 2-12 Bridges Street and this building project which was for public purpose use necessitated government resumption of six lots (I.L. 3226, 3227, 3228, 3229, 3230, 3231).

It is a two-storey utilitarian building of reinforced concrete frame construction built in the Modernist or International Modern style. This style of architecture is generally accepted as having originated in Germany at the Bauhaus school of art in the 1920s. Its main themes were asymmetry; severe blocky cubic shapes; smooth flat plain undecorated surfaces often painted white; the complete elimination of all mouldings and ornament; flat roofs; large expanses of glass held in steel frames often in the form of curtain walling, translucent glass blocks or long horizontal streamlined bands of windows. Very free planning was made possible by the adoption of steel-framed or reinforced concrete post-and-slab construction with flat slab floors and a flat roof-slab carried on concrete columns or posts known as pilotis thus enabling partitions to be erected where desired as they played no part in the structure.

***Architectural
Merit***

The front elevation of the market facing Bridges Street is an asymmetrical composition with the main entrance at one side flanked by a panel of Shanghai plaster grooved to resemble masonry. Above this panel there is a large grid pattern window which illuminates the internal staircase. The remainder of the elevation is a plain painted rendered wall featuring two horizontal streamlined bands of windows. The rear elevation and side elevation are similar to the front elevation in design. A small penthouse on the roof provides accommodation for a caretaker and coolies. The colour scheme is off-white with green trim.

Internally, the ground floor plan consists of open fronted stalls with white glazed tiled partitions separated by aisles. The upper part of the walls and the beams and ceiling are painted white. A staircase in the corner beside the main entrance leads to the first floor.

Building of this style is now becoming quite rare due to redevelopment. The 1/F is used as an indoor children's playground which is connected to Wing Lee Street by two bridges. This playground was not part of the original design; it was converted into the present form in 1969. Despite this, the building retains much of its original character and appearance.

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

For almost 60 years, Bridges Street Market has served the community and is remembered by local residents.

***Social Value &
Local Interest***

It is in fairly close proximity to former married police quarters in *Group Value* Hollywood Road and it is one of the sites of Central and Western Heritage Trail, i.e. the original site of the American Congregational Mission Preaching Hall.