

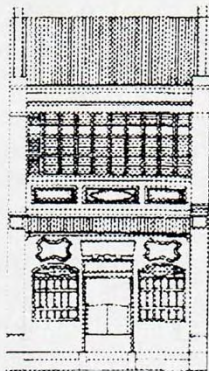
PHT *newsletter*

PENANG HERITAGE TRUST * PERSATUAN WARISAN PULAU PINANG

26A Stewart Lane, 10200 Penang, Malaysia * Tel/Fax: 264 2631 E-mail: phtrust@po.jaring.my

Number 60

February/March 1999



PHT's OFFICE

Thank You!

The PHT would like to thank Aileen Ng, our volunteer, for her help during the past weeks. She has replaced Priscilla during the December holidays and got part of the library in order. Aileen leaves Penang for Kathmandu in March. The library still needs to be catalogued - any volunteers?

C K. Tong donated a beautiful bulletin board to PHT. As advised by our *feng shui* master, the bulletin board is placed right at the front entrance to deflect away any bad *chi*... It also serves to post announcements of our upcoming events. Thanks, Tong.

Furnishings, Finishings, etc.....

The office still needs a few things. The PHT would be happy to receive any donation of cutlery, crockery, cushion covers, etc from the members. We have some heritage videos and would appreciate a donated television and video player. We also need a ladder.

Volunteers, please.

We need volunteers to help take care of the PHT office and to help during talks, seminars, exhibitions and other events. Contributions of letters and articles are welcome, and would make this volunteer editor's burden a little lighter.

Draft Guidelines for Heritage Development in the Inner City of George Town

In our previous newsletter, we carried the full text of the speech by Tan Sri Tan Kok Ping, Chairman of the Chinese Chamber of Commerce, in which Tan Sri Tan launched an assault on the very idea of heritage protection and conservation. Recent news reports suggest that this attack against heritage may have been politically motivated. In this newsletter, we are happy to carry two apt, public-spirited responses. We also reproduce an abstract from a paper delivered at a public seminar by the Deputy Director-General of Valuation, Ministry of Finance, Malaysia, providing an expert view about the property market implications of heritage listing.

LETTER from the Malaysian International Chamber of Commerce & Industry (MICCI):

The MICCI was founded in Penang in 1837, and as far as can be ascertained, is the oldest private sector commercial organisation in Malaysia. It is accordingly natural that the commercial future of Georgetown in particular, and of the island of Penang in general, is of outstanding concern to the Chamber.

In this context the speech by Y.Bhg. Tan Sri Tan Kok Ping, President of the Penang Chinese Chamber of Commerce, given at the Dialogue Session on Heritage and Conservation, was of interest. It is assumed that Tan Sri Tan was speaking in his own personal capacity and that he was not representing the membership of the Penang Chinese Chamber of Commerce.

Save Inner City George Town Signature Campaign

Calling all Penangites in Penang, KL, Singapore or wherever you are, and calling all those who love Penang.....

In light of the recent offensive on heritage conservation, we implore you to support our signature campaign. The form is enclosed with this newsletter. We have made the statement very simple in order to get the message in four languages onto one page.

Our target of 10,000 signatures will be reached if each of our members returns the forms filled with 30 signatures. Feel free to photocopy the forms to get more signatures. You have a say in the future of historic George Town. Let's give the decision-makers a strong message that we want the inner city to be conserved for future generations!

It was also clear that he was not representing the views of most property owners in the 426 acre area of the Georgetown Inner City. At the Conference held in Penang in March 1997 on this subject, very positive ideas were expressed by several of the larger owners on the subject of heritage development possibilities arising in the area, particularly should it be designated a World Heritage site. These possibilities have been overlooked in Tan Sri Tan's address.

continued next page

1. Penang as Tourist Destination.

No doubt the north shore and the beach hotels have in the past and will continue to be Penang's prime attraction as a tourist destination. However, many locations elsewhere in the world offer sun, sand and sea alternatives equal to, if not better than, in Penang. Penang's great good fortune is the fact that it has 3 major additional assets to attract the visitor when he or she wants to get away from the beach. These are:

- a) the unique Penang Hill
- b) the unique Balik Pulau area
- c) the unique Georgetown historic city area.

Penang Hill and Balik Pulau are fascinating and will beguile visitors. They will not however be major money earners. Georgetown's historic inner city area however should be a very significant income producer.

2. *The Historic Inner City Area.* It is understood that Georgetown should have little difficulty in getting listing as a World Heritage site. The commercial advantage of such a listing should be of outstanding interest to all members of the Penang Chinese Chamber of Commerce. Even before world heritage listing is achieved, the opportunities for commercial exploitation of the inner city of Georgetown, if developed along the "proposed guidelines", are outstandingly significant. Such developments would include:

- boutique hotels
- specialist tourist shops
- state of the art historic museums (along the lines of that in York, UK)
- food from hawker stalls to haute cuisine (of particular interest to Malaysian tourists)
- market (not supermarket) style shopping

3. Architectural Style -

a) *General Character* : It must be appreciated that it is the general character of the city area which attracts the visitor. Certainly the visitor will be interested in heritage buildings, but he/she will not wish to see them isolated in an unsympathetic modern development.

b) *Buildings to be Used* : A successful historic area should involve the conservation of existing buildings and their conversion into com-

mercially useful facilities.

c) *New Structures in Sympathy to the Old* : Where vacant sites exist, new structures should be built to be in sympathy with and to enhance the existing architecture, particularly as regards the roof line. In most historic areas, a good rule of thumb is that buildings should not exceed tree height.

d) *Repeal of Rent Control* : Sensible legislation has to be put in place before the repeal of the Rent Control Act results in the character of substantial areas of the old city being destroyed by speculators.

e) *Commercial Success* : What appears not to have been appreciated by Tan Sri Tan is the fact that properly developed historic areas are highly successful commercially. Numerous commercially successful examples can be found in Australia, the United States, all over Europe, Turkey and China.

4. *Conclusion* : In conclusion, the MICCI urges that members of the Chinese Chamber give this whole subject very serious consideration before withholding support for the Council's draft guidelines on the heritage development and of inner city of Georgetown.

No doubt a very small minority of land holders have interesting ideas for developments along the lines of Komtar. However, serious investors surely appreciate that there is only room for one Komtar in the area. A carefully thought out heritage development strategy for the whole area will bring commercial success to all owners in the area, and at the same time will develop an outstanding tourist attraction which will benefit everyone on the island of Penang.

- Dato' Jorgen Bornhoft, President of Malaysian International Chamber of Commerce & Industry



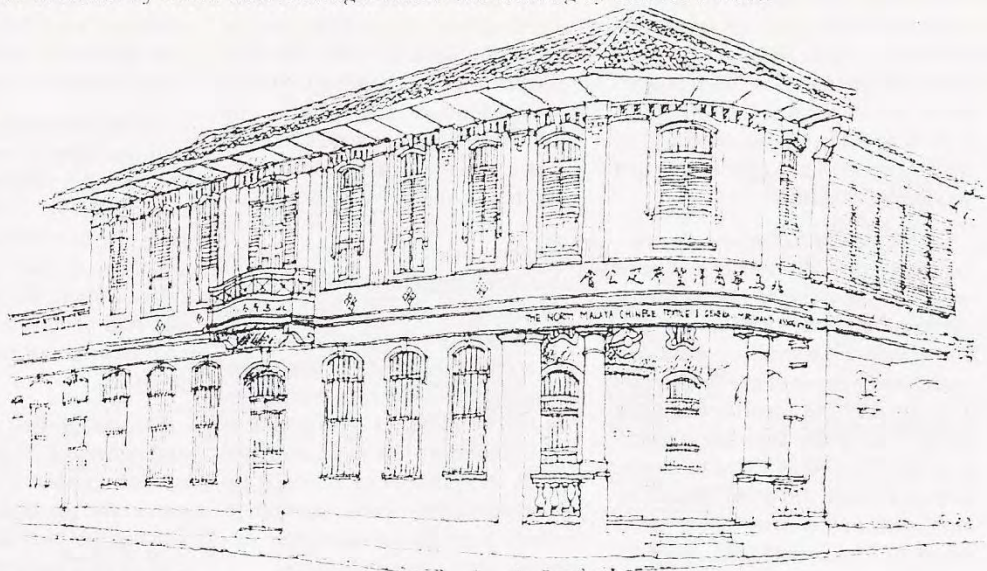
What About Us, the Small Traders?

An OPEN LETTER to Tan Sri Tan Kok Ping & Committee Members of the Chinese Chambers of Commerce

My family's business is a member of the Chinese Chamber of Commerce. We have lived in the inner city of Georgetown for generations and we are still practicing the trade my grandfather started. He was a modest importer of Chinese herbs and the family has grown, survived and prospered sufficiently on the business. I have been luckier than most - my family sent me abroad to be educated and they are now depending on me to continue the trade.

You say in the newspapers that you are representing the members of the Chamber who are "100% behind you" when you criticise our Chief Minister, who has a vision of Georgetown as "a living heritage for future generations". How can you say that? You cannot say you are speaking for members like my family business and our neighbours whom we have known since I was a child? And the small traditional trades and businesses down my street and in the streets next to us. An examination of your register of members would reveal that it is small people like us who make up the BULK of your Chamber. When was the last time the Chamber spoke for the small people like us?

We are very sad about what you have said. We are supposed to look to you for leadership but you have in fact NOT thought about us at all or planned for us in your scheme of things for the great Redevelopment of Georgetown. How do you see us benefitting from these BIG visions of more office blocks and huge shopping malls? We, the small traders and our counterparts in the Malay Chamber of Commerce and the Indian Chamber of Commerce are the ones who started the different Chambers. And NOW, OUR Chambers ONLY speak for the BIG guys, the ones who would first squeeze us then gobble us up happily. We are seen as small, old fashioned little nuisances who can be done away with come 1 January, 2000. Why are you not working to find solutions for our businesses when the year 2000 may find us unable to continue with our trades, when these century-old businesses will be lost forever in the midst of some Bayan Baru low-cost flat. ONE big multi-storey shopping mall with an anchor departmental



store in the middle of Bridge Street (Jalan C.Y. Choy) or Campbell Street would kill us all. Where would we go, the small hardware dealer, the trader, the small importer, the kopi tiam, the money changer, the crockery shop, the joss stick maker, a herbs man like me? Our Chief Minister Tan Sri Dr. Koh sees us as a "viable living community in an intact historical city". HE at least sees a future *in* us and *for* us. What do YOU plan for our future?

We are in great fear that the doing away of the Rent Control will mean that many of us will not be able to survive. We would lose more than half of our valued customers, who are made up of people who live in the inner city. Clearing the many thousands of us all, grandparents, extended families, children out of the city would kill Georgetown and create much unhappiness, dissatisfaction and discontent. It would increase the commuting traffic jam. We would no longer have a city of close neighbourliness, old friendships, racial harmony and that something very special and different about Penang. We would be like anywhere else, large, lost and without identity.

Tan Sri Tan, please address yourself to the real people whom you say you represent. You have abandoned us for the big guys and the short view, yet you still claim to speak for us. Please return to your roots and to us, the real people of the inner city. Thank you. - J. Tung

Seminar on Repeal of Rent Control

Henry Butcher organised a successful seminar on the Repeal of Rent Control in February, bringing together legal, professional and social perspectives on the issue. YB Dr. Toh Kin Woon gave a rousing speech about the possible social impact of rent control repeal on the inner city community.

The following passages are extracted from a paper by Mr. Mani Usilappan for the seminar. Mr. Mani is the Deputy Director-General of Valuation, Valuation and Property Services Department, Ministry of Finance, Malaysia.

Conservation or Heritage Listing

Controlled premises occupy strategic locations in urban areas and more often make up the urban centre. In some towns they also form the bulk of the commercial centre. Owing to their historic presence, they add value to the culture and heritage of the town centre. Besides, these buildings are also of architectural value as they spell out how the town grew, how people lived and the sort of character the town had. In fact a number of towns are epitomised by virtue of the presence of these buildings. Comprehensive redevelopment would remove the culture and char-

acter of the town.

Hence, it is no wonder that planners, architects, sociologists and public officials entrusted with the duty to govern local government would want the conservation of some of the historical landmarks for posterity. Conservation of this nature would add character and value to the city.

Obviously, just as wholesale redevelopment is not the solution, neither is wholesale conservation. Conservation of old buildings should be selective on the basis of location, property type and the significance of that locality or property to the well-being of the town. The debate on conservation of old buildings may appear to be something new in Malaysia, but it is an old issue in most Western countries. In the West, including the US and Canada, whole districts within towns are gazetted as conservation areas. No redevelopment would be allowed on any building within that area. Even if allowed, the only changes would be internal and minimal. In such countries, the public has accepted the status quo and market activities operate within that framework.

The listing of a property as a heritage property by itself would not depress or reduce the market value of the property. Market value would depend on the uses allowed for the property in that location. In localities that are redeveloped, and the potential for redevelopment is high,

then listing a building for heritage purposes would have an impact on its market value. However, in areas where the potential is not transparent, where continued use with refurbishment allows a flexible use of space, the market value would not be affected drastically.

The impact of listing on the market value would therefore depend upon the location of the property, the developments that have taken place in the immediate environment, the purpose of the listing and also whether the locality has been listed or only the individual units. If an area has been listed as a conservation area, then the planning implications for the whole area would be consistent with the purpose of the conservation area. The limitation on redevelopment would apply generally to all owners. Therefore, the effect on the individual would not be felt. Such a listing would help to preserve the locality and help to maintain the environment.

On the other hand if individual buildings are listed, as against the immediate neighbourhood, then the individual property will be greatly affected. Whilst the rest of the properties enjoy development potential and are allowed to be redeveloped, the property which is listed would be negatively affected. It would lose its development potential. The investment in such properties could only be seen in its existing use and the return from the existing use. Potential value or the enhanced value of achieving that potential value would not arise. The individual owner, in not being allowed to develop his property, would suffer prospective economic loss.

Conservation schemes are normally introduced to keep for the community a part of the social, cultural and architectural heritage. It is to provide to its people and posterity a part of the history. Therefore, the community may have to bear part of costs of conservation. Successful conservation schemes may require an elaborate system of incentives.

Such incentives could involve grants, tax based or even planning gain not currently available at the subject property.

Properties situated within conservation areas would probably be limited in the kind of redevelopment, refurbishment or renovations that may be allowed. There are several problems for the properties in these types of areas. If the property is in good repair and is well maintained, it may continue to enjoy good return and tenants may rent them. If, on the other hand properties are in a poor state of repair, to maintain the buildings in a better state of repair, the owners may need public persuasion. Even though economics would dictate that buildings in a poor state of repair would not command attractive rentals, there may be owners who are reluctant to repair. Public persuasion through fines or subsidies may encourage the repairs to be done.

Policies on what work can be done to buildings within conservation areas need to be clear. Not only must they be clear but they must be implemented unequivocally. Such policies should not be too rigid in their limitations. Some element of refurbishment and renovation should be allowed without substantially affecting the character of the building or neighbourhood. Together with it should go comprehensive attempts at maintaining the neighbourhood as a conservation area of quality.

Perhaps the conservation areas could be a pivot for the tourist trade. Heritage premises upon refurbishment could be turned into restaurants, offices, shops, small hotels attracting foreigners to visit places which still keep their old world charm. With successful refurbishment, conservation areas would not lose their investment value. In fact, over time the returns could increase. Such conservation areas could improve the entire neighbourhood, and properties adjoining such schemes would also benefit. It is a fact that properties adjoining amenities or well developed or successful localities, tend to appreciate in values. The value of a house facing a playing field would fetch a higher value than a house that is facing other houses, or a house in housing scheme with amenities would fetch a higher price than one which is situated in a scheme that has no such amenities.

In conclusion: With the repeal of

Control of Rent Act, controlled premises have become decontrolled and generally would appreciate in value because of higher rents.

The actual supply of such premises and the state of repair of the buildings besides the location would determine the level of rental appreciation. Further enhancement of the investment in such properties would depend upon the actual state of repair and how owners respond to the challenge posed in refurbishing the premises.

Because of their strategic location and historical importance, there is a need for conservation for preserving part of the physical historical development for the future. This could lead to private costs in terms of opportunities lost in some cases.

Not all conservation areas would be exposed to this loss in terms of opportunity costs. Well managed conservation areas can continue to be attractive.

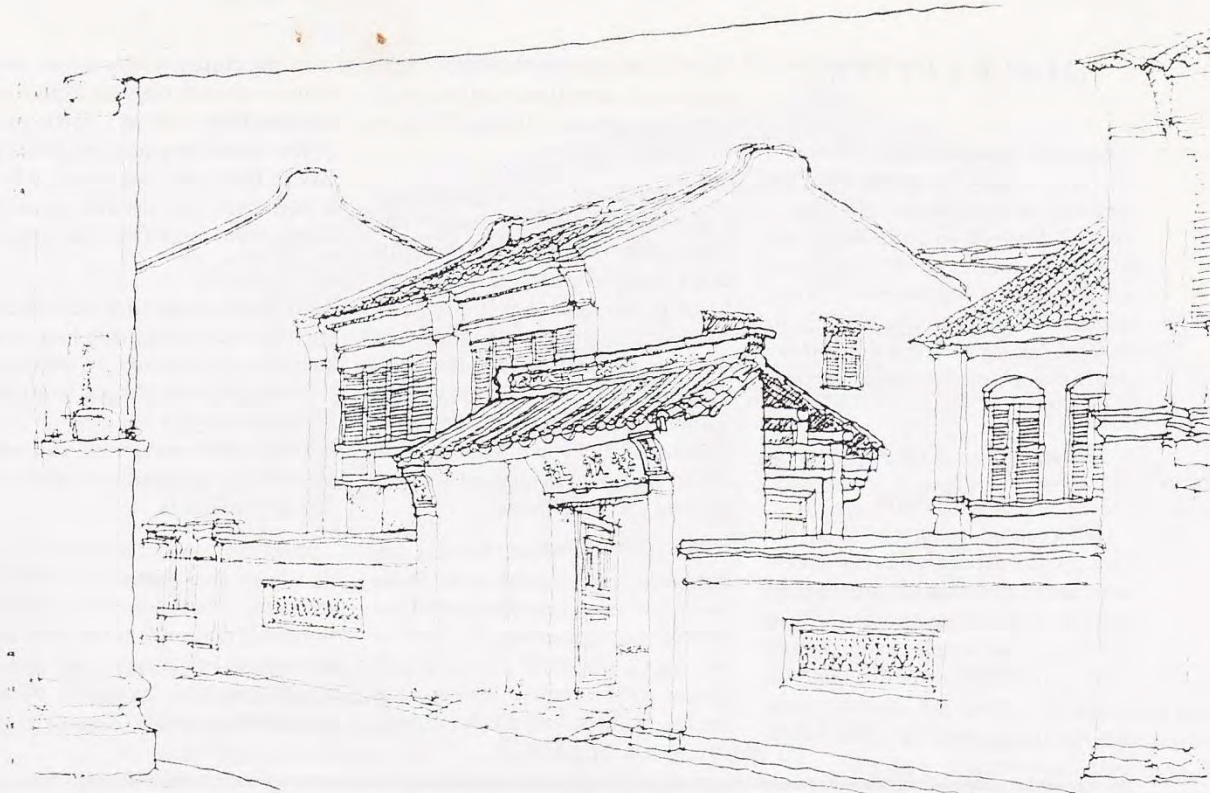
There is probably a greater need for transparency in planning policies and procedure with regard to establishing conservation areas and heritage building.

A system of planning incentives, tax incentives and grants would be required. Perhaps the local authorities could also impose development charge to cream off planning gains now given by local authorities almost freely.

Redevelopment must not be seen as the only means of enhancing the capital value. Too much over building hence led to extensive office and retail space. Such redevelopment has been a waste of resources.

Perhaps under this kind of scenario, keeping the controlled premises in their existing use, albeit repaired, renovated and refurbished would be a better option.





Shophouses and a backpacker hotel in Love Lane. Ink drawing by Tan Yeow Wool.

Chulia Street Tourist & Business Perceptions

In February, University of South Australia students, Benjamin Mead, Kym Wundersitz and Kishan Sidhu presented the results of their survey of Chulia Street. The survey was conducted and compiled for the PHT in January - February 1999, when the three students were in Penang as volunteers for the Trust. They worked out of the PHT office, at Stewart Lane which is located in the vicinity of Chulia Street.

The study concluded that Chulia Street is absolutely vital to Penang's backpacker tourism industry. Although these tourists spend relatively less on accommodation, they tend to stay longer and what they spend goes directly into the local economy.

The main tourist-related businesses identified were hotels, hostels, cafes, bars, pubs, travel agencies, restaurants and antique & curio shops. However, tourism spending also had a wider trickle down effect onto surrounding businesses such as photo developing shops, general stores, workshops, sundry shops, coffee shops, retail shops and markets.

These businesses are located in Chulia Street and adjacent streets such as Love Lane, Carnarvon Street, Cintra Street, Pitt Street and Penang Road.

Most of the tourists surveyed liked Chulia Street the way it was, especially the authenticity of environment and heritage. They only suggested minor improvements like upgrading pedestrian amenities.

The study also highlighted the great uncertainty as to whether business operators would be able to continue their businesses after rent control is lifted.

Over half (58.8%) of the respondents indicate that they were unsure if they could continue their business after January 1st, 2000. Around 23% of respondents thought that they would *not* be able to continue to operate their business. Only 17.6% of those surveyed believed that they would be able to continue to operate once the rent control is lifted.

Whatever happens to Chulia Street will have important implications for the rest of Penang. A significant number of the backpacker tourists come back again later as 'mainstream' tourists staying in international hotels. A few are international

travel journalists who like to stay in an authentic local environment instead of a 'get-away-from-it-all' resort hotel. The backpackers, regarded as well-travelled, also have considerable influence on the reputation of a destination, which is conveyed in magazine reports and by word of mouth.

The "Penang Heritage Trust Report: Tourist and Business Perceptions of Chulia Street - 1999" is available for only RM10 at the Penang Heritage Trust office, 26A Stewart Lane.

PHT Exhibition on Revitalized Buildings

The PHT prepared a photo exhibition showcasing heritage buildings in Penang which have been renovated and revitalized. The photo exhibition was designed by Gwyn Jenkins, interior architect. It was first displayed at the Rent Control Repeal Seminar and is now a permanent exhibition in the PHT office. Thank you, Gwyn, Tong, Ben, Kym and Kishan for helping to put it all together and to Ahmad for delivering the panels to the seminar venue.

OTHER LETTERS

Over the years, Penang's losses in heritage and environment have influenced many fine sons and daughters of Penang to join the brain drain. The author of this letter is a retired medical doctor from Penang who has just migrated to the U.S. to join his family. He wrote the following letter on the eve of his departure..

Penang -- My Island in the Sun

Half a century is but a blink in this vast cosmos of ours, and yet it measures more than half a lifetime to many but the fortunate few. I have grown up and watched you change from your early unspoiled days to this present state. As I ponder these few remaining moments when I shall

be still your native son, I recall those memories, sometimes spilling over into this pleasant dream flooding my mind.

The beach was my playground, and I can still see that little lonely child who made friends with the little crabs that shyly crawled out of their holes in the sand. For 365 days of each year that little boy would spend hours every day watching and playing with the sparkling clear sea and foamy waves. When the tides came in so would the breeze, and that whiff of salt sea spray to comfort you and tell you you were home.

The sand was white, beyond any man-made tint, and soft, silky to the touch, caressing your bare feet as you walked carefree along it. Closer to the water, the sand changed to a denser consistency, allowing sand castles, tunnels, and all those intri-

cate structures which a few twigs, leaves and that magical sand would fashion from a child's fertile mind. A few stones or a piece of driftwood would form the framework to build a barricade against the splashing waves from engulfing that precious castle.

The rocks at the cape were like old friends, ever-changing in form as the seasonal tide buried or uncovered their magnificent shapes. You clambered up the big ones, using every toehold, and imagined you were climbing some mountain in the Andes or Himalayas.

Then, as you lay down on top of that huge rock jutting out into the sea, you felt as one with nature, watching nothing but the clear blue sky above with wisps of distant clouds assuming incredible shapes, and listening to the lapping waves

Emily of Emerald Hill

The Kiwanis Club organised a performance of 'Emily of Emerald Hill', the classic one-woman play written by Singaporean playwright Stella Kon about a manipulative Nyonya matriarch. Thanks to Woo Yee Saik for bringing the play to Penang.

In order to promote Straits Chinese culture in Penang, we hope other groups, such as the Penang Players, the Penang Arts Council, Pusat Seni USM, etc. might consider staging one of the many Peranakan plays and musicals that have come out of Singapore over the last few years. Indeed, when I gave a talk at the Baba

Convention in Malacca last December, I learnt how the Straits Chinese culture has given inspiration to a rich variety of visual, literary and theatrical creations, especially popular among the Singapore youth.

The writers, actors, musicians and artists were not limited to those of Straits Chinese origin. Rather, Singaporeans (including some expatriate Malaysians) from all ethnic backgrounds seemed to regard Straits Chinese culture as part of their common heritage.

Could the Penang Babas and Nyonyas also help to stimulate similar interests among our young people? - KSN

For those of you who been bitten by the Peranakan bug while watching Emily, here are two attractive websites (info contributed by Josephine Chua, AWPNUC member and a true-blue Nyonya from Malacca)

Singapore Peranakan Association: www.peranakan.org.sg

Singapore National Heritage Board www.info-lab.com/baba/

The latter website displays the floor plan of a RUMAH BABA. You can visit any room by clicking on it.

Manik slippers

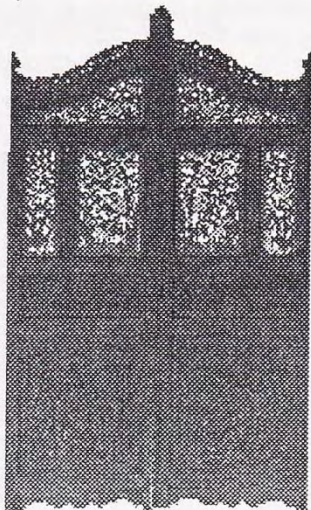


Bead Workshop

Michael Cheah, a specialist in nyonya & baba heritage, is organising another beaded slippers course at the PHT's office, by popular demand.

The course will now start on:
Saturday 20 March 99
at 3.00pm -5.30 pm

Fees: RM100 for 1 session a week for 4 weeks, or 4 sessions per month. Part of the proceeds goes to support the PHT. Materials are not included, but Michael will be selling them at practically cost price. Nyonya kueh and Chinese tea will be provided. Those interested, please contact Priscilla at tel 604-264 2631.



splashing around your favourite rock. Was this how hermits felt, or was this how the great sages meditated, when they communed with nature?

As dusk approaches and the setting sun withdraws its harsh light, a kaleidoscope of colours unfurls above as if some giant artist was at work, splashing the wildest colours and hues in the sky. It is never the same every day, and surely art appreciation from this great teacher up above exceeds any formal training from mortal sources.

The tiny streams meandering into the sea, and those graceful coconut trees have now been captured on canvas by the famous artist you saw sketching them long ago. If only you had made better friends of them long ago, then perhaps you too might have been immortalized.

That was then, and now, as you tread the same path, you cannot retrace those early steps. The beautiful streams are gone, replaced by concrete drains. The coconut trees have long since given way to some manicured lawn, and your friends, those seemingly ageless rocks have been buried by cement, as some soulless house owner has claimed the beach as his, and piled ugly stones to reclaim the beach as his own private property.

The sea is murky, the refreshing salt sea spray now gone, or sometimes replaced with the smell of oil. The crabs no longer inhabit the beach, and even the skies look polluted.

Perhaps it is time to leave this island home, and bring only those distant pleasant memories which will always stay unspoiled. There will be other shores, other islands still unspoiled, to nourish the minds of the children of the World. To them I dedicate this indelible memory, so that their dreams will always lay intact, always there for them to see and feel until their senses dim with age.

*All my days I will sing in praise
Of your forest waters
Your shining sands*

- Dr Goh Kong Chuan



New PHT T-Shirt for Sale

We are launching a new T-Shirt as part of our 'I Love Old Penang' Campaign. The T-Shirt carries this slogan in four languages -- Malay, English, Chinese and Tamil!

The central image is a lovely ink drawing by watercolour artist Khoo Cheang Jin of the PHT Office, which he painted specially for PHT. Thank you, Cheang Jin.

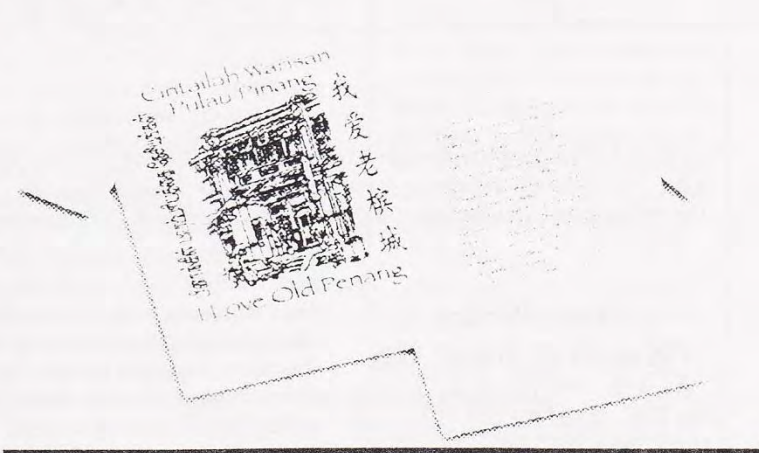
The T-shirt design is the result of inputs from a bunch of PHT members who usually hang out at the PHT office and drink the Chulia Lane teh tarik (free-flowing for volunteers!).

The final design was produced by Cecilia Mak who designs many of the T-shirts sold by the Friends of Penang Botanic Gardens.

Size M and L = RM18

Size XL and XXL = RM20

Available at PHT office.



Apologies for a Misleading Announcement

To the Hon. Secretary, Old Frees' Association, Penang

Re: Circular Announcement of Public Talk by Datuk Lim Chong Keat at the City Bayview hotel on 26/01/99.

I am writing to you as Hon. Secretary of the Old Frees' Association, the host association for the above event, and I refer to the circular announcement which was distributed with the last PHT monthly newsletter (Nov/Dec 1998) at the request of Mr. Winfred Khoo. This was agreed to by the PHT in good faith.

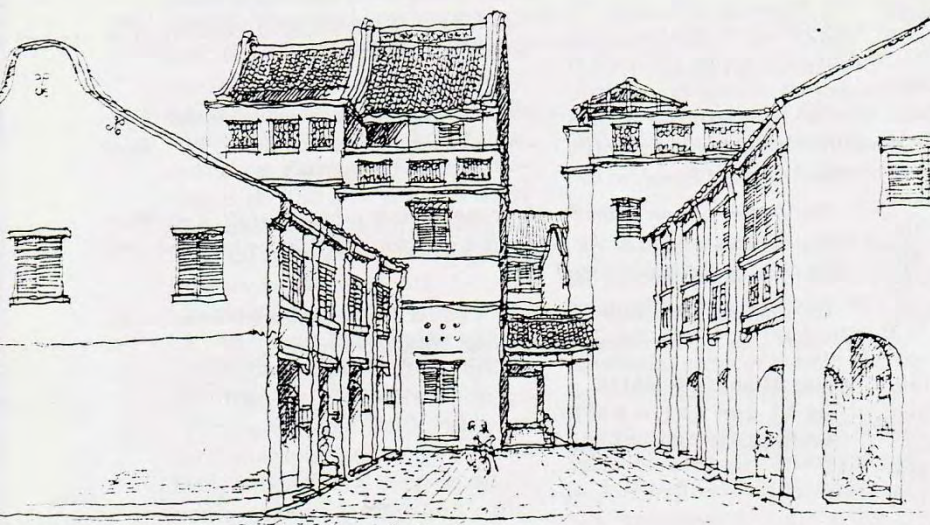
The circular clearly indicates, among other things that those coming to attend the talk will have the opportunity to meet with (and presumably raise questions to) members of the State Legislature, the

Chief Minister, presidents of the two Municipal Councils, MP's, Senators etc'. However, it has come to our knowledge that many of the above, including the Chief Minister and the President of the Penang Municipal Council had not even been informed about the event, let alone consented to come to it.

The PHT Council would like to record its strongest objection to the misleading information contained in the circular announcement which reflects badly on the accuracy and reliability of our newsletter.

We shall thus have to inform our members that this is entirely the responsibility of the Organising Secretary, Mr. Winfred Khoo but the PHT nevertheless apologizes to our members for having distributed the misleading circular.

- Dr Choong Sim Poey,
Vice-Chairman, PHT



Cannon Square, recently used as a location for the filming of 'Anna & The King'. Ink drawing on page 3, 5 and 8 by Tan Yeow Woon. Culture & History Research Studio, Nan Yang Folk Culture group & PHT member.

Street Parties Festivals & Movie Sets

Since the PHT organised the Loo Pun Hong Street Party in November 1998, there has been almost one street party per month. World AIDS Day was celebrated in Leith Street in December. The Wonders of Chinese New Year 1999, and then the Chinese New Year Open House, were held at the Khoo Kongsi in February. The International Women's Day was celebrated by women's groups at the Padang Kota.

Nan Yang Folk Culture (NYFC), which organised a very creative Wonders of Chinese New Year, invited PHT to take a booth alongside two dozen other organisations. The event splendidly demonstrated how a heritage venue like the Khoo Kongsi could be used, not only for tourist events, but as an exciting cultural venue for Penang youth. Nan Yang Folk Culture and the Penang Heritage Trust have initiated a campaign called 'I Love Old Penang', which we hope will start with a whimper and end with a bang.

Indeed, the last few months have

been extremely eventful and festive. Our student volunteers, Ben, Kishan and Kym took part in our Deputy Prime Minister's Hari Raya Open House in Seberang Perai, the Kampong Seronok Open House and caught the tail end of the Thaipusam procession. Some of us attended the Chief Minister's Chinese New Year Open House, escorting our esteemed guests, YM Tengku Iniran and his wife Moira, from Negeri Sembilan royalty.

Most recently, historic George Town has been visited by another kind of royalty, Chow Yuen Fatt who plays the King and Jodie Foster who plays Anna in the film "Anna and the King". The newspapers announced that filming would begin on February 28 and end on March 11. That first Sunday, thousands of Hong Kong movie fans flocked to Armenian Street to catch a glimpse of Chow Yuen Fatt, although it was primarily a scene of Anna and son riding through a street full of market carts, well-trained elephants and Penangites dressed up as 19th century Siamese.

International Women's Day at

Padang Kota obviously attracted another kind of crowd - fans of Jodie Foster who tried to say hello to her over the fence when she strolled out of the Town Hall, at lunch time.

The Town Hall, incidentally, is being used as the setting for the Court of Justice. The set designers have taken down all the plywood partitions to reveal a magnificent ballroom on the first floor, a space that should be made available to Penangites for receptions, plays and performances.

Other venues were the Syed Alatas Mansion, Swettenham Pier and the Khoo Kongsi, which have undergone amazing transformations under the direction of Oscar-winning set designer Luciano Arigghi.

Coming up!

University of Malaya delegation to visit PHT. The PHT is conducting a two-day programme (21-22 March 1999) for a delegation from University of Malaya's Department of Built Environment which consists of lecturers Dr. Yahaya Ahmad and Naziaty Yaacob, and seven Masters students including Koh Sheh-Ren, who is mapping out the waqf properties as part of the UNESCO project. PHT members are welcome to join us for the following events.

Sunday 21 March, 1999:

- 9.30pm Tour around Kapitan Kling Mosque

- 2.30pm Talk at PHT office "Conservation and Penang after Rent Control Repeal".

Other events, venues and times to be confirmed. Interested, please contact Priscilla.

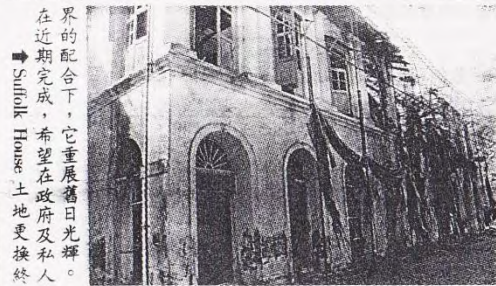
The Economics of Heritage, UNESCO Conference Workshop, 9-17 May 1999, at the Hotel Warisan 1924.

Warisan Kita Di Tanjung, to be held in April 1999 at PEMENANG, Jalan Pemenang (Cantonment Rd.)

紀碧真歡迎私人界

KWONG WAH YIT POH. SUNDAY 10 JAN. 1999

提供瑟福屋修復計劃



在近期完成下，它重展舊日光輝。
Suffolk House 土地更換及私人

(檳城九日訊) 檳州旅游文化及婦女事務發展委員會主席拿督紀碧真州行政議員指出，Suffolk House 的土地更換手續已近期完成，他歡迎私人界呈上計劃來修復及發展上述有兩百年歷史的檳城「總督府」。

她是在昨日為理大攝影學會主辦的攝影展主持開幕禮後受記者詢問時講話，拿督紀碧真也當場致電予負責上述土地更換的縣署部門，獲得有關部門高層官員的核實。

拿督紀碧真州行政議員也稱，她已接獲來自檳城古跡信託機構呈上有關興建臨時屋頂的計劃圖，上述計劃已轉呈公共工程局研究，上述臨時屋頂 (Roof Over Roof) 將暫時性保護上述建築屋，以免風雨無情吹打。

她也指出，基督教衛理公會 (Methodist Church) 以及檳島市政局已分別將他們要交換的土地呈給州政府，土地交換已完成，當局目前正處理 Suffolk House 入口處所引起事項，入口處現被美以美男子中學的一間工作室所阻擋，在計劃中，政府將與美以美男子中學協議，將上述試驗室遷至附近政府土地。

可發展為博物院

無論如何，她說，隨著土地交換的近期完成，私人界現受歡迎提出建議書來修復及發展 Suffolk House，在計劃下，他們將與政府針對租期及使用達致協議，政府希望上述建築屋將發展為一個供檳城歷史文化及藝術的展出中心，可發展為一間博物院，或是文化展出地點。

她表示，希望任何有關方面所呈上的計劃是不含有其他不能接受的附加條件，她指出，曾有一些外國公司答應修復及發展有關建築屋，不過卻夾帶一些不獲政府答應的條件，她拒絕透露有關條件的內容。

向當局申請撥款

在詢及有關檳城古跡信託機構呈上的臨時屋頂計劃時，她指出，上述計劃原在年前提起時需耗資約 8 萬零吉，不過目前的開銷可能更大，而她將在州政府中申請撥款供上述用途。

拿督紀碧真州行政議員指出，Suffolk House 是檳城一個重要的建築屋，不過卻在申請修復及



↑ 拿督紀碧真說：歡迎私人界協助修復及發展。

發展所需的撥款面對巨大困難，她曾在大馬路第七計劃下申請 4 百萬零吉的撥款，卻被拒絕，目前正再次向第七大馬路計劃申請，若不能成功，唯有繼續在第八大馬路計劃申請撥款。

她指出，上述 Suffolk House 雖然重要，不過卻不能被政府列為優先計劃，因為政府有更重要的事務，如解決水患，最近的龜尾土崩事件，所需引爆炸藥價錢不菲。他稱若當局在此時期花費 4 百萬零吉來修復上述建築屋，將引起人民的非議。

不過她將繼續努力，不放弃繼續為上述修復計劃作出申請，她也建議，英國文化協會可提出建議，協助發展上述建築屋，包括成為英國文化協會的圖書館或文化中心，在目前馬幣兌英鎊的匯率下，上述計劃不會對該協會造成太大的困難。在受詢針對檳州唯一反對黨議員章瑛針對上述建築屋的指責時，她促章瑛不要只是空口說白話，應拿出具體行動，他個人的處理事務原則是行動證明。她促章瑛不要將問題政治化。

檳州行動黨州議員章瑛在日前巡視 Suffolk House 指出，上述建築屋的淪落，是檳州旅遊年的一大恥辱，因為它曾是或為檳州「旅遊業星星」條件，更多遊客將趁機游覽這見證檳城兩百多年歷史發展演變的陳年老建築。

檳最富歷史建築

Suffolk House 建于 1786 年間，為檳城開



年內將走入歷史廢墟。
Suffolk House 若繼續淪落，一，或兩

埠者萊特上校在檳城的最早府邸，與萊特街修道院內的「政府屋」(Government House) 為檳城最珍貴及最富歷史價值的建築屋。

在 30 年前，政府與 Suffolk House 土地持有者即基督教衛理公會達成協議，政府與衛理公會交換土地，政府將讓出現美以美男子中學的一塊土地給衛理公會，教會則將 Suffolk House 的土地擁有權交給政府，以方便政府進行適當的發展。當局是在最近才完成上述土地交換。#

DAP: Save Suffolk House as proof

STAR
Wednesday
13 Jan 1999

PENANG: The DAP has called on the state government to lead in preserving heritage buildings in Penang by making a push to save Suffolk House, the state's most historical building.

State DAP deputy chairman Chong Eng said the state government would have no moral authority in promoting conservation of historical buildings if it allowed Suffolk House "to rot."

If the state was serious about preserving architectural culture, she added, it must also not allow government agencies like the Penang Development Corporation to demolish heritage buildings.

"The state must lead by example before it can expect individual house owners to preserve their property," she said yesterday in a statement.

State Tourism, Culture, Arts and Women Development Committee chairman Datuk Kee Phaik Cheen said recently that restoration work on Suffolk House had been stopped in view of the economic situation.

Chong said while funding was difficult to come by, it must not become an excuse for not trying to save the building.

"Chief Minister Tan Sri Dr Koh Tsu Koon had said preserving heritage cannot be valued in monetary terms," she said.

Moreover, Chong noted that the state would be spending RM8mil in beautification projects this year and the Penang State Symphony Orchestra and Chorus had spent RM100,000 for just one concert.

The state government, she added, planned to build an extra wing in Anjung Wanita in the Caring Society Complex.

"Between saving Suffolk House and building the extra wing, certainly the former should be given priority and immediate attention," she said.

FRIDAY January 15 1999 THE STAR

State seeks aid to restore Suffolk House

By HWA MEI SHEN

PENANG: The state is seeking assistance from Britain and the European Union (EU) to restore Suffolk House, said Chief Minister Tan Sri Dr Koh Tsu Koon.

He said letters had been written to the British High Commissioner and approaches would be made to the EU to source for funding, adding that there would also be some local funding.

"We will like to see the possibility of Suffolk House as a symbol of co-operation between Malaysia and Britain in particular and the EU in general," he told reporters yesterday after witnessing a memorandum of understanding signing ceremony at Island Hospital.

Dr Koh said the state government would like to either conserve or reconstruct Suffolk House "one day."

"However, since it costs so much, we are not going to rush into spending some RM5mil at this

time because there are more pressing needs," he said.

He was responding to state DAP deputy chairman Chong Eng's call on the state government to lead in preserving heritage buildings in Penang by making a push to save Suffolk House, the state's most historical building.

The Penang Heritage Trust (PHT) has also warned that the building will be beyond repair within two years if nothing is done.

Dr Koh said the state was now studying how best to protect the structure from further deterioration and what was the most suitable technology to use.

The Public Works Department, he said, was to do some estimates while PHT would be asked to submit more engineering reports.

"We want all the engineering aspects sorted out first so that (the approach taken) will be effective as well as economical," he said.

A grave reminder of Anna and Penang

By CHOONG KWEE KIM

PENANG: Barely 2km from the set of *Anna and the King* lies the final resting place of Thomas Leonowens - husband of the tutor on whom the movie is based.

Even as shooting of the Hollywood movie starring Jodie Foster as Anna entered its third day yesterday, Leonowens' tomb at the Protestant cemetery, off busy Jalan Sultan Ahmad Shah, remains practically unknown to many.

His grave, in fact, is located in the same cemetery as

those of other famous personalities - such as Penang's founder, Captain Francis Light and former governors of Penang.

According to Penang Heritage Trust (PHT) secretary Khoo Salma Nasution, Anna, then 25, was in Penang with her son Louis around the time of her husband's death in 1859 at the age of 31.

She said there was a theory by an American social historian researching Anna's background that the original name of Anna's husband was Leon Owens, which was a common name.

After his death, Anna, believed to be of Anglo-Indian descent, changed it to Leonowens, which suggested a more distinguished social background.

"Life was difficult for a young woman with a child stranded in a foreign land and Anna had to refashion her identity to improve her prospects of a job or a marriage," Khoo said.

Anna was believed to have stayed in Penang for a short period before she was offered the job as tutor to the many wives and children of King Rama IV, better known

as King Mongkut.

Anna, born in 1834, died at the age of 81 in 1915 and was buried in Quebec, Canada.

Robin Hollister, location manager of *Anna and the King*, said the crew only learnt about Leonowens' burial here when they arrived in Penang for filming.

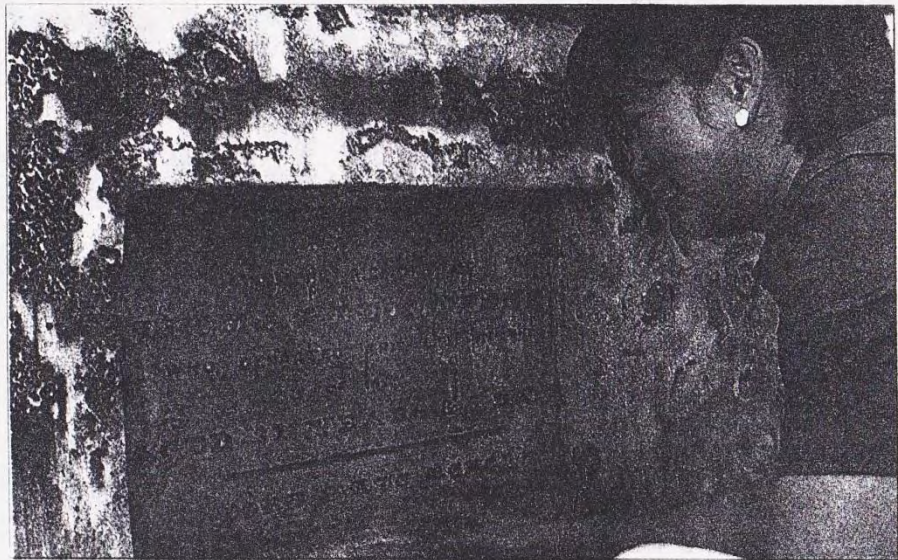
"The original script was written for Thailand and when we had to shift location, we chose Penang for the opening scene because of its physical suitability," Hollister said.

"The coincidence was pure chance and nothing more

than that," he said, adding they would not do any shooting at the cemetery as it was not in the script.

The cemetery's restoration co-ordinator Loh-Lim Lin Lee said she told three film crew members about the tomb when they came to look for a suitable location last December.

"I was their tour-guide when they visited Cheong Fatt Tze mansion and when I told them about Leonowens' tomb, they were very excited because they had no inkling that Anna had been in Penang," she said.



RESTING IN PEACE ... Loh-Lim dusting off the headstone at Leonowens' grave at the Protestant cemetery yesterday. - STARpic by ZAINUDDIN AHAD

'Put old names on street signs'

STAR, Wed.
27 Jan 1999

PENANG: Street signs should carry both the new and old names of a road if the name has been changed, said the Penang Heritage Trust (PHT).

PHT council member Ahmad Chik called on the Penang Municipal Council to include the old names of roads in smaller lettering within brackets when designing new street signs for the island.

He said locals were usually more familiar with the old names as it took a long time for people to make the adjustment.

"It will certainly also be helpful for tourists as many of the older maps will still carry the old names," he said.

Elaborating on this, Ahmad said many people still thought of Jalan Sultan Ahmad Shah as Northam Road.

"And very few people refer to Green Lane as Jalan Mesjid Negri," he added.

Council president Dr Teng Hock Nan had said on Sunday that the council would design new and cheaper street signs for the island.

In welcoming the move, Ahmad reiterated that good street signs were not only a necessity but added grace and charm to any city.

He urged the council to obtain professional assistance in developing the new design, adding that PHT would be happy to help in every way possible.

Armenian Street residents laughing all the way to bank

By CHOONG KWEE KIM •

STAR, FRIDAY 5 MARCH 1999

PENANG: Armenian Street residents are laughing all the way to the bank after enduring almost three days of "inconvenience" during the filming of *Anna and the King*.

Noodle seller Ang Hooi Hong, 53, gleefully pocketed RM250 from the movie company, 20th Century Fox, as compensation for loss of income for two and a half days.

This was a windfall to Ang who earned RM40 to RM50 a day. "I was paid for not working and on top of that, I also caught a glimpse of Hong Kong superstar Chow Yun-Fat," he grinned.

Ang said business was very good a week before the filming proper as many film crew and visitors patronised his stall.

It is learnt that the movie company paid RM100 a day for small stalls and residential homes, RM500 for shophouses and several thousand ringgit for rental of premises for the entire duration of use.

Barber Tan Eng Seng is now RM1,250 richer after being paid RM500 a day. "They should come and make more movies here,"

he said.

Housewife Teh Lay Choo, 45, was excited that Hollywood had made a big budget movie at her doorstep and paid her RM100 daily.

On top of that, Chow, the Hong Kong superstar, made a surprise visit to her husband's cafe at Gurney Drive last week which drove customers into a frenzy as they asked for autographs.

Those staying in residential premises had nothing much to complain except for restriction of mobility considering that most prewar houses there have no backdoors.

But owners of some bigger shophouses claimed that the compensations were insufficient to cover losses. They said the closure of access roads had also caused problems of loading and unloading goods.

"This may be a happy event for Penang as it has brought in money and created jobs but bigger businesses here may be affected if they were to make movies here often," a shopowner said.

Life at Armenian Street is now back to normal as all the props had been dismantled except for the gigantic palace gates.

Group wants studio to restore grave

By CHOONG KWEE KIM

PENANG: 20th Century Fox which is shooting *Anna and the King* here has been urged to contribute towards the restoration of the tomb of Thomas Leonowens, husband to the English tutor featured in the movie.

Protestant Cemetery restoration co-ordinator Loh-Lim Lin Lee suggested that the Hollywood giant include the restoration of the tomb as part of its celebration of Anna's life in its latest movie.

"The presence of 20th Century Fox here would be remembered beyond the glamour of film-making if it can assist in the restoration efforts," said the building conservation researcher.

She said restoration work at the Jalan Sultan Ahmad Shah Cemetery had been stalled for five years due to shortage of funds.

Loh-Lim, who is Penang Heritage Trust council member, said only 70% of the cemetery were restored when funds ran out in 1994.

"Leonowens' tomb is in the last section yet to be restored," she said, adding the cemetery was bombed during World War Two.

Restoration of the cemetery where many of Penang's European pioneers are buried was undertaken by PITT in 1993, using its

own funds, fundings from the French plantation company Socfin, Penang Municipal Council, and the state government.

The cemetery is barely 2km from the film set in George Town.

PITT, which conducted a study of the graves, found that most people buried there died below the age of 30 from some mysterious tropical diseases, probably malaria.

Leonowens died at the age of 31 in 1859 but the nature of his death was unknown, though a story passed through Anna's own accounts and those of her family said he died in 1858 in Singapore of heat prostration after a tiger hunt.

However, documentary records and evidence of his tomb in Penang proved the account wrong and cast doubts on Anna's credibility.

A Miami University, English professor Susan Morgan, who edited a 1990 edition of Anna's book *The Romance of the Harem* wrote a critique which suggested that Anna's own life was probably as bizarre as the lives of the women in the royal harem of Siam in the 1860s that she wrote about.

Anna "effectively took three years off her age" and she "changed names and places to hide the working-class origins of her family and husband,"

Morgan wrote.

She mentioned a critic which W.S. Bristowe (who in his 1976 biography of Anna's son Louis) revealed that Anna was "a virtual con artist who lied about everything in her back ground."

Bristowe surmised that Anna's "revisions of her personal history became explicable as an attempt to cover the fact that she was of mixed blood and so was not all white", Morgan said.

Bristowe found from army lists, marriage and burial records that Anna married Thomas Leon Owens (in 1849) who later died a "Hotel Master" in Penang and his name was changed to Thomas Leonowens which was inscribed on his tombstone.

Apparently, Anna was in Penang and later went to Singapore with Louis to teach before she was hired by King Mongkut to be tutor to his many children.

She was hired upon the recommendation of the King's "Chinese agent Tam Kin Ching in Singapore on the suggestion of John Adamson of the Borneo Company," Morgan wrote.

Though Anna's account of her experiences in the Siamese royal court may be as questionable as her background, one thing for sure is that her husband died in Penang as evidenced by his tomb here.

Filming to begin tomorrow

STAR
SATURDAY
27 FEBRUARY 1999

THE filming of *Anna and the King* in Armenian Street tomorrow will include the use of 13 Indian elephants.

The elephants, aged between 12 months and 56 years, are presently undergoing simple training and costume-fitting at the Scouts' Coronation campsite in Kebun Bunga.

Animal consultant Rona Brown said the jumbos, which were brought in from the Malacca Zoo and Leng Cheng Elephant Sanctuary in Kelantan, were ready to "act".

"The elephants here are with their respective handlers and we see no problem in getting them to do their stint as they have no specific characters to play," she said during a press tour of the campsite yesterday.

She said a total of 19 elephants and 56 trainers had been recruited for the movie, which included seven full-time feeders to the elephants.

Brown, who has been in the cine field for the past 37 years, has worked on

several reputed movies such as *Gorillas In The Mist*, *Tarzan*, *The Greystoke*, *Secret Garden* and *Dr Doolittle*.

Other animals to appear in the scene include six oxen, seven cows, six goats, 15 chickens and four bullocks besides a couple of monkeys and snakes.

"We will powder up the youngest baby elephant to create a literally white elephant, for a scene where King Mongkut is showered with good luck upon seeing it," she said.

Brown's assistant Brian Edmonds, who is in-charge of the elephants' wardrobe said the elephants will be dressed with grand cloaks, headgears, earrings and rattan-cum-wooden *howdahs* (basket frames) on their backs.

"The main source for the costumes were taken from temple murals in Thailand besides photographs, lithographs and research at the Bangkok National Museum," he said.

He said shooting of the market scene in Armenian

Improve the sorry state of street signs in city: PHT

By HWA MEI SHEN

PENANG: The Penang Municipal Council must act to improve the sorry state of street signs in George Town, the Penang Heritage Trust (PHT) said yesterday.

Its council member Ahmad Chik said a recent PHT survey revealed the city had too few street signs and a high percentage of them were dirty and badly maintained.

"The municipal council definitely has to work very hard to put up many more signs if it is to make George Town friendly and more accessible to visitors during *Visit Penang Year* this year and to make it easier for residents to find their way around."

The survey covered 55 roads in the city centre, Pulau Tikus and two housing estates.

Under the standards applied, all roads should

have a sign at each end, with one at every T-junction and four at crossroads.

Ahmad said the findings showed that while a total of 577 signs were needed for the roads surveyed, only 133 had been provided and 39 of these were dirty, illegible, damaged or not readily visible.

He said that even major roads lacked adequate signs — Jalan Sultan Azlan Shah had only six although it needed 41; Jalan Mesjid Negrī, two (31); Jalan Scotland, three (11); and Jalan Utama, four (28).

"Moreover, just over 10% of the roads do not have any signs at all," he said, adding that these included fairly important ones like Lorong Madras and Lorong Kinta.

He also pointed out that there were "at least six, possibly more," designs of street signs in

current use.

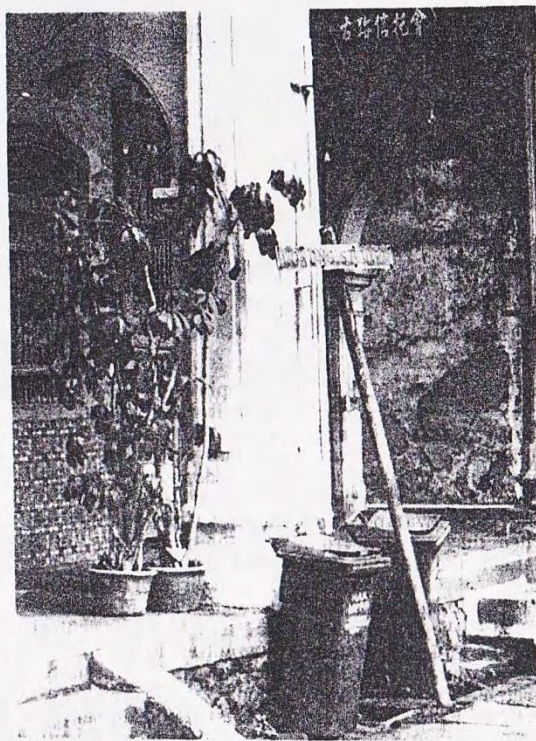
According to Ahmad, street signs were necessary fixtures which could add grace and charm to a city if designed and maintained properly.

"London's are so attractive that they are collectors' items, and Singapore has them erect and clean just where you expect them to be," he said.

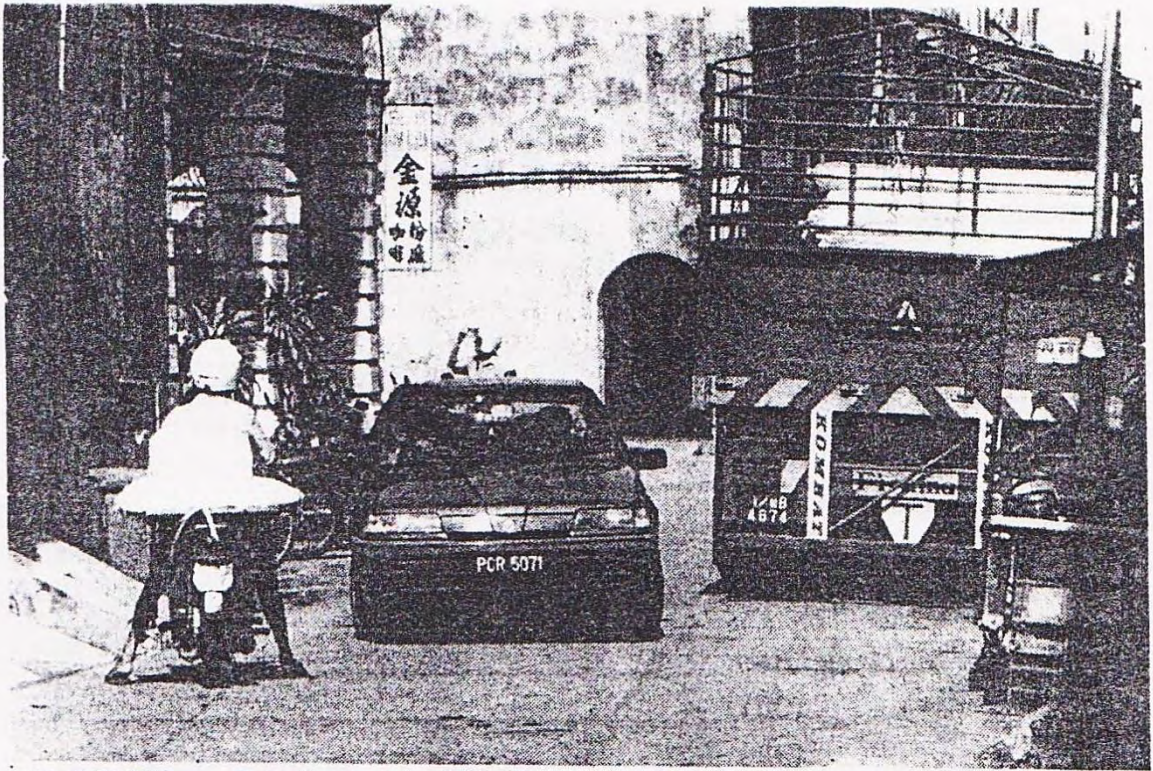
Ahmad also questioned the inconsistency between road signs and maps put up by the municipal council around the city.

He said that while the sign for the southbound road starting from the Jalan Tengku Kudin roundabout read Jalan Sultan Azlan Shah, the road was called Jalan Gelugor according to the maps.

"Which is the correct name? Would this be one reason not to change road names?" he asked.



BAD SHAPE ... a forlorn looking street sign in front of the Penang Heritage Trust office in Stewart Lane.



BLOCKED ... A trailer parked at Stewart Lane causing inconvenience to road users. *STAR, Friday 5 March 1995*

Trailers damaging homes

PENANG: Twelve-wheeler trailers, parked at Stewart Lane to unload goods, have caused some "damage" to the pre-war houses there, residents claimed yesterday.

"They alleged their doorsteps had been damaged by lorries while cracks had appeared in their houses.

"We feel a sinking vibration each time a trailer is parked to unload goods here," said one resident.

She said the goods were unloaded to a warehouse along the road thrice daily — in the morning, evening and midnight.

Another resident said it was quite noisy when workers were unloading the goods.

"We suspect that the warehouse owner is negotiating to buy another building to store his goods," she said.

She said two to three trailers were sometimes parked along the road to unload the goods.

Penang Heritage Trust secretary Khoo Salma Nasution said the Penang Municipal Council should prohibit lorries from entering narrow streets like Stewart Lane, Muntri

Street and Armenian Street.

She said the vehicles not only caused damage to the pre-war buildings but also posed a danger to schoolchildren using the lanes.

She also noted that many pre-war buildings were being converted into warehouses which were fire hazards.

"The council should prohibit the conversion of a residential house into a warehouse," she said, adding that existing warehouses should be given a grace period to move out.

MPPP opts for new, cheaper street signs

STAR
MONDAY
25 JAN
1999

By TUNKU SHAHARIAH

PENANG: The Penang Municipal Council (MPPP) will design new and cheaper street signs to replace old reflective ones which had either been damaged or stolen.

Council president Dr Teng Hock Nan said he had instructed MPPP's engineering department to work on the new design last year.

He added the new signs would be made of cheaper material and would be without the area postcode and the word 'Pulau Pinang' on them.

"The council's engineering department will come up with the new design which could possibly be made from cast iron because it is cheaper," he told reporters at the council's *Hari Raya* open house yesterday.

Dr Teng was asked to

comment on Penang Heritage Trust's (PHT) statement on Saturday on the "sorry state" of street signs in George Town.

PHT council member Ahmad Chik had said a PHT survey revealed the city had too few street signs and that a high percentage were dirty and badly maintained.

Ahmad said the survey covered 55 roads in the city centre, Pulau Tikus and two housing estates.

He said the survey showed there were only 133 street signs out of the 577 needed for the roads surveyed and 39 of the 133 were dirty, illegal, damaged or not visible.

Dr Teng added he would also seek police help in identifying second-hand goods shops in

the city which were buying the stolen street signs from thieves.

"Apart from the street signs, the thieves had also stolen and sold the cast-iron covers from the drains to second-hand goods shops," he said.

To another question, Dr Teng said the council will arrange the proposed dialogue with the three bus companies which had objected to George Town's free shuttle service.

Among those present at the open house were Yang diPertua Negeri Tun Dr Hj Hamdan Sheikh Tahir, Chief Minister Tan Sri Dr Koh Tsu Koon, state executive councillors Dr Toh Kin Woon and Dr Kang Chin Seng, Bukit Bendera MP Chia Kwang Chye and MPPP councillors.



A section of Campbelt Street or "Sin Kell" (new road) which turns off into Kuala Kangsar Road.

NAMES PLAY A SIGNIFICANT PART for us to remember history and our invaluable heritage. They remind us of a bygone era. The heritage of a city is like chapters of a book added on over the years. If we change the names of these places with new ones, the historical significance is lost. The city may expand with either a growing population, or an influx of population from elsewhere, or in some instances, may even shrink due to an exodus of population to its outskirts. But names remind us of its past and its historical origin.

My point of argument is that even if you delete the name Little Bighorn from the map, you cannot erase it from the American history when General George Armstrong Custer and his command was massacred in 1876 by the Sioux.

Captain Francis Light established Penang as a British colony in 1786 and a street has been named after him - Light Street - to honour him for his effort. The name Penang is as old as Pulo Pinang itself - it is just that the the British spelt and pronounce "Pinang" as "Penang". The Hokkiens called it Pi-Nang-Su and the word "Su" means "island".

Until today folks still say "Saya nak pergi ke Tanjung" whenever they are referring to Georgetown and it is a fact that before the city got its

Nostalgic Penang

Want to visit Pi-Nang-Su or Pulo Pinang? Well, those were the names given to Penang as Yong Cheek Yong finds out from the old documents and maps in the Penang State Museum.

name, it was known as Tanjung Penagga (that is, "Cape of the Penagga Trees").

It is quite surprising that although Penang is known as Pulau Pinang, I cannot proudly show a pinang (betel nut) tree to my friends because there is hardly any around! We cannot blame anyone for the loss of one of the elements of our heritage because pinang is no longer an economically viable crop as in the olden days when folks would chew on pinang, sirih (betel leaf), gambier

slices and kapur (slaked lime).

Datuk Kramat Padang has been a favourite place for ardent football fans to congregate several times a week to watch matches played by locals. This huge field has popularly being referred to as Padang Brown because of the memorial of David Brown standing there beside the hawkers complex. There is yet another name for it which people seldom call anymore - Padang Burung. It was so called because of the flocks of sparrows bird-bathing

in the inundated field after a shower or merely feeding off the land.

Little is known that in late 1800's, Chulia Street was made up of two sections - the section from Penang Road to Love Lane junction was known as Choolia Road while the other section from Love Lane junction to Beach Street was called Choolia Street.

Weld Quay? Well, it was not even on the map yet! Perhaps it was how Beach Street got its name as well as a local equivalent of Ujong Pasir. The lower section of Chulia Street is known to Cantonese as "Tai Moon Lau" till today because there was an arch across the road somewhere close to Chulia Lane.

Penang Road, the aorta of the heart of Georgetown, was formerly known as Tiaw Lang Kay or Hang Man Street because in the early years, convicted criminals were

hung near the present day Cathay cinema. What about Burmah Road which is known to the locals as Gu Chia Chooi because bullock carts were used to transport water from Waterfalls (Botanic Gardens) to town. The mosque at the junction of Burmah Road and Transfer Road is called Mesjid Titi Papan because of the wooden bridge that arched over the Prangin Ditch stretched from Weld Quay to Jalan Sultan Ahmad Shah. This ditch was used as a demarcation for the city limits of Georgetown in 1805.

All right, put out your 10 fingers and start guessing how Mesjid Simpang Enam at Macalister Road got its name. Now, let us count the roads: Jalan Penang, Jalan Magazine, Jalan Bricklin (now Gurdwara), Jalan Dato Kramat, Jalan Macalister and Jalan Ladstone (obliterated by Komtar). Jalan Magazine has nothing to do with periodicals. On the site of the present Gama building, there stood a beautiful double storey building that supplied powder magazine for gunowners. In fact, during the secret society riots, known as Penang Riots of 1867, there was a rumour that one of the warring factions wanted to blow up the building as a distraction for the law enforcers.

While we know the long beautiful stretch of urban beach as Gurney Drive, the Penangites also call it Coast Road. It became a popular place during Chap Goh Meh, the 15th day of the Chinese New Year, when damsels in cars would arrive to throw oranges into the sea, "wishing for good husbands". The popular verse goes: *Tim ho kum, chuah ho ang*, meaning Throw good oranges, get good husbands.

Taking a digression, we go back to the old days when maidens are clothed at home and Chap Goh Meh is the only time when they are permitted on the pretext of celebrating the festival to venture out of the house. Young men would seize the opportunity to prospect for wives by lurking at the Esplanade or Gurney Drive. After spotting a girl they fancied, they would attempt to find out where she lived and with the blessings of his parents, a matchmaker was engaged to complete the task leading to matrimony.

Matchmaker or *mui lang poh* sometimes introduced with a mere half-postcard size photograph or mugshot of a girl, or none at all. A saying goes: A matchmaker only takes a couple to their nuptial chamber but do not promise their fertility. Matchmakers' recommendations have to be taken with a pinch of salt and sometimes they were considered notorious liars. However, credit must go to them for promoting many successful and satisfied marriages. There were numerous stories about this dying breed whom people love and hate.

In the past, the couple were not able to see each other's face until the wedding night. Even then, the bride

would have a thick embroidered veil covering her face and it was only in the bridal chamber that her husband unveiled her. We can anticipate the anxiety of the couple when they were about to see each other for the very first time.

There was a story about woman who was shocked to find that her husband was a hunchback on her wedding night and when the matchmaker was approached by the woman's family later, the matchmaker argued that the family had agreed that the man was handsome from the mugshot!

Another has it that the matchmaker asked the girl's family to consider accepting the man she was introducing. This young man is from a respected family and once committed, I do not want you to accuse me of speaking *terng tay kah uah* (literally meaning long and short legs language). The family took it for granted that the matchmaker was merely saying that she would not be at fault if the marriage were to fail in the future and so they agreed. Indeed, on the wedding day, it turned out that the bridegroom had a leg slightly shorter than the other and thus the family were forced to keep their end of the bargain.

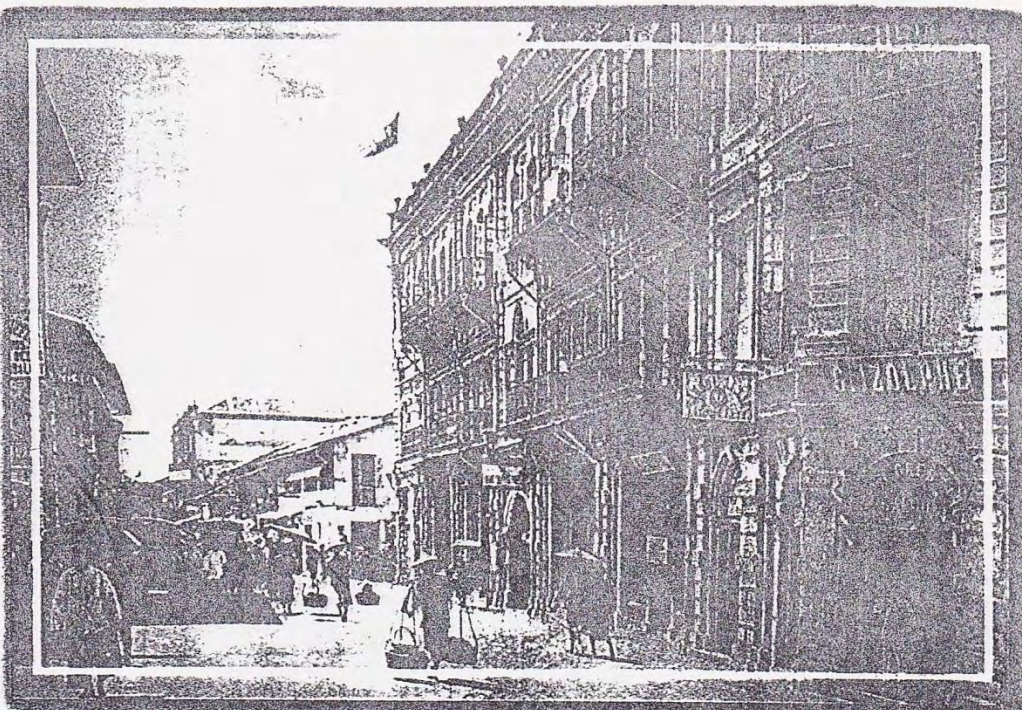
In Chinese Peranakan families, some daughters were given Malay nicknames such as Kodok (toad), Merah (red), Putih (white) and Ning (truncated pronunciation of kuning, yellow). A man was match-made to a girl whose nickname was Kodok and he just kept his fingers doubly crossed as he would be marrying a toad! On the wedding night,

ters to go outdoor: Before that age of liberation, be warned, floor boards had eyes. By that, it means that sometimes holes were made in the floor board for damsels to peek through at household visitors in the hall downstairs. Girls were not to be seen or heard.

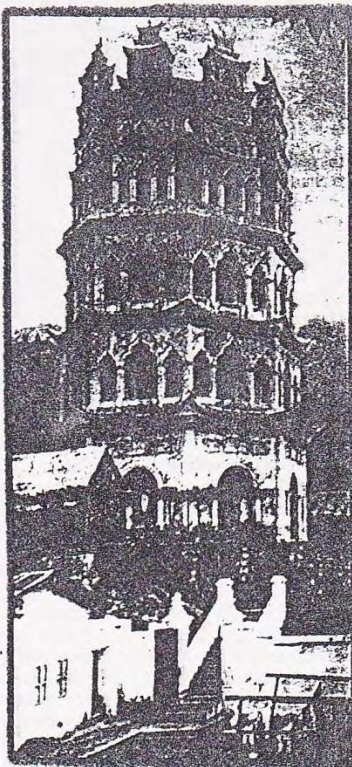
There was a time (circa 1800's) when segregation of sexes were well observed when even husbands were not expected to be seen together with their wives in public. If this was not adhered to, the public might label the woman as *heow* (lustful). Thus, the man could only enjoy the pleasure of a gharry (horse carriage) ride with his wife during the interval between towns and close upon arrival, the man had to get down and walk all the way following behind the gharry within the urban vicinity.

If our forefathers can be brought back to life today - *alamak* - they would be utterly shocked to find the mingling of both sexes in public places and the demise of the matchmakers' era. They may shy away from the theatres because during their time, the husbands would sit in the men's gallery while wives would sit in the front section with the ladies. For some of the ultra-conservative families, their children may even call their mother *Ee* (aunt) instead of *Ma* (Mother). They were to be bashful even to be recognised openly as "mother".

It is thought-provoking to think what culture our great, great grandchildren would have in the next millennium and what they would think of us? Heritage junk? Or would they make a quantum leap back to the matchmakers' era?



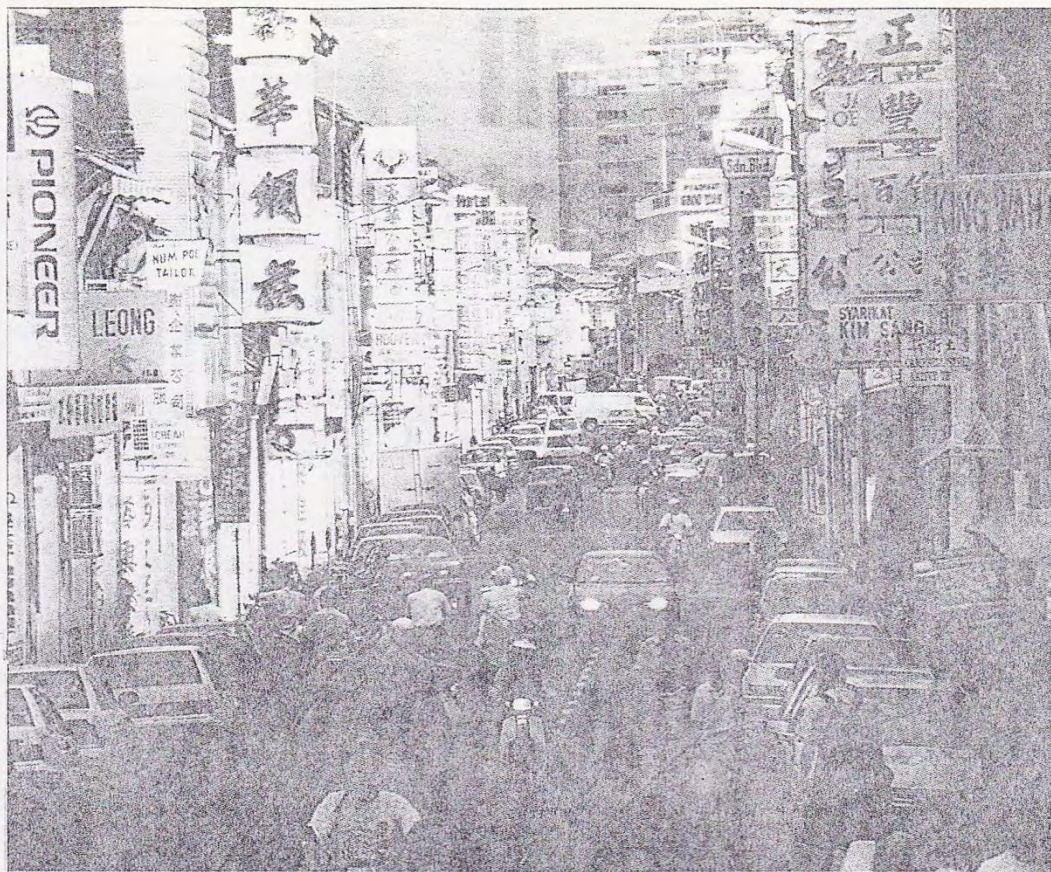
A view of Beach Street in the olden days, now the hub of banking activities, at the junction of Union Street and Downing Street.



Can you recognise this Penang landmark? It's Kek Lok Si under construction.

he was pleasantly surprised that the Kodok he accepted was pretty.

The post-World War II period saw the start of the decline of these matchmakers as families became more liberal in allowing their daugh-



TYPICAL ... a file picture of Campbell Street. The solution is to slow down traffic with traffic lights and pedestrian crossings or zebra crossings for many busy roads on the island.

No such thing as heritage overhead bridge in Penang

THE proposed Citibank bridge will be another modern icon which reinforces the image of Jalan Sultan Ahmad Shah as an office city.

It will do nothing to reinforce the heritage character of Jalan Sultan Ahmad Shah, no matter what the design.

Even if the design is "heritage" it can only be tacky pastiche at best, as there is no such thing as a heritage overhead bridge - at least not in Penang.

Personally, I have nothing against modern buildings and highrises, but they would be more appropriate somewhere else - near the Penang Bridge, for example.

The Citibank bridge design would indeed be attractive, classy, and appropriate if the bridge were to span the North-South Highway instead of one of South-East Asia's most admired heritage suburbs.

However, the overhead bridge is not just an aesthetic issue. It is a problem of the lack of fore-

sight in development planning which now makes us choose between heritage and new development, between cars and people.

The "sacking" of Jalan Sultan Ahmad Shah seriously began during the last building boom. What was once Penang's millionaire's row of charming mansions and roadside trees had been ruined by poor development planning, juxtaposing thirty-storey highrises with two-story buildings and increasing the built-up space along this road - consequently, the traffic, sewerage, and other infrastructure demands - by fifty or a hundred-fold.

In the past, the municipal council made a feeble attempt at drawing up conservation guidelines, and one product of its vision was the heartwreck of Hardwicke on the corner of Jalan Pangkor and Jalan Sultan Ahmad Shah, which looks like a gatehouse for the monstrous development towering above it.

What do we have today?

Half a dozen gigantic office blocks, mostly half empty.

Jalan Sultan Ahmad Shah, which also serves a thoroughfare connecting the Pulau Tikus suburbs to the inner city, was choked with too many cars turning off into the private developments.

Jalan Sultan Ahmad Shah was turned into a one-way street, bringing heavy traffic into surrounding residential streets and causing traffic jams further down the system.

Trees were sacrificed, roads were widened and more one-way systems were introduced, all to make traffic smoother.

We are now dealing with pedestrians as an afterthought after a few people have been victimised while trying to cross the road.

How many people have been knocked down already on new one-way streets?

If we need a pedestrian bridge in front of Citibank, why not on Jalan

Larut, near Wellesley School? Why not on Jalan Burmah in front of Union School?

Where will it end? How much will it cost? Will people use the overhead bridges or will they be white elephants and cheap permanent advertising space for their sponsors?

The solution, if we choose people over cars, is to slow down traffic with traffic lights and a level pedestrian crossing or zebra crossing. To make it even safer, a speed hump can be introduced.

Such a crossing will be infinitely more people-friendly, schoolchildren-friendly and disabled-friendly than an overhead bridge. Then motorists will stop thinking that one-way streets are meant to be racing tracks.

They may even pause long enough to admire what is left of our heritage buildings in Jalan Sultan Ahmad Shah.

MARY TYE,
Penang.
(via e-mail)

Tourism brochure by tourists

Aussies charmed by Chulia Street

By NG SU-ANN

PENANG: Three South Australian graduates are designing a special tourist brochure on Chulia Street, renowned as Penang's backpackers' haven.

The 21st-century-olds from Adelaide, who were intrigued by the street's old world charm and the buildings' architecture, said the brochure could help tourists identify budget hotels, souvenir shops, cafes and other commercial centres in the area.

"The brochure will feature a map with photos of the various places which cater to tourists' needs," said Kym Wundersitz.

Wundersitz, Kishan Sidhu and Ben Mead, who graduated in urban and regional planning studies at the University of South Australia, undertook the project in their own after "falling in love" with the street during a visit last year.

"We liked it so much that we started saving for another trip here.

"And to make it more meaningful, we wanted to contribute a little something to help in Penang's development," said Wundersitz.

He said they had interviewed about 100 tourists and traders involved in the street's tourism sector so far, adding: "We wanted to find out what had attracted the tourists to make return visits."

"We also fear the repeal of the Rent Control Act may force the prewar shops to shutdown to make room for modern buildings," he said.

Mead at they were also drawing up a plan for a disabled-friendly bus-stop for submission to the Penang Municipal Council.

"We will meet up with Step (Sustainable Transport Environment Penang) to ascertain the ideal components to make the bus-stop disabled-friendly," he said.

He added that they would also gather views and suggestions, especially from bus commuters.



ON THE JOB ... South Australians Sidhu (left), Mead and Wundersitz discussing their project in Chulia Street yesterday.