Greetings!

The Penang Heritage Trust has been in the limelight several times since the beginning of year 2001.

Laurence Loh and Loh-Lim Lim Lee welcomed the Deputy Prime Minister Dato’ Abdullah Badawi and UNESCO Regional Cultural Advisor for Asia & The Pacific Dr. Richard Engelhardt, who officiated the UNESCO Awards ceremony at the Cheong Fatt Tze Mansion on 6 January. Restoration of the Cheong Fatt Tze Mansion in Georgetown, Penang, Malaysia has been selected as the “Most Excellent Project” from among the entries in the inaugural UNESCO Asia-Pacific Heritage 2000 Awards for Cultural Heritage Conservation. The next day, the Penang Chief Minister Dr. Koh Tsu Koon launched the completion of the pilot phase of the Loo Pan Tung restoration, a project for which Laurence and Loh-Lim had given substantial support.

Then on 4 February, the Prime Minister Dr. Mahathir Mohamad visited the Penang Heritage Trust station set up at 120 Armenian Street as part of the Chinese New Year Open House celebrations, where a new exhibition on Dr. Sun Yat Sen in Penang had been put up just in time by Kho Salma with the help of Lim Gaik Siong. On 17 February, the Canadian High Commissioner, Jean C. McCreasy, visited the Penang Heritage Trust office, and launched the project ‘Heritage Community Revitalization Through Women and Youth’ which is supported by a grant from the Canadian High Commission.

...continued on page 15

Exclusive Guided Heritage Site Visits

Site Visit #13
SUNDAY, 25 March 2001, 3.30 P.M.
The Francis Light Protestant Historic Cemetery

This is the historic resting place of many of the island’s earliest settlers, such as Francis Light, the early governors, Reverend Hutchings, founder of the Penang Free School and Thomas Leonowens, the husband of Anna of ‘King & I’ fame.

Early loss and untimely loss of their loved ones was the price many pioneer settlers had to pay. Unsanitary conditions and tropical illnesses such as malaria and cholera claimed the lives of both the young and old, including innumerable infants and mothers who died at childbirth. Francis Light himself died of frustration, overwork and fever, and was buried there in 1794.

The Penang Heritage Trust restored the cemetery in 1993-94 by repairing the wall, restoring graves and reinking blurred inscriptions. The Trust also documented all tombs and erected a large explanatory signboard and map at the entrance to the cemetery. Join us for a picnic tea among the frangipani arbours and restive tombs.

Frangipani trees create a shaded isle through the burial ground which is full of timeless forms such as broken columns, Greek urns, Roman sarcophagi and structures emulating the canopyed tombs of Indian Rajahs.
SITE VISIT REPORTS

Cheong Fatt Tze Mansion (November 26, Site visit #10)
Report by Woo Yee Saik

Ninety-two PHT members and guests showed up for this specially conducted tour of Penang's unique Cheong Fatt Tze mansion. In her own inimitable and lively style, our hostess and guide for the afternoon, Loh-Lim, took us round the grand Blue Mansion, and regaled us with witty anecdotes about its former owner, the flamboyant tycoon Cheong Fatt Tze. The millionaire's stranger-than-fiction life story could compete with any best-selling novel. "It is a rags-to-riches saga," said Loh-Lim.

Although fond of Western concepts, Towkay Cheong Fatt Tze embraced the ancient principles of feng shui when building his home, which explains its slightly askew position in relation to the street. Loh-Lim says it was most important for a man of his stature to have the correct feng shui to ensure continued success. Geomancers worked out the proper alignment so that all wind and water flow lines were in close harmony with nature. Rainwater was brought into the house through large pipes in the walls, and kept inside as long as possible before flowing out again. The front door still faces the sea and the building, with hills behind for protection, is on an incline, a position called "riding the dragon's back".

The feng shui alignments proved auspicious for the towkay who made ever more prosperous business deals in his elegant front hall, adorned with geometric floor tiles and art-nouveau stained-glass windows imported from England. While tea was served to business colleagues, wives number three, six and seven, plus several daughters, may have peeked at guests from behind a fantastic gold filigree screen, now restored to its former glory.

Four elderly carpenters, discovered in Penang, took over three years to repair by hand all the woodcarving on the timber beams and shutters. Skilled workers from China restored the fantastic Chien...

Khoo, Cheah & Tan Kongsi (January 28, Site visit #11)
Report by Dr. Tan Chong Guan

Our January site visit took us to the Khoo, Cheah and Tan Kongsi, all in close proximity in the inner city. Chinese New Year season notwithstanding, an enthusiastic crowd of over 70 showed up.

The visit started at Khoo Kongsi with Khoo Salma giving a most interesting background on the history of the early Chinese settlement and their Kongsis. Khoo Kongsi is the most well known of all the kongsis because of its magnificent architecture and intricate design. It is currently in the final phase of restoration work by a group of experts on heritage building conservation from India. We were very lucky to have the conservation team with us, besides giving explanations and answering questions, they also showed us photograph of beams, doors & walls before and after the cleaning work. Our heartfelt thanks to them for their time and we look forward to the fully-restored Khoo Kongsi. Not forgetting Mai Loon, who gave a very detailed explanation on the meaning of the various painting and art work.

Listening attentively to Khoo Salma at Canon Square

Two minutes away, tucked in a corner is Cheah Kongsi. We were warmly greeted by a group of trustees who were obviously delighted to see so many of us visiting their Kongsi. Khoo Salma again briefed us on the historical background of the kongsi, while some members and press were busy clicking away for group photos.

Our last visit for the day was the Tan Kongsi, situated off Lebuh Pantai. Although it was a 5 minute walk away from Cheah Kongsi, we were late due to the warm hospitality by the Cheahs who provided us with cakes and bottled water. Our hosts were already waiting anxiously for us when we arrived. Dato' Tan Lip Sen and fellow trustees not only welcomed us warmly but they also prepare nyonya kueh, kum and bottled water for everyone. Mr. Tan Lye Hoe briefed us on the historical background of the kongsi. A Q&A session followed with trustee Dr Tan Chong Telk answering most of the questions from the group. To a provoking question on what are the effects on their tenants following the Repeal of the Rent Control Act, the trustee replied they had not evicted a single tenant nor had they raised the rent up more than 50% to the great applause of the crowd.

The Kongsi visit has proven to be most interesting. It gives the visitors an insight into the history of the early Chinese immigrants and also what is happening to the Kongsi today.
CHEAH KONGSI, FIRST OF THE FIVE GREAT HOKKIEN CLANS OF PENANG

Flanked by early 19th century shophouses, it's an unassuming gateway at Lebuh Armenian belies a splendid interior of serene courtyards and a unique mid-19th century temple of Straits Eclectic-style architecture.

Cheah Kongsi is the oldest of the five main clans in Penang whose surnames are Cheah, Kho, Yeoh, Tan and Lim. The five kongsis are located in the same neighbourhood and make up the Hokkien Kongsi which were part of the Chinese Town Hall Organisation (formerly known as Peng Clan Association). Four Trustees from each of the five clans are selected to represent the Hokkien Kongsi.

Historical Perspective: The Cheah Si Hock Kwong Kongsi which was established in 1820 (Qing Dynasty Kar Kheng 25th Year) possesses a history that spans 180 years. Towards the end of the Ming Dynasty and during the early years of Qing Dynasty, countless mainlanders from the coastal provinces of Guanzong and Fujian (Hokkien), migrated overseas especially to the Malay Peninsula and other Asian countries, with the aim of searching for a better living. The Cheah Clan first landed in Butterworth, but eventually moved to Penang Island due to booming business and better opportunities there. Many set up businesses around George Town especially near the coastal areas. Strangers to the land, they encountered difficulties and obstacles in their normal dealings and attempts to make a living. A group of elders who had done well, decided to form an association which would offer assistance to newly-arrived clan members in Penang.

The foundation of Cheah Kongsi was based on a combination of racial mutuality, location and a common dialect. Members of the association consisted of descendants of the Cheah clan from Cheok Tong Village located in the Hai Tong District, Zhang Zhou prefecture. The present Cheok Tong village is in Fujian Province, in the designated Development Zone of Hai Chang, opposite Xiamen City in the Xin Ling Zone, Province of Fujian. All these immigrants were peace loving residents who had never violated the law. They had registered the association as a kongsi (not the usual trading company) according to the then distinctions of district organizations under the British rule. According to the records on the monuments in the building in 1858 (Qing Dynasty Hsien Feng 8th Year) Cheok Tong Seah in China had collected land revenue from its own villages, totalling 12,367 Yuan and together with the donations from the local Cheah Clan members, started to build the ancestral Tsung Der Tang and later renamed it Sek Tek Tong in 1873 (Qing Dynasty Tung Ji 8th Year) when construction was completed. The Premier of the Chin Dynasty, Cheah Aun Kong, was worshipped as the prime God, and two Hock Hau Kong were also worshipped. According to the early Kongsi Constitutions, the kongsi was established by Cheah Han Yan in 1835 (the copy of the earliest land title showed registration in 1820, therefore the establishment must be earlier than 1835). After his demise (due to the tender age of his heir, Cheah Zi Chu), his wife Ong Sin Neoh was nominated to be in charge of the property and management of the Kongsi. In 1846, she appointed Cheah Su Yi as the Kongsi’s only trustee. When Cheah Su Yi passed away in 1862, Ong appointed nine other trustee members to attend to the affairs of the Kongsi. They were Cheah Chi Ya, Cheah Pan, Cheah Shi, Cheah Tin, Cheah Yin, Cheah Hun, Cheah Pek Hai, Cheah Wu Chai and Cheah Zhen Huang.

The Origin of Hock Haw Kong: The two Hock Haw Kong were Governor Xu Yuan and General Zhang Xun who once guarded Sui Yan City during the Tang Dynasty (year 618-902), reign of Emperor Hou Tsung who succeeded Emperor Huang Tsung. Sui Yan City was attacked by Yi Zi Gins (130,000 troop soldiers). With only 7,000 men for defense, Xu Yuan and Zhang Xun and their counterparts Nan Ji Yun and Lui Wan Chun swore to defend the city. Surrounded by the enemies, running out of food supply and without allies, Xu, Zhang and the others stood their ground for endless days. The enemies attacked daily and rescue troops were delayed. Zhang Xun was filled with anxiety and hatred. He gritted his teeth, gnashed his jaws as was stated in a song in Wen Tian Xiang which dubbed him Zhang Soon Yen Chi and Xu Yuan killed his beloved spouse to feed the army. Nevertheless, when rescue finally arrived it was unfortunately late by 3 days. Sui Yan City had already perished. Xu and Zhang who had sacrificed their lives were awarded the title Hock Haw by the Emperor. In honour and memory of their loyalty and courage, they were dubbed Shou Wei Shen or God of Defence. The Liu Shaw temple (also called Liu Si Temple) in front of Cheok Tong Seah was built to offer prayers to Xu and Zhang to ensure a safe voyage and successes and prosperity in business. The Cheah ancestors brought the Hock Haw Kong to Penang, that is why the Kongsi was named Cheah Si Hock Haw Kong, Kongsi or Cheok Tong Seah Sek Tek Tong.

Ancestral Cemetery: In 1917, Cheah Choo Yew and 13 other trustees decided to purchase a piece of land along Mt Erskine Road as the Cheok Tong Cheah Clan Cemetery to ensure that the descendants of Cheah Clan would possess a burial ground. A Trustees Board was formed out of the selected maximum 20 trustee members and the Board was responsible for the Kongsi’s financial matters, asset management, running of the cemetery and welfare of the members. The purpose was to unite the clan members and devote offering to ancestors on each festivals and to award scholarships to the deserving children of the clan, help the poor and unfortunate and make donations to charity/education funds.

Penang Chinese Recreation Club (PCRC): Sportswise, the PCRC was the early pioneer, especially with the help of the five clans which bought the land in 1903 to benefit those active in sports in the Chinese Community. The field of the club was called Victoria Green and the five clans appointed trustees to take care of its assets management. The PCRC was established in 1892 making it the earliest Chinese Sports Association in Malaysia. A part of PCRC, the ground was purchased by Cheah Choo Yew.

NOTE: The Penang Cheah Si Hock Haw Kongsi not only plays an important part in uniting its clan members, but also contributes towards education, religion and sports. This special write-up is courtesy of the Board of Trustees of Cheah Kongsi, on the occasion of PHT’s January site visit to Cheah Kongsi, for its members.
Letters published under this section are open to direct correspondence by anyone who is interested in the subject matter, or who feel that she/he is qualified to offer help/advise in response to those who have written in to us.

Comments on Inner City Revitalization & Dirty Penang

Being born and brought up in Penang, I am pleased to hear that the Penang Heritage Trust is working on the revitalization of the inner city in Penang. It is time that we should try to work closely with the state government, particularly MPPP to better improve the condition of these areas.

As a tour operator specialising in bringing European tourist into Malaysia, particularly Penang, I have many comments from our clients about the "falling apart heritage buildings" in Penang. In our tours, our emphasis on Penang is basically heritage and culture but I get comments that we do not upkeep our heritage buildings and its surroundings. Our tours are mainly concentrated on walking tours within the inner city as by doing such walking tours will our tourist appreciate the beauty of our heritage.

I do not blame the landlords for not upkeeping these old buildings apart from their frustrations tackling the rent control problems, the conclusion is to sell their properties or tear them down and build new buildings that will generate more income. In actual fact, some of these landlords have been exploited by their tenants for the past 60 years with the outdated laws.

Recently the rent control act has been lifted but there has been a lot of damage done to our heritage buildings. I recently read in the papers that the State Government in conjunction with the Federal Government, has set aside a 100 million ringgit fund to provide as soft loans to landlords for them to renovate these buildings but are these incentives attractive enough for landlord to take it? There are many beautiful old buildings which perhaps the state government can take the opportunity to purchase from landlords who wish to sell and renovate them to preserve our heritage. The state government can start a good example by doing so. I have noted that some old government quarters have been beautifully renovated along Burmah Road and been put to good use. What about purchasing heritage buildings from the private sectors and renovating them also?

To start off, the MPPP must do something about the cleanliness of the city -- drains are clogged; some roads especially side lanes, are full of rubbish along the edge of the roads. Why can't the MPPP send people to remove the rubbish regularly, or else see that strict enforcement is in place to curb the indiscriminate throwing of rubbish all over the place. I actually have more than 30 pictures of "Dirty Penang" with me and I really would like to meet the President of MPPP for his explanation. I think Dato' Kee has also taken note and actually acted on it but sadly her hard work to bring tourists to Penang is not taken seriously by MPPP.

Sometimes vehicles are parked haphazardly and disorderly, blocking traffic making the city look so untidy apart from hawkers trading at all corners of the road. Although the roadside stalls are really an attraction but someone must make sure that these are controlled and taken care off instead of making the situation worst. Therefore in conclusion, I really hope that the state government and MPPP must at least show a good example to the private sectors.

Please update me as I really want to do something to help Penang to gain back its beauty!

Eric Ewe (Kuala Lumpur)
Email: ee12pst@pc.jaring.my
Dated: 12 October 2000
Researching the history of Penang and some comment/ideas for improvement

I was travelling through the pages of Penang history on the Internet and perched upon your site. What beautiful graphics you have and what a splendid idea. Often as I have visited my place of birth, I lament the sad condition of those fabulous old homes. The Penang Heritage Trust deserves support and as we all get older, the work you do becomes more valuable.

Penang is a most unique city and I am sadly surprised not more has been done to enhance the island. I was there in August last year and the traffic was horrible especially around the Tanjong Tokong area, just after the roundabout at Gurney Drive. If I remember they were digging the roads when I was a young schoolboy in the late 60’s, and they’re still at it now!

I almost died when I saw how they lopped off the tops of some of the beautiful angsana trees around the Scotland Road areas. Murder! Whoever was responsible should have his head chopped off, also. Those giant trees are priceless. Many Penangites may have got so used to them and take them for granted but honestly to someone like me who hasn’t seen them for a long time or a tourist, they are impressive. Trees must be regarded as an important natural heritage, which I am glad to note was an item included for conservation in your objectives I guess, having been away from Penang and looking at it with fresh eyes gives one a different purview. Whatever one’s reason for loving the place, there is no doubt the old houses and architecture need to be conserved for posterity. Perhaps, one thing that could be done is to also include the old street names (in a different colour) under the Malay names. I appreciate it is part of the Malaysianization process to change street names to reflect Nationalistic values but honestly, some things just shouldn’t be changed because of their historical value. For example, Armenian Street was historically the place of abode for the Armenians and Light Street was the first street to be created after the founder established his settlement. The history of Penang is an intangible valuable asset.

I am researching the history of Penang with a view to writing a novel based on the history and the island itself and was happy to learn Anna and the King was shot there but of course most people don’t know that. I live in Australia but once a Penangite, always a Penangite. Please let me know in what ways I can do something to help your cause and the list of objectives you have sound impressive. I also think the Penang Botanical Gardens deserves to be enhanced. Does it come under your scope of responsibilities?

Steve Oh (Australia)
Email: abc@inet.net.au
Dated: 16 January 2001

Great Job!

Thank you for the excellent PHT Newsletter of October-December 2000. The articles always make me wish I could visit all the sites that are described. Your organization is doing a fine job, and deserves plenty of recognition and support. We look forward to visiting Penang again in early August. Best regards to you and your office staff. And how is that nice cat?

Michael M. Stein (Herndon, Virginia, U.S.A.)
Email: jasminc-and-mike@erols.com
Dated: 15 January 2001

We need help... locating the families of some prominent historical personalities of Penang.

We are working on a book project relating to Scouting history and development in Singapore and Malaysia. This deals with the beginnings since 1908 till present. For Malaysia section of the story, it would stop at 1965. However, you might be pleased to know that Penang was one of the first to have a Scouting Movement. We would like to locate the families of a few prominent historical personalities of Penang. Specifically, they are:

1) Goh Guan Ho - Prominent Penang lawyer and a very early member of the Scout Movement. He was originally from Singapore but settled in Penang after he was married. He was in the scout movement during 1908 - 1910s early days.

2) Ong Joo Sun - Prominent Penang councilman and a very early member of the Scout Movement. He joined Scouting at Penang YMCA around 1910.

3) Zainal Abidin - Founding member of UMNO Penang and a very early member of the Scout Movement. He was the first Muslim District Commissioner of Scouts in Malaya. He taught at St Xavier.

4) Mr Oon Hoot Ewe - A very early member of the Scout Movement.

5) Mr Ong Ewe Siung - A very early member of the Scout Movement

6) Khoo Sim Theong - A very early member of the Scout Movement. Hewas the first Chinese District Commissioner of Scouts in Penang and Malaya. He was a teacher at Penang Free School.

7) Chan Seang Teik - A very early member of the Scout Movement

Can anybody help us?

Dr Kevin Tan & Wan Meng Hao
Email: kevin@tecity.com.sg
Dated: 14 February 2001
PHT ABROAD

International Seminar on Traditional & Vernacular Architecture, Chennai, Tamilnadu & Hampi, Karnataka, 6-12 January 2001
Trust council member Loh-Lim Lin Lee’s first-hand account of her participation and experiences at the seminar...

The Madras Crafts Foundation, organiser of the seminar, is a non-profit organization dedicated to the preservation of traditional architecture, crafts, performing arts and design. Their main project has been the Dakshina Chitra Centre, located a little out of Chennai, a unique heritage centre made up of reconstructed period settings of 19th century streets, homes and working spaces of the Tamil Nadu, Kerala and Karnataka regions. Traditional crafts persons and folk artists work & perform (and some live as well) in the Centre. It is open to the public and acts as a demonstration & teaching tool.

The seminar was organised with a view of the vulnerability of traditional and vernacular architecture of Asia, to destruction in a period of rapid transition, migration, population growth and development.

The first part of the seminar was held in Chennai and focussed on the Rhetorical Use, Modalities and Technology of Expression of South Asian vernacular architecture and traditions. Main speakers included Seminar Director, Michael Meister, Professor of Art & South Asian Regional Studies, Univ. of Pennsylvania, Miki Desai, architect and author of Architectural and Independence, New Delhi 1997 and Ismeth Raheem of Colombo, Sri Lanka.

A separate session was conducted on the Modern Agenda and Vernacular Architecture with papers from Adele Naude Santos, architect and professor from University of Berkeley, California, Paul Mikula, architect and co-author of Traditional Hindu Temples in South Africa, Durban 1982 and Kinya Murayama of Team Zoo, Tokyo, Japan, who spoke on Design from Decaying Tradition.

The second part of the seminar was conducted at Hampi, 16th Century world historic site and centre of the Vijayanagara empire. Hampi was granted world historic status in 1996 and as of 1999, has been put on the endangered list, due to lack of proper management and planning. The site is scenically magnificent, 550 sq km in size with a core zone of 26 sq km, and dotted with magnificent royal palaces, baths, temples, elephant stables, guard quarters, bazaars all giving evidence of the stone carving skills of the region. Two aspects of conservation were presented, one the self-evident need to authentically conserve a major world historic site and the other, the aspirations of the communities in place and how they can co-exist with international standards of conservation.

Workshops and discussions were held with the communities of Hampi and Anegondi, a historical village within a 5-minute boat ride, to look at the current situation at the sites, where highways and bridges were presenting intrusions of the 21st Century. Leaders of the sessions in Hampi included George Mitchell, architect and architectural historian and John Fritz, archaeologist, both of whom have spent the last 21 years of their lives studying just the central zone of Hampi.


In Anegondi, issued centred on people’s participation in development within a historic site and their aspirations. Sharma Shapiro of the Kishkinda Trust introduced the group to the work the Trust had been conducting in the village of Anegondi. Village women had been involved in weaving, children’s classes were conducted and low impact technology in raw sewage disposal was introduced to the villages by the Trust.

A truly impressive participatory final session of the seminar was held with the community leaders and women of the villages as well as the representatives of the local government and the Archaeological Survey of India, the federal authorities in charge of the care of the historic site of Hampi. The groundwork was laid for the formulation and implementation of a management plan involving all stakeholders, while fulfilling the requirements of UNESCO. Citizens forums in small and medium towns which draw upon citizen participation and views were planned for the near future.
CALL FOR COMMENTS

The following is an excerpt from a Memorandum sent by the Penang Chinese Chamber of Commerce (PCCC) to the Chief Minister of Penang, Tan Sri Dr. Koh Tsu Koon, dated 16 November 2000.

The memorandum lists several topics of contention, including housing, transportation, infrastructure, tourism, trade & commerce, etc. which are not covered here because it is beyond the scope of this newsletter.

This excerpt highlights the issue of the PCCC’s view on Heritage Conservation in Penang, which it addresses from a rather skewed angle. The PCCC appears hostile towards the implementation of the Heritage Guidelines for the Inner City of George Town by the MPPP. It also contends that the poor response to the RM100 million soft loans provided by the State/Federal Government for heritage conservation purposes (in response to the repeal of the Rent Control Act), shows a lack of property owners’ commitment towards the policy. We welcome comments from readers and members of the Penang Heritage Trust, which we will publish in the next issue of our newsletter. You may email us at <phtrust@po.jaring.my> fax us at 04-2642631, or send your comments to 26A Lorong Stewart, 10200 Penang, Malaysia.

Heritage Conservation

1. The implementation of Heritage Guidelines for the Inner City of George Town has since aroused numerous criticisms from the public. The PCCC had organized a seminar to voice its concern over the negative impact of the guidelines, in which the disadvantages outweigh the advantages, two years ago. However, there has been affirmative action being taken to resolve the issues raised.

2. In essence, we have no objection to the conservation of certain well-known historical building, such as the State Assembly building, the Penang High Court, the State Museum, the Town and City Halls, religious buildings, clan houses and private homes. However, such conservation should be based on case-by-case basis. Simply freezing the development projects in the 425 acres of prime land just for preserving certain heritage buildings is ultimately unfair to the affected property owners, developers as well as the residents in general. In fact, such implementation has evoked much controversy, as it is a challenge to private ownership, which is against the capitalistic economic system. The government should be selective when implementing the preservation and beautification of historical heritage instead of adopting an extensive guideline to have an overall control.

3. The property owners cannot be deprived of an economic gain by forgoing their land use and development potential. The ill response to the RM100 million soft loans provided for heritage conservation purposes shows the lack of property owners’ commitment towards this policy, as there is no economic value for their properties.

4. Undoubtedly, without economic motivation these old buildings will definitely be left to suffer from both physical and functional obsolescence and thus, defeated the purposes of the state government urban modernization plan. As a consequence, the quality of living of the people of George Town will be further deteriorated due to aggravation of the existing unresolved problems, such as flood, traffic congestion, infrastructure bottleneck etc.

5. In short, the strict enforcement of Heritage Guidelines, in addition to the Repeal of Rent Control Act will result in the loss of population in town area and slowing down of commercial activities in the designated area. Without taking speedy remedy action to encourage flexible development, it will turn the once most prosperous area in Penang into a ‘dead city’ and such an attractive old building certainly will not make us proud in the eyes of tourists.

6. The future development of Penang is very much depended on its strategical adjustment. To achieve this, it should first and foremost, increase or at least maintain its population to generate commercial activities, to make it lively, active and economically viable. There should be urban rejuvenation, upgrading urban slums, making more efficient use of the land scare land resources, ensuring compatibility of land use and accelerate the upgrading of all infrastructure.

7. Facing the scarcity and limitation of land in this island, instead of imposing rigid conditions on development projects, the state government should in fact give more flexibility for multiple-development by the property owners and/or joint venture between government and private sector, such as building more low-medium cost housing and converting the old buildings to commercial blocks. The prerequisite for implementing these projects is to maintain vigorous commercial activities.
PROJECTS

Three New Projects for Penang Heritage Trust

The first project focuses on women and urban governance, the second on waqf and Muslim heritage as an educational resource, and third project combines the two concerns by focussing on inner city Muslim community, in particular Muslim women and young women. The 3 projects are in line with 2 of PHT’s new strategic visions: “Strengthening Traditional Communities through Women & Children”; “Youth & Heritage”.

1 Local-Local Dialogue on Women in Urban Governance. Supported by AWAS and HAWA Penang.

The purpose of this project is to explore how to improve housing conditions and urban governance in the historic inner city of George Town through greater representation and participation by women in decision-making. The multi-stakeholder dialogues will help to build women’s capacity to negotiate with local government, and to re-educate city governments on the principles of good governance in relation to the priorities and needs of women and the community. These dialogues are all the more important considering that this is the period when public inputs are being gathered for the long overdue Local Plan for George Town, the most important long-term instrument for protecting the living heritage city. UNDP has commissioned AWAS (Asian Women and Shelter) to organise structured dialogues on Women in Urban Governance in 8 cities in Asia. The dialogues were originally part of a UNCHS programme for Localizing Habitat Day 2000, which has its theme “Women in Urban Governance”. AWAS has appointed PHT to take up this project with a sponsorship of USD4,000. HAWA under the chairmanship of Dato’ Kee Phaik Cheen has agreed to support this project with a further sponsorship of RM10,000, in order to enlarge the participation. The theme of the Local-Local Dialogue will be ‘Women and the Changing City: Housing & Urban Governance of Inner City George Town after Rent Control Repeal’, exploring sub-themes such as:
   - Women & Shelter.
   - Women & Inner City Neighbourhoods.
   - Women Access to Services & Amenities.
   - Women, Urban Environment & Public Safety.
   - Women, Planning & Urban Development.

2 Heritage in Youth Education: Urban Muslim Community, Culture & Heritage. Supported by UNESCO.

Participation Programme George Town boasts a unique urban Muslim community, historically made up of Tamils and other Indian Muslims, Achehnese and other Sumatrans, as well as Arabs and Malays. Their cultural resources in terms of built heritage, religious culture, lifestyles, food, languages, printing press and literary history, business skills and so forth contribute tremendously to the cultural and economic diversity of George Town. These resources have the potential to play an important role in the tourism development of Penang and the cultural education of young Malaysians. PHT has been awarded a USD17,000 grant under the UNESCO Participation Programme for a proposal submitted through the Education Ministry. The Penang Heritage Trust project consists of several strategies to develop and promote Penang’s urban Muslim community, culture and heritage through the following components:
   - Heritage education kit for presentations in schools.
   - Educational heritage tours for schoolchildren.
   - Week-long intensive heritage course for young leaders.

Japanese Visitors to Penang
23-26 March 2001

Mr Taro Ryotaro Katsura, Vice-Chairman from Nara Machizukuri Center will bring 8 members from Nara University. They will stay at Clittie Penang, Khoo Salma, Lim Gaik Siang & Junko Tanaka will show them around Penang. PHT members who wish to meet with the visitors or help with hosting, please contact PHT Office Tel: 2642631.


This is a community development project conducted by the Penang Heritage Trust and targeted at Muslim community living in the historic inner city, which faces certain challenges after the Repeal of Rent Control. PHT was awarded a RM 30,000 grant by the Canadian High Commission from the CIDA Women’s Initiative Fund. The project aims to:
   - strengthen community through women and youth initiatives and networking.
   - enhance the role of women and youth as custodians and interpreters of their heritage and historic environment.
   - engage women in urban governance and improving housing conditions and urban environment.
   - promote the development of a historic cultural community, whose heritage, prosperity and well-being are important to the cultural diversity of inner city George Town.

The year-long programme will fund skills development, community talks, cultural training & development, surveys, Muslim heritage tours, exhibition and documentation.

Note: The second and third projects strive to continue some of the initiatives started during the PHT’s project ‘Community Participation in Waqf Revitalization’ with a grant from UNESCO-LEAP (programme on integrated community development and cultural heritage site preservation in Asia and the Pacific through Local Effort) in 1999.
Blue Mansion grabs Top International Award
Presentation ceremony of the prestigious
UNESCO Asia-Pacific Heritage Conservation Award 2000
on evening of 6 January 2001

The historical 38-room Cheong Fatt Tze mansion of George Town, Penang was recently awarded the inaugural UNESCO Asia-Pacific Heritage Conservation Award 2000 as the Most Excellent Project in the region. The RM 7.6 million (USD 2 million) restoration was led by Penang-based husband and wife team, architect Laurence Loh, and Lin Lee Loh-Lim.

Deputy Prime Minister Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi was the guest of honour, while Richard Engelhardt of UNESCO officiated the award ceremony. Also present were Penang Chief Minister Tan Sri Dr. Koh Tsu Koon, State Tourism Exco Mdm Kee Phaik Cheen, Badan Warisan Malaysia President Tan Sri Ahmad Sarji, and of course Penang Heritage Trust President Dr. Choong Sim Poey.

About 200 guests were invited for the event and the press and media were well represented. The weather was wonderful and the choice of the main inner courtyard for the venue of the award ceremony was an excellent one. The glow from the setting sun lent a certain rustic charm to the whole event. To add to the authenticity of the grand Chinese mansion, hostess Lin-Lee looked resplendent in her black velvet cheongsam while hubby Lawrence cut a dashing figure in a white kungfu costume. Cikgu Baharoodin’s dancers performed a traditional dance in their colourful costumes. This was followed by an equally interesting demonstration of a ku chen performance by students of the traditional Chinese musical instrument. Thereafter, there was a dinner reception. The newly opened archives room was a popular side attraction and guests who wandered into the side-wing got a chance to peek into the newly restored suites which would soon be available for rent to the public.

The evening was a grand success and even Cheong Fatt Tze himself would have smiled in approval...

The Campbell Street Mall ...Does it Work?

The two German ASA students who worked out of the Penang Heritage Trust office from September to December 2000 gave a presentation of their findings on December 6 of last year. They have pursued their research with a high degree of professionalism and thoroughness and the conclusions are rather convincing.

Their excellent 47-page report describes the short history of Campbell Street since the 1950s and the planning background, analyses the traffic situation, the structure of businesses and reasons for Campbell Street’s decline, and reviews the new appearance of Campbell Street Mall. The report is a must-read for local government officers as well as private consultants involved in urban design and streetscape design.

The subject of the Cambell Street Mall is still drawing much interest, most recently at the Signage Seminar organised by MPPP on 20 February, featuring speakers Australian conservation architect Elizabeth Vines and Malaysia’s top graphic designer William Harald-Wong.

One Year After – An Evaluation of Campbell Street Mall by Peter Welk, Diane Dochnab, ASA Team 2000 is available for viewing at the PHT office.
The letter of Professor Fukuda Kishino (NST, Nov 8) was among a considerable number of letters written to the press in recent months, expressing concern with heritage conservation in Malacca.

All the letters were written following the demolition of Nos. 90, 92 and 94 Jonker Street, and most made specific reference to the incident. Other problems and pressures - physical, social and economic - afflicting Malacca’s heritage environment were also highlighted in some of the letters, many of the comments made in the context of the city’s application for Unesco’s World Heritage status. Professor Fukuda’s letter offered a perspective on the matter from a country that is internationally acknowledged as one of the most developed and well-informed in the conservation of architectural and cultural heritage, and which has had at least nine sites successfully listed by Unesco since 1992 (seven of which are cultural heritage properties).

Badan Warisan Malaysia is of the opinion that the concerns expressed must be viewed collectively and constructively, and should not have been dismissed before a proper and thorough comparison was made with the very real situation that exists in the city.

The variety of opinions shown in the correspondence may be because the full extent and intention of the Malacca Enactment (1988) has not been implemented and enforced. The observations of Professor Fukuda and the other authors have underlined the urgency with which the need for enforcement must be addressed. The changes that have occurred in the old part of Malacca have clearly affected the integrity of its architectural fabric to varying degrees, in many cases altering original architectural features irrevocably. There are extensive examples of highly insensitive works which have jeopardised the aesthetic merit of individual buildings, groups of buildings and streets. Private initiative, when left unguided and motivated by the misinterpretation of heritage value, can have highly damaging results. Equally, public initiative, when misguided, sets a dangerous precedent and example for others to emulate.

The role and responsibility of the local authority and its statutory and non-statutory advisors in the conservation of Malacca’s historic areas and heritage zones has been brought into question. Despite the presence of legislation, it is the scope of influence and involvement of the local authority and its advisors that becomes the point of reference for any changes that are made to heritage buildings in Malacca. This highlights the urgency for the need of official guidelines for the conservation of heritage buildings. In the context of architectural heritage, physical change and the appropriateness of use naturally become the criteria for judging the interests of those involved, as well as the level of commitment and credibility of those who are entrusted to offer advice and guidance.

Badan Warisan hopes that these agencies will adopt the correct methodology and contemporary
Papan: The Case for Conservation

The recent reports in the newspapers of houses in Papan being sold literally for the value of the bricks with which they are built is a reflection of how our heritage buildings are valued purely on commercial lines.

Papan’s story is the story of tin-mining in the Kinta Valley with all the colour of a frontier town. In 1881 it was a multi-ethnic town with 13 mines run by Chinese and Mandailing miners; these two culturally divergent communities co-existed in peace for more than a century and the Papan chengkot is probably unique in Malaysia for having a Muslim cemetery on one side and a Chinese cemetery on the other.

It is ironic given that Perak which built its wealth from tin mining now discounts the economic history of Papan and is only focussing on a few sites in Perak for their tourism potential. Papan, which has its own story to tell, is dismissed. The many noteworthy buildings in Papan including Raja Bilah’s mansion (built 1896), the Bagas Godang (built 1882), the brick shophouses (originally around 60), the timber houses (around 20), the timber mosque and the Chinese temples, plus the disused tin-mines collectively are representative of life in an early mining community.

Badan Warisan Malaysia believes that a heritage law is urgently needed to prohibit the destruction of such heritage buildings. Guidelines are needed which are sensitive to and encourage conservation of the fast diminishing number of heritage properties. These guidelines must be to internationally accepted standards and there must be management mechanisms formed to ensure implementation and encourage best practice. The business of conservation is not only one in which the government plays a role, but one where the community participates to preserve their cultural traditions and the buildings in which these are lived out.

Press Release
Badan Warisan Malaysia
www.bwm.org.my

...continued from page 2 [Cheong Fatt Tze site visit report]

mien mosaics rarely seen in such abundance in private houses. This ceramic shard, a Hokkien art form, decorates the gable ends, doorways, and edges of the tiled roof and the verandahs like mantle of rich embroidery. 12,000 coloured pots were snapped into small pieces and intricately pasted together to form vivid patterns and mythological creatures.

Then we proceeded into the main courtyard, the largest of five, framed with eight Corinthian columns and a balcony of cast iron from MacFarlanes of Glasgow, combined with Chinese timber lattice work and wood-carved, gilded doors. We were also ushered into the newly-opened Archives Room, which contains documents, photographs and original items belonging to Cheong Fatt Tze and his family. Pointing to the side wing of the house, Loh-Lim explained that if Cheong Fatt Tze was slightly displeased with a family member, the object of his disgruntlement would be moved to a room there. In what must have been a tumultuous management, of wives, concubines, children, distant relatives and servants, Cheong Fatt Tze maintained order by room assignments. Current favourites always resided in the centre of the mansion toward the front. Those a bit out of favour were pushed into one of the wings. If the tycoon was really angry with an occupant, it meant exile across the road in the servants’ quarters.

The Towkay’s will stipulated that his property could not be sold until the death of his last son. Over the years, the Blue Mansion fell on hard times as the trustees of the estate provided little money for its upkeep. When rooms were rented out, the mansion slowly began to crumble.

Because of the primitive lighting, large amounts of electrical wiring were rigged up on the outside of the house; walls were blackened from cooking with charcoal and gas; clothes lines draped form intricate carvings and the tycoon’s once-elegant halls became a racetrack for tenants’ motorbikes.

When Cheong Fatt Tze’s last son died in 1989, the mansion seemed certain to be lost. But Fate was to play a hand when Loh-Lim and her husband, architect Laurence Loh decided to devote themselves towards restoration of the Blue Mansion.
Prayer/Blessing Ceremony to Commemorate the Completion of the Pilot Phase of Restoration Works at the Loo Pun Hong Carpenters' Guild Temple
Love Lane, morning of 7 January 2001

The recent completion of the restoration of the Loo Pun Hong Carpenters' Guild Temple at Love Lane, represents the Penang Heritage Trust's largest project to date.

A great part of Penang's Chinese, Straits Chinese and eclectic architectural heritage was built by the artisans of the Carpenters' Guild. Today, these artisans still continue to play an important role in restoring Penang's heritage buildings. Their contributions throughout the ages should not be forgotten. The restoration of the historic Carpenter's Guild temple at Love Lane is the first step towards preserving this tradition of local craftsmanship.

To mark this milestone, PHT together with the Loo Pun Hong Carpenters' Guild, jointly organised a special prayer ceremony to bless the temple and also to commemorate the completion of the pilot phase of the restoration works.

The event was graced by YAB Tan Sri Dr. Koh Tsu Koon, Chief Minister of Penang, who unveiled the commemorative plaque. Also present were YB Mr. Teng Chang Yeow (Adun of Padang Kota & Political Secretary to CM), Mr. Teoh Teik Yew (Carpenter's Guild President), and Dr. Choong Sim Poey, President of Penang Heritage Trust.

Members of the press, PHT members, as well as the public, turned up in full force to witness the event. There was a tea reception afterwards, followed by guided tours as well as an exhibition which showcased the Guild's excellent craftsmanship.

From left to right: YB Teng Chang Yeow, Mr. Teoh Teik Yew, YAB Tan Sri Dr. Koh Tsu Koon, performing a special prayer ceremony to bless the newly restored Loo Pun Hong Carpenters' Guild Temple.

Please help us to promote!
PHT will be conducting these three trails:

Tuesday
Little India, Spice Trail

Wednesday
Heritage Trail 2 & Cheong Fatt Tze

Thursday
Street of Harmony & Historical Enclave.

Those interested to join can contact Priscilla at Tel 264-2631 at least a day before for any of the tours. The fees for the trails are RM50 per pax (3-10) and RM40 per pax (11 & above).
Wonders of Chinese New Year 2001
Street Party at Love Lane, Sunday 14 January
Organised by Nanyang Folk Culture Society
and the Penang Heritage Trust

Despite the scorching sun and sweltering heat on that particular Sunday morning, it was estimated that an enthusiastic crowd of over 8,000 people turned up to participate in the celebrations.

A stage was set up in the middle of Love Lane at the Muntri Street/Steward Lane junction, where performers entertained the crowd with song & dance. A lion/Chingay procession really livened up the party and hoards of tourists were seen gaping in wonder and busily clicking away with their cameras. Highlights included a specially guided tour of the Carpenters’ Guild by our very own Council Member, Goh Mai-Loon.

Hardworking beauties manning the PHT booth take time off to pose for a photo. Clockwise from left are Mai-Loon, Khoo Salma, Gaik Siang, Oon Bee and Teresa Capo.

Hi-Tea at the Hilltop, 29 January 2001
As a show of appreciation, twelve well-deserving PHT Volunteers who really husted their back for us this past year, were invited by Vice President Ahmad Chik & wife Joan to have tea at his lovely “cottage” perched atop Bukit Bendera.

by Raja Abdul Razak

Even Alice’s tea party with the Mad Hatter, March Hare and Dormouse wasn’t half as fun or as picturesque.

Imagine the scene: an English-styled cottage on the cool heights of Bukit Bendera, and people having tea in the garden whilst taking in the awesome view of George Town some 2,000 feet below. Lush tropical trees and shrubs grow just feet away from the neatly kept lawns.

Little round tables with their distinctive red and white chequered tablecloths were laid out with freshly baked English pies and sumptuous curries. Fresh tosei and apom manis hot-off-the-griddle and steaming teh tarik were made to order. In one corner, an electric ice shaver was set up in case anyone wanted to cool off with some ais kacang. It was a scene that simply begged to be captured, but alas, no one remembered to bring a camera!
Tramways & Trolleybuses of Penang
Talk by Ric Francis, 30 January 2001, 5.00 pm at INTEC College
Fiona Bower reports...

If Ric Francis had his way, the streets of Penang would re-introduce the use of trams and trolley-buses. Mr. Francis, a retired engineer from Australia, gave a lively and fascinating account of the transportation history of Penang from 1880 to 1963. The presentation attracted over 30 people to Intec College on the evening of 30 January, including a fair representation from the press.

Ric's extensive research about this intriguing era, too him from Australia to sources as far away as the United States and the UK. Virtually no records exist in either Penang, or other parts of Southeast Asia. With very short notice, Gaik Siang prepared the powerpoint presentation. The majority of images that were shown, were sourced from old postcards. Ric described these wonderful photographs in the minutest of detail. Many in the audience were quick to recognise streets and buildings from decades ago.

Penang’s first tramway opened in 1888, running a route from the prison to Waterfall. By 1905, fourteen electric trams were traversing the roads of George Town. The system was profitable until the trade depression in 1922. For the next 40 years the government struggled to retain the system, until 1963 when the last bus took it’s final journey.

In 1925, Penang had twenty-four trolleybuses, running on five miles of single and double track each. The body of these handsome vehicles was appropriate to the climate. Wooden slat seats replaced upholstered ones, windows dropped down and were fitted with sunblinds to protect passengers from sun or rain.

In 1956, two double-decker busses arrived from London. First class passengers sat in the lower level, second class passengers rode on the top. Fares during this period were 10 cents for adults, and 5 cents for children. Transporting people around Penang was not the only task of these vehicles. They also transported tin ore to the smelting plant, returning with cargoes of tin ingots.

Recently, there has been a trend in Europe and Australia, seeing the return of these vehicles. Governments and populations were realising that they are an economical method of mass transit. They are environmentally friendly, and provide passengers with a much smoother and quieter ride.

Ric fielded many interesting questions from the audience. In closing, he reminded us that keeping even the smallest moments from our past is integral to preserving the heritage of Penang.
Dr. Mahathir’s visit to Sun Yat Sen Base  
in conjunction with Armenian Street/Cannon Square  
Chinese New Year Open House. Sunday, 4 February 2001  

Seen through the eyes of an American visitor to Malaysia...

Negotiating my way through the throngs of people (estimated at 40,000!), to Armenian Street and the Yap Temple, at the cultural core of the festivities, I was experiencing a tradition far older than anything I’ve known from my home. It was at once, humble, enlightening, colourful. The entertainments were varied, traditional, a delight to the senses, even to one who does not ordinarily feel comfortable among crowds of people. A blending of carnival midway Barker, community, religious observance, secular revelry – all accented with a vast array of food aromas and the fleeting scents of Jasmine and Oolong tea in the shophouses. Truly, Gong Xi Fa Cai.

I arrive at 120 Armenian Street (Sun Yat Sen Base), displaying the banner, Persatuan Warisan Pulau Pinang. Teresa Capol and Joanne Khaw were at the entrance to welcome visitors and distribute PHT flyers and literature. Just inside the entrance, PHT had also set up a merchandise booth, where I had volunteered my services. The shophouse, like most others, is long, somewhat narrow, with a large airy atrium in the middle of the house, filled with exotic plants and a goldfish pond. I read about Dr Sun Yat Sen from the displays on the walls. Chinese tea was served. The exhibition was well-attended, crowded, really. Very warm; ceiling fans turned, providing little relief from the heat. Evening, and a red sunset, and now a capricious breeze from the street... heaven. Darkness descended, lights blazed forth, the streets came alive.

I was told we would be receiving a very important visitor to the shophouse: the Dato’ Seri Dr. Mahathir bin Mohamad, Malaysia’s Prime Minister. “The Prime Minister?”, I asked. Shortly after 10 pm, the Prime Minister’s arrival was heralded by a collection of what I referred to as Paparazzi, jockeying for position, flashbulbs popping, and the PM’s entourage and security people entered the shophouse.

Enter the Prime Minister himself. Calm, studious, urbane, he and his wife graced the shophouse and was shown around the exhibits while host Khoo Salima explained. I observed, and took mental notes of the procession. The PM signed the guestbook with a flourish. Shaking hands with all who were present, he made his way to where I was standing. “It is an honour to meet you, sir,” I said, as I shook hands with him. “Are you helping to take care of this place too?” he asked me. “Yes, indeed,” I replied. This brief exchange of a few words. From but one location on this small, blue world, far away no longer.

My life has changed its course.

Gregg Curè [February 2001]

... continued from page 1, Editorial

2001 promises to be a good year for the Penang Heritage Trust. Our site visits have been incredibly successful and popular, with Priscilla and her children energetically making sure that subscriptions are collected. Three new grants for PHT have just been announced (see page 8).

We will miss Syatika d/o Atikulam, who worked as Research Officer with PHT during the last seven months, as she is leaving for greener pastures in Singapore. Syatika was working on the Endangered Trades project, Property Watch & Heritage Alert, and had also started working on PHT’s new project on Women in Urban Governance. We hope to announce the arrival of two new staff at PHT in the next newsletter. Faiz Izwan Amir, a Tourism Management student at Universiti Teknologi Mara (UiTM) is interning with PHT for two months from mid-February to mid-April and will help us to manage and market our PHT Heritage Tours.

I am sure you will agree, William Chow has brought the PHT Newsletter up to an unprecedented standard, both in terms of form and content. This issue of the Newsletter brings in many new contributors, which goes to prove that PHT is not short of talented writers. Keep writing!

Khoo Salima Nasution
Special Discounts!

13 retail outlets in Penang & other cities have become our pioneer “discount” givers in our new effort to bring more value to your PHT membership card! Look out for PHT stickers at these outlets, which have kindly extended 10% discount or special rates if you present your card.

**FAIRYTALE**
21A Cordingra Avenue
10350 Penang

**Jairu Court**
11 Leith Street
10200 Penang

**WHITE RAJA**
**RESTAURANT & BAR**
4, Jalan Telawi, Bangsar Baru
59100 Kuala Lumpur

**Old China Cafe**
No. 9 Beach Street
10300 Penang

**Bukit Jambul**
2, Jalan Bukit Jambul
11900 Penang

**Linens & Things**
Lot F-9, 1st Floor KL Plaza
Jalan Bukit Bintang
55100 Kuala Lumpur

**THE ART GALLERY**
366-4 Bells Row
Jalan Burma
10350 Penang

**PICASSO**
M-K1 Mezzanine Floor
Island Plaza, Tg, Tokong
10470 Penang

**The Garage**
2 Penang Road
10000 Penang

**LAKE TOWN RESORT**
Jalan Bukit Merah
Sriangol
34400 Perak

**Pusser’s Choice**
26, Jln Pudu Lama
50200 K.L.

MERCHANDISE CORNER

All items listed here are available from the PHT Office. Please note that 10-20% of the proceeds goes to PHT, so your kind support will be much appreciated...

**PENANG SHOPHOUSE CARDS**
Set of 6 blank Greeting Cards each illustrating a different Penang Shophouse
by Alan Flux
Price: RM 10.00

**PENANG HILL MAP**
A delightfully & innovatively illustrated map & brochure full of useful information about Penang Hill
Price: RM 4.00

**FACES OF GEORGE TOWN BOOKMARKS**
Khoo Cheang Jin Watercolours
Set of 8 bookmarks
Price: RM 6.00

**VICTOR CHIN POSTCARDS**
32 watercolours of urban scenes in Penang, Kuala Lumpur, Melaka & Singapore
Price: RM 15.00 (set of 4)

**CHEONG FATT TZE MANSION CARDS**
Set of 8 blank cards depicting the splendor of the magnificent mansion
Price: RM 12.00

“Save Historic George Town” Car Sticker: RM 2.00 each

Save Historic George Town
LISTED ON 100 MOST ENDANGERED SITES 2000, WORLD MONUMENTS WATCH
website: www.pht.org.my • email: phtrust@po.jaring.my
CM: Viable to restore ‘old buildings’

By SIRA HABIBU

PENANG: Chief Minister Tan Sri Dr Koh Tsu Koon said yesterday that supporters of conservation efforts are not “doomsday clock-takers” as it was economically viable to restore heritage structures.

He said the value of property in established heritage enclaves appreciated tremendously.

“In fact, many great cities of the world are adorned with heritage buildings and such heritage structures exude a sense of history and culture,” he said.

He said destroying heritage structures for short-term monetary gain would have an adverse impact on Penangites livelihood in the long run.

“We have a winning formula in the form of heritage charms, friendly people, hawker food as well as impressive scenery,” he said.

Concerted efforts among the public and private sectors were needed to ensure Penang secured global recognition as a heritage centre, he said.

He added Penang had become part of the international heritage conservation movement as more and more “rejuvenated” old buildings adorned the cityscape.

Dr Koh said among the impressive old buildings that had been restored were Cheong Fatt Tze Mansion, Syed Alatas Mansion, Acheen Street Mosque, Kho Kongsi Temple, Hotel 1926, 1930 Hotel and The Garage.

Dr Koh said this at a function to commemorate the completion of the pilot phase of restoration works at the 145-year-old Loo Pun Hong Carpenters’ Guild Temple in Love Lane yesterday.

“This is a good example of how the private and public sector, as well as a non-government organisation, made concerted efforts to restore this oldest carpenters’ guild in Malaysia,” he said.

The Penang Heritage Trust and the Loo Pun Hong Carpenters’ Guild raised a total of RM185,429 for the restoration work, while the state chipped in one more RM13,000.

It took five years of fund raising and efforts to complete the first phase of the project, he said.

The Penang Heritage Trust was committed as they managed to complete the first phase of the project despite financial constraints.

PHOTO: ...Dr Koh admiring the restored artwork painting which adorns the wall of the courtyard.

NATION

SATURDAY November 11 2000 THE STAR

'Respect feelings of people'

By ONG JU LYNN

PENANG: The federal government should respect the feelings of the people when approving federal projects within a state, said Penang Ratepayers Association (PRA) president Datin Puan Choi Sin.

“It may be the legal right of the federal government, but it should also consider the wishes of ratepayers,” he said.

Choi Sin was referring to a federal proposal to put up a seven-story office building within the precinct of the historic High Court building at Lebuh Farquhar.

He said the state government should consider the state government’s proposal to erect a block on an alternative site.

The state had offered a 2,800 sq. piece of land beside the Dataran Sri Pinang, which is just across the road from the court house.

State senator Ong Boon Peah voted his disappointment that the state government had not made a definitive stand against the federal project.

“The state should stand up for the wishes of the people who have elected them to office,” he said.

Several organisations, including the Penang Heritage Trust and the Penang Tourist Guides Association, have voiced their disapproval of the federal project claiming the seven-story block would mar the picturesque vista and jeopardise Penang’s nomination to the UNESCO World Heritage Listing.

Heritage tour guide Terese Pereira said the courthouse was among the heritage buildings covered in the American Express Heritage Trail.

“At tour guides, we are directly in contact with tourists. How do I explain to them what a modern seven-story block is doing next to a historical building that is almost a hundred years old?” said Pereira who has been a heritage tour guide for nine years.

She added that tourism in Penang would be affected if efforts to conserve them is reversed by a project that would destroy the historical harmony of the historical vicinity.

A lesson on history of kongsi for Penang Heritage Trust members

By A. Sangeetha

GEORGE TOWN, Sun: The heavy gates of three Hokkien kongsi swung open to visitors, who marvelled at the rich history and intricate designs of age-old clan houses.

The visitors, who are members of the Penang Heritage Trust (PHT), took a walk through the Khoo, Cheah and Tan kongsi situated at Armenian Street and Cannon Square, before being served a sumptuous noon meal spread this afternoon.

PHT secretary Kho Soo Sam Nasution gave descriptive narrations of the history and background of the kongsi and the neighbourhood, which left many visitors astounded.

Despite the hot sun, the visitors enjoyed the tour as well as the wide food spread.

Kho, who later spoke to reporters, explained that the visits, which are planned monthly at different locations, are organised by the PHT mainly for its members, to allow them to learn about the clans and kongsi, which have existed since the 1800s.

“We want to show them how united the kongsi were in those days, their social ties and kinship. Even today, they remain intact, including the buildings and heritage,” said Kho.

She said the two-and-a-half-hour visits was aimed at educating members on how the 19th century organisations have come to exist until today, although they started as social associations and enclaves.

“It is amazing how they managed to remain as non-profit associations and have remained so to date,” said Kho.

She said the PHT, which last year started with the monthly visits to various historical locations, including Hindu temples and mosques, hopes to introduce the diverse cultures and communities of Penang to its members.

Kho said a course in preserving and maintaining heritage buildings and the sharing of resources will be planned in the near future.
Objections against courthouse project

By ONG JU LYN and BERNARD SEE

PENANG: The federal project to build a seven-storey block housing a new courthouse and carpark bays within the existing courthouse precinct will destroy the heritage harmony of the historical vicinity, said Penang Heritage Trust president Dr Choong Sim Poei.

He said the project would block the courthouse vista, the definitive design as one entered the historical enclave of George Town.

Built in 1905, the Penang courthouse is one of seven monuments that have been gazetted and protected under the Antiquities Act 1976.

"The courthouse is a landmark within the historical vicinity which includes other heritage buildings such as the St George's Church, the Penang Museum and the Light Street Convent," he told a press conference in Intec College recently.

"The project, approved in 1997, would also mean the removal of the Logan memorial which now stands in the compound of the courthouse," he added.

The monument was built in recognition of lawyer and ethnologist James Richardson Logan who championed political autonomy for the Straits Settlement in the early 1800s.

Dr Choong added that extensive conservation work had been done on these protected buildings and allowing the project to go on would reverse efforts to put George Town in the World Heritage List.

Chief Minister Tan Sri Dr Koh Tsu Koon said Minister in the Prime Minister's Department Datuk Pandikar Amin Mulia would be invited to take a tour of the historical building.

"We are against the project as it would damage the century-old building. I hope the minister will be able to see the beauty of the building and keep it as it is.

"If the federal government still insists on the project, the state government will ensure that the style of the carpark is similar to that of that period to reduce the damage," he said.

Dr Koh added that preferably a block 'no higher than the original building' should be allowed within the court grounds.

State Tourism, Culture, Arts and Women committee chairman Datuk Kee Phaik Cheen also expressed her disapproval of the federal project.

"We understand that there is a lack of space in our existing courthouse, hence, we have offered an alternative site to build the new block. "Unfortunately, the federal government still insists on the original plan," she said.

The alternative plan proposed by the state was to build the seven-storey block beside the Dewan Sri Pinang, just across from the courthouse.

Penang is in the process of seeking nomination on the UNESCO World Heritage List jointly with Malacca.

Barring unforeseen circumstances, Penang would be accorded heritage status by December 2002.

The six other monuments gazetted under the Antiquities Act 1976 are Fort Cornwallis, the Kapitan Keling Mosque, the Lebuh Acheh Mosque, the Sheikh Omar Basheer Mousoleum, the Clock Tower, and the Battu Bertulis Ceruk Tok Kun in Province Wellesly.
Opinions

Ban hammer-driven piling on historical sites

Penang Heritage Trust is deeply concerned that hammer-driven piling is still being permitted by the local authorities within heritage zones. This method is unsuitable to heritage sites and buildings of historical value.

The ramifications are far more serious than the threats to several high-profile heritage sites such as the Peranakan Mansion in Leith Street and the history of the state in Ipoh.

Some war-time houses were also affected by water leaks due to the present works of structural brick wall, architraves, lintels and doors. The problem of subsidence and upheaval of the grounds have caused buildings to become unstable and displace.

The disfigurement of the area has made it unsuitable for further development. Buildings are affected by water leaks and the foundations of some are suffering from subsidence and upheaval.

Traditional built-in windows and doors being affected by the new works. The heritage buildings are threatened with demolition. It is unenforceable to stop this process.

Another concern is the collapse of the historic building in Beach Street which was triggered by earthworks on the adjacent site. The building is listed as a heritage site.

Recent issues of concern are:

- The collapse of a historic building in Beach Street due to new earthworks in an adjacent site which claimed a worker's life.
- The hammer-driven piling and the building in Beach Street has affected the area. The state government should consider the impact on the heritage site.
- The on-going earthworks at several adjacent sites deep within the heritage zones.
- The public are unaware of the significance of the heritage buildings.

The director general of the Department of Heritage has expressed concern over the proposed new buildings in the heritage area. The state government has stepped in to stop the new buildings and the heritage site is saved.

If Heritage Trust is to succeed in its application for World Heritage Listing, the state and local authorities must be proactive in ensuring the maintenance of the heritage site.}

Heritage buildings such as the Cheong Fatt Tze Mansion should be adequately protected.

Letter

Need to look into problems posed by schoolbuses

Since time immemorial, schoolbuses have been providing an invaluable service to community by ferrying children to and from school. The operators are mainly the unskilled drivers.

However, progress has its share of disadvantages. The vehicles are often overcrowded and less than a decent standard. The drivers are often inexperienced and the children are often left unattended. The children have to wake up very early in the morning to get to school, and the journey home is sometimes a tedious one.

The authorities responsible for ensuring the safety of the children must ensure that the vehicles are well-maintained and the drivers are properly trained. The children should not be left unattended during the journey.

Ng Moon Leung
Penang
LIFESTYLE
Fading of past glory

Going soon... a(1) view of Sia Boey market taken from the top of the new Prangin Mall. The market is bounded by Jalan Dr Lim Chee Leong on the left and Maxwell Road on the right.

— Picture by Goh Gai Lea

The Days of the century-old Prangin wholesale market in Penang are numbered. Built in 1886 to stand still as a stilted trawler, the market was razed to make way for the new Prangin Mall. Although the market has been in operation for over a century, the new mall will soon be completed and take over the role of the old market.

Located in the heart of the city, the market was once the hub of the city's trade, serving both locals and tourists. However, with the development of the city, the market has become a relic of the past. The new Prangin Mall, with its modern facilities and retail spaces, will undoubtedly attract more visitors.

The market has been a source of community gathering for many years. However, with the passage of time, the market has become a symbol of the city's past. The new Prangin Mall will undoubtedly change the landscape of the city, and the market will be a thing of the past.
ONE of the darkest moments in the history of the Prangin riverine market was during World War II when the Japanese launched an air strike in the city of George Town just east of the market.

As news of the air strike spread, the townsfolk of George Town and nearby areas began to evacuate. People fled to the safety of the hills and forests around the city, leaving behind their homes and belongings. The Japanese occupation of the city lasted from 1942 to 1945, during which time the Prangin riverine market was hit hard by the war.

As the war came to an end, the townsfolk returned to their homes and the market slowly began to revive. The market was once again bustling with activity as people resumed their daily lives.

Path of yesteryear

Malay Chinese historian Ong Hon Seng, a deputy research director at Nanyang Technological University, notes that the Prangin riverine market was an important center for trade and commerce in the region. He says, "The market played a crucial role in the economic development of the area, providing a platform for local traders to sell their goods and connect with customers from all over the region."

The market was also a hub for cultural activities, with local musicians and dancers performing for the visitors.

The Prangin riverine market was not just a marketplace; it was also a social gathering place. People would come to the market to catch up with friends, enjoy the music and dance, and experience the local culture.

The market was eventually replaced by modern developments, but it remains an important part of the city's history and culture. Today, people still gather at the site to remember the past and celebrate the present.

End
Tug-of-war over Penang Town Hall

THE Penang Island Municipal Council (MPPP) has been asked to "return" the Penang Town Hall at the Esplanade to the people instead of converting it for administrative use.

The building, which has not been used by the MPPP for about nine years, was specifically designed to serve as a "civic and cultural centre" in George Town when it was built in 1899.

The town hall was gazetted under the Antiquities Act to protect it from demolition or improper alterations. Any significant changes to its structure are subject to strict regulations administered by Muzium Negara.

It is likely that major alterations to convert it for administrative use will contravene these regulations. Recently, 26 organisations wrote a letter to the MPPP to appeal for the return of the town hall. The following is a copy of the letter:

"Declared open in 1980 and upgraded in 1986, the town hall was built to fulfil social functions, having within its spacious interiors, an assembly hall, a library and a ballroom where weddings, parties and other events were celebrated."

"For over 64 years, from 1920 to 1984, it also maintained a town band, for the pure enjoyment of the citizens of Penang, holding open-air concerts in the bandstand at the Esplanade as well as the Botanic Gardens." When the City Hall was completed in 1902 to accommodate the municipal offices, the town hall was again upgraded, emerging as one of the first buildings in Penang to be completely fitted with electric lights and fans, for the added comfort of its public users.

It is clear that the people of inner-city George Town require the use of a public building that has been custom-made for civic and cultural usage.

It should be noted that the proposed civic centre at Komtar phase 4, promised to the public more than 25 years ago by the Penang government, has never materialised.

A large number of citizens, arts and professional groups wish to urge the MPPP to return the town hall to the people of Penang to be used as a civic centre.

Its restoration and refurbishment to meet the needs of the Penang public in general and the downtown urban community in particular, would be one more factor justifying the recent selection of the city George Town as a United Nations Development Programme 'lead city', and one of the six most liveable cities in Asia.

The following plans are enclosed as preliminary concept proposals for usage of the space. These are based on perceived needs as well as viable financial returns to the MPPP.

In general, they encompass:

> a medium-sized venue for the performing arts;
> a venue for public meetings and functions that is disabled-friendly and accessible at street level to all, including the elderly;
> a location for the State Art Gallery (currently inaccessible to many), transient exhibitions, an information centre and a cafe;
> a venue for receptions and kenduri for the downtown population; and
> a special 'Malaysia-Penang' collection library/reading room.

The town hall would continue to remain under the guardianship of the MPPP.

The successful management of the town hall as a civic and cultural centre would be ensured with the setting up of a management committee comprising of the MPPP and some of the arts, civic and community organisations utilising the premises.

We thank you for your consideration and we trust you and your councillors will very seriously review this request.

A favourable response will be met with great appreciation by many sectors of the public.

Dr Choong Sim Poey
Chairman of Penang Heritage Trust
By ONG JU LYNN  
STAR/THUS and SYLVIA LOO  
1 Feb 2001

PENANG: More than 300 long-term tenants of about 100 pre-war houses belonging to the Khoo Kongsi in Cannon Square will have to vacate their homes to make way for a tourism project.

SOS secretary Ong Boon Kong said yesterday the tenants would gradually be evicted after the one-year lease they had been asked to sign recently expired.

Ong was referring to the proposed plan to turn the Khoo Kongsi heritage enclave in Cannon Square into a "tourism complex" which had been approved by the Penang Municipal Council.

It is learnt that planning permission had been given to convert the Khoo Kongsi Temple square houses into commercial lots consisting of antique, and souvenirs shops, bookshops and "food outlets."

Ong added that 20 tenants within the Cannon Square had been given the ultimatum of signing a final one-year tenancy agreement at 100% increase in rent, or face eviction if they did not leave by March 31.

"The Khoo Kongsi development typifies the unpopular mass displacement of George Town's original inhabitants after the coming into effect of rent control last year," said Ong.

He added that throwing out the people to convert houses into tourist basins is a blend of tourism development that is "unimaginative" and "misguided."

Ong said it appeared that the repeal of the Rent Control Act 1966 had been exploited to justify heartless eviction of inhabitants in favour of a multi-million heritage development project.

Penang and Malacca are jointly seeking the UNESCO World Heritage Listing, and barring unforeseen circumstances, will be awarded the status by December 2002.

The affected residents ad-hoc committee assistant secretary Loke Saw Sim said residents had been trying to meet the trustee of Khoo Kongsi since receiving the eviction notice in March 1999.

She said that initially, the residents had asked for a compensation of RM30,000 but it was lowered to RM20,000 after the trustee had offered a flat rate of RM5,000 to the residents.

Describing the residents as being caught in the middle, Loke said they were either forced to take the compensation or signed a new tenancy agreement.

Most of the residents do not have alternative housing.

The committee's secretary Goh Chin Choo said the residents were "helpless people" and hoped that the authorities would step in to help them.

By Christina Gurunathan
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PENSIVE MOOD ... (from right) Goh, Loke and Ong speaking at the press conference yesterday.

PHT project to empower inner city residents

Programmes to be conducted for women and youths in George Town

By Christina Gurunathan
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PENANG. Sun: The Penang Heritage Trust (PHT) will conduct a year-long development programme in an effort to strengthen and empower Muslim community dwellings in the inner city of George Town.

The RM30,000 project, funded by the Canadian International Development Agency under its Women's Initiative Fund, will target some 100 women and 80 youths in the precincts surrounding Acheen Street and the Kapitan Keling mosque.

"The women and youth play an important role as custodians of their heritage and historic environment," PHT secretary Khoo Salma Nasution told a press conference on the project at the trust's office on Jalan Stewart yesterday.

Khoo said following the repeal of the Rent Control Act, many of the residents had to move out and now live in poor conditions.

"Through the project, we want to engage the women in urban governance and improving housing conditions and the urban environment."

Khoo said heritage conservation is incomplete without developing the community socio-economically and instilling in them the pride of living in the area.

"We want the women and youth to be interpreters of their history. Their heritage, prosperity and well-being are important to the cultural diversity of inner city George Town which is being nominated for World Heritage status," she said.

She said PHT will conduct a survey to gauge the socio-economic status, literacy rate and educational needs of the community members.

Several skills development programmes in business, management, information and education, community talks, cultural training and development will also be conducted for the women and youths.

The High Commissioner of Canada, Jean McCloskey, said the fund is to strengthen the capacity of women to take part in social, economic and political decision-making in Malaysia.
PHT acts to preserve, spur traditional trades

By HWA MEI SHEN

PENANG: Worried that effects of the repeal of the Rent Control Act will kill off the traditional trades in George Town, the Penang Heritage Trust (PHT) has launched a project aimed at protecting these activities.

Project coordinator Loh-Lim Lin Lee said the PHT had embarked on the project with a small grant from the state government because it was vital to preserve trades that form part of Penang’s heritage.

"Under the project, we are collecting data on identifying possible endangered trades and suggesting solutions for the continuance and revitalisation of these trades," she said yesterday.

According to her, the repeal of the Act was not the only reason why the trades were in danger of dying out.

"Some of them may not be attractive to the younger generations because of the nature of the job or the low returns," she noted.

Loh-Lim said the project, which started in September, involved the identification of streets in the inner city and the recording and photographing of all commercial activities.

"We are also recording other buildings - residential, derelict or vacant - in order to present realistic direction for relocation or retention in future proposals," she said.

Other aspects include extensive discussions with traders during the data collection process and the identification of core buildings integral to the surrounding trades such as markets, places of worship or banks.

The final part of the project calls for recommendations for proactive moves to retain and aid endangered trades.

Those interested are invited to provide the PHT with cases and addresses of individual trades or particular trade-areas which they feel are endangered as well as suggestions for revitalisation of such trades.

For details, call Sujatha at the PHT (2642631/2645487).

Pedestrian mall plan flawed, says Unesco rep

By Agnes James

GEORGE TOWN, Wed: Although attempts by the Penang Island Municipal council to turn Lebuh Campbell into a pedestrian mall were “noble”, the plan was not implemented as it was flawed, said Unesco Pacific representative Elizabeth Vines yesterday.

"I would caution against more Campbell Streets," said Vines, who is also a conservation architect.

She said fully pedestrian malls around the world have reverted to allowing limited vehicular activity as they ring life and activity into an area.

Among the flaws in question are the covered drains. Vines said open drains are an art of the unique character of Penang and that covers would only lead to blockages.

"The issue should be to educate people not to litter drains and to clean up these drains more frequently," Vines said.

Vines also said the tiles used on the street would start to look "shabby" with time, and that the seats at the mall were simply not conducive.

"The seats are very difficult to use. Seats must be made comfortable to make people feel welcome and want to engage in conversation."

"Campbell Street should be reassessed as the open spaces are taken up by seats which no one can sit on," she said, adding that "well-selected" plants could be placed around the mall.

Vines said this in her talk on Authenticity and Conservation - New Development, Signage and Commercial Reality Issues at the Town Hall.

Earlier, she said Penang had reached a crossroad and the challenge at hand was how to manage the rapid growth and at the same time retain its unique character.

"The challenge now is to meet these changes, which are inevitable, but at the same time retain the unique characteristics of Penang."
Project ‘may not comply with Act’

PENANG. The approved seven-storey block extension to the 93-year-old Penang High Court in Lebuh Farquhar may not comply with the 1996 amended Town and Country Planning Act, said Penang Heritage Trust secretary Khoo Salma Nasution.

“In approving the project, the federal government may have overlooked crucial sections of the law pertaining to the erection of buildings in the vicinity of historical buildings and monuments,” she added.

“Section 22 (5)(i) of the Town and Country Planning Act 1996 states that where the development concerns the erection of a new building, permission may be refused by the local authority if conditions to ensure compatibility with the architecture, character or appearance depicted in the buildings located in the surrounding area are not complied.

“In the case of the High Court extension, the proposed seven-storey block is clearly incompatible with the surrounding landscape. The erection of the block would mar the High Court vista, dominating the High Court which has been a significant landmark within the historical enclave of innercity George Town,” Khoo Salma added that the local
certainty, which the Penang Municipal Council (MPPP), was empowered to exercise that right to refuse permission whether it was a small time developer or, in this case, the federal government.

The Penang Municipal Council Town Planning Department director Tan Thean Siew, however, refused to comment on the matter.

The controversial federal project has been vociferously opposed by the state government and non-government organisations.

The Penang Heritage Trust, Save Ourselves (SOS), and the Penang Tourist Guides Association have come forward to object to the project.

They pointed out that the erection of the block would break the harmony of heritage architecture in the vicinity, comprising historical buildings such as the High Court, the Lightfoot Convent, the St George’s Church and the Penang Museum.

The Star on Nov 14 reported that the state government, fearing that the project would jeopardise Penang’s application for the Unesco World Heritage Listing, had offered an alternative site opposite Dewan Sri Penang for extension project.
Incongruous to build high-rise in old enclave

BADAN Warisan Malaysia is deeply concerned with the proposal to build a seven-storey carpark cum-office block in the forecourt of the historic High Court Building in Farquhar Street, Penang.

Based on any known conservation guidelines, a seven-storey building of this magnitude and mass is incongruous within the two-storey scale of Penang's oldest historical enclave.

Badan Warisan and Penang Heritage Trust (PHT) had previously objected to a similar proposal and had recommended an alternative which took cognisance of the whole urban setting in terms of orientation, relationship to adjoining buildings and scale.

PHT in a statement issued on Nov 8 had raised several valid objections to this proposal. We applaud the forward thinking of Chief Minister Tan Sri Dr Koh Tsu Koon, who has endorsed the views of PHT and for his support for conservation legislation.

Badan Warisan strongly supports the views of the state government and the PHT in these matters.

This is even more so within Unesco's preceding views on Penang's historical context. The erection of this seven-storey building will undoubtedly jeopardise Penang and Malaysia's joint submission for World Heritage Listing.

This latest incident effectively demonstrates the urgent need for a comprehensive heritage law with conservation guidelines and management mechanisms according to internationally accepted standards.

Badan Warisan Malaysia is actively pursuing this by developing a working relationship with planning authorities to promote viable guidelines on heritage conservation of the very limited and diminishing stock of heritage buildings in our cities.

BADAN WARISAN MALAYSIA.

Penang.

Committee still waiting for word over relocation of Lebuh Campbell wet market

By Christina Gurungshan

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GEORGE TOWN. Sun: Relocating the 111-year-old Lebuh Campbell wet market will only burden the people who routinely patronise the market for their daily provisions. Kapitan Keling Mosque restoration committee member Muslimah Nordin said although the committee submitted its opposition to the move to the Penang Island Municipal Council (MPPP) last year, the council had yet to reply.

“We wrote to the MPPP last year urging it not to relocate the market as it will only make it difficult for us to do our marketing. However, until now, we have yet to get a reply,” she said after a press conference on heritage revitalisation through women and youth projects at the Penang Heritage Trust's office in Jalan Steward yesterday.

She said this in response to a proposal made two years ago to convert the wet market into a handicraft centre or a dry market to harmonise with the streets semi-shopping mall concept.

The then MPPP president Dr Teng Hock Nan had said the wet market “did not fit in” with the shoplot concept of the RM2.5 million pedestrian mall.

Teng had said: “Since the wet market is part and parcel of Cannon Street, we need to look into harmonising the area so that tourists will be attracted to it. However, the MPPP will have to undergo consultation and planning before executing any plan for it.”

Muslimah said there are many other outlets in the state where tourists can obtain souvenir items or even jewellery. “If the tourists want to purchase jewellery, they can always visit the jewellers in Lebuh Pitt. And there are many other places they can buy souvenirs from.”