



Keep 37 Emerald Hill

Conservation Proposal

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Part 1

Introduction

1. Introduction

KEEP 37 EMERALD HILL: A CONSERVATION PROPOSAL



KEEP 37 EMERALD HILL: A CONSERVATION PROPOSAL

Founded in 1899 by forward-looking Straits Chinese men, the Singapore Chinese Girls' School (SCGS) was the first school established by Singaporeans to provide a secular, well-rounded education for young girls. The school started out along Hill Street, but went on to spend almost 70 years at 37 Emerald Hill in its own purpose-built campus. Classes began at No. 37 in 1926, in a two-storey building with 12 classrooms, a staff room, teachers' office and an assembly hall.

In many ways, the school found its footing at Emerald Hill. From its earlier years of uncertainty - finances were a perennial problem, the school had moved premises every few years, and the challenge of convincing families to educate their daughters was immense - the school finally had a sense of permanence at 37 Emerald Hill. Enrollment grew steadily and included girls (and at one point, boys) of all races. The SCGS identity was firmly seeded with the creation of a badge and uniform, and over the years more buildings were added to accommodate the growing number of students. SCGS also achieved full independent school status while at Emerald Hill.

The site also bore witness to key events that were significant in Singapore's history, including the Japanese occupation from 1942 to 1945, and an early act of terrorism at neighbouring Faber House in 1986. Above all, it was home to generations of students, and is an embodiment of experiences and memories of our collective school-going years.

The fact that the buildings have remained intact for 25 years after SCGS moved to Dunearn Road lulled many of us into a false sense of security over their continued existence. When the Keep 37 Emerald Hill team discovered that the school was not conserved, and was at the time slated for residential use, there was no question that something simply had to be done about it.

To make a compelling case for conservation, we have set out first to establish why the site is significant, not only from a historical perspective, but also from social and architectural angles. Beyond that, we recognise that the site holds great potential for new, distinctive uses, and that a broader community can and should have a voice in imagining what these uses could be.

WHAT IS KEEP 37 EMERALD HILL?

The Keep 37 Emerald Hill campaign is a community-based, volunteer-run initiative seeking official conservation status for the former Singapore Chinese Girls' School (SCGS) campus at Emerald Hill. Launched in September 2018, the campaign aims to demonstrate the value that the site holds to a wide range of stakeholders - including past and present students, residents of Emerald Hill, Orchard Road businesses and heritage enthusiasts - and to re-imagine future uses for the site.

We recognise that history and heritage will always mean different things to different people, but have built Keep 37 Emerald Hill around the idea of listening to and presenting the ideas of a community larger than just ourselves. We have drawn inspiration from other community-driven conservation campaigns that have come before us, including Save Old School, Save Dakota Crescent, Lives of Farrer Park, Conserve The Quadrant as well as more recent efforts directed at Singapore's modernist icons (Pearl Bank, People's Park Complex and Golden Mile Complex).

HOW DID IT ALL BEGIN?

In late-2017, the SCGS Alumni received an email from an alumna, proposing to approach the Urban Redevelopment Authority (URA) about conserving the Emerald Hill campus. She had been surprised to find out that the school was not already conserved, and was writing in to the Alumni to seek its support. The email was in turn forwarded by the Alumni Committee to one of the campaign's team members - an urban planner - asking if she knew anything about how a conservation process might work. A quick check of URA's Master Plan 2014 revealed that the site was intended for residential use at a Gross Plot Ratio (GPR) of 2.8, presumably a private condominium similar to those that had sprung up further down Cairnhill Road.

Equally surprised (if not horrified) that the campus wasn't conserved, a team of like-minded alumni banded together to get Keep 37 Emerald Hill off the ground. Our team, a multi-disciplinary group of former students who had spent none, some, or all of their time at the Emerald Hill campus, was united in their belief that this living part of the school's history had to be retained. We also felt strongly that we had to try to capture the voices and ideas of a community that went far beyond just our group.

2. Process

WHAT DID WE DO?

As a community-focused effort, the Keep 37 Emerald Hill campaign was designed to make participation accessible to as many people as possible. While our team acknowledged that the most immediate audience was likely to be the SCGS community - particularly former students and teachers who had spent time at the Emerald Hill campus - the hope was also that the campaign could appeal to a broader audience, including residents of the area, heritage enthusiasts, and those with an interest in Orchard Road, such as business owners. We sought to use this as an opportunity not only to raise awareness among SCGS girls of their own school's history and heritage, but to speak to a wider audience about conservation, the loss of built heritage, and participatory planning in Singapore.

The campaign was launched in September 2018 with four key avenues for people to get involved:

1. A CHANGE.ORG PETITION

This was considered the easiest way for people to express their support for the cause. While we also encouraged deeper engagement through participation in our public workshops and submission of photos and stories, we also felt that it was critical to include a simple way for people to immediately express support. The petition was well-received, closing in January 2019, with just over 11,500 signatures in less than four months.¹

Several supporters left messages on the petition page explaining their reasons for signing. Many touched on the need to recognise the role that the school played in mainstreaming education for girls, and the desire to see something else other than high-rise condominiums and big commercial developments off Orchard Road.

2. SOCIAL MEDIA PRESENCE

Facebook and Instagram pages (@Keep37EmeraldHill) were started to spread the word about the campaign. Both platforms have included information on milestone events such as the public workshops, as well as historical facts and personal stories that our research and outreach uncovered over the course of the campaign. We have close to 800 Facebook page followers, and close to 500 followers on Instagram. These outlets have been important in sustaining interest in the campaign, particularly after the initial rush of petition-signing had subsided.



Sample Instagram post on the @keep37emeraldhill page

¹ A similar petition to Conserve the Sporting Heritage of Farrer Park, launched in April 2018, has 1,224 signatures to-date.

3. PORTAL FOR SUBMISSION OF MEMORIES

Working together with the school, an online portal hosted on the SCGS website was created to allow people to submit their old photos and stories associated with the Emerald Hill campus. This was done with the intention of creating a “memory repository” that could serve as a resource for the school and alumni beyond the life of the campaign, potentially even as part of the school’s Heritage Room. It turned out to be less popular than we had hoped - we did receive a handful of photos, though mostly through email or social media.

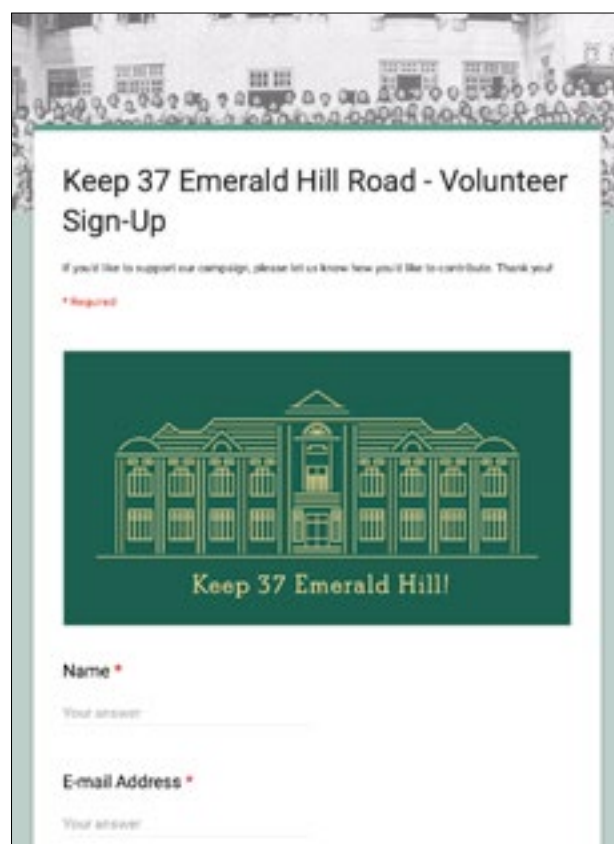


You can help by showing your support in any (or all) of the following ways:

- SIGN THE PETITION**
Sign our [Change.org](#) petition and share it with your friends.
- LIKE OUR PAGES**
Like our Facebook and Instagram pages to stay updated.
- SEND US PHOTOS**
Submit your photos and memories of SCGS at Emerald Hill.
These are a critical part of the social history of the site - we will draw on them for the proposal and create a repository to share them with the community.
- BE A VOLUNTEER**
Help us with our campaign if you'd like to volunteer your time or other resources!
Use the form to let us know if you'd like to participate in our public consultation workshops in Nov 2016. You'll have a chance to share your views on what should be done with the site!

4. VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITIES

We invited interested individuals to sign up to help us in our campaign, whether as researchers, writers, workshop facilitators, contributors of planning and design ideas or in any other capacity. Of the 50 responses received, over 80 percent were current or former SCGS girls, with the remainder a mix of residents, heritage enthusiasts, and general members of the public. Volunteers mostly offered to help with research and writing as well as attend and/or facilitate public workshops, with a handful pledging cash or in-kind contributions towards our workshop expenses.



Keep 37 Emerald Hill Road - Volunteer Sign-Up

If you'd like to support our campaign, please let us know how you'd like to contribute. Thank you!

*** Required**

Name *
Your answer: _____

Email Address *
Your answer: _____

PUBLICITY

The campaign received coverage in *The Straits Times* when it was launched in September 2018. Our team also had the opportunity to speak to current SCGS students about the campaign at an assembly talk in October. At the end of the year, we were also invited on to 93.8 Now's evening radio show to speak about the campaign.

RESEARCH, OUTREACH AND ENGAGEMENT EFFORTS

Aside from providing avenues for people to get involved in the campaign, the team focused on research, outreach, and engagement efforts to build their narrative for this report.

1. DESK RESEARCH

The team's research consisted both of desk-based work as well as interviews and engagements with various parties. Information was drawn from books, newspaper articles and oral history interviews from the National Library and National Archives. Valuable information, photos, and anecdotes were also taken from the school's own artefacts in its Heritage Room, and extracted from many of the school's internal publications.



2. INDIVIDUAL & SMALL GROUP ENGAGEMENTS

In line with the report's two main sections – establishing the significance of the site and proposing new uses for it in future – the team sought stories and advice from a range of individuals. The team engaged early on with URA's Conservation Management team. The National Heritage Board (NHB) gave us suggestions on resources and comparative examples, as did heritage blogger Jerome Lim and mapping expert Mok Ly Yng. In October 2018, we organised a photoshoot for teachers who had taught at Emerald Hill back at the campus, and took the opportunity to listen to their recollections of number 37.

We also met with architects and business owners with experience in restoring and adaptively re-using heritage properties, including Mok Wei Wei (W Architects), Dr Ho Puay Peng (National University of Singapore), Loh Lik Peng (The Unlisted Collection) and Yung Ong (Proof Living Group). Jonathan Poh, who led the Save Dakota Crescent effort, shared his experiences of running a conservation campaign with us.

When specific uses were suggested, we reached out to domain experts to hear their views. Melissa Quek, for instance, Head of La Salle's dance department, shared her thoughts on the need for more arts-related spaces in Singapore. Tong Yee and Chee Li Fong, from The Thought Collective, brought their perspective on how civic and community spaces can go far in bringing people together.

Dr Richard Helfer, Vice-President of the Emerald Hill Conservation Association, kindly arranged a consultation for the core campaign team with a group of 12 Emerald Hill property owners. The owners, some of whom had lived in the neighbourhood all their lives, spoke of their own histories as residents of Emerald Hill, and voiced their opinions on what they wanted to see in their neighbourhood. A photo shoot that the team organised with former SCGS teachers back at 37 Emerald Hill also gave the team an opportunity to engage with them on their memories of the site and their hopes for how it could be used in future.



The Straits Times' coverage in September 2018 helped raise public awareness about the campaign. (Image: The Straits Times)

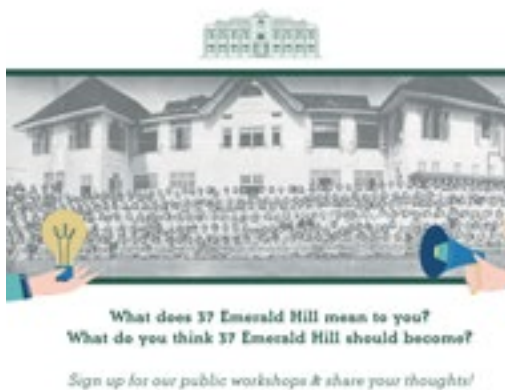
Clockwise from right: The team met Tong Yee and Chee Li Fong from The Thought Collective. A photoshoot for former teachers was organised back at 37 Emerald Hill, giving the team the opportunity to also speak to them about their memories of and hopes for the former campus. (Images: Keep 37 Emerald Hill team)



3. PUBLIC WORKSHOPS

A critical part of our campaign was the organisation of two public workshops, which were intended as opportunities for people to share both their memories of 37 Emerald Hill, as well as their ideas for how the site could be re-imagined. The workshops were publicised through the campaign's social media outlets, as well as via the SCGS Alumni network.

We created a series of FAQ posts to try and dispel what we thought might be misconceptions about the workshops, for instance, that they were meant only for SCGS girls (not at all!), and what the timeline was for redevelopment of the site (we don't know, but we don't want to wait till it's too late to say something about it!). The Singapore Heritage Society (SHS) helped to spread the word, as did other heritage enthusiasts. To draw participation from Emerald Hill residents, the team also placed flyers in their mailboxes.





The workshops were held at the SCGS campus on Dunearn Road in November 2018, with one session in the morning and another in the afternoon. Across the sessions there was a total turnout of more than 70 participants. Over half (55%) identified as SCGS alumni and staff. Others identified as general members of the public (25%), architects, urban planners or academics (15%), and heritage enthusiasts (10%).

Each three-hour workshop was divided into two components. First, participants were invited to jot down their memories of the site and the surrounding area on Post-Its along a Memory Wall. The team prepared a 3-D model of the school premises, a collage of images from different periods in the school's history at Emerald Hill (both of the school buildings and the surrounding Emerald Hill/ Orchard Road area), as well as quotes reflecting the views of members of the public who signed the online petition. The Memory Wall component is described in greater detail in Section 2a.

Next, in smaller groups, participants spent time discussing ideas for how the site could be adaptively re-used. The Keep 37 Emerald Hill team set the context for the discussion by showing examples of other conservation buildings in Singapore, and provided each team with reference images and guiding questions. This section of the workshop was facilitated by 12 volunteers. The process and outcome of this section are laid out in Section 3.

Part 2a

Significance of Emerald Hill: Historical & Social

1. History of SCGS



From left: Song Ong Siang, Dr Wu Lien-Teh (a fellow editor of the *Straits Chinese Magazine*), and Dr Lim Boon Keng. (Image: One Hundred Years' History of Chinese in Singapore by Song Ong Siang)

“One fault very noticeable in most girls' schools is entirely absent in this school. The girls are not afraid to speak out... I have not met more intelligent Chinese pupils elsewhere.”

EXTRACTED FROM THE REPORT
OF THE ACTING DIRECTOR
OF PUBLIC INSTRUCTION,
EXTRACTED FROM *THE STRAITS
CHINESE MAGAZINE* MARCH
1907.

EARLY BEGINNINGS

Singapore Chinese Girls' School was founded in 1899 by a group of astute, forward-thinking and erudite Straits Chinese gentlemen, including Sir Song Ong Siang and Dr Lim Boon Keng. SCGS opened in July at Hill Street with an English headmistress, Miss Mary Geary, seven girls on the register, and a capital fund of \$6,000 for its operations. Since then, SCGS has gone through historical trajectories of troughs and crests, struggles and successes to reach its standing as one of Singapore's premier girls' schools, with an enrolment of 2,200 students.

The founding of the school was premised on the betterment of the Straits Chinese community, in particular, the general and domestic edification of its women. Both Song and Lim lamented the backward attitudes of their community towards its women, disagreeing that women should remain cloistered at home as wives and mothers. Looking towards more progressive societies of the time, such as those in Europe, they wanted Peranakan women to achieve similar levels of education and societal standing. Song and Lim had themselves been educated in excellent British schools, and yet felt strongly that education should not be based solely on the norms and traditions of other cultures; it had to have some foundation in the community's own cultural and historical traditions. To achieve that, the scholastic paradigm for SCGS incorporated aspects of Confucian philosophy to achieve an equilibrium with its more progressive Western inclination – while becoming worldly-wise and generally knowledgeable, women were also trained to become better housewives and mothers through education.

Apart from English, some of the subjects taught in the early years of SCGS were Romanised Malay, Chinese, Arithmetic, Geography, Music and Sewing, to both educate young girls while still equipping them for their future roles as wives and mothers. While there appeared to still be colonial and patriarchal aspects in its approach, the motivation was very progressive for its time. Educational opportunities for Chinese girls in Singapore then were few and far between, with most girls' schools started by missionaries or the colonial government.² Cultural norms stood as obstacles preventing girls from being enrolled in schools – good Chinese families, for example, found it indecent to expose their daughters to the public eye. By age 13, girls were commonly required to remain at home, allowed out only once a year on ‘Chap Lak Mei’, the 16th day of the first Chinese moon. Even then, they were prevented from stepping off their carriages. To mitigate parents' anxieties about their school-going daughters, and to encourage other families to enrol their daughters in SCGS, two carriages under the charge of two Chinese matrons were arranged to ferry the girls to and fro school.

In spite of the fervent opposition and criticism from other camps of the local community, SCGS was born and became the first female school to be built and maintained ground-up.

² The oldest girls' school in Singapore was the Church of England Zenana Mission for Chinese Girls, which taught only domestic subjects when it opened in 1842. It later became known as St. Margaret's School. Raffles Girls' School followed in 1844, after which came the Convent of the Holy Infant Jesus (1854), and St. Anna's Convent (1893), later known as St. Anthony's Convent. Methodist Girls' School was established in 1888 as the Anglo-Tamil Girls' School, and Fairfield Methodist Girls' School was founded in 1889.

“True, the Christian missions have anticipated us..... Why should we relegate our primary duties when we are quite able - if we only choose to do so - to look after our own house... It is necessary to teach the girls such practical things as sewing, cooking and the ordinary household duties in order to convince our detractors that education does not make them less fit as housekeepers. In educating our girls, it is essential to present before them an interesting course of lessons, and to guide them slowly to take an interest in the acquisition of our language and of things in general.”

EXPLAINING SUBJECTS TO BE TAUGHT.
EXTRACTED FROM *THE STRAITS CHINESE MAGAZINE*, 1899.

GROWING PAINS

The survival of SCGS was, however, highly uncertain in the first 20 years of its existence.

The early principals, Miss Geary Miss Mary Lemon, Miss L. Cook and Miss Barbara Kerr, had their work cut out for them as the school struggled to attract and retain qualified female teachers, who often left for schools with better pay. Sir Song Ong Siang regularly visited the school to observe teaching quality and student progress, and filled in wherever help was needed.

The school's efforts appeared to pay off as it received stellar results in its first Government Inspection in October 1901, and positive reports by the Director of Public Instruction in subsequent years. However, its troubles were far from over. The early years saw students being withdrawn from school once they passed Standard IV or V as they were deemed of age to assume household duties. Even the Director of Public Instruction noted this in his report in December 1903.

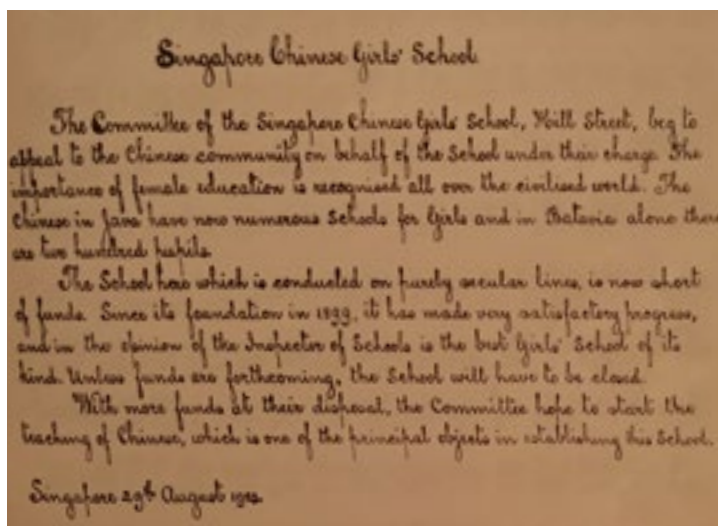


Photo: An appeal for funds (Image: SCGS)

The financial condition of the school was also a constant source of worry in its early days, with many appeals for parents to keep students in school and for funds to keep the school going. From 1905, the school committee admitted boys between 7 and 10 years old to swell the student population. The numbers grew steadily over the years, to the point that students had to be turned away in 1911. The school returned to an all-girls institution in 1936, when the school premises could no longer accommodate the growing student population.

The Hon. Mr. Song Ong Siang then asked Lady Guillemand to be kind enough to declare the Singapore Chinese Girls' School open, and handed her a key to the front door, but unfortunately the door refused to open until one of the lady teachers dashed around one end of the building, while Dr. Lim Boon Keng, with wonderful agility for one of his years, dashed around the other, to remove a bolt which had dropped into the socket, thus holding the door shut against the best endeavours of Lady Guillemand to open it. The doors were thrown open and the audience proceeded upstairs to the Assembly Hall where the annual prize distribution was held.

The opening ceremony for 37 Emerald Hill included an unanticipated flurry over trying to open the front door, as detailed in the local newspapers. (Image: National Archives of Singapore)

“...these ignorant women..... are just the outcome of the conservative and unreasonably prejudiced policy of their own fathers and grandfathers... Our appeal is for general co-operation in which every Straits Chinese can take part; - those who are rich with their money; those who are parents with their children; those who are influential with their influence. In this manner only, can we hope in time to remove the stigma that now attaches to Straits Chinese womanhood.”

COMMENTING ON EDUCATING STRAITS CHINESE GIRLS. EXTRACTED FROM *THE STRAITS CHINESE MAGAZINE*, JUNE 1907

As the school could not afford to pay its teachers well, academic standards started slipping. Two teachers were so young and poorly-educated that they were referred to as “the two little girls” by the Inspector of Schools in 1910. English writing classes were sometimes found to be taught in Malay. But 1916 saw an important turning point - school fees were increased to \$3 a month to increase staff strength and attract more effective teachers. The pool of good and faithful teachers started growing. In the 1920s, other academic and vocational subjects were introduced to the curriculum, including History, Shorthand Typing and Bookkeeping. This was contrasted with missionary schools, that tended to focus on moral and domestic education. A Mandarin teacher was also hired, but learning to speak Mandarin is not compulsory - some choose not to as they speak Malay at home.

In 1925, SCGS moved to its new, two-acre premises at 37 Emerald Hill which comprised a single two-storey block with 12 classrooms, an assembly hall, a staff room, and a Principal's office. The relative expanse of space encouraged more physical exercise, leading SCGS to

finally enter a team for the inter-secondary school sports competition in the same year. Under Principal Nesbitt's (later, Mrs Geake) charge in 1928, a clearer SCGS identity started to be formed. The school badge and uniform were designed (see stories on pages 40 and 41); a Guide Company was created to teach girls survival skills and self-reliance. The student population grew enough to form Standard V and VI classes. In 1936, SCGS decided to work towards being a “self-contained educational unit” such that girls who needed to get ready for the Junior and Senior Cambridge examinations (Secondary Three/Four) would not have to be transferred out to other schools.

The threat of war loomed large on everyone's minds in 1940, and the Board allowed the Air Raid Precaution Workers and members of St. John's Ambulance Brigade to use the school's tennis court and tiffin shed for drills. In 1941, while the school was still mourning Sir Song Ong Siang's death, war broke out in Singapore. SCGS was requisitioned by the British military authorities, and classes ceased with immediate effect.

Song Ong Siang



Song Ong Siang was born in Singapore on 14 June, 1871, to a prominent Christian Straits Chinese family.

Song studied at Raffles Institution and then at the Christian Brothers' School, (which later became known as St. Joseph's institution). As a student, he was ahead of his peers and was awarded the Guthrie Scholarship from the age of 12, for five consecutive years. Unfortunately, Song was precluded from being the first Queen's Scholar – this honour went to Dr Lim Boon Keng - because he was too young at the time. He was still eventually made a Queen's Scholar in 1888, becoming the only Chinese Queen's Scholar to read Law in England. At Downing College in Cambridge, and later on at Middle Temple, he distinguished himself as a brilliant student. In 1893, at 22 years of age, Song was called to the Bar and entered legal practice upon returning to Singapore. In that same year, he set up the legal firm Aitken and Ong Siang. He was also the Chairman of the Chinese Christian Association, and a shareholder and trustee of the Anglo Chinese Boarding School in 1904. In 1907, he married Helen Yeo in a military wedding – the first of its kind for a Chinese couple in Singapore.

Song was deeply concerned with and played an active role in improving the status of the Straits Chinese community. He started the first Romanized Malay-language newspaper in 1894, with the aim of improving the standard of Malay and also increasing general knowledge. In 1897, Song and Dr Lim Boon Keng started the *Straits*

Chinese Magazine, an Anglophone newspaper which strove to engage, instruct, inform and uplift the community. The magazine remained in print for the next 11 years. In it, he frequently highlighted the lowly perceptions of Straits Chinese held by the European community and sought to improve their standing in the eyes of the powers at large. In particular, he advocated for the education of Straits Chinese women:

“Are we not desirous that the Straits-born Chinese community shall be looked upon as an educated and enlightened people? Then let us look after our women, and help them all we can to be themselves more enlightened, more perfect, more noble in their thoughts and aspirations, and more fit to be the worthy mothers of the future citizens of this settlement.”

It was in that vein that Song, together with his contemporary Lim Boon Keng, founded the Singapore Chinese Girls' School with other prominent Straits Chinese gentlemen in July 1899. Sir Song Ong Siang was deeply invested in the school's operations, and had been known to personally visit newly arrived ships from Britain and Europe to look for women on board who might be persuaded to stop at Singapore to become teachers at SCGS.

Song's other contributions to the Singaporean society at large included the founding of the Chinese Philomathic Society, the Straits Chinese British Association, and the Hullett Memorial Library. Song also authored the seminal *One Hundred Years' History of the Chinese in Singapore*, a 600-page book that chronicles the lives of close to 200 members of the Chinese community. A devout Christian, Song was an elder in the Prinsep Street Church, preaching in both Malay and English.

In 1919, in recognition of his numerous and notable contributions to society, Song became a Nominated Member of Singapore's Legislative Council. He was conferred the Order of the British Empire (OBE) in 1927 and in, 1936, the Knight of the British Empire (KBE) by King George V - the first Chinese person in then-Malaya to be knighted.

Lim Boon Keng was born on 19 October 1868, to a Peranakan family in Penang. He moved to Singapore with his father, Lim Thean Geow, and the rest of his family when he was young.

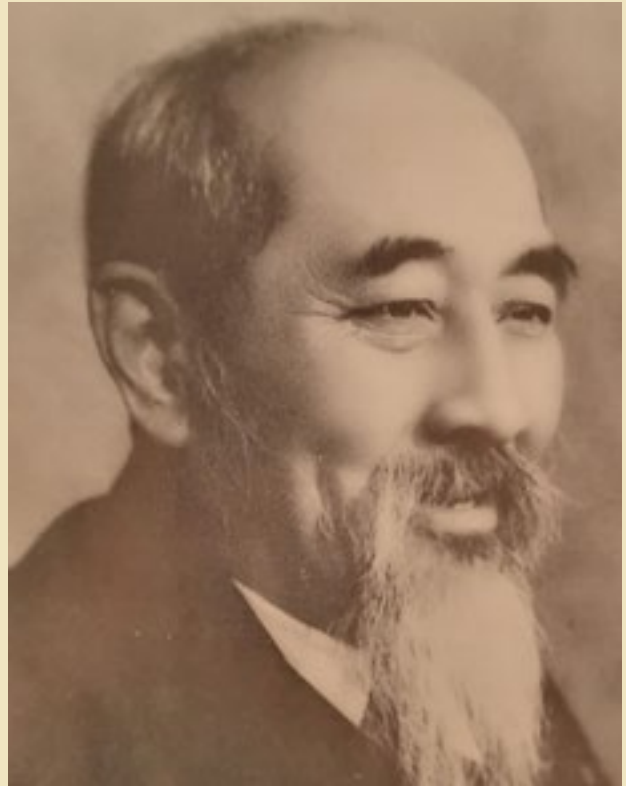
Like Song, he studied at Raffles Institution (RI) in Singapore. However, the untimely death of his father put the family in financial difficulty, which almost forced him to drop out of school. His principal, Mr R.W. Hullet, was so impressed with Lim that he took it upon himself to persuade his family to let him continue his education. Hullet succeeded, and Lim was able to remain in school and achieve stellar results. In 1887, Lim became the first Malayan to receive a Queen's Scholarship. He gained admission to the University of Edinburgh and graduated in 1892 with a First Class Honours degree in Medicine.

As a contemporary of Sir Song Ong Siang, Lim, too, was concerned with improving the general perception and welfare of the Straits Chinese community. He was an intrepid doctor, legislator, a champion of the underprivileged and a progressive thinker. In 1895, he campaigned against the wearing of queues - long braids originally seen as physical signs of submission - among Chinese men, with the intention of toppling the Qing dynasty in China. Lim was outspoken about the need for Straits Chinese families to educate their girls, a view he expressed often in the Straits Chinese Magazine that he started together with Song. After the founding of SCGS, Lim visited the school often, eventually becoming its Director. The school's first permanent campus at 37 Emerald Hill was in fact the site of a family home that belonged to Lim, known then as Claregrove.

Like Song, Lim was a prolific, steadfast contributor to the improvement of Singaporean society. In 1898, he founded the Philomathic Society and in 1920, he co-founded OAC insurance with Lim Nee Soon - the first insurance company established and owned by local Singaporeans. He was a founding member of the Singapore Chinese Chamber of Commerce, and also started the Straits Chinese British Association - an early iteration of today's Peranakan Association - in 1900 to be an official voice for the Straits Chinese Community. He eventually became its President.

SCGS was not Lim's only contribution to education; he also served as the second President of Xiamen University, founded by Tan Kah Kee, at the behest of Sun Yat Sen, whose revolution Lim supported. Heavily influenced by the reform movement in China during the 19th century, Lim developed and maintained close ties with key figures in the movement. He would eventually serve as personal physician and private secretary to Sun, the first President of the Republic of China.

Lim Boon Keng

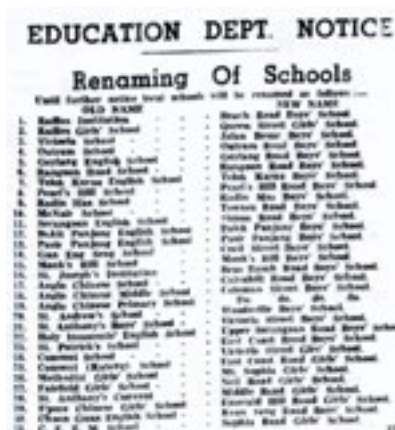


Lim was a member of many important organisations in his time. In 1895, he was a member of the British Legislative Council, where he led an inquiry into the roots of poverty in Singapore. He was also a Justice of the Peace and a member of the Chinese Advisory Board. Within the same council, Lim also campaigned for the banning of opium. In 1918, Lim was made an officer of the Order of the British Empire for his services to the Legislative Council.

Lim passed away in 1957, at the age of 88. The area known as Boon Keng, including Boon Keng Road and Boon Keng MRT station, was named after him.

“My father Dr Lim Kok Ann was born at 2 Emerald Hill, now part of the campus, which was the home of his grand father Dr Lim Boon Keng. The site is deeply embedded in Singapore history... the last remaining geographical tie to that great Singaporean Lim Boon Keng. Let it be preserved.”

STELLA KON, AUTHOR OF *EMILY OF EMERALD HILL*



THE WAR

Under the British authorities' charge, the school was used as an identity card registration office. The entrance of the school was converted to an air-raid warden's post, and an air-raid shelter was built within the school grounds. In January 1942, the school and the nearby Cold Storage plant were hit in a bombing raid. Casualties from Cold Storage were aided up the hill to SCGS by, among others, Mrs Geake.³ In the same year, the Education Department published a notice to rename schools. Schools with associations to missionaries or to the British government had those references removed in their name. SCGS was thus temporarily renamed to Emerald Hill Road Girls' School.

In October 1943, while under Japanese rule, the Japanese Chief of the Public Welfare Department suggested that the Board surrender SCGS' premises to the local municipality. This was accompanied by a written undertaking from the Mayor to grant another suitable site should the Board wish to re-establish the school, as reported in the minutes of the Directors' Meeting, 1945.

According to Miss Tan Sock Kern, one of the teachers who was present before and after the war (and who would later become Principal of SCGS), the school premises were used as an officer's club for cultural entertainment.⁴

While there have been some suggestions of the site being used as a comfort house, Miss Tan's account was separately corroborated by Mr Heng Chiang Ki, a resident of Emerald Hill during the war, who observed Japanese geishas and mainly high ranking officers entering the building⁴. He contrasted the school's premises with the houses along Cairnhill Road, which were taken over by the Japanese as comfort houses. He also heard singing and playing of musical instruments taking place within the SCGS site. Making use of the fields in the school, Japanese soldiers were also seen crawling on the ground as part of their warfare training. When the war ended, additions to the school noted by teachers included a piano in the primary school hall, and five to six bare cubicles in every classroom.

Clockwise from top left: Renaming of SCGS to Emerald Hill Road Girls' School during the war (Image: National Library Board)

Cold Storage along Orchard Road sustained damage in a 1942 bombing raid. (Image: National Archives of Singapore)

A map from the Japanese Occupation shows the building footprint of SCGS, with translations of Hullet Road and Emerald Hill Road to the north and east of the site. (Image: National Library Board)

³ "Education in Singapore" Oral History Interview with Tan Sock Kern, accessed online at National Archives of Singapore.

⁴ "Japanese Occupation of Singapore" Oral History Interview with Heng Chiang Ki, accessed online at National Archives of Singapore.

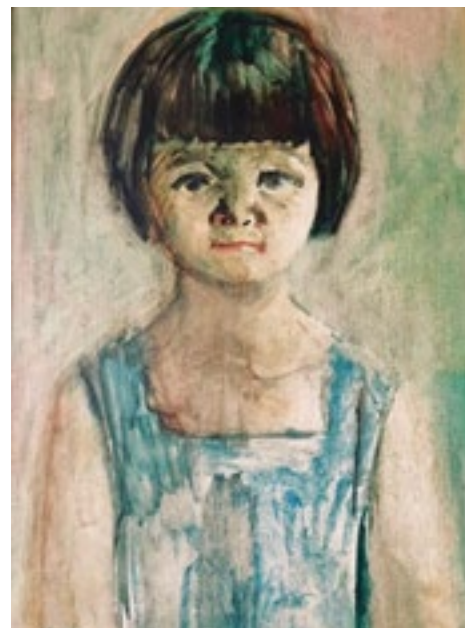
REBUILDING

After the war, SCGS started reinstating the school buildings to their original condition. When SCGS was ready to take in students, most of the few who returned were overaged. Returning the school to its original state took considerable time, and was made possible only by a \$30,000 'war claim' from the government. However, as documentation of the claim was later misplaced, the principal at the time had to stringently tighten the school's purse strings in order to repay the government. The delay in re-opening led many girls to enrol at Methodist Girls' School (MGS) instead.

In 1947, girls of all races were welcomed to the school and school enrolment steadily increased to 370. Burgeoning demand for school places came with consistent 100% passes in the School Certificate examinations, and two girls were eventually sent abroad to Australia to further their studies. The student population almost doubled to 700 in 1950, and grew quickly to 900 in 1952. The school barely coped with its rapidly-growing population, even with an Afternoon school session added. The Song Ong Siang block was constructed and completed in 1957 to much relief, funded by a generous donation by Lady Song.

With Miss Tan Sock Kern at the helm, SCGS steadily became known for academic excellence. At the same time, societal changes are such that parents are far more open to sending their daughters to school. In the 1960s, a number of government-led restructurings took place, including moving to a six-day workweek and back, and combining the hitherto three schools (Lower Primary, Upper Primary and Secondary) into one. The list of co-curricular activities grew to include Basketball, Art Club, Chess, Gymnastics, Brass Band, and the Literary Debating and Dramatic Society.

From the 1970s, the school grew from strength to strength. SCGS maintained the record of 100% School Certificate Exam (and later GCE 'O'-level) passes, enrolment increased to 1,700 students under 71 staff, and the list of President's Scholars lengthened. Its school girls continued to perform well at local competitions and even went on to bring glory to Singapore at various international competitions. Miss Rosalind Heng became principal in 1979, steering the school with a steady hand as the education landscape continued to evolve.



Kwan Sai Kheong - later to become the Permanent Secretary and Director of Education - painted this portrait of his daughter, Margaret, one day after school in 1961. (Image: Margaret Kwan)



In a rare image of the school in the post-war era, the Primary School block is seen covered in camouflage paint. (Image: Eddie Teo)

In 1989, SCGS became an independent school - one of two pioneer girls' schools to achieve this status. Doing so meant being given more freedom to adapt the curriculum to the needs of the student body, such as making Art and Home Economics non-examinable. Literature was made compulsory for Upper Secondary students, and local heritage tours for Lower Secondary classes were added, with the objective of helping pupils better appreciate Singapore's rich cultural heritage. The school was way ahead of its time in recognising the importance of national education, which was formally introduced to all schools in 1997.

Finally, almost 70 years after making Emerald Hill its home, SCGS moved to its current Dunearn Road premises in 1994 to better accommodate the expanding needs of the school. The Dunearn Road site was officially opened on 8 July 1995. The new location, five times larger than the Emerald Hill site, allowed all the students to be combined to one session.

The school's founders would be proud to see the school as it is today - focused on nurturing 'Kim Geks' (gold and jade in Hokkien, suggesting purity, adaptability and resilience) through a balanced and holistic education. In 1997, the Emerald Hill site was added to NHB's list of historical sites, and a plaque is placed outside the former SCGS in commemoration.

1st TERM			
	TOP	BOT	REMARKS
Arithmetic	50	30	Outstanding
Algebra			
Geometry			
English GRAM			
Reading	30	30	Make very careful notes
Discussion & Spelling	40	40	Outstanding
Composition & Essay	30	30	Outstanding
Grammar & Spelling	30	30	Plan carefully but thoroughly
Literature			Study with care
CHINESE			
Art			Doing is outstanding
Handwork			Outstanding
Cookery			
Home Science	30	30	Very outstanding
General Science			
Music			
Physical Education			
Gym			
Hygiene			
Nature Study			
Latin			
History			
Geography	40	40	Not outstanding
Personal			
Activities			
Personalities			
Character			
Character			



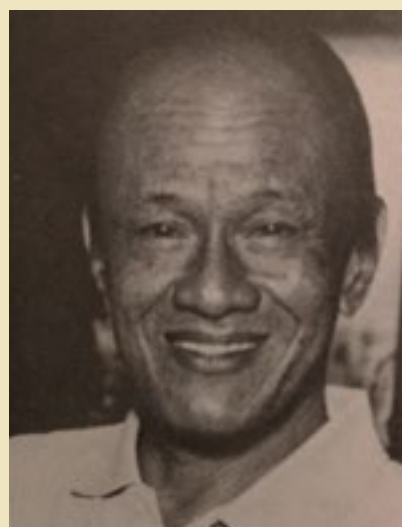
Top: Report book from 1950, while still under Mrs Geake. Nature Study is added to the list of subjects taught. (Image: SCGS)

Bottom: First of many heritage tours. This picture shows secondary one students in front of Victoria Memorial Hall as part of the Civic District tour, with their guide Mr Singh. (Image: SCGS)

Old Boys of SCGS

Back in 1934, a young Felix Chia found himself in a class full of girls and only a few other male classmates. Mr Chia lived along Emerald Hill Road and wore a white short-sleeved shirt and 'kan-chia' (rickshaw puller) blue shorts to school, so named for their similarity to the colour of the jacket donned by rickshaw pullers then.

Other old boys like Lee Kip Lee recall not having to wear a uniform, unlike the girls in the school. Being grossly outnumbered by the girls, Mr Chia recalled that the boys were mostly left to their own devices and often played marbles at recess time. Mr Koh Boon Cheang, who was Mr Chia's contemporary in SCGS and only stayed for a year, remembered the paths leading to the school crafted of laterite. These left signature red stains on the children's school shoes and caused much grief for their overworked amahs.



Author and playwright Felix Chia, one of the school's male students who ended up in SCGS because his parents could not secure a space for him in Anglo Chinese School. (Image: SCGS)



On close inspection of this 1930 photograph of SCGS students at the school's main entrance, a number of boys can be identified in the school population. (Image: Felix Chia)

"There were 33 boys on the roll, and with the exception of two, these had left for other schools at the end of the year. It was difficult to place boys in other schools at the end of the Primary course because most boys' schools had their own pupils to accommodate. However, while co-education was desirable for small children under ordinary conditions, it was found that when one sex was in the minority, the benefit was doubtful. Boys were therefore admitted reluctantly."

THEN-PRINCIPAL, MISS NESBITT. EXTRACTED FROM A SCHOOL REPORT, PUBLISHED IN SCGS' ANNUAL SCHOOL MAGAZINE IN 1988.

Teachers Through the Years



SCGS may have struggled to retain teachers in its early years, but later generations of students were privileged to be taught by dedicated, long-serving educators. It is not uncommon in the school for teachers to have been old girls themselves, or for them to now teach alongside colleagues who had taught them as young girls.



Miss Beatrice Wee, in the middle of both photos, is flanked by some of the SCGS alumnae who were taught by her and returned to SCGS as teachers or administrators. They are all still serving the school in various ways. Miss Wee taught from 1952 to 1992, establishing the Girl Guides' "1st Company Central", after the original first company (which she'd been apart of as a student) had shut down. Miss Wee is shown in a class photo on the right taken in her early years with SCGS.



Five of the teachers in the top photo, taken in the early 1970s, are seen in the bottom photo taken back at 37 Emerald Hill in October 2018. The red brick wall of the Lee Kong Chian block is visible in both pictures.

2. SCGS at 37 Emerald Hill - Stories & Memories

PRE-SCGS

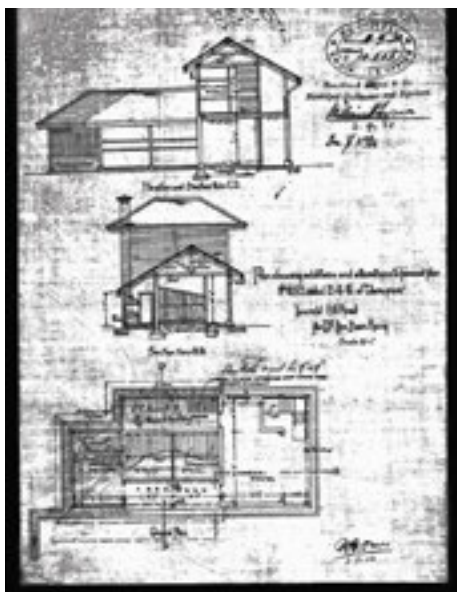
Before Emerald Hill, SCGS operated out of several different locations on Hill Street, including the site of the Central Fire Station (today a National Monument). In 1919, after the government moved to acquire the Hill Street premises from the school, SCGS started searching for a new location. This was somewhat inevitable, as successive school inspection reports had condemned the lack of available space for its growing student population. It was only in 1923 that the school directors managed to secure the Emerald Hill site.

The SCGS site was originally part of a nutmeg orchard, established in 1837 by a postal clerk, William Cuppage. Cuppage and his neighbouring nutmeg orchard owners, including Dr Thomas Oxley (owner of Killiney Estate), and William Scott (owner of Claymore), had limited luck with their nutmeg cultivation endeavours - the trees required a full decade to bear fruit, but a mysterious disease in 1857 wiped out the orchards within five years. Cuppage remained on his land, but replaced his nutmeg trees with other fruit trees.⁵ When he passed away in 1872, he left the land and the two houses on it - Erin Lodge and Fern Cottage - to his daughter.⁶

The land changed hands several times before being bought in 1900 by businessmen Seah Eng Kiat and Seah Boon Kang, who re-parcelled the 13.2 hectare site into smaller separate plots for sale to new owners. At the time that 37 Emerald Hill was identified as a suitable new home for SCGS, it belonged to Dr Lim Boon Keng and was called Claregrove. However, as his asking price of \$50,000 was too steep, the Board convinced the government to buy it and lease the site back to SCGS for 99 years. It cost the Board an astronomical sum of \$60,000 to build the school. While Emerald Hill is now right in the heart of town, its location at the time was considered as being away from the city centre; the row of houses at nearby Cuppage Terrace, built in 1905, were meant to cater to the growing middle classes wishing to escape hectic city life.

⁵ “National Heritage Board (2018). Orchard Heritage Trail: A Companion Guide.

⁶ “No. 66 Emerald Hill Road - URA.” <https://www.ura.gov.sg/Corporate/Get-Involved/Conserve-Built-Heritage/Architectural-Heritage-Season/-/media/E69E4CAB32154E4F9EA6EDAE2CDAD750.ashx>. Accessed 24 Apr. 2019.



Clockwise from top left:

Building plan showing additions and alterations to Claregrove residence for Dr Lim Boon Keng (Image: Courtesy of National Archives of Singapore)

SCGS girls having lessons outside their Hill Street premises. (Image: Courtesy of National Archives of Singapore)

Orchard Road from the Andrew Tan Collection. (Image: Courtesy of National Archives of Singapore)

Part of Plan of Singapore Town in 1893, showing Claregrove. (Image: Courtesy of National Archives of Singapore)



SCGS was firmly a part of the Emerald Hill fabric. Residents remember girls in the ubiquitous blue pinafore all around the neighbourhood, walking past the shophouses before and after school.⁷ Sometimes they'd be on the front steps of the Song Ong Siang block waiting to go home, or sketching shophouses as part of an art class. Students remember the grand shophouses too - some would peek in through open doors on their way to school, hoping to catch a glimpse of what went on inside the homes.

Before the Song Ong Siang block was built, residents actually had an unblocked view of the school field and all the activities that took place on it. In later years, girls could be seen running laps between Emerald Hill, Saunders Road and Hullet Road for P.E. As Mrs Florence Phuah (SCGS alumna and Vice-Principal from 1989 to 2006) firmly believed that poetry and English were found everywhere and should not be limited to classrooms, it was also not uncommon for students to be spotted walking along the five-foot ways, accompanied by their English teachers.

"I tell you, when I first joined this school, it was paradise! The food around was so good! I can still see it all - in the back lane, there was the yew char kway stall, and the suzie bun stall... And sometimes, there would come this little round old lady, swaying on tiny bound feet, with two baskets, one in front and one behind her, hanging from a pole on her shoulder. 'Otak!' she would call, and all the teachers would come tumbling out. In those days, teachers could leave the school any time... (sigh)."

MS ROSALIND HENG, FORMER PRINCIPAL OF SCGS, IN *PIECES OF JADE AND GOLD*

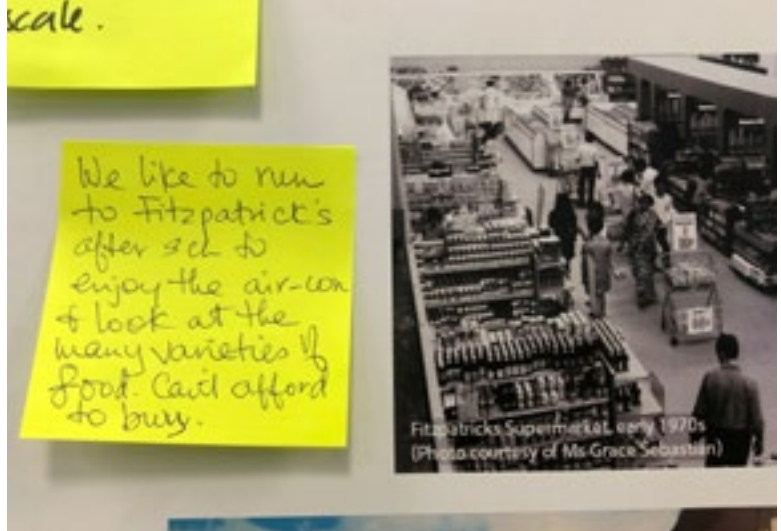


SCGS girls along Emerald Hill through the years. (Image: SCGS)



These photographs from the 1940s show the SCGS field before the construction of the Song Ong Siang block. Emerald Hill shophouses, with a clear view of activities taking place in the school, are seen in the background. (Images: SCGS)

⁷ They also unfortunately remember the bad traffic that used to clog the streets before and after school!



Clockwise from top left:

Emerald Hill residents inside the school, before the Song Ong Siang block was built. (Image: Eddie Teo)

A workshop participant remembers heading into Fitzpatrick's to enjoy the air conditioning. (Images: Keep 37 Emerald Hill team, Bill Johnston)

A street hawker plies the Emerald Hill/ Orchard Road area in 1948. Framroz's Aerated Water is today part of Peranakan Place. (Image: Flickr)



An undated photograph of the Heeren Building, at the junction of Orchard Road and Cairnhill Road. (Image: Roots.sg)



A row of flower shops stood across from the Orchard Road Market, shown in this photo in 1978. The market, popular for fresh produce in the 1960s, was demolished in 1982 as part of the government's plans to turn Orchard Road into a prime shopping district. (Image: Lee Kip Lin)

Over the years, the neighbourhood changed significantly, and later generations of SCGS girls had the benefit of being close to the hustle and bustle of Orchard Road. Their memories trace the development of the area over time, from Fitzpatrick's and Cold Storage in the 1960s, to McDonald's at Centrepoint and Famous Amos at Specialist's Centre in the 1980s. It wasn't just the students who benefitted; some parents would take advantage of free parking within the school premises to go shopping on Orchard Road. Teachers were responsible for locking the school gates up when afternoon session students had gone home, and one in particular remembers always locking the gates at 6:30 p.m. sharp, forcing parents who'd gone shopping to come back the next day for their cars.

Some former students have a distinct memory of Ali Joo Furriers - a curious sight in tropical Singapore. The luxurious fur shop was housed in the Heeren Building at the junction of Cairnhill Road and Orchard Road, which was demolished in 1990 to make way for today's The Heeren development. The original Heeren Building, built in 1931, was named after Heeren Street in Malacca, with *heeren* being Dutch for "gentleman". It also housed the Beethoven Record House - years later, the new Heeren would be anchored by another record store, HMV - and Marjorie's, where school swimmers remember buying their Speedo swimsuits.

Others also remember a row of flower shops - Prince's, Queen's and Corona - across the street from the old Orchard Road Market, which was where Orchard Point stands today. Prince's and Corona are still in operation today, albeit elsewhere.

“Before the building Centrepoint at Orchard was built, it was the location of Singapore’s first and oldest supermarket - Cold Storage. Like Robinsons, Cold Storage was a place where the most fashionable ladies from the expatriate community would shop for their groceries. On the upper floor was a boutique called Hilda’s which imports beautiful dresses, buttons and accessories from England. Mum used to come here quite frequently and memories of me rummaging through drawers of buttons are still with me. I love recommending her buttons I found to match her material.

Then she would take me to the Magnolia Snack Bar for vanilla and chocolate ice cream which comes in little stainless steel cups. If I was really good, I get to order an ice cream sundae. My favourite was the Merry Widow which was a really strange name for an ice cream but it made me remember it even more after all these years.

Best of all, my school was just behind, up a little road called Emerald Hill. It was fun to know that right at the school door’s steps was the iconic retail stretch of Singapore. A great distraction and diversion from our studies back in those days.

Then came the time to tear the buildings down for Centrepoint in 1983. I was sad to see the Magnolia Snack Bar and Hilda’s go but with all modernisation, it was inevitable.”

SERENE CHOO



School children crossing the street in front of the famed Magnolia Snack Bar on Orchard Road. It was next to Cold Storage, on land that would later become Centrepoint. (Images: National Archives of Singapore, Serene Choo)



SCGS girls lining up at McDonald's at Centrepoint. Girls who only had their Primary School years at Emerald Hill lament the fact that they never got to enjoy being so close to Orchard Road, even though the school rules forbade girls from “loitering” in public in their uniforms after school. (Images: National Archives of Singapore, Keep 37 Emerald Hill team)

Memory Wall



The Memory Wall exercise at our public workshops was the team's way of getting participants to share their stories and memories of their time at Emerald Hill. For those who hadn't spent time at that campus, it was also an opportunity to understand what lay within, and to get a sense of the memories that others held of the space.



The team collaged photographs and maps of 37 Emerald Hill and the larger Orchard Road area with comments that had been emailed or left on our Change.org and social media platforms, capturing sentiments that others had about their time at Emerald Hill and the need to conserve the site. Photographs were chosen to reflect the site and its surroundings over different periods in the school's history. There was also a small model of 37 Emerald Hill, with the building façades drawn on by a member of our team.⁸



Participants make their way around the Memory Wall and the model of 37 Emerald Hill. (Images: Keep 37 Emerald Hill team)

⁸ We had originally imagined that this would be a terrific exercise to be carried out in person, at the actual school site. Something similar had been done by a group of former Anglo Chinese School (Junior) students when the school moved out of its Peck Hay Road location in 2008, and a commemorative book "Walls Have Ears" was published as a result. However, as we don't have easy access to the Emerald Hill site, the Memory Wall was our next best alternative.



Participants were asked to pair up with each other and go around the Memory Wall, taking turns to capture each other's thoughts and memories on Post-It notes. The notes were stuck on to photos or quotes that resonated with participants - steps outside the old Primary School block, or the McDonald's at Centrepoint, for example. Participants could then take their time to look through what others had written as the workshop continued.



Some memories were fairly universal, such as those to do with the school's famous mee pok man, playing catching on the school field and all manner of ghost stories around the campus.

Others provided a glimpse of the surrounding neighbourhood in different times, allowing us to see an evolution in the school's neighbours, from florists and a fur shop to the antique store and bars at Peranakan Place.

Walking Interviews

If you are familiar with the SCGS campus:

1. Which part of the school is most memorable to you? Why?
2. Where did you spend the most time, aside from classrooms? What did you do there?
3. What sights, sounds or stories do you remember from your time at school?
4. What do you remember of Emerald Hill / Orchard Road?

If you are not too familiar with the campus:

1. Is there anything that stands out to you about 37 Emerald Hill? A building? A feeling? A story?
2. What are your impressions of Emerald Hill / Orchard Road?
3. Do you remember particular sights, sounds or stories about the area?



Guiding questions were shared for participants to make reference to as they went about the Memory Wall exercise. (Image: Keep 37 Emerald Hill team)

3. Primary School Block

An official opening ceremony was held on 6 February 1926 at 37 Emerald Hill Road, although classes had already begun on 7 September 1925. The new school comprised a two-storey block with 12 classrooms, an assembly hall, a staff room, and a principal's office. There were old wooden structures that were retained - a tiffin shed which became the canteen, as well as two small wooden houses that accommodated the office help, and the school gardeners and their family. Surrounding the block was more than two acres of woody ground with fruit trees.

The oldest building within the compound, the Primary School block is fondly remembered for its terrazzo staircases, louvered windows, high ceilings and walkways filled with students playing five stones or hopscotch. But it also came with haunted toilets, floors that never seemed to get clean no matter how much sweeping happened, and leaky roofs.

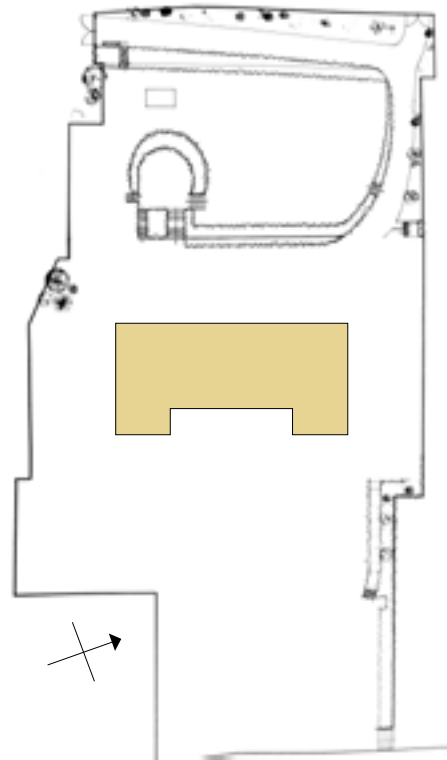


Photo taken in 1948 of directors, staff and students



Top: The Primary School block, facing Cairnhill Road. (Image: Keep 37 Emerald Hill team)

Bottom: At the school's 70th Anniversary celebrations (Image: SCGS)



"I remember when we were in Primary 4 - this would have been in 1982 – we were in the second floor classroom nearest to the assembly hall of the old school building – and during one of the classes (English? Maths? Wasn't Science or Chinese) – some workers were doing some maintenance work in the attic above our 10-year old heads, perhaps patching the aging roof through which there were multiple leaks during rainstorms. There were always pigeons who nested above - the coo-ing and loud fluttering of wings was part of the daily classroom soundtrack. All of a sudden, the ceiling came crashing down just in front of my table in the front row corner by the window. My seat partner, Dawn Ang (green team) and I were covered in dust from the collapse debris and stared at each other in shock. We two 10-year olds didn't speak for the rest of the day. Awestruck from the idea that this was a badly-patched ceiling that was damaged during World War Two - I was in awe that I had a connection to people 40 years ago; And dumbstruck for sure for a near-death close-call - Glad That I Lived Am I "

JASMINE NG, FOR WHOM THE SCHOOL SONG "GLAD THAT I LIVED AM I" TOOK ON NEW MEANING ONE DAY



Primary school girls doing class duty at recess time. This typically included sweeping, making sure chairs and tables were neatly ordered, and sticking your arms out the window to clap chalkboard dusters together, sending excess chalk dust flying. (Image: SCGS)

“When it rained, the roof leaked, so we just moved the tables and continued with lessons.”



WOODEN DESKS

These old wooden desks could be flipped open for students to store their books and stationery in school. Sometimes, they revealed carvings left behind by previous generations of girls who'd used them. Because SCGS was a dual-session school when at Emerald Hill, desks were shared by two girls every day, and they sometimes left little notes for each other inside. Older alumni also remember there being an inkwell at the corner of each table.



Undated photographs show Primary School classrooms, possibly in the 1950s or 60s. Students didn't have individual desks but instead sat on benches at longer tables with a partner. Chinese text was still written vertically, as seen in the girls' writing on the blackboard. (Images: SCGS)



Flip-top wooden desks, as seen in classrooms in the 1970s and 1990s.
(Images: SCGS, Toggle)

Illustrator Li Ching Heng remembers keeping hand-written notes from classmates and other students in her desk. She thinks they were mostly “cute and sweet”, but has a particular memory of the angry ones she used to exchange with the girl who shared her desk, scolding her for moving her belongings around.



The wooden desks - both the flip-top one and the bench-type configuration - live on in the school's Heritage Room at Dunearn Road. On the left, former teachers and alumni pose with the desks at the time of the Heritage Room's completion in the mid-1990s. They remain a fixture in the room today, along with other artefacts to show what SCGS classrooms used to look like. (Images: SCGS & National Museum)

PASSION FLOWER

Parts of a 1986 made-for-TV movie called *Passion Flower* were shot in the old SCGS. A remake of a 1930 film, *Passion Flower* is described as a “melodramatic made-for-television romance” and a “spicy suspense flick”,⁹ in which a Singapore-based financier falls in love with the daughter of a powerful smuggler.

Not quite critically acclaimed – *Passion Flower* has a score of 5.4/10 on IMDB – the movie’s interrogation scenes were in fact filmed in the Primary School block, a benevolent substitute for Changi Prison. Some batches of secondary school girls were even asked to watch and analyse the movie as part of their English curriculum, much to their bewilderment given the racy content.



A poster for *Passion Flower* hints at its PG (or worse) content. We found a trailer on YouTube and tried to spot the Primary School block – could this be it? The windows looked familiar... (Images: IMDB, YouTube)

⁹ IMDB.com and rottentomatoes.com



GARGLE, GARGLE, SPIT!

The Ministry of Health launched a national dental health campaign in February 1969, aiming to inculcate good dental hygiene habits in school-going children. At the time, half the national population reportedly did not know how to brush their teeth properly, and half the school-going population didn't even own toothbrushes.

Together with other measures, such as setting up dental clinics in primary schools, compulsory toothbrushing drills were introduced for all primary one to three students, with each child provided with a toothbrush and plastic mug, costing 25 cents per set.¹⁰



Many SCGS girls remember squatting by the drain that ran around the Primary School block to brush their teeth. By the 1980s, some remember wondering why this was a necessary part of the school day - dental hygiene standards had improved considerably by then, and the teeth-brushing exercise came to represent a bridge between an old and new Singapore.



“Gargle, gargle, spit!” “Six times up and six times down!” “Up, down, left, right! Round and round with all your might!” Primary school students squat and stand by the drain outside the Primary School block, brushing their teeth as part of a national dental health campaign.

¹⁰ “Dental health campaign | Infopedia - NLB Eresources.” http://eresources.nlb.gov.sg/infopedia/articles/SIP_1177_2008-12-05.html. Accessed 19 Apr. 2019.

The SCGS Badge

In the early days of SCGS being at Emerald Hill, the badge was conceived as a green and gold shield, with a gold dragon at the crest. The dragon was adopted as a symbol of Imperial China, stressing the Chinese character of the school and the cultural heritage of our Straits Chinese founders. The shield was designed by one Mr Walker - an expatriate art instructor at the Ministry of Education, and was adopted by Mrs Geake, principal of the school from 1927 - 1951. After the fall of China to communist forces in 1949, the dragon symbol was seen to have lost its significance.

In 1952, a new school badge was designed by the art mistress Mrs C. Ang, under the charge of the school's first Asian principal, Mrs Tan Swee Khin. Aside from retaining a link to the school's Chinese heritage - seeing as the dragon was no longer considered suitable, the yin yang symbol was chosen for its representation of duality in the universe (light and darkness, life and death), and how opposing elements can be complementary. Together with the school motto "Sincerity, Courage, Generosity, Service," a Union Jack was also included at the top as Singapore remained under colonial rule. The interlocking letters "SCGS" were inscribed against the yin yang symbol, with the yin shaded silver and the yang a deep blue. The jade and gold hues from the original badge also remained. Some girls, believing the yin yang symbol would be able to protect them from the wandering spirit of the murdered mistress, brandished the badge as they entered the haunted toilets.

When Singapore attained internal self-government in 1959, the link to colonial rule became unnecessary. Some time before 1979, the Union Jack was replaced by the letters "SCGS", and the silver and blue yin yang symbols became jade and gold instead, giving rise to the school crest that we are familiar with today. To ward off the 'ghosts' that purportedly lingered in some parts of the school, some students would brandish their badge before them as they entered those spaces.



Top: The SCGS badge today.

Bottom: A short-lived version with a Union Jack was used for a few years, before Singapore attained internal self-government.

(Images: SCGS)



School Uniform

Up until 1929, no uniforms were worn by SCGS students. Children simply wore their day-to-day clothes - a sarong or baju panjang with slippers - and usually had their hair done up in a bun or two. Some children even went to school sporting jewellery.

SPOTLIGHT FEATURE: THE SCHOOL UNIFORM

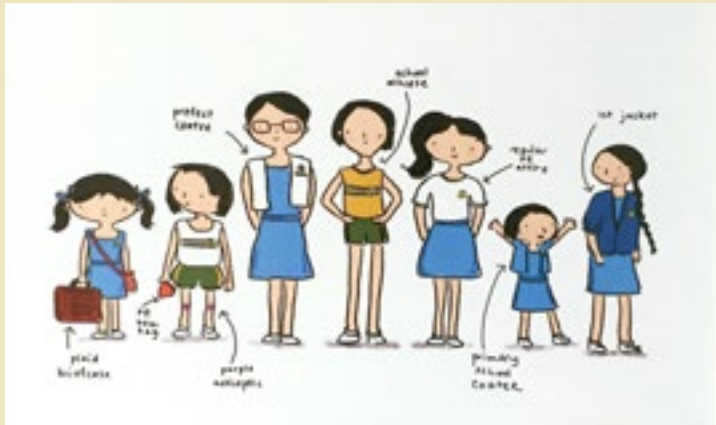


Illustration by Melissa Tan

In 1928, under an initiative to cement a stronger school identity, senior girls and teachers were asked by then-Principal Mrs Geake to design a uniform. Her brief was for something sensible, comfortable, and importantly, something mothers could make for the students. The chosen outfit was a white samfoo top with black (later blue) trousers. SCGS was the only girls' school with trousers as part of the uniform. While unpopular, Mrs Geake favoured it for the ease with which sports drills and running could be carried out. However, girls from other schools used to tease SCGS students because of their uniforms, calling them 'amahs' or kang chia' (rickshaw puller).

For a period of time after the war, as cloth was difficult to come by, no uniforms were worn. As an interim measure, lower primary girls were instructed to wear pink, upper primary green, and secondary blue.

In 1949, the now-familiar blue sundress makes its appearance. In its early form, the blue dress had a square neck, stiff flared skirt that fell mid-calf, no sleeves and a cloth belt. There was a big blue button on each shoulder then, for girls to attach coloured team sashes to their uniforms when playing games - no separate P.E. uniform existed at the time. To differentiate between morning and afternoon session students, afternoon school girls wore green dresses instead. An blue outer coat was introduced for primary school girls, and a white bolero for prefects. The bolero is still worn by prefects today.

The first sports uniform only made its appearance in 1955, and was worn at the Games Day. Designed by Sports Secretary Miss G. C. Teo, it was a white top with a pair of blue bloomers. These bloomers are still worn by the primary school girls today, though in green with yellow stripes down the side. The sleeveless white top now has coloured team stripes on it, for identification of Blue, Green, Red and Yellow teams.

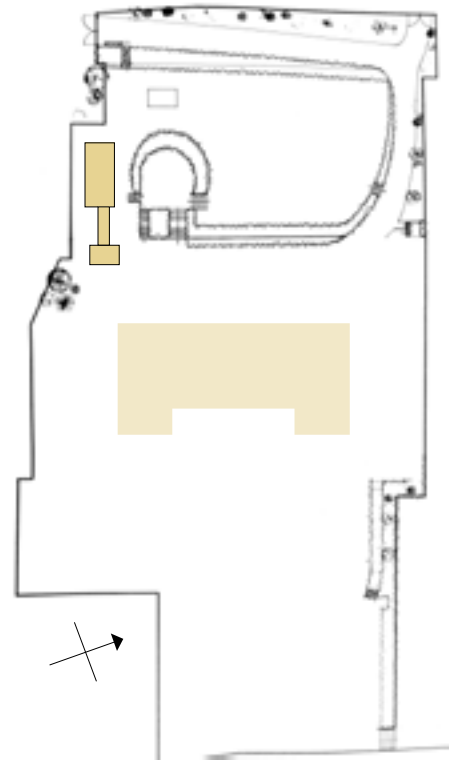


(Images: SCGS)

4. Principal's House

The intention to establish a Principal's Quarters was announced at the opening ceremony of the Emerald Hill site, in Sir Song Ong Siang's speech. A few years later in 1930, under Miss Nesbitt's charge and assisted by Mr Lee Kong Chian, the Principal's Quarters (also affectionately known as "the bungalow" or "Miss/ Mrs ____'s House", depending on who lived there at the time) was constructed for the principal and her family. \$750 was provided to furnish its interiors. The two-storey house fronting Cairnhill Road included a drop-off porch and garage, connected by a sheltered walkway to the main building, which included bedrooms, a living room, kitchen and rooms used by the school.

To facilitate the school's decision in 1936 to establish SCGS as a "self-contained educational unit" - one that would allow girls to remain at SCGS for Junior and Senior Cambridge certifications -, Mrs Geake (previously Miss Nesbitt) vacated the Principal's Quarters in 1937 to make way for the new Cambridge classes. This proved insufficient, leading to further appeals to the government to buy and lease to SCGS a "Draycott site" to build more classrooms. In lieu of this, the government allowed onsite extensions, after which the house was returned to its original purpose.



Top: Present day photo of the Principal's Quarters.

Bottom: Girls seated in front of the porch.

(Images: Keep 37 Emerald Hill team, SCGS)



Top: Photo of the Principal's Quarters, with porch extending from the upper level of the house.



Bottom: Mrs Geake and family, inside the Principal's Quarters

(Images: SCGS)

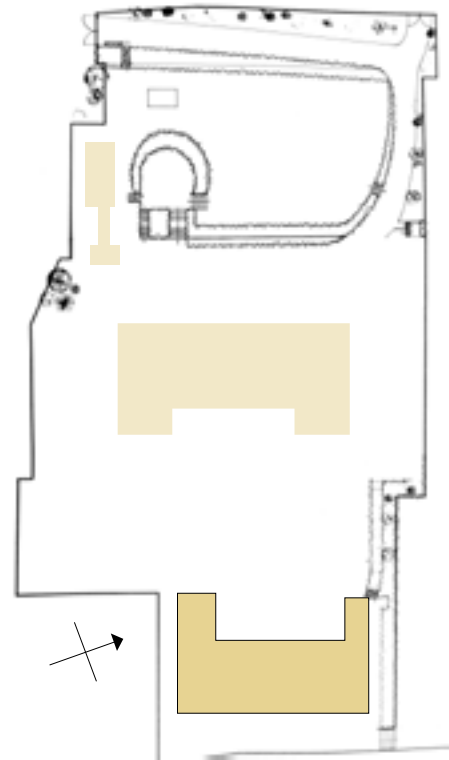
After Mrs Geake, it was occupied by Vice-Principal Mrs Y.W. Wong and her family in the 1960s, after which the then-retired Principal Ms. Tan Sock Kern moved in. When the school attained independent status in 1989 and needed more room, the building ceased to serve as a residence again. Instead, it housed various ECA activities.

After former Principal Miss Tan Sock Kern moved out, the Principal's house became used for regular day-to-day activities by the school. One former student remembers lining up inside the house for the dreaded BCG vaccination, "fearing the worst."

5. Song Ong Siang Block

The three-storey Song Ong Siang (SOS) block fronting Emerald Hill was completed in 1956, a few years later than planned due to a shortage of funds. Contributions from Mr Tan Chin Tuan, Mr Runme Shaw (after whom the building's Shaw Hall was named) and Mr Loke Wan Tho made its possible, alongside a dollar-for-dollar matching from the government. While the school initially wanted to build two blocks, one of which would be two-storeys high, budgetary constraints led to a single three-storey block instead. The SOS building consisted of eight new classrooms, a science lab, a room for domestic science (later known as Home Economics of Home Management), as well as the Shaw Hall. The school field became smaller once the SOS block was built, but it facilitated the introduction of General Science to the secondary syllabus.

As the school population swelled, even the staff room in the Song Ong Siang block became too cramped. To cope with the shortage of tables, teachers from the morning and afternoon shifts would share them. By a fixed time every day, regardless of whether work was completed, the morning shift teachers would have to vacate their tables. Miss Rosalind Heng, Principal of the school from 1978 to 2006, often had to remind teachers not to overstay their welcome.



Clockwise from top left:

Present day building facing
Emerald Hill. (Image: Keep 37
Emerald Hill team)

Field outside SCGS before the Song Ong Siang Block was built. (Image: SCGS)

SCGS entrance via the newly built Song Ong Siang building, facing Emerald Hill. (Image: SCGS)

To cope with the tight situation, many of the teachers who still had work to do after their session ended would set up camp elsewhere. For most, this was at a dining table placed behind the stage within Shaw Hall, which was just a few steps away from the staff room. Able to only fit six people at a time, the teachers talked, planned, marked and ate together at the dining table. Unbeknownst to many students, their exam scripts were often stored right under their noses - beneath the stage where performances were often held.



The stage in Shaw Hall was used for assembly talks and performances, and apparently for hiding exam scripts too. (Image: SCGS)



The Home Economics room was on the first floor of the Song Ong Siang block - girls remember having to make rock buns there as an early initiation into the world of baking and cooking.

One day, a caretaker and his spouse were caught in a domestic feud, and somehow they'd begun arguing in the empty Home Economics room. A teacher heard them arguing and quickly locked them inside, thinking that could force them to resolve their differences. But she hadn't realized she'd locked a warring couple in a room full of knives! (No one was harmed, as far as we know.)



Mrs Amy Goh taught Home Economics at SCGS. She was photographed standing outside the Home Economics room in November 2018, identifying it as a spot that holds many memories for her at 37 Emerald Hill. (Image: Keep 37 Emerald Hill team)

6. Lee Kong Chian Block

After the Japanese took over the premises in 1942, they added an extra building – a small, one-storey annex on the far side of the school from the Principal's Quarters. When SCGS reclaimed the premises after the war, this annex was repurposed to house the school's caretaker, three classes, and a set of dingy, musty toilets which relied on a single bulb for light. One year, the caretaker killed his mistress and was rumoured to have put her in a trunk inside a cupboard along the passageway to the toilets. This, together with the building's association with the war, gave rise to many of the school's ghost stories.

As the school continued to need more room for expansion beyond the SOS building, the one-storey annex was replaced by the Lee Kong Chian (LKC) block. Construction began in 1969 and the block was completed in the early 1970s. Named for the prominent businessman and philanthropist, the LKC block introduced two science labs and eight classrooms.

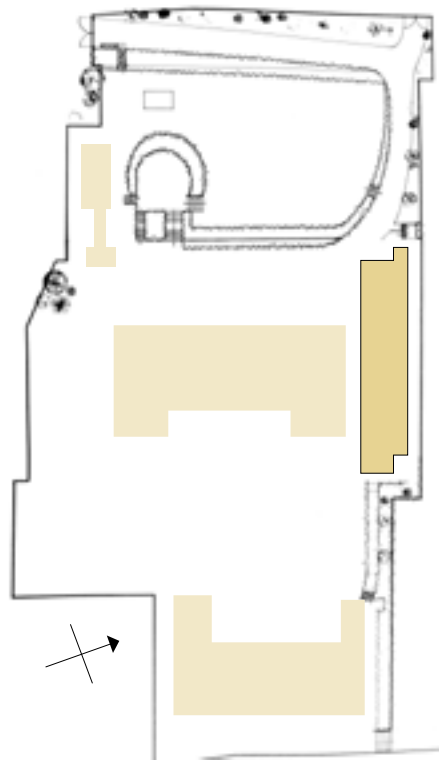
Students often lined the hallways to look over the field and basketball court, which was the setting for games and celebrations like National Day and Teachers' Day. Among the rooms in the LKC block was a Teachers' Resource Room, which doubled as a place for teachers to rest and eat. The first computer the school ever bought in the 1990s was placed there, and teachers were expected to key in all the students' end-of-year grades using a system called Word Star. Only one teacher, Ms Beh Mui Leng, was brave enough to use it!

Clockwise from right:

Girls playing in front of the one-storey annex that was eventually replaced by the Lee Kong Chian building. (Image: SCGS)

Girls lining the corridors of the Lee Kong Chian block to watch the annual National Day celebrations on the field. (Image: SCGS)

Present day photo of the Lee Kong Chian Block (Image: Keep 37 Emerald Hill team)

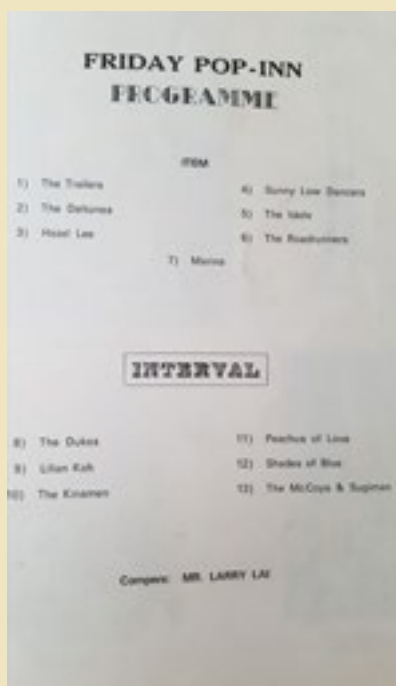


Fundraising for the Lee Kong Chain Block

In the late 1960s, a group of enterprising students helped to raise funds for construction of the LKC block by organising “Friday Pop-Inn” - a concert featuring a number of popular local singers and bands. Hosted by Larry Lai, a household name thanks to Rediffusion, the concert featured groups like The Trailers, one of the few bands to have achieved commercial success in Singapore.

While it was common then for bands to play covers of British and American hits, The Trailers also wrote and recorded original songs. Their first single in 1966, “Do It Right”, even managed to knock The Beatles off the top of local music charts.

Friday Pop-Inn was held at the former National Theatre - the largest theatre at the time - which had been built to commemorate Singapore's self-government in 1963. Julie Lee (Kwong), part of the organising committee, was a Secondary 2 student the year of the concert. She remembers then-Principal Miss Tan Sock Kern gamely saying yes to their idea for the fundraiser, and giving them “great trust and empowerment” to see it through.



Parts of the Friday Pop-Inn programme. (Images: Julie Lee)

7. Canteen & ECA Block



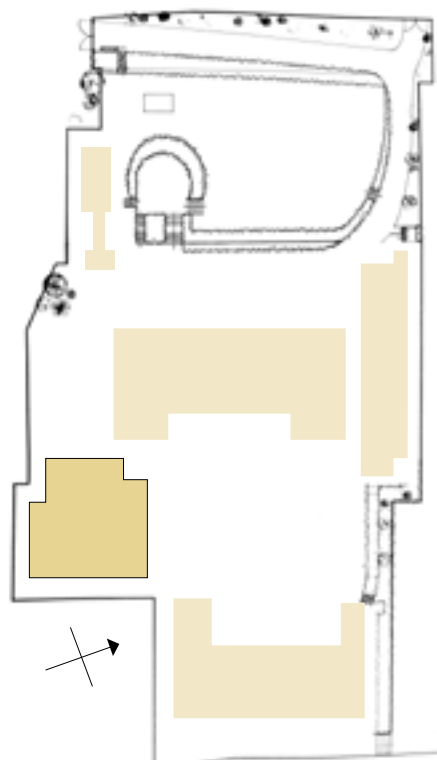
In 1979, a new building with a multi-purpose hall above a large canteen was added to the school, next to the previous tiffin-shed. Two years later, an extension was built at the site of the tiffin-shed to accommodate a central library, a bookstore and extra-curricular activity (ECA) rooms. These cost \$100,000 and included a short link bridge connecting the primary school hall to the new library.

The latest structures to be added to the school bore the brunt of one of Singapore's earliest encounters with international terrorism. At 8:40pm on Sunday, 21 December 1986, an explosion went off at nearby Faber House on Orchard Road, home to both the Canadian High Commission and the Israeli embassy. The explosion originated from a drain at the back of Faber House, but did no damage to the actual building. Instead, the SCGS canteen and ECA block - about 15 metres away, up a small slope - sustained damage that included shattered louvred window panes, collapsed ceiling boards, and cracks in the walls. Thankfully, as the blast happened on a weekend and during the December school holidays, there were no casualties. The explosion was actually the second one to take place at Faber House; a similar explosion, also originating from a drain, had taken place in March 1985. Both were suspected to have targeted the Israeli embassy in Faber House. A Palestinian guerilla confessed to the first bombing only in 1991, and confirmed that he had targeted the Israeli embassy.¹¹ The 1986 bombing, however, remains an unsolved case.



Left: Teachers and students stand on the field for a prize-giving ceremony in the late 1970s. The canteen and gym are under construction in the background. (Image: SCGS)

Right: Present day photo of the canteen and gym. (Image: Keep 37 Emerald Hill team)



¹¹ Faber House explosions | Infopedia - NLB eResources." http://eresources.nlb.gov.sg/infopedia/articles/SIP_1546_2009-07-17.html. Accessed 24 Apr. 2019.



The link bridge between the primary school hall and library is now obscured from view. (Images: SCGS, Keep 37 Emerald Hill team)





Left: Girls from the SCGS Dance Group listen to a visiting speaker in the library, which doubled as a costume store room and sewing room. (Image: SCGS)

Bottom: Newspaper coverage of the aftermath of the Faber House blast. Picture shows an SCGS cleaner sweeping away broken glass panes. (Image: National Archives of Singapore)



In the mid-1980s, in light of the school's ever-growing needs, a feasibility study was conducted to determine if it would be possible to redevelop the existing buildings so that more facilities could be added. Carried out by the firm Kumpulan Akitek - who were behind notable local landmarks such as Highpoint Residences and the State Courts - the report suggested that the school could indeed expand on-site, while still conserving the original Primary School building and intensifying other parts of the site. The proposed plans included a basement level built into the existing slope facing Cairnhill Road that would house a 300-seater theatre for performances. The plans were eventually shelved as it was decided that, unfortunately, the premises would remain far too small for the school's future needs.

The discussion then turned to relocation. In 1990, SCGS announced plans to move to a new site along Dunearn Road instead. This was the same year in which classes from the whole top floor of the primary school block had to be relocated to the halls and gymnasium, as the rotting roof battens and rafters of the primary school block were repaired. After much effort to raise \$8 million out of the \$40 million needed to build the new school, SCGS made 'The Great Move' to Dunearn Road on 4th July 1994, some 95 years after SCGS first opened its doors in July 1899.

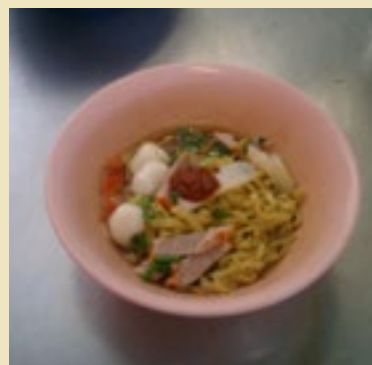


Kumpulan Akitek's feasibility study for the expansion of SCGS on-site at Emerald Hill. (Images: SCGS)

The Meepok Man

The SCGS Mee Pok Man, and the mee pok he sold every day, are legends among students past and present. Even for the Emerald Hill residents we spoke to who were around when SCGS occupied 37 Emerald Hill, some of their most vivid memories of the school were of the Mee Pok Man.

In the 1940s and 50s, one of the street hawkers plying Emerald Hill Road was a woman selling noodles - she had one box-like container for her ingredients, and another for a charcoal stove to prepare food. Her son, who would grow up to become the famous Mee Pok Man, helped generate sales by walking around the surrounding streets, knocking a stick on a bamboo slab to create “tock tock” sounds that announced their arrival.



The last British Principal of SCGS, Mrs Jessie Geake, decided to invite the hawker to operate a dedicated stall in the school's tiffin shed. “Ah Sim”, as she came to be known, sold bowls of noodles for 20 to 30 cents each. Her son, Mr Ang Boon Chye, continued to make the “tock tock” sounds along the streets of Emerald Hill outside the usual recess timings, inviting neighbours into the school for bowls of mee pok. Mr Ang eventually took over the stall in 1970s, supported by his wife. His family stayed at a house just around the corner from the school, next to Faber House. He had five daughters and a son. Three of his daughters attended SCGS.



The SCGS Mee Pok Man as a young boy, helping his mother in the days before they set up a stall inside the school. On the right, Mr Ang reaches for his famous bottle of vinegar - next to it were large bowls of chilli, which you could dollop on to your mee pok at your own peril. (Images: SCGS)

“I remember my Pa always put his SCGS noodle stall as TOP priority. As a young child I couldn’t understand why and many times I was worried for him as I knew he was not well but still insisted on selling. But now I am so proud of him as many SCGS girls remember him, and I am so proud to say I am the daughter of the SCGS mee pok uncle.”

KATHLYN ANG, ONE OF MR ANG BOON CHYE'S FIVE DAUGHTERS. KATHLYN GREW UP CLOSE TO EMERALD HILL AND SPENT COUNTLESS HOURS IN THE SCGS GROUNDS AFTER SCHOOL. SHE NOW WORKS FOR THE EMERALD HILL CONSERVATION ASSOCIATION.

“Kway teow?! Your order was kway teow?! Who orders kway teow from the mee pok man?!?”

A FORMER STUDENT EXPRESSING SHOCK AND HORROR AT HER FRIEND'S CHOICES

The fame of the SCGS mee pok attracted hordes of office workers and salesgirls from as far away as C K Tang's, further down Orchard Road. The school eventually had to ban non-SCGS students and staff from buying food from the canteen, simply because there were so many people coming in for mee pok. When the school moved to Dunearn Road in 1994, Mr Ang and his iconic noodle stall went along as well. One of his daughters, Kathlyn Ang, recalls that he always insisted on working, even during school holidays, worrying that SCGS girls would not have anything to eat otherwise. He also never took a single sick day.

After his passing in 2006, he was succeeded by his wife (who had also sold noodles in a separate stall, next to her husband). Today, her brother continues to operate the school's mee pok stall at Dunearn Road, making only minor tweaks to the chilli sauce recipe. There are friendly debates over whose chilli sauce is better, but SCGS girls still look forward to having a bowl of familiar mee pok if they ever return to the school. Even within Mr Ang's family, “mee pok days” are organised, with one of Mr Ang's daughters successfully replicating the original taste of Mr Ang's mee pok.

Generations of SCGS girls, as well as people who lived and worked in the Emerald Hill vicinity, continue to associate the school with the deceptively simple bowl of flat noodles with char siew, fishballs and sliced fishcake. Some still fervently declare it the best mee pok in Singapore. The Mee Pok Man lives on through the countless bowls of noodles that continue to be served at Dunearn Road, and the “tock tock” sounds that can be heard at the Food Gallery in the National Museum, recreated by Mr Ang himself.

On the whole, it's been very pleasant and comfortable working here. I know the staff and students well, and what matters is being happy. [...] I will sell noodles here at SCGS until my last breath, until I really am too weak to work.”

MR ANG BOON CHYE, WHEN INTERVIEWED IN 1999 ABOUT HIS TIME IN SCGS.

The school and Alumni periodically organise “Mee Pok Days”, bringing old girls back to the canteen for bowls of their beloved mee pok. (Images: Facebook)



Top: Mr Ang's mother, Mdm Ng Tang Keow (also known as “Ah Sim”), still returned to help out at the mee pok stall, even after she had retired. She is pictured here in a photograph from 1986. (Image: SCGS)

Bottom: Illustration by Melissa Tan



8. Spaces Around the School

THE RED BRICKS

A small red brick wall and landing sit near the Lee Kong Chian block, at the top of a driveway from the Cairnhill Road entrance. The slope was often the last leg of a PE run, and girls could only stop once they'd touched the red bricks - a welcome sight for many a sweaty student. The staircase and landing, almost a mini-amphitheatre, were a popular spot to rehearse plays or poetry recitals, or to have a quieter recess away from the canteen.



Girls in foreground sitting on a step, with other girls in background doing work on the stone table and stools in front of the red brick wall (Image: SCGS)



Present-day photo of the same step and red bricks (Image: Keep 37 Emerald Hill team)



Girls performing in front of red bricks (Image: SCGS)

CABBAGE PATCH

The school field was an integral part of school life. Throughout the school's history at Emerald Hill, it was used for all manner of celebrations and special occasions, including Games Day (the precursor to Sports Day), National Day celebrations, school anniversaries, annual class photo-taking and prize-giving ceremonies. And while it provided an obvious open ground for students to

play on during recess, many recall the strict instructions to remain off the field, which was nicknamed the "cabbage patch" because of its often half-barren state. It didn't stop girls from playing catching on it though. With an office overlooking the field from the Primary School block, Principal Miss Rosalind Heng could often be heard shouting out the window, "Girls! Get off the grass!"



Top: The school field was used for special occasions, such as the school's 70th anniversary celebrations in 1969. Because the field was often partially bald, its day-to-day use was eventually minimised. Secondary school girls didn't stand on the field for flag-raising; instead they gathered in the small courtyard outside the Song Ong Siang block. (Images: SPH, SCGS)



Bottom: Photographs from the 1950s show Games Day on the field. (Images: SCGS)

Since the field was (technically) out of bounds, girls made use of the areas around it when they needed room to play. Zero point, circle-circle, five stones and hop scotch were common sights around the canteen and Primary School block at recess time. When the school bell rang to signal the end of recess, a collective shriek from girls dashing back to their classes could also be heard.

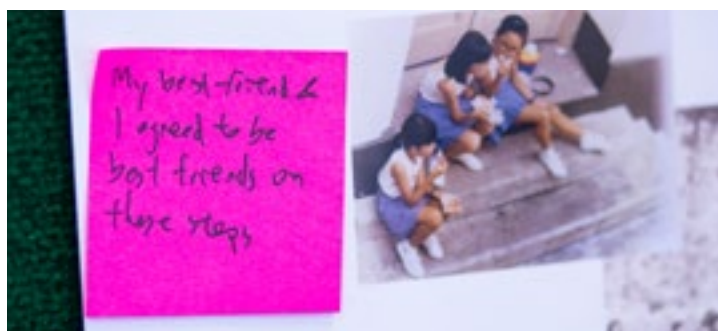
Right: The dangers of traipsing across the school field, as illustrated by Li Cheng Heng.

Below: Primary School girls made ample use of the spaces around the field and canteen at recess time. (Images: SCGS)



STEPS

A small flight of steps outside the Primary School block, facing the ECA block, was a popular spot for girls to gather - a waiting area before or after school, a place to eat during recess if the canteen was too crowded, and most importantly a spot where friendships were both forged and lost.



(Images: SCGS, Keep 37 Emerald Hill team)

BASKETBALL COURT

On the other side of the Primary School block facing Cairnhill Road - today a basketball court and playground - used to be another semi-grassy patch with many mangosteen trees, flowering shrubs and a well. Some accounts indicate that the well was built by the Japanese when the school was taken over by troops during World War II.



Undated photographs show the well in the field facing Cairnhill Road. The well remained something of a mystery to SCGS girls over the years; it was eventually removed when the field made way for a basketball court. (Images: SCGS)

“The well was covered up, of course, lest anyone should fall in, but that did not deter those who persisted in peeking through to determine what could lie in its inky recesses.”

MRS FLORENCE PHUAH



Top: Miss Rosalind Heng guarding the netball pole with her arms akimbo, as the teachers and students battle it out over a game of netball.

Bottom: Upper secondary basketball girls taking their photo at the basketball court for the school's annual magazine. (Images: SCGS)



“Other than the canteen and the classroom, the basketball court was the place where my friends and I bonded, not over food or idle chatter, but over games and games of basketball. We have these few sites to thank for the solidifying of our friendship. How many footsteps have we made, footsteps that formed intricate patterns from the sheer number of games we had, running up, down and around the court? If I could plot out the lineage of my friendship with these very people, it would start on Emerald Hill and its basketball court – a complex, spirited and beautiful pattern of footprints, invisible but reified, that define the cartographic journey of friendship, where little feet grew steadily to big feet, in a dance of basketball games, PE lessons and 1.6 kilometer runs.”

FROM “GOING BACK TO EMERALD HILL”,
BY CHEW YI WEI

In addition to being used for netball, the basketball court doubled as the track for the annual National Physical Fitness Award (NAPFA) test. Former students remember having to run multiple rounds of the court for their 1.6km or 2.4km runs. It was easy to lose count, so every runner had a buddy who would stack rubber bands on her wrist, removing one band for every round of the court run.

Like other parts of the school, the basketball court also came with its ghost stories. A commonly spread urban legend in Primary school was that you could hear a lady screaming and crying if you stood at a particular point on the court and knocked three times on the ground. At another spot closer to the principal’s house, ghosts were rumoured to reach out and grab your legs as you walked past.



Left: Girls practising their skipping routine at the basketball court, with the landscape of Cairnhill Road in the background which features the now defunct shopping mall, Cairnhill Place. Over the 70 years that SCGS was at Emerald Hill, it observed numerous changes to its neighbourhood. (Image: SCGS)

9. Campus Greenery

Befitting of its early days as plantation land, the school premises had a remarkable amount of greenery, though most of it has been lost with time. Oral accounts and photographs show that a great diversity of trees thrived all around the campus, until they had to make way for new buildings and facilities, collapsed in storms or fell victim to termites.



Top to Bottom (Images: SCGS)

A photograph of the school from the 1980s shows the Cairnhill Road side (save for the basketball court) was still dotted with large trees.

Girls lining the steps that connected the driveway to what is now the basketball court. A wooden trellis that supported a petrea plant can be seen in the top left corner.



“There were also many fruit trees in Cairnhill field. There were jambu trees, chiku trees, mangosteen trees, rambutan trees. We used to pick the fruits from the gravel, wash them, and eat them. We would enjoy ourselves swinging on the swings and the see-saw round the field. A butterfruit tree on the other hand was found in Emerald Hill field... pupils ate the fruit and realised they tasted like butter. There were trees at the edge of Emerald Hill Road, tall with overhanging branches and boughs. Pupils swung on them as though they were Tarzans. All these were gone [later]. They were cut off. The Flame of the Forest stood tall and beautiful in Emerald Hill Road field but this too was soon taken away. It was so sad to see all these trees cut down.”

MRS J.Q. FOK, A FORMER STUDENT AND LONG-SERVING TEACHER, REMEMBERS THE GREENERY WITHIN THE SCHOOL

A majestic Traveller's Palm grew between the Lee Kong Chian and Song Ong Siang blocks, forming a striking backdrop for the school field. An undated black and white photograph shows the tall palm extending beyond the height of the school wall. Miss Tan Sock Kern, former Principal of SCGS, is shown at a prize-giving ceremony in the late 1970s with the palm behind her. The Traveller's Palm, a non-native species introduced to Singapore only in the 1900s, is still used as an emblem of Raffles Hotel today. Students of the late 1980s and early 1990s do not recall the palm still standing at the time they were in school.



(Images: SCGS)



Another iconic tree stood between the Principal's House and the ECA block. Large and shady, girls remember doing warm-ups for PE or House Practice under the tree, before being made to run laps around the nearby basketball court. A stone ring around the base of the tree, as well as benches laid out around it, provided spaces for students to gather to read or do homework.



*Unfortunately the tree no longer stands today.
(Images: SCGS, Keep 37 Emerald Hill team)*

Just beside the Principal's house was an enormous and reputedly haunted Waringin tree, around which small offerings were sometimes spotted. In December 1978, the tree collapsed in a thunderstorm, though fortunately it fell towards the basketball court and did not cause any damage to the house.

When Cairnhill Road was being widened to ease traffic in the 1980s, a row of rubber trees within the school premises had to be cut down. Before that, many girls used to play with the rubber seeds - one popular "game" involved rubbing fallen rubber seeds on the tarred car park floor as vigorously as possible, then burning an unsuspecting friend by pressing the seed against her skin.



In this undated photo, girls line up outside the Principal's House to greet the Principal. This was probably a festive occasion given that the girls are all wearing their own dresses and not school uniforms - every year to celebrate Chinese New Year, for instance, students could wear their new clothes to school. The tall Waringin tree, which collapsed in the late 1970s, is seen just outside the house. (Image: SCGS)



The rubber seed game, as illustrated by Melissa Tan

"The driveway curved upwards towards the school, with thick bamboo on the left and the spreading old raintree in the mainschool compound on the right, its roots bursting out of the tarred edges. The orange blossom tree which grew next to the raintree was constantly in bloom, its bunches of white flowers producing an intoxicating fragrance that wafted throughout the school. There was a well in the middle of the compound, covered by huge slabs of granite... A variety of flowers thrived here too - marigolds, cannas, honeysuckle and daisies. Diagonally opposite the raintree was our famous Waringin tree growing on a mound, its branches touching the roof of the Principal's Quarters. This was one of the coolest spots in the school. There was always a mysterious air about this part of the school, because of the shadowy quiet, and a narrow flight of moss-grown steps that led further down to the bungalow... As the driveway turned, you could see a long flight of stone steps linking the drive to the garden-compound below. There were more flowering plants here, with broad swathes of grass on both sides. You walked under a wooden trellis, supporting the untidy petrea plant, to get to the flight of steps. We students loved the petrea and would pick up the fallen purplish-blue flowers with their petals like mini helicopter rotors, and spin them, watching them land gracefully."

MRS FLORENCE PHUAH

10. The Jewel of Emerald Hill

One of the most unique gifts the school has received is a song, personally written by Rudy Mosbergen, former Principal of Swiss Cottage Secondary School. In today's terms, he would be described as a multi-hyphenate: a hockey Olympian (he represented Singapore at the 1956 Melbourne Games), dedicated coach, published author and avid musician. He was also appointed the founding principal of Raffles Junior College in 1982.

Titled 'The Jewel of Emerald Hill', Mosbergen's song was gifted to the school in the late 1980s or early 1990s. All students learned to sing it, and it was often sung en masse at school-wide events like National Day. It was sung, poignantly, on the morning of 4 July 1994, at the last school assembly conducted at Emerald Hill before the move to Dunearn Road. Though no longer at Emerald Hill, SCGS girls are still taught to sing the song as part of their music curriculum today.

"The singing of 'The Jewel of Emerald Hill' marked the end of one era for SCGS and the beginning of a new one."

EVELYN ANG, REMINISCING SCGS' MOVE FROM EMERALD HILL TO DUNEARN ROAD

THE JEWEL OF EMERALD HILL

Nestling on a hill, sparking like a gem
You're the school so dear to me
You're the sheer delight, in the noon daylight
Bustling with activity

Looking so demure, graceful yet secure
You are the school, that's meant for me
Where I spent the best years of my life

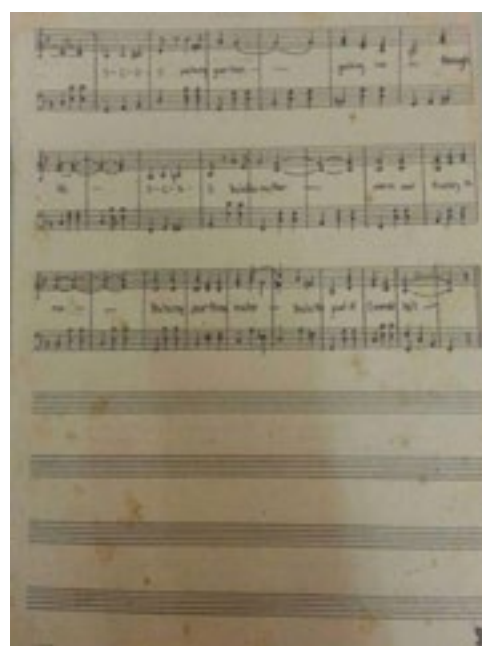
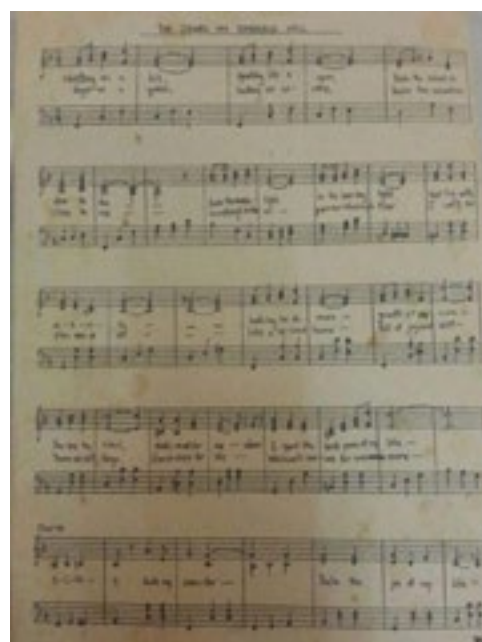
S-C-G-S you're my mentor
You're the joy of my life

S-C-G-S you're my guardian
Guiding me on through life

S-C-G-S you're like Mother
Warm and friendly to me
You're my dear Alma Mater
You're the jewel of Emerald Hill

Regal as a Queen, looking so serene
You're the school so close to me
Something's in the air, gives our school much flair
I can't explain it at all

Like a second home, full of joy and zest
There we will forge, friendships for life
Which will endure forever more



Original score of 'The Jewel of Emerald Hill'.
(Image: SCGS)

Dance

Dance was first introduced in SCGS by Mrs Geake, who introduced the folk dance Sellenger's Round and the May Pole Dance to the school in the late 1920s. These would continue to be taught in P.E. lessons until the 1980s. When Miss Tan Sock Kern took over as principal in 1956, she initiated dance classes for students, introducing them to a variety of other English, Scottish, Welsh and ethnic dances. Photographs from the 1950s and 60s commonly show students dancing and putting up performances in the Primary School hall and on the school field.

Dance in SCGS was elevated when Mrs Jean Chan joined the school in 1970. Apart from teaching English and English Literature, she was initially put in charge of the school's Literary, Debating and Drama Society (LDDS). Having herself been a leading student at Maudrene's School of Dance, Mrs Chan began to offer dance as part of the LDDS activities. Her first entry in the Singapore Youth Festival Music and Dance Presentations won a Certificate of Merit - then the highest award.



Top: News coverage of Miss Jean Chan and SCGS' dance heritage in 1983. (Image: SCGS)

Left: Girls performing the Maypole dance. The dance continues to be performed by dancers today, most recently at the school's Family Day concert in celebration of SCGS' 120th Anniversary. (Image: SCGS)

“We danced wherever there was space in the old school - in the primary school hall, in Shaw Hall, in the gymnasium and on the field. I remember trying to find reasons to cross the link bridge from the primary school into the (air-conditioned) library to cool down. There was also a tailor who lived across from the school on Emerald Hill, and a couple of times I would walk there with Mrs Chan to be measured for a new costume. We would rehearse for hours at a time, sometimes six days a week during school holidays when there was a concert coming up. But it was always fun, and to this day some of my best friends were friends I danced with all through school.”

A FORMER SCGS GIRL REMEMBERS HER DANCING DAYS WITH THE SCHOOL



In response to student enthusiasm, and in recognition of Mrs Chan's efforts and achievements, dance was subsequently established as a separate extra-curricular activity in 1974. Parquet flooring, barres and full-length mirrors were added to the Primary School hall in the early 1980s, converting it into a dance studio (when not also used for assembly, P.E., and all types of other extra-curricular activities.) The dance group continued to excel in Youth Festivals, and staged public concerts that were extremely well-received. At the time, not all schools had dance as an ECA, and SCGS set itself apart with its rigour and professionalism. The group travelled overseas on goodwill trips, to participate in competitions and to perform, with Mrs Chan and other teachers bravely bringing dozens of girls on weeks-long trips to the United States and Canada, the UK, Japan, and Australia.

In 1995, facilitated by its independent status, SCGS made full use of its new dance studios in Dunearn Road by launching Royal Academy of Dancing Ballet Classes as well as Tap Dance as extra-curricular programmes, in addition to the regular Dance Group. Concurrently, dance was incorporated into the students' regular P.E. classes. Mrs Jean Chan continues to oversee the school's dance programme today.



Top: Ms Jean Chan is pictured helping girls fine-tune their extensions in the Primary School hall.

Bottom: Mr Donato Ferrer - a professional Singapore Dance Theatre ballet dancer who would later join the school as a full-time dance teacher - performing alongside SCGS dancers.

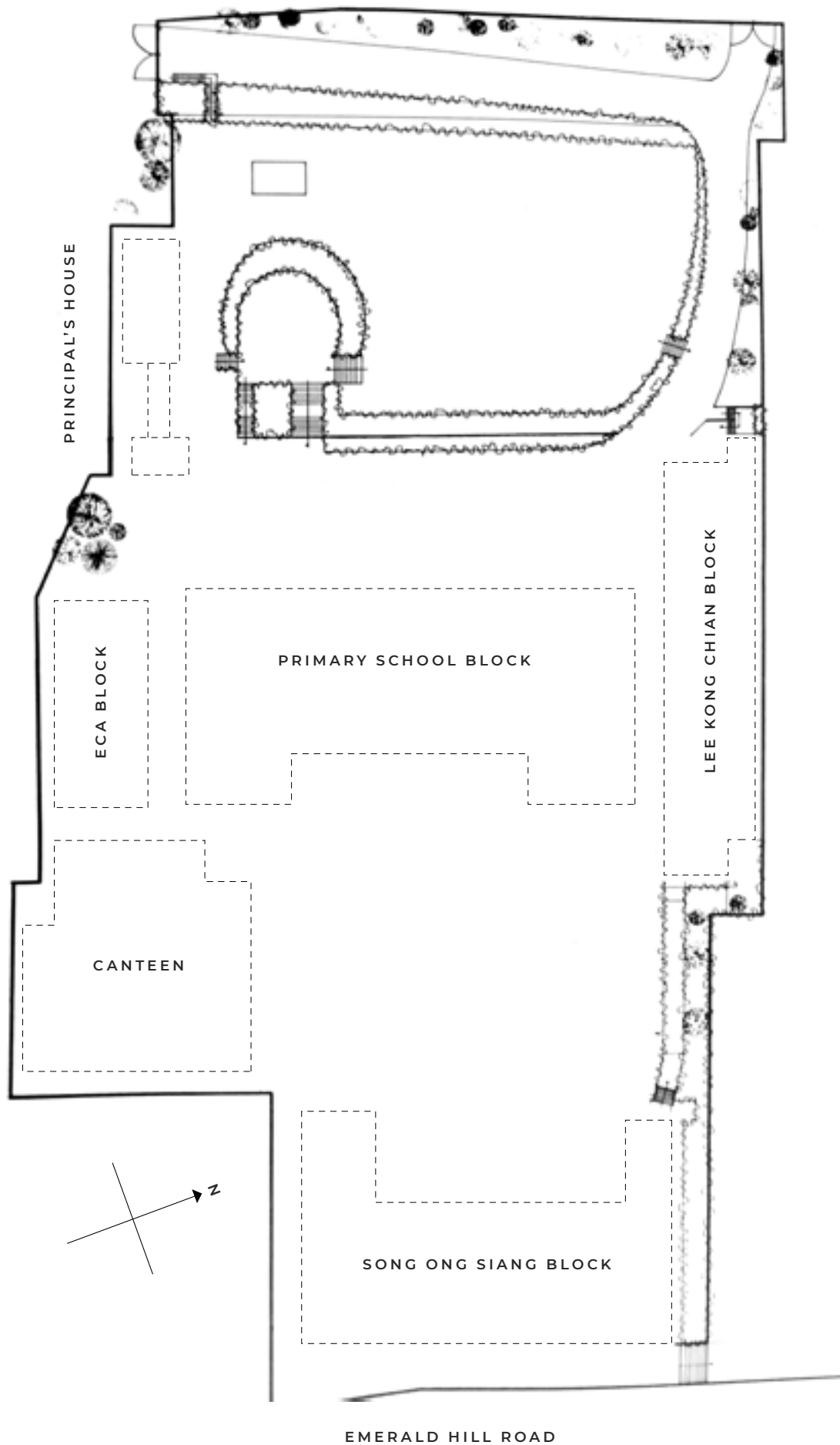
(Images: SCGS)

Part 2b

Significance of Emerald Hill: Architectural

Overview

Based on archival research and site observations, this section takes an in-depth look at the architectural character and features of four buildings within the 37 Emerald Hill site - the Primary School Block, Principal's House, Song Ong Siang Block and Lee Kong Chian Block. The last of the school buildings to be added to the site, the canteen and ECA block are less notable from an architectural angle, and are instead written about in more detail in Section 1: Historical & Social Significance.



1. Primary School Block

1925

The Primary School Block was the first building to be developed on the site of 37 Emerald Hill. The approximately one-hectare site, located at the heart of present day Orchard Road, was considered a little out of town at that time.

Designed by E.C. Seah¹² from local firm S.Y. Wong and Co. and approved by the P.W.D. and the Municipality, the building was completed in 1925 at a cost of \$60,000. The same year, the school vacated its old compound at Hill Street and relocated to this site.

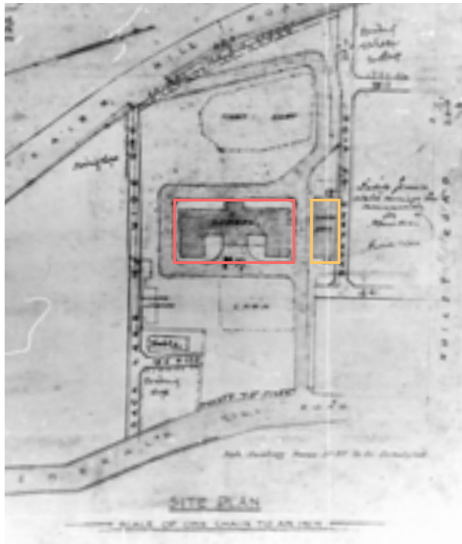
A reinforced concrete structure, the new school had a built-up area of approximately 10,319 square feet, consisting of classrooms, an assembly hall and a principal's office. There was also a separate stand-alone tiffin shed to the side of the main building.

The new building's design was considered as "being all that could be desired in point of space, lighting, and ventilation."¹³ Clearly, the new school environment was a vast improvement from the "trying conditions"¹⁴ at the Hill Street site.

¹² The full name of E.C. Seah was Seah Eng Choe. He was the fourth son of Seah Liang Seah and grandson of Seah Eu Chin, an eminent Teochew merchant in early colonial Singapore. Refer to page 78 for more information on Seah Eng Choe.

¹³ "Chinese Girls' School: A New Building in Cairn Hill Road." *The Straits Times* 8 Feb. 1926: Page 11. Print.

¹⁴ "Singapore Chinese Girls' School Opened by Lady Guillemard." *The Singapore Free Press and Mercantile Advertiser* 10 Feb. 1926: Page 94. Print.



Top: Site plan

- ▭ Primary School Block
- ▭ Tiffin Shed

Bottom: A group photo taken at the lawn fronting the Emerald Hill façade.

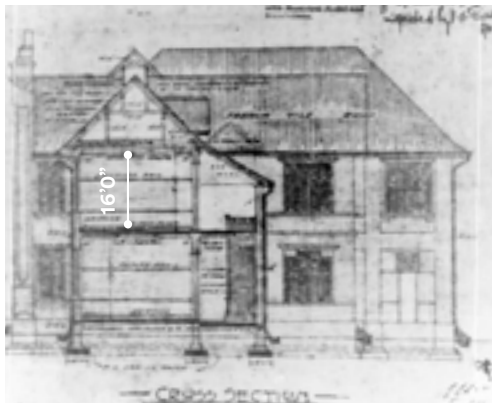


EARLY MODERN WITH ARTS AND CRAFTS AND ART DECO INFLUENCES

The building can be characterized as being Early Modern, with influences of the Arts and Craft and Art Deco styles. The former can be seen in the dominant steep pitched roof with flared eaves, tectonic façade elements and honest expression of building materials. The latter is expressed in the form of highly stylized detailing and geometric motifs such as the reed bunch ornaments, window architraves and sills, and column capitals.

The overall building form is defined by a series of volumetric protrusions and recesses. This helps break the monotony of an otherwise long and straight façade. There is a clear hierarchy in the arrangement of building form, where important spaces such as the entrance hall and board room were marked by more pronounced projections and elaborate ornamentations. The overall symmetry of the façade gives it a sense of order.

Like many early modern buildings modelled after Western styles, tropical architectural features were incorporated to adapt to local climate. These features included deep roof eaves, precast concrete ventilation blocks and louvered windows.



A MODERN AND FUNCTIONAL INTERIOR SUITED FOR LEARNING

With the 16 feet (4.87m) floor-to-ceiling height and large window openings, an abundance of natural light and ventilation filled the interior, thereby creating a conducive environment for learning.

The interior was mostly devoid of ornamentation, apart from skirtings and picture rails that ran along the perimeter of classrooms and corridors. The finishes palette was a restrained one, with plastered walls, ceramic tiled floors and asbestos ceiling. More expensive finishes such as timber flooring were only used in key spaces like the assembly hall.

Such design approach was emblematic of a modernist ethos that emphasized function, health and hygiene with minimal excesses. The modest interior finishes also reflected the exercise of design prudence, appropriate in a context where the building funds were largely contributed by the local community.

Top: The cross section indicated high floor-to-ceiling interior spaces largely devoid of ornamentation.

Bottom: An abundance of natural light and ventilation filled the interior.





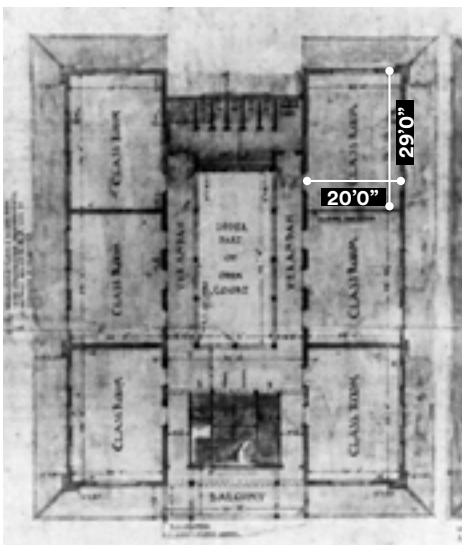
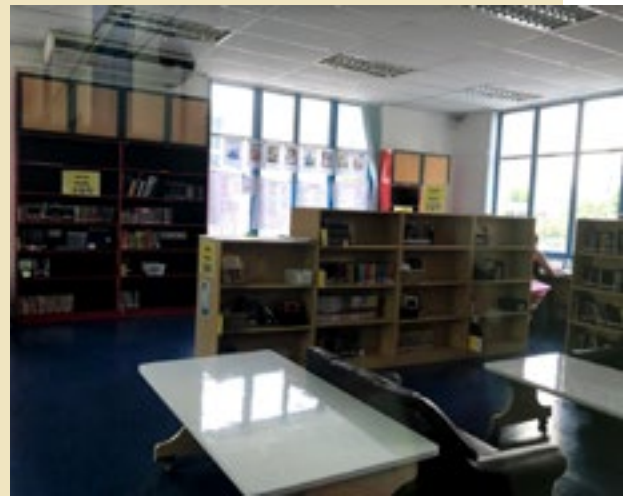
Left: The window toplights were probably boarded up when the internal ceilings were lowered to suit air-conditioning needs.

Bottom: The volume of the interior space becomes compressed with the lowered ceiling.

AIR CONDITIONING

With subsequent installation of air-conditioning and the need to optimize energy consumption, ceiling levels were lowered and volume of the interior spaces became reduced. Consequently, the window toplights were boarded up since the lowered ceiling is misaligned with the original top of window level. The original lofty interior space became compressed and visually cluttered.

This conflict between window heights and mechanical services is common in old buildings originally designed with natural ventilation in mind, but have since undergone change in functional requirements. A simple solution to this problem is to set back the ceiling pelmet from the window.



Top: Plan of the Anglo Chinese Primary School at Oldham Road, c. 1924. Its classroom size was similar to that of SCGS.

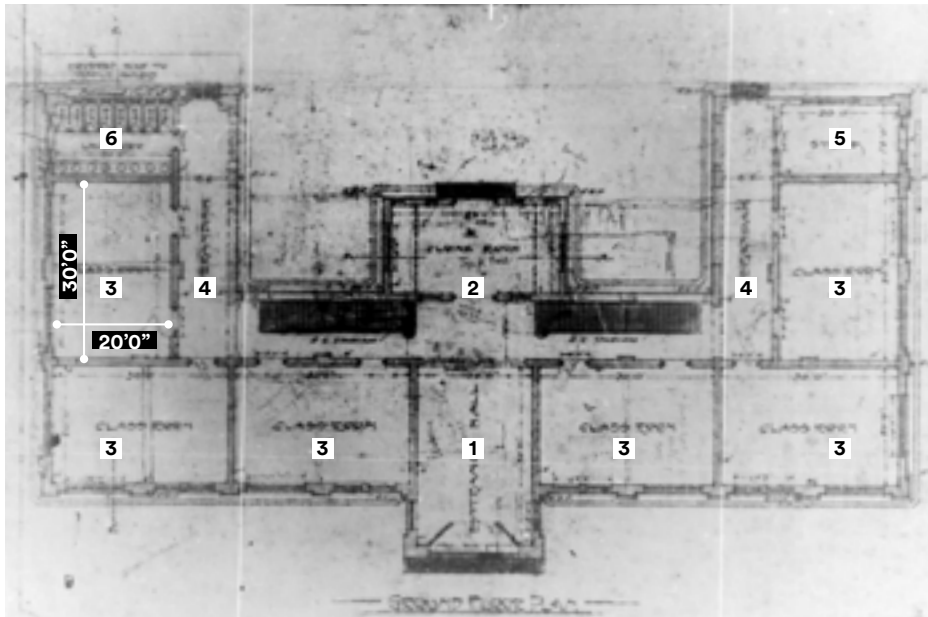
CLASSROOM SIZE

Each of the 10 classrooms was of a standard size measuring 30 feet long by 20 feet wide.¹⁵ This seemed to be a common standard for schools built at that time. School buildings contemporaneous with the SCGS Primary School Block, such as the Anglo Chinese Primary School at Oldham Road, also had classrooms of similar size and proportion.

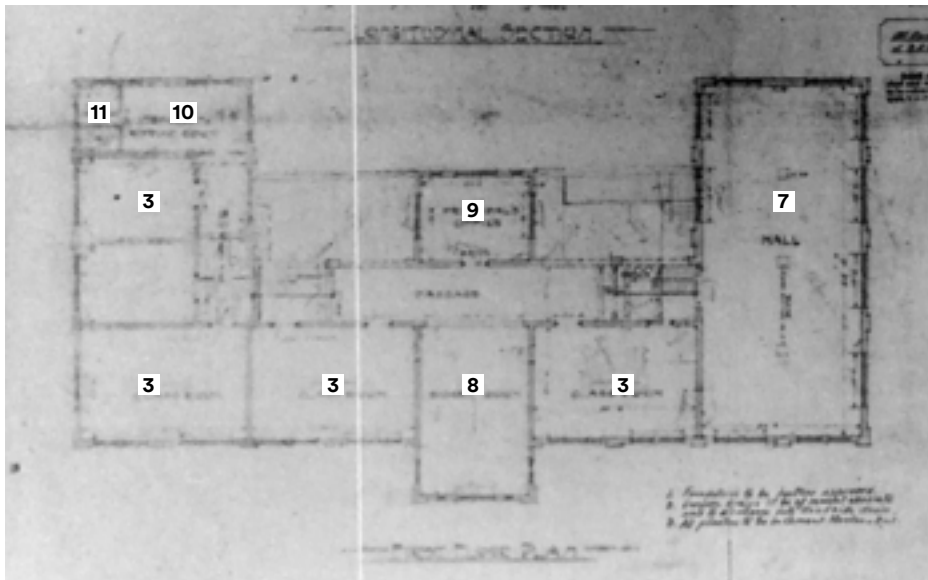
It was a good size both by past and present day standards. Based on the current Ministry of Education space standard of 1.5m² per student, the 600 sqft (55.7 m²) classroom room would be able to accommodate approximately 37 students.

When SCGS moved to its present Dunearn Road campus, the new primary school classrooms increased in size to 64.8m².

¹⁵ Building plans indicate 10 classrooms, but newspaper coverage and school publications list the number of classrooms as 12.



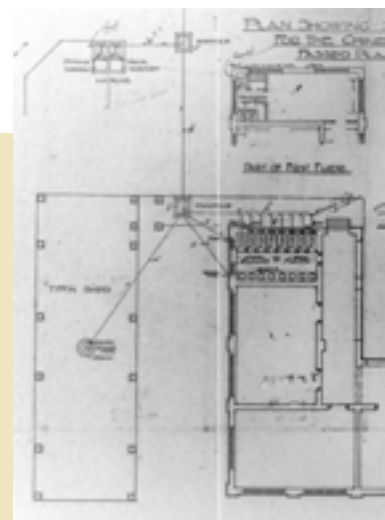
Ground floor plan
 1. Entrance Hall
 2. Cloak Room
 3. Classroom
 4. Verandah
 5. Store
 6. Lavatory



First floor plan
 7. Hall
 8. Board Room
 9. Principal's Office
 10. Teachers' Sitting Room
 11. Teachers' Lavatory

SANITARY FACILITIES

Within the Primary School Block, only lavatories for females were provided. These were located on the ground floor for female students' use. The teachers lavatory, which included a bath, was located on the upper floor within the teachers' sitting room. There was no provision of sanitary facilities for males within the building. Stand-alone latrines meant to serve male and female hawkers were separately located next to the Tiffin Shed.



Sanitary layout plans

FRONT FAÇADE - FACING CAIRNHILL ROAD

THE FRONT FAÇADE THAT BECAME RECOGNIZED AS THE BACK

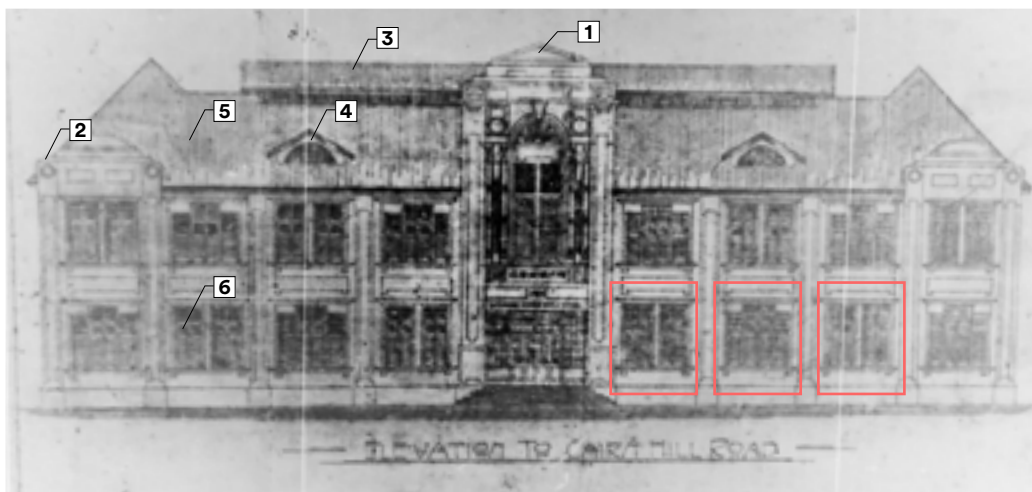
The Cairnhill Road façade was originally designed to be the front façade, marked by the portico leading into the entrance hall and the embossed school name above the doorway. However, it seems over the years many have come to recognize the Emerald Hill Road façade as the school's frontage instead. This inversion of the front and rear façades was due to the fact that pedestrians mostly accessed the site from the Emerald Hill side.

Despite the lack of archive photos of the Cairnhill Road façade, it is clear by comparing present day conditions with the archive drawings that significant features of this façade remain intact.

MODIFICATIONS AND CURRENT CONDITIONS

The entrance porch on the ground floor had mostly been modified. Along with the addition of a RC canopy for vehicular drop-off, the embossed characters bearing the school's name was lost. The grand steps leading into the entrance hall were also altered and replaced with planter boxes and dividing walls. Although most of the timber louvered windows were replaced with aluminum casement windows, the main timber frames remain largely intact.

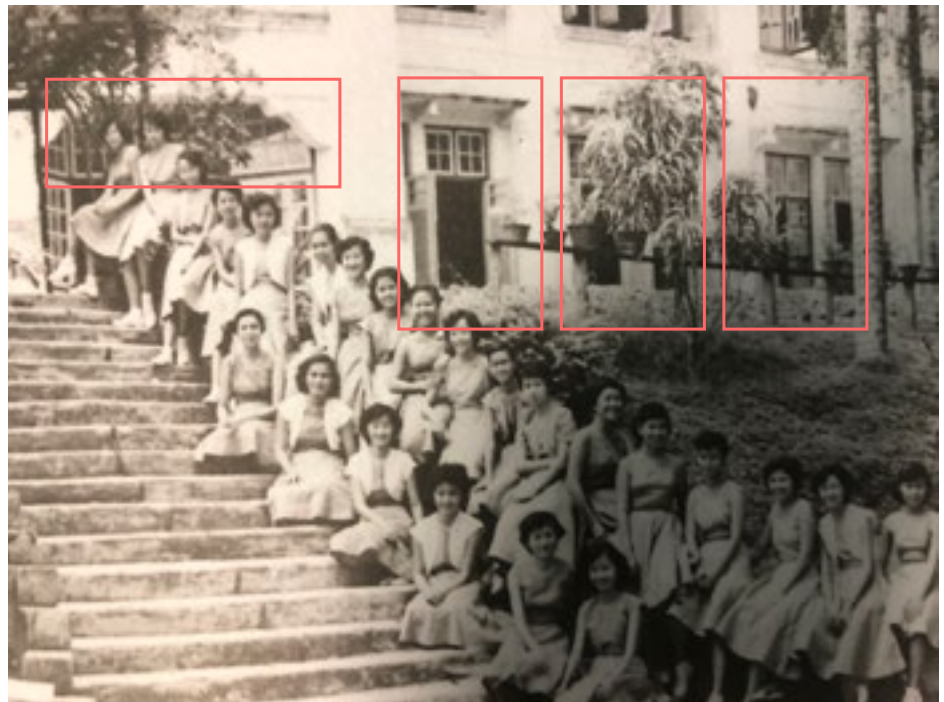
1. Portico with pediment, fanlight with keystone and architrave
2. Column capitals with geometric motifs
3. Jack roof
4. Dormer with timber framed fanlight
5. French terracotta tiles
6. Timber louvered window with toplight



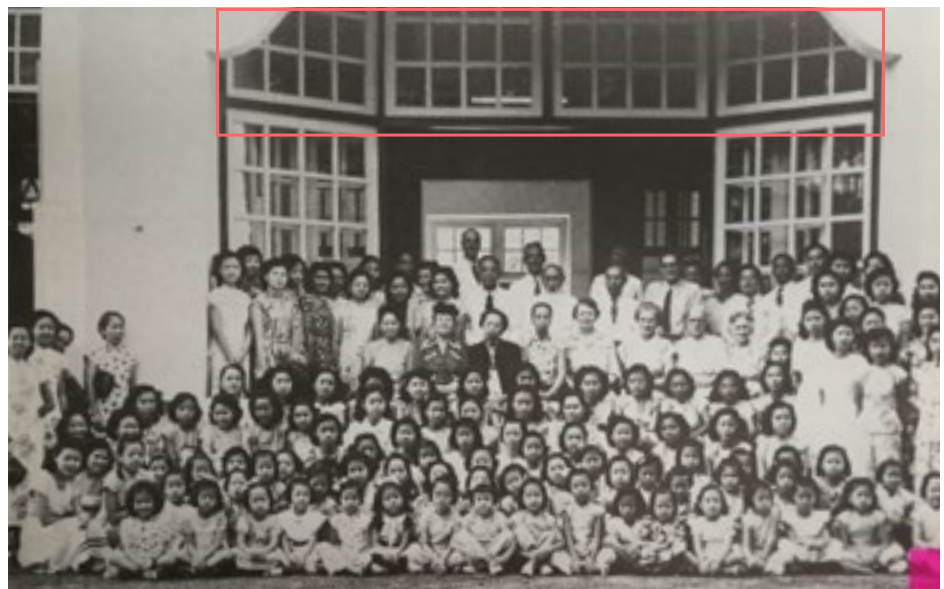
*Front façade facing
Cairnhill Road*

*Top: Present
Bottom: Building
plan*

*Note:
The Cairnhill Road
façade has 3 bays
of repetition on
each side, while the
Emerald Hill façade
only has 2.*



Group photograph, of school directors, staff and students, taken in front of the Cairnhill façade, c. 1950. It was mentioned in the caption, however, that this was taken at the back of the Primary School building.



This photograph showed the same entrance porch as the earlier photograph, but with more surrounding context. From this, it is evident both photographs were taken in front of the Cairnhill façade, which was supposed to be the front of the building.

CAIRNHILL ROAD FAÇADE THROUGH THE YEARS

THE ENIGMATIC FAÇADE

Unlike the Emerald Hill Road façade, which was frequently featured in its entirety, archive photos of the Cairnhill Road façade were mostly cropped and lacking in context. The Cairnhill Road façade thus became less distinguishable, so much so that it was often mislabeled and confused with other sites.

POSSIBLE POST-WAR MODIFICATIONS

A possible explanation for this inconsistent façade design could be that some damage happened during the war and the building had to be renovated and made good after the war. Original elements lost include the gridded timber doors, decorative corbel beams and embossed characters bearing the school's name.

Description Edited by NAS:	Group photograph of staff and students of Singapore Chinese Girls' School (SCGS) at its premises in Hill Street
Covering Date:	1900s
Media - Image No:	19960005080 - 0067
Negative No:	85.254/17
Photo Accession No:	58478
Conditions Governing Access:	Viewing permitted. Use and reproduction require written permission from copyright owner.
Credit Line:	Singapore Chinese Girls' School Collection, courtesy of National Archives of Singapore

Do you have more information on this record?



An archive image on National Archives Singapore wrongly labelled what should have been the Cairnhill Road façade as SCGS's former premise in Hill Street.



PRE-WAR

In this rare side view shot of the façade, the central portico with its large opening and decorative corbel beams are immediately identifiable.



1968

The decorative corbel beams were gone. The central portico had already been modified with an RC canopy added.



PRESENT

Current design of the central portico tallies with archive images dating from the post-war period.



c. 1925 - An archive image, likely taken during the pre-war period, showing the full extent of the Cairnhill Road façade, albeit limited to the ground storey. Perhaps due to a distorting effect on the image, the façade seems rather flat and its identifying feature i.e. the central portico is not distinct. This is likely why many of such straight-on photos of the Cairnhill Road façade are not quite distinguishable.

REAR FAÇADE - FACING EMERALD HILL ROAD

THE PROMINENT FAÇADE WITH AN EXTENSIVE FRONTAGE

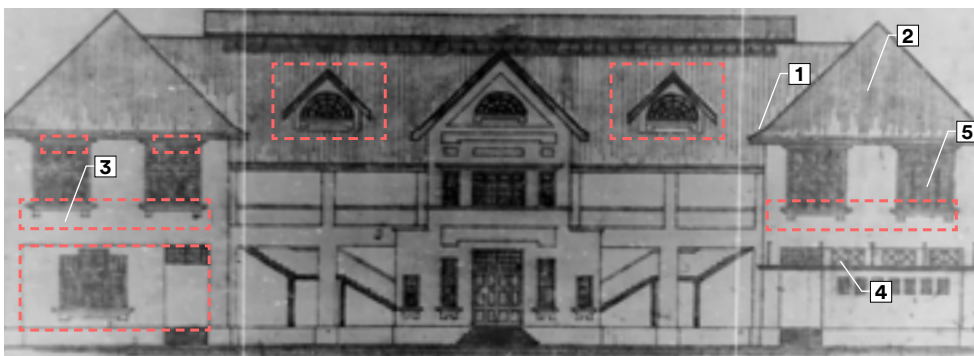
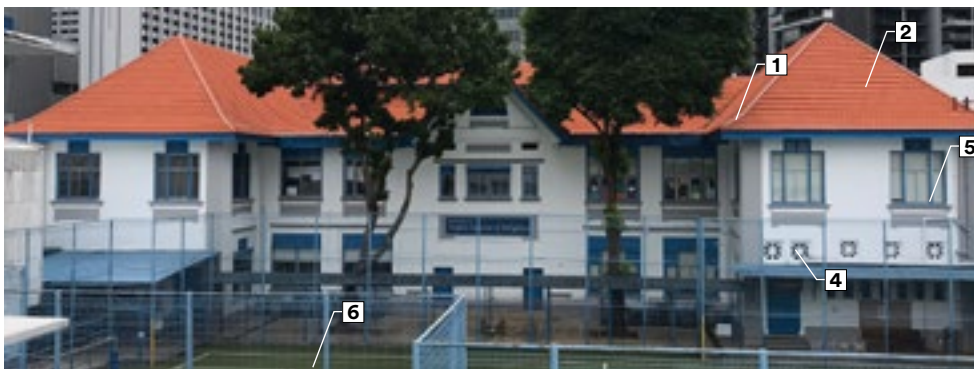
The Emerald Hill Road façade features prominently in many archive photos as the key backdrop for important school events such as Games Day and prize-giving ceremonies. Up until the Song Ong Siang Block was erected in 1956, this façade was fronted by a huge lawn that extended to Emerald Hill Road. The extensive frontage gave the site an institutional character that distinguished it from the domestic scale of terrace houses lining Emerald Hill Road.

MODIFICATIONS AND CURRENT CONDITIONS

The overall profile of this façade, with its steep pitched roof and flared eaves, remains intact. Although the French terracotta roof tiles (likely to be Marseille tiles) had been replaced, the tile profile remains the same as the original one. Other defining features such as the precast concrete ventilation blocks, decorative window sills and plaster mouldings appear to be in good condition.

Notable modifications include the bricked up doorway and window openings along the central bay, leaving only the ornamented window sills visible today. Similar to the Cairnhill Road façade, most of the timber louvered windows, which were still intact when the school moved from this site in 1994, had since been replaced with aluminum casement windows. The toplights are also boarded up. The full elevation of this façade is now partially obscured by two fully-grown trees and fencing around the tennis court.

1. Hipped roof with flared eaves
2. French terracotta tiles
3. Plaster mouldings
4. Precast concrete ventilation block
5. Timber louvered window with toplight and decorative sill



Top: ?
Bottom: Prize giving ceremony held at the lawn



Note: There seem to be discrepancies between the archive elevation and the original as-built condition of this façade. There could have been amendments to the design that were not documented in this drawing.

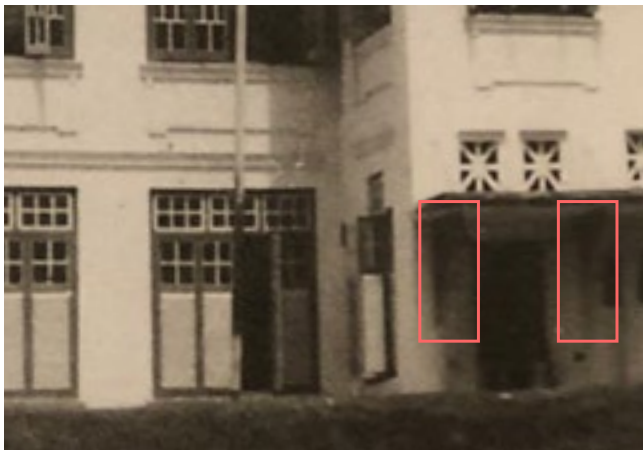
REAR FAÇADE - FACING EMERALD HILL ROAD

OTHER NOTABLE ARCHITECTURAL FEATURES

The blue, corrugated metal roof seen on the façade today is obviously a later addition. However, what appears to be unworthy in fact conceals an original architectural feature beneath. Comparison of archive photos with present-day photos shows that the corrugated metal roof was actually laid over an existing reinforced concrete canopy supported by lightweight steel trusses with geometric design, which are original features of the building.



An early photo of the Emerald Hill Road façade with original features intact



A series of photos, from past to present (right to left), showing the same geometric steel trusses that are still intact today.

SPOTLIGHT FEATURE: SEAH ENG CHOE



- 14 Feb 1884 Birth of Seah Eng Choe,
fourth son of Seah Liang Seah
- 1910 Graduated from Armstrong College, Newcastle-
on-Tyne with BSc in Civil Engineering
- 1916 Started his own business as a Civil Engineer,
Architect and Licensed Surveyor
- 1918 Practiced in partnership with WHC Le Cain,
under the name of Seah & Le Cain
- 1922 Partnership Seah & Le Cain was dissolved with
Seah declared a bankrupt
- 1923-24 Joined S.Y. Wong & Co.
- 1924 Designed SCGS Primary School Block
- 1930 Designed SCGS Principal's House
- 1931 Designed Loke Yew Building
- 20 July 1949 Death of Seah Eng Choe

Seah Eng Choe

E.C. SEAH

A MEMBER OF THE PROMINENT SEAH CLAN

The architect for the Primary School Block and Principal's House, as recorded in the municipality-approved plans, was E.C. Seah of S.Y. Wong & Co. The full name of E.C. Seah was found to be Seah Eng Choe. He was in fact the fourth son of Seah Liang Seah and grandson of Seah Eu Chin, an eminent Teochew merchant in early colonial Singapore.¹⁶

Seah Eng Choe was educated at Raffles Institution and went on to obtain a BSc in Civil Engineering from Armstrong College, Newcastle-on-Tyne in 1910. After a short stint serving as pupil to D Balfour & Son Consulting Engineers at Newcastle-on-Tyne (1912-15), he returned to Singapore in 1916 and started his own practice as a Civil Engineer, Architect and Licensed Surveyor.

1918 - 1922

PARTNERSHIP AT SEAH & LE CAIN

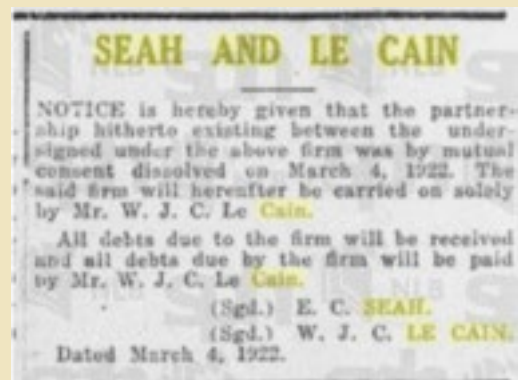
In 1918, WJC Le Cain joined E.C. Seah to form a partnership. Together, they practised under the name of Seah & Le Cain. One of the firm's first commissions was an open competition they won to construct three blocks of living quarters at Upper Cross Street. The partnership, however, was soon dissolved in 1922 when Seah declared bankruptcy.

1923

PRACTICE AT S. Y. WONG & CO.

After the dissolution of Seah & Le Cain, Seah joined local firm S.Y. Wong & Co. and continued practising. One of the key institutional projects he did in his early days at S.Y. Wong & Co. was the new campus for Singapore Chinese Girls' School at 37 Emerald Hill.

E.C. Seah's other prominent works include the Loke Yew Building, a row of 4-storey Art Deco shophouses with plaster ornamentation, geometrically shaped decorative elements and ornately carved capitals. Today, the building, standing at the junction of Armenian Street and Loke Yew Street, is gazetted as a conserved building.



The Loke Yew Building in distinctive Art Deco style was designed by E.C. Seah in 1931.¹⁷

¹⁶ Accounts of the Seah family lineage are well documented in Song Ong Siang's book "One Hundred Years' History of the Chinese in Singapore."

¹⁷ Gopalan, Jeremy. "More to Singapore's 'old buildings' than meets the eye." Today [Singapore] 19 Aug. 2013. Today Online. Web. 26 Dec. 2018.

2. Principal's House

1930

This house was built to serve as the principal's residence. Plan for its construction was discussed at the time when the Primary School Block completed. The school's board appealed to the local Chinese community for additional funds to be raised to support this project.

The first approved plan for this building was dated 10 January 1930. Comprising of a two-storey main house and a one-storey outhouse with an estimated floor area of 1,986 square feet, it was designed by the same architect who did the Primary School Block – E.C. Seah from S.Y. Wong & Co.

The house, though modest in scale, was designed to be self-sufficient – with a kitchen, servery, dining room, sitting room (British term for living room), two bedrooms with ensuite baths and also a boy's room. A covered way linked the main house to the porch and garage.

ARTS AND CRAFT STYLE WITH TROPICAL ADAPTATIONS

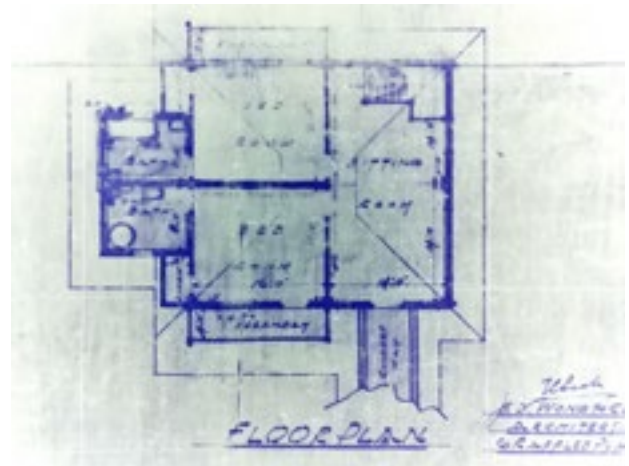
The house design exhibited elements of the Arts and Craft style, characterized by its dominant steep pitched roof with flared eaves. It shared a similar design language and tectonic expression as the Primary School Block, with few excesses. The architectural features incorporated were largely functional ones to make the house suited for tropical living. Such elements took the form of open verandahs, precast concrete vents and louvered windows, all of which served to provide relief from tropical heat and allow better cross ventilation. A significant portion of these architectural features remain intact today, allowing the original character of the house to be largely preserved.



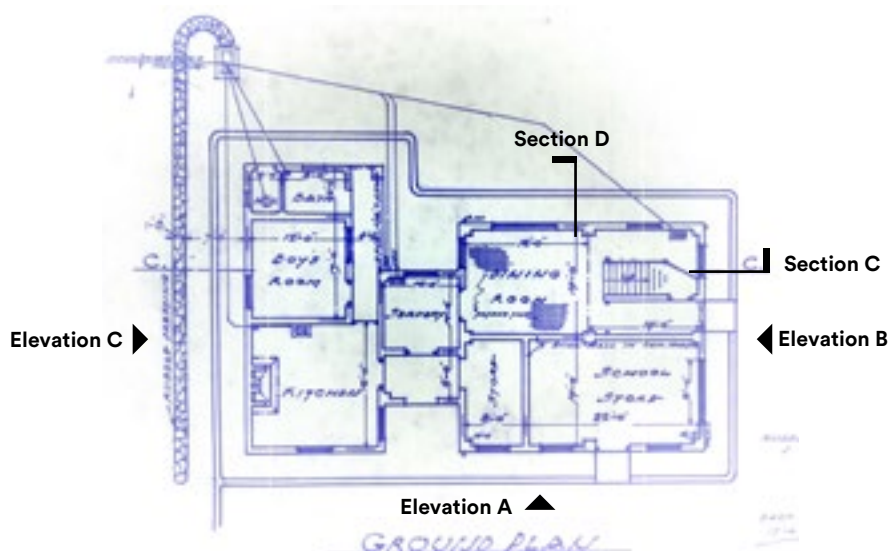
Location of the Principal's House within the Emerald Hill campus



Elements of the Arts and Craft style, characterized by dominant steep pitched roof with flared eaves, were clearly seen in the house design



Archive plans showing the various functions accommodated within the house



ELEVATION A - FACING PRIMARY SCHOOL BLOCK

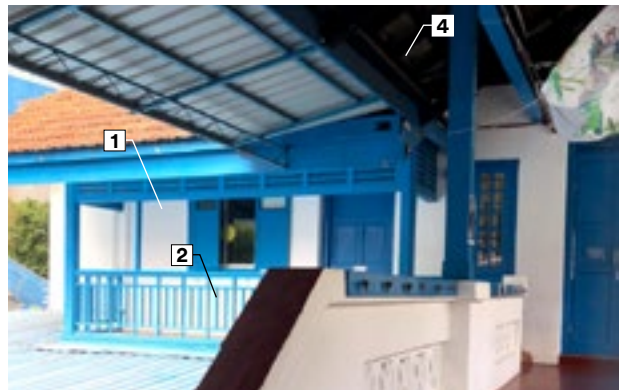
MODIFICATIONS AND CURRENT CONDITIONS

The house's defining architectural features are generally intact. Extant elements such as fixed timber louvres, timber balustrades, concrete vents and cast iron hopper appear to be of original profiles, although their base materials are obscured by latter day paint work.

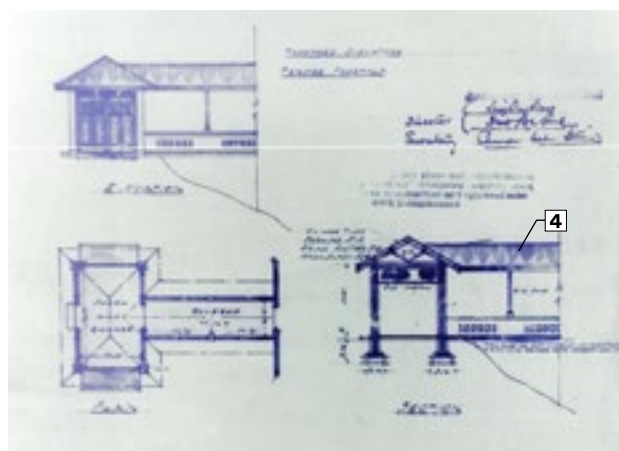
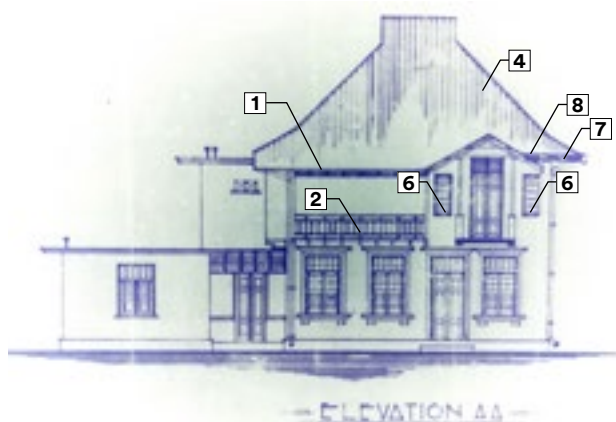
Notable modifications include ad hoc addition of corrugated metal roof sheets to enhance weather protection and boarding up of several window grids' glazing to keep out light.

Where there had been replacement of weathered building materials, such as the roof tiles, the profile of the new tiles follow that of the original, which were likely to be Marseille tiles (French tiles).

1. Fixed timber louvres
2. Timber balustrades
3. Parapet wall with precast concrete vents
4. Terracotta-tiled roof with exposed rafters
5. Timber paneled door with top louvres
6. Timber window with grid glazing
7. Cast iron hopper
8. Fascia board



Present



Archive

ELEVATION B - FACING BASKETBALL COURT

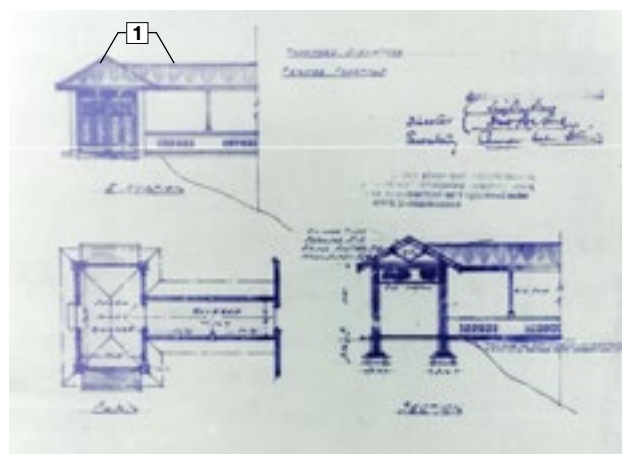
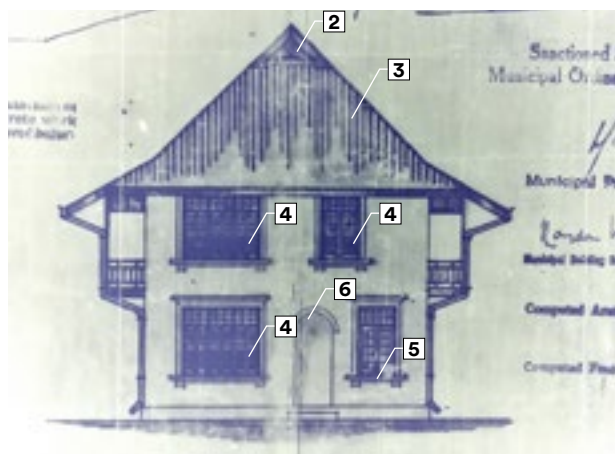
MODIFICATIONS AND CURRENT CONDITIONS

The most prominent feature of this façade is the hipped gable roof with its roof vent. Although the full elevation is now masked by ad hoc additions such as the swimming pool and vertical slat fence, the original roof pitch profile can still be clearly read from a distance. Several of the original louvred windows were replaced with aluminum casement windows, but the main timber frames and toplights largely remain intact. This makes it easier to reinstate the original window design without damaging the substrate in an intrusive manner.

1. Porch and garage with covered way
2. Hipped gable roof with roof vent
3. French terracotta tiles
4. Timber louvred window with toplight
5. Timber window with grid glazing and toplight (Staircase)
6. Timber door with fanlight and decorative molding



Present



Archive

ELEVATION C - FACING EMERALD LINK

MODIFICATIONS AND CURRENT CONDITIONS

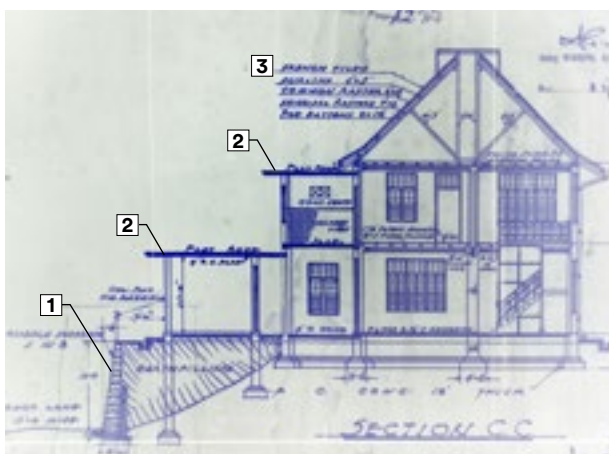
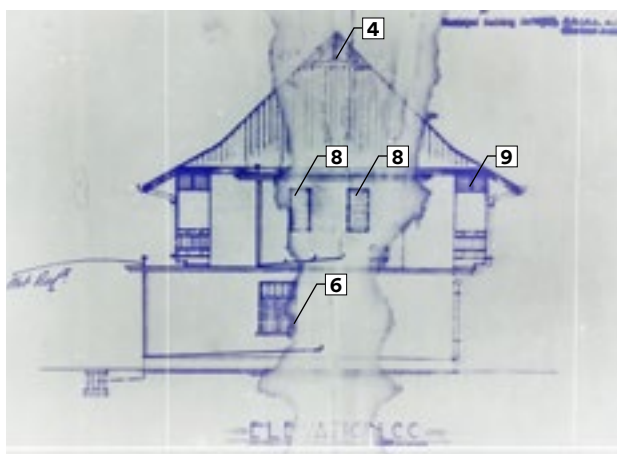
This is the rear façade of the house. Compared to the other façades, the rear façade was designed to be much plainer, expressing the utilitarian nature of the functions housed within. The hierarchy of spaces within the house were also expressed through different heights of the roofs, with the two lower RC flat roofs stepped down from the main hipped gable roof.

It seems there had been no major alteration to this façade, apart from the boarding up of window toplights. Remnants of the original earth-retaining rubble wall can still be seen on site today.

1. Rubble wall
2. RC flat roof with overhang
3. French terracotta tiles
4. Roof vent
5. Precast concrete vents (WC)
6. Timber louvred window with toplight (Boy's Room)
7. Timber louvred window with toplight (Kitchen)
8. Timber window with grid glazing (Bed Room)
9. Fixed timber louvres (Verandah)



Present



Archive

ELEVATION D - FACING CAIRNHILL ROAD

MODIFICATIONS AND CURRENT CONDITIONS

This façade is visible from Cairnhill Road. A defining feature of this façade is the projecting verandah, which is supported by concrete corbels with decorative mouldings.

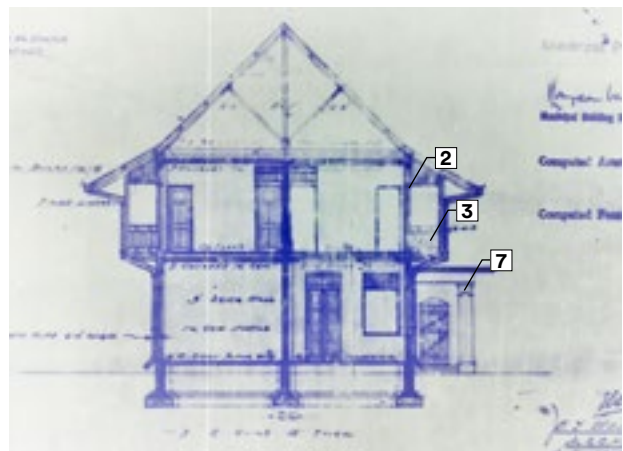
The external staircase appears to have been added later to provide direct access from the ground level to the upper floor verandah. The staircase is independently supported by steel columns and beams, making it possible to demolish it and restore the original façade without adversely affecting the original building structure.

Elevation drawing of this façade was not documented in the archives. Some architectural elements on this façade can be identified on Section D-D.

1. Projecting verandah
2. Fixed timber louvres
3. Timber balustrades
4. Concrete corbel with decorative mouldings
5. Timber paneled door with top louvres
6. Timber louvred window with toplight
7. Concrete column with moulding
8. Precast concrete vents (WC/ Bath)



Present



Archive

3. Song Ong Siang Block

1956

The Song Ong Siang Block was completed in 1956 to cater to an expanding school population. Its largely unadorned façade, accentuated by horizontal bands of reinforced concrete overhangs, was typical of a modernist aesthetic that was clearly taking shape in Singapore post-war architecture.

The period of rapid industrialization following the post-war years brought about new possibilities in industrial materials and construction techniques, which further proliferated the modernist principle of form follows function. The Song Ong Siang Block is a humble example that showcases several of these modernist architectural features.



STEEL FRAMED WINDOWS

Steel windows with their slender frame profiles became increasingly common in the 1950s in Singapore. The most well known brand at that time was Crittall windows of British origin. Many major buildings in Singapore then were installed with Crittall windows as a mark of quality.

Similar steel framed windows were used on the façades of the Song Ong Siang Block, albeit they were likely to be of more economical source and not the Crittall brand. The relatively large window to wall ratio and slender frames meant maximum light and ventilation could enter the classroom interiors.



Emerald Hill Road façade: The original steel windows appear to be intact.



Inner façade: Original steel windows have been replaced with aluminum casement windows.



WINDOW TYPES

Different window types were designed to control the extent of light, wind and rain penetration. Functional requirements clearly informed the design and location of each window type. A close examination of archive and current photos reveals two predominant window types that define the Song Ong Siang Block.

- Type 1
- Type 2



Inner façade – Past

TYPE 1

This window type can be found along the front façade facing Emerald Hill Road as well as on the 2nd storey of the inner façade, although the latter has since been modified.

These external windows directly regulate the exterior and interior environments. As a response to tropical weather, the window design had (A) ventilation louvers above and (B) bottom-hung window below, which restricted rain entry without compromising air circulation. Most of these original windows appear to remain in good conditions today.



Emerald Hill Road façade – Present



Present day condition of original steel windows on the front façade



Archive photo showing a typical secondary level classroom



▭ Type 2
▭ Modified to aluminium casement

TYPE 2

These internal glass louvred windows were mostly located along corridors fronting the science laboratories.

The scale of these glass louvred panels were designed to be relatively large for a purpose. The large glass surface area, coupled with a centre-pivot mechanism, brought in maximum daylight and good airflow, which are necessary conditions for a science laboratory to function properly. The need for light and ventilation notwithstanding, it is not impalpable to imagine that the size of these glass louvred windows were ultimately limited by available space, construction technology and budget at the time.



STEEL DOORS

The original classroom doors were composed of mild steel and glass, in similar design language as the steel windows. Today, it seems many, if not all, of these original steel doors have been replaced with lightweight timber doors that are perhaps more practical for day-to-day use.



Archive: The original steel doors and windows were of a common design language



Present: The elegantly framed steel window stands in stark contrast with the oddly proportioned timber door that was a latter day addition.

DECORATIVE STEEL RAILING

Although the building generally appears austere, it is not completely devoid of decorations. Decorative motifs, typically applied with restraint and subtlety, add character to the overall architecture. An example is the decorative mild steel railing, coupled with a lower parapet, which breaks the mass of the solid building form. Interestingly, the open corners on two sides of the building became popular vantage points for students to overlook the field. These original decorative mild steel railings can still be found on site today.



*Archive:
Decorative mild steel railing,
coupled with a lower parapet,
breaks the mass of the solid
building form.*



*Present:
Original decorative mild steel
railings can still be found on site
today.*



4. Lee Kong Chian Block

1970

The school continued to need more space to cater to an ever expanding population. In 1970, the Lee Kong Chian Block was completed to support the functions of the secondary school.

Characterized by block-like form and raw finish, the Lee Kong Chian Block has an uncompromisingly brutalist aesthetic — an architectural style that emerged in the mid-20th century and gained popularity in the 1970s. The building mass is accentuated by deep concrete down hangs, high parapet walls and narrow openings.

It appears, based on archive photos, that the façade was originally in granolithic finish, which is a composite of cement and fine aggregates (typically granite). Granolithic was, and still is, a popular choice of finish in applications where durability is key and aesthetic is not an important consideration. The original granolithic finish on the Lee Kong Chain Block has since been painted over.

The monolithic Lee Kong Chian Block stands in stark contrast with the much more articulated façade of the Primary School Block, with the two built 50 years apart.



(Images: Keep 37 Emerald Hill team, SCGS)

Part 3

Re-Imagining 37 Emerald Hill

37 Emerald Hill Re-Imagined

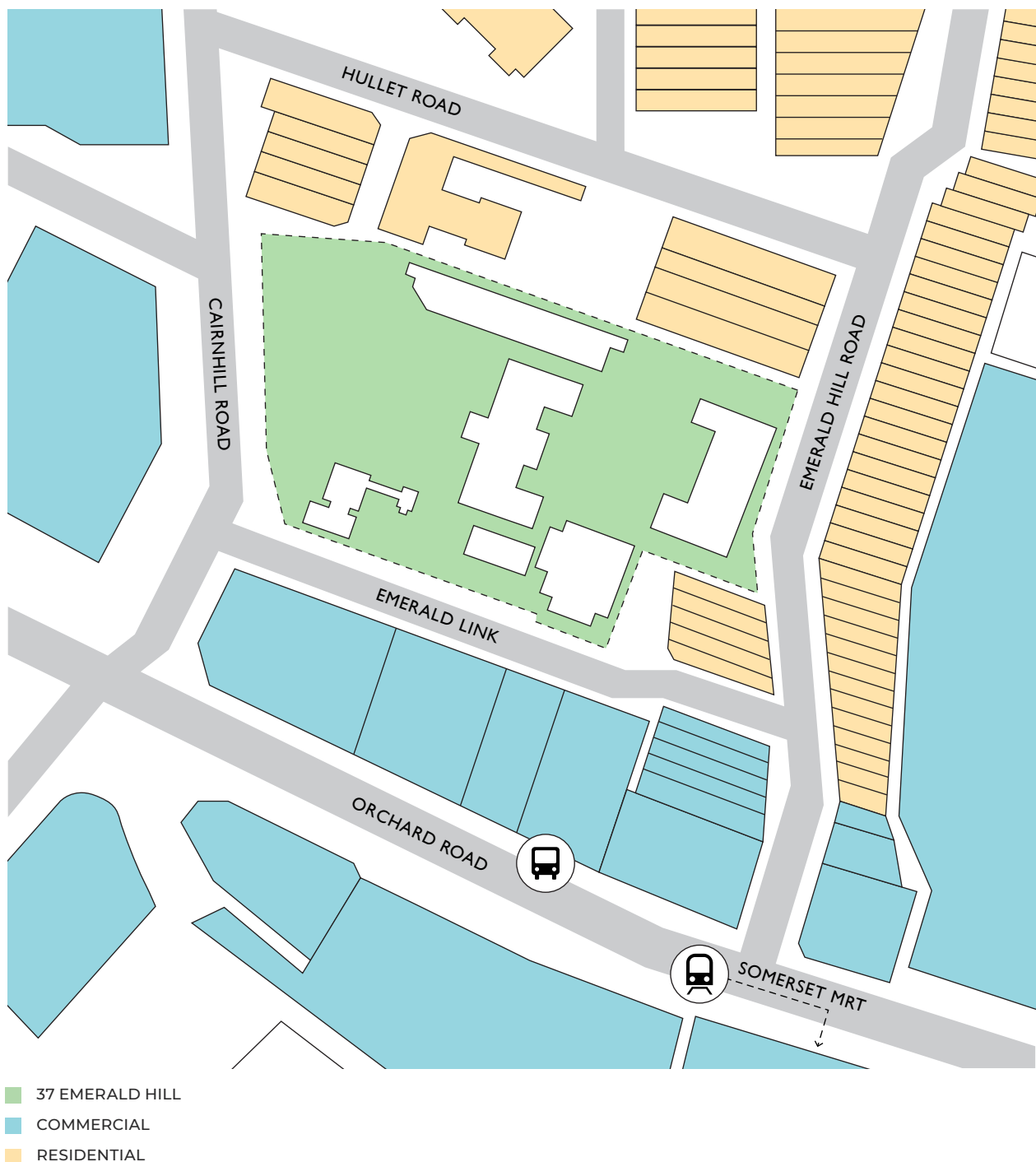
The ideas presented in this report are based on our background research and assessment of publicly-available information, as well as the outreach and engagement efforts undertaken as part of the campaign. We faced some limitations in terms of obtaining details that would have facilitated further study, including, for instance, information on the built-up area - Gross Floor Area (GFA) - of the existing site, or the current state of the interior of some buildings. It was also beyond the scope of our team to undertake detailed cost-benefit analyses or market feasibility studies. We have thus not set out to devise detailed planning and design proposals for 37 Emerald Hill, but have instead focused our efforts on ensuring that the voices of a broader community are captured and translated into ideas.

Throughout the course of our engagements, stakeholders were unanimous in their view that beyond the conservation of the site, there is a need to ensure that any future uses remain sensitive to its rich history and heritage. Building on our background research and stakeholders' views, we have proposed Three Big Moves for a re-imagined 37 Emerald Hill, as well as three broad proposals for how the site can be used. These are described in the sections below, following a brief description of the site, its surrounding context and a SWOT analysis.

1. Background

SITE

37 Emerald Hill Road is a State-owned parcel of land located in central Singapore, bounded by Cairnhill Road to the west and Emerald Hill Road to the east. Formerly home to the Singapore Chinese Girls' School (SCGS), the approximately 1.1ha parcel consists of 5 separate buildings - detailed below and in Part 2b - as well as open spaces. The site is largely flat but includes gently sloping terrain on the Cairnhill Road edge. Since SCGS' move to Dunearn Road in 1994, the site has been leased to different international schools, continuing its legacy as an educational institution. It is currently leased to Chatsworth International School and houses its Primary School campus; the team was, however, unable to find publicly available information on the remaining lease tenure.



CONTEXT

Located between the commercial street of Orchard Road and the quiet residential enclave of Emerald Hill, the former SCGS campus occupies a unique transitional site between two distinct neighbourhoods. Widely viewed as Singapore's most prominent shopping precinct, Orchard Road is home today to over 5,000 retail and dining establishments.¹⁸ In recent years, however, the precinct has faced challenges in continuing to draw crowds, prompting calls for a "bold rethink" of how to keep it attractive and relevant.¹⁹ Recently unveiled plans to turn Orchard Road into a "lifestyle destination" did not appear to go far beyond the status quo; Mark Shaw, President of the Orchard Road Business Association (ORBA), for instance, felt that they "could have been bolder."²⁰

"The bottom line is: Orchard Road must change to remain attractive in the face of competition from global shopping destinations, local suburban malls and online retailers... Along Orchard Road, more can be done to increase the diversity of activities, by creatively adapting, reusing and redeveloping existing spaces."

CENTRE FOR LIVEABLE CITIES



Is Orchard Road "kind of boring"? Singapore's biggest shopping precinct is a hive of retail activity but seems to have struggled in recent years. (Images: Discover SG, Pinterest, Straits Times)

¹⁸ "Orchard Road: A shopping paradise - Visit Singapore Official Site." <https://www.visitsingapore.com/see-do-singapore/places-to-see/orchard/>. Accessed 24 Feb. 2019.

¹⁹ "Reimagining Orchard Road - Centre for Liveable Cities." 28 Jan. 2018, <https://www.clc.gov.sg/docs/default-source/urban-solutions/urb-sol-iss-12-pdfs/essay-diversifying-activities-in-a-shopping-street.pdf>. Accessed 24 Feb. 2019.

²⁰ "Getting Orchard Road to bear new fruit, Opinion ... - The Straits Times." <https://www.straitstimes.com/opinion/getting-orchard-road-to-bear-new-fruit>. Accessed 23 Mar. 2019.



The Emerald Hill residential enclave was the first to be identified as a conservation area by the URA. (Images: Yahoo, Janes Tours)



This before and after composite shows Emerald Hill in 1969 and present day. The shophouses remain the same, but the degree of development along Orchard Road is very different. (Images: Lee Kip Lin, Keep 37 Emerald Hill team)

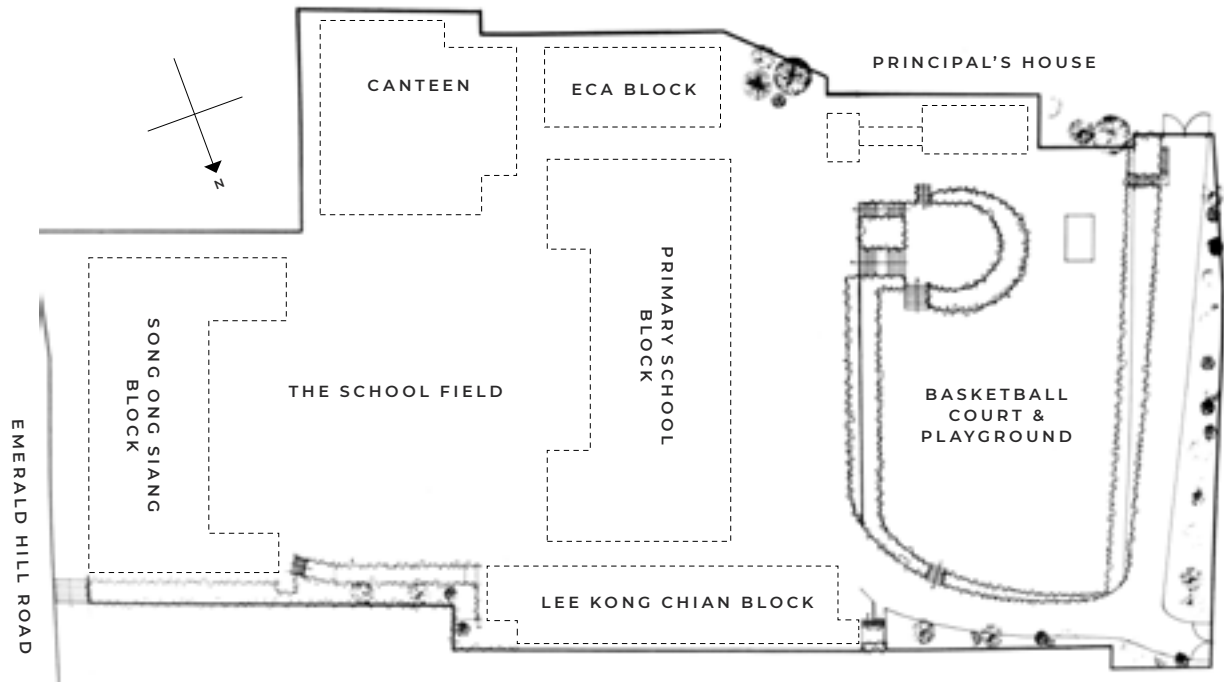
Emerald Hill stands in contrast to the busy boulevard of Orchard Road. Once a “barren hill covered with short brushwood and lallang”, the estate was used as a nutmeg plantation before becoming established as a predominantly Peranakan residential enclave.²¹

The neighbourhood was identified as a conservation area by the Urban Redevelopment Authority (URA) in 1985 - the first of its kind in Singapore. Many of the Emerald Hill buildings are shophouses and two-storey terrace houses designed in a Straits Chinese style, built over a period of 90 years. Conservation status was officially granted to the precinct in 1989, and Emerald Hill continues to be a quiet and attractive residential area today.

²¹ Urban Redevelopment Authority, 1991. Secondary Settlements - Conservation Guidelines for Emerald Hill Conservation Area. http://eservice.nlb.gov.sg/data2/BookSG/publish/8/8300474f-8604-4111-8826-465c923877ac/web/html5/index.html?opf-tablet/BOOKSG.xml&launchlogo=tablet/BOOKSG_BrandingLogo_.png&pn=2. Accessed 12 Dec 2018.

2. Buildings & Open Spaces

THE SCHOOL BEGAN OPERATIONS AT EMERALD HILL IN SEPTEMBER 1925, AFTER FIRST SPENDING SEVERAL ITINERANT YEARS AT DIFFERENT LOCATIONS ON HILL STREET. HOME TO SCGS FOR CLOSE TO 70 YEARS, THE CAMPUS TODAY IS A PATCHWORK OF BUILDINGS ADDED TO THE SITE OVER TIME.



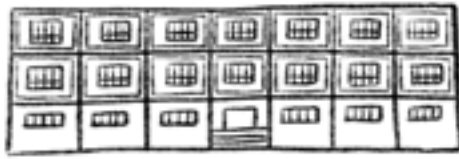
PRIMARY SCHOOL BLOCK

Facing Emerald Hill on one side and Cairnhill Road on the other, the original school building is a two-storey block designed by local architect E.C. Seah of S.Y. Wong and Co. Set amidst what was originally green, open space, the building housed twelve classrooms, an assembly hall, a staff room and an office for the Principal. The original school building would later be used only for primary school lessons.



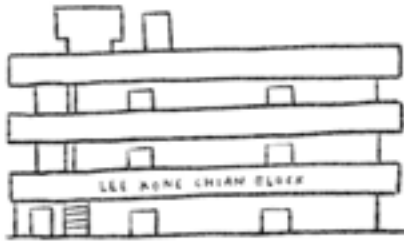
PRINCIPAL'S HOUSE

A house for the Principal and her family was added in 1930, designed again by E.C. Seah. Facing Cairnhill Road, the second building on-site was a fully-functioning home for Principals until 1989, after which it was used for classes and extra-curricular activities.



SONG ONG SIANG BLOCK

Named after one of the school's founders, the Song Ong Siang Block fronting Emerald Hill Road was completed in 1956. The 3-storey building introduced eight new classrooms, a science lab, a room for Domestic Science (later known as Home Economics), as well as an additional hall. Upon entering from the Emerald Hill entrance, visitors first see a small courtyard space, with the school field at a slightly higher level.



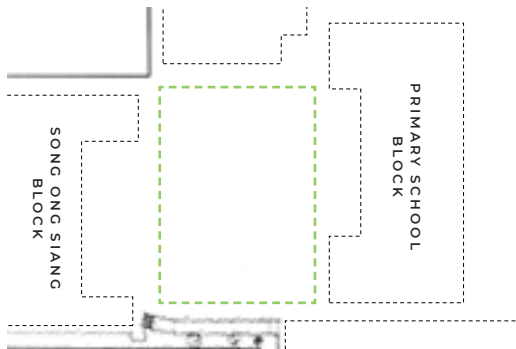
LEE KONG CHIAN BLOCK

In 1970, the 3-storey Lee Kong Chian Block - with its distinctive grey façade - was added to the campus. It took the place of a one-storey annex block next to the primary school block that was built during the time of the Japanese Occupation. The Lee Kong Chian Block housed eight more classrooms, two science labs and a library.



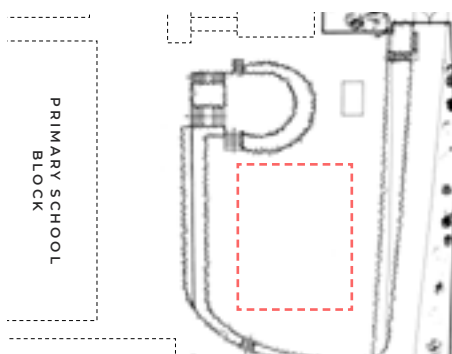
CANTEEN & ECA BLOCK

The final building to be added to the site was the canteen and ECA block. Plans for the block were drawn up in 1979, with the canteen and multi-purpose hall taking the place of the school's original tiffin shed. Rooms for ECA groups and a new library were built alongside the primary school block, with a second storey link built between the two buildings.



THE SCHOOL FIELD

Today an astro-turfed surface surrounded by a high fence - is bounded by four school buildings on the Emerald Hill side (insert diagram/ photo). This has created a courtyard-like effect on site, welcoming visitors into a more intimate, enclosed space.



BASKETBALL COURT & PLAYGROUND

Adjacent to the old principal's house, a basketball court and playground fill the open space fronting Cairnhill Road.

3. S.W.O.T Analysis

STRENGTHS

- Rich heritage and historical significance of site and Emerald Hill neighbourhood
- Original buildings largely intact
- Easily accessible with good public transport connectivity
- Considerable open space between buildings (vs. high-density surroundings)

WEAKNESSES

- Site closed off to larger community
- Somerset/ Orchard Road commercial belt is homogenous, unexciting
- Opportunities for redevelopment or introduction of new uses largely dependent on private sector
- Lack of green spaces and amenities for residents

OPPORTUNITIES

- Sanctuary close to, but away from, Orchard Road
- Ongoing plans for rejuvenation of Orchard Road
- Proximity to Design Orchard
- Need for more community-centric amenities for residents
- One of few State-owned pieces of land in the area

THREATS

- Uncertain future plans (Reserve Site zoning in URA's Master Plan 2019)
- Lack of activation in future programming
- "Cookie cutter" commercial uses

Keep 37 Emerald Hill Public Workshops

Two public workshops were organised in November 2018 to gather memories, stories and ideas for the future of the old SCGS campus. (More information about the Memory Wall segment of the workshops is found in Part 2a). The second part of each workshop focused on gathering ideas from participants on how, if conserved, 37 Emerald Hill could be used in future.

To set the context, participants were shown examples of other conserved buildings in Singapore, including ones that had retained their original uses (such as shophouses), and ones that had been adaptively re-used into museums, retail spaces and condominium clubhouses. As not all participants were familiar with the Emerald Hill campus - aside from students who'd spent time there, some had never set foot into the site before - a brief history of each of the five former SCGS buildings was also shared.



(Images: Keep 37 Emerald Hill team)

Building	Percentage
Building 1 - Primary school block	25%
Building 2 - Principal's house	18%
Building 3 - Song Ong Siang block	12%
Building 5 - Canteen / ECA block	8%
Building 4 - Lee Kong Chian block	5%

Building	Percentage
Building 1 - Primary school block	54%
Building 2 - Principal's house	17%
Building 3 - Song Ong Siang block	13%
Building 4 - Lee Kong Chian block	9%
Building 5 - Canteen / ECA block	7%

Mentimeter poll results - morning session on the left, afternoon session on the right - showing participants' prioritisation of the five buildings. The Primary School block, Principal's house and Song Ong Siang block were ranked highest in both the workshop sessions. (Images: Keep 37 Emerald Hill team)

From all you've heard today, what is your one favourite idea?

From all you've heard today, what is your one favourite idea?

[illegible]



“My favourite part about the workshop was that it managed to draw out the emotional investment such a diverse range of people - age, gender, alumni and non-alum - had in the 37 Emerald Hill site. Everyone actively engaged and shared, (sometimes heated) debate was provoked, but most importantly we built out possible futures together. It felt hopeful, collaborative, even consequential.”

SOH LISHAN, VOLUNTEER FACILITATOR AND FORMER SCGS STUDENT.



(Images: Keep 37 Emerald Hill team)

4. Vision: Three Big Moves

Three Big Moves were developed as a framework to guide future plans for the Emerald Hill site, based on the main concerns, ideas and asks shared in our public engagements. Regardless of the final use or uses decided on for the site, our collective hope is that they remain sensitive to the following key strategies:



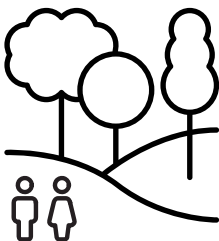
1. RETAIN HISTORY AND HERITAGE

Perhaps the most strongly articulated view across our public engagements was that the history and heritage of 37 Emerald Hill – as a place of learning and self-improvement particularly for women, and as a proud achievement for the Peranakan community – had to be retained. Many felt it would be a missed opportunity to have the site conserved, whether in part or in full, only to house uses that had little or no connection to its history.



2. INCREASE ACCESSIBILITY AND PUBLIC ACTIVATION

In addition, stakeholders felt it was important for the site to remain publicly accessible. There was little interest in a “condominium clubhouse” model of conservation, in which a conserved building or buildings is hidden from public view, and is accessible only to a small group of individuals. Emerald Hill residents in particular felt that there is immense opportunity for the site to be a community-centric destination, providing spaces, facilities and experiences that are not currently available in the area.



3. INTRODUCE GREENERY AND MAINTAIN "BREATHING SPACE"

It was widely acknowledged that the 37 Emerald Hill site exists in a unique transitional zone, between a crowded commercial stretch and a serene residential area. Balancing out the call to introduce more public-facing uses was the desire to see the site serve as a breathing space away from Orchard Road, providing a differentiated experience that bridges between the hectic shopping district and the private conservation zone. In addition, the site could take the “Bring Back the Orchard” theme from ongoing Orchard Road rejuvenation efforts a step further by introducing accessible, open green spaces within 37 Emerald Hill.

5. Potential Users

The question of for whom 37 Emerald Hill should or could eventually be often came up in the course of our engagements with different groups. Neighbourhood residents, tourists, heritage enthusiasts and Orchard Road shoppers were all seen as existing groups of users who

would have an interest in the site, but it could also appeal to a broader range of people depending on its future use. Based on these discussions, we devised four archetypes to describe the types of people we imagine as visitors to and users of the re-imaged 37 Emerald Hill space.



1. FAMILIES

WANTS

- Quality time
- 'Something for everyone' - Family-friendly spaces to enjoy and explore on weekends
- Time away from the grind of city and working life



2. TOURISTS

WANTS

- Unique cultural experiences
- Lots of greenery
- A good back-story



3. CREATIVE ENTREPRENEURS

WANTS

- New places to check out, 'not another cookie-cutter mall'
- Affordable yet central co-working space



4. SHOPPERS

WANTS

- Unique, photo-worthy locations
- Standing out, being different
- 'Pop-up' events and in-the-moment experiences

6. Future Uses: Three Consolidated Concepts

We choose to believe that the rezoning of 37 Emerald Hill to a Reserve Site under URA's 2019 Draft Master Plan indicates that the previous plans for a dense residential development are being re-considered. In response, we have grouped the various ideas proposed for 37 Emerald Hill into three consolidated thematic concepts, each a possible amalgamation of uses to occupy the site. Each concept combines some of the most strongly advocated ideas in our engagement with the public and stakeholders, though we acknowledge that not all ideas were universally agreed on. What was considered an "appropriate" commercial use, for instance, was often a point of debate.

While we recognise that conservation status may not be awarded to all the buildings, and that eventual redevelopment of the site may thus involve demolition of one or more of them, the concepts are intended to illustrate what different scenarios could look like - retaining the site as-is with all buildings intact, or with only some buildings remaining in order to optimise other proposed uses. We also see the uses as being modular, i.e. any long-term permanent use, when decided on, could be a combination of uses described across different concepts below.

i. The Commons - A Modern Community Club

A modern community club, The Commons will continue the legacy of 37 Emerald Hill as an institute of learning, and as an amenity for a broader community to access and enjoy. It takes reference from new models of co-located community facilities, including Kampong Admiralty in Woodlands, and Oasis Terraces in Punggol, and responds to concerns over the privatization and commercialization of a community asset.



VISION

Easily accessible and a clear change of pace from Orchard Road, The Commons is a place for multi-generational visitors to gather and find respite from the hustle and bustle of the city, while still capitalising on its central location. Importantly, The Commons will also serve local residents, who have voiced feedback on the lack of public amenities in their neighbourhood, particularly for those with young families. The Commons draws inspiration from the site's rich heritage as a former institute of education, and is also seen as providing a much needed green lung in the area. This is a space that brings people together to learn, to gather, and to enjoy being away from busy adjacent roads and curated, inward-looking mall environments.

PROGRAMMING



I. LEARNING SPACES

The Commons will offer opportunities for people of all ages to engage in learning activities. It is inclusive and accessible, providing an array of classes for people regardless of age and educational background. Childcare and classes for children can be offered on the lower floors of both the Primary School and Lee Kong Chian blocks, making use of the open green spaces directly adjacent to both buildings and providing an amenity for nearby residents. Eldercare facilities or elderly-friendly classes and workshops can also be offered, with common spaces designed to encourage interaction between the young and the old.

The remaining floors of the Lee Kong Chian and Song Ong Siang blocks are adapted into modern spaces for lifelong learning, including seminar rooms, maker spaces, studios, a library and discussion spaces. This could complement the existing Lifelong Learning Institute in Paya Lebar Central, by offering a more central venue for working adults to attend classes at.

- LEARNING
- COMMUNITY
- COMMERCIAL
- HOTEL
- RETAIL/F&B
- PUBLIC REALM
- GRASSED AREAS
- HERITAGE COURTYARDS
- PUBLIC SEATING

What If...

One question raised during our engagements was whether the site could remain in use by a school, as in its current form. There were no strong views about this, though most who responded felt that they would prefer a more accessible and inclusive use. Residents of Emerald Hill in particular shared that they would like to see more public amenities in their neighbourhood, especially for those with young families.



Old science labs and classrooms (seen in undated photographs) are adapted to create new, modern spaces - maker labs, classrooms, studios etc. - for lifelong learning. These can include classes for children, such as those offered at the National Design Centre's One Maker Space, as well as activities for the elderly. At the new museum for visual culture, M+ in West Kowloon, Hong Kong, workshops for older adults are regularly held in conjunction with exhibitions. (Images: SCGS, One Maker Space, M+, Lifelong Learning Institute)



The Song Ong Siang block, fronting Emerald Hill Road, has classrooms on the first floor. These public-facing spaces can serve as windows into activity inside The Commons, signalling openness and accessibility for the community. Such an approach was adopted in the Jemtelandsgade Neighbourhood Centre in Copenhagen, in which floor-to-ceiling ground floor windows give passersby an indication of the activities within. (Images: Keep 37 Emerald Hill team, Architizer)



II. WOMEN'S HUB

In addition to housing childcare functions, the stately Primary School building is envisioned as a Women's Hub. This was an idea that resonated strongly in our workshops - the creation of a space that would support working women, in keeping with the history of the school as an institution formed to promote the betterment and independence of women and girls. The building could consist both of functional office or co-working spaces and meeting rooms on the upper floor, as well as a venue for symposiums and seminars in the old school hall. The Women's Hub is seen as a space for members to find mentorship, support, connections and friendship, building on the popularity of other co-working spaces in the city. The inclusion of childcare facilities within the site gives working mothers easy access to childcare support, which is often a stressor for those looking to continue working with young children.

The gymnasium above the canteen, a large and flexible space, can also be rented out for community events or used for talks and seminars. It is also suitable as a rehearsal and/or performance space by arts groups.



Top: The "Women's Hub" idea explained during our public workshops. The image in the middle shows the old school hall in the 1940s, being used for a Directors' Tea. (Images: Keep 37 Emerald Hill team, SCGS)

Housing childcare facilities, co-working spaces and conference rooms, the former Primary School building can be adapted to create a working environment that supports women and encourages female entrepreneurship. The Wing, a co-working space in several American cities that began as a space for women of diverse backgrounds to meet and work, offers babysitting services for members in several of its locations, in recognition of the need for greater flexibility and support for working mothers. (Images: The Wing)





The gymnasium above the canteen was used for a variety of school and extra-curricular activities - its square, column-free layout lent itself easily to being adapted for different purposes. While not the most architecturally significant building on site, we see value in retaining it as a flexible space for community events, such as exhibitions, talks or performances. The Jemtelandsgade

Neighbourhood Centre, often called one of the most beautiful public spaces in Copenhagen, combined a new assembly hall with an old industrial building to form a base for concerts, debates and conferences, creating a centre of gravity for the local community. (Images: Keep 37 Emerald Hill team, SCGS, Dorte Mandrup)

III. GREEN OPEN SPACES

A key idea from our engagements was to introduce more lush and accessible green spaces within 37 Emerald Hill. These provide relief from the dense urban environment, and can also be used for education and outreach. The existing basketball court area facing Cairnhill Road can be a new urban Community Garden, providing learning opportunities around native Singapore plant species, gardening and farming techniques, and food sustainability. The Community Garden serves as communal gathering point for local residents, both young and old.



At Roppongi Hills in Tokyo, the rooftop garden is treated as a stage for a variety of community engagements in order to bring nature closer to the city and its residents. In partnership with different Japanese prefectures, outreach and education initiatives are held throughout the year, including planting and harvesting rice, making glutinous rice and harvesting rooftop-grown edamame. (Images: Roppongihills.com)



The old school field can be re-purposed as a lushly landscaped green courtyard - a Secret Garden or hideaway spot that surprises visitors coming off Orchard Road, one that is attractive both as a play space for children and a space to enjoy a quiet meal or coffee break. In both the Community Garden and the Secret Garden, water features and careful shading help to create comfortable outdoor environments that are well-utilised despite the perennial heat and humidity.



Edible Garden City, driven by the belief that plants can be both productive and beautiful, is a Singapore-born company that designs, builds and maintains food gardens throughout the city. The group has “foodscaped” over 200 edible gardens for offices, hotels, restaurants, schools and homes, and conducts educational workshops with the aim of bringing communities together through farming.



These open spaces lend themselves for programming after hours, though the concerns of residents have been noted on the unwanted noise late night activities may create. More energetic activities that extend into the evening - community-run fairs or even outdoor performances - are planned for the part of the site that fronts Cairnhill Road (and has visibility from the Orchard Road/ Cairnhill Road junction), with the Emerald Hill side responding sensitively to the character and atmosphere of the Emerald Hill conservation area.



Different courtyard spaces provide inspiration for the Secret Garden - the Isabella Stewart Gardner Museum in Boston, the courtyard outside the Victoria & Albert Museum in London, Museum of Modern Art (MOMA) in New York, and the Ford Foundation's revamped indoor garden, also in New York. MOMA, located in busy midtown Manhattan, is noted for its creation of a serene courtyard space (with ample seating!) right in the heart of the city. (Images: Rebdo.org, Outdoor Projects, Dezeen)





IV. COMMERCIAL ZONES

Commercial uses will also be included, both to support other uses on-site, support commercial viability and to provide Orchard Road visitors with a more unique retail environment than large malls. Retail tenants are chosen for their socially-conscious focus and support of local communities. They complement and anchor the main activity spaces, potentially in the form of multi-label boutiques, or smaller units that spill out into the Community Garden and Secret Garden spaces. The old canteen houses small F&B stalls - adopting a pop-up model for young chefs who're keen to explore an informal dining concept - while the upper floors of the Lee Kong Chian block are rented to start-ups that need more flexible leases for experimentation and innovation.

The Principal's House, overlooking the Community Garden and its urban farm, is imagined as a hybrid space for F&B-related uses. It is anchored by a test kitchen that provides a platform for young chefs to try their hand at running a restaurant. Inspired by other local efforts like Magic Square - a successful pop-up restaurant helmed by young chefs along Portsdown Road - the test kitchen will be a space for learning and experimenting, with a focus on local, seasonal produce. Remaining spaces can be used as studios for cooking classes. Given its location fronting Cairnhill Road and Emerald Link, the Principal's House is likely to enjoy a more steady stream of foot traffic compared to some of the other buildings on-site.



Above: Socially-conscious commercial uses include the Social Space, Unpackt and The Art Faculty by Pathlight. (Images: sassymamasg.com, 8 Days, The Art Faculty)

Below: Magic Square at Portsdown Road, a successful test kitchen pop-up for three young Singaporean chefs, and participants at a cooking class organised by Cookyn, Inc. (Images: Instagram, Straits Times)



STORE Studio, Coal Drops Yard



Coal Drops Yard, designed by Thomas Heatherwick, combines historic Victorian coal yards with modern architecture to create retail & public spaces in Kings Cross. STORE Studio runs an innovative design practice and store within the compound. (Images: Dezeen, STORE Studio)

Coal Drops Yard is a high-end retail development within London's sprawling Kings Cross precinct. One of the more unique offerings housed in Coal Drops is STORE Studio, a design collective that has three key components - an educational programme of art and architecture courses, wide-ranging public events and exhibitions, and a socially engaged design practice. STORE Studio sells products by London-based makers, and also organises workshops led by the same designers for members of the public. The profits from the workshops - participants must pay a fee to take part - go into funding after-school activities for students with an interest in design. These students then design and prototype objects that are sold at the STORE shop, and are allowed to allocate their earnings to a cause of their choice.

Through their annual Summer School programmes, the founders of STORE are seeking to address an imbalance in access to design and art education, particularly for children from less privileged backgrounds. Aside from imparting design skills, the Summer School programme helps to boost confidence, and serves as a springboard for young aspiring designers to be plugged in to other designers and mentors.

ii. Spice Gardens - Celebrating History and Heritage

The Spice Gardens is the vision of the old SCGS site that appeals to visitors in search of heritage and culture: those who long for a glimpse into the pioneer years of a young nation, and of the cultural origins of the Emerald Hill conservation area. This option harnesses the rich heritage of the site as a fairly unspoilt and well-documented backdrop to activities of yesteryear.



VISION

Straits culture and heritage are amplified and celebrated at every turn, but the past is also balanced with the present, and the future. Envisioned as a Peranakan Heritage Centre, the site provides a living experience of Peranakan culture, beyond just artefacts in a museum. Visitors learn about the intertwined culture of the school, its illustrious founder and the Peranakan community, and are given a glimpse into the progressive mindsets behind the school's inception. A Spice Garden theme informs the landscaping throughout the site, taking visitors on a journey of Singapore's spice trade, and its importance in shaping our national identity through our tastebuds.

The use of heritage buildings for museums is not new in Singapore, with well-known examples such as the Singapore Art Museum (occupying the former St. Joseph's Institution), and the Peranakan Museum (once home to the Tao Nan School). The addition of new, modern spaces to expand civic and cultural institutions has also been exemplified in places like the Victoria Concert Hall and Theatre, and the National Museum of Singapore as shown in images on the next page. (Images: Wikipedia, Flickr)

PROGRAMMING



I. MUSEUM

The Peranakan Museum is relocated to the site, housed in the Primary School block and with a new annex built in place of the canteen and ECA blocks. Workshop participants voiced the opinion that Emerald Hill was a more natural home for the Peranakan Museum than the current location along Armenian Street, given the history of the area as one of three key Peranakan enclaves in Singapore.

Aside from housing the museum's main collection, the Primary School block and accompanying new buildings can also provide dedicated venues for heritage-related symposiums, seminars and film screenings. Heritage-focused agencies and organisations - whether the National Heritage Board, the Peranakan Association or the Singapore Heritage Society - can also find office space in the new extension. Fronting the museum, the school courtyard is transformed into a Secret Garden, welcoming visitors to relax amidst lush landscaping.



What If...

While the Peranakan Museum was seen as a natural choice for a museum on-site, there was some discussion over how realistic an option this would be, given the existing museum's plans for expansion at its current location. Other suggestions for museums included a Children's Museum or Museum of Play, offerings which don't currently exist in Singapore and which would introduce inclusive, family-friendly uses at 37 Emerald Hill. The existing open spaces provide ample opportunity for outdoor explorative and play elements to complement exhibitions housed within the existing buildings. Such a museum would also stay true to the spirit of learning, exploring and imparting knowledge to younger generations.



Playeum, a non-profit group, runs the Children's Centre for Creativity at Gilman Barracks, where children and families can come together to play, learn and be inspired. (Images: bigdayout.com, playeum.com) Other examples include the Boston Children's Museum and the Please Touch Museum in Philadelphia, both of which are dedicated to learning through play. (Images: habyts.com, pleasetouchmuseum.org)

Tai Kwun: Centre for Heritage and Arts



Hong Kong's most ambitious conservation and revitalisation project to-date, the Centre for Heritage and Arts at Tai Kwun has transformed the former Central Police Station compound into a public cultural venue, one that celebrates and amplifies the rich history of the site. Sixteen heritage buildings were restored for adaptive re-use, with two modern buildings - designed by Herzog & de Meuron - added on. Tai Kwun seeks to offer an array of high-quality arts and heritage experiences, and in doing so grow an appreciation for heritage, contemporary art and the performing arts in Hong Kong. The art and heritage functions are complemented by lifestyle offerings, including a wide range of culinary options and curated retail stores. A full calendar of workshops and performances - the outdoor area once used as an exercise ground for prisoners now functions as a performance space - invite further engagement between the community and the space.



With multiple buildings and spaces in a central urban location, Tai Kwun presents an exciting offering of arts, heritage and lifestyle events. Courtyard spaces dot the venue, providing outdoor space for visitors to dine and gather. These spaces are also used for performances by different arts and cultural groups. (Images: Wallpaper, Taikwun.hk)

The history of Tai Kwun comes alive in various ways, but of note to us was the inclusion of eight dedicated storytelling spaces throughout the site - something we hope to be able to do within 37 Emerald Hill. Each of these sites finds a way to feature the history and stories of lives of people who were once inside Tai Kwun. A video of the first case heard at the Central Magistracy is played, for example, as are moving silhouettes inside six cells of the Victoria Prison. A mango tree retained in the Parade Ground courtyard comes with its own legends - some officers believed that a tree full of fruit meant lots of promotions, while others felt that fruits brought bad luck..

II. HOTEL

To enhance commercial viability of the site, the Song Ong Siang block is transformed into a boutique heritage hotel, blending Straits heritage with modern-day comforts in a historic Peranakan neighbourhood. Called Claregrove, the hotel is named for the estate that occupied the site before the land was leased to SCGS in the early 20th century.

Given the size of the building, it would be possible to keep the number of rooms small, and the absence of facilities such as ballrooms would preclude larger events from taking place on site. Vehicular access for a small number of guests to the hotel could conceivably be taken from Emerald Hill Road without causing too much disruption to existing street traffic. The private hotel use could also be balanced with ground floor uses that are open to the public - a kebaya store and Peranakan-themed cafe, for instance. The Emerald Hill entrance would remain a public one, welcoming visitors to the museum and the Secret Garden courtyard.



The four-storey Art Deco building along Dickson Road was home to the Hong Wen School from 1945 to 1981. Since 2010, it has housed the Wanderlust Hotel, a 29-room boutique hotel with most of the building's original external features retained. Ceramic tiles on the façade, for example, were intricately restored. (Images: Ministry of Education, coolist.com, HomeandDecor.com)

Other award-winning boutique heritage hotels in Singapore include The Great Madras, a 35-room hotel in Little India that was restored to represent the mishmash of influences in the neighbourhood. The Warehouse Hotel, a 37-room hotel in an iconic 1895 godown along Robertson Quay, takes pains to showcase local talent throughout. This includes contemporary artwork, custom-designed furniture and locally-inspired cuisine. (Images: Traveloka, behance.net)



Views on this use were mixed in our engagements. Some felt that the area was ripe for a unique boutique hotel experience, inspired by examples of Peranakan heritage hotels in Penang's Georgetown, a UNESCO World Heritage Site. The extensive capital costs that would be required to convert the building into a liveable one, and the long lease period needed to recoup these costs, were also highlighted. Others were concerned that such a use would privatise 37 Emerald Hill and bring too much traffic to the quiet side of the site.



III. GREEN OPEN SPACES

Similar to the proposal for The Commons, the Spice Gardens concept retains the site's existing open spaces – the courtyard on the Emerald Hill side and the basketball court on the Cairnhill Road side –, transforming them into lush gardens for gathering, learning and relaxing. Fronting the Claregrove hotel, the old school field is quieter in character, but provides room for guests and visitors to enjoy being outdoors. On the Cairnhill Road end, more active programming can take place, including classes and workshops on urban farming.



Top: 10 Corso Como's tranquil courtyard in Milan. Bottom: Students at Citizen Farm (Images: blog.studentsville.it, Citizen Farm)

Workshop participants felt that these spaces were as important to retain as the physical buildings on-site, given their centrality to day-to-day school life in SCGS, and the need to provide breathing space away from Orchard Road. In Hong Kong's Tai Kwun development, the retention of open spaces within the grounds has helped to invite people back into what was once essentially designed to be a fortress, housing prison cells and courts. A member of one of Tai Kwun's advisory committees mentioned in an interview that "neighbours will just drop by in the evening to meet up with their friends, because Central doesn't have many open spaces."²² The open spaces at 37 Emerald Hill can do the same for the Orchard Road area.

²² "Tai Kwun: The Big House is Finally Open - ZOLIMA CITYMAG." 2 Aug. 2018, <https://zolimacitymag.com/tai-kwun-the-big-house-is-finally-open/>. Accessed 6 Apr. 2019.

IV. DINING SPACES

The Principal's House is re-purposed as a restaurant that focuses on Peranakan recipes. The restaurant would serve Claregrove guests as well as other visitors, and, in keeping with the spirit of learning, will also incorporate spaces for cooking classes and workshops. A “National Kitchen Cooking School” - building on the popularity and success of Violet Oon’s restaurants - is seen as an ideal use, offering a distinctly Singaporean experience for residents and visitors alike. The House will also house as well as a tea room for sampling local Nonya desserts.



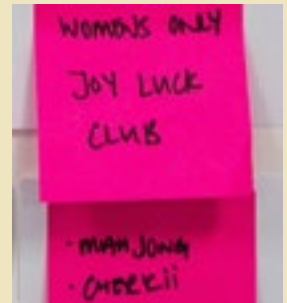
The Kebaya Dining Room at the Seven Terraces Hotel in Penang, and Violet Oon’s collection of restaurants in Singapore, both adopt a more traditional Peranakan style. (Images: Seven Terraces, Violet Oon)



Housed in a conserved Black and White building in the Botanic Gardens, the Corner House restaurant is an example of a home that has been well-adapted into a modern restaurant. Built in 1910, the two-storey house was named for Eldred John Henry Corner, the Assistant Director of the Gardens from 1929 to 1945. (Images: Corner House)

A Modern-Day Gambling Den?

In our public engagement workshops, there was great amusement when a team presented its vision for the Principal's House: a mahjong teahouse-den, (as airy and civilised as the shophouse mahjong scene in *Crazy Rich Asians*), where the activity of gaming is re-interpreted as a nostalgic communal artform, be it chequers, mahjong, 'cherki', or bridge. Small plates of nonya kueh and traditional snacks are brought up to guests who would easily spend half a day eating and playing games.



References and objects that the group had in mind - The Crazy Rich Asians mahjong scene (filmed at the Blue Mansion in Penang), cherki - a traditional Peranakan card game, Peranakan food and the Joy Luck Club. (Images: Keep 37 Emerald Hill team, says.com, Peranakan Life, Shangri La)

iii. No. 37 - Creative Park

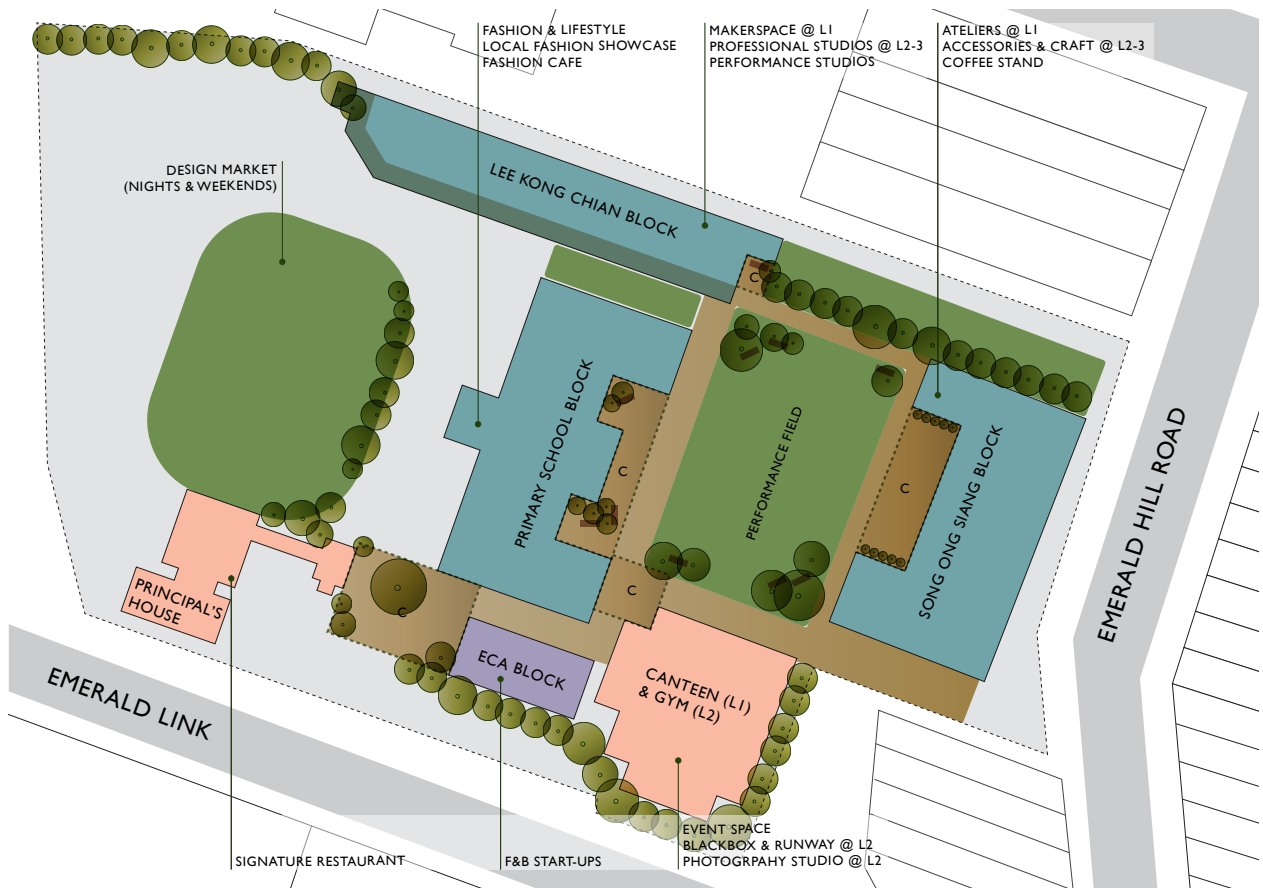
No. 37 is the “Art Box” for aspiring designers and design aficionados in the context of Orchard Road. It appeals to designers for its creative commons vibe, and to visitors who desire an authentic experience on the pulse of Singapore’s local design scene. The site serves as a platform for the business of design and the arts, as well as an insight into designers’ process.



VISION

No.37 revolves around being “accessible”, “experiential” and “experimental”. As opposed to the heavily retail-centric precinct around it, the majority of the site is dedicated to creative maker-spaces, including fashion, craft and even the performing arts. Since Orchard Road is already the destination for both high-end and mass-market fashion, No. 37 focuses on the uniquely local, providing spaces for bespoke ateliers and workshops for makers in various fields, from clothing to accessories and lifestyle products like furniture. Space is set aside to celebrate and support traditional forms of professional craft, combining the old and the new. The element of learning is also incorporated on-site, with tenants required to open their doors to visitors and hold regular salons and workshops to foster dialogue and impartation of skills.

PROGRAMMING



- LEARNING
- COMMUNITY
- COMMERCIAL
- HOTEL
- RETAIL/F&B
- PUBLIC REALM
- GRASSED AREAS
- HERITAGE COURTYARDS
- PUBLIC SEATING

I. SPACES TO CREATE, SHOWCASE & LEARN

In the Lee Kong Chian block, design studios on upper levels are anchored by a multi-purpose workshop and maker space on ground level, with additive manufacturing and prototyping capabilities. The Song Ong Siang block, facing Emerald Hill, houses more public-facing activities, like leather-crafting, pottery classes or knitting workshops, as well as meeting spaces for amateur interest groups.



No. 37 provides room for workshop and maker spaces, both for more permanent professional use by design studios and local businesses, as well as for classes conducted for members of the public. (Images: Singapore Tyler Print Institute, Center Pottery)

Joint programming and sharing of spaces between No. 37 and Design Orchard - located just across the street on Emerald Link - can help to create a more robust experience for members of the public. The multi-label retail space at Design Orchard can be made available to local designers from No. 37, particularly those who are just starting out and aren't able to rent larger commercial spaces. The Textile and Fashion Federation (TAFF), housed at Design Orchard, can collaborate with No. 37 on workshops and programming. Design Orchard users can make use of the larger spaces at No. 37 for events that are expected to draw larger crowds, like seminars and workshops. "Block party" events can bring visitors in and out of both spaces, establishing a node that supports and celebrates local design.

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Casual spaces allow interest groups to gather and organise smaller-scale community events. The Moon, a bookstore, cafe and event space in Chinatown, hosts talks, markets and other gatherings in its shophouse space. (Images: The Moon)



OH! Open House is an independent arts organisation that tells alternative stories about Singapore through art, combining art with heritage in art walks and art experiences. The former SCGS campus played host to several visual and performance art pieces in the 2018 iteration of OH! Open House at Emerald Hill. Various spaces in and around the campus - both formal spaces like classrooms and halls, as well as outdoor spaces around the school field, were made use of to explore narratives of colonialism and the history of Emerald Hill. (Images: Open House, Instagram)



The old gymnasium is converted into a rehearsal space for performing arts groups, in keeping with SCGS' long history of excellence in the performing arts. Anecdotal evidence suggests that such groups often face challenges in finding decently-sized and affordable spaces to rehearse in, with most available studio space owned by private operators. Even spaces like the Aliwal Arts Centre - a dedicated venue to support arts groups - are not always purpose-built, meaning that available space is not always the most functional. A large, column-free space with high ceilings, the old gymnasium above the canteen is well-suited for this purpose.

Doubling as an informal “black box” performance space, the gymnasium will add to the variety of uses in the Orchard Road area, providing a welcome alternative activity to shopping and eating out. Performing arts offerings within No. 37 will give visitors reason to linger in the area a little longer, and will ensure activation of the site even on weekends. Family-friendly programming to cater to residents in and around the area also aligns well with the National Arts Council's (NAC's) stated priority of catering to different demographics and sustaining audience development.²³



Singapore's first independent contemporary arts centre, *The Substation* was founded in 1990 by local playwright Kuo Pao Kun. *The Substation* actively curates its own lineup of events, typically in line with a year-long theme, but also offers its spaces such as the Theatre and Gallery (pictured above) up for public rental. (Images: *The Substation*)



Groups like the *Kueh Tutus*, a collaborative team of creatives who create interactive dance performances for young children, could activate No. 37 with programming that appeals to families in the surrounding neighbourhoods. (Images: *Kueh Tutus*)

²³ “NAC - Key Priority Areas of Our SG Arts Plan (2018-2022).” 28 Nov. 2018, <https://www.nac.gov.sg/naccorp/naccorp/singaporeartscene/Our-SG-Arts-Plan-2018-2022/Key-Priority-Areas-of-Our-SG-Arts-Plan-2018-2022>. Accessed 26 Mar. 2019.

II. COMMERCIAL SPACES

Space is set aside for commercial uses within No. 37, providing co-working venues for design firms to rent, platforms for designers to showcase their products, and an overall more vibrant mix of uses for visitors to enjoy. As much as our engagements showed a desire to avoid over-commercialising the space, participants also acknowledged that a number of cafes, restaurants and shops were essential to draw crowds. Careful programming will be essential to avoid competing with other commercial spaces in the vicinity.

Resident brands and designers at No. 37 are required to open their doors to visitors at regularly organised events, while testing new concepts at pop-up spaces and markets. Fashion and F&B start-ups can test their business model and products at the weekly markets at low overhead costs, while having a presence along Orchard Road. The idea is not so much to provide yet another retail-heavy environment, but for some store space to be set aside to support the creatives whose studios and work spaces are housed at No. 37.

To be a truly Singaporean experience, authentic design is paired with authentic food. Night and weekend markets seek to offer a variety of shopping and dining options, including a potential destination for street food trucks. No. 37 includes F&B incubator spaces in the old school canteen, hosting aspiring chefs and food concepts. Similar to the vision in The Commons proposal, the Principal's House is imagined as a more formal F&B incubator offering "Chef's Table" experiences and cooking classes.



III. OPEN GREEN SPACES

The school's open spaces - the old field on the Emerald Hill side and the basketball court fronting Cairnhill Road - are retained and landscaped to provide active green spaces along Orchard Road. Both serve as grounds for public art displays, performances and interventions that encourage visitors to play and engage with their surroundings.

The open space fronting Cairnhill Road is enlivened and activated with community events including weekend and night-time markets, though at a frequency and scale that is mindful of potential noise and disamenity to surrounding residents.



Over the years, the school field has hosted all manner of celebratory events, displays and performances. In No. 37, it is activated with public art and installations to invite play and interaction. These can be programmed together with designers-in-residence at the Creative Park - installations can be simple and playful (public seating and the occasional gigantic coffee cup, an extra-large, multi-person swing, or a pop-up in conjunction with an art exhibition. (Images: Daphne Ng, URA, Dezeen)



The courtyards at the Singapore Art Museum were, similarly, tarmac-surface carparks and basketball courts when the building was occupied by St. Joseph's Institution. Today, they host museum events. Outdoor spaces at the Huashan 1914 Creative Park in Taipei are frequently used for different events and performances, including mini concerts by popular local musicians. (Images: Singapore Art Museum, Taiwan Tourism Bureau)

Examples of successful market-style events in Singapore include the annual Michelin Guide Street Food Fair, held this year at Resorts World, and ArtBox, held at Marina Bay. Smaller-scale versions of such events could be held at No. 37. (Image: Vulcanpost.com)

Police Married Quarters (PMQ)



PMQ was an often-cited reference in our public engagements, with several people suggesting it could be a model for the former SCGS. Once a dormitory for rank and file police officers, PMQ is now home to more than 100 design and creative enterprises in the heart of Hong Kong. Intended to nurture and support local “create-preneuers”, the site’s old residential units have been converted into design studios, boutiques, offices and even accomodation for visiting designers. PMQ’s regular night markets are popular among design enthusiasts, and its cafes and restaurants also help to draw a crowd of both locals and tourists.



PMQ is home to over a hundred shops and design studios, and its public spaces are often used for events - 1,600 papier-mache pandas occupied the central courtyard as part of a conservation and sustainability campaign in 2014. Markets and pop-up design events help to activate the space. (Images: Pinterest, PMQ)

The PMQ case also highlights some of the challenges in establishing and maintaining a viable tenant mix, and in continually activating the space. It is understood that the PMQ management board selects its tenants carefully in order to curate what it considers to be the “right” mix of brands and products. That said, reports have pointed to an “identity crisis” and “grumblings [over] management decisions”, with some tenants feeling the strategic direction of the site was unclear. With six floors of stores and restaurants, some felt it was difficult to sustain visitors’ interest in floor after floor of small shops.

One of PMQ’s unique offerings is Taste Library - a 2,000 square foot space resource centre about food from all around the world. The Library’s 3,000 books include historical texts, cook books and food-related guide books. The space has a magazine room, three separate reading rooms and a test kitchen that hosts classes and events.



Songshan Creative and Cultural Park



One of Taipei's largest creative arts spaces, this complex sits on the grounds of a former tobacco factory established by the Japanese in 1937. In 2011, the Taipei City government finished renovations of the area, changing the space into a large public park with exhibition halls, art shows, and conference spaces. Most exhibition halls and shops are located within the old tobacco factory, at the center of which is a large, beautiful Baroque Garden where guests can stroll or relax.

When the factory was in operation, it was also home to its employees and provided accommodation and food services, as well as education opportunities and nursery services. Today, those spaces have been modernized while retaining their original purposes, inviting guests to explore Taiwan's history and culture during the Japanese occupation.

The annual Taiwan Design Week 2016 was held at Songshan Creative and Cultural Park - the event acts as something of a tradeshow and platform for local designers who want to promote their brands and products. (Images: Candid Headlines, YouTube, TKHunt, Perspective)

Huashan 1914 Creative Park



(Images: Tricia Will Go Places)

Originally opened in 1914 as a privately owned winery that produced sake and ginseng wines, the 7.21-hectare Huashan 1914 site has grown into one of Taiwan's most vibrant cultural centers. A wide variety of events are now held at the renovated structures scattered throughout the complex. A remodeled warehouse, for example, has become a celebrated live music venue, Legacy Taipei. And a former packaging facility is now a popular art house cinema, Spot Theater.

The park regularly hosts concerts, exhibitions, lectures, theatrical shows and workshops; it is also home to stores selling locally crafted designer goods as well as stylish bars and restaurants. On weekends, it stages a bazaar offering all manner of handicrafts and food items. Today Huashan 1914 is not only the heart of Taiwan's creative pulse, but also a bridge to a unique architectural past.



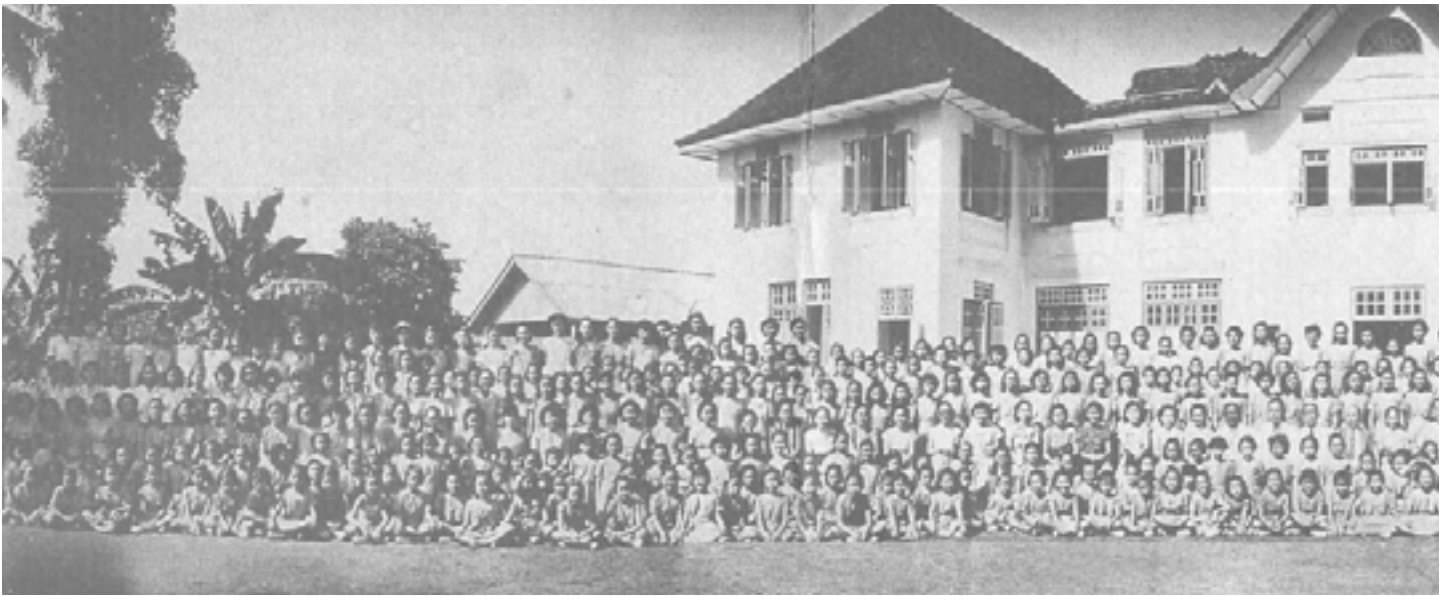
One of the most popular exhibits at Huashan 1914 was the 'Upside Down House', an 'ordinary' three floor American family house with everything inside - from the car to the appliances to the toys on the floor - built upside down. The exhibit was on display until July 22, 2016. (Images: Visions of Travel)

Examples of events held at Huashan 1914 include The Simple Life festival, one of the most celebrated music festivals in Taipei, which combines musical performances, agricultural products, lectures, forums and a creative craft market. Over 360,000 participants have taken part in the festival over the last decade. (Images: A Simple Day)



Part 4

Conclusion



Conclusion

We see 37 Emerald Hill as an opportunity to have history and heritage be the starting point for how the site is used in future, and are optimistic that the work of this campaign has established the meaning and potential it site holds for different stakeholders. It is our view, and that of the community whom we have engaged, that the site should not become yet another shopping mall or condominium. Instead, 37 Emerald Hill can be something that honours and celebrates its past as a pioneering institution for the education of Singaporean girls, while also adding a unique and inviting new use off an otherwise homogeneous commercial street.

Our hope is that the future owners or tenants, whatever the final use is determined to be, will engage our community to weave the SCGS story into the site, and fully consider the views of the students, alumni, and neighbours in the planning and programming of 37 Emerald Hill. In the meantime, we intend to continue the conversation with the school and the Alumni on how the heritage of the former SCGS can remain a part of every student's school-going experience.



“I support the Keep 37 Emerald Hill campaign, not from the point of view of a SCGS old girl who spent 10 years on the Emerald Hill campus, but as one of many Singaporeans who love our country enough to ask of ourselves, who we are and want to be as a people: who we are when we make a stand to preserve, not erase history when we can dig deeper, build higher, and what we pledge when we safeguard tangible links across generations to the next. I have faith in the creativity of our urban planners and engineering talent who can tease more use out of other plots of limited land, while keeping our hands off physical heritage that belong to future generations after us. We are just the current custodians - let's do our duty right.”

JASMINE NG

Part 5

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