

Historic Building Appraisal

Nos. 88 & 90 Staunton Street, Sheung Wan, Hong Kong

Historical Interest

The houses, built in 1951, are situated at Nos. 88 and 90 Staunton Street (士丹頓街).¹ It is one of the oldest streets developed by the British on Hong Kong Island, and can be identified on a map dated 1845. Staunton Street is bounded by Old Bailey Street (奧卑利街) at one end and Shing Wong Street (城皇街) at the other, and intersects with Shelley Street (些利街), Graham Street (嘉咸街), Elgin Street (伊利近街) and Aberdeen Street (鴨巴甸街). The Chinese community, mainly comprising newcomers from mainland China, was first established along the northern coast of Hong Kong Island in the early 1840s, with settlements concentrated in the Upper (上市場), Middle (中市場) and Lower Bazaars (下市場).² The Middle Bazaar was located very close to the areas inhabited by Europeans. In view of the cultural differences between the Chinese and European communities and the undesirable hygienic condition of the Chinese tenements, the government carried out a segregation policy and relocated the Chinese residents of the Middle Bazaar to the Taipingshan area crossed by Lower Lascar Row (下摩囉街), Hollywood Road (荷里活道) and Taipingshan Street (now known as Tai Ping Shan Street) (太平山街). By September 1844, all the old structures in the Middle Bazaar had been removed. Subsequently, the places to the east of Aberdeen Street in Central were inhabited by Europeans, and Staunton Street was no exception. The landlords and occupiers of Staunton Street were overwhelmingly Europeans before the late 1860s, when this situation began to change with the rise of wealthy Chinese merchants.

An interim assessment of rates for a period from September 1896 to June 1897 shows that by that time the even numbered house lots on Staunton Street only spanned from Nos. 2 to 62. Nos. 88 and 90 are first identified in the earliest available map dated 1897,³ when the perception that Aberdeen Street was the

¹ It was said that Staunton Street was named after Sir George Thomas Staunton (1781 – 1859). From 1792 to 1794, he accompanied his father, Sir George Leonard Staunton (1737 – 1801), to China as the latter was appointed secretary in the first British mission to China led by Lord George Macartney. George Thomas Staunton began learning Chinese as a child and thus acquired a good knowledge of the language. From 1798 to 1817, he, the only Englishman of the East India Company in Canton (now known as Guangzhou) who could understand Chinese, was an interpreter for the company, later a member of the East India Committee, and finally the chief of the company in Canton. His publications include the translation of the Qing legal code (大清律例), the first book translated from Chinese into English, in 1810. He also co-founded the Royal Asiatic Society of Great Britain and Ireland with scholar Henry Thomas Colebrooke in 1823. From 1816 to 1817, he was a ranking member of Britain's second mission to China with Lord Amherst and Sir Henry Ellis. From 1818 to 1852, he was a Member of Parliament in England, and advocated the First Opium War (1839 – 1842).

² The main business centre near the coast was called Lower Bazaar (下市場), with the present Jervois Street (蘇杭街) in Sheung Wan as the main street. The Upper Bazaar (上市場) was located on the hillside at the back of Lower Bazaar, generally referred to as Taipingshan (太平山). The main streets were approximately the present Lower and Upper Lascar Rows (上摩囉街) (下摩囉街). The Middle Bazaar (中市場) was an area including the present Peel (卑利街), Graham (嘉咸街), Gutzlaff (吉士笠街), Cochrane (閣麟街), Gage (結志街) and Gough Streets (歌賦街) in Central. At the foot of this area were some marine lots.

³ The *Interim Valuation*, 1896 – 1897 (for a period from September 1896 to June 1897), with Nos. 2 to 62 indicated, is the only available record for the year 1897. The available rates records for the year 1897 are thus incomplete. The valuation

dividing line between the Chinese and European communities had indeed been fading from around the mid-1860s. Probably it had been more common to refer to the neighbourhood of Staunton Street as “卅間” (literally meaning 30 houses) from sometime around the turn of the twentieth century.

While the exact dating of the name “30 houses” is not known, it can, for instance, be identified in an English newspaper dated 1919 and a Chinese one dated 1927. In other words, it was no later than the 1910s that Staunton Street and its neighbourhood had formed a local community known as “卅間”. According to local residents, the story goes that a cluster of 30 stone houses on Bridges Street (必列啫士街), acquired by a wealthy merchant, had been a local landmark. The local residents then used the name “卅間” to denote the local community approximately extending from Shelley Street (些利街) to Tank Lane (水池巷). At present, the name “30 houses” and its demarcation are still respected; for example, the annual Yu Lan Ghost Festival (盂蘭勝會) is organized by a local association named “中區卅間街坊盂蘭會” (or known as “Central 30 houses *kaifong* Yu Lan association” in English, which has its office at No. 62 Staunton Street). The ritual boundary follows the aforesaid informal demarcation of “30 houses”. Staunton Street falls within this boundary.

Unfortunately, most of the timber and brick buildings in the area of “30 houses” had been so devastated by bombing, looting, flooding and rainstorms during the Japanese Occupation (1941 – 1945) that the area was then described as “卅間廢墟” (literally meaning 30 houses in ruins). In 1947, the government appointed well-known businessmen and community leaders, including Ho Kom-tong (何甘棠) (1866 – 1950) and Ma Tsui-chiu (馬敘朝) (1878 – 1959), to advise on the rehabilitation of the community and reconstruction of the buildings there. Each new house was expected to be of four storeys and accommodate some 50 residents. The existing Nos. 88 and 90 Staunton Street were rebuilt against this background of reconstruction and rehabilitation.

The plot of land on which the present-day Nos. 88 and 90 now stand was, first registered between 1844 and 1930 as Inland Lot No. 157 (or I.L. 157). In 1930, I.L. 157 was divided into two new land lots, namely I.L. 2984 for the house lot of No. 88 and I.L. 2174 for No. 90. Lam Yu-tat (or Lam Yue-tat) (林如達) acquired I.L. 2984 (i.e. No. 88, with a lot area of 625 sq. ft.) on 3 October 1930 and Li Yau-chuen (李右泉) (1861 – 1940) acquired I.L. 2174 (i.e. No. 90, with a lot area of 784 sq. ft.) on 18 November 1930.⁴ No. 88 changed hands several times between

books dated from 1898 to 1904 are now missing records.

⁴ Lam Yu-tat was a merchant, and operated a Nam Yuen Restaurant on the ground floor of No. 112 Wellington Street.

1934 and 1947 until it was sold in 1950.⁵ Regarding No. 90, after Li Yau-chuen passed away in 1940, his family members became the registered owners in the capacity of the executors of his will until they sold it in 1950.⁶ According to the Japanese Title Deeds of 1942 (昭和十七年), No. 90 Staunton Street was a three-storey (參階) shop-cum-residential building (商店及住宅) constructed of brickwork and timber (煉瓦及木造), with some damages (小破).⁷

The houses both changed hands on 31 May 1950, when I.L. 2984 for No. 88 Staunton Street was acquired by Chan Kai (陳楷/陳佳) (1885 – 1967)⁸ and his wife, Poon Pui-ching (or Pun Pui-ching) (潘佩清), while I.L. 2174 for No. 90 passed to Kong Fook-to (江福桃), wife of Shum Wai-yau (岑維休) (1897 – 1985).⁹ Chan Kai, Shum Wai-yau and others co-founded a Chinese newspaper named *Overseas Chinese Daily News* (華僑日報) in 1925. Nos. 88 and 90 Staunton Street were within walking distance of the paper's offices at Yuen On Lane (元安里) and Hollywood Road.¹⁰

I.L. 2174 was on the list of estates in the probate of the last will and testament of Li Yau-chuen. According to the probate, Li Yau-chuen (or Tsun, or Chun) (李右泉), alias Li Shiu-yuen (李肇源), Li Siu-yuen (李少源), Li Yuen (李源), Li Yee (李怡), Li Kai (李楷), Li Shun-shing (李慎誠), Li Cheung (李祥), Li Ngoi (李藹), was a pawnbroker, with a registered address of No. 66C Bonham Road, and passed away on 9 September 1940. Li Yau-chuen was both a successful businessman and prominent community leader. For example in the 1930s, Li owned about 80 percent of the pawnshops in Hong Kong and was dubbed “King of Pawnshops” (當舖大王). Besides, he had been Treasurer, Director and finally Chairman of the Chinese Chamber of Commerce (華商總會). In serving the community, he was, for instance, a member of the Board of Directors of the Tung Wah Hospital (東華醫院) in 1897 and 1899, and since 1906 he had become a permanent advisor of the institution. He was also Director of the Public Dispensary (公立醫局). In 1929, he was awarded the Order of C.B.E. to recognise his contribution in liaising with the Guangdong government in Guangzhou during the General Strike (省港大罷工) in 1925.

⁵ No. 88 was acquired by Ho Kit in 1934, Ho Li Shi in 1938, Lau Chok-wai in 1939 and Fong Tse Wing-mui in 1947.

⁶ Li Shum Shi (李岑氏), Li Ka-shu (李家恕), Li Ka-shi (李家仕), and Li Ka Ngok (李家萼) were the executors of Li Yau-chuen's will.

⁷ Public Records Office, 「香港占領地總督部家屋登錄所」(Ref.: HKRS57-6-6252). The Japanese Title Deeds of No. 88 Staunton Street is missing.

⁸ Chan Kai was a member of the business staff of the *South China Morning Post*. Then in 1925, he co-founded *Overseas Chinese Daily* (renamed *Wah Kiu Yat Po* in the late 1920s) with Shum Wai-yau. After the Second World War, he devoted much time to a wide range of business activities in addition to the affairs of the newspaper. He developed properties and started many business ventures. For instance, he operated motor boat services (民力電船公司), Universal Pharmaceutical Laboratories Ltd. (環球製藥有限公司), a brick manufacturing factory in Tsing Yi (青衣磚廠), etc. Chan had also made generous donation for the construction of the office building of the Tsing Yi Rural Committee (青衣鄉事委員會會所) and a school initiated by that committee.

⁹ Apart from founding *Overseas Chinese Daily*, Shum Wai-yau was also Chairman of the Board of Yew Sang Hong Ltd., a Director of the Hongkong and Yau-mati Ferry Co. Ltd., etc. He was also active in serving the community. For instance, an education fund for children was set up under the auspices of *Wah Kiu Yat Po*. It was named “華僑日報讀者救童助學基金” in Chinese and “Wah Kiu Yat Po Readers' Scholarships Fund” in English. He was also Chairman of the Sze Yap Clansmen's Association, Chairman of the Newspaper Society of Hongkong, Chairman of the Supervisory Committee of the Causeway Bay Kaifong Welfare Association, a Director of the Anti-Tuberculosis Association, and a member on the Executive Committee of the Hongkong Society for the Protection of Children. Shum was awarded the O.B.E. in 1956 in recognition of his public services in Hong Kong.

¹⁰ Yuen On Lane could be accessed round the corner of No. 116 Hollywood Road. 「元安里 Yuen On Lane 在荷李活道 116 號側」, 見「日用便覽 – 街道指南」, 《香港年鑑》, 1952 年第五回中卷, 頁 2 (香港: 香港華僑日報, 1952)。

Overseas Chinese Daily News was indeed the successor of *Wah Sheung Chung Wui Po* (華商總會報, also known as *Chinese Commercial News*), a commercial paper published by the Hong Kong Chinese General Chamber of Commerce (香港華商總會) at Jervois Street.¹¹ In May 1925, Shum Wai-yau and Chan Kai purchased the paper together with its machinery from the Chinese Chamber of Commerce, whose chairman was Li Yau-chuen at that time. Both Shum and Chan had worked in the *South China Morning Post (SCMP)*,¹² and later set up the *Overseas Chinese Daily News* in 1925, which was aimed to “supply the Chinese public with a really modern paper – a paper run, as far as possible, on the same lines as the Hongkong English dailies”.¹³ Publication under the name of *Wah Sheung Chung Wui Po* continued at Jervois Street following the takeover. The paper was then relocated to No. 1 Yuen On Lane and renamed *Overseas Chinese Daily News*. The first issue under the name of *Overseas Chinese Daily News* was published on 5 June 1925. It broke the old tradition among the Chinese dailies of having a holiday on Sunday, and maintained a seven-day issue week. In the late 1920s, the English name was changed to *Wah Kiu Yat Po*, which was a transliteration of the Chinese name. According to business directories dating from the 1920s to 1940s, the editorial and publishing offices were housed at No. 1 Yuen On Lane, while the business department was at Nos. 108 – 110 Hollywood Road. But according to the business registration record (商業登記) created by the Japanese in 1944 (昭和十九年), No. 106 Hollywood Road had also been its office by that time. To mark its 25th anniversary and meet its plan for expansion, *Wah Kiu Yat Po* called for construction of a five-storey concrete building to replace the premises at Yuen On Lane and Hollywood Road in June 1950.¹⁴ The new building at No. 110 Hollywood Road was completed in 1952.¹⁵ It was further enlarged and rebuilt in 1969.¹⁶

¹¹ *Wah Sheung Chung Wui Po* was first published in a house in Des Voeux Road Central and later removed to Jervois Street.

¹² Shum Wai-yau joined the *SCMP* as a clerk in 1915 and resigned in 1933 from his post as chief Chinese Assistant. Chan Kai was a member of the business staff of the *SCMP* before the war and remained its cashier until the outbreak of the Second World War in 1941.

¹³ “Modern Paper: New Chinese Journal – The Overseas Chinese Daily News”, *South China Morning Post*, 5 June 1925.

Chung Ngoi San Po (中外新報, 1858 – 1919) was the Chinese version of the *Daily Press* (孖刺西報) and the first Chinese newspaper in Hong Kong. Due to financial difficulties, it was taken over by Hong Kong Chinese General Chamber of Commerce in 1919 and became *Wah Sheung Chung Wui Po* (華商總會報). *Wah Tze Yat Po* (華字日報, 1864 – 1941, 1946) established by Chen Aiting (陳藹亭) was the second one. Another one was *Tsun Wan Yat Po* (循環日報, 1874 – 1941, 1945 – 1946) set up by Wang Tao (王韜).

¹⁴ The editorial and publishing office was temporarily accommodated by the Confucian Society next door, while the business office at No. 90 Hollywood Road.

¹⁵ Among the guests attending the reception celebrating its opening on 6 February 1952 were the then Governor Sir Alexander Grantham (葛量洪) (1947 – 1957) and Lady Grantham.

¹⁶ The then Governor Sir David Trench (戴麟趾) (1964 – 1971) attended the opening ceremony on 22 September 1969.

According to a former resident of No. 90 Staunton Street, Shum Wai-yau lived on 1/F (or the second storey) of the house from 1951 to 1953. He moved out in 1953 as he did not want to live near the Bridges Market, which was opened on 30 April 1953. The interviewee and her family members then rented and lived in the flat previously occupied by Shum from 1953, and had lived there for around 53 years from then on.¹⁷ It is believed that No. 90 Staunton Street, which was within walking distance of the head office of *Wah Kiu Yat Po* at No. 110 Hollywood Road, had only provided temporary accommodation for Shum. According to the aforesaid business registration record of 1944, No. 13 Wun Sha Street was the residential address of Shum Wai-yau and Kong Fook-to (owner of No. 90).¹⁸ It was then indicated in the land documents dated 31 May 1950 that No. 90 was acquired by Kong Fook-to (Shum's wife) of No. 13 Wun Sha Street. Shum Wai-yau then moved from Wun Sha Street to No. 15 Tin Hau Temple Road around 1954. In an interview in 2003, his son, Shum Choi-sang (1922 – 2016) (岑才生), said that he had been living in Tai Hang, including sometime on Tin Hau Temple Road, with his family members since his days as a primary school student up to the time of the interview. Besides, 2/F (or the third storey) of No. 90 had been occupied by the family of a senior staff of *Wah Kiu Yat Po* for about 20 years, while 3/F was shared by a number of the newspaper's staff. Kong Fook-to sold No. 90 to a company in 1990.¹⁹

As for No. 88 Staunton Street, while it is certain that it was the property of Chan Kai and his wife, Poon Pui-ching, from 1950 to 1967, it was said that Chan Kai had lived there and moved out around the same time as Shum Wai-yau. Besides, a bonesetter often consulted by the staff of *Wah Kiu Yat Po* resided and practised on 1/F of No. 88. In fact, according to the said Japanese record dated 1944, No. 31 Wun Sha Street was then the registered residential address of Chan Kai and Poon Pui-ching. In 1950, according to land records, No. 88 was acquired by Chan Kai and Poon Pui-ching of No. 31 Wun Sha Street in Tai Hang. That registered address remained unchanged until Chan Kai and Poon Pui-ching passed away in 1967 and 1966 respectively. Chan paid a visit to the newspaper's office on Hollywood Road the evening before his death in his villa named “龍溪寄廬” on Tsing Yi on 18 August 1967. No. 88 then passed into the ownership of his

¹⁷ The story goes that the interviewee's mother sold eggs at a stall off the shopfronts of Nos. 88 & 90. One day in 1953, Shum Wai-yau's amah told her mother that Shum was about to move out from 1/F of No. 90. Since her mother wanted a larger flat with better living condition for a sick mom, it was decided to rent 1/F of No. 90. The interviewee was eight years old that year. The family had lived there for about 53 years from then on. The interviewee used to refer to the ground floor as the first storey. She lived on the floor above the ground floor, i.e. 1/F or the second storey of No. 90 Staunton Street.

¹⁸ According to the business registration record (商業登記) created by the Japanese in 1944 (昭和十九年), No. 31 Wun Sha Street was the residential address of Chan Kai, while No. 13 Wun Sha Street was Shum Wai-yau's.

¹⁹ It was acquired by Grace Field Development Limited, with Wong Fook-tai and Lai Wan-yuk as directors.

nephew Chan See (陳是) in his capacity of the executor of Chan Kai's will until it was sold to a merchant in 1971.²⁰

As mentioned above, on 31 May 1950, No. 88 was acquired by Chan Kai and Poon Pui-ching (his wife), while No. 90 was acquired by Kong Fook-to (Shum's wife). Given the relationship of the Chan and Shum families as close working partners, it was thus not surprising that they joined hands to re-develop Nos. 88 and 90. The architectural drawings prepared by the architect, A. H. Basto (Antonio Hermenegildo Basto) (1894 – 1979), in 1950 covered both house lots.²¹

*Architectural
Merit*

The houses were constructed for domestic purposes, with a Domestic Permit issued by the Building Authority on 17 February 1951, which describes them as “one Chinese house”.²² Externally, the four-storey houses, each with a cockloft for storage between the ground and first floors, are of simple and modest design. The front facade's design reflects an environmental concern with achieving sufficient natural lighting and ventilation through the row of timber windows and the open grilles under two of the window panels on each upper floor (1/F to 3/F). Openings were also designed at the middle staircore in the form of vertical fins, which are quite commonly found in post-war tenement houses. Besides, the curving balconies at the rear of each house also add visual interest to the exterior.

Internally, the houses are on a roughly mirrored plan, with a shared staircase and shared party walls.²³ The entrance, the staircase handrail and the linings of steps are finished with terrazzo. A number of hardwood doors with fanlights providing access to the flats still exist. The plans of each flat on the upper floors (1/F to 3/F) show layouts comprising a common area and bedrooms, as well as a kitchen and a washroom at the rear portion. The floors of 1/F to 3/F are finished with red and white cement floor tiles. Some of the fixed partitions defining the spaces for bedrooms, which have openings and grilles for ventilation, are still identifiable. Each kitchen was provided with a built-in stove with a flue connected to the chimney on the rooftop. Some of the built-in stoves can still be identified. The tenants of No. 88 could enter the washroom, which was in a corner of the kitchen, through the doorway of the adjoining store (or a bedroom for

²⁰ The merchant was Tsang Tin-fat (曾天發) of No. 252 Sai Yeung Choi Street.

²¹ A. H. Basto was the architect of St. Anthony's Catholic Church (聖安多利堂) at No. 69A Pok Fu Lam Road (Grade 2), for instance.

²² Domestic Permit issued by the Building Authority on 17 February 1951 (B.O.O. Ref. No. 3/2493/50).

²³ As mentioned before, the plot of land “I.L. 2984” on which No. 88 was situated had a lot area of 625 square feet, while that of No. 90 on I.L. 2174 covered 784 square feet. A ground floor plan shows that No. 88 was 15 feet and 10 inches wide, whereas No. 90 was 20 feet and 3 inches wide.

No. 90), then via a curving balcony and finally by the doorway of the washroom itself. As discovered during site inspection, some of the doorways had been filled in and new doorways opened, and the tenants would instead have entered the washroom through the adjoining kitchen. A plan dated 1951 for No. 90 shows that a washroom would be equipped with a “2 gallons iron water tank automatic for flushing cistern”.²⁴

A Chinese Overseas Clinic (華僑診療所) was opened at the ground floor of No. 88.²⁵ Regarding No. 90, a Po Pan teahouse (寶賓茶室) was first opened at the ground floor and later a Po Pan butcher’s shop (寶賓肉食公司) from the 1970s to the 2000s, with a grocery round the corner. The name plaque of “寶賓茶室” finished with terrazzo is still in place, and “Po Pan” had been an iconic shop name for decades and is still remembered by local residents.

***Social Value
& Local
Interest***

There are a number of declared monuments and graded historic buildings in the close vicinity, such as the Chinese Y.M.C.A of Hong Kong (Central Building) (香港中華基督教青年會(中央會所)) (Grade 1), Bridges Street Market (必列啫士街市場) (Grade 3), the former Married Police Quarters (前已婚警察宿舍) (Grade 3), Man Mo Temple Compound (文武廟) (declared monument), Ladder Street (樓梯街) (Grade 1), Nos. 26A - C Graham Street (Grade 3) as well as the former Central Police Station Compound (中區警署), Central Magistracy (中央裁判司署) and Victoria Prison (域多利監獄) (declared monuments).

Group Value

Nos. 88 & 90 Staunton Street are a good example of post-war tenement houses. While a number of elements of historic interest still exist, such as the terrazzo finishes at the entrance and on the staircase handrail, timber doors, windows and fanlights and cement floor tiles, the houses had undergone unauthorised alterations. A balcony built of concrete slab with a metal balustrade was added to the front facade of each upper floor. Two of the timber window panels together with the open grilles at the lower level were altered to create a timber door to the balcony. In 2016, the Building Authority ordered the respective owners of Nos. 88 and 90 Staunton Street to demolish an opening formed in the external wall giving access onto the approved canopy facing Staunton Street and a projecting structure erected on the approved canopy facing Staunton Street on the floor concerned. The owners were also ordered to reinstate the parts of the buildings affected by those unauthorised works. Such orders had been complied with by November of that year. The old timber frames are

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

²⁴ Proposed Additional Urinal, Grease Trap & Water Storage Tank at No. 90 Staunton Street on I. L. No. 2174, approved on 22 June 1951 (B.O.O. Ref.: 2363/51). Only the architectural plans of No. 90 Staunton Street are available.

²⁵ Oral history interviews with local residents.

retained, with the openings below (the original location of open grilles) in-filled with bricks.

Nos. 88 and 90 Staunton Street had once respectively provided temporary accommodation for Chan Kai and Shum Wai-yau, who were co-founders of the oldest Chinese newspaper in Hong Kong, *Wah Kiu Yat Po* (1925 – 1995), and were also well-known public figures actively involved in public services. The clinic, teahouse and butcher's shop on the ground floor are still fondly remembered by local residents.

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Historic Building Appraisal

“Hoi Tin Yat King” *Pai-fong*

Ngong Ping, Lantau Island

The main settlements on Lantau Island are located at Tai O (大澳), Tung Chung (東涌), Mui Wo (梅窩) and Ngong Ping (昂坪),¹ while religious buildings are primarily situated at Ngong Ping and in nearby areas at Luk Wu (鹿湖) and Keung Shan (羌山).² In the 1960s, it was said that there were no shops and residences but religious buildings in those places.³ Ngong Ping, where Po Lin Monastery (寶蓮禪寺) is situated, is a plateau overlooked by Lantau Peak (鳳凰山) and Nei Lak Shan (彌勒山).

**Historical
Interest**

The structure, with the horizontal panel engraved with the Chinese characters “海天一境” (Hoi Tin Yat King, literally the sky and the sea merging into one), is known as “「海天一境」牌坊” (“Hoi Tin Yat King” *pai-fong*). On the reverse of the panel are inscriptions of “風平浪靜” (literally gentle breeze and calm waves), together with the name “筏可” (Fat Ho). They are inscriptions of the calligraphy of Venerable Fat Ho (筏可大和尚, 1893 – 1972), who was the second abbot of Po Lin Monastery (1930 – 1972).⁴ The arrival of Venerable Fat Ho at Ngong Ping as the monastery’s abbot in 1930, the inscriptions of his calligraphy, and a historic photo dated 1938 all suggest that the *pai-fong* was built in the 1930s.⁵

It was described in *Lantau Chronicle* (《大嶼山志》), published by Po Lin Monastery in 1958, that those who arrived at Ngong Ping from Tai O through Keung Shan and Luk Wu could appreciate the picturesque image of “海接蒼穹，水天一色” (literally the sky and the sea merging into one) at a pavilion named Kam Hoi Ting (襟海亭, now collapsed). Visitors would then reach the “Hoi

¹ Ngong Ping was known as “昂平” or “昂坪” in Chinese in the past. For instance, the place was referred to as “昂坪” in a newspaper report dated 1956, while “昂平” was adopted in the *Lantau Chronicle* (《大嶼山志》) published by Po Lin Monastery in 1958. This publication also tells us that the Nei Lak Shan (彌勒山) overlooking the monastery was also known as “昂坪山”.

² Keung Shan is “薑山” in Chinese in the past. For example, “薑山” was adopted in the *Lantau Chronicle* (《大嶼山志》) published in 1958.

³ 吳灞陵，「幾個像樣的地方」，《今日大嶼山》(香港：華僑日報，1963)，頁 11。

⁴ In 1906, three Buddhist monks of the Zen School (禪宗), namely Venerables Da Yue (大悅), Dun Xiu (頓修) and Yue Ming (悅明) travelled from Jiangsu Province (江蘇省) of Mainland China to Lantau Island to set up a site at the plateau (now known as Ngong Ping) for practice. Since then, many monks from all directions were attracted to the place for its tranquility. They built a large hut and called it “Big Thatched Hut” (大茅蓬). In 1924, Venerable Ji Xiu (紀修大和尚) assumed abbotship, renamed the hut as Po Lin Monastery, and became the first abbot of the monastery.

In 1930, when Venerable Ji Xiu decided to retire, Venerable Fat Ho was invited to take over the abbotship. During his tenure of abbotship, Venerable Fat Ho succeeded in raising funds to expand and develop the monastery, building Buddhist halls and chambers, including the existing Main Shrine Hall of Buddha (大雄寶殿), which was completed in 1970.

⁵ 黃佩佳，〈香港本地風光：附新界百詠〉(香港：商務印書館(香港)有限公司，2017)，頁 309-310。

Tin Yat King” *pai-fong*, which was erected over a footpath at the entrance to the Ngong Ping plateau,⁶ after around ten minutes’ walk from Kam Hoi Ting. The *pai-fong* also marked the end of steep and winding paths,⁷ which may also explain why it was named “Hoi Tin Yat King”.

Before Lantau Island was developed by the government in the 1960s, villagers and visitors could only travel around the island by going up and down steep, narrow and winding paths on foot or by sedan chair known as *shan dou* (山兜), an expensive means of transport at that time.⁸ The first completed section of the island-wide vehicular road network (環島公路), which ran from Mui Wo to Shek Pik Reservoir (石壁水塘) and is now known as South Lantau Road (嶼南道), was built in the late 1950s.⁹ The other sections, including the main roads, Keung Shan Road (羌山道), Tai O Road (大澳道), Sham Wat Road (深屈道) and Tung Chung Road (東涌道), were built by phase in the 1960s. Ngong Ping Road, built in the early 1960s, is an access road branching out from Sham Wat Road at one end and leading to Po Lin Monastery at the other.¹⁰ Before Ngong Ping Road was constructed, those coming from Tai O to Po Lin Monastery and its surroundings must travel via the footpath which provided direct access to the monastery.¹¹ This path is still identifiable today, and it runs high up along Sze Tsz Tau Shan (獅子頭山) parallel with Ngong Ping Road down below.

It is about a five-minute walk from the “Hoi Tin Yat King” *pai-fong* to Po Lin Monastery. In the past, the older generations of monks there used to call this *pai-fong* a *shan mun* (山門, literally mountain gate, which serves as an entrance doorway to a Buddhist temple), through which visitors could join the path leading directly to the plateau where the monastery was situated.¹² Visitors would then

⁶ 「自大澳登山，沿途勝景頗多，蘆山飛瀑，鹿湖古剎，足供留連。迨登襟海亭，即見海接蒼穹，水天一色，帆檣如畫，山花迎人，凝眸四顧，地悉平坦。稍進，寶蓮禪寺即在目前。昂平八景。漸次入望。」

釋明慧，《大嶼山志》(香港：寶蓮禪寺，1958)，序及頁 19—20。

⁷ 舊侶，「一九七〇年深秋，夜攀鳳凰小趣」，第 35 期《野外雜誌》(香港：野外雜誌社，1979)，頁 24-26。

⁸ A *shan dou* was actually a rattan seat with carrying poles. In the 1970s, it cost \$20 to \$30 to take a ride of sedan chair from Tai O to Ngong Ping. But indeed, only very few sedan chairs could survive the convenience brought by vehicles at that time.

⁹ Hong Kong needed another large reservoir to meet the rapid increase in population and industrialisation of Hong Kong from the 1950s. Shek Pik Reservoir was opened in November 1964.

¹⁰ Construction of Ngong Ping Road was reported to have started in 1961. However, widening works had to be carried out so that it could be used as a vehicular road.

¹¹ Visitors could also hike from Tung Chung to Po Lin Monastery. But the paths were much steeper. Only hikers starting at Tai O must pass through the *pai-fong* to reach the monastery.

¹² Oral history interview with a senior member of Yung Sheh Hiking Club (庸社行友, established in 1932), who is in his

find another *pai-fong*, which led them to the building complex, with its horizontal panel engraved with the name of “寶蓮禪寺” (Po Lin Monastery).¹³

At present, the “Hoi Tin Yat King” *pai-fong* is still standing over the footpath. However, both the *pai-fong* and footpath have been left untended for a long time. Trees and undergrowth have seriously obscured the footpath as well as the view of the *pai-fong*. It has become very difficult to identify and reach the *pai-fong*. Despite that, the “Hoi Tin Yat King” *pai-fong* has left marks on its former function as an old *shan mun* (舊山門, an old entrance gate) of Po Lin Monastery, as two inscribed couplets in Fat Ho’s calligraphy on the columns of the old *shan mun* have been replicated on the existing *shan mun pai-fong* (山門牌坊) of the monastery, which was erected in 1971.¹⁴ Those two couplets read as follows:

Front couplet

願乘雲水毋疲滄涯入寶所，行仰高山歷過崎嶇自坦平

(Wishing to arrive at Po Lin Monastery free from exhaustion by riding on clouds and water
Flatlands will enter the scene after passing through high hills and difficult paths)

Back couplet

大路在前須分明認去，一肩擔下當努力將來

(The path is ahead and proceed with determination
Be conscientious in future upon taking on responsibility)

In 2016, an elderly hiker who was in his 80s at that time, reminisced that in 1959, when there was no vehicular access to Ngong Ping and Po Lin Monastery, it took three hours by ferry to arrive at Tai O from Central and then another three hours on foot from Tai O to Ngong Ping. He, together with other hikers, would make a reservation with Po Lo Monastery for overnight accommodation, so that they could visit the monastery and its surroundings and climb Lantau Peak at the southeast of Ngong Ping.¹⁵ They had to pass through the “Hoi Tin Yat King”

70s, by the Antiquities and Monuments Office on 19 August 2019.

¹³ This *shan mun* was built to abut the Main Shrine Hall of Buddha (大雄寶殿).

¹⁴ The *shan mun* in front of the Main Shrine Hall of Buddha (大雄寶殿) was rebuilt and relocated to the existing location in 1971 to match the new landscaped features. The existing one was designed to lead visitors to Lotus Pond (寶蓮池), and then the Hall of Skanda Bodhisattva (韋馱殿), the Main Shrine Hall of Buddha (大雄寶殿) and the Grand Hall of Ten Thousand Buddhas (萬佛寶殿), and to echo with the Big Buddha (天壇大佛) and Tei Tan Park (地壇). At present, the monastery calls it a *shan mun pai-fong* (山門牌坊), that is, a *pai-fong* which functions as a *shan mun*.

¹⁵ Lantau Peak, now known as Fung Wong Shan (鳳凰山, literally phoenix mountain), was locally known as Lan Tau Shan (爛頭山, literally bad head mountain). Its hilltop is rocky and thus described as not having a “good-looking head”. Lantau Peak, which is 934m above the Hong Kong Principal Datum, is the second highest peak of Hong Kong and the highest, main mountain (主山) of Lantau Island. It is still a hot spot to catch sunrise. Tai Mo Shan (大帽山), which is 957m above the Hong Kong Principal Datum, is the highest peak of Hong Kong. The island’s name “Lantau Island” is indeed a transliteration of its main, highest peak.

pai-fong on their way to the monastery at that time. The story of hikers staying at Po Lin Monastery overnight was reported in the newspapers during the 1950s and 1960s, even after Ngong Ping Road was opened in the early 1960s.

The “Hoi Tin Yat King” *pai-fong* is an example of traditional Chinese architecture with modern and Western elements. It is a reinforced concrete *pai-fong* composed of a panel supported by two square recessed-panel columns with capitals and recessed-panel piers. There is a finial ornament in the form of a sphere above each column. Above the panel is a small triangular pediment, while the soffit has a stepped profile. Both sides of the panel are decorated with a pair of four-petal floral motifs. The *pai-fong* was originally painted in different colours, and this can still be recognized although the colours have faded out. It was mainly painted in red, supplemented by white and green.

**Architectural
Merit**

The *pai-fong* was a landmark on the path to Po Lin Monastery and its surroundings, and a renowned photo hotspot for hikers and visitors to the monastery. The old images of the *pai-fong* dating from the 1950s to 1970s can be still identified in publications and electronic resources.

**Social Value
& Local
Interest**

It was said that the popularity of “Hoi Tin Yat King” *pai-fong* as a landmark declined after the construction of Lantau’s main roads and Ngong Ping Road, which allowed visitors to reach Po Lin Monastery and Ngong Ping by vehicle direct. Nonetheless, it is believed that this decline was gradual. At first, although bus services between Mui Wo and Ngong Ping and Keung Shan began operating in 1966, the very steep, narrow and meandering nature of Keung Shan Road, Sham Wat Road and Ngong Ping Road (Ngong Ping Road was nicknamed chopstick road, 筷子路) made them dangerous for vehicular use.¹⁶ In a newspaper report dated 28 April 1974 on a serious traffic accident, for instance, the road from Mui Wo to Ngong Ping was described as “the island’s twisting highway of death”.¹⁷ The situation was improved after extensive road upgrading and widening works were carried out around the mid-1980s.

¹⁶ The bus services on Lantau Island were first provided by the Kowloon Motor Bus Company (KMB, 九龍巴士公司) in 1960. The bus route ran between Silvermine Bay (銀礦灣) and Cheung Sha (長沙) in Mui Wo. In 1965, KMB wound up its bus service on the island and sold its buses to the Lantau Bus Company (LMB, 大嶼山巴士公司), which was newly set up by the Lantau South, Mui Wo, Tai O and Tung Chung Rural Committees. LMB operated bus service from Mui Wo to the starting point of Ngong Ping Road (昂平路口) and from Mui Wo to Keung Shan. In 1968, LMB, in collaboration with a tea garden locally known as “Ngong Ping Tea Garden” (昂坪茶園), was renamed United Lantau Bus Company (聯德巴士公司) and extended its service to Tung Chung and Tai O. In September 1966, the Ngong Ping Bus Company (昂平巴士公司) was established by Po Lin Monastery to provide bus services between Mui Wo and Ngong Ping. In 1971, the Tai O Public Bus Company (大澳公共汽車公司) was set up by the Tai O Rural Committee, which provided service between Tai O and Mui Wo. To overcome strong competition, the three bus companies were amalgamated to form the existing New Lantau Bus Co., (1973) Ltd. (新大嶼山巴士(1973)有限公司).

¹⁷ “Highway of Death”, *South China Morning Post*, 28 April 1974.

When Ngong Ping Road was newly built in the early 1960s, the uneven road surface caused much inconvenience to vehicular use.¹⁸ Improvement works were subsequently carried out in 1966 and 1972, and extensive upgrading works were carried out in 1984 to make it safer. It was only in that same year that the road was formally named Ngong Ping Road (昂平路) in the *Government Gazette*.¹⁹ Besides, in the 1970s, there were still hikers who used the path and passed through the “Hoi Tin Yat King” *pai-fong* on their way to Lantau Peak, while visitors to Po Lin Monastery would visit the *pai-fong* too. Furthermore, between the late 1970s and the early 1980s, some visitors would still get off the bus at Sham Wat Road, then walk along Ngong Ping Road and turn on to the path until they reached the *pai-fong*.

Apart from road improvements, the government also began to establish country parks across Hong Kong in the late 1970s. More than half of Lantau Island falls within the protected realm of Lantau South Country Park (designated in 1978), Lantau North Country Park (1978) and Lantau North (Extension) Country Park (2008). Moreover, Lantau Trail (鳳凰徑) was opened in 1984.²⁰ However, the “Hoi Tin Yat King” *pai-fong* and the footpath do not fall within any designated country parks or hiking trails. Worse still, the footpath was affected by the road and slope upgrading works in the 1980s and 1990s, and some parts of it were damaged. The remaining section of the footpath gradually became overgrown with shrubs and undergrowth. As a consequence, the *pai-fong* is barely known by younger generations, but it remains fondly remembered by older generations, especially those who hiked on Lantau Island before the mid-1980s.

There are graded religious buildings in the nearby areas at Luk Wu and **Group Value** Keung Shan, including Luk Wu Ching Ser (鹿湖精舍) (Grade 2), Chuk Yuen Ching Ser (竹園精舍), Fat Chuen Tsz (佛泉寺) and Ng Chit (悟徹) in Luk Wu, and Chi Chuk Lam (紫竹林), Po Lin Shut (寶蓮室) and Ng Chun (悟真) in Keung Shan (all Grade 3).

¹⁸ 「近年更闢了一條寬闊的車路，從昂平通下大風凹附近，和石壁水塘通往深窟方面的運輸車路相接，轉入環島公路，這樣，如要乘車，從梅窩到石壁，便可以直上昂平了。(但現在沿途路面還是凹凸不平，汽車通過異常困難。)」Ngong Ping Road is the vehicle road described in this quote. While the name of Ngong Ping Road can be identified from a Police Notice dated 1966 and a Transport Department Notice dated 1972, for instance, it was indicated as “Ngong Ping Access Road” on a plan for improvement works in 1972.

吳灞陵，「幾個像樣的地方」，《今日大嶼山》（香港：華僑日報，1963），頁11–12；

¹⁹ The upgrading works included road widening, cutting and filling slopes, construction of retaining wall and partial road-reconstruction.

²⁰ The trail starts at Mui Wo and runs across the country parks on Lantau Island. It links up a host of famous attractions, including Lantau Peak (鳳凰山), Sunset Peak (大東山), Yi Tung Shan (二東山), Keung Shan (羌山), Fan Lau (分流), Shek Pik Reservoir (石壁水塘), etc. Hiking facilities were provided and enhanced from time to time.

The “Hoi Tin Yat King” *pai-fong* served as a *shan mun* of Po Lin Monastery for nearly four decades from the 1930s to 1971, and was an important landmark for both hikers and visitors to the monastery. Moreover, it is one of the few surviving historic structures inscribed with the calligraphy of Venerable Fat Ho, who was the abbot of Po Lin Monastery (1930 – 1972), and also assisted in the management of Tsing Shan Monastery (青山禪院) during a transitional period after the death of its abbot, Master Hin Ki (顯奇法師) in 1932. They are two of the most well-known monasteries in Hong Kong. The *pai-fong* retains a high degree of authenticity despite suffering a long period of neglect.

Rarity,
Built Heritage
Value &
Authenticity

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Historic Building Appraisal

Masonry Wall and Earthenware Pipes at Caroline Hill Road Causeway Bay, H.K

The history of the existing masonry wall and earthenware pipes at Caroline Hill Road (加路連山道) can be traced back to the early 1920s, but it has undergone alterations over the past decades. The road surrounds Caroline Hill (加路連山),¹ which is situated in a district locally known as So Kon Po (or in the past Soo Kun Poo, 掃桿埔, literally straw broom plain). In the old days, the district extended to the north-west of the Soo Kun Poo Valley (掃桿埔谷) to encompass the area to the north-east side of the old East Point Hill, now the area of Hysan Avenue (希慎道) and Lee Gardens (利園), while the south-east was Caroline Hill. There was a Chinese settlement approximately on the site of today's Irving Street (伊榮街) and Keswick Street (敬誠街) at the time the British occupied Hong Kong. In 1842, this village of Soo Kun Poo had a population of about eighty people. The names of Caroline Hill and Caroline Hill Road are first shown on plans dating to the 1860s. Earlier still, according to a plan dated 1845, a house named Morgan's Bungalow had by then been built at the present location of the South China Athletic Association (SCAA, 南華體育會), with Sukunpu Valley (i.e. Soo Kun Poo Valley) to the east of the house. The district was sparsely populated. For instance, a plan dated 1859 shows the Soo Kun Poo Valley and paddy fields on the east and south-east side of Caroline Hill, while to its west and south-west were other hills with some Western-style houses. A Chinese Cemetery, later known as Mount Caroline Cemetery (咖啡園墳場, literally coffee gardens cemetery), was established to the south of Caroline Hill, approximately around today's Hong Kong Stadium, before 1856. Caroline Hill remained quite free of development around the 1930s.

*Historical
Interest*

Apart from the former Morgan's Bungalow (altered or rebuilt as St. Francis' College for missions in the Provinces of Guangdong and Guangxi in 1862) on the private lot of Inland Lot No. 358 (I.L. 358), a plan of 1867 also shows a Sookunpoo School (掃桿埔官立學校) on the adjoining plot of government land at Caroline Hill. The school was established in 1855.

According to a plan dated 1889, the former Morgan's Bungalow and Sookunpoo School stood on elevated platforms bounded by natural slopes. In 1921, the private lot of I.L. 358 was surrendered to the government. Then

¹ It was said that Caroline Hill was named after Caroline Preston, wife of a doctor, William J. Preston. Caroline died in early 1852 soon after arriving in Hong Kong. William worked in the apothecary trade as a druggist. He operated the Hong Kong Dispensary from 1850 to 1856. In 1856, he handed over the dispensary to another druggist and left Hong Kong. He might have come back to Hong Kong and worked under Dr Thomas Boswall Watson, one of the founders of the Watson chemist chain.

between 1922 and 1924, a masonry retaining wall was built as part of the site formation works in preparation for a new site for Queen's College at the former I.L. 358. The site levelling works, road building and filling of low-lying areas at and around Caroline Hill were reported to have begun by Messrs. Kin Lee and Co. in 1922 and completed in 1924. A plan of 1922 and an aerial photo dated 1924 show that the retaining wall actually extended along both the prospective site for Queen's College and the site of Sookunpoo School. However, construction of a new Queen's College on Caroline Hill was eventually dropped for financial reasons, and the site was allotted to the South China Athletic Association and Navy Recreational Club in 1927.

Sookunpoo School was relocated in 1905. The old school site was then used by other schools,² until it was allocated to the then Public Works Department for erecting new office and workshop buildings for the Electrical and Mechanical Office (now known as the Electrical and Mechanical Services Department) under it. Constructions were carried out in the 1950s by stage, with some later additions in the 1970s. Besides, a Post Office Recreation Club (郵政體育會) was erected to the northwest of the old school site (or at the junction of Caroline Hill and Leighton Road), and opened in May 1953. A new access stairway was opened at the masonry wall on Caroline Hill Road between the Post Office Recreation Club and the Electrical and Mechanical Office.

Over the years, a large portion of the 1920s' masonry retaining wall was altered or demolished. For instance, the north-western section of the wall, which extends along Leighton Road between the two ends of Caroline Hill Road, has at times between the 1960s and 1980s been subjected to re-alignment and partial demolition.³ The existing masonry wall with earthenware pipes at Caroline Hill Road has thus become the oldest and most intact surviving section of the retaining wall. It is now a retaining wall of Slope Feature Nos. 11SW-B/FR 193 and 11SW-B/FR 32 registered in the Slope Maintenance Responsibility Information System of the Lands Department.

² Sookunpoo School was established in 1855. It was said that the school had been renamed Tang-lung-chau School. However, the name of Sookunpoo School was still marked on a plan dated 1889. In 1905, the school was relocated. The old school premise then underwent some structural improvements and became the home of the Victoria British School, which was opened on 20 March 1905 to correspond to the Kowloon British School, as a result of a petition to the government for establishing such a school on Hong Kong Island in August 1904. It was co-educational and only admitted European children not over twelve years old. In 1932, the school was closed due to the falling off in attendance, and the children were sent to the Central British School at Quarry Bay. The school premise was then used to operate the Junior Technical School, which was opened in 1933. Only 40 students were admitted in the first academic year. They were sons of dockyard and employees of the Public Works Department. It was a secondary school and expected to give those boys an opportunity of filling certain positions, such as foremen and draftsmen. It ceased operation during the Japanese Occupation (1941 – 1945) and re-opened in 1948. The school site was later allocated to the then Public Works Department for erecting a new workshop for the Electrical and Mechanical Office under it.

³ Alterations are shown by the aerial photos of 1945, 1949, 1961 and 1975; maps of 1958, 1968, 1971, 1976, 1979 and 1989; and the architectural drawings of the PCCW Recreation Club.

The retaining wall of 11SW-B/FR 193 and 11SW-B/FR 32 is built of dressed granite blocks with copings in vermiculated rustification and has a drainage channel above. It contains three built-in earthenware pipes with sound condition, which are said to have been commonly used before the 1970s. Wall “11SW-B/FR 193”, which starts at its intersection with Leighton Road, increases in height from the north corner of the site towards the south, which results in a change from eight to nine courses over its length. The southern portion of this retaining wall has a cement concrete bond course at a level of five courses above ground. Wall “11SW-B/FR 32” increases in height from the north to the south, and, as a result, ranges from nine to ten courses. It also contains cement concrete bond courses.

**Architectural
Merit**

According to the Buildings Ordinance 1935, there was a new requirement on the construction of masonry and brick retaining walls that exceed 12 feet in height, that is, they must be provided with lacing or bond courses of good cement concrete at least one foot in depth and extending throughout the full thickness of the wall. Moreover, the distance between any two adjacent bond courses could not exceed six feet when measured vertically. According to government records, wall “11SW-B/FR 193” is 3.5 metres in height (approx. 12 feet), while wall “11SW-B/FR 32” is four metres high (approx. 13 feet). Those cement concrete bond courses suggest that the wall might have, over the past decades, undergone alteration and upgrading works by the works department, which might have made reference to the aforesaid requirement in the Buildings Ordinance 1935.

The wall at Caroline Hill Road is a typical example of dressed block masonry retaining walls. It serves as a reminder of the historical streetscape of Caroline Hill and So Kon Po. The built-in earthenware pipes are rather iconic features of the wall.

**Social Value
& Local
Interest**

The masonry wall with built-in earthenware pipes on Caroline Hill Road has group value with other historic buildings, including the Race Course Fire Memorial (馬場先難友紀念碑) (declared monument), St. Paul's Convent Church (聖保祿修院) (Grade 1), Po Leung Kuk, Main Building (保良局主樓) (Grade 2), Shing Kwong Church (聖光堂) (Grade 2), S.K.H. St. Mary's Church (聖公會聖馬利亞堂) (Grade 1), Tung Wah Eastern Hospital (東華東院) (Grade 2) and St. Margaret's Church (聖瑪加利大堂) (Grade 1).

Group Value

While the wall is a typical example of dressed block masonry retaining walls, the cement concrete bond courses are probably a tangible reminder of the change in the statutory requirements for the construction of masonry retaining

**Rarity,
Built Heritage
Value &**

walls before the Second World War, while also suggesting that the original 1920s' *Authenticity* wall underwent alterations over the past decades. The earthenware pipes in the wall, which are said to have been commonly used before the 1970s, help to retain the historic character of the wall.

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