

Historic Building Appraisal
Kong Ha Wai – Main Building
(Near Kam Tsin Wai) Pat Heung, Yuen Long, N.T.

Kong Ha Wai (江夏圍) is a huge mansion erected by Wong Kwong-kiu (黃廣僑) in 1933-36. The area has been named as Kong Ha Wai since then. It is on the west of Kam Sheung Road (錦上路) and east of Kam Tsin Wai (金錢圍) village in Pat Heung (八鄉), Yuen Long. Kwong-kiu was a Hakka (客家) coming from Meixian (梅縣) of Guangdong (廣東) province. He was a merchant of gold business. He bought the land from a Tang Lo-pun (鄧魯賓?) and built his mansion. Some of the workers were villagers of Kam Tsin Wai. The mansion is so called “wai” (圍, walled village) but it is not a walled village itself. The mansion comprises a main building for use as a residence of some 20 members of the Wong, a servants’ quarters, a gate entrance, two ponds in front of the main building and a surrounding garden with green houses. The Wongs left the mansion during the Japanese Occupation (1941- 45) and wooden furniture of the house was looted as firewood. Tung Yick School (同益學校) was temporarily accommodated in Kong Ha Wai in Spring 1941 until the end of the War.

*Historical
Interest*

The Wongs did not return to the mansion in 1945 after the War. It was used as a temporary police station as the one in Au Tau (凹頭) had been destroyed. They returned to their mansion when the police station moved to a new one in Pat Heung in 1953. The garden of the mansion was used as a factory starting in 1963 and later extended to the residential main building as well in the 1970s. Three of Kwong-kiu’s grandsons emigrated to Australia and the U.S. in the 1980s leaving their father Shui-luen (瑞麟) residing in the servants’ quarters until 1997 when he sold the mansion to a developer.

The main building occupies an area of about 10.5 square metres facing northwest. In front of it is an open foreground. In the past, there were two semi-circular *fung shui* ponds in front of this foreground. The bigger pond was added in later stage in the outer skirt of the smaller one. However, the ponds were reclaimed between 1982 and 1985 by a landscape nursery for more usable space. A pitched-roof gate entrance is at the right end of the compound and a servants’ quarters at the right corner of the open foreground. The huge main building is a two-storey Chinese Eclectic residential building having a symmetrical design. It is about 4.5 metres wide and 2.3 metres deep. Its entrance is on the central axis of the building. An entrance hall is behind the entrance and behind it is a big open courtyard of two-storey high. Behind the courtyard is the main hall of same width as the entrance hall. On either side are rooms and a staircase for access to the upper floor. Due to the serious alteration of the building for use as a factory, many

*Architectural
Merit*

of the rooms are not accessible. An altar is at the hall of the upper floor housing the soul tablets of the Wongs for worship. The building has an impressive façade of a Chinese Eclectic building of the 1930s. The recessed entrance is supported by two tall Tuscan columns with three arched openings. The ground floor front façade is a verandah supported by two columns of similar style on either side of the two tall ones. At the roof end of the upper floor is a parapet with moulded concrete balustrades of flowers and Chinese patterns. A pediment is in the middle of the parapet with the name “源遠堂” (Yuen Yuen Tong), the trust name of the Wongs, and mouldings of auspicious birds, lions, dragons and flowers. The stone doorframe of the entrance is decorated with a knotted column moulding on either side. Above the lintel is a moulded gold colour name of Yuen Yuen Tong with two stone lions. The building was constructed of concrete and green bricks with its walls and columns to support its pitched roofs of timber rafters, purlins and clay tiles. The gables are of the Fire (火型) style of the Five Elements (五行). The ridges are with curling ends.

It is a residential building to witness the settlement of the Wongs in Kong Ha Wai. **Rarity**

It has high built heritage value. The building has been altered internally and added with temporary structures very much diminished its authenticity. **Built Heritage Value, Authenticity &**

It has group value with the servants' quarters and the entrance gate of the mansion. **Group Value**

Kwong-kiu had two sons, Tak-ling (德麟) and Shui-luen, both served in the Hong Kong May Shien Association (香港梅縣同鄉會) in 1970-96. The former was the chairman of the Association in 1979-81. One of the nephews of Kwong-kiu, Kai-lun (繼麟), studied at Kam Chuen School (錦全學校) in Kam Tsin Wai. Kwong-kiu bought lots of land in the area and rented them to the nearby villagers for agricultural farming and livestock breeding. A paper mill was at the garden of the mansion and later the main building was used as factories of plastic flowers, plastic moulds, carpets, rubber bands, zinc products and lately polyfoam products. The garden is used by a landscape nursery. **Social Value, & Local Interest**