

Historic Building Appraisal

No. 112 Jervois Street, Sheung Wan, Hong Kong

No. 112 Jervois Street (蘇杭街) is situated in one of the earliest Chinese settlements established after the British takeover of Hong Kong Island in the early 1840s. The Chinese community at that time, which mainly comprised newcomers from mainland China, was first established along the northern coast of Hong Kong Island, with settlements concentrated in the Upper (上市場), Middle (中市場) and Lower Bazaars (下市場). The main business centre near the coast was called the Lower Bazaar, within which the main thoroughfare was today's Jervois Street in Sheung Wan.¹ It was only renamed Jervois Street (乍畏街) after a great fire in 1851. Before that, it was known as "Lower Bazaar Road", which was first identified on a map of 1843 as part of the Lower Bazaar, and had a row of houses on either side of the street.

A great fire broke out at the Lower Bazaar near today's Western Market and Jervois Street on 28 December 1851. It spread eastwards to the present-day intersection of Queen's Road Central (皇后大道中), Jervois Street and Wellington Street (威靈頓街), southwards to Queen's Road Central, westwards to the junction of Jervois Street and Morrison Street (摩利臣街), and northwards to the Bonham Strand (文咸東街) Praya north of Jervois Street. To prevent the flames from spreading to Central, the British Army and Royal Navy blew up the buildings with explosives to create a firebreak, which resulted in the destruction of around 450 houses. This devastating fire led to the reconstruction of the Lower Bazaar, including Lower Bazaar Road, which was renamed Jervois Street after Major General William Jervois, who had directed the firefighting operation. The name can be identified on a plan of the City of Victoria dating from 1856. Jervois Street was known as "乍畏街" in Chinese, as "乍畏" is similar to "Jervois" in pronunciation. Interestingly, it was informally known by local Chinese residents as "So Hong Street" (蘇杭街), literally a street of Suzhou (蘇州) and Hangzhou (杭州) in mainland China, since it was well known for shops selling silk products from those cities. For instance, between the 1870s and 1880s, it was said that

¹ The Lower Bazaar was close to today's Western Market. The Upper Bazaar (上市場) was located on the hillside at the back of the Lower Bazaar, and was generally referred to as Taipingshan (太平山). The main streets of the Upper Bazaar were approximately where the present-day Lower and Upper Lascar Rows (上摩羅街) (下摩羅街) are situated. The Middle Bazaar (中市場) was an area including today's 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. 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 (下摩羅街), 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, all the areas to the east of Aberdeen Street (鴨巴甸街) in Central were inhabited by Europeans. This situation continued until the rise of wealthy Chinese merchants in the 1860s.

some 20 to 30 shops of that kind were opened there. In the 1930s, Jervois Street was still well known for silk products, but the number of these shops declined gradually after the Second World War. Despite that, in 1978, the street was renamed “蘇杭街” in Chinese, although Jervois Street was retained as the English name.

Among the many shops selling silk products at Jervois Street was a herbal tea shop named Yuen Kut Lam (源吉林, the current trademark is Yuen Kut Lam's) and a pigment shop named Yuen Kwong Wo (源廣和) run by the Yuen (源) family. The Yuens' motherland was in Heshan (鶴山), where they first operated a pigment shop named “San Chang” (三昌顏料店) in Foshan (佛山) during the Daoguang (道光) reign (1821 - 1850) of the Qing (清) dynasty.² In 1892 during the Guangxu reign (光緒壬辰年), they also established a factory there to produce herbal tea with the brand name Yuen Kut Lam, which it was hoped could heal the poor. The brand name bears the founders' wish for the fortune and prosperity of the Yuens and for the family business to flourish like a forest. The tea itself, which contained tea leaves impregnated with herbs, was known as “Kam Wo Tea” (甘和茶). Therefore, the tea was generally referred to as “Yuen Kut Lam Kam Wo Tea” (源吉林甘和茶). The tea was sold in the pigment shop. It became widely known in 1898 during the Guangxu reign (光緒戊戌年), when it healed many victims of the plague in places such as Nanhai (南海) and Foshan in Guangdong Province. From then on, the Yuens shifted their business focus to the herbal tea, while the pigment business was wound down.

In 1906, two branch shops were opened in Hong Kong and Guangzhou (廣州). The one in Hong Kong was first opened at No. 118A Jervois Street,³ and moved to the present building at No. 112 in 1923. At present, No. 112 is still situated on a plot of land registered as “The Remaining Portion of Inland Lot No. 195C” (or I.L. 195C RP). According to land records, this plot of land was first leased to a Chinese trader named Chun Tai (陳泰) from the government in 1883. It changed hands in 1888, 1894, 1911, 1919 and 1923 when it was acquired by Yuen Shut-ling (源述靈). It was possessed by the Yuen family from then on.⁴

² It was referred to as “Sam Cheong Firm of Fatshan” in English in an application for registration of trade marks by the Yuens in Hong Kong in the 1910s.

³ “Application for Registration of Trade Marks”, dated 14 August 1919, *Hongkong Government Gazette*, 15 August 1919 (Supplement) from Hong Kong Government Reports Online, and Publicity Bureau for South China, *Anglo-Chinese Directory, Hong Kong* (Hong Kong: Publicity Bureau for China, 1922).

⁴ The ownership of the plot of land “I.L. 195C RP” before 1923 is set out below:

1883 – 1888: Chun Tai (陳泰), trader;
1888 – 1894: Cheung Ting-tsim (張廷俊);
1894 – 1911: Helena Adelaide Margesson and Emily Charlotte Margesson;
1911 – 1919: Cheong Pat (張弼), merchant;
1919: Cheung Yeung Shi (張楊氏), wife of the late Cheong Pat; and

Following the tradition in Foshan, the Yuens sold both pigments and herbal tea in the shop, with an emphasis on the latter. The brand name Yuen Kut Lam was retained for the tea, while the pigment shop was named Yuen Kwong Wo (源廣和). Packed in small cardboard boxes, the herbal tea was also commonly known as small box tea (盒仔茶).

It is believed that No. 112 Jervois Street was a back-to-back Chinese shophouse built around the 1900s.⁵ A new Public Health and Buildings Ordinance, which required the provision of a scavenging lane at the rear of a domestic house, was enacted in 1903. According to a “Deed of Covenant with reference to a Scavenging Lane in rear of No. 112 Jervois Street” dated 29 August 1912, a portion of the building’s rear would become a scavenging lane when the party walls and other structures adjoining it had been removed. Moreover, according to the “Report of the Director of Public Works for the Year 1912” compiled on 30 July 1913, No. 112 was on the list of “scavenging lanes to be provided by owners when an opportunity occurs of gaining access to them from the adjoining streets”.⁶ No scavenging lane was shown in the Japanese Title Deed (家屋所有權登錄申請書) of 1942 (昭和十七年), or the maps of 1955, 1977 and 2020. Up until now No. 112 is still without any scavenging lane at the rear.⁷

The building survived the Japanese Occupation (1941 – 1945). According to the Japanese Title Deed of 1942, it was a three-storey (三階) shop (商店) built of brickwork and timber (磚瓦木石造) in Chinese style (中國式), with some damage (小破) at that time. While most of the walls have been plastered and painted, grey brickwork can be identified at locations where the finish has come off.

1919 – 1923: Lo On (羅安), trader.

Helena Adelaide Margesson and Emily Charlotte Margesson were British from a distinguished family. Their father William Margesson was the rector of Whetlington and high sheriff of Sussex in 1805, while their mother Mary Frances Margesson was from the Cooke Baronets of Wheatley Hall. One of their brothers, Henry Davis Margesson, was a merchant at Macau who founded Margesson & Co, and set up the Hong Kong branch in 1865.

⁵ Chinese shophouses were often referred to as “tenement houses” or “tenements” in colonial records. The older shophouses were built in a variety of styles including back-to-back, back-to-side, back-to-lane, back-to-street/ road.

⁶ *Hong Kong Government Administrative Reports*, 1912.

⁷ Then it appears that the building was constructed before 1903. Nonetheless, the deed of covenant of 29 August 1912 also shows that the owner, Cheong Pat (張弼), who purchased No. 112 in 1911, had “recently constructed on Crown Land adjoining the said Remaining Portion of Inland Lot No. 195C, a verandah or balcony projecting from the said 112 Jervois Street.” The technical feasibility of adding a verandah or balcony to an existing building at that time is in doubt. However, the rate records for the years 1910, 1911 and the first half year of 1912 are missing, which makes it difficult to prove with archival records if No. 112 was rebuilt around 1912.

The Land Registry Office, “Deed of Covenant with reference to a Scavenging Lane in rear of No. 112 Jervois Street” dated 29 August 1912. *Property Particulars of the Remaining Portion of Inland Lot No. 195C* (Memorial No. 50537).

No. 112 Jervois Street is a three-storey building with a long and narrow footprint. The ground floor houses a shop, while the upper floors are for residential and storage purposes. The front facade is designed with a cantilevered balcony on each upper floor, each on a concrete slab supported on concrete brackets and metal posts on both sides. The soffits of the balconies are decorated with moulded details. The decorative balustrades with geometric patterns are concealed by two large stainless-steel name plaques of “源吉林” and “源廣和”. Timber plaques were formerly used.

The building has an eye-catching shopfront consisting of a timber doorframe painted red with classical details and a metal grille gate. Above the main entrance is a timber panel engraved with the name of the shop “源吉林” with a trademark under it. The metal gate surround was removed in the renovation work carried out around November 2019, but the trademark and symmetrical band of curling ironwork remain intact. Before the renovation, the vertical panel to the left of the doorway gave the name of the tea and its brand name (源吉林甘和茶), while that to the right stated that Yuen Kwong Wo (源廣和硯硃店) sells red pigment. The old vertical panels in poor condition have become museum collection items. The plinths below the timber frame are finished with red mosaic tiles.

Internally, the layout remains intact. The ground floor is mainly a retail area fitted with a timber cabinet and cashier's counter. Upon entry through the main entrance, one encounters a wide threshold of granite floor slabs. A large pedestal finished with terrazzo near the shopfront is retained. The timber strips on the wall prevent moisture entering the brickwork, while a raised platform to prevent flooding also helps protect the goods. There is an opening in the timber boarding above the cashier, which is a smart design aimed to allow staff to hang up goods or money for convenience and security reasons. Mouldings supporting the timber joists and boarding for the first floor can also be identified. A timber staircase leading to the upper floors is still in use. The timber balustrade is of an elegant design with turned newel posts and balusters. The yard at the rear was originally open-air but is now covered. The space behind the yard (or the rear end of the building), which was used for storage purposes, has been recently converted for use as an office.

Proceeding from the ground to the first floor via the timber staircase, one would firstly see a cockloft situated between the floors. The Chinese characters “賬房” (account's office), which were inscribed on the timber door lintel, have left a clear indication of the cockloft's former use. The floor is laid with floral-

Architectural Merit

patterned cement floor tiles. The cockloft frontage facing the shop entrance is the most decorative part of the ground floor. It is designed with a timber decorative framework with a meander pattern, below which is a timber checker screen resting on a timber balustrade with a swastika motif. Hanging side by side in the centre are a pair of gilded timber plaques inscribed with the names “源吉林” and “源廣和” .

On the first floor, the living area is divided into two with a timber grille partition. The floor slabs are timber planks resting on timber joists and mouldings. The floor is laid with cement tiles patterned with pearl chips. It is worth noting that there are also some floor tiles showing the Chinese characters “祿” (wealth) and “壽” (longevity). Timber strips have been fixed to the walls for the protection of the goods stored on the first floor. There are three double-panel French doors with pivot windows above, which open onto the balcony. The whole set of doors and windows is of exquisite design with lozenge patterns, fitted with pressed glass of different colours, which is reminiscent of the Chinese Manchurian window design. At the rear is a bridge over the ground floor yard, which gives access to the kitchen. The yard enhances ventilation as well as the levels of natural light inside the building. The kitchen, which has been disused since around 2007, has brickwork stoves and was designed to be semi-open in order to benefit from the better ventilation and illumination.⁸ The second-floor interior was inaccessible at the time of the survey. From the exterior, it can be seen that the second-floor balcony is enclosed. The tiled roof has been replaced with a concrete one, while the pitched form is retained.

No. 112 Jervois Street is of considerable social value and local interest. For over a century, Yuen Kut Lam's Kam Wo Tea has been a popular brand of herbal tea in Hong Kong, mainland China, Southeast Asia, and even as far away as Canada, and is especially famous for its ability to heal colds. It holds a special place in the collective memory of Hong Kong people, at least for older generations, and is still made in Hong Kong. Up until now, the firm has been located at No. 112 for over a century. Following the takeover of the Foshan-based firm by the Chinese government in 1956, the Hong Kong branch has operated since then as the head office (總行) of Yuen Kut Lam's. The century-old shophouse is an iconic landmark, and has attracted wide coverage in publications, the press, social media and local films. For the Yuens, it is where their family business has its

Social Value & Local Interest

⁸ A chef was employed to prepare lunch and supper for about 20 employees. Almost all the employees were indeed members of the Yuen family. Great meals would also be prepared on the first and fifteenth days of each lunar month and festive days, mainly the spring meal (春茗) on either day between the eighth and twelfth days of the Chinese New Year, and the meal on Winter Solstice (冬至). This practice ceased around 2007 when the chef retired.

deepest roots. The building would also provide temporary accommodation for family members and relatives coming from places outside Hong Kong.

No. 112 Jervois Street has group value with other historic buildings, including **Group Value** Western Market (舊上環街市), the Man Mo Temple Compound (文武廟) (both Declared Monuments) and Ladder Street (樓梯街, Grade 1).

No. 112 Jervois Street is a rare surviving example of back-to-back shophouses in Hong Kong. No major alterations that would have diminished its authenticity can be identified. It has been standing in Sheung Wan, a commercial and residential area with deep historical roots for the Chinese community, for over a century and has become a famous landmark. It holds considerable value in both **Rarity, Built Heritage Value & Authenticity** built heritage and intangible cultural heritage.

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Historic Building Appraisal
No. 24 Nga Tsin Long Road
Kowloon City, Kowloon

No. 24 Nga Tsin Long Road (衙前塱道) in Kowloon City (九龍城) was built around 1935, and has borne witness to the historical development and urbanisation of the district before the Japanese Occupation (1941 – 1945). The building is situated on a plot of land registered as “New Kowloon Inland Lot No. 2029” (or N.K.I.L. 2029). With the extension of their authority to the entire Kowloon Peninsula in 1898, the British named the areas to the north of Boundary Street (界限街), including Kowloon City, as “New Kowloon”.¹ Kowloon City was first known as Kwun Fu (官富場), and was an area with imperial salt fields garrisoned by government troops. The history of those government-run salt fields can be traced back to the Song (宋) dynasty (960 – 1279).² From the Yuan (元) dynasty (1271 – 1368) through to the Qing (清) (1644 – 1911), an assistant magistrate of Kwun Fu, known as “官富巡檢司”, was responsible for the governance of villages.³ The magistrate had its administrative office (i.e. *yamen*, 衙門, which later became the Kowloon Walled City, 九龍寨城), where suspects of criminal offences were interrogated. In the twenty-third year of the Daoguang reign (道光二十三年, 1843), the assistant magistrate of Kwun Fu was retitled the assistant magistrate of Kau Lung (九龍巡檢司), with the responsibility for the governance of around 400 villages,⁴ one of which was Nga Tsin Tsuen (衙前村, literally meaning the village in front of the *yamen*).

The name “衙前村” can be identified in the *Xin'an Gazetteer* (《新安縣志》) published in the Wuchen year (戊辰, 1688) of the Kangxi (康熙) reign and the twenty-fourth year of the Jiaqing reign (嘉慶二十四年, 1819). The story goes that during the twelfth year of the Zhizheng reign (至正十二年, 1352) of the Yuan dynasty, the three clans of the Chans (陳氏), the Ngs (吳氏) and the Lees (李氏) together established Nga Tsin Tsuen, which was situated to the northeast of the *yamen*. It is said that during the Ming (明) dynasty (1368 – 1644), around the middle of the sixteenth century, some of the Chans moved out of Nga Tsin Tsuen and

¹ The boundary of New Kowloon was marked on a map dated 1937. Places like Cheung Sha Wan (長沙灣), Sham Shui Po (深水埗), Kowloon Tong (九龍塘), Tai Hom (大磡), Kowloon City (九龍城), Ngau Chi Wan (牛池灣), Ngau Tau Kok (牛頭角), Sai Tso Wan (西草灣) and Cha Kwo Ling (茶果嶺) fell within the boundary.

² The name “官富山” (literally meaning the mountain of Kwun Fu) can be identified on a map in *Xin'an Gazetteer* (《新安縣志》) compiled in the twenty-fourth year of the Jiaqing reign (嘉慶二十四年) (1819) during the Qing dynasty. However, salt production was forced to cease due to the Coastal Evacuation Order (遷海令), which was carried out between the first and the eight year of the Kangxi reign (康熙, 1662 – 1669) against the anti-Qing rebels led by Zhang Chenggong (鄭成功).

³ The number of villages amounted to around 300 during the Jiaqing reign (1796 – 1820), for instance. The magistrate was also responsible for the villages outside Kau Lung Shing (九龍城), such as the villages of Wong Nai Chung (黃泥涌), Hong Kong (香港), Pok Fu Lam (薄寃林) and So Kon Po (掃管莆) on Hong Kong Island, as well as the villages in what we now refer to as the New Territories until the British took possession of them.

⁴ The name “Kowloon” was only formally adopted after the British possessed the entire Kowloon Peninsula.

established another village named Nga Tsin Long (衙前壩)⁵ at the southwest of the *yamen*. Having said that, Nga Tsin means “in front of the *yamen*”, whereas Long means “low-lying marshy land”. Historical maps show that Nga Tsin Long was quite near to the coast. Today’s Nga Tsin Long Road occupies the approximate location of the former village of Nga Tsin Long.

The road’s name, “衙前壩道” in Chinese and “Nga Tsin Long Road” in English, together with another eight new streets, was formally listed in the Government Gazette on 12 May 1933.⁶ The development of these nine streets is a reflection of the urbanisation of Kowloon City. Before the 1920s, farming, fishing and quarrying were important to the local economy of the district. There was a market town (or *hui*, 墟) known as Kau Lung Kai (九龍街), which extended from the southeast corner of the *yamen* right down to the coast. The urbanisation of Kowloon City started with the Kowloon Bay Reclamation Scheme, which was initiated by Sir Kai Ho-kai (何啟, 1859 – 1914) in early 1914.⁷ Reclamation work commenced in 1916. Houses were built after the first phase of the reclamation was completed in 1920, and the new housing estate was named Kai Tack Bund (啟德濱). Prominent figures such as Tso Seen-wan (曹善允) (1868 – 1953) moved to Kai Tack Bund with his family in 1920. The names of a number of Chinese and foreign residents, such as Li Chor-chi (李楚池) and C. G. Anderson, can also be identified from historical records dating to the 1920s and 1930s.⁸ The seafront area of the reclaimed land later became part of the Kai Tak Airport.⁹ Later, sometime between the late 1920s and the mid-1930s, the government developed the inland areas. The new streets, including Nga Tsin Long Road, were indicative of the urbanisation of

⁵ The village of Nga Tsin Long was a member of an alliance known as Seven Alliance (七約, literally meaning the alliance of seven villages). It was composed of seven former villages of Nga Tsin Long, Nga Tsin Wai (衙前圍), Sha Po (沙埔), Tai Hom (大磡), Kak Hang (隔坑), Ta Kwu Ling (打鼓嶺), Shek Kwu Lung (石鼓壠), which spanned across today’s Kowloon City and Wong Tai Sin Districts.

⁶ The other eight streets were Lung Kong Road (龍崗道), Nam Kok Road (南角道), Hau Wong Road (侯王道), Lion Rock Road (獅子石道), Fuk Lo Tsun Road (福佬村道, now 福佬村道,), Junction Road (聯合道), Carpenter Road (賈炳達道) and Southgate Road (南門道). A journal 《香港年鑑》, published by the then Wah Kiu Yat Po (華僑日報), shows that Fuk Lo Tsun Road has been referred to as 福佬村道 from 1949 onwards.

⁷ Sir Kai Ho-kai promoted the reclamation of Kowloon Bay, with the objectives of building houses at the waterfront both for the better-off local Chinese and wealthy Chinese incomers from Guangzhou. He hoped that the reclamation of Kowloon Bay could relieve the overcrowding of Hong Kong due to the influx of Chinese from Guangdong after the 1911 Revolution. In 1912, he formed The Kai Tack Land Investment Company Ltd. (啟德營業有限公司) with Au Tack (區德, 1840 – 1920). After Sir Kai Ho-kai passed away, Au Tack, with his partners Tso Seen-wan, Cheung Sum-woo (張心湖, ? – 1932) and others, resubmitted their reclamation proposal in November 1914, and it was approved by the government in December 1915. Reclamation started in 1916, with the first phase completed in 1920. The company was in its heyday in the early 1920s, but was liquidated in 1930.

⁸ C. G. Anderson was a manager of the Assurance Franco-Asiatique (保太水火保險公司). Li Chor-chi was the Chinese secretary of Ho Hong Bank and a well-known Chinese tenor at that time. He was also one of the guests laying the foundation stone of St. Stephen’s College in Stanley on 27 August 1928.

⁹ Kai Tack Bund was formally named in Government Gazette on 5 May 1922. In 1942, the Japanese ordered to have the bund demolished for the expansion of the Kai Tak Airport.

Kowloon City,¹⁰ and involved the redevelopment of the former market town of Kau Lung Kai, the village of Nga Tsin Long and the nearby agricultural land.

Regarding the development of Nga Tsin Long Road, the earliest rates records for it are dated 1933 – 1934, which show that “No. 12” was the street’s largest even-numbered house at that time. “24 Nga Tsin Long Rd.” can be first identified in the rates records of 1934 – 1935.

On 13 August 1935, a Government Lease of N.K.I.L. 2029 was entered by Tai Shung-ching (戴崇貞). On the same day, she signed a Verandah Undertaking, through which she undertook that during the construction of verandahs at N.K.I.L. 2029, it would in no way deviate from the plans and drawings supplied by her architects.¹¹ During the Japanese Occupation (1941 – 1945), a Japanese Title Deed (家屋所有權登錄申請書) dated 1943 (昭和十八年) shows that Tai Shung-ching was still the owner of No. 24 Nga Tsin Long Road at that time, but she lived at High Street (高街) on Hong Kong Island. The property was described as a Chinese-style (中國式), three-storey (叁階) building constructed of reinforced concrete (鉄筋混凝土), in mixed use, with a shop on the ground floor (商店(階下)) and residential units at the upper floors (住宅(階上)), and it was in good condition (完整).

While no official records on the exact year of construction of the building can be identified, if one takes into consideration the rates records, the Verandah Undertaking of 1935 and the Japanese Title Deed of 1943, it is believed that No. 24 Nga Tsin Long Road was built around 1935.

The ownership of the building has changed hands a number of times since 1950.¹² While the owners might not be well-known figures, a tenant named Tang Tai-chuen (鄧泰全, ? – 1999) and a traditional Chinese medicine practitioner named Chung Pak-ming (鍾伯明, 1912 – 1984) brought about a turning point in the building’s history.

Tang Tai-chuen opened a Tai Wo Tong Chinese Medicine Co. (大和堂參茸藥行) on the ground floor of No. 24 Nga Tsin Long Road. It is believed that it was

¹⁰ A map dated 1922 shows the general layout of Kai Tack Bund. The houses there were residential blocks, each having an open courtyard to the rear, which was similar to the layout of No. 24 Nga Tsin Long Road. Besides, some photos dated 1927 and 1932 show rows of three-storey houses at Kai Tack Bund. However, in the background, there were also other three-storey row houses lying perpendicular to those of Kai Tack Bund. Those “perpendicular” housing blocks were within the area bounded by the aforesaid new streets. Moreover, as mentioned above, the new streets were only formally named in 1933. Therefore, it is believed that the urbanisation of Kowloon City first commenced with Kai Tack Bund between the late 1910s and the mid-1920s. Later, sometime between the late 1920s and the mid-1930s, the government developed the inland areas.

¹¹ Little was known about Tai Shung-ching. It was only recorded in the Verandah Undertaking that she was a spinster, and later a married woman in the land records of 1947 and 1949.

¹² The owners included Lee Mui-chi (李梅枝), a merchant; Ko Wai-har (高慧霞), a married woman, and Susan Au.

opened at the present site in the 1940s.¹³ Tang Tai-chuen, nicknamed “水龍王” (literally King of the Water Dragon), was a well-known footballer around the late 1940s. Later in the 1960s, he was a team manager in a number of soccer matches in Asia. He was also very active in promoting football and welfare services. For instance, in the 1970s, he was the president or a committee member of a number of football and youth associations, while in 1988, he was the Honourary President of Hong Kong Football Association (香港足球總會), Hong Kong Chinese Footballer's Fraternity (HKCFF, 香港華人足球員聯誼會) and South China Athletic Society (南華會). In 1959, he was one of the founders of HKCFF. Besides, from 1969 to 1993, Tang served on the Board of Directors of The Lok Sin Tong Benevolent Society, Kowloon (九龍樂善堂, referred to as Lok Sin Tong hereafter). In 1972, in order to relieve the financial burden of patients, he made a generous offer that any patient being able to present a prescription issued by Lok Sin Tong could buy medicine from Tai Wo Tong at cost price (祇收成本). In the Queen's Birthday in 1974, Tang was awarded a Badge of Honour (榮譽獎章) to recognise his contribution to sports and the community. In the 1980s, he served on the then Kowloon City District Board (now known as Kowloon District Council).

Regarding Chung Pak-ming, his homeland was Xinhui (新會) in Guangdong province. He became a registered Chinese medicine practitioner in the twenty-first year of the Republican period (民國廿一年, 1932) and practised in Guangzhou. He then came to Hong Kong after the fall of Guangzhou to Japanese troops in 1938. For decades, from the early 1940s to the early 1980s, he served as the Chinese medicine practitioner at Tai Wo Tong until sometime shortly before he passed away in 1984.¹⁴ From 1948 onwards, patients having obtained a consultation card (贈診証) from Lok Sin Tong could receive free medical consultation from Chung Pak-ming at Tai Wo Tong, and from 1950 to 1983, he served on the Board of Directors of Lok Sin Tong. For decades, Chung had also been a member of the Kowloon City District Kai-Fong Welfare Association (九龍城區街坊福利會).

Apart from Lok Sin Tong, Chung Pak-ming also served as the designated Chinese medicine practitioner of the gold shop known as Chow Sang Sang (周生生), and the seasoning and chemical company of Tien-Chu-Ve-Tsin Chemical Industries (H.K.) Ltd. (香港天廚味精化學工業廠有限公司), whose shop and administrative office were in Kowloon City respectively. The consultation fee and medicine would

¹³ A bulletin printed by The Lok Sin Tong Benevolent Society, Kowloon (九龍樂善堂) in the twenty-eighth year of the Republican period (1939) contains a list of Chinese medicine clinics in Kowloon City; however, none of them was on Nga Tsin Long Road. According to a newspaper report dated 1988, the company had been operating for some forty years by that time, and employing Chung Pak-ming as its Chinese medicine practitioner.

¹⁴ In the past, the Chung's family resided at No. 22 Nga Tsin Long Road, not No. 24.

be paid for by the companies as their employees' medical benefits.¹⁵ Besides, Chung would also offer consultation and medicine, both free of charge, to very poor patients.

According to local residents, another Chinese medicine practitioner named Choi Siu-wun (蔡兆垣) practised on the first floor of No. 24 Nga Tsin Long Road. His patients would then buy the Chinese medicine he had prescribed at Tai Wo Tong.¹⁶ He also offered free medical consultation for Lok Sin Tong's patients.¹⁷ It is said that he practised at No. 24 Nga Tsin Long Road from around the 1940s until he passed away in 1987.

After the death of Chung Pak-ming in 1984, his son, Chung Fook-lee (鍾福利, 1937 – 2012), assumed his father's role at Tai Wo Tong. Tai Wo Tong thus continued to operate until Chung Fook-lee passed away in 2012. A relative of the Chungs then operated a herbal medicine shop there until 2017. In 2018, the shop was converted for use as a café, which retains "Tai Wo Tong" as its name. The brand name of "Tai Wo Tong", though changed in nature from Chinese medicine to coffee, has thus continued.

No. 24 Nga Tsin Long Road is a three-storey building with a rooftop structure. The ground floor is for commercial use while the upper floors are for residential purposes. Externally, it is a typical example of a verandah-type shophouse, with a deep verandah on each floor supported on rectangular columns over the pedestrian walkway at street level. The columns on the ground floor are built of granite, while the building materials of those on the first and the second floors have been concealed by plaster. The capitals on the top floor are of a simple stepped design. Over the years the balustrades at the verandahs on the upper floors comprise infilled panels without balusters. Below the second-floor balustrade is a moulded stringcourse. The party walls on either side of the second-floor verandah have a curved profile. Regarding the shopfront, the timber name plaque engraved with "大和堂" (Tai Wo Tong) above the main entrance is retained intact. In the past, the shop's name "大和堂參茸藥行" was painted on the front facade at the top of the covered walkway (i.e. below the first-floor balustrade), while "大和堂熟藥" (literally meaning Tai Wo Tong prepared medicine) appeared on the two columns; however, these were painted over during the conversion works. A new foldable metal gate with the name "大和堂" as a cut-out has been installed at the main entrance. A boundary stone engraved with

Architectural Merit

¹⁵ Chow Sang Sang had a shop (now closed) near Nga Tsin Long Road, whereas the office and factory of Tien-Chu-Ve-Tsin Chemical Industries (H.K.) Ltd. were in Pak Tai Street. The seasoning company is now named The Tien Chu (Hong Kong) Company Limited (天廚(香港)有限公司), with its Hong Kong headquarters in Tsing Yi.

¹⁶ It was said that Choi and Chung began their practice at No. 24 Nga Tsin Long Road at about the same time.

¹⁷ According to Lok Sin Tong's publication, Choi provided free medical consultation in the 1940s and the 1950s at least.

N.K.I.L. 2029 can be identified at the rear wall.

The interior of the ground floor has been altered and renovated to fit the needs of the Tai Wo Tong café. There is a small store room under the staircase at the right. The original wooden herb cabinet (百子櫃) has been restored and preserved in-situ, whereas the original counter and display cabinet have been converted into a counter for ordering, brewing coffee, and placing drinks. In the past, the front and rear of the shop were partitioned with a timber panel, forming the clinic's consultation room at the rear and a waiting area at the front.¹⁸ But now the panel has been removed to open up the interior and facilitate the operation of the café. The floor finish was terrazzo in the past, but is now cement screeding. There is a new door leading to the backyard, which replaces the wall and window previously there, but part of the original foldable metal gate bearing the name “大和堂” has been salvaged and reinstated on either side of this new doorway. At the backyard are a kitchen and toilets.

A steep concrete staircase is located at the right-hand side of the building and provides access to the upper floors. It has treads finished with timber boards and a timber handrail on the wall along its right-hand side. There is a sliding metal gate at the entrance to the staircase. Above the gate is a metal grille with geometric design and coin motifs. The wired glass fanlight at the entrance door to the first floor is fitted with a patterned metal grille. The stairs leading to the two levels at the rear of the first floor are fitted with a V-pattern metal balustrade.

Regarding the internal layout of the upper floors, each has a verandah which is divided from the living area by a double-panel French door and casement windows with fanlights and security bars. The front portion of the first floor consists of the living area with a bedroom and a storeroom having cubicles partitioned by timber boards with patterned glazing. The living area was once used as the consultation room of Choi Siu-wun. The rear portion contains a kitchen, two toilets and a room with some furniture.

The front portion of the second floor consists of the living area with two cubicles formed by timber partitions with glazed panes. The rear of the second floor houses a kitchen and a toilet. There is a long and narrow internal concrete staircase at the right side of the second floor leading to the roof terrace. There is a skylight on the rooftop that illuminates the staircase below. A chimney stack is found on the roof in a position corresponding with the original smoke flues at the kitchen on the second floor.

¹⁸ The consultation room was situated behind the timber panel most of the time during Chung's practice. It was only for a short period of time in the later days that medical consultation was provided in the right corner of the panel's front, so that it would be more convenient for Chung to monitor the shop's operation.

Regarding the building's fabric and materials, No. 24 Nga Tsin Long Road is a reinforced concrete building. The living areas on the upper floors are laid with cement floor tiles with an octagonal and diamond pattern, surrounded by a fret-patterned border. Not all of the patterned floor tiles survive at the verandahs, and the damaged tiling has been covered by cement screeding. The roof terrace is also paved with cement. The interior walls are mainly plastered and painted, while the dado area of the first floor is finished with pink mosaic tiles. There are timber panelled cubicle partitions decorated with floral patterned pressed glass.

The building is one of the important landmarks in Kowloon City. Tang Tai-chuen and Chung Pak-ming were respectively a well-known social leader and Chinese medicine practitioner in Kowloon City. For decades, they served to enhance the association of the building with the local community. Over the years, the old Chinese medicine shop has also attracted coverage in the mass media and publications, and has been a site for location filming. Many character-defining elements of the former Tai Wo Tong, including its name plaques, the timber herb cabinet, part of the old timber partitions and the foldable metal gate, as well as a number of framed mirrors with the names of Chinese medicines, have been retained. Artefacts such as the certificate of practice of Chung Pak-ming dated 1932, and other signs of appreciation for Chung in the form of certificate, mirror, calligraphy, etc. are also displayed in the café. These serve to retain the historic ambience of the building, and have attracted wide media coverage. The building's social value and local interest has also been sustained by its conversion to use as a café.

No. 24 Nga Tsin Long Road is within walking distance of other historic buildings, including the former Yamen Building of Kowloon Walled City (前九龍寨城衙門) and Hau Wong Temple (侯王古廟, both Declared Monuments), Bethel Bible Seminary (伯特利神學院, Grade 2), Nos. 31 – 35 Hau Wong Temple New Village (侯王廟新村) and Nos. 1 and 3 Hau Wong Road (侯王道) (both Grade 3).

No. 24 Nga Tsin Long Road is a good example of a verandah-type shophouse in Hong Kong. More obvious alterations can only be identified on the ground floor. But those changes have mainly affected the internal layout in order to facilitate its use as a café. The internal layout of the upper floors remains intact. The historical ties of the building with the pre-war development of Kowloon City add to its built heritage value. Such ties extend from the name of the street where it stands (which is related to the former village of Nga Tsin Long and the former Yamen Building of Kowloon Walled City) to the urbanisation of Kowloon City (the redevelopment of villages houses, market town and agricultural land to create streets lined with shophouses).

Social Value & Local Interest

Group Value

Rarity, Built Heritage Value & Authenticity

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Historic Building Appraisal
Second Street Public Bathhouse
Junction of Second Street and Western Street, Sai Ying Pun, H.K.

Second Street Public Bathhouse (第二街公共浴室) is situated at the junction of Second Street (第二街) and Western Street (西邊街) in Sai Ying Pun (formerly “Saiyingpun”), which is close to an area formerly known as Taipingshan. It was completed and opened in 1925. The construction of the bathhouse was a result of the government’s efforts to improve the sanitary conditions of the City of Victoria, which had been an ongoing process since the first outbreak of bubonic plague at Taipingshan in 1894. In fact, from 1894 to 1923, Hong Kong was frequently hit by plague epidemics, which occurred almost every year before 1904 and every few years between then and 1923.¹

Historical Interest

According to a report on the bubonic plague in Hong Kong during the epidemic of 1903, which Governor Sir Henry Arthur Blake (1898 – 1903) completed in August that year, neighbourhoods such as Second Street and Third Street were inhabited by very poor people, and had “an evil record in every epidemic of plague since 1894”.² To eliminate the media of infection, Blake suggested that there should be “constant, unremitting attention to cleanliness of person, furniture and premises”.³ To this end, he proposed that disinfection work, including the erection of large tanks for boiling water and disinfectant fluid (Jeyes fluid), into which bed boards and simple furniture could be dipped, must be carried out, and wash houses (i.e. bathhouses), in which both sexes could have a supply of hot water for washing purposes, should be provided by the government.

Early in April 1903 before finishing the report, Blake proposed the erection of tanks and setting up of bathhouses to Dr John Mitford Atkinson, who was the Principal Civil Medical Officer and President of the Sanitary Board. On 22 April, four large tanks were erected within the area bounded by Second Street,

¹ The plague in 1896, for instance, affected places like Second Street and Third Street (第三街) in Saiyingpun, Taipingshan Street (太平山街) and Upper Station Street (差館上街) in Taipingshan, Bridges Street (必列啫士街) and Staunton Street (士丹頓街) in Sheung Wan, and Graham Street (嘉咸街) and Gage Street (結志街) in Central.

At its climax in 1894, 2,679 plague cases were recorded. In 1896, 1898, 1899, 1900, 1901 and 1903, the figure was, on average, 1,350 cases per year. From 1904 to 1907, around 480 cases were recorded every year. Unfortunately, the figure rose to 1,073 in 1908, 1,847 in 1912, 2,146 in 1914 and 1,181 in 1922. The mortality rate exceeded 90% on average.

² “Memorandum by H.E. The Governor on the Result of the Treatment of Patients in their Own Houses and in Local Hospitals during the Epidemic of 1903,” *Hong Kong Sessional Papers*, 1903.

³ *Ibid.*

Third Street, Eastern Street and Western Street.⁴ In the same month, some private premises were also vacated, fitted up and later rented by the government to house four temporary public bathhouses, which were situated at No. 92 Second Street and No. 1 Woi On Lane (both for men), and No. 2 On Wai Lane and No. 2 Sheung Fung Lane (both for women).⁵

In 1903, as part of the constant efforts to improve the sanitary conditions of the City of Victoria, the first permanent free public bathhouse (for men only) was opened in Cross Lane in Wan Chai (demolished), and that was followed in 1904 by the first permanent one for both men and women at the junction of Pound Lane and Taipingshan Street (now Tai Ping Shan Street), which was subsequently rebuilt in 1961.⁶ The other two public bathhouses were aforementioned temporary ones in Second Street (for men) and Sheung Fung Lane (for women). They were closed on 27 December 1922 to make way for re-construction. In 1925, they were replaced by the third permanent public bathhouse (for men and women) in the City of Victoria, i.e. the existing one at the junction of Second Street and Western Street, which was completed in November 1925 and opened on the 18th of the same month.

Second Street Public Bathhouse is situated on government land. Previously it was a private lot known as “Inland Lot No. 624” (I.L. 624). The plot of land was owned by the Berlin Ladies Mission for China, which operated a foundling house there until it was surrendered to the government in 1892. Around 1900, a public latrine of 40 seats was erected on the north side of a portion of the former I.L. 624 at the corner of Second Street and Western Street.⁷ A contract was let on 11 September 1923 for the construction of the existing bathhouse and an underground trough closet under the centre of Second Street at its junction with

⁴ The tanks measured nine feet in length, two feet in width and 3 feet deep and could hold about 400 gallons of water. Mats and cloth materials would be dipped for about two minutes first, after which bed boards and simple furniture would be dipped. They were set up in Sheung Fung Lane, Tak Sing Lane, On Wai Lane and Woi On Lane.

⁵ Chinese dwellings were built with neither toilets nor bathrooms. Back in the early 1880s, Governor Sir John Pope Hennessy (1877 – 1882) considered building public bathhouses, with a supply of hot water, for the Chinese, and hoped that further private ones charging an extremely moderate fee could be built. However, both the local Chinese and government officials at that time were apathetic concerning housing and sanitary reforms. They were anxious about the costs that might be incurred and the potential need for increased taxation and rents. Neither of Hennessy’s successors – Governor Sir George Bowen (1883 – 1885) and Governor Sir William Des Voeux (1887 – 1891) – achieved any significant improvement in the sanitation of the Chinese houses. In 1901, as one of the remedial actions taken to prevent plague epidemics during the governorship of Sir Henry Arthur Blake, temporary mashed bathhouses were erected in various parts of Hong Kong Island and Kowloon in 1901. The establishment of temporary bathhouses in vacated houses was therefore an improvement in this aspect of public sanitary facilities. The houses were selected with the assistance of Fung Wa-chun (馮華川), who was Chinese community leader and served on the Board of Directors of the Tung Wah Hospital in 1892, 1897 and 1901.

⁶ The first permanent free public bathhouse on Hong Kong Island was built in Cross Lane on the east of the Naval Hospital in Wan Chai in 1902 and opened in 1903. It was for men only and mainly served the male coolies in the district.

⁷ A map dated 1922 shows that the remaining portion of the old lot was occupied by a West District Public Dispensary and Maternity Hospital (also known as Tsan Yuk Maternity Hospital (贊育醫院), which was formally opened on 17 October 1922 (Grade 1).

Western Street. It was expected that the bucket latrine would be reconstructed with an additional storey and fitted out as a bathhouse, providing accommodation for 34 men and 18 women, upon completion of the trough closet. The trough closet was completed in 1924, while the Second Street bathhouse had not yet been reconstructed that year. The number of users of the bathhouse was first recorded in 1925.⁸

Located on a sloping site, the two-storey bathhouse built of red brickwork was constructed on a levelled granite platform. The building has a rectangular plan, with a narrow front/western facade on Western Street and a long northern facade on Second Street. The external wall has been plastered and painted pink. Some brickworks are exposed and have been painted white, including window sills, recessed wall surfaces under windows on the first floor, and the coping of the screen wall in front of the male bathroom. The recessed wall surfaces under the windows show Flemish bond brickworks. The chimney stacks of brickwork on the roof are exposed and painted pink.

Architectural Merit

The male bathroom is located on the ground floor and the female one on the first floor. The Chinese characters “男浴室” (male bathroom) and “女浴室” (female bathroom) have been painted on the front facade at the respective access staircase. The entrance to the male bathroom is accessible via a flight of granite steps with metal railings, one of which is old and two of which are a pair of railings of later addition. The entrance to the female bathroom is accessible via an external staircase, made up of concrete steps, in the lane between the southern facade of the bathhouse and the Old Tsan Yuk Hospital (舊贊育醫院). This staircase is supported on columns and fitted with an old concrete railing and a pair of metal railings of later addition. The columns supporting the staircase have chamfered edges with stepped bases.

The bathhouse was designed for practical purposes and built on a simple rectangular plan. The male bathroom is a large space with shower stalls. There are glass louvers for better ventilation. The female bathroom is also a large space with shower stalls. As the top floor, there are more ventilation devices. Apart from glass louvers, there are ventilation vents on the central axis of the flat concrete roof. There are also ventilation grilles made by flattened octagonal blocks at the two ends of the first floor, although the grilles in the former caretakers' quarters at the east end (with No. 88 Second Street at the back) have

⁸ No records could be taken in 1924 as construction was not completed. The record on the number of users of the bathhouse in 1925 is set out below:

18,859 (men); 14,111 (women) and 18,403 (children). These were the figures as from 18 November 1925, on which Second Street Bathhouse was first opened.

been sealed. Besides, there is an obsolete refuse chute inside the bathhouse. It runs from a corner near the entrance to the male bathroom to the upper floor, and is covered by a roof vent.

The bathhouse was built with two caretakers' quarters, one of which was located at the east end of the male bathroom. The remaining one was on the top of it on the first floor and connected to the female bathroom. They were used as staff quarters probably until sometime around the early 1990s, and now remain vacant. The ground-floor caretakers' quarters is decorated with black and white cement floor tiles. It was connected to the boiler room (still in use) and the oil store. The oil store was converted from a coal storage room around 1959, and is now a storeroom.⁹ The former caretakers' quarters and oil store, and the existing boiler room on the ground floor are accessible via an internal staircase on the northern facade, while the former caretakers' quarters on the first floor is accessible via an external concrete staircase, which was proposed to erect in 1959.¹⁰

A proposed alteration plan prepared in 1959 shows the known alterations to the building. For instance, four shower stalls were proposed to be added in the male bathroom while the number of shower stalls in the female bathroom was proposed to be doubled by sub-dividing the old ones. The more obvious change to the internal layout was carried out at the caretakers' quarters and the service rooms at the east end of the male bathhouse. Originally, a caretaker could access the quarters on the ground floor through an internal staircase, which led from Western Street to the space opposite the storeroom for coal. Then turning left, the caretaker would reach the boiler room, and finally the quarters and kitchen. After alterations, the coal store became an oil store. The boiler house was relocated to the space opposite the new oil store. The old internal staircase was also replaced by a new one. The location of the former boiler house was used to accommodate a new concrete staircase, and a new storeroom which adjoins the living space of the caretakers' quarters. The partition wall of the storeroom has gone, but the granite slabs which mark the entrance doorways of the storeroom and the living space have been retained. The kitchen was once converted into a quarters during the Japanese Occupation (1941 – 1945). Around April 1962, the

⁹ Bathing water was first heated by coal, later by diesel oil and now by gas. It is believed that coal was replaced by diesel oil around 1959, as an architectural drawing of 1956 shows that the existing facility room was a room for storing coal, with a Boiler House adjoining it. In 1959, a drawing was prepared for the proposed conversion of the room to an oil store. Besides, an Urban Council's record of 1974 shows that diesel oil was used at that time. According to the information from the Food and Environmental Hygiene Department in 2020, hot water is provided from every November of a year to April of the next year. The supply will start once a temperature of 20°C or below is recorded in November, and will stop once 25°C or above is recorded on three consecutive days in April.

¹⁰ Before having the external staircase, the caretakers' quarters on the first floor was only accessible through the female bathhouse and the door still exists.

then Public Works Department reverted it to a kitchen. Besides, a new external staircase provided the caretakers' quarters on the first floor with a new access. Those changes to the internal layout and the erection of an external staircase at the east end of the building led to alterations (including relocation and addition) to the window and door openings.

Second Street Public Bathhouse is important for people who live without or with inadequate bathing facilities for over 90 years, although such importance has been declining from the late 1970s due to the modern trend of providing bathrooms in residential units.¹¹ Its history provides a continuing link to the lives of local people in the district.

The bathhouse has group value with other historic buildings, including the Main Building (主樓, Grade 1) and Annex Block (附屬建築物, Grade 2) of the Old Tsan Yuk Maternity Hospital (舊贊育醫院), Kau Yan Church (救恩堂, Grade 1), King's College (英皇書院, Declared Monument) and Bonham Road Government Primary School (般咸道官立小學, Grade 1).

Second Street Public Bathhouse is the only surviving pre-war building of its kind in Hong Kong. It bears witness to the government's efforts to improve the sanitation of the city, and has been providing valuable service to the public and local residents for many years, although it is now a less critical resource in the context of the modern city. The more obvious alterations were the changes to the staircase leading to the ground-floor staff quarters and the addition of an external staircase to the first-floor staff quarters around 1959, and the replacement of timber windows with aluminium ones in 2010. However, such alterations have not diminished the authenticity of the building. The colour of the external wall finish was changed to pink from light yellow in the late 1990s, giving it a more eye-catching appearance.

Social Value & Local Interest

Group Value

Rarity, Built Heritage Value & Authenticity

¹¹ According to two records of the then Urban Council dated 1978 and 1980, the use of public bathhouses was declining because the modern trend of providing bathrooms in residential units had greatly reduced the need for public bathhouses.

Some records on the usage rates of the Second Street Public Bathhouse is extracted below for reference. Figures of the 1960s and the 1980s cannot be identified.

Year	Men	Women	Children
1925	18,859	14,111	18,403
1935	186,998	108,383	128,012
1950	97,753	74,175	76,672

Year	Average Number of Daily Users
1975 – 1976	114
1977 – 1978	85

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