

## **Checheng Old Street** - hill town amour

Location: walk up on the trail from the Checheng Railway Station

From the Checheng Train Station, follow the stairs up along the Tai 131, the old tribe popping into the scene is the Checheng Old Street. The Old Street is still kept in its simple and tranquil style, revealing an air of refined nostalgic elegance with red-brick and concrete houses adorned with red tiles, glazed tiles, or grayish-white eaves.



Houses stand in rows facing one another – cozy and friendly, showing a picture of benevolent neighborhood. Even after the 87 Flood, houses here have rarely been rebuilt into other styles; therefore, a nostalgic sense of the 50's brick/wood structures still floats in the air. Strolling on the old street, you will find silver-haired ladies staring at strangers with their curious eyes like scenes from the old movies.

The old Zhengchang employee dormitory is still standing on the side of the street. As the Company moved away, the building is almost emptied out, except three families remaining in the old structure. Although they no longer work for the

company, the company still preserved these two stories for them to retire in.

The end of the old street is the San Yuan Temple hosting the Three Emperors – Yao, Shun, and Yu. It is the belief-central of Checheng residents. The plaza in front of the incense burner is the center where villagers gather to chat.

## **Zhengchang Timber Mill**

- a witness to the history of the timber industry

Location: north of the Checheng Train Station

Located right next to the wood-storage pond, the timber mill was the old all-purpose timber processing center of the Zhengchang Timber Company. It is now dismantled into a pile of remains. Walking on the remains of the old timber mill, you will not only smell the wood fragrance of the old days but also find traces of marks in the wood piles noting the glories of the past. There are four plywood mills at the south side of the train station. The exteriors are still left intact; from the structures, you can have a glance of the grandeur of the old Zhengchang Empire.

At the time, Zhengchang had 700 employees; plus extra seasonal helpers for tree-planting and grass-cutting, the number could sometimes be added up to a thousand. With so many employees, even the enormous canteen could not take them all in at once; the employees had to eat in batches. Each day, more than 100 trucks shuttled back and forth to transport the workers. It was indeed grand in scale.

At the time, Sun Hai's Cypress export business earned for the country two million US Dollars. The glory is still a story told by the villagers, some elders in the village are still proudly telling people that they were nursed by the milk of Zhengchang. The eldest son of Sun Hai, Sun Guo-Xiong, inherited his father's generosity of a corporate man. He donated the timber mill to the Ri Yuan Tan (Sun Moon Lake) Park Administration and wished to build the place into a wood museum to showcase the history of the local wood industry. The Administration expressed that the wood museum is currently under construction and will be opened in 2005.

## **Community Focus**

### **Sky Cart**

The sky cart standing on the side of the pond is in fact a crane used to hoist up the logs. Different



to other metal cranes, the sky cart is a structure built with thousand-year-old cypress wood. It is more than 6 meters high, 10 meters wide and 4 meters deep, with a maximum loading capacity of 13 tons. Its driving force comes from the motor on the beam, which pulls the steel cable up and down. Interestingly, in the old times, people define "cart" as rotating wheels; therefore, when people saw the motor spinning in the sky, they called it the cart in the sky. The sky cart structure is indeed grand and amazing. It was never designed by engineers or technicians; it was actually an amazing structure carved inch by inch out of the hands and experiences of old smart craftsmen. Standing still, it has been through numerous disasters and earthquakes. It is the spiritual landmark prized by the locals.

## The Wood-Storage Pond

- floating in the air the charming fragrance of wood

Location: north of the train station

The 0.5 acre wood storage pond was the place used by Zhengchang to soak logs. During the 60's to 70's when the timber business was in its peak, logs from the Danda Logging Yard were transported to Checheng. After the logs arrived, they were then hoisted up by the "sky cart" and put into the pond. At the time, the "sky cart" processed more than ten loads of logs each day.

There are three functions to the storage pond. One is to reduce the moisture content in the logs and prevent insects and sun-burn cracks. The second is to vacuum the logs based on the principle that woods in water are in the vacuum state and under this state, the life of the woods are prolonged. The third is for convenience. With the floatation force, the logs in the pond are easily hoisted up for checks. Imagine! Without the pond, human power is basically incapable of hoisting up 200-meter-long and 6 to 7 meter wide logs that have grown in mountains of more than 2000 meters above the sea level.

The sky cart did the job of hoisting up the logs; those with higher quality were laid at the right side for export and the second class logs were put at the left side to be sent into the processing plant. Nowadays, the wood storage pond no long stores logs, only a few ducks singing and leisurely glazing on the pond. With the breezes, threads of refreshing wood fragrances fill the senses of the leisure seekers. It is a great place for a relaxing chat.



## Fu Chang Gu (Byproduct Processing Plant)

- treasuring the resources endowed by the nature

Location: South of the Train station

The so-called Fu Chang Gu is the plant where Zhengchang manufactured its "byproducts". In the past, Zhengchang exported a massive amount of timbers and processed products. The remaining woodchips and powders were then sent to the byproduct plant for final processing. Cypress can be generally categorized into two types. One is the odorless red cypress used to make chopping boards and spatulas, and the other is the fragrant chamaecyparis (Japan cypress). Cypress oils were extracted from this breed through high-temperature steaming and the residuals were usually compressed into kindling or sold to paper mills.

Right now, the byproduct plant has only a stove and four drying rooms left. The steam barrels used to extract cypress oil are no long there. Currently, the Checheng Community Development Association uses its open spaces to run a holiday food court and hold large activities. Ever since the laws were passed to prohibit cypress logging, cypress oil has become a thing of the past. The manager of the old Zhengchang, Mr. Lin, expressed that cypress oils sold in Checheng now are mostly his collections for many years. The oil is a great product. It is not only an antiseptic but also a great relaxing essential oil.

## The Minghu and Mingtan Reservoirs

- underground storage of the Sun Moon Lake

Location: On the Tai 131 Expressway

The two power plants inside of the Minghu Reservoir are Daguan I and Daguan II. They are now collectively called the Daguan Power Plant. The hydraulic power for power generation in this plant is from the water of the Ri Yue Tan (Sun Moon Lake). After power generation, the exhausted water is released into the Minghu Reservoir and during off-peak hours the water is then drawn back to the Sun Moon Lake. Repeatedly using the water resources, the plant was one of the major power sources in Taiwan during the earlier times.







Behind the Minghu Reservoir is the Mingtan Reservoir, which was completed in 1995. It is one of the largest draw/store hydraulic power plants in the world. The Mingtan Power plant uses the Sun Moon Lake as its upper pond and the dam built in the Shuili Creek Valley as its lower pond to generate power by using the 380 meters of drop between these two ponds.

Both the Mingtan and Dagan Power plants adopt the draw/store hydraulic power generation method, which has three advantages compared to other ordinary hydraulic power generation methods: 1 frequent water exchanges to maintain the water quality, 2 recycling water through draw and store to prevent wastage of water resources, and 3 effective electrical power and elevation energy exchanges to lower the costs as well as protect the environment.

The Checheng Valley nestles in between two beautiful lakes - Minghu Reservoir at the east and Mingtan Reservoir at the west. There is no other place in Taiwan like Checheng to have been endowed by such treasures. Its past has a close connection to the reservoirs and the history of electrical power can never leave this beautiful town out.

### The Dagan Old Tunnel

- try to walk through in pitch dark

Location: Get on the Tai 131 Expressway towards the Puli direction and turn right before the Mingtan No.7 Bridge.

The Dagan Old Tunnel was built in 1919 as a sub-line of the Jiji Line Railway. This section of Jiji Line Railway was removed in 1934 after the power plant was completed, with only the old tunnel left. It was later altered into a section of the expressway with traffic signs and checkpoints set up at the entrances. When the tunnel was still part of the expressway, cars shuttled through nonstop, but in 1981 when the Mingtan Reservoir began construction, the road became a lake and bustling of cars became a story of the past.

The Dagan Old Tunnel is an S-shape passage of 200 meters in length, built with fire-burned bricks. Fire-burned bricks have the quality of absorbing the steam from the trains and the residual of coal-burning does not stick on the walls either. There are drenches on the two sides of the tunnel. When the steam from the train evaporates and hits the roof of the tunnel, the water is channeled into the two drenches. Inside of pedestrians to remember the carried a stick to drenches. The scared the girls by



### Community Focus

#### Wood Work DIY



The Zhengchang Timber Company developed a series of semi-finished traditional household products for the Checheng Community Development Association. The products are

offered to the public for hands-on experiences of woodworking. The Woodwork DIY Classroom is located in the old Zhengchang office. It will surely bring you a very different kind of experience when you make your own wood pieces in this old structure. The Wood Work DIY Classroom opens to visitors on Saturdays and Sundays. Finished products are also available and are priced the same as the unfinished products. We highly recommend that you come and try your hands on one of the items. You are promised to have a very different kind of fun.



Pencil holder NT\$ 60, Chopstick Holder NT\$ 100, Book Self NT\$ 230, Children's Stool 350. For details, please contact Miss Liu at the Checheng Community Development Association – Tel: (049) 277-4749.

the tunnel, there are also six manmade dodging holes for dodge the trains in the dark at night. Many villagers still intense heartbeat rose from dodging the trains. They usually hold them back from the walls so that they didn't fall into the young villagers, on the other hand, remember how they jumping out of the holes.