

Heritage Appraisal of School House, St. Stephen's College

The School House of St. Stephen's College at No. 22 Tung Tau Wan Road, Stanley, was built in 1930. It is not only the oldest building of St. Stephen's College, but also the oldest surviving school building still providing boarding service in Hong Kong. During the Japanese Occupation, it was converted into the Stanley Internment Camp by the Japanese army. Thus, it bears important witness of the development of local education and the sufferings endured by the internees in the wartime period.

*Historical
Interest*

With the rise of status of the Chinese community in the late nineteenth century, the relatively well-off Chinese desired to have a school providing English education solely for their children. Eight Chinese community leaders petitioned to the then Governor Sir Henry Blake for the establishment of a private English school in 1901. St. Stephen's College was established two years later by Rev. Bishop Banister of the Anglican Church and a number of prominent Chinese such as Sir Ho Kai (1859-1914) and Dr Tso Seen-wan (1865-1953), who wished to save China by means of education.

St. Stephen's College was opened on Western Street in 1903 as a Christian boys' school modelled on English public schools¹. The Church Missionary Society of England took charge of the school. It attracted overseas students from Southeast Asia soon after its opening. The school was moved to Bonham Road in 1923 and then to the present site in Stanley in 1930 due to its expansions.

Construction works of the existing school premises in Stanley commenced in 1928. The School House was the first building completed in 1930. Martin Hostel and the Old Laboratory were completed in the following year.

The School House, comprising a school hall, a school house (dormitory) and classrooms, was built as the main school building of

¹ "English public schools" refer to private schools (usually boarding schools) independent of the state educational system. They were endowed for the use or benefit of the public and carried on under some of public management.

St. Stephen's College. It was built by Mr Lam Woo (1871-1933), with Mr L.G. Bird as the architect. The foundation stone was laid by the then Governor Sir Cecil Clementi (service from 1925-1930) on 27 April 1928. It was completed and opened by the Acting Governor Mr W. T. Southorn on 25 March 1930.

The primary section of St. Stephen's College at Nos. 30-32 Wong Ma Kok Road, Stanley was set up in 1936-1938. Both the primary and secondary sections provided boarding service for students.

Around 15 December 1941, shortly before the Japanese attack on Hong Kong, the School House of St. Stephen's College was taken over by the British Army and converted into an emergency military hospital. Staff and students of St. Stephen's College helped out in the hospital. Early on the Christmas Day of 1941, the Japanese army captured St. Stephen's College and broke into the School House. The troops bayoneted 56 wounded British and Canadians who were still in their beds, and killed two doctors and seven nurses. This was later called "St. Stephen's College Massacre".

During the Japanese Occupation (1941-1945), St. Stephen's College and the nearby Stanley Prison Wardens' Quarters were used as the Stanley Internment Camp. The Camp housed about 3 000 internees, including 1 000 in St. Stephen's College (among whom some 370 were interned in the School House). Classes were organised for the interned children in the classrooms on the ground floor of the East and the West Wings. Church services and concerts were held at the main hall of the central block. The upper floor was used as students' dormitories.

The School House of St. Stephen's College was seriously damaged in the war. The school facilities were destroyed and all the desks were used as fuel. After the Japanese surrender, the School House was temporarily handed over to the Government for the use of a Police Training School while repair works were undertaken. St. Stephen's College was re-opened in 1947. It started to be co-

educational in 1968 and became an aided school receiving Government subsidy in 1970. It joined the Direct Subsidy Scheme in 2008.

At present, eight pre-war buildings, including the School House as the oldest one, Martin Hostel, the Old Laboratory and five bungalows (staff quarters), remain in the secondary section of St. Stephen's College. Both of its primary and secondary sections still provide boarding service for the students.

The School House is an H-shaped building consisting of an East Wing and a West Wing connected by a Central Block (originally the main hall). On the ground floor of the two wings are classrooms and on the upper floor are students' dormitories. *Architectural Merit*

The School House is in late transitional Arts and Crafts style bearing Modernist influence, with external walls of granite on the ground floor, and plain rendered and painted finish on the upper storey. Rough-cast rendering, wide overhanging eaves, arched windows and doorways and arcaded verandahs are typical features of the Arts and Crafts style. The pitched roofs reflect an adaptation to the sub-tropical climatic conditions in Hong Kong.

Internally, the main entrance hall of the East Wing has rich architectural features including an arched doorway to the Vestibule and glazed panelled double doors to the library entrance. One of the notable features of the entrance hall is the double-entry grand staircase leading up to the first floor. The staircase features ornamental ironwork balustrading and newels, a moulded hardwood handrail and terrazzo (polished granolithic) treads and risers.

The first floor landing and the upper part of the staircase are supported by four fluted neo-classical columns with octagonal bases. At the first floor level, the staircase changes to a double-return staircase with a quarter-turn staircase leading up to the upper floor female dormitory. There is a recessed ceiling panel over the staircase area from which ornamental light fittings are suspended.

Architectural features are minimal on the upper floors, but there is an ornamental balcony at the second floor level featuring an ornamental parapet, a stepped terrazzo plinth, cross-braced pierced panels, concave corners and shaped brackets. There is one small corner fireplace in one of the upper floor rooms. Floor finishes are a mixture of timber boarding in the library and on the upper floor but terrazzo at verandahs, balcony on the first floor and the ground floor of the West Wing dormitories.

The library, which was originally the school assembly hall, is very impressive featuring rows of octagonal columns forming aisles on each side and balustrade galleries at the first floor level connecting the East and the West Wings. The main feature of the library is the roof which is exposed to view. It is a pitched roof supported by reinforced concrete horizontal purlins and arched portal frames. The floor finishes comprise timber boarding.

In 1980, in order to convert the assembly hall into a library, *Authenticity* a new floor slab was constructed at the first floor level over the study area, where a new reinforced concrete staircase was constructed for access to bookcases. The original roofs, which were built of tiles, have been replaced with reinforced concrete in the renovations over the years. Four original chimney stacks (although now redundant) are kept intact.

In the East and the West Wings, most of the windows in the dormitory on the first floor have been replaced with modern aluminium windows and the terrazzo treads and risers of the old staircases are also carpeted. Although internal refurbishment and alterations have been made over the years, they have generally retained much of their original authentic appearances and do not affect the overall architectural significance of the School House.

The School House is the oldest surviving school building *Rarity* still providing boarding service in Hong Kong. During the Japanese Occupation, it was converted into the Stanley Internment Camp by the Japanese army. Amongst the total of six internment camps set up by the Japanese army in Hong Kong, only the buildings used as

the Stanley Internment Camp still survived, of which the School House is the oldest building bearing witness of the sufferings endured by the internees during the Japanese Occupation.

St. Stephen's College is a prestigious school in Hong Kong. Prominent public figures, including the late Sir Chau Tsun-nin (1893-1971), Mr Ip Man (1893-1972), Sir Tang Shiu-kin (1901-1986), Sir Chau Sik-nin (1903-1985), and contemporary the former Legislative Council Member Mr Timothy Fok Tsun-ting and Mr Raymond Chien Kuo-fung, are alumni of the College. *Social Value & Local Interest*

In 2008, "St. Stephen's College Heritage Trail" was established by the school to promote public appreciation of the history of the site. Free guided tours are provided for educational and non-profit-making organizations, as well as those for the public on the College's Open Day every year.

The School House has very high group value with other buildings on campus, such as Martine Hostel (built in 1931) (Grade 2), the Old Laboratory (built in 1931) (Grade 2), Bungalows Nos. 1-5 (built in 1931) (Grade 2) and St. Stephen's Chapel (built in 1950) (Grade 3). St. Stephen's College as a whole also have group value with other historic buildings in Stanley, such as the Old Stanley Police Station (built in 1859) (declared monument), Stanley Mosque (built in c.1936-1937) (Grade 1), Stanley Post Office (built in c.1937) (Grade 2) and St. Stephen's Preparatory School (built in 1938) (Grade 3). *Group Value*