A GUIDE TO
GEORGE TOWN’s
Historic Commercial
and Civic Precincts
George Town’s Historic Commercial & Civic Precincts

Note: Site numbers on the left of each entry correspond with numbers on the foldout reference map in the centre spread. The current site or building name is used if prominently displayed, otherwise a notable name from its historical past is used.

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George Town World Heritage Incorporated
A Background

The development of George Town’s historic commercial and civic precincts occurred under two distinct administrative phases:
1) under the British East India Company (EIC) (1786–1858)
2) under British Crown rule which lasted until just after the Japanese Occupation (1941–1945) during World War II (WWII).

In 1826 the administration of Penang, Singapore and Malacca was combined under the Penang presidency (1805–1830) to form what became known as the Straits Settlements. After 1830 administration fell under the EIC’s Bengal Government and lasted until the EIC was abolished in 1858. The Straits Settlements became British Crown territories in 1867. In 1896 the British Government established a federation of four states in the Malay Peninsular; Selangor, Perak, Pahang and Negeri Sembilan, which was known as the Federated Malay States or FMS. After WWII the Straits Settlements, the FMS and the non-federated Malay states amalgamated. This first became the Malayan Union then the Federation of Malaya, which was granted independence in 1957. Singapore was separated from the federation in 1965.

Beach Street was one of the first thoroughfares established in George Town and once literally ran along the seafront, with mercantile businesses hugging the seaward side. Business was derived from visiting EIC ships on the Britain to China trade route as well as free ‘country traders’ and local and regional trade. The owners of these properties gradually extended them seawards leading to a ‘defacto’ reclamation of seafront land for which owners of property along Beach Street were issued grants in 1870. A second reclamation was undertaken by the Government between 1883 and 1889. This land too was granted to the adjoining landholders at nominal cost. In the early years British and other European merchants tended to dominate the northern section of Beach Street with Chinese, Indian, Arab and Malays the balance.

On the mainland, tin had long been mined by the Malay sultans and had formed a valuable part of their trade with the Dutch and British East India Companies. Chinese immigrants slowly dominated the industry by the mid-1800s, some taking controlling interests and amassing huge fortunes. As large-scale industrial techniques were introduced concessions were bought out, mainly by British companies, leading to a boom in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. Rubber was also first planted around the end of the 19th century and rapidly became the next boom. Penang’s location at the top of the Strait
of Malacca made it an ideal port location which in turn drove the mercantile boom of the early 1900s when many of the prominent buildings we see today were constructed. Significantly, the Hokkien Chinese call the section of Beach Street between the Clock Tower and China Street ‘Ang Mor Thau Khor Kay’ which translates as ‘European Commercial Street’. Despite this name, by the end of the 19th century many of the buildings in this sector were owned by Chinese tin and rubber tycoons who leased them to the foreign companies.

The dominant shipping lines of the mid to late 1800s steamship era which carried on extensive trade to the East were the British P & O Company and the German Norddeutscher Lloyd, though American, Japanese, French and other European lines also sailed the traditional trade routes to China and other regional destinations. The home-grown Straits Steamship Company Ltd commenced business in 1890, specialising in passenger and goods trade in the region. In Penang a steam ferry service commenced to the mainland from Kedah Pier near Fort Cornwallis in 1894.

The boom conditions of the late 1800s and early 1900s brought about an extraordinary revitalisation of Penang’s economy and placed it firmly on the international map. An influx of trade goods exported and imported through the port saw many mercantile companies with headquarters in Singapore establish Penang branches, which also encouraged others to establish businesses here. Following the mercantile firms were the ancillary services. Internationally established banks began to cluster around the northern end of Beach Street along with department stores, newspapers, doctors, lawyers, pharmacies, real estate agents, specialised retail, men’s clubs and cafes known as tiffin rooms.

With this vote of confidence from the private sector the Singapore-based Straits Settlements Government could no longer ignore Penang and many impressive buildings were then constructed to support the administration of the settlement. These included a vast administrative quadrangle at the northern end of Beach Street, a town hall, municipal offices and a courthouse. Institutions such as schools also saw an injection of funds, mainly through private donors, and many grand structures arose where simple buildings had once stood.

Sadly, many of these were destroyed by Japanese and allied aerial bombing during WWII, leaving George Town today deprived of some of its grandeur of 100 years ago. This guide aims to assist visitors to better understand and enjoy many of the remaining buildings which comprise George Town’s Historic Commercial and Civic Precincts.
Note on currency

Throughout this book the dollar ($) is the standard currency quoted. This took several forms between settlement in 1786 and the present, as briefly outlined following:

- **1786–1903**: Spanish dollar, which also included equivalent silver dollars of Mexico, Peru, Bolivia etc. The Indian Rupee was declared the official currency in 1824 and remained so until 1867, though the Spanish dollar continued in use as the preferred currency. Small denomination Straits Settlements coinage was first issued in 1845.
- **1903–1939**: Straits silver dollar. Introduced to replace all other silver dollars. Private and Government banknotes were also introduced.
- **1939–1953**: Malayan dollar. Issued as a common currency for all the Malay States, including Singapore and Brunei. No dollar coin was issued.
- **1953–1967**: Malaya and British Borneo dollar. Issued following the admission of North Borneo and Sarawak. No dollar coin was issued.

Note on street names

The street names used in this publication reflect the historical period being discussed and are therefore the English equivalents to the Bahasa Malaysia names in use today.

<table>
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<th>Bahasa Malaysia</th>
<th>English</th>
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<td>Weld Quay</td>
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<tr>
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<td>Church Street Ghaut</td>
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<tr>
<td>Gat Lebuh China</td>
<td>China Street Ghaut</td>
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<tr>
<td>Lebuh Pantai</td>
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<tr>
<td>Jalan Penang</td>
<td>Penang Road</td>
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Swettenham Pier

At the turn of the 20th century a rail line from Butterworth to Taiping had been completed and the section from there to Kuala Lumpur was well under way. George Town’s port facilities would require a major upgrade to handle the anticipated increase in cargo from the tin and produce-rich Federated Malay States. Following land reclamation here in the late 1880s a T-shaped iron pier was designed by consulting engineers Coude, Son, & Matthews and by 1901 construction was well under way. Completed in 1904 at an expense of nearly $640,000, the pier initially provided 600 feet of wharfage, but this was soon found to be insufficient. Up until early 1906 it was simply known as ‘the Iron Pier’, after which the name Swettenham Pier was adopted. Tram lines were later extended to the pier to facilitate goods and passenger movements.

Sir Frank Athelstane Swettenham was the first Resident General of the FMS (1896–1901) and Governor of the Straits Settlements (1901–1904). He had been the British Resident of Perak (1889–1895) and is credited with driving the expansion of Malaya’s export industries by constructing rail links to port towns, including Klang and Penang. He is also credited with the vision of transforming George Town’s port area into a thriving business precinct through land reclamation and port improvements.

By 1911 an extension of 345 feet to the north and 255 feet to the south was completed, providing wharfage length of 1,200 feet. Steamers and other vessels with a draft of up to 27 feet berthed at the pier, importing and exporting goods and passengers. The new railway and pier proved to be a massive boost to Penang’s flagging economy by making the port the principal import and export hub for the FMS. Thousands of migrant workers arrived at the pier, predominantly from India and China, to seek employment in the mainland tin mines and rapidly increasing number of rubber plantations. George Town also became a major departure point for pilgrims to Jeddah to perform the hajj, and thousands would converge on the jetty when the pilgrim ships departed or returned. This business continued up until the 1970s, when air travel took preference.
After nearly a century of use, the old pier was replaced with the modern facilities seen today. Cargo is now handled by the extensive port facilities on the mainland, but Swettenham Pier continues its long history, now as a berth for local and international cruise ships. Access to the pier is restricted.

2 Government Goods Sheds

Even before Swettenham Pier was completed in 1904, many large mercantile firms had established themselves on the newly reclaimed land along Weld Quay and business was improving rapidly. It soon became clear that additional goods warehouses would be needed to cater for the increasing quantity of merchandise transiting through Penang. A decision was made to reclaim a section of waterfront between the pier and Fort Cornwallis and construct two large Government-owned goods sheds which would then be leased out to private merchants.

Reclamation work commenced in 1901 but was not completed until 1905. Construction of the substantial goods sheds was completed in early 1907. They represent excellent examples of early 20th century architecture, which today might seem far too elaborate for simple storage sheds. Access to the pier and goods sheds is restricted.
3 King Edward Place

Before the land reclamations of the late 1800s, this area was the site of the Light Street public jetty, constructed by the EIC in the mid-1820s. The reclaimed area was named King Edward Place after King Edward VII became the reigning British monarch in 1901. During the 1890s an impressive two-storey U-shaped Government building was constructed fronting Beach Street, King Edward Place and Weld Quay (see Nos. 4 & 28).

4 Site Of Old General Post Office

This vacant site once housed the General Post Office. Completed in 1903, this wing was an extension of the Government buildings which eventually ran in a U-shape from Weld Quay around to King Edward Place and along Beach Street. All except one section of this building was destroyed by allied aerial bombing at the end of WWII (see No. 28). On the site of the current Post Office on the opposite side of Downing Street once stood the Exchange Building. This was an impressive structure which featured a façade curving around the Downing Street/Weld Quay corner. It housed the Penang Chamber of Commerce, the Penang Turf Club and the Town Club, but was also a victim of allied bombing in 1945.
The next impressive block of conjoined buildings, with the addresses Nos. 1 – 5 Weld Quay, was constructed in stages during the 1890s following completion of land reclamation. With a prime position fronting the busy quayside these were occupied by some of the largest mercantile firms of the day. Many of these were branches of companies which commenced in Singapore and expanded to Penang with the advent of the FMS Railway and the new Swettenham Pier. This facilitated the export of tin, sugar, tapioca, rubber and a host of other products from the Federated Malay States through the port of George Town, initiating an explosion of growth.
The Royale Bintang Hotel now occupies the first two prominent buildings past today’s Post Office building, known respectively as 1 and 2 Weld Quay. It is operated by Royale Bintang Hotels & Resorts Group, a division of Boustead Holdings. Boustead & Co. has its founding roots in Singapore, where Edward Boustead began a mercantile business in 1828. A branch of the company was established in Penang in 1864.

Boustead died in 1888, but his company continued and was one of the first mercantile firms to utilise the reclaimed land on Weld Quay. Designed by Swan & Maclaren, construction of the impressive building we see today at No. 1 began in 1891 and was completed in July 1892. The company even had its own jetty directly opposite. Behind the Weld Quay façade were the company offices, then a long row of godowns accessed via a central granite-paved laneway and extending right through to its original premises on Beach Street.

The company soon became one of the most successful British firms in the Malay Peninsular, with direct involvement in the formation of companies such as the Straits Trading Company, the Tanjong Pagar Dock Company, Shell and many others. It represented many large sugar estates and held numerous shipping and insurance agencies. From 1899 it became the country’s main exporter of tin and during the early 1900s became a major rubber plantation manager and exporter.

Restructuring during the 20th century saw the company split into separate entities in Singapore, Malaysia and the UK. Boustead & Co. operated its Penang branch from these premises for over 110 years, finally relocating to Seberang Prai in recent years. Today the Malaysian company is known as Boustead Holdings Berhad and employs over 17,000 people. Its interests include oil palm plantations, property, pharmaceutical, heavy industry, trading and industrial and finance and investment.
This building was constructed at a slightly later date than Boustead & Co’s building by a German-Swiss mercantile company, Schmidt, Kustermann & Co., which also had branches in Singapore (Rautenberg, Schmidt & Co.) and Hamburg (Schmidt & Kustermann).

The Penang branch of the company was first established in Beach Street in 1858 and dealt in a variety of merchandise. In the 1870s they were agents for Ohlendorff & Co., London, which specialised in the supply of Peruvian guano as fertiliser for sugar cane, tapioca, rice, tea and coffee. By the 1890s they were agents for the Sun Insurance Office and the Austrian branch of Lloyds Steam Navigation Company. As Penang’s port grew busier, business became extremely competitive. The company went to court in 1910 to prevent a local Chinese firm using a trademark similar to one of their lines, Kaiser Brewery Beck & Co.’s Key Beer, which featured a key on a red shield. This same trademark is still used on Beck’s beer today.

But then World War I (WWI) intervened. Being a German company, its assets were seized under the Alien Enemies (Winding-up) Ordinance 1914, including cargo aboard the German steamer Luetzow. The partners at the time were Robert Sturznengger (Swiss) and Martin Suhl (German, born in Singapore, but at the time a prisoner of war in Australia), both sons of the original partners; and Max Hasche, a German born in Penang but running the Hamburg branch. Hasche was considered an alien enemy and his share was seized, as was Suhl’s, but as Switzerland was neutral Sturznengger received his share of the liquidated assets. He then commenced business as Sturznengger & Co in Church Street, but was bankrupted in 1922.

In June 1916 this building, as part of the seized assets of Schmidt, Kustermann & Co, was put up for auction at ‘Logan’s Buildings’ in Beach Street. It was described as 3-storey premises extending through to Beach Street, including 13 godowns with access to both streets, and a 2-storey building on the Beach Street frontage. The premises were finally sold to Heah Swee Lee a year later for $283,000. Heah was a Perak sugar and rubber baron who had moved to Penang some years earlier. He built Northam Lodge, became a state councillor and was a prime mover behind the Penang Polo Club.
Another company with its roots in Hamburg was Behn Meyer & Co., established in Singapore in 1840 by Theodor August Behn and Valentin Lorenz Meyer. The Penang branch commenced in Beach Street in 1891 when the company acquired the tin smelting company of Friedrichs & Co. Their operations were relocated to this building following its completion in the late-1890s. The wide arched doorway on the left facilitated passage to a row of warehouses at the rear over a granite-paved laneway – a feature found on many mercantile buildings of this era. Behn Meyer & Co rapidly expanded its operations from one which was predominantly trade between Germany and the East to one of international trade, with branches in many parts of Southeast Asia. In 1906 the company relocated its headquarters from Singapore to Hamburg.

At the outbreak of WWI Behn Meyer’s assets were seized under the Alien Enemies (Winding-up) Ordinance 1914. Not to be thwarted, in 1922 the firm established a subsidiary, the Straits Java Trading Company, and again occupied their old premises at No. 3 Weld Quay. This continued until WWII when once again the company was forced to close its offices in the East. In March 1946 The East Asiatic Co. Ltd, a company incorporated in Denmark, commenced business at this address, as well as in Singapore and Kuala Lumpur, occupying it up until the 1970s. It is believed that this building, right through to and including 19 Beach Street, was constructed by Lim Choo Guan, better known as Puah Hin Leong of Khie Heng Bee Rice & Oil Mills fame, and was held by the family estate until it was sold in 1979.

Beyn Meyer & Co was nothing if not persistent, re-establishing its Southeast Asian business after WWII and it now operates in over 14 countries. A branch was re-established in Penang on 1 January 1958 at 17-19 China Street Gaut (see No. 13) and the company still operates divisions in Penang and Seberang Prai.
Schiffmann, Heer & Co., 4 Weld Quay

This building was probably completed around 1900 and the eastern half was first occupied by Schiffmann, Heer & Co. The company was established in Penang in 1891 by Germans Max Schiffmann and a Mr Heer. Heer departed in 1903 and Italian merchant Gino Pertile of Pertile & Co., Singapore, became a partner. The following year Schiffman also became a partner in Pertile & Co., Singapore, and sole partner in 1905 when Pertile retired to Italy. After a good trading year in 1906, Schiffmann went to Europe, returning to find both businesses in trouble. Both companies were liquidated in 1908 with large overdrafts.

Adamson, Gilfillan & Co then occupied the premises. This Scottish firm was established as Gillfillan, Wood & Co. in Singapore in 1867 and Penang in 1884; the later name being adopted in 1904. The company became agents for the P & O Steam Navigation Company in 1888 and later secured a coal supply contract to the newly formed FMS Railway. They specialised in mining machinery alongside a wide range of miscellaneous goods.

Penang Sugar Estates; Behr & Co., 5 Weld Quay
Along with its neighbour, this building was constructed around 1900. It was first occupied by the Penang Sugar Estates company which managed some of the largest sugar, and later rubber, estates in Province Wellesley (Seberang Prai), including Golden Grove, Caledonia and Byram. In February 1907 they moved their offices to the Caledonia estate.

The next tenant was Behr & Co; first formed in 1890 in Singapore by Germans Max and Meyer Behr. Both had previously been employed by another prominent firm of the day, Katz Brothers. The firm also established a London office under the name Behr Brothers with a British partner. This proved a judicious move, as when WWI broke out the assets of all German companies in the Straits Settlements were seized under the Alien Enemies (Winding-up) Ordinance of 1914. The London branch carried them through and after the war the Penang branch was re-established in this same building.

In 1919 Frederick George Taylor, who had previously worked with Boustead & Co and served with the Coldstream Guards in France during WWI, returned from war and established F.G. Taylor & Co. The company, which had offices at 43 Beach Street, seems to have shared these premises with Behr & Co, but in November 1924 F.G. Taylor & Co. failed, leaving huge debts.

The Borneo Company Ltd., 7–7A Weld Quay

The Borneo Company Limited was founded in London in 1856 to concentrate on business in Sarawak. The following year it absorbed MacEwen & Co. which had branches in Singapore, Java and Siam (Thailand). The company was primarily an import and export business, but diversified into industries such as shipping, banking and mining. The Penang branch was established in 1919 with offices in 29 Beach Street, and relocated to this building after it was constructed in the early 1920s.
The first motor car arrived in Penang in 1903 and the Borneo Company soon saw the possibilities. In 1925 Borneo Motors Limited was established to concentrate on this market throughout Malaya; a branch of business which soon became one of the company’s most important. Vehicles sold include Austin, Vauxhall, Chevrolet, Oldsmobile, Cadillac, Chrysler and Buick as well as trucks, busses and tractors. After several acquisitions the company merged with the Inchcape Group of the UK in 1967 and Borneo Motors was split into Malaysian and Singaporean divisions. Today Inchcape operates in 26 countries and specialises only in motor vehicles. The Malaysian division was sold to United Motor Works in 1981 and in this region only Borneo Motors (Singapore) Pte Ltd remains, representing Toyota, Suzuki, Lexus and Hino. Between 1947 and 1958 this building housed The Eastern Bank Limited.

Paterson, Simons & Co., 9 Weld Quay

This building was completed by Phuah Hin Leong of Khie Heng Bee Rice and Oil Mills after purchasing the site from the shipping and rice importing firm of Chong Moh & Co. in 1893. It was then leased by him to Hallifax & Co, which had commenced business in 1892. 10 years later this mercantile firm was taken over by Paterson, Simons & Co., which had been formed in Singapore in 1859 by William Paterson, Henry Minchin Simons and William Ker, and dealt in a wide variety of merchandise. Over time it diversified into agencies for shipping, insurance and rubber, and industries such as engineering and agriculture, occupying this site for many decades.

In 1947 the building became the offices of J.H. Vavasseur & Co. Ltd. (general agents), which relocated here from the Chartered Bank building. A branch of Union Rubber Brokers Ltd of Singapore was opened at 9 Weld Quay in 1956, and in the early 1980s it was the.
office of Thai Airways Co. Ltd. Paterson, Simons & Co. became a principal subsidiary of Woodhall Trust Ltd in the 1970s which in turn became part of the Elders IXL International Group of Companies of Australia in 1982.

![Early 1900s picture showing the Paterson, Simons & Co. building standing alone.](image)

**12 Wisma Kastam Building, China Street Ghaut**

Constructed by the Federated Malay States Railway (FMSR), this is perhaps one of the world’s grandest railways stations without a railway! A rail line from Penang to Taiping was completed in 1900, and by 1903 one could travel all the way to Kuala Lumpur. The coming of rail awakened Penang from a long slumber and revitalised the island as a port for a great part of mainland Malaya. Despite the date of 1907 on the clock tower, construction of this building commenced in 1905 and was not finally completed until early 1909, at which time it was the largest in Penang; its clock tower also making it the highest. When opened it housed the railway administration offices, private offices, a booking office, a restaurant and even some basic accommodation.
Passengers would purchase an all-inclusive rail ticket which entitled them to take a railway ferry steamer to Butterworth where they would board their train. In anticipation of increased passenger and freight demands created by the opening of the rail, a 644 feet-long (196m) jetty had been constructed opposite by the FMSR in 1901.

A proposal by the FMSR to build a first-class hotel ‘in the style of the great railway hotels in Europe’ was never carried out. The building currently houses the Royal Malaysian Customs Department.

Pre-WWII view of the FMSR building. On the far left the railway jetty can just be seen, with the Yeap Chor Ee building behind. On the right are the Paterson, Simons & Co and Borneo Company Ltd buildings.

Yeap Chor Ee Buildings, China Street Ghaut

The buildings lining the southern side of China Street Ghaut from Weld Quay to Beach Street owe their existence to one man, Yeap Chor Ee. From his arrival in Penang in 1885 at the age of 17 he demonstrated a remarkable aptitude for business. Humble beginnings as a barber soon gave way to successful partnerships and astute investments in sugar, rubber, rice, tapioca and in particular, tin.
When the first of these buildings (No.1) was constructed on the Weld Quay frontage in 1922 to house his business interests, Yeap was 55. The adjoining buildings on the left and right of Victoria Street were, like No. 1, designed by Stark and McNeill, and were completed by 1934.

The one on the eastern side (No.2) was occupied by the Indian Overseas Bank Ltd, which was established in Madras in 1936. The Penang branch was the first Indian bank in Malaya, opening on 5 July 1937. The Indian Overseas Bank Ltd, Indian Bank Ltd and United Commercial Bank Ltd were nationalised by the Indian Government in 1969, and in Malaysia merged to form the United Asian Bank Berhad (UAB) in 1973. The new entity continued to trade from these premises for some years. After mergers it became part of today’s CIMB Group. Another significant tenant after WWII was Lindeteves (Malaya) Ltd.

The building on the western side (No.3) was occupied by a variety of businesses over the years including Behn, Meyer & Co. Ltd, which re-established its Penang branch here on 1 January 1958, continuing until the 1970s.

Yeap Chor Ee, who was affectionately known as The Grand Old Man of Penang, died an extremely wealthy man in 1952 at the age of 85. His original home at the northern end of Penang Street is now a gallery and restaurant. In keeping with his philanthropic assistance to educational institutions, Yeap’s family home called Homestead in Jalan Sultan Ahmad Shah was donated to the Wawasan Education Foundation in 2006, which also currently utilises No. 3 of these buildings in China Street Ghaut.
George Town Dispensary, 39 Beach Street

A ‘dispensary’ would be better known today as a pharmacy, or chemist. In the early days of Penang under the EIC the Government provided such services, but this later gave way to private enterprise. There were several dispensaries in George Town, however this one, which was first established in 1889 by an Armenian, Dr Thaddeus Cachick Avetoom, soon became the most prominent. Born in Calcutta in 1861, Dr Avetoom received his medical qualifications in Edinburgh in 1885 and began practice in Penang the following year. In 1895 the business was relocated from Logan’s Buildings in Beach Street to 37A Beach Street and was advertised as ‘Wholesale & Retail Chemists and Druggists’ supplying ‘Patent & proprietary medicines, pharmaceutical drugs and chemicals’. In addition it was an agent for ‘sight tested’ glasses. Business soon expanded to include the supply of high quality imported pharmaceuticals to other dispensaries and hospitals in Malaya and Thailand.
In 1901 George Town Dispensary Ltd was formed to take over the George Town Dispensary. Business continued to grow and over the years branches were opened in Ipoh, Taiping, Malacca and Petaling Jaya. In Penang the company relocated next door to this handsome building, which was designed by Swan & McLaren and completed in 1923 at a cost of $93,661.77. By this time ownership had passed from Armenian to British hands. The China Street Ghaut side of the building was leased out as professional offices, and still retains the original name, George Town Chambers. The business survived wars and recessions as an independent company right up until 1982, when it was taken over by New Hibernia Securities. The company was restructured and the pharmaceutical and dispensary division was separated into a new entity named George Town Pharmacy Sdn Bhd.

The centre building is 37 Beach Street in the early 1900s, the location of the George Town Dispensary before moving to the corner building.

16 **AIG Place, 37a–37b Beach Street**

This land was officially granted to John Colhoun in 1802 and was the location of the George Town Dispensary from 1895, before it moved to the building adjoining in 1923. For many years the Penang Foundry Company (est. 1876) had their offices in 37 Beach Street and workshops behind these premises. At that time the property was owned by Lee Chin Tuan and Lee Chin Soon. The original structure was demolished to make way for this building, which was completed in 1925.
The name Cheong Fatt Tze is widely associated today with his family home, the ‘Blue Mansion’ in Leith Street, but during his life in Penang he was better known by his Hokkien name, Thio Tiauw Siat. A highly successful businessman with extensive interests in Malaya, the Dutch East Indies and China, Thio died in 1916 leaving a vast estate. The initials ‘TTS’ on this building indicated that it was constructed from his estate by his family. Early occupants were Nawng Pet Tin Ltd and later, Grafton Laboratories Ltd. It is now occupied by AIG.

**17 Goon Yen & Friends, 32–34 Beach Street**

This beautiful building, completed in 1886, is the earliest of the major business premises in Beach Street to retain its original structure. Its designer is unknown; however the first anchor occupant was the Chinese ship chandlery firm of Goon Yen & Friends, which was established by Choy Goon Yen the same year. When the original partners retired in 1895, Ng Seah Wong was brought in as a partner and managed the company until its demise in 1915. During this time it diversified into tapioca, coconuts and rubber plantations on the mainland. Over the years many businesses have occupied the various offices in the building, which has recently been reoccupied by OCBC.

The Oversea-Chinese Bank Limited was incorporated in Singapore in 1919, and in April 1920 a Penang branch opened at 24 Beach Street. The following year it moved to this site. As a result of poor business conditions following the New York Stock Exchange crash of 1929 and subsequent depression, the Chinese Commercial Bank Limited, the Ho Hong Kong Bank Limited and the Oversea-Chinese Bank Limited merged to form the Oversea–Chinese Banking Corporation Limited (OCBC). Malayan exports had fallen from $1,290 million in 1925 to just $366 million in 1932, and imports fell over 60%. Rubber prices had fallen from $1.14 per pound in 1925 to a low of just under 5 cents in 1932 and tin prices had fallen some 55%.

Formed in October 1932, the new entity, headquartered in Singapore, began trading in January 1933, just as a world recovery was under way. It had branches in Malaya, China, Hong Kong, Java, Sumatra and Burma. By 1934 the Penang branch was reopened. In 1938, the original 1880s facade was replaced with this impressive Art Deco-style one, designed by Charles Geoffrey Boutcher. The dull grey finish to its façade is known as ‘Shanghai plaster’ and the original logo, later stylised by OCBC, can still be seen in the central panel. The bank moved to its new building in the early 1960s, but has recently relocated some services here.
This imposing corner building is known as Kongsoon House and was completed in 1914 for wealthy Chinese businessman Goh Taik Chee. He had commenced business in Church Street in 1890 as Goh Taik Chee & Sons, trading as a general merchant and importer of equipment which found ready markets with the tin, and later, rubber booms. Well known for his social work and philanthropy, he was a prime motivator for the reconstruction of the Tuah Peh Kong Temple at Tanjong Tokong, and in 1909 was president of the Chinese Anti-Opium Association. At that time it was estimated that there were 20,000 opium smokers in George Town. He annually gave two scholarships to the Penang Free School, and was a member of the Chinese Chamber of Commerce, the Penang Chinese Advisory Board and the Straits Settlements Hospitals Board. He died in 1919.

The Oversea-Chinese Bank Limited (now OCBC) first opened a branch here in April 1920 but moved next door to No. 28 the following year. Goh Teik Chee & Sons were still trading here at that time and were agents for Triumph motorcycles. From the mid-1930s to the late 1990s the Kee Huat Radio Co. Ltd had its premises here. The company retailed a variety of electrical goods and was an agent for Esso gas. OCBC has recently relocated some of its services here.

Sandilands, Buttery & Co Ltd & Katz Brothers Ltd, 29–33 Beach Street

The building comprising 29 and 31 Beach Street was designed and owned by Stark & McNeill, and completed in 1921 in compliance with the widening of the street. One of its more prominent occupants was the mercantile firm of Sandilands, Buttery & Co. Ltd. The origins of this company date back to the 1830s when Francis Currie Lorrain and George MacFarlane Sandilands, both of Glasgow, founded Lorrain, Sandilands & Co. in Penang. Francis’s brother, Walter Scott Lorrain, co-founder of the Singapore Free Press & Mercantile Advertiser, was also admitted as a partner at a later date.

In 1856 a branch of the company was established in Singapore. At some stage John Buttery, another Glaswegian and long-standing Penang merchant, was admitted as a partner, and after Francis Lorrain died in 1857 and Walter Scott Lorrain officially withdrew in February 1863 the company was resurrected as Sandilands, Buttery & Co. The firm, which opened a Glasgow branch upon establishment, was originally located on a large property at the far end of Beach
Street, but when this land was required for further reclamation and Government buildings in the 1880s it was sold for $185,000. This sum caused much controversy at the time, being deemed rather high, particularly as Sandilands was by then a member of the Straits Settlements Legislative Council. The firm then moved to this location, sharing it with W.N. Woodford & Co. in the early 1900s before the building we see today was constructed. The Glasgow branch, which was called John Buttery & Co. was moved to London in 1875, and a branch was established in Medan, Sumatra.

As did many mercantile firms of the day, Sandilands, Buttery & Co. operated as general import/export merchants, agents for rubber, tapioca, tobacco, tin, sugar and other Straits produce, as well as representing a string of banking, shipping and insurance agencies. G.M. Sandilands died in London on 27 November 1887, but unlike many, the company survived well into the 20th century. After WWII it was acquired by Henry Gardner & Co. Ltd of London but continued to operate under the name Sandilands, Buttery & Co. Ltd. Through further mergers in the early 1970s the firm became Jardine Sandilands then Jardine Marketing Services Ltd in 1976. The legal firm of Wreford & Farrer Baynes (then Wreford & Thornton, then Conaghan, Wreford & Thornton) was also one of the new building’s first tenants and continued business here for several decades.

Various businesses operated from No. 31 post-WWII, including a KLM agency, The General Electric Co. Ltd., Typewriters (Malaya) Ltd and KPM Lines. No. 33 also designed by Stark & McNeill and completed in 1922 for the estate of Phuah Hin Leong. The site was most notably occupied by Katz Brothers Ltd for many years until taken over by Henry Waugh and Co. Ltd in 1929. Both were mercantile companies and also acted as secretaries and registered offices for a large number of tin mining and rubber producing companies over the years. Henry Waugh and Co was also absorbed by Jardine Matheson & Co. in 1954.

India House, 27-27A Beach Street

From the late 1870s this site, right through to the sea, was occupied by the mercantile firm of Huttenbach Brothers & Co. and is shipping arm Huttenbach, Liebert & Co. German-born August Huttenbach was one of Penang’s greatest advocates, driving trade, business and administrative initiatives until his retirement to Britain in 1914.
Two companies established by John Fraser and David Chalmers Neave, the Singapore and Straits Printing Office and the Singapore and Straits Aerated Water Company, were merged in 1898 to form Frazer and Neave. In the early 1900s the firm had premises on this corner site. The company still exists today and is better known by its F&N brand of softdrinks. In the later 1920s, Grosvenor Motors, the legal firm of Lim & Lim (est. 1927) and the Federal News Co. operated from No. 27A Beach Street.

This distinctive building, built by S.N.A.S Sockalingam Chettiar and known as India House, was completed in 1941 and unoccupied when the Japanese Occupation in WWII intervened. Between 1948 and 1951 the Hongkong & Shanghai Bank was accommodated here during construction of its new building (see No. 26), and from then until the 1970s the building housed the United States Information Services (USIS) library. These libraries were established worldwide and open to the public in order to assist in ‘building understanding of the United States as a nation, its institutions, culture and ideals’. Many Penangites well remember utilising its well stocked library here.

22 Saw Seng Kew & Co., Ltd, 23 Beach Street

Designed and owned by Stark & McNeill, this building was completed by early 1920; the first to be rebuilt in compliance with plans to widen Beach Street. It was then named British India House. Late 19th century occupants of the site included Cunningham Clarke & Co., Thean Chee & Co. and Choo Ghuan Keok & Co. By the turn of the century Lux Brothers, electrical engineers and contractors, were located here, but by July 1904 bookmaker Fred Lander had taken over the premises, which were also used by fellow bookmakers C.H. Willis and A.W. Tully. By late 1912 this business seems to have ceased. The new building’s first tenants were Sime Darby &Co. Ltd., Islay Kerr & Co. Ltd., solicitors Adams and Allan and accountants Barker & Co. Ltd.

Over the decades the offices have been utilised by accountants and agents for various rubber and insurance companies, insurance companies, legal offices and shipping and travel agencies.
British India House is now colloquially known as the Saw Seng Kew building. Born in 1900, Saw Seng Kew rode the wave of the early 20th century rubber boom. At the age of just 20 he was manager of the rubber firm, Syn Thong Company and became managing director in 1940. He formed Saw Seng Kew & Co. after WWII and rapidly rose to prominence, becoming chairman of the Rubber Trade Association (1946–48) and the Penang Rubber Exchange. In 1954 he became chairman of the Chinese Chamber of Commerce and lived at ‘Peakview’ on Gurney Drive. Politics soon followed and he became president of the Penang MCA and State Alliance chairman.

With wealth and influence at hand he founded Southern Banking Ltd, which first opened for business on the top floor of this building in August 1965 with capital of $20m. Saw Seng Kew was both chairman and managing director. The following year he was awarded the Panglima Mangku Negara (PMN) which carries the title ‘Tan Sri’. Meanwhile the 5-storey building at 21 Beach Street, now occupied by Alliance Bank, was under construction and the bank relocated there in 1967. Saw died three years later but the company Saw Seng Kew & Co Sdn Bhd continues to this day. In 2006 Southern Bank was taken over by CIMB Bank.

The Whiteaways Arcade, 8–22 Beach Street

This extensive building, spanning from Church Street to Bishop Street, housed many businesses throughout its history, but is named for perhaps its most famous tenant; Whiteaway, Laidlaw & Co. The company was founded in Calcutta in 1882 by 26-year-old Robert Laidlaw and 31-year-old Edward Whiteaway, and specialised in ‘good class Drapery, Household Furnishing, Boots, Shoes, and Gentleman’s Goods in India’. A successful formula saw branches open in several cities in India, in Burma and in 1893, Singapore. Mr Whiteaway withdrew in 1899 and Laidlaw opened a Penang branch in 1903.

This building was described as ‘the finest and newest block of offices in Penang’ when it was completely destroyed by fire in March 1904. Occupying businesses lost all their stock and trade, including the Pinang Gazette Press; W. Cornfields, tailors & outfitters; Thean Chee & Co., ship’s chandlers; Chin Seng Brothers, watchmakers; Howarth Erskine, electrical and engineering; Dr. Brown; Wassiamul Assiomul & Co., Indian jewellers and D.A.M. Browns offices. The building
formed part of the estate of multi-millionaire tin magnate and former Chinese Kapitan of Perak, Chung Keng Kwee (also known as Cheang Keng Kwi or simply Ah Quee) who had died in 1901. At the time of the fire it was valued at $200,000, but was uninsured. The upper portions of the burnt out building were demolished and the edifice was rebuilt.

Whiteaway, Laidlaw & Co. then occupied the Bishop Street end of the reconstructed building. The firm was known for its cash only policy which did not prevent it becoming one of the biggest and best-known of the British emporiums in Asia. The company was floated on the stock exchange in 1908 with 23 branches, and from thereon became Whiteaway, Laidlaw & Co. Ltd. In 1914 it moved its Penang branch into new premises designed by prominent Penang architect Henry Alfred Neubronner on the opposite side of Bishop Street (now Yuta House).

The company enticed customers with special sales including ‘dollar days’ and in 1935 introduced an ‘ambitious policy’ guaranteeing the lowest price for equivalent products and a full refund if not fully satisfied. By this time it had 40 department stores in several continents with central purchasing in London. The Bishop Street store closed on 31 January 1966; the last surviving of its stores in Malaysia and Singapore.

Over its 110-year-plus history this building, which together with its neighbour across Bishop Street was sometimes also referred to as ‘Ah Quee’s Buildings’, housed a great number of professional and retail businesses and played an important historical roll as part of a major business hub in Beach Street.

In the early 1800s this was the site of mercantile godowns associated with names such as Thomas Perkins, William Weightman, William Revely, John Revely and George Porter. The Navy Tavern and Anthony Brunoe’s tavern were also located here in those early years.
With a frontage spanning from Bishop Street to Union Street, this building was the first large-scale complex of shops and offices constructed in Penang. It was also another of the properties owned by the multi-millionaire, Chung Keng Kwee. When completed c. 1883 it was three stories high and sported cast iron balconies on the Beach Street frontage.

It was commonly known as the ‘Logan Buildings’ or ‘Logan’s Buildings’ from its completion, which reflects its association with Daniel Logan, the son of prominent Penang lawyer James Richardson Logan (See No. 39). Daniel Logan was admitted to the Penang Bar in 1864, being appointed Crown Prosecutor the following year and Solicitor General in 1867. He and Frederick Ross founded the legal firm of Logan and Ross in 1871 which subsequently operated from an office in the Union Street side of this building for many years. Daniel Logan died in 1897, reputedly the largest landed proprietor in the Straits Settlements, and was succeeded by his son, also named Daniel. The first Chinese lawyer in Penang, Yeoh Guan Seok, joined in 1907 and became a partner. He was also a member of the Penang Bar and the Chinese representative in the Legislative Assembly prior to his death aged just 45 in 1926.

Auctions of property were often held ‘under the archway’; still an impressive feature of the Beach Street frontage, and over its long history many of Penang’s most prominent early firms began business or were based here. In the early years these include Pritchard & Co.; Robinson Piano Co. Ltd; the Hongkong & Shanghai Bank; legal firms such as Presgrave & Matthews, A.A. Anthony & Co., Logan & Ross; auctioneers and general brokers Cunningham, Clark & Co. and a multitude of other retail and professional businesses. The Pinang Gazette newspaper was relocated here from the Whiteaways building after its offices and press were destroyed in the 1904 fire. In the 1930s the upper storey was removed as it was deemed unstable, but despite losing its dominant appearance the 130-year-old building retains its historical prominence.

The Logan building in its original state in the early 1900s.
This site was originally occupied by Scott and Co., the mercantile business of Francis Light’s trading partner, James Scott. His extensive warehouses occupied 293 feet of prime sea frontage and were subsequently the premises of many of Penang’s earliest mercantile firms. In 1903 the Nederlandsche Handel Maatschappijor Netherlands Trading Society (NTS) acquired this site, which at the time was occupied by the Criterion Tiffin Rooms. The structure we see today was then designed for the NTS by architects and civil engineers Wilson & Neubronner. The NTS had been established by royal charter in 1824 in Amsterdam as a trading company in order to re-establish Dutch mercantile presence in its former territories. With its main branch in Batavia (Jakarta), it slowly morphed into a banking institution through the financing of planters in Java and Sumatra; in particular for sugar and tobacco. It ceased its mercantile business in 1887, and by the time this building was completed in April 1905, the bank also had branches in Indonesia, Singapore, Rangoon and Shanghai. Adjoining, at 11 Beach Street, was the Chartered Bank of India, Australia and China, though the current building is not the original.

As of 3 October 1964 the company traded as the Algemene Bank Nederland N.V. (General Bank of the Netherlands or ABN Bank) following a merger. In 1991 the bank merged with Amro Bank to form ABN Amro Bank, which in turn was taken over in 2007 by a consortium comprising the Royal Bank of Scotland Group (RBS), Fortis and Banco Santander. A complicated restructure brought about by the 2008 financial crisis saw the Penang branch fall under the RBS banner; however its investment banking operations here were recently taken over by the CIMB Group. At the time of writing the building is being sold.

The early mercantile warehouses at this end of Beach Street gradually gave way to expansion of the Government and banking sectors around the turn of the 20th century. The Hongkong and Shanghai Banking Corporation, better know today as simply HSBC, first opened a branch in Penang in 1884 and for some years traded from the Logan Buildings opposite. This site, previously occupied by the old Post and Telegraph Office, was then acquired and an imposing three-storey building adorned with a prominent domed tower was designed by Wilson & Neubronner. Construction was completed at a cost of around $250,000 and the bank moved in on Christmas Eve 1906. Until completion of the FMSR building (see No. 12), it was the highest in town, being 120 feet to the top of the dome. Significantly, it was the first building in Penang to have an electric lift installed.

After WWII HSBC decided to modernise its premises, and by May 1949 the 200 piles necessary to support the foundations had been driven. While construction was under way the bank relocated temporarily to India House. The British High Commissioner, Sir Henry Gurney, had the pleasure of declaring the $1.5m building open on 19 May 1951. HSBC is one of the true survivors in Penang’s banking history, being able to mark 130 years of business in 2014.
The Chartered Bank of India, Australia and China was established in London in 1853. A branch was established in Singapore in 1859 and the Penang branch was opened in 1875. Trading from 33 Beach Street for many years, the bank moved to a substantial two-storey building at 11 Beach Street after its completion in the late 1890s. Prior to construction of the current Standard Chartered Bank building the old Central Police Station occupied the site, but was demolished in 1925 in preparation for the bank. Designed by John McNeill and C.G. Boucher of Stark & McNeill, the new building was commenced in 1926, but due to difficulties during construction was not completed and opened until 30 January 1930. The contractors were Chin Ah Chin and Yong Ah Shing, and at four storeys it was one of the highest buildings in Penang at the time. Offices on the upper floors proved popular and many important firms have occupied them over the years. One of Penang’s oldest legal firms, Presgrave & Matthews, and the old accountancy firm of Kennedy, Burkill & Company currently have offices here.

In 1969 the Chartered Bank of India, Australia and China merged with the Standard Bank of British South Africa to form Standard Chartered Bank. With 1,700 branches in 68 countries it is one of the world’s most international banks. As the oldest continuously trading bank in Penang it will celebrate 140 years of business on the island in 2015.

Following the early 1880s land reclamation and resumption of mercantile properties, in particular that of Sandilands, Buttery & Co. which owned the majority of this site, the Straits Settlement Government commenced construction of a vast U-shaped administrative complex. Commencing in King Edward Place, the first wing was constructed between 1884 and 1889, and extended in an L-shape around to face Weld Quay, at the southern end of which was the General Post Office. From King Edward Place the second phase from 1890–91 saw construction of a Land Office wing extending along Beach Street. The third phase extended the Weld Quay wing as far as Downing Street from 1901–1903 and the Post Office was then relocated to that end. The last phase was to extend the Beach Street wing to Downing Street from 1907–1909. Upon completion the complex housed the Governor’s office, the Resident Councillor’s Office, the Audit Office, the Public Works Department, the Land Office, the Marine Department, the Harbormaster’s Office, the Solicitor-General’s Office, the Telephone Exchange & Telegraph Office and the General Post Office.

Today, all that is left of this impressive Government quadrangle is this last-constructed wing of 1907. All the rest were demolished by allied bombing towards the end of WWII. The surviving section now houses the Majlis Jabatan Agama Islam or Islamic Council.
29 Immigration Building, corner of Beach Street & Light Street

 Constructed during 1889–90 at a cost of $18,570, this building formed the last part of what was a law enforcement precinct comprising the Magistrate’s Court, the Central Police Station (where the Standard Chartered Bank building now stands) and here, the Police Office. Today a local branch of the Immigration Department occupies the building.

30 Queen Victoria Memorial Clock Tower, Beach Street & Light Street Junction

 When the 100th anniversary of Penang’s settlement by the EIC came around in 1886 there was talk of the Government constructing a memorial clock tower somewhere in the reclamation area, but this came to nothing. 11 years later, on the occasion of Queen Victoria’s Diamond Jubilee, the highly successful Chinese businessman Cheah Chen Eok pledged $30,000 towards a memorial clock tower, stipulating that it should be 60 feet high; one foot for each year of the reign of Queen Victoria. A design competition was launched with a first prize of $150 and $50 for second, closing in November 1897. After modifications a second round was held, closing in March 1898. The municipal engineer, Mr. Peirce, won both rounds, and after much deliberation construction of the clock tower began in 1900, but only after Cheah contributed a further $5,000.
Construction was supervised by Barnett and Stark with local contractors and it was officially opened on 23 July 1902. The tower is 60 feet to centre of the clock, which was brought from Europe, and 97 feet to the top of the cupola. The belfry above the clock contained five bells which chimed the Westminster quarters, and the hour bell weighs one ton. The clock has windows of opal glass and was originally illuminated at night by acetylene.

When the Japanese bombed Penang in December 1941 the clock tower was damaged. This, combined with allied bombing in 1945, caused the tower to lean slightly. After the Japanese Occupation the clock and chimes were repaired and once again rang out the time for George Town, but the chimes are not in operation at the present time.

Born in Penang in 1852, Cheah Chen Eok began the mercantile firm Chen Eok & Co. in 1876. He later held the highly lucrative rights to operate the opium and spirit monopolies in the Straits Settlements and died a wealthy man in 1922 at the age of 70 years.

State Legislative Assembly Building, Light Street

The year this stately building was built has not been determined, but is believed to be in the mid-1800s and certainly well before 1869 when it is pictured during the Duke of Edinburgh’s visit to Penang. In the early days it was known as the Police Courts or Magistrate’s Courts. It formed part of a police precinct between Light, Beach and Union streets which also housed the Central Police Station (now the site of Standard Chartered Bank), the Police Office (now the Immigration Department), police barracks, stables, and a fire engine garage. This last utility fell to the police to administer up until 1909 when the Municipal Fire Brigade was formed. At that time Union Street doglegged from Beach Street around all these buildings to emerge on Light Street adjacent to the Magistrate’s Court. This building retained its court function up until the early 1960s, when it was converted at a cost of over $150,000 into chambers for the State Legislative Assembly.
After Francis Light received verbal permission from the Sultan of Kedah to establish a British East India Company settlement in Penang he landed on this point on 17 July 1786. Two weeks later, after clearing the trees, a timber fort was laid out on the same spot and the same size as today’s fort. With the advent of war between Britain and France in 1793, Light began rebuilding the fort in brick and by the time of his death in October 1794 it had been built up to the cordon. The brickwork structure was completed to what we see today in 1804-05 under Lieutenant Governor Robert Townsend Farquhar. In addition a moat complete with drawbridges and glacis on the land-facing sides were formed. Once again this had been driven by an escalation of the Napoleonic Wars.

As was typical of fortifications of the day, the heaviest cannons at Fort Cornwallis, 32-pounders, were mounted on outworks constructed beyond the moat on the sea-facing sides of the fort. Smaller cannons were mounted on the ramparts of the fort. None of the cannons were ever fired in defence, but were regularly fired for salutes.
By 1814 there were 77 cannons of various sizes mounted on the fort and its outworks, and a further 45 in storage. Inside the fort were barracks for a limited number of strategic military personnel, storage warehouses, a gunpowder store and other ancillary buildings. At that time there were also guardhouses above the eastern and western gateways.

After the end of the Napoleonic Wars, Fort Cornwallis was maintained as a military garrison. When the last regiments were moved out in 1881 it became a base for the Sikh and European police force. There were many occasions over the following decades when the fort was on the brink of demolition and by 1922, in order to expedite this, the moat was filled in. The western wall of the fort was in fact demolished around 1932 in order to open up the interior to the Esplanade, or padang. Luckily, in 1936 the Straits Settlements Governor, Sir Thomas Shenton Whitelegge Thomas, saved the fort from complete demolition. A bronze statue of Francis Light was commissioned from Britain and mounted on a high granite plinth at the fort, where it was unveiled by Sir Shenton Thomas, as he was commonly known, on 3 October 1939.

Just over two years later, on 8 December 1941, the Japanese began bombing Penang. The British hurriedly departed, leaving the Japanese in occupation of Penang until their surrender to British forces on 4 September 1945. During this time the fort and the Esplanade were utilised by the Japanese forces as a site for military workshops and storehouses.
Light’s statue was removed and after the war was remounted at the Supreme Court building in Farquhar Street before more recently returning to the fort. In the early 1970s an amphitheatre and ancillary buildings were constructed in the fort, and in March 1976 the fort was declared a National Monument. During 2000-01 the fort was extensively restored with a grant from the Malaysian Government, including reconstruction of the demolished western curtain and gateway.

Today it is perhaps the most iconic and important structure which links George Town’s World Heritage Site back to the first days of settlement by the EIC.

The Esplanade in this instance is in fact the spacious grassed area and not, as commonly understood, the road and seafront walkway or promenade. It takes its name from military terminology in which an Esplanade is an expanse of land between a fortification and other buildings. Its purpose was to enable an unobstructed view of the fort’s surroundings; an open piece of no-man’s land which an enemy would have to cross under fire from the fort. For some years after the EIC settlement was founded in Penang the Indian soldiers (sepoys) were camped on this land, later being moved out of town. The Esplanade was then used as a military parade ground, but over time it became a recreation ground for the island’s inhabitants.
A cricket pavilion was constructed for the Penang Cricket Club on the western side of the Esplanade in 1884, followed by one for the Penang Recreation Club on the eastern side in 1890. The former was primarily for Europeans, the latter for the Eurasian community. There was also a bandstand on the seaward side which had been donated in 1884 by Cheah Tek Soon and was regularly used to entertain Penangites by moonlight. In 1908 the Penang Cricket Club constructed a substantial 2-storey pavilion designed by Wilson & Neubronner to replace their old one and in the mid-1930s the club, along with the Golf Club, was absorbed into the Penang Sports Club. The pavilion was given up in 1940 to be demolished in order to return the Esplanade to the general public.

Then WWII intervened. The Japanese constructed military warehouses and a light rail-line on the Esplanade, but it was allied bombing that finally destroyed the Cricket Pavilion and a new Eurasian Recreation Club constructed just prior to the war. It was not until around 1950 that the Esplanade was once again returned to the open green public space we see today.

The grand Penang Cricket Club building which once stood at the Town Hall and City Hall end of the Esplanade.
Penang’s involvement in WWI took an unexpected turn in the early hours of 28 October 1914, when the German light cruiser *Emden* brazenly steamed into the harbour under the cover of darkness and under the noses of the British. At anchor was the Russian light cruiser *Zhemtchug* – two torpedos from the *Emden* sealed her fate. The raid caught all by surprise and the *Emden* managed to escape the harbour unscathed. Just north of Penang she encountered the French destroyer *Mousquet* heading back to port. She too became a victim of the *Emden’s* firepower. Today a red buoy can be seen in the harbour northeast of the cenotaph marking the site of the wreck of the *Zhemtchug*.

On the Russian ship 89 men lost their lives, as did many aboard the *Mousquet*. A grave and memorial to the Russian sailors can be found in the Western Road Cemetery, and the Penang Museum displays an anchor salvaged from the *Mousquet*.

**Zhemtchug Wreck Marker**

**Cenotaph**
The cenotaph to honour the fallen in WWI was itself a victim of war. First designed by architects Swan & Maclaren it was completed at a cost of some $12,000 and unveiled on 11 November 1929. In January 1946, towards the end of WWII, it was destroyed during the same allied aerial bombing raid which also demolished the Government buildings in King Edward Place, the Hongkong and Shanghai Bank and other nearby buildings. Luckily many of the original granite building blocks and bronze plaques were saved. Architects Boutcher & Co. assisted with reconstruction plans at no charge and the cenotaph was rebuilt in 1948, being unveiled once again on Remembrance Day that year.

36 Municipal Offices (City Hall)

During the early decades of the EIC settlement and right up to the late 1800s, this was the location of a large private residence. In the early years it was owned by merchant Thomas Halyburton who leased it to the Company, firstly as a house for visiting navy captains, then from 1815 as the Government Secretary’s office. It was later known as Essex Lodge.

By the turn of the 20th century, offices occupied by the Municipal Commissioners and their staff in the old Town Hall were deemed insufficient. Plans were drawn up and tenders called in June 1900 for the construction of this building. Lee Ah Cheang, who tendered $75,400, won the contract, though the cost amounted to closer to $100,000 by the time the building was completed on 1 April 1903. The Municipal Commissioners decided that there would be no official opening, preferring instead ‘to quietly take over the offices’. The

George Town was granted city status by Queen Elizabeth II as of 1 January 1957 and this building has been identified as ‘City Hall’ from that date. George Town was the first town in Malaya to be declared a city; 15 years before Kuala Lumpur achieved the same status.

Town Hall

Like its neighbour, a private residence once graced the land on which the Town Hall stands. Owned by merchant George Seton it was leased as a house for visiting admirals of the British navy until it was destroyed in a massive town fire in 1812.

Designed by military engineers Captains Innes and Satterthwaite, the Town Hall’s primary function was to provide a public hall for entertainment, the lack of which had been complained about for many years prior. Tenders to construct this building were called for in July 1878 and the foundation stone was laid on 1 January 1879 by Lieutenant Governor Colonel Archibald Anson. It cost around $35,000 and was opened on 6 August 1880 by the Straits Settlements Governor, Sir Frederick Weld, with a public ball. This was before the days of electricity and the entrance and ballroom were lit by ‘hundreds if not thousands of coconut oil lamps’ which had been supplied by Katz Brothers. Some of the first electric lighting in Penang was temporarily installed in the Town Hall during a ball in 1883, but kerosene lamps were kept lit as well in case of power supply problems.
Renovations and additions were made in 1890, some to fix structural problems caused when the curve of the archways was lessened during construction on Anson’s request. Until completion of the new municipal offices building in 1903 (see No. 36), rooms of the Town Hall had also been appropriated by the authorities. Once they moved out the opportunity was taken to add the side wings and roof the portico. The main ballroom stage was also enlarged to a standard size – something that up until then had caused many a headache for theatrical performances. The renovated Town Hall was reopened in 1906 and is substantially the building we see today.

38 Koh Seang Tat Fountain

Koh Seang Tat was the grandson of the first Chinese Kapitan, Koh Lay Huan. He was appointed a Justice of the Peace in 1877 and ten years later became a municipal commissioner. He was also a planter at one time; his entries at the Melbourne International Exhibition in 1881 winning 1st prize for mace and ‘oils’; 2nd for cloves and 3rd for nutmeg & paddy. He was heavily involved in the legal opium farm monopolies and was also in a mercantile business in Beach Street with Foo Tye Sin, trading as Tye Sin Tat & Co. He was a great advocate for the betterment of Penang and in 1883 he rattled the Straits Settlements Government with a petition signed by nearly 4,000 persons demanding a fairer share of the financial cake for Penang.

Koh Seang Tat established scholarships at both the Penang Free School and St Xavier’s Institution and represented the people of Balik Pulau in their demands for better facilities. He also donated money for a hospital there and a memorial fountain which still stands at the roundabout. This fountain, which remains in its original location on the Light Street side of the Town Hall, was presented to the municipality and unveiled on 4 July 1883. Significantly Koh lived next door on the site of today’s Dewan Sri Pinang. When the Duke of Edinburgh visited Penang in 1869, Koh’s house was the best that could be found for the Duke’s accommodation, after which it was given the name Edinburgh House. Koh Seang Tat died there on 25 April 1911 aged 80.
Logan Memorial

This gothic-styled monument was originally erected in the western end of the Supreme Court grounds in 1873 and commemorates the memory of Scottish lawyer James Richardson Logan. Logan came to Penang in 1839 with his brother Abraham and soon made his mark defending the rights of European and non-Europeans alike. From 1843 to 1853 he was in Singapore where he began editing and publishing the *Journal of the Indian Archipelago and Eastern Asia*. More commonly known as ‘Logan’s Journals’, 13 volumes were published between 1847 and 1859. Back in Penang he became editor of the *Pinang Gazette* which he utilised to champion freedom of speech and the legal and human rights of the population.

His death from malaria on 20 October 1869 at the age of 50 was described as a ‘public calamity’. This memorial, which was originally topped by a cross and surrounded by a cast iron railing, was entirely funded by public subscriptions from Penang, Singapore and Melaka, and is a measure of his public worth. The four female figures represent Justice, with a sword and scales; Fortitude, with a club; Wisdom, with an open book; and Temperance, with a chain and bit. Below Justice is a marble medallion depicting Logan’s portrait profile, and below Wisdom is a dedication inscribed on a marble plaque. Upon his death his brother Abraham returned to Penang where he too furthered the cause of free speech through the pages of the *Pinang Gazette* and his death in 1873 is also recorded on this marble plaque.

Supreme Court

The eastern half of today’s Supreme Court buildings (towards Jalan Masjid Kapitan Keling) was opened by Chief Justice Sir Lionel Cox on 9 September 1903. A new western wing was completed two years later; the whole being designed by the municipal engineer and constructed at a cost of just over $206,678. The land which the eastern half occupies was, in the days of EIC Penang, the site of large private residence belonging to the Hutton family. The western half of the Supreme Court building is a recent construction completed in 2007, but on land once occupied by the original courthouse.
When the British recorder (judge) Sir Edmund Stanley arrived in Penang in 1808 with letters patent to establish the first Court of Judicature (one rank below a Supreme Court) in the Malay Peninsular there was no courthouse for him to operate from. For a year court sessions were held in the lower rooms of Government House (see No. 44) while suitable premises were found. Adrian Koek of Malacca then owned the western half of the ground now occupied by the recent extension to the court buildings. It had originally been owned by Light’s assistant, Thomas Pigou. This land was acquired and the existing house was utilized for the recorder’s accommodation. By the end of 1809 construction of a new courthouse on the same land was completed. It faced a road called Prince Street which then ran between Farquhar Street and Light Street. This building was demolished in late 1903 after completion of the new building.

Around 1905 the Penang Library, which began in 1816, moved from the Town Hall to the upper wing of the Supreme Court building facing Farquhar Street, where it remained until the 1970s. At one time it was the largest library in Malaysia with a wealth of rare and valuable publications accumulated since its founding, but the vast majority of its holdings were lost during and just after the Japanese Occupation.

With a history of administration of the law stretching back over 200 years, this site could be considered the genesis of today’s legal system in Malaysia.
St George’s Church

This building is one of the great surviving legacies of the British East India Company’s 72-year administration of Penang. Construction of St George’s Church was funded entirely by the Company, unlike many other significant buildings in Penang which were funded privately. Ironically the Anglicans were the last of the major religions to construct a place of worship in George Town. For many years services were held in the old Government House, and after 1809, in the Court House. Commencement had been thwarted by many considerations, including a lack of funds, indecision on whether or not to relocate the town to higher ground and deliberations with the British Government over continuation of the Company’s trading charter in 1813.

With these uncertainties decided, construction began in early 1817 and the church was opened with a service given by Reverend J.R. Henderson on Christmas Day 1818. Modelled on the design of St George’s Church in Madras by Lieutenant Colonel James Lilliman Caldwell of the Madras Engineers, it was constructed by Lieutenant (later Captain) Robert Smith of the Bengal Engineers. The total cost came to $53,927. The original Indian-style flat or ‘terrace’ roof did not suit Penang’s wetter climate and immediately began to leak. After many attempts to solve the problem a pitched roof was added to the central section in 1864. The cenotaph in front of the church is a memorial to Francis Light, built by public subscription in 1824.

A bomb dropped in the December 1941 Japanese air raid severely damaged the church, but looters who followed did a great deal more harm. Most of the numerous marble memorials which lined the walls were stolen, as was the marble floor, the pipe organ and most of the furnishings. The church was restored and re-opened in 1948 and has seen further restoration in recent years. This is the oldest Anglican church in Southeast Asia and will celebrate its bicentenary in 2018.
Penang State Museum

The history of the building now occupied by the Penang State Museum has its roots in the foundation of the Penang Free School in 1816 on the initiative of Reverend Robert Sparke Hutchings. Now a highly respected Penang institution, the Free School had humble beginnings in a rented house in Love Lane before moving to its own purpose-built premises next to St George’s Church in 1821. By the 1890s the number of boys attending the school outstripped its capacity and tenders for a new wing, not to exceed $18,000 in cost, were called in 1895. Architects Swan & Maclaren won the contract and construction began in March 1896.

The new wing was built by subscription which came mainly from the Chinese and by 1900 some $33,000 had been raised, including a donation of $12,000 from Chung Keng Kwee. In 1903 the Government purchased land adjoining to the west for $20,000 and a large extension of the wing was completed in 1906; once again with the majority of subscriptions coming from the Chinese. At that time there were 850 boys enrolled. During WWII the 1896 wing was completely destroyed by Japanese aerial bombing. If you face today’s museum building, imagine it continuing all the way to the boundary of St George’s Church. What you see today is the surviving 1906 wing.

Up until 1920 the Free School was managed by a board of trustees, but that year was taken over by the Government. A decision was then made to establish the Free School as a secondary school. New buildings were constructed in Green Lane and occupied by the Free School in January 1928. The old building in Farquhar Street remained as a primary school; appropriately renamed the Hutchings School. In 1962 tenders were called to convert the old school into the Penang State Museum and it was officially opened in April 1965. The Hutchings School moved to more modern buildings adjoining the museum, part of which today still occupies the ground first allotted to the Free School in 1821.
Roman Catholic Sisters of the Holy Infant Jesus Mission from the Convent St Maur in Paris first arrived in Penang in 1852. They had come at the request of Bishop Jean-Baptiste Boucho to take over the teaching of girls at a small school attached to the church in town. The Christian Brothers likewise arrived to take care of the boys’ school. In March 1859 the Sisters purchased this property (which then totalled 7 acres and included adjoining land) and established the Convent Light Street. A portion of the original land was sold by the Convent to the St Xavier’s Institution (see No. 46) for its playing field. The grounds have particular significance in Penang’s history, being the land first occupied by Francis Light and Martinha Rozells for their private and official residences (see No. 44).

Over the years numerous additional buildings were constructed to cater for the increasing number of students, including a chapel, cloisters, a hall and classrooms. There is even a wing to cater for orphaned babies, some of whom had simply been anonymously left at the gate. These children were reared, cared for and educated by the Convent. The school is still operational and lays claim to being the oldest girls’ school in Malaysia. Its walls hold many memories for the vast number of students who passed through its doors.

During the Japanese Occupation in WWII the school was appropriated by the Japanese Navy. American naval prisoners were apparently ill-treated when imprisoned in Block C and a few names scratched in the walls are preserved to this day.

Access to the school grounds is restricted.
Still surviving amongst the buildings of the Convent Light Street is one of Penang’s most significant buildings. Francis Light and Martinha Rozells built a Malay-style bungalow somewhere on the original 7 acre piece of land and in addition Light constructed a two-storey lime-washed brick house from around 1789. This became his official house for administrative purposes and the reception of visitors. After his death in 1794 the house was sold according to his wishes, and purchased by his trading partner, James Scott. Scott then leased the house to the EIC administration at the then very high rent of $250 per month, and the building became known as Government House. For many years the lower central room was used for Anglican church services, and the Court of Judicature held its sessions there for a year until a courthouse was completed in 1809.

After Scott’s death the property was sold in 1810 to the wealthy Achenese Tuanku Syed Hussain, who had then recently constructed the Acheen Street mosque. He continued to lease the building to the EIC Government at the same rate until March 1818, when Suffolk House was taken up as the new Government House. For many years the old Government House was leased or owned as a private residence and for visiting naval captains until purchased by the Roman Catholic Mission in 1859 (see No. 43). Mother St Mathilde initially utilised the house as a novitiate and it was later used for a variety of purposes, including cookery classes.

Being within the school grounds, access to this historical building is only possible by special arrangement.
The history of this church goes back to the arrival from Kedah of the Catholic bishop Antonio Garnault in the weeks following Light’s arrival in Penang. Bringing with him a number of mostly Eurasian followers, they commenced building a church in part of the block defined by Beach, Church, Bishop and Pitt Streets. This church was called Our Lady of Assumption. Later rebuilt in brick, it remained the heart of the George Town Catholic community until 1857. Construction of a church to replace it, the one we see today in Farquhar Street, commenced soon afterwards under the supervision of the energetic Reverend L.C. Manissol, and it was consecrated on 6 October 1860.

When new Free School buildings were completed in 1906, the three old original school buildings were demolished. The Assumption Church purchased all the materials, which were then utilised to build a new parish hall on the Love Lane side of the land the following year. This building was subsequently demolished in 1926 to make way for an extension of the church. Extensive remodelling and new wings on each side of the building were completed in 1929 at a cost of nearly $85,000. During Japanese bombing in 1941 the church was lucky to escape with just a few broken stained glass windows. The shrine in front of the church was built in 1954 to house a statue of Our Lady of Fatima and the following year the church was designated a cathedral by Vatican decree. Due to a decline in the number of parishioners it reverted to being the Church of the Assumption in 2003.
Like the Convent Light Street, St Xavier’s Institution has its roots in a small mission school attached to the first Catholic church (see No. 45). This developed into what was known as the Catholic Free School which was established in 1825 as an English language boys’ school. At the request of Bishop Boucho, Sisters from the Holy Infant Jesus Mission and Lasallian Christian Brothers arrived in Penang from France in 1852 to assist with schooling. In short, the schools in town developed into two: the Sisters took on establishment of the Convent Light Street and the Christian Brothers took over the boys’ school.

The first school building on this site was completed in 1858, and named St Xavier’s Institution. Today’s buildings are of course not original. The original 2-storey building was extended many times as the enrolments increased over the years. As at the Free School, the Chinese were often at the forefront of donations, as was the case in 1895 when a grand new 2-storey building was completed. This building was larger, but not dissimilar in style to that of the surviving Free School (Museum) wing. The wealthy opium and tin magnate Chung Keng Kwee, along with Gan Hong Kee and Lim Ah Kye were the principal donors. A third storey was added in 1901 and a new wing was built in 1908, when enrolment topped 1,000. The ornate styling of the main building was simplified in the 1920s. During the Japanese Occupation St Xavier’s was used as quarters for the Japanese Marines. This attracted the attention of allied bombers towards the end of the war and the St Xavier’s Institution buildings were destroyed.

After the war the school carried on for seven long years in attap huts on today’s playing fields opposite, as hopes of a speedy reconstruction were continually dashed. It was not until 1954 that the buildings we see today were completed at a cost of around $2million.
Today’s E&O Hotel extends over what were originally two separate private properties. The area was first subdivided and sold off by the EIC in 1805 when this section of Farquhar Street was first constructed. The first purchasers of these two allotments were shipbuilder Patrick Chiene and merchant John McCulloch. By the 1870s Chiene’s land had become the Hotel d’Europe, which was taken over by Armenians Martin and Tigram Sarkies in 1885 and reopened as the Oriental Hotel. Their first venture into the hotel industry in Penang had been construction of the Eastern Hotel on the corner of Light and King Streets, opposite the Town Hall; apparently the property of the Khaw family. It was opened on 15 April 1884 and advertised as being ‘one of the finest which the island affords and is within two minutes walk from the Jetty. Wines, Spirits, &c., &c., of the best brands obtainable at all hours. Billiards and Reading Room open daily from 6 a.m. till 12 p.m., charges moderate.’ Their target market was always the more affluent of society.

In 1887 the two Sarkies brothers decided to consolidate their operations by giving up the Eastern Hotel. A property adjoining the Oriental Hotel to the east was obtained and by joining the two together with an accommodation wing the new complex was renamed the Eastern and Oriental Hotel (E&O). The same year they opened the Raffles Hotel in Singapore, followed by the Strand Hotel in Rangoon (Yangon) which was managed by their younger brother Aviet. In 1905, they added the Crag Hotel on Penang Hill to their operations. Arshak Sarkies, the youngest, joined his brothers in Penang in 1891 and would oversee management of Raffles Hotel and the E&O Hotel until his death in 1931.
Under Arshak’s direction the E&O’s reputation continued to grow over the following decades and further extensions and improvements were added in the early 1900s, including electric lighting. After WWI a property to the west called Sea Bank was acquired and in its place a new extension called the Victory Annex was completed in 1922, followed by the opening of a grand ballroom in January 1923. In December 1929 a new 4-storey eastern wing, including the impressive domed foyer then called the Palm Court, was opened in order to compete with Runnymede Hotel. The hotel’s calling card of the day claimed it ‘The gateway to Malaya and the Far East’ and emphasised its ‘902 feet of sea frontage’; reputedly then the longest in the world belonging to a hotel. Timing, however, was unfortunate. The Great Depression hit the same year and the $400,000 spent on upgrading the hotel sent the Sarkies Brothers company into bankruptcy. In 1938 the buildings were sold off to their competitors, Runnymede Hotel, at a great loss.

Following the Japanese Occupation in WWII the E&O Hotel was reopened in April 1946, claiming to be the only hotel in Malaya to be up to pre-war standards. In 1951 the hotel was sold to Choong Lye Hock Estates and a new wing was constructed on the Farquhar Street frontage in 1957. New ownership came in 1965 when it was purchased by Chan Eng Hock who later sold a controlling interest to Jack Chia-MPH Ltd. The old Victory Annexe was demolished in 1981 but rebuilding plans stalled. By 1996 the hotel was in poor shape and was closed down for remodelling. Its international reputation and long history ensured it would not be neglected for long, and after a complex ownership restructure extensive restoration and rebuilding works were undertaken and it re-opened for business five years later under what is now the E&O Group. A carpark extension was completed on the site of the original Victory Annex during these works and an additional multistorey tower was built over this carpark in 2013, retaining the old name. Some of the E&O’s more famous visitors over the years include Mary Pickford, Douglas Fairbanks, Noel Coward, Rudyard Kipling, Somerset Maugham and Hermann Hesse.
These two recently restored buildings are part of a larger site which tells a story of Protestant missionary work in Penang dating back to the early EIC settlement days. The area became private land in 1805 when Lieutenant Governor Robert Townsend Farquhar subdivided and sold off Company land, constructing this portion of the street named after him in the process. The first owner of around an acre of land here was Andrew Burchett Bone, who began the *Prince of Wales Island Gazette* in 1806 and built his residence at what was then No. 10 Farquhar Street.

Anglican missionaries Thomas Beighton and John Ince of the London Missionary Society arrived in Penang in 1819. Bone had died in 1815 and it may well have been his house that the Society purchased in 1821. Planter and prominent local personality David Brown was at the forefront of raising funds to construct a Mission Chapel on the site – a result that was finally achieved in June 1824 at a cost of just under $5,000. Services were conducted in English, Chinese and Malay, and schoolhouses and a printing press were also operated here by the missionaries.

The nonconformist Anglicanism of the chapel’s first subscribers continued to distinguish the services held here from those at the more ecumenical St George’s Church. In the 1860s Baptist Brethren evangelical missionaries leased the premises from the Society until it was sold off around 1870 and the Mission Chapel was apparently demolished. Although a school for girls had extended to the land on which today’s Mission House stands, it was not part of the Society’s legal title. The Brethren returned and built a new Mission Chapel here in 1876, followed by a Mission House and probably a school, and services were held until 1938 when the municipal council required land to widen Farquhar Street. The missionaries then moved to a new location in Burmah Road and the chapel was demolished, leaving the buildings we see today.
After the completion of St George’s Church both the church and the cemetery were consecrated on 11 May 1819 by the Bishop of Calcutta, Thomas Fanshaw Middleton. It is thought that this may have been the time at which the Protestant and Catholic sides of the cemetery were separated by the existing wall. Today the surviving memorials appear to be clustered together in unusually close proximity. The truth is that the cemetery was always filling up and new graves were often sited over old ones. Maximising space, particularly on the higher ground, was a therefore a necessary consideration. By the early 1890s the cemetery was declared full and a new one was opened in Western Road. Unfortunately, Japanese aerial bombing in 1941 destroyed many memorials on both the eastern and western ends of the cemetery.

The earliest surviving memorial plaque at the cemetery is for H.D.D. Cuningham who died on 2 October 1789 and the most recent known burial is for Cornelia Josephine van Someren in 1892. Many notable identities from Penang’s early history are buried here including Francis Light; his trading partner James Scott and some of his descendents; governors Philip Dundas, Charles Bruce, William Petrie and J.A. Bannerman; judges Sir William Russell and Sir William Jeffcott; Free School founder R.S. Hutchings; missionaries John Ince & Thomas Beighton and prominent planter David Brown, just to name a handful.
Amongst the memorials one can find not only British names, but also Dutch, Armenian, German, French, American and Chinese, representing a cultural cross-section of Penang’s protestant population during its first 100 years.

The cemetery is open daily from dawn till dusk.

The Catholic cemetery shares a common early history with the Protestant cemetery adjoining, but whereas the latter has remained under the auspices of the Government, the Catholic side became the property of the diocese. Unfortunately a great number of the some 200 memorials cannot be identified and even more are now non-existent. The oldest surviving memorial is for Rita Antonia dos Reys from Macao dated 1798 and the youngest is for Sister Louis of the Catholic Mission, whose real name was Emily Thomas and who died in 1892. Like the Protestant cemetery, those interred came from various nationalities and from numerous walks of life.
The Church of St Francis Xavier is yet another institution established by the indefatigable Roman Catholic Bishop, J.B. Boucho. In this case it was primarily to cater for converts from the Indian Tamil community. It is said that it was first established in 1857 when Fr. Francois Hab utilised a small cemetery chapel for services. He then built the first dedicated church in 1867 on land which had reputedly been donated to the Assumption Church. A replacement building was completed in July 1902 and 50 years later, in December 1952, the current building was completed at a cost of $120,000. $80,000 of this sum was made up of donations by Sir Henry McAuliffe and by Francis Harrison Grumitt, the latter a former owner of the Straits Echo newspaper; the balance coming from parishioners.

A curious feature of the church is a ceiling formed of woven screw-pine leaves. The complex also comprises St Joseph’s Orphanage, a small school and administrative offices. From a canteen on site staffed by volunteers the Roman Catholic diocese feeds over 150 of Penang’s homeless persons daily, Monday to Friday.

Access to the cemetery is through the dividing wall with the Protestant cemetery and therefore subject to its opening hours.

Church of St Francis Xavier

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His links to Penang include an ancestor, George Porter, who at various times between 1822 and 1834 was schoolmaster at the Penang Free School, superintendent of the Botanic Garden, parish clerk at St George’s Church and a merchant & auctioneer.

Marcus’s expertise in Penang’s early history has led to his being consulted during restoration of heritage buildings such as Suffolk House and St George’s Church and he has given public talks in Penang and Singapore on subjects such as the Penang Free School, Fort Cornwallis, the Botanic and Spice gardens and the founding of Singapore. Marcus has also provided research assistance in various projects within the George Town UNESCO World Heritage Site. He lives in Penang.
George Town World Heritage Incorporated was established by the Penang State Government as the State Heritage Agency in April 2010 to spearhead efforts to ensure that George Town’s legacy will not be lost.

GTWHI is an organisation dedicated to protecting, promoting and preserving George Town as a sustainable city. GTWHI works in cooperation with the federal, state, and local governments as well as several non-governmental organisations to manage, monitor, promote, and execute heritage-related activities. We identify the problem areas, build a strategy, and call on experts and stakeholders in our vast network to work with us towards the solution.

George Town is a living legend, but it will disintegrate before our very eyes should we fail to nurture it. Therefore, research, impact studies, site usage, public awareness, branding, promotion, public transport, tourism, and security must be given equal attention.

To ensure the sustainability of the World Heritage Site, we work with many partners and collaborators, from conservation specialists and state and city authorities for better planning, conserving and management of the physical site; to historians and arts practitioners on a programme of educational and cultural activities.

We provide advice to property owners, architects and builders; conduct skills development workshops; provide resources on George Town and heritage through our library and digital archive; and we engage with school children, students of institutes of higher learning, and the public through our programme of talks and activities.