

PHT *newsletter*

PENANG HERITAGE TRUST • PERSATUAN WARISAN PULAU PINANG

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Fig. 10

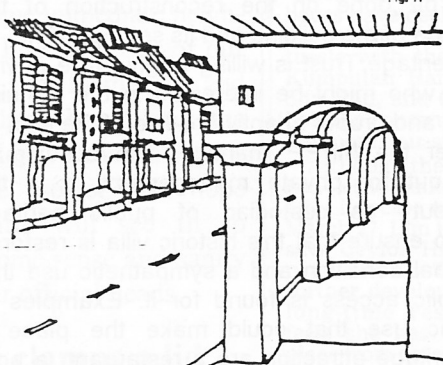


Fig. 11

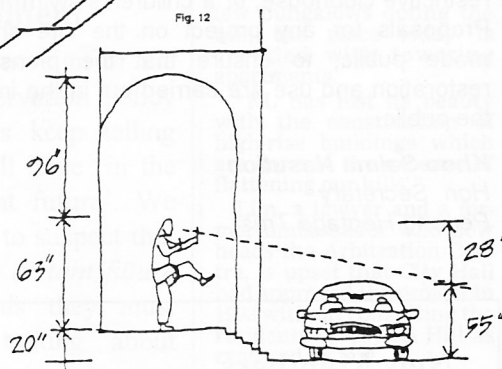
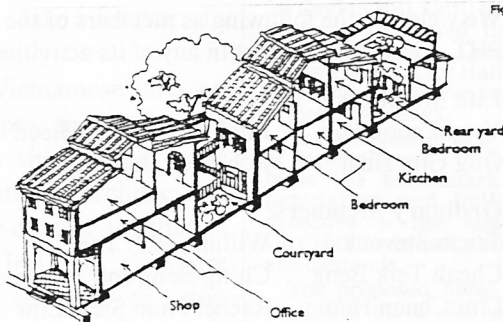


Fig. 12



The traditional shophouse

Fig. 9



PHT Talk and Slide Show

Penang: Facets of a Collective Flavour

Laurence Loh

Thursday 27 June • 8.00pm

INTEC College (Penang Arts Centre)

(Leith Street, opposite Cheong Fatt Tze)

"Facets of the Penang flavour can be assembled and reinterpreted to create a new urban Plan for Penang in relation to building form, scale, layout, land-use mix, etc. Such a plan should encapsulate the essence without necessarily being imitative. The most critical area to attempt a reinterpretation would be within a dense urban context, or where the opportunity presents itself, in the planning of new neighbourhoods" – *Laurence Loh.*

A graduate of the Architectural Association of London, Laurence Loh returned to Penang in 1974 to join Architects Team 3, where he was Chief Administrator from 1976-1978. He was a partner in S B Cheah & Rakan-Rakan before he established his own firm – Laurence Loh Architect – in 1983.

He is a member of the Royal Institute of British Architects (RIBA) and the Malaysian Architects Association or Pertubuhan Akitek Malaysia (PAM).

Among the numerous architectural awards he has won are – First Prize, Penang Swimming Club Comprehensive Development Competition in 1984; Winner, PAM Award for Design Excellence in Repetitive Housing (Cascadia Apartments, Penang) in 1991; and Winner, PAM Award for Conservation (Cheong Fatt Tze Mansion, Penang) in 1995.

He has served on many committees, including the State Museum Board; the Committee for Drafting the State Conservation Policy; and the Northern Chapter of PAM as its Chairman. He has presented papers on conservation at State, National, and International Conferences and continues to be consulted on restoration work carried out locally.

(Light refreshments will be served)

THE RELAU "SUMMER HOUSE"

History

CHUNG THYE PIN (1879 - 1935) was the last Kapitan China of Perak. He was the son of Chung Keng Kwee, leader of the Hai Sans in the Larut wars and a signatory of the Pangkor Treaty. The Chung family donated their former tin mines to the Taiping municipality and they are now known as the "Taiping Lakes". The family is also known for their architectural monuments — Chung Keng Kwee built the temple and mansion "Hai Kee Chun" on Church Street (Lebuh Gereja), and Chung Thye Pin the domed "Shanghai Hotel", now demolished, on Gurney Drive.

According to C S Wong in "The Gallery of Kapitan Chinas", published by the Ministry of Culture, Singapore in 1963

.....the other architectural "monument" to the late Kapitan (Chung Thye Pin) is the once famous fresh-water swimming pool in Relau, to the south of the city of George Town, which was the first and most expensive swimming pool built on the island of Penang. By the side of the pool was a "Summer House" wherein the Kapitan frequently entertained his numerous friends and business associates with the gaiety and splendour of an Oriental prince.

It is said that Thye Pin was inspired by the artistic canals of Venice and the enchanting ponds and lakes of China when he himself designed the pool, which was constructed for him by B H Ung, the first Chinese architect who introduced concrete buildings to the community of Penang a fine example of whose work is the Ban Hin Lee Bank.....

Chung Thye Pin's daughter, Madam Chung G H, aged 66, said in a recent interview (May 1996) that as a little girl she used to go swimming at her father's villa. She believes that the property was sold after her father's death in 1935. The new owner abandoned the house when a youth was drowned while swimming in the pool. This story is often repeated by the old Straits families of Penang.

Cultural and Architectural Significance

Chung Thye Pin is undoubtedly one of Malaysia's best-known historical figures. As mentioned above, the Chung family history is important to both Penang and Perak.

The villa is believed to be the only pre-war example of a "summer house" with a purpose-built swimming pool that can be found in Penang, and perhaps in the country.

Designed by B H Ung, one of the first prominent Chinese architects in Malaysia, the villa is a unique mixture of Eastern and Western influences. It is modeled after a Chinese "lau" and also has highly artistic Italian details, for example, the grand "twisted barley" columns, not to be found anywhere else in Penang.

The pool is designed to be fed by a stream flowing alongside the villa. This is a remarkable educational example, especially for the young, of how to maintain the quality of our natural water resources and the greenery of our surroundings. This rare pre-war swimming pool "summer house"

restored would surely be one of the most attractive of architectural monuments in Penang.

Present condition

The building has suffered from weathering, lack of maintenance, and vandalism. However, the basic structure appears to be very sound, and enough of the original features are intact so that a high degree of authentic restoration would be possible. Although most of the land on the large property has been developed with highrise apartments, the historic setting of the building itself, on a hill slope on a different level from the rest of the development, still remains and could be properly landscaped for the enjoyment of visitors. The site is easily accessible from the main road.

Ownership

The building and its immediate surroundings are now owned by the Penang Island Municipal Council (MPPP), this portion of the property having been surrendered by the developers to the Council as "open space".

Recommendations

The building warrants high-quality restoration, and that means only consultants and contractors with experience and a good track record in heritage conservation work should be used. Some research needs to be done on the reconstruction of the missing parts of the building and its setting. The Penang Heritage Trust is willing to give free advice to anyone who might be interested in the genuine restoration and proper adaptive re-use of the site.

Whether the MPPP manages the building or leases it out for private management, it is the MPPP's duty as custodian of public heritage buildings to ensure that this historic villa is restored to its original condition and a sympathetic use that allows public access is found for it. Examples of sympathetic use that could make the place a popular heritage attraction are a restaurant, a non-restrictive clubhouse, or a children's swimming pool. Proposals for any project on the site should be made public, to ensure that the plans for its restoration and use are carried out in the interest of the public.

Khoo Salma Nasution

Hon. Secretary

Penang Heritage Trust

New Members

We welcome the following as members of the PHT. They can take part in any of its activities.

Life Members

Yeap Leong Poh	Mdm Kee Phaik Cheen
Ong Gim Huat	Robert C. Holland

Ordinary Members

Tricia Stevens	William W L Tan
Cheah Teik Beng	Ch'ng Beng Joo
Lim Chuen Hoe	Rachel Phun Siew Lim
Chew Weng Lai	

Of local plans and planning permission

"There is no local plan for Ceylon Hill. Until that is done as stipulated in the Town and Country Planning Act, City Hall has no power to approve such a project"

—P G Lim

It is the familiar story of local council complacency and arrogance, evasions and incompetences and changes of direction, conspiring to inflict on the street where you live the crush of mega shopping complexes, office blocks, one-stop centres, and suchlike. A 15-storey, 250-room, 4-star hotel is threatening to make itself the unwelcome immediate neighbour of P G Lim, one of our pioneer life members, and we applaud her taking the authorities to task for approving the project. We hope the courts will see fit to knock some sense and sanity into their official heads.

Hanoi clamps a lid on development

There is still no sign of the heritage conservation policy the authorities keep telling us Penang will have 'in the not too distant future'. We are beginning to suspect that *in the not too distant future* are key words they must utter when talking about plans and promises they are likely to take forever to carry out.

The Vietnamese are no longer happy to see modern structures shouldering aside their traditional architecture. No longer do they see that as progress. In Hanoi, there are planning controls to stop new construction in the city's ancient and colonial quarters (See NHT report next page)

Fancy a hotel next to your house?

P.G. LIM is fighting a lone battle to stop the construction of a 15-storey hotel next to her family's four-level apartment at Ceylon Hill — one of the few pockets of green left in Kuala Lumpur.

Her other affluent neighbours have declined to join her in her two-year legal tussle with the developer, Kumpulan Harta Brisdale Sdn Bhd, and City Hall to halt the construction of the 250-room four-star hotel.

Although the High Court has yet to make a decision after her case was heard on March 27, Lim is anxious to save Ceylon Hill, which is near the KL Tower, from further development. As a long-time resident, she feels she has to stop the place from deteriorating.

Once verdant with only a few bungalows dotting the hill, the place today is crowded with towering apartments.

"KL has lost its beauty with the construction of high-rise buildings which are done at the expense of flattening our hills."

Lim, a lawyer and a former ambassador who now heads the Arbitration Centre, is upset that City Hall had approved the project in 1993 without consulting the residents of Ceylon Hill as required by law.

"There is no local plan for Ceylon Hill. Until that is done as stipulated under the Town and Country Planning Act, City Hall has no power to approve such a project," she says.

The absence or the lack of local plans — to determine the benchmark for population and building densities — has enabled City Hall to do as it pleases, she contends.

The proposed hotel will be built on a 35° slope which the Housing and Lo-

New Straits Times, Friday 26 April 1996



TOO CLOSE FOR COMFORT ... Lim looks out at the verdant patch of land outside her home in Ceylon Hill. Will it next be filled with a 15-storey hotel?

cal Government Ministry considers as critically dangerous for the construction of buildings.

"Haven't we learnt anything from the Highland Tower tragedy?" she asks.

City Hall, she says, has also failed to take into account the existing infrastructure when approving the project.

At present, the road on Ceylon Hill is a narrow, winding one. And if the hotel is built amidst the residential area, it will only increase traffic congestion and aggravate noise pollution, she asserts.

Besides, she says, the existing capacity of the drainage system as well as the supply of water and electricity would be unable to cope if the hotel were to be built.

But this is not the first

time Lim has resorted to taking legal action to conserve what little is left of the hill.

Not too long ago, she challenged the developer of Regency Tower located opposite her house. She lost the case and the developer went on to build a high-rise apartment.

"When we built our family's apartment, we were told by City Hall to construct no higher than four storeys.

"But that has changed. Now it seems that developers are allowed to build as high as they want."

If she loses this time, Lim will have to endure living barely three metres from a hotel.

It would be another chapter in our history on how we lost our hills.

Hanoi Beholds Its Colonial Beauty

It Aims to Keep From Exploding Into a New Asian Mega-City

By Seth Mydans
New York Times Service

HANOI — Battered by war, crumbling from poverty and neglect, this faded, tree-lined capital remains one of the last beautiful cities in Asia, a relic of French colonial elegance amid the raucous new mega-cities of the region's economic boom.

Now Vietnam has begun to develop, and just a year or two ago local planners and foreign architects were voicing despair that Hanoi, with a population of more than 2 million, was about to go the way of Bangkok, Singapore, Jakarta and Shanghai — bustling, new and increasingly indistinguishable.

Developers had demolished the colonnaded shopping arcade by the

edge of Hoan Kiem Lake, at the city's heart. They had begun to rip down the historic prison known to Americans as the Hanoi Hilton. And the drawing boards were filled with projects that threatened the narrow streets of its 1,000-year-old Ancient Quarter and the shaded villas of its French section.

But today those projects have been scaled back or halted, and city officials are increasingly saying no to ambitious proposals that would make a lot of money very fast. They have established a chief architect's office and published a new urban plan, and they are directing high-rise developers toward the city's western district, where they have set virtually no limits on growth.

The planners and architects who watch over Hanoi now say this could

be the first major city in the region to modernize without losing its character and its low-rise charm.

"We have a new policy," said Ha Van Que, assistant to the city's chief architect. "We are trying to preserve our city and develop it at the same time."

This approach appears to be part of an urgent effort by the government to control the potentially chaotic development it unleashed in the 1990s with new market-oriented policies. The government is working to disperse new industries around the country and to avoid the urban concentrations that have brought problems elsewhere in Asia.

"We think we're getting somewhere," said Lawrie Wilson, an Australian urban planner who is an adviser to the chief architect. "I'm quite optimistic that what is left today of the character of the city will be conserved and enhanced."

Hanoi has the advantage of starting 20 or 30 years late. It has been preserved from development by the hardships of war and poverty, and it has the opportunity now to learn from its neighbors.

"We want to avoid the mistakes of Bangkok and other cities in Southeast Asia," Mr. Que said. "They developed too quickly."

Hanoi also has the benefit of the strict planning and tight controls of the country's Communist government. The word of Prime Minister Vo Van Kiet — who appears from his speeches to be a dedicated urban conservationist — carries the power of fiat.

"There are decrees that say the character of the Ancient Quarter and the French quarter must be preserved," Mr. Wilson said. "No other city has had that. In other cities it was just, 'We must develop and the sky's the limit.'"

For a time, it was argued here that the graceful avenues of the French section were a vestige of colonialism that should be demolished, as happened in Malaysia's capital, Kuala Lumpur. But the Vietnamese seem to have embraced this heritage.

The fight for the city's character has not yet been won, though. Widespread corruption and the quicksand of Vietnam's bureaucracy can swallow government decrees. And there remains a strong lobby for rapid, unfettered growth. There are many people here, after decades of lagging behind other nations, who want nothing more than to look like Bangkok.

The first rounds went to the developers, who rushed in before the government had a framework for assessing their dazzling proposals.

"It's called progress," Peter Purcell, the Australian developer of twin 20-story apartment towers, said at the time.

But his towers will not be built. The city architect's office stepped in and said the project's design has been limited to a five-story building with an eight-story annex in the back. The arcade's colonnaded facade is to be restored.

Special Announcement

Royal Melbourne Institute of Technology at the Penang Carpenter's Guild

Wednesday 19 June – Wednesday 17 July 1996

A team of 13 students and 4 teachers from the Architecture and Interior Design departments of the Royal Melbourne Institute of Technology (RMIT), Australia are here for one month to assist in the restoration and repair of the Carpenter's Guild (Loo Pun Hong) on Love Lane.

The projects the students will work on include:
Developing dilapidation report of the building
Landscaping of the front courtyard and atria
Completing full inventory of furniture and artefacts
Planning new layout of exhibition hall

The students would like to meet the members of the Guild and the Penang Heritage Trust to discuss traditional building techniques.

The Trust and the Guild thank the RMIT.

Events planned for the students:

Welcoming Dinner

Talk on Chinese Architecture by Mr Tan Yeow Hooi

Talk on Penang Architecture by Mr Laurence Loh

Talk on Khoo Kongsi by Mr Teh Kiang Wooi

Tour of the Cheong Fatt Tze, the Syed Alatas, 120 Armenian Street, RMIT at Jawi, & the Island



A Journey Through Time

Shangri-La's Rasa Sayang Resort welcomes you to participate in the Penang Heritage Night Buffet which celebrates the charm of old Penang. A portion of the proceeds from every buffet will go towards the conservation of heritage buildings in Penang.

*Every Tuesday
7.00pm - 9.30pm
Coffee Garden
RM52.00++ per person
RM26.00++ (Children under 12)*

For reservations, please call 04-8811 811



Prices are subject to 10% service charge and 5% government tax

Announcement

Rasa Sayang Resort
“Penang Heritage Night Buffet”

**Shangrila's Rasa Sayang Resort
has invited the members of the
PHT Antique-Collectors Club
to show their antiques and collectibles
at the Penang Heritage Night Buffet
being held every Tuesday
from 7.00pm - 9.30pm
at the hotel's Coffee Garden**

For further information contact:

Stephanie Lee, Communications Executive Rasa Sayang Resort, Tel: 8811 811
Richard Lim, Chairman PHT Antique-Collectors Club, Tel: 262 3610
Tan Teong Kooi, Executive Secretary Penang Heritage Trust, Tel: 281 3187