

## Historic Building Appraisal

### No. 190 Nathan Road, Tsim Sha Tsui, Kowloon

No. 190 Nathan Road (the “Building”) is situated in Tsim Sha Tsui, a **Historical Interest** district which bears unique historical significance. Situated at the southern tip of the Kowloon Peninsula and overlooking Victoria Harbour, Tsim Sha Tsui used to be strategically important for coastal defence. The geographical advantage of the harbour-front was also a great attraction to businessmen. Tsim Sha Tsui was the first portion of the Kowloon Peninsula developed by the British, who developed it for defence and commercial purposes, a pattern similar to the early development of the Central district.<sup>1</sup> Some of the surviving buildings and structures, e.g., St. Andrew’s Church Compound (聖安德烈堂), the Former Kowloon British School (前九龍英童學校), the Former Whitfield Barracks (前威菲路軍營), the Former Marine Police Headquarters Compound (前水警總部), Signal Tower at Blackhead Point (大包米訊號塔), etc., are significant reminders of the early development of the Kowloon Peninsula.

The number of the land lot on which the Building is situated has changed twice. Originally referred as Sub-section 1 of Section A of Kowloon Inland Lot No. 611 (K.I.L. 611 S.A. ss. 1), it was first changed to Kowloon Inland Lot No. 3731 (K.I.L. 3731) in 1935, and then to the current lot known as K.I.L. 9735 in 1970.<sup>2</sup>

The Building was built between 1932 and 1933. In July 1932, Chan Yuen-sheung sold K.I.L. 611 S.A. ss. 1 to Lau Tsung-tai (劉松娣) at the price of \$23,500.<sup>3</sup> No premises were mentioned in the land record K.I.L. 611 S.A. ss. 1. In April 1932, Woo Lai-tin anticipated that the flats on the site would be ready for operation in August the same year,<sup>4</sup> and only four remaining sites

<sup>1</sup> Plans and maps relating to the development of the Kowloon Peninsula by the British by the late nineteenth century:

- (i) Lands Department, “Kowloon 1863, Proposed Roads” (Map Ref.: HD23-1);
- (ii) Lands Department, “Map of Kowloon Peninsula showing War Office Lands and Military Reserves, April 1891” (Map Ref.: MM-0182); and
- (iii) Public Records Office, “South of Boundary Line, Kowloon Peninsula”, dated 23 April 1897 (Map Ref.: Map CO-129-275, p. 597).

<sup>2</sup> The Land Registry Office, Property Particulars of Kowloon Inland Lot Number 9735.

<sup>3</sup> The name of the purchaser “Lau Tsung Tai” is the name shown in the following land records:

- (i) The Land Registry Office, Memorial No. 132620, dated 27 July 1932; and
- (ii) Public Records Office, “Assignment of Subsection 1 of Section A of Kowloon Inland Lot No. 611 situate at Kowloon in the Colony of Hong Kong”, dated 27 July 1932 (File Ref.: HKRS 265-11B-1008(2)).

<sup>4</sup> “New Houses for Kowloon. About 400 Flats to be Ready in August on Site of Chater Bungalow”, *Hong Kong Daily Press*, dated 29 April 1932.

were not sold in June 1933.<sup>5</sup> In 1935, the re-registration of the re-developed K.I.L. 611 was formally completed by the then Land Registry Office.<sup>6</sup> In a land record of the same year (1935), Lau Tsung-tai is also referred to as the sole registered owner of K.I.L. 611 S.A. ss. 1.<sup>7</sup> On 16 February 1937, she entered into a “Lease of Kowloon Inland Lot No. 3731” with the government. This Lease contains a plan showing that the location of K.I.L. 3731 was the same as the old lot K.I.L. 611 S.A. ss. 1 at No. 190 Nathan Road. The verandahs and balconies of the Building facing Nathan Road and Austin Road respectively were indicated on the plan.

According to oral history interviews conducted by Walk In Hong Kong in 2021 with Ms. Virginia Chan<sup>8</sup>, granddaughter of Lau Tsung-tai, the sole registered owner as of 1932 and continuing until 1967, Lau Tsung-tai, whose hometown was Taishan (台山) in Guangdong province, was the mother of seven children, including Henry Chan/Chin (陳耀南), William Chan/Chin (陳耀芳), George Koock (Chan/Chin Yow Ching) (陳耀正) and Florence Chan/Chin (陳琮鳳).<sup>9</sup> She ran a café in the United States where her children were born. In the late 1920s, she moved to Hong Kong with her family. She opened Café Evergreen (永青餐室) on the ground floor of the Building and the family lived on the upper floors.<sup>10</sup> The exact year when the café was opened could not be ascertained. However, Ms. Chan reminisced that most of the customers of the café were army officers, naval officers or sailors, all in uniform.<sup>11</sup> Separately, according to the newspapers of the years 1934 to 1936, a shop selling women’s clothing, known as “Messrs. Paul Rennet ET CIE” operated at Nos. 186 – 190 Nathan Road.<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> “Last of Charter’s Bungalow: Four Remaining Sites Put Up for Auction. No Offers Received”, *South China Morning Post*, 29 June 1933.

<sup>6</sup> Notification No. 890 dated 9 November 1935, *Hong Kong Government Gazette* dated 15 November 1935.

<sup>7</sup> Public Records Office, “C.S.O. 1315-1922, K.I.L. No. 611, Charter’s Bungalow - 1. Question of Government Acquiring the - 2. Proposed Purchase by the Military Authorities for Building Officers’ Mess 3. Development of - ”, dated 3 January 1922 to 6 January 1936, Enclosure 20 and the minute sheet dated 23 September 1935 on this enclosure (File Ref.: HKRS58-1-106-1).

<sup>8</sup> Appendix I to Walk In Hong Kong’s *Historic Building Appraisal Report for 190 Nathan Road*, Tsim Sha Tsui (June 2022) <[https://walkin.hk/wp-content/uploads/2022/06/190\\_Nathan\\_Assessment\\_Final\\_v2\\_20220604-1.pdf](https://walkin.hk/wp-content/uploads/2022/06/190_Nathan_Assessment_Final_v2_20220604-1.pdf)> uploaded on Walk In Hong Kong’s website on 5 June 2022.

<sup>9</sup> Walk In Hong Kong, *Historic Building Appraisal Report for 190 Nathan Road*, Tsim Sha Tsui (June 2022), p. 4, 8, 9 and 41.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid. p. 35.

<sup>11</sup> Walk In Hong Kong, *Historic Building Appraisal Report for 190 Nathan Road*, Tsim Sha Tsui (June 2022), p. 40.

<sup>12</sup> Sources:

(i) “Apartments to Let”, *South China Morning Post*, dated 15 December 1933;  
(ii) “PAUL RENNET ET CIE”, *South China Morning Post*, dated 11 April 1934; and

According to the Japanese Title Deed (家屋所有權登錄申請書) of the Building dated 1942, the ground floor was occupied by a shop and the upper three storeys were for residential use.<sup>13</sup> Lau Tsung-tai lived on the first floor at that time.<sup>14</sup> Ms Chan, aged around eight in 1944, recounted in the oral history interview that Café Evergreen served the Japanese army during the occupation period<sup>15</sup>, though no information about the shop can be identified from various documents, namely the Japanese Title Deed, a telephone directory printed in 1943 and any other government records available for inspection.<sup>16</sup>

Apart from having a café serving the Japanese army, according to the oral history interviews conducted by Walk In Hong Kong, the Building was related to the resistance of the local residents against the Japanese Occupation and that two of the sons of Lau Tsung-tai, the Building's owner, Henry Chan and William Chan, provided information for the British Army Aid Group (BAAG).<sup>17</sup>

According to the statements made by Chan Wai-mui (née Choy Wai-mui 蔡惠梅, widow of Henry Chan), William Chang (鄭維廉) and Lam Sik, who were among the witnesses at the trial of Inouye Kanao (井上加奈雄), a Japanese war criminal, held in an Ordinary Criminal Session in 1947 at the then Supreme Court of Hong Kong, testified that both Henry Chan and William Chan worked for William Chang. William Chang was a wireless technician in Hong Kong before the Japanese Occupation from 1941 to 1945. In July 1942, William Chang joined BAAG and served as its agent in Waichow (Huizhou). Around early 1943, William Chang instructed Henry Chan to build a radio

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(iii) "Local and General", *South China Morning Post*, dated 17 February 1936.

<sup>13</sup> Public Records Office, "K.I.L. 3731 (Japanese Title Deeds)" (File Ref.: HKRS57-6-9796). "地階商店" and "貳叁四階住宅" were mentioned in the record. It is also noted from this title deed that Nathan Road was renamed from "彌敦道" to "香取通" (literally meaning "fragrant thoroughfare").

<sup>14</sup> 「九龍第一號『密偵』，黎傑昨日公開受審：威廉陳慘遭毒斃」，《香港工商日報》，1946年4月5日。

<sup>15</sup> Walk In Hong Kong, *Historic Building Appraisal Report for 190 Nathan Road*, Tsim Sha Tsui (June 2022), p. 45.

<sup>16</sup> Other restaurants used by the Japanese in Tsim Sha Tsui, included the canteens designated for the Japanese army at Nos. 13 – 15 Hankow Road, Nos. 12A & 13 Humphrey's Building and No. 132 Chatham Road (all redeveloped). According to an intelligence summary prepared by BAAG, there was an "Army Canteen in Nathan Road", and about 300 Japanese could be seen every Sunday buying things there. Café Evergreen cannot be identified in the telephone directory printed in 1943. Queen's Café (皇后餐室) at No. 29 Nathan Road is the only café which appears in that directory. Evidence of the location of this "Army Canteen in Nathan Road" is yet to be available.

<sup>17</sup> BAAG was an underground resistance organisation, which was active against Japan in Hong Kong and South China during the Second World War. Also see p. 11 – 12 of Walk In Hong Kong, *Historic Building Appraisal Report for 190 Nathan Road*, Tsim Sha Tsui (June 2022).

transmitter. William Chang tested the transmitter and used it to convey, from Hong Kong to his BAAG comrades in Waichow, information about the Japanese, including Japanese troop and ship movements, ammunition dumps, anti-aircraft gun posts and bombing targets. Lam Sik helped Henry Chan tune up the transmitter. Henry Chan once told Lam Sik that the radio transmitter was for sale, and Lam Sik believed this because he knew that many people sold transmitters to Waichow at that time. Indeed, the radio transmitter which Henry Chan and Lam Sik built was itself later sent to Waichow. In 1943, Henry Chan was arrested by the Japanese. He was released in the same year, but died within a few days after the release.<sup>18</sup>

While the statements made by the above witnesses reveal that Henry Chan worked for BAAG, there was no other information about what he actually did in the Building, including whether the radio transmitter was built or used there, or whether the Building was used for observing Japanese military activities in the surroundings.

There is no information as to whether William Chan lived in the Building. However, at the trial of accused Japanese collaborator, Lai Kit (黎傑), Lau Tsung-tai and her daughter Florence Chan (William Chan's younger sister), stated that William Chan was arrested in the Building in June 1944 by Lai Kit, George Wong (黃佐治) and a man known as "Fatty Lau" (肥仔劉), secret detectives of the Japanese Gendarmerie (憲兵部特務密探), accusing William Chan of being a spy. William Chan returned to the Building in August 1944 and hid there, going out only at night; but he did not return after going out in March 1945. Later, in June 1945, Lau Tsung-tai was informed that William Chan was in Kwong Wah Hospital (廣華醫院). She visited him, finding that he was seriously injured. William passed away a few days later.<sup>19</sup>

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<sup>18</sup> Sources:

(i) Public Records Office, War Criminals – Inouye Kanao (File Ref. HKRS163-1-216), Enclosure 26(2), pp. 12 – 13; and  
(ii) "Collaboration Case: Witnesses Tell of Arrest and Torture", *South China Morning Post*, 5 December 1946.

<sup>19</sup> Sources:

(i) "Twelve Overt Acts: Detailed Charges Brought Against Lai Kit", *South China Morning Post*, 5 April 1946;  
(ii) "Woman's Trying Ordeal: Stripped Off Clothing and Given Water Torture", *South China Morning Post*, 30 May 1946;  
(iii) "Stories of Torture: Further Evidence Against Alleged Collaborator", *South China Morning Post*, 19 October 1946;  
(iv) "Collaboration Case: Witnesses Tell of Arrest and Torture", *South China Morning Post*, 5 December 1946;  
(v) "Collaboration Case: Complete Denial Made by Accused in Box", *South China Morning Post*, 6 December 1946;  
(vi) 「九龍第一號『密偵』，黎傑昨日公開受審：威廉陳慘遭毒斃」，《香港工商日報》，1946年4月5日；  
(vii) 「附敵案第三宗開審，黎傑暴行比敵更甚」，《華僑日報》，1946年4月5日。

As mentioned above, Chan Wai-mui (widow of Henry Chan, also referred as Choy Wai-mui) stated that her brother-in-law William Chan worked for William Chang who was an agent of BAAG. William Chan's granddaughter, Ms. Amy So, learnt from family members that her grandfather had a radio transmitter, camera and radio. He would lock himself in a room, not allowing anyone to enter. No one knew what he did in the room.<sup>20</sup> Nevertheless, it is believed that the radio set was associated with the transmission of secret information. The fact is that in July 1943, the Japanese government instructed owners of radio receiving sets to take them to the broadcasting station for testing and inspection. Those within the 545-200 metre wave length would be passed and permits issued, while others would be liable to confiscation.<sup>21</sup>

Some of the statements made by other witnesses reveal what kind of spying activities were carried out by other people. For instance, one stated that he had a short-wave receiving set to give wireless information about local movements of Japanese troops and shipping and the results of Allied bombing.<sup>22</sup> Others sold radio parts to BAAG agents and some sent weather reports by radio to Waichow. Some, like William Chang, conveyed information about Japanese troop and ship movements, ammunition dumps, etc. to Waichow.<sup>23</sup> However, no information of such activities is available with respect to Henry and William Chan.<sup>24</sup>

Café Evergreen continued to operate after the war. Other uses of the Building are known from old newspapers and oral history interviews.<sup>25</sup>

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<sup>20</sup> At other times, when hearing someone knock at the door, William would hide in the cockloft (used for the storage of rice and sugar) on the second floor of the Building. Ms. Chan saw her father reaching the cockloft by a wooden ladder, which he would then place in the cockloft until he wanted to leave it. Also see footnote 30 and p. 12, 39 and 40 of Walk In Hong Kong, *Historic Building Appraisal Report for 190 Nathan Road*, Tsim Sha Tsui (June 2022).

<sup>21</sup> Colonial Office, "Registration of Radio Sets", Secret Hong Kong: Situation in Enemy Occupied Hong Kong, C.O. 129/590/22, p. 22.

<sup>22</sup> Public Records Office, "Albert Edward Peveril Guest", War Criminals – Inouye Kanao (File Ref. HKRS163-1-216), Enclosure 26(2), p. 9.

<sup>23</sup> Public Records Office, "Lam Sik", War Criminals – Inouye Kanao (File Ref. HKRS163-1-216), Enclosure 26(2), p. 13.

<sup>24</sup> Henry Chan and William Chan both died before the end of the Second World War. Some court files were still classified as closed files and restricted from inspection at the time of this survey.

<sup>25</sup> The third floor of the Building was used at least once to organise an auction of goods, such as chairs, tables and cupboards ("Public Auction", *South China Morning Post*, 11 November 1945). At other times, a dental clinic operated on the third floor (*South China Morning Post*, 16 November 1945 and 4 February 1948, and p. 31 of Walk In Hong Kong, *Historic Building Appraisal Report for 190 Nathan Road*, Tsim Sha Tsui (June 2022)). Ms. Chan recounted that Lau Tsung-tai had sold candies and biscuits there and she mentioned that the married couple Cheung Ying and Mui Yee (both were film stars) once lived on the second floor. (p. 31 of Walk In Hong Kong, *Historic Building Appraisal Report for 190 Nathan Road*, Tsim Sha Tsui (June 2022))

In 1967, Lau Tsung-tai transferred the ownership of the Building to her son George Koock, alias Chin Yow-ching (陳耀正). In 1970 the Building was purchased by Kam Chan & Company Limited (錦燦有限公司), co-owned by a prominent entrepreneur Ma Kam-chan (馬錦燦) (1909 – 1984) and others. In 1972, the Building was sold to Tai Mau Company Limited (大懋有限公司), which was renamed Tai Sang Land Development Company (大生地產發展有限公司) in 1973 with Ma Kam-chan being its Chairman and Managing Director.<sup>26</sup> The Company held the Building for rental purposes. The ownership of the Building remains unchanged as of October 2022.

This four-storey Verandah Type Shophouse is located at the southeast corner of the junction of Austin and Nathan Roads so that its front and side elevations are very prominent. The Austin Road elevation has long balustraded balconies with rounded ends at each floor level with a matching typhoon canopy at parapet level. The parapet wall to the flat roof is decorated with vertical fins. There are two staircase bulkheads on the roof, one at each end. Windows and doors facing on to the balconies have moulded architraves. The bottom of the canopy and the balcony of each floor are decorated with mouldings. The front elevation facing Nathan Road features faux masonry columns and verandahs which have been enclosed by glazing. The parapet is in the same style as the side elevation and features a flagpole in the centre with a triangular shaped base. The faux masonry columns are also triangular shaped at the top. The rear elevation is rather plain with regularly spaced windows. The design of the exterior of the Building displays Art Deco and Neo-classical influences. The Building as a whole is an eclectic mix.

**Architectural Merit**

The social value of the Building to the community lies in the commercial role it has played in this busy part of Tsim Sha Tsui. Being situated on a prominent corner it is quite a well-known local landmark with some local interest.

**Social Value & Local Interest**

The Building is within walking distance of other historic buildings and structures, including the military buildings and structures at the Former Whitfield Barracks (前威菲路軍營, four barrack blocks and one battery), the Former Marine Police Headquarters Compound (前水警總部, Declared

**Group Value**

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<sup>26</sup> As a businessman, Ma was one of the leading market providers of warehousing spaces, cold storage and general godown services in Hong Kong between the 1950s and 1970s. He also founded the Tai Sang Bank in the 1930s. As a community leader, Ma served on the Board of Directors of the Tung Wah Group of Hospitals in 1948 and 1949, and was Chairman in 1951.

Monument), the Signal Tower at Blackhead Point (大包米訊號塔, Declared Monument), Rosary Church (玫瑰堂), St. Andrew's Church Compound (聖安德烈堂), the Former Kowloon British School (前九龍英童學校, Declared Monument), St. Mary's Canossian College (嘉諾撒聖瑪利書院), Kowloon Cricket Club (九龍木球會), the Ex-Portuguese Community School (Escola Camões) (前賈梅士學校), the Former Kowloon-Canton Railway Clock Tower (前九廣鐵路鐘樓, Declared Monument), and the Peninsula Hotel (半島酒店) etc. All serve as reminders of the important roles Tsim Sha Tsui has played in the development of the Kowloon Peninsula from the late nineteenth to the early twentieth centuries.

The Building is a surviving shophouse or residence in Tsim Sha Tsui with a direct relationship with the Japanese Occupation. Other buildings and locations in the area, also associated with the Japanese Occupation including the Former Whitfield Barracks, the Former Marine Police Headquarters Compound and the Peninsula Hotel were occupied by the Japanese army and navy for military and administrative purposes.

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

The Building was designed with Western-style decorative features which is quite rare for a shophouse. However, its authenticity has been severely affected due to extensive alterations and spatial re-organisations, including change of internal layout, removal of partition walls, replacement of original windows and doors with modern ones, modern shop frontages, removal of old servant staircases and construction of new concrete staircases with balustrades. In addition, the access to the staircase facing Nathan Road from the ground floor has been rearranged to the rear of the Building to maximise the shop frontage facing Nathan Road. The new connection corridor of the staircase to the new access entrance/exit formed at the rear of the Building was also constructed at the original open backyard.

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**Historic Building Appraisal**  
**Wan Chai Fire Station**  
**435 Hennessy Road, Wan Chai, H.K.**

The Wan Chai Fire Station, situated at 435 Hennessy Road, was purposely designed and built for fire-fighting purposes with the provision of an appliance room, offices, stores, ancillary accommodation, an open drill yard, and a hose drying and drill tower. It was constructed between 1940 and 1941. Construction was however interrupted by the Japanese occupation, which began in December 1941, so no official records show its opening date. *Historical Interest*

Since the establishment of the Hong Kong Fire Brigade in 1868, Fire Brigade Station (滅火局) or Engine House (水車館) had been set up in Wan Chai to provide fire protection services to the eastern part of the Hong Kong Island mainly by using manual fire pumps on carts. To accommodate new motorised fire engines, a new Wan Chai Fire Station was built in December 1921. It was a temporary one to accommodate 20 firemen, converted from an old cinema shed on newly reclaimed land at the intersection of O'Brien Road and Johnston Road. Equipped with a 50-foot hose drying and drill tower, the station was later demolished to make way for road developments. Another temporary fire station was erected at Thomson Road in 1932. However, the space was so small that it had to take up part of the space in the newly constructed No. 2 Police Station on Gloucester Road to accommodate its garage as well as the hose drying and drill tower. The tower was erected in the police station compound where the annual fire brigade display took place. For administrative considerations, Wan Chai Fire Station was renamed Eastern Fire Station (東區消防局) in 1937 to highlight its geographical location as the most easterly fire station on Hong Kong Island. This consideration no longer applied in 1967, when Eastern Fire Station was redesignated Wan Chai Fire Station to clarify the main district it was responsible for.

As the war was approaching in the late 1930s, the Government expected increasing demand for war-related emergencies and fire services in the war period. The Auxiliary Fire Services was founded in 1938 to provide supplementary manpower support to the regular fire brigade. The whole of the Wan Chai Fire Station was then designated to serve as the headquarters for the Auxiliary Fire Services. Therefore, plans for a new Wan Chai Fire Station at the junction of Hennessy Road and Canal Road East were drawn up in 1939 to accommodate the regular fire brigade. The construction, at an estimated cost of \$110,000, was carried out by Cheong Hing Co, starting at the end of 1940. The war journal of John Charter (1912-1989), an architect in the Public Works Department, who had been working for some 18 months or more on the design of the new Wan Chai Fire Station and was subsequently interned by the

Japanese at the Stanley Civilian Internment Camp, mentions the following about the new fire station:

*“This was nearing completion, but most of the fittings ordered from England, such as the sliding folding electrical door gear, all door furniture for the upstairs doors, sanitary fittings, etc. were six to nine months overdue and the job was not completed before war began.<sup>1</sup> It was quite heavily shelled by the Japanese from Kowloon, across the harbour, during the war as it was being used, despite its unfinished condition, by the Fire Brigade. I have not seen it since the war but I hear the Japanese have now finished it off somehow and have established it as the fire station for the Eastern District, as it was intended to be used.*

*It makes me smile, somewhat ruefully, when I think of the time and trouble that I spent designing the first floor to support the weight of the superstructure in case it was hit by a bomb during the war. The idea was, that though the upper stories might collapse, the fire engines in the appliance room below would not be damaged and the station could still be operated. As it happened, all the fire engines during the war were kept out of the fire stations, chiefly because they were in continual use, but also because the Japs seemed to know just where the stations were, and it was safer to keep the engines in side streets, under trees etc.”<sup>2</sup>*

During the Japanese occupation, the development of the Hong Kong Fire Brigade was suspended because of the loss of manpower and equipment. However, fire services continued to be offered by the Gendarmerie Fire Brigade under Japanese rule, and a fire team was set up in Wan Chai district. The newly built Wan Chai Fire Station was believed to have been used throughout the period. After the war, the fire station resumed normal operation and became one of the venues to run initial training courses for sub-officers, firemen and fire engine drivers between 1959 and 1961.

Since it was built, the fire station has occupied a strategic and prominent location, which ensures a swift response to fire calls. Its front entrance is on Hennessy Road, an important thoroughfare that connects Queensway at its west end and Causeway Bay at its east end. Besides, it was built along and almost at the north end of Bowrington Canal, which was later covered. Another important thoroughfare, namely Canal Road Flyover, which currently connects Aberdeen Tunnel to the Cross-Harbour Tunnel, was then built over the Bowrington Canal.

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<sup>1</sup> The war refers to the Japanese invaded Hong Kong in December 1941.

<sup>2</sup> Anthony Crowley Charter, *The First Shall Be Last*, UK: Grosvenor House Publishing Ltd, 2018. pp. 56-57.

The year 1960 marked a milestone in the development of the Hong Kong Fire Brigade. The then Deputy Colonial Secretary, David Trench (1915-1988) was appointed to look into the problem of the Hong Kong Fire Brigade. He compiled a report, namely Trench Report which radically reorganised the fire brigade and called for a 10-year phased development. One of his concerns was about the accommodation needs for on-duty staff. To echo with such an initiative on staff accommodation, a policy of departmental quarters for senior fire officers at each major station was further proposed by the Chief Officer of Fire Brigade, one of which was Wan Chai Fire Station. Therefore, major renovations were carried out in Wan Chai Fire Station from 1966 to 1967 to provide five additional quarters to house one station officer and four assistant station officers on the second and third floors of the fire station. To cater for the changing operational needs, the quarters on the second floor were later changed to an office and recreation area.

The Wan Chai Fire Station was designed by John Charter of the Public Works Department, who also designed Queen's College in Causeway Bay, and the East and Central Wings of the Central Government Offices after the war. He was promoted to head of the Government Architectural Office in 1959. *Architectural Merit*

Situated at the junction of Hennessy Road and Canal Road East, Wan Chai Fire Station is accessible from Hennessy Road and Lockhart Road via the folding gates of the appliance room and the back doors respectively. Built with brick and reinforced concrete, the fire station comprises a four-storey main building facing Hennessy Road, a one-storey annex block along Canal Road East forming a L-shape plan, and an open drill yard facing Lockhart Road. It is modernist architecture, adopting a humble and functional design, featuring a cubic external appearance, emphasising the horizontal elements, namely the overhang projections, balconies and a simple stringcourse running around the wall surfaces. Its simple form with regular window and door fenestration can be seen in a photo taken from Bowrington Canal looking north in 1941.

It is a four-bay fire station. The ground floor of the main building is dominated by the appliance room facing Hennessy Road, which accommodates four fire engines and is equipped with automatic folding gates, with the original granite thresholds still retained. As it was constructed not long before the Japanese occupation, its structure on the ground floor was specifically designed to take the load of the superstructure should it collapse if hit by a bomb. Such a feature was also covered in a news report on 11 March 1941, describing the almost completed Wan Chai Fire Station.<sup>3</sup> Adjoining

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<sup>3</sup> "New Fire Engines – Latest Type Appliances Expected Shortly – For Wanchai Station", *South China*

the appliance room is the office and watch room. The upper floors contain a mess room, a kitchen, dormitories for firemen and station officers, offices for the station commander and clerical staff, a gym, a meeting room, a laundry and drying room, and married quarters. There are two sets of sliding poles from the upper floors to each end of the appliance room. The annex block houses various stores. On one side of the drill yard is a hose drying and drill tower, and there are two vehicle accesses to the fire station from Lockhart Road.

The fire station has undergone several additions and alterations over the years to cater for operational needs. For instance, the original teak doors for the fire engine bays were replaced by new folding gates. Two pedestrian access points to the main building on Hennessy Road and Canal Road East were enclosed in the 1980s for the alteration and expansion of the office and watch room. Most of the windows were replaced by modern windows, and all the original French doors on the first floor balcony were replaced by windows, which removed balcony access. The major alterations undertaken between 1966 and 1967 for additional quarters on the second and third floors removed the original staircase on the third floor corridor to the roof terrace, and a new staircase was added on the third floor at the existing stair well to give access to the roof terrace. Besides, part of the original corridors on the second and third floors, and flat roof on the second floor were enclosed to form new interior spaces for these alterations. The sliding pole leading down from the dormitory on the first floor to the east end of the appliance room is believed to have been added after the late 1960s.

Despite the above renovations to the interior of the fire station, notable features have been retained, including the drill yard together with the steel hose drying and drill tower erected thereon, which is the only existing steel tower still in use in the fire stations in Hong Kong. Also retained, to the west end of the appliance room, is the earliest set of sliding poles made of brass among all the existing fire stations, instead of stainless steel which is now commonly used. Besides, the setting of an engine bay with the original granite thresholds also remains.

The social value of Wan Chai Fire Station lies mainly in its long-term service to society. Since the station is situated in an area with very convenient transport, its service has not been confined to the Wan Chai district. It has extended to Kowloon and even the New Territories, making it one of the busiest fire stations in Hong Kong. The prominent location also turned it into a well-known local landmark and it is dubbed the “Goose Neck Bridge Fire Station” (鵝頸橋消防局).

***Social Value and Local Interest***

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*Morning Post*, 11 March 1941.



In order to avoid affecting daily operations, the fire station is generally not open to the public. Its accessible location and iconic building form, with its red folding gates abutting Hennessy Road and the steel drill tower at the rear of the fire station often arouse curiosity and attract attention from the public and tourists to take pictures of them.

To pray for protection during dangerous work, firemen conduct “worship of the hose drying and drill tower” (拜喉架), which is a popular ritual in fire stations, including Wan Chai Fire Station on occasions like greeting newcomers, celebrating promotions and important traditional Chinese festivals such as Lunar New Year, the Dragon Boat Festival and the Mid-autumn Festival. The worship of Kwan Tai (關帝) is also common in fire stations.

Wan Chai Fire Station is within walking distance of other graded historic buildings, such as St. Paul’s Convent Church, Sheng Kung Hui St. Mary’s Church, the Old Wan Chai Police Station and No. 6 Stewart Road. ***Group Value***

Wan Chai Fire Station, a massive four-storey reinforced concrete structure of modernist and functional design, is the longest-serving fire station in Hong Kong. Prior to 1958, no standard specifications were set for the design of fire stations. Nevertheless, fire stations have two common architectural features – an open drill yard and covered appliance bays – and the Wan Chai Fire Station is no exception. Wan Chai Fire Station is one of the two surviving fire stations with an early unconventional design and still in its original use. Another one is Mong Kok Fire Station, which has been in service since 1953. The Wan Chai Fire Station retains considerable authenticity, as the original structure and integrity in design remain intact. ***Rarity, Built Heritage Value & Authenticity***

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**Historic Building Appraisal**  
**Ex-Office Building of Sha Tin Rural Committee,**  
**No. 248 Pai Tau, Sha Tin, N.T.**

The ex-office building of the Sha Tin Rural Committee (沙田鄉事委員會) (the *Historical Interest* “ex-office building”) was built at Pai Tau near the Sha Tin Station along the Kowloon-Canton Railway in 1949. The building was named “沙田鄉公所” in Chinese (literally the Sha Tin Rural Office) when it was built. It was the first building of its kind to serve as a rural office, specifically for the Sha Tin Rural Committee.

In the past, Sha Tin was divided into nine *yeuks* according to its districts. Before World War II, the only village alliance that existed in Sha Tin was the “nine *yeuks*” (九約, literally the alliance of nine).<sup>1</sup> The “nine *yeuks*” did not have a fixed meeting place and would meet at Che Kung Temple in Sha Tin when an occasion arose.

Hong Kong after the war was in dire need of reconstruction. John Barrow, the then District Officer of the New Territories, mobilised villagers in the New Territories to set up their own village groups and encourage the election of their own representatives to deal with village matters. With the enthusiastic response and participation of Sha Tin village elders such as Ng Din Ping (吳殿平), Tsang Kwong Yan (曾廣仁) and Lau Sui Sau (劉水秀), etc., the Sha Tin Rural Committee was established in 1947. It marked the beginning of a new chapter for village governance in the region. Ng Din Ping was elected as the first Chairman of the Committee.

At the beginning, the Sha Tin Rural Committee used a premises which was once a *Kui Yik Soh* (區役所) during the Japanese Occupation, and later rented a village house in Pai Tau to serve as its temporary office. The functions then were mainly distribution of food items such as rice, sugar and oil to villagers for relief. In 1949, through a support initiative by Barrow, the Government granted a piece of land at the present site of No. 248 Pai Tau as the permanent office of the Sha Tin Rural Committee.

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<sup>1</sup> Nine *Yeuk* (九約), i.e. alliance of nine groups of villages, included Tai Wai *Yeuk* (大圍約), Tin Sam *Yeuk* (田心約), Keng Hau *Yeuk* (徑口約), Pai Tau *Yeuk* (排頭約), Kak Tin *Yeuk* (隔田約), Fo Tan *Yeuk* (火炭約), Sha Tin Tau *Yeuk* (沙田頭約), Sha Tin Wai *Yeuk* (沙田圍約) and Siu Lek Yuen *Yeuk* (小瀝源約).

The ex-office building of the Sha Tin Rural Committee was designed by the then District Officer South, James Wakefield. According to a newspaper report in 1949, the building consisted of a rural office, a reception room and a maternity home.<sup>2</sup> The construction costs amounted to \$25,000, of which \$4,000 came from the Government, \$6,000 from the Chinese Temples Committee, and the rest raised by villagers. Construction works were completed in May 1949 and a grand opening ceremony was held on 12 July in the same year, officiated by John Barrow and with the attendance of a few hundred guests. In his address, Barrow remarked, “whereas in the past, villagers could approach District Offices directly, now with the establishment of the rural committees and their elected members, when problems arise, the rural committees could help villagers liaise with District Offices for solutions.”<sup>3</sup> It shows that the main function of the rural committees was to serve as a channel of communication between the Government and the people.

Later, the succeeding Chairman of the Committee, Ng Chung Chi (吳松熾) made further plans to construct additional wings to the left and right of the main building. Construction was completed in October 1960 with the west wing housed an office on the ground floor and the Chairman’s office on the first floor, while the east wing served as a public clinic. As to the original main building, it was used as meeting rooms and Government offices to diversify the services provided at the Sha Tin Rural Office.

The Chinese name of the “沙田鄉公所” was changed to “沙田鄉事委員會” in 1978. In 2016, its office moved to No. 13 Pai Tau Street, while the old building near the Sha Tin Station has since been left vacant.

Situated on a raised platform built of granite stone blocks, the ex-office building comprises a main building, two extension wings and a detached storeroom, all of which were constructed of reinforced concrete. There are two flights of steps, one on the left side and one on the right side of the raised platform, leading from street level to the small front yard of the building. The original concrete rectangular railings enclosing the front yard are still largely intact.

*Architectural Merit*

The design of the one-storey main building is simple and functional in a rectangular plan. The stepped parapet along the roof end of the front facade is inscribed with the name of the building in both English and Chinese – “SHATIN RURAL COMMITTEE” and “沙田鄉事委員會”. Three flag poles are evenly

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<sup>2</sup> 〈建築沙田鄉公所 加強治安措施〉，《華僑日報》，1949年1月21日。

<sup>3</sup> 〈新界民政署長 協助沙田居民 解決生活困難〉，《香港工商日報》，1949年7月13日。

spaced behind the stepped parapet. A flat-roofed porch at the front façade is supported by square columns forming arches on both sides. At the rear is a row of toilets and kitchen separated from the main building with a long and narrow lightwell in between. On the roof, a chimney stack can be seen at the rear eastern end. A segmental pediment-like structure is found along the back of the stepped parapet.

Two extension wings were added to both sides of the main building in 1960. Both wings are two-storey high with a pitched roof. Timber rafters, purlins and tiled roof can be seen in the west wing, while the east wing has been replaced by corrugated metal roofing. The Chinese name of the building is inscribed on the gable wall of the east wing, such that people from the direction of Pai Tau Village can recognise the building easily. The main building and the two extension wings are connected on the ground floor. The roof of the main building is accessible from the first floor of each of the two extension wings.

The present layout has the meeting room occupying the whole ground floor of the main building except a room for the Chairman at the north eastern corner. The toilets and kitchen remain in the rear. Both floors of the extension wings serve as office area. Apart from the main entrance which gives access to the main building through the porch, there are also entrances on both side elevations of the extension wings.

There is a small detached single-storey storeroom, which was added during the extensions in 1960, on the west side of the main building.

From a social perspective, the ex-office building had served as a hub for a wide range of services for the local community since it was built in 1949. In earlier times after the Sha Tin Rural Committee was established, it mainly helped villagers to resume farming after the war and played the role of arbitrator for issues such as marital and property disputes. Later it took up social welfare functions such as providing shelter and food to the needy in times of natural disaster, setting up the Fook Tak Association (福德會, literally association for welfare and virtue) to provide relief funds, providing funding for the construction of a market, a public school, and even a fire station for the benefit of Sha Tin residents.

***Social Value  
and Local  
Interest***

In its early days, the Sha Tin Rural Office played a pivotal role in the provision of Government services. Staff from various Government departments were deployed to the Rural Office to provide public services to the villagers during different periods of time. These services included the application for identity cards and birth certificates, dog licensing and free rabies vaccinations, etc. In 1971,

working in tandem with the newly enacted Marriage Reform Ordinance (the implementation of monogamous marriages), the Government set up marriage registries in various rural offices in the New Territories to facilitate marriage registration for villagers. The east wing of the Sha Tin Rural Office was once used as a marriage registry. The Sha Tin Rural Office in earlier times provided a convenient venue for villagers to complete procedures and formalities as required by the Government, like the Government Offices of today.

A maternity home was already in place at the ex-office building on its completion in 1949, followed by an all-purpose clinic in 1951. Medical services as well as prenatal check-ups for pregnant women and childcare services were provided. These public health services ceased when a new clinic and maternity home were opened at the present site of the Sha Tin (Tai Wai) Clinic in 1965.

The construction of the ex-office building marked the first step in village governance as it provided a permanent home for the Sha Tin Rural Committee. The building, which still survive today, was the first of its kind to implement a new kind of village administration in the post-war era. The building was a testament to the joint efforts of the Government and the Sha Tin community in strengthening communication and cooperation in relation to village matters.

The ex-office building is within walking distance of other graded historic buildings, such as Nos. 5A, 5B, 5C and 6 Pai Tau and Lam Ancestral Hall. ***Group Value***

The ex-office building is the first and the oldest surviving building purposely built as a rural office in the late 1940s, which bears witness to the development of the rural committees in the New Territories. ***Rarity,  
Built Heritage  
Value &  
Authenticity***

It is a simple utilitarian building. The front central porch of the main building, together with its stepped parapet inscribed with the name of the office, are iconic architectural features of the building. They served as an important backdrop for the photographing of important events over the years, such as the opening ceremony and inauguration ceremony of the Sha Tin Rural Committee.

The ex-office building retains much of its authenticity in terms of overall appearance, despite some alterations carried out over the years. These include installing metal railings on top of the original concrete rectangular railings and the raised platform, replacing the original windows and doors with modern ones, turning the original doorways on the front façade of each of the two extension wings into windows, and replacing the roof of the east wing with corrugated metal sheeting.



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## Historic Building Appraisal

### No. 113 Bonham Strand, Sheung Wan, H.K.

Bonham Strand was named after Sir Samuel George Bonham (1803-1863), the third *Historical Interest* Governor of Hong Kong. After a great fire in the Sheung Wan district on 28 December 1851, Governor Sir George Bonham ordered the burnt bricks and debris to be used for land reclamation. Bonham Strand and Bonham Strand West came into being after this reclamation. Bonham Strand was close to the jetties and piers for loading and unloading goods; for instance, the famous historic “Wing Lok Pier” (永樂碼頭, 俗稱「三角碼頭」) was located at the junction of Wing Lok Street and Des Voeux Road West. Hence, the area attracted many traders and merchants to set up their businesses, and became the centre of Nam Pak Hongs (南北行) and Kam Shan Chongs (金山莊).

The building at No. 113 Bonham Strand is situated on Marine Lot No. 158, Section A, which was subdivided from Marine Lot No. 158 in 1911. The first owner of the lot was Foong Tung (馮桐) but he sold it to Li Ying (李煥) in 1912. There is no new sales record since 1912 and the lot is now still in the name of Li Ying, although he must already be deceased. The whole building is occupied by a tea shop, namely “Pang Yu Tai” (彭裕泰) or “Pang Yu Tai Lung Kee” (彭裕泰隆記).<sup>1</sup>

The current building on the lot was rebuilt between 1930 and 1931. A covenant relating to a scavenger lane and a balcony undertaking<sup>2</sup> were signed between Li Ying and the Government in January and April 1930 respectively, likely during the planning stages for the new building. The plan attached to the covenant shows the footprint of the building, which is the same as the building today. The rates collection book records that rates collection stopped from the second quarter of 1930, and resumed only in the third quarter of 1931. This proves that the existing building was completed no later than the third quarter of 1931.

“Pang Yu Tai”, the tea merchant as well as general importer and exporter that still operates under the same name, set up the shop at the present location as early as 1909, as

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<sup>1</sup> According to a notice published in the Hong Kong Government Gazette of 1893, “Pang Yu Tai” is also known as “Pang Yu Tai Lung Kee”.

<sup>2</sup> Balcony undertaking was signed as a requirement between building owners and the Government, which requires owner to upkeep the balconies in good condition and to remove them if they became dangerous to the pedestrians, as balconies are usually projected over government land. A scavenger lane covenant took effect along with the No. 1 Public Health and Building Ordinance enacted in 1903, which requires the building owner to reserve a lane behind the subject building and another building on the back, so as to allow ventilation, light and night soil collector to access. The undertaking and covenant are signed before completion of the building to ensure that the regulations are followed.

indicated by a newspaper advertisement in *The Chinese Mail* placed by the shop that year. Hence, the shop has been in operation at No.113 Bonham Strand for more than a century. However, the brand has an even longer history. The first mention of the brand can be traced to the Annual Report of the Tung Wah Hospital (徵信錄) in 1885. It shows that “Pang Yu Tai” made a donation of five dollars to the Hospital. “Pang Yu Tai” was formally registered as a tea merchant as early as 1893 according to the Hong Kong Government Gazette, and its lion logo was trademarked by 1909.

Besides trading teas, “Pang Yu Tai” also operated as a Kam Shan Chong, as described in a shop directory published in 1915. The advertisement in *The Chinese Mail* states that their products were “famous at home and abroad”, thus indicating that the tea products of “Pang Yu Tai” were also exported overseas. The appearance on the market of counterfeit Pang Yu Tai’s products shows the brand’s popularity among locals.

In the 1960s, the address of the cockloft and the second floor were registered as the contact address of a film arts association and an accountant respectively. It is noted that the person-in-charge of each business was surnamed Li. However, it has not been possible to ascertain whether these two persons belonged to the Li family of “Pang Yu Tai”, as no more information is available.

The architect of the current building was Messrs. Clark & Iu Architects, which was set up in 1924, with John Caer Clark (1877-1942) and Iu Tak Chung (1896-1933) as partners. John Caer Clark came to Hong Kong and worked for the Public Works Department. He set up his own practice in 1913 and designed No. 1 Chatham Path, which was used as his private residence and then the Chatham English School. Iu Tak Chung, one of the earliest Chinese architects in Hong Kong, was a graduate of the University of Hong Kong as well as directors of the Tung Wah Group of Hospitals and the Po Leung Kuk. One of his works was the Main Building of the Po Leung Kuk at Causeway Bay.

***Architectural  
Merit***

The building at No. 113 Bonham Strand is four stories high with a flat roof. As recorded in the Title Deed of House Registration Office of the Japanese Military Government in 1943, the building was constructed of reinforced concrete. On the roof, there is a parapet finished with cement lime render with a curved silhouette moulding. All the balconies on the upper floors are cantilevered and project over the pavement on Bonham Strand. Formerly, the edges of the balconies were moulded in cyma recta style, but they have now been changed to plain flat surface. The balustrades on the first, second and third floors have been replaced by stainless steel rods and chains, while the old wooden fanlights and doors open onto the balconies still remain in place.

A metal shutter gate encloses the entrance of the shop. Shanghai plaster finish can be found above the gate with the shop name, “彭裕泰” painted in red on a white background and a green frame. The door number, “No. 113” painted in red on either side of the shop name. A pair of wooden doors to the shopfront is located in the midst of two wooden framed glazed windows, the lower part of which are decorated with floral tiles. Above the wooden doors and windows, mirror plaques are embedded. The middle panel bears the name of the shop, the left panel has “wholesale” in Chinese (批發), both in golden colour, while the right panel is plain. Photos of the interior from the late 2010s show that the shop setting is that of a traditional Chinese tea shop. Inside the shop, a row of hardwood cupboards was built along the walls. A mirror plaque with the Chinese shop name and the lion trademark in golden colour was hung on the middle wall. Reinforced concrete slabs can be observed on and around the ceiling.

On the roof of the building, a chimney stack can be seen, with a small concrete structure probably a store room adjacent to it. It can be observed from the roof of the adjacent building that there is a small enclosed backyard, most likely accessible only from within the shop.

According to the Hong Kong Miscellanea (《香港雜記》) published in 1894, there were around twenty tea traders in Hong Kong at the time. Today, the number has increased to around 115 registered tea traders and sellers in Hong Kong. However, there are only a few remaining century-old brands, “Pang Yu Tai” being one of them. Ying Kee (英記), Yiu Yeung (堯陽) and Ngan Ki Heung (顏奇香) are a few other examples. “Pang Yu Tai” testifies to the development of Kam Shan Chong business and tea trade in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century Hong Kong. Nowadays, Pang Yu Tai’s tea tins, tea boxes, wrapping paper and memorabilia can be found amongst the collections of local and overseas museums, which stands as a testimony to the brand’s value in the Hong Kong tea trade as well as among Chinese emigrants to Europe and North America. The four-storey pre-war building is itself distinctive in the area, as most of the buildings in bustling Sheung Wan have already been redeveloped into high-rise buildings.

***Social Value  
and Local  
Interest***

There are several monuments and historic buildings nearby. They include Western Market, Man Mo Temple Compound, Old Pathological Institute (all Declared Monuments), No. 112 Jervois Street, No. 120 Wellington Street, Nos. 172-176 Queen’s Road Central, No. 1 Queen’s Road West, Nos. 26A-C Graham Street, No. 60 Hollywood Road, No. 62 Hollywood Road, Main Block of Tung Wah Hospital, Kwong Fook I Tsz, Bridges Street Market and Former Married Police Quarters.

***Group Value***

The building has operated as “Pang Yu Tai” tea shop for over 90 years. Having a ***Rarity,***

century-old local brand is a rarity in itself, and it is even rarer to see a century-old brand operating at the same location for more than one hundred years. Although the old metal balustrades of the upper floors have been changed to steel bars and chains, the original appearance of the building has been kept in a rather authentic condition.

***Built  
Heritage  
Value &  
Authenticity***

This type of pre-war shophouse is becoming rare. The building has survived surrounding developments over the decades, and stands to witness the development of the overseas trade in early Hong Kong.



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**Historic Building Appraisal**  
**No. 20 High Street, Sai Ying Pun, H.K.**

High Street is situated on a slope above First, Second and Third Street in Sai Ying Pun. It is also referred to as Fourth Street. The street first appeared on a map from 1859, which depicted the street with dashed lines, meaning the street was proposed to be formed. Records show that the street was proposed to be named High Street in 1860, and land sales for the street began in 1861. *Historical Interest*

No. 20 High Street is located on Inland Lot No. 6488, but the lot was known as Inland Lot No. 690 Section D Subsection 1 before 2015. There used to be a building without back yard nor scavenger lane at this location in 1913, as detailed on an indenture of sale of the lot. In 1926, when the building on the lot was in the process of being rebuilt, the owners of the lot signed a scavenger lane covenant with the Government, attaching a plan showing the current footprint of the building. It was also recorded in the rates collection book that rates were not collected from 1 July 1925 until 1 July 1927. Hence, it is believed that the existing building on No. 20 High Street was completed in July 1927 at the earliest.

Land records show that before 1927, the lot belonged to Chan Lai Hing (陳麗馨) and Chu Kam Ying (徐錦英). In January 1927, which is likely before the completion of the building, the lot was sold to Lam Yat Hing (林日卿 or 林逸興), who died in 1941. The lot and building were then inherited by Lam Yuen (林源 alias Lam Ching 林滢) and Lam Sing Hoi (林星海) in 1949.

Little is known about the Lam family. It has been found that a Lam Sing Hoi was the Divisional or District Air Raid Warden of the Western Division who was mobilised in 1940, but it is not certain whether he is the same Lam Sing Hoi as the property owner. However, it is certain that the owner Lam Sing Hoi returned to mainland China and was a Chinese medicine trader during the Japanese Occupation, as shown in a letter of authorisation attached to the Title Deed of the House Registration Office of the Japanese Military Government in 1943.

The architect of the building, as indicated on the above-mentioned scavenger lane covenant, was Denison, Ram & Gibbs Architects, a famous architectural firm in Hong Kong responsible for building some of the territory's monuments and graded buildings, such as the Helena May in Garden Road, Eliot Hall and May Hall at the University of Hong Kong, and Matilda Hospital on the Peak. *Architectural Merit*

It was observed in 1943 and recorded in the Title Deed of the Japanese Occupation that the four-storey building was constructed of reinforced concrete and timber. Bricks can also be observed in some of the main walls. Half of a semi-circular parapet wall can be seen at the roof level, decorated with Greek key pattern. This indicates that the building used to be symmetrical with the adjacent No. 18 High Street, which however has already been rebuilt. The building has recessed balconies on the upper floors. On the left hand side of the roof parapet wall, there is a vase-shaped decoration. A chimney stack is observable at the back. There is also a narrow scavenger lane observable at the back of the building, with access to adjacent buildings blocked off, as well as an enclosed backyard, both are typical features of tenement houses built after the enactment of the Public Health and Buildings Ordinance in 1903.

According to the Title Deed of the Japanese Occupation, the building was used for residential purposes, although from photos of the recent past, it can be seen that the ground floor has also been used for shops. Currently, the ground floor shop is separated from the first, second and third floors. The two areas use different entrances, and a wooden and brick wall has been built between the ground floor shop and the staircase leading to the upper floors. The old wooden staircase has been retained, but the top has been covered with an extra layer of material for durability and safety.

A granite threshold can be observed at the main entrance. Original floor tiles are found on both the second and third floors, while the first floor has been repaved with wooden planks. The balconies were fitted with new metal balustrades in 2018, when the current owner acquired the building. Meanwhile, the French doors and windows leading out to the balconies have not been modified except for having been painted white. There is a metal ladder leading up to the flat roof at the end of the corridor on the third floor.

The building at No. 20 High Street is one of the examples of the surviving pre-war tenement houses in Sai Ying Pun. It is easily distinguishable from the surrounding buildings due to the delicate design of the façade.

***Social Value  
and Local  
Interest***

There are a number of historic buildings within walking distance. Along High Street are the Facade of the Old Mental Hospital (Declared Monument), Tsung Tsin Mission of Hong Kong Kau Yan Church, Main Building and Staff Quarters of Old Lunatic Asylum Chinese Block. Located somewhat further away are the Main Building and Annex Block of Old Tsan Yuk Maternity Hospital, Second Street Public Bathhouse and Western Magistracy on the First Street. Other buildings within walking distance include Main Building of St. Stephen's Girls' College, King's College, Bonham Road Government Primary School, a cluster of historic buildings at the

***Group Value***

University of Hong Kong, including Main Building, Hung Hing Ying Building, Tang Chi Ngong Building, Fung Ping Shan Building, Eliot Hall and May (all Declared Monuments), No. 4 Hospital Road, 35 Bonham Road, Old Upper Levels Police Station, Front Block of Chinese Rhenish Church and Caritas Ling Yuet Sin Kindergarten.

This type of pre-war tenement house is becoming rare. It bears witness to the history and development of Sai Ying Pun. Even though the top floors of the building have been adapted for modern use, having been converted into serviced apartments since 2018, architectural features such as the parapet wall, roof decoration, granite threshold at main entrance, old wooden staircase, old floor tiles and period French doors on the upper floors can still be seen today.

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

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## Historic Building Appraisal

### Staff Quarters E (N424)

### Staff Quarters F (N425)

### Chung Chi College, The Chinese University of Hong Kong, Sha Tin, N.T.

In early 1950s, Hong Kong experienced rapid growth in population and economy, resulting in an acute demand for tertiary education.<sup>1</sup> Recognising the need, Dr. Lee Ying-lin (李應林博士) (former President of Lingnan University in Guangzhou) (前廣州嶺南大學校長) (1892 – 1954),<sup>2</sup> Bishop R.O. Hall of Sheng Kung Hui (聖公會何明華會督) (1895 – 1975), Dr. E.E. Walline (華連博士) (representative of the American Presbyterian Church in Hong Kong) (美國聯合長老會駐港代表) (unknown – 1965), Mr. David W.K. Au (歐偉國先生) (1899 – 1959) (former Chairman of the Board of Governors of St. John's University in Shanghai) (前上海聖約翰大學校董會主席) and others decided to establish a local institution of higher education that would follow the Christian traditions of the thirteen Christian universities and colleges in Mainland China where graduates of secondary schools in Hong Kong had used to continue their studies before 1949. In August 1951, Bishop Hall submitted an application to the Government for permission to establish a Chung Chi College on a trial basis, i.e. to open temporary evening classes in Arts and Science for one year, using Chinese as the main medium of instruction. Permission was granted in the same month.<sup>3</sup>

**Historical  
Interest**

Chung Chi College (崇基學院) (“Chung Chi” literally meaning “to worship Christ”) (the “College” hereafter) was opened in October 1951. “止於至善” taken from Confucius, literally meaning “cease striving only after the highest has been attained” or “dedication to the highest”, is the motto of the College. Dr. Lee Ying-lin served as the first President (1951 – 1954). In the beginning, the College taught classes in borrowed and rented premises, namely

<sup>1</sup> Prior to 1949, many of the senior graduates from the secondary schools in Hong Kong went to Mainland China to seek higher education, including the 13 Christian universities. However, after the political change in 1949, those Christian universities were transformed into institutions no longer Christian. With the door to the Mainland closed, an institution of Christian higher education was thought to be badly needed by the founders of Chung Chi College. The founders aimed at establishing a Christian university in Hong Kong to take the place of those 13 Christian universities. It was also said that the Government wanted to increase the opportunities of graduates from Chinese-medium secondary schools in receiving tertiary education.

<sup>2</sup> Dr. Lee Ying-lin, for 15 years by 1951, was President of Lingnan University in Guangzhou.

<sup>3</sup> In the College, English was used as a second language and for convenience. To the College's founders, English is a useful language for everyday life; however, the College's purpose was to be a centre of Chinese culture and of Chinese ways of thinking and living and of serving one another. The founders also hoped that the College would fill a gap in the educational system, providing advanced education to graduates of Chinese-speaking schools.



St. Paul's Co-educational College at No. 33 MacDonnell Road (in the evenings); the Social Hall (formerly also known as "Cathedral Hall" and currently "Li Hall") of St. John's Cathedral (in the mornings); and later on at No. 147 Caine Road. By September 1953, classes for the College's 279 students were still scattered in the aforesaid buildings. In March 1954, when the second term opened, the College rented the Bishop Hoare Memorial Building at Bishop's House situated at No. 1 Lower Albert Road and no longer held classes in St. Paul's Co-educational College and Cathedral Hall.<sup>4</sup>

While permitting the College to operate temporarily for one year in August 1951, the Government also set up a Committee on Higher Education to look into "the general question of local provision for higher education in the medium of Chinese".<sup>5</sup> The committee recognised the needs of higher Chinese studies in Hong Kong, the population of which was mostly Chinese, and hoped that Hong Kong could be "a proper meeting place for the exchange of Chinese and English thoughts."<sup>6</sup>

In 1953, the Board of Directors of the College (referred to as the "Board" hereafter) proposed to provide four-year courses, and approached the Government for a grant of land at Ma Liu Shui (馬料水), an interest-free loan of HK\$1,000,000 to the Board for the building works of a permanent campus and a railway station to be constructed by the Government. In August 1954, the Government proposed the following to the Board for consideration:

- (i) the Board would be granted an interest-free loan of HK\$1,000,000 for building works which would be repayable in 10 equal annual instalments;
- (ii) the Board would also be granted land at Ma Liu Shui not exceeding 10 acres in area, with conditions to be set out, after the Board had been incorporated; and
- (iii) a railway station would be constructed and maintained by the Government.

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<sup>4</sup> The number of students of the College increased steadily, from 85 (1951 – 1952), 192 (1952 – 1953), 251 (1953 – 1954), 331 (1954 – 1955) to 323 (1955 – 1956).

<sup>5</sup> Memo entitled "Chung Chi College", dated 18 May 1953, from D.J.S. Crozier, Director of Education, to Hon. R.B. Black, Colonial Secretary in "Chung Chi College – Post Secondary Classes for Chinese (Vernacular) Studies". HKRS163-1-1599, encl. (4)1.

<sup>6</sup> "Report of the Ad Hoc Committee on the Establishment of Chung Chi College" dated 19 March 1954 in "Chung Chi College – Post Secondary Classes for Chinese (Vernacular) Studies". HKRS163-1-1599, encl. 26.

Eventually, the United Board for Christian Higher Education in Asia (亞洲基督教高等教育聯合基金會) (representing churches in the US and Canada), the Asia Christian Colleges Association (亞洲基督教大學協會) of London and the Lingnan Board of Trustees (嶺南大學校董會) provided funding for the construction works. Therefore, in November 1954, the Board withdrew their application for a loan and submitted to the Government a block plan on the proposed site of the College. From then on until 1959, the Board liaised with the Government on the actual area to be allocated for the new campus and the exact buildings to be constructed, and accomplished the incorporation of the Board.

The Board was incorporated under the *Chung Chi College Incorporation Ordinance* (《崇基學院法團條例》) in July 1955. The draft Conditions of Grant for around 10 acres of Government Land at Ma Liu Shui to be made to the College was drawn up in October 1955 and accepted by the College one month later in November. After further discussions with the Government, the College, on 5 January 1956, submitted a new layout plan for the construction of the College buildings. The Government raised no objection, in principle, to the latest proposal and agreed to make a provisional grant of land with a total area not exceeding 10 acres to the Board.<sup>7</sup> The foundation stone of the College, blessed by Bishop Hall, was laid by Dr. Leslie G. Kilborn (啟真道博士), the then Chairman of the Board, on 12 May 1956; whereas the Ma Liu Shui railway station was open to traffic on 24 September in the same year.

The academic year commenced at the new campus on 1 October 1956. The dedication ceremony on 23 November 1956, officiated by Governor Sir Alexander Grantham (governed 1947 – 1957), marked the formal opening of the College buildings.<sup>8</sup> Dr. Lin Daoyang (凌道揚) (1888 – 1993), after the founding President Dr. Lee Ying-lin, served as the first President of the College (1955 – 1960) at the new campus.

Later, the College obtained further financial support from the churches in

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<sup>7</sup> The layout plan of the campus was further revised after January 1956. It was not until December 1959 that the grant of land could be formally made. The Conditions of Grant of 9.95 acres of Government Land at “D.D. 42 Lot No. 713” free of premium, together with the layout plan of the campus, was registered as “New Grant Conditions No. 8995” in May 1961.

<sup>8</sup> The Departments of Foreign Languages (外國語文學系), Economics (經濟學系), Business Administration (商業管理學系), Social Education (社會學系) and Chinese Language (中國語文學系) are the first five academic departments established.

the US, Canada, etc. for more building works. By the mid-1960s, additional plots of Government Land had been granted to or reserved for the College. Apart from Government Land, the College also negotiated with the villagers at Ma Liu Shui for acquisition of private lots for the construction of an athletic field and infrastructure.

Designed by Chau & Lee Architects & Engineering<sup>9</sup>, Staff Quarters E and F were constructed in 1965 and 1966 respectively. The design of these two buildings has evolved from the previous quarters with a greater height, introduction of new building services and a carport reserved on the lower ground level.<sup>10</sup> The buildings are six-storey tall with a lift shaft tower rising from the centre of the building on the roof. There are projecting canopies over the balconies and railings are installed on the parapet walls on the roof.

## ***Architectural Merit***

The uniform front elevation with evenly spaced windows and balconies on each floor is highlighted with the rubble stone trim at the two ends of the building which is a common architectural feature of the old buildings built in Chung Chi College<sup>11</sup>. The regularly positioned projecting reinforced concrete boxes for the air-conditioning units increased visual interest to the front elevation and made contrast to the uncoursed rubble stone (locally known as *ngau tau shek* 牛頭石) facing on the side elevations. The white plastered concrete projecting balcony slabs and canopies also stand out on the front elevation with the deliberate use of dark coloured metal railings with very thin members. Yet, such railing can now only be seen on the upper floors of Staff Quarters F, while others have been converted into stainless steel finishing with glass panels. The flooring of the front balconies is finished with mosaic tiles with pattern.

Staff Quarters E is designed to accommodate twelve 2-bedroom flats which are rectangular and mirrored in plan on each floor. The main staircase is refurbished with modern finishes on treads and risers. The terrazzo finish of stringer and wall stringer are retained, while the balustrade has vertical metal rod balusters with timber handrails for Staff Quarters E and PVC handrail for

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<sup>9</sup> Chau & Lee Architects and Engineering was a local architectural practice established by Chau Iu-nin (周耀年) and Richard Lee (李禮之) in 1933 and was a well-known local architectural practice before the Japanese Occupation (1941 – 1945). Chau Iu-nin graduated from The University of Hong Kong with a B.Sc. (Engineering) degree while Richard Lee was trained as an architect in the United Kingdom.

<sup>10</sup> The carports are now transformed into a storeroom at Staff Quarters E and a café at Staff Quarters F.

<sup>11</sup> Examples include Hua Lien Tang, Ying Lin Tand, Ming Hua Tang and Chapel.

Staff Quarters F. The terrazzo finish of the lift surround is retained for both blocks on each floor, while terrazzo border is also observed on the floor at the staircase and lift lobbies.

Staff Quarters F was named the Inter-University Hall (or Po Wen Yuan (博文苑) in Chinese) and served as guest house with eight flats for visiting scholars and their families and office spaces on the first two floors.<sup>12</sup> It housed the Lingnan Institute of Business Administration, the University's Economic Research Centre and the University of California Study Centre in the beginning.<sup>13</sup> The upper two floors are now used as Postgraduate Hall and repartitioned to dormitory style with dormitory rooms and shared facilities in each flat, while the other floors accommodates InnoPort, an office operated by the Office of Research and Knowledge Transfer Services of The Chinese University of Hong Kong (the "CUHK" hereafter).

The CUHK, inaugurated in 1963, with Chung Chi College, New Asia College and United College as the three foundation colleges. Chung Chi College, the earliest one set up at the present site<sup>14</sup>, was also the first Christian college of higher education in Hong Kong. The campus was a popular place to visit in the early years with various educational, social and religious activities, such as retreats, training programmes and summer camps, held there before.

***Social Value  
& Local Interest***

Despite their close proximity to the railway station, Staff Quarters E and F are separated from the areas for academic buildings and student dormitories. The public and the university's students and alumni, including those of the College, have little association with them.

The early buildings of Chung Chi College still standing in the campus include the chapel, staff quarters, students' dormitories, and some of the academic buildings etc., providing an example of tertiary education institute in Hong Kong after the Second World War.

***Group Value***

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<sup>12</sup> 崇基校刊，第41期，1966年12月，頁43。

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<sup>14</sup> New Asia College was found in 1949 and moved to the present campus in 1973. United College was founded in 1956 and moved to the present site in 1971.

Dormitory units for staff members were common in the post-war period. Residential buildings of similar form are common in Hong Kong. Staff Quarters E and F architecturally carry a consistent architectural language of the early College buildings that served as a prototype design started by Robert Fan<sup>15</sup> for the staff quarters blocks. Staff Quarters E remains its original use as a staff residence, while a large portion of Staff Quarters F has been converted into office space.

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

During the past two decades, multiple renovation works had been carried out at both Staff Quarters. Major renovations range from spatial reorganisation of the buildings to cater for the changing needs of the CUHK to lift replacement works to upgrade the dated facilities. Part of the ground floor of Staff Quarters F was converted to a cafe to provide food and beverages to university staff, students and visitors, while the carports at Staff Quarters E have been converted to a storage room.

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<sup>15</sup> Robert Fan (范文照) (1893 – 1979) was one the first-generation U.S.-trained Chinese architects. He was the planner and architect of Chung Chi College's campus and buildings built in the period of 1956 to 1959.

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