

PHT *newsletter*

PERSATUAN WARISAN PULAU PINANG • PENANG HERITAGE TRUST

c/o 11 Free School Road, 11600 Penang • Fax/Tel: 04 - 281 3187

Number 10

December 1994

Talk and Slide Show

Why Buildings Decay

Dr. A. Ghafar Ahmad

Sunday
11 December '94
8.00 pm
E&O Hotel
(Straits Room)
Farquhar Street

Dr. A. Ghafar Ahmad lectures at the School of Housing, Building and Planning, Universiti Sains Malaysia, Penang. He has a Bachelor of Science in Architecture from the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee, USA and a Master of Architecture in Urban Design from Kent State University, Ohio, USA. He did his PhD. in Building Conservation at the University of Sheffield, United Kingdom. He has carried out a study on the conservation of British colonial buildings built between 1800 and 1930 in Malaysia. He will talk on common building problems, touching particularly on the factors that bring about building defects.

Advertisements

A HERITAGE HOUSE AS CULTURAL CENTER

A European cultural & linguistic Association would like to establish a permanent "home" for its activities.

The Association is proposing to owners of heritage houses (Category 1 & 2) the following arrangements:

1. The Association will take over the mansion on a long lease (30 or 40 years);
2. The Association - with the help of a foreign architect who is an expert in building conservation - will undertake to restore the building to its original condition;
3. The Association will bear the cost of the restoration. The owner of the building will be paid a nominal fee..

The owner of the heritage building will benefit from the above arrangements by having:

- a. his property restored to its original condition;
- b. the satisfaction of contributing to the preservation of historic buildings;
- c. his family name enhanced.
The Association will ensure that his family name is enhanced by stressing his cooperation in promoting the interaction between Malaysian and European cultures.

If any owner(s) of heritage houses is interested in the above proposal, he should contact the Executive Secretary of the Penang Heritage Trust who will then arrange for him to meet with the representatives of the Association.

HOT WOK CAFE'

**A Special Discount of 15%
For PHT Members Only**

**Just tell the cashier
you are a PHT member
and enjoy the best of Nyonya cuisine**

PHT Conservation Education Programme For Schools

This programme, part of the PHT's efforts to promote the cause of conservation in Penang, is designed specially to make the younger generation, the leaders of tomorrow, more aware, appreciative, and proud of the aesthetic and cultural significance of the island's architectural heritage — the public buildings, private villas, shophouses, and kampungs from the 19th and early 20th centuries.

The PHT will take a one-hour Talk and Slide Show to the major schools in the state during the first quarter of the coming school year. Each school will be given RM100 to start a heritage club. The clubs will automatically become members of the Trust and receive its newsletter. There are plans to follow up the talk with tours and competitions. The Education Department has sent a circular to the schools urging them to participate in the programme.

We must thank the Eastern Smelting Group of Companies (ESCOY) for sponsoring the programme and the Education Department Penang for fully supporting it.

NYONYA FASHION SHOW

Produced & Directed by
Michael Cheah

Saturday
3 December 1994
8.00 pm
Novotel, Penang

Michael Cheah, PHT member, will present his collection of authentic Nyonya Costumes & Jewellery from the 1880s – 1950s. The finale is a wedding ceremony featuring 3 types of Baba Wedding Costumes of the 1920s and 30s.

Included in the programme:

- An 8 Course Chinese Nyonya Dinner
Single – \$50
Table of 10 – \$500
- Lucky Draws

For further details & Invitation Cards
call Michael Cheah, Tel: 04 - 229 2203

PHT Antique Collectors Club Meeting
Saturday 10 December '94 5.00 pm
8-H Jalan Bunga Puduk, Tanjung Bungah
Call Pierre Laine, Tel: 04 - 890 1451, to confirm

New Members

We welcome the following as ordinary members of the PHT. They can nominate, vote, and stand for elections, and take part in any of the PHT's activities.

Ben K.T. Choong	Ng Wai Fong
Khor Boh Ling	Teh Bee Kim
Bibiana Lee Bee Leng	

A queer and freakish way to determine the future of our architectural heritage

A report in The Star (Tuesday 8 November) says that the Johore City Council is seriously deliberating whether to "demolish or restore" a pre-war building, "old and dirty", on Jalan Dhobi because transvestites — no doubt bold and beautiful — have started plying their trade there. An amazing story. Surely this is a queer and freakish way of determining the fate of the country's old buildings.

Will the Johore authorities restore the building so that the transvestites may rendezvous in cleaner, cozier "action rooms"? Demolishing it will certainly not rid the city of the problem. The problem will simply stray into the next "guest house" down the street. Have dress will travel.

Is the PHT amused? I should think not. It can give conservationists no pleasure to know that, besides the destructive behaviour of those who call themselves "developers", the nomadic lifestyle of transvestites is now a real threat to the well-being of our architectural heritage.

Looking at the building frenzy along Jalan Sultan Ahmad Shah, I can't help wondering what the Penang Municipal Council is likely to do should our own wandering "queens" suddenly take to entertaining their karaoke clients at, say, the decrepit but historic Soonstead?. A PHT wit says "the MPPP is likely to see that as a perfectly good reason to allow Soonstead to be Metropoled".

Whether you like it or not, transvestites are here to stay. You cannot make them disappear altogether and forever by destroying their favourite haunts. Clean-living, no-nonsense Singapore tried and failed. The "rugged society" found, much to its chagrin, that it had no choice but to build them a spanking new Bugis Street — to welcome them back.

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3 November 1994

Letters to the Editor
The Star, No. 13, Jalan 13/6
46200 Petaling Jaya

Dear Editor,

The Penang Heritage Trust wishes to express its shock and dismay over the planning permission granted by the MPPP (Penang Island Municipal Council) to "Hardwicke", No. 67 Jalan Sultan Ahmad Shah, as reported in your paper on 27 October 1994.

In October last year, the MPPP announced its conservation guidelines for Jalan Sultan Ahmad Shah. The Penang Heritage Trust welcomed these guidelines as a first step towards Council development of planning policies that would respect and enhance the heritage of Penang.

We also suggested some improvements to the above guidelines, the most important of which being effective legal penalties for illegal demolitions, and clearer guidelines for new developments, especially as regards height and design control.

According to the official MPPP guidelines, no changes, alterations, or additions are allowed a Category 1 building, except for works needed to preserve or maintain it. However, "development on the same lot is permissible if it observes the following conditions": a) The "development" can only be carried out "behind the building", depending on the land area available there; b) The type of use for each development will be subject to the proposed Control Plan (Plan Pengawalan); c) The "architecture must harmonise with the existing building in scale, design, colour scheme, etc.

While there is no height control prescribed for new developments on Category 1 properties, the guidelines for Category 2 stipulate that "the height of the additions cannot exceed that of the original building by more than 2 storeys". As virtually all Category 2 buildings are double-storey buildings, it is clear that the new additions cannot be higher than 4 storeys.

Since Category 1 buildings are deemed to be more significant than those in Category 2, surely any development on the land of Category 1 buildings should be subject to stricter controls. But that appears not to be the case with Hardwicke, a two-storey Category 1 building. We read in The Star (27 October '94) that "the full council" had granted planning permission to the owner of Hardwicke "to build a 25-storey building.....with 80 condominium units.....on the land surrounding the mansion".

Would the full MPPP council like to explain to the public, in clear and unambiguous terms, why they have disregarded their own guidelines and allowed new construction on Hardwicke land not only to surround the mansion but also to be higher, 21 storeys higher, than that allowed on Category 2 land?

At the present rate of "progress" and "development" the city of Penang will soon degenerate into just another concrete jungle. If not stopped while there is still time, 51 massive towers, not 34 as we thought at our last press conference on 20 April, will rise and dwarf our dwindling stock of historic mansions, the symbols of the achievements of our forefathers, along Jalan Sultan Ahmad Shah.

Yours sincerely,



Dato' Nazir Ariff
President, Penang Heritage Trust

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8 November 1994

The Editor
New Straits Times
31 Jalan Riong
59100 Kuala Lumpur

Dear Editor,

The Cabinet, and in particular the Ministry of Local Government and Housing, is to be congratulated for having agreed in principle to set up a National Council on Conservation and Preservation of Heritage Buildings, and to have Parliament pass a Bill on Conservation and Preservation of Heritage Buildings (New Straits Times, 28 October 1994).

There is a great deal of concern in Penang and in other heritage circles about the indiscriminate and wanton destruction of heritage buildings to make way for development. This is further accentuated by the fear that the government will succumb to pressure from property owners and repeal the Rent Control Act before suitable legislation to protect heritage buildings is in place. Vulnerable cities like Penang can very quickly turn into a synthetic-style pastiche in such circumstances.

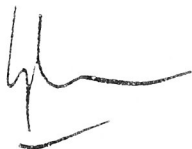
Preparation of the heritage legislation started as long ago as 1991, but sadly, nothing has materialised so far. It is believed that the first draft was found to be unsuitable. If the Ministry is starting on the second draft from scratch, and this appears to be necessary, it will probably take another three or more years before the legislation can be presented to Parliament for approval.

It is the hope of the Penang Heritage Trust that in drawing up the heritage legislation the Ministry will consult all interested parties, particularly the heritage bodies. Heritage legislation is notoriously difficult to put together, and it should properly be done by specialist draftsmen. It is therefore our hope also that the Ministry will seek the best advice that is available to assist in drawing up the act.

In the meantime it will be necessary to take some temporary measure to stop the current destruction of heritage buildings.

The PHT recommends that the Rent Control Act should be selectively abolished, so that for an initial period of five years or so only owners of heritage properties in conservation areas who restore their properties would benefit from the rent de-control. Simultaneously, the Town and Country Planning Act should be amended to extend the functions of the State Planning and the Local Planning Committees. This is to allow these two Committees to include heritage conservation in their structure and local plans, and to increase penalties for the destruction of heritage properties.

Yours sincerely,



Dato' Nazir Ariff
President, Penang Heritage Trust