

VINTAGE PHOTOS

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A GLIMPSE INTO PUDU'S PAST

The acquisition of some interesting images gives **ALAN TEH LEAM SENG** opportunity to reminisce about his carefree undergraduate years frequenting the Puduraya bus terminal and the key landmarks seen during the journey

EXCITEMENT reaches its peak as the morning drive to Kangar eventually leads to the popular Sunday market in Pauh, some 12km from the Perlis state capital. Uniquely located within a rubber estate that is almost equally bisected by Perlis State Route R6, Nat Pokok Getah bustles with activity right from the crack of dawn, with vendors hard at work setting up stalls that boast not only of various culinary delights, but also a wide selection of freshly harvested agricultural produce.

Judging from the sea of people present, it is clearly evident that this recently reopened shopping and food destination has not lost its lustre despite suffering from a near two-year pandemic-induced hiatus. The meandering path leads to my usual go-to section where antique dealers and second-hand goods dealers congregate.

A rich hunting ground for historical artefacts and sought-after collectibles, this particular section has yielded many wonderful additions to my growing collection over the years. Just like past visits, the sojourn this time reaps

handsome rewards in the form of vintage photographs and post-cards.

VINTAGE PHOTOGRAPHIC HAUL

While most depict social events, like nuptials and birthdays, the remainder highlight interesting street scenes, which include quite a number of buildings with eye-catching architectural designs. As in most instances, inquiry regarding the collection's provenance comes to naught as the seller, like most stall operators nearby, protects his livelihood by jealously guarding his sources.

The images, however, start to reveal more details upon scrutiny. With the same group of people posing in front of key federal capital landmarks, like Bangunan Sultan Abdul Samad, Masjid Negara, Kelab Di-Raja Selangor, Chin Woo Stadium and Bangunan Sulaiman, it is possible that a local Perlis family must have visited Kuala Lumpur sometime in the past. The niggling question about how these precious images ended up for sale in this lush rubber estate is anyone's guess.

While most places featured are rather easily identifiable, a par-



The Puduraya bus terminal in Kuala Lumpur in the late 1980s. PIX BY ALAN TEH LEAM SENG



Interesting memorabilia and collectibles can be found at Nat Pokok Getah in Perlis.

ticular dome-shaped structure proves quite puzzling until the name Jalan Pasar Bahru in the foreground offers a clue. Putting two and two together, it soon becomes evident that the photograph shows the iconic Pudu market building together with its adjacent open air retail area.

Within minutes, the photograph brings to the fore a flood of memories related to time spent as an undergraduate in Serdang, Selangor. Back then, semester breaks meant boarding the Toong Fong bus in Seri Kembangan and enjoying the sights as the naturally ventilated vehicle rumbled towards Puduraya in the city where express buses lined up by the score to take passengers to destinations all over the country, as well as Singapore and Thailand.

Especially busy during festive periods like Hari Raya, Deepavali and Chinese New Year, Puduraya was declared open by then prime minister Tun Hussein Onn on Oct 2, 1976.

Going on to gain pride of place as one of the oldest and most important transportation terminals in Kuala Lumpur until its closure in 2010 and eventual rebranding a year later as Pudu Sentral and eventually UTC KL, this multi-storey landmark had dedicated bus lanes at the basement level while ticketing counters, retail outlets and eating

shops were located directly above.

Devoid of departure and arrival announcements then, it was common for passengers to rush down the nearest staircase just to see if their bus had arrived or otherwise. In case of the latter happening, they would then leave the exhaust fume-saturated environment and rush back up to wait patiently before repeating the exercise a while later.

FAREWELL PUDURAYA

My last encounter with Puduraya took place on convocation day. Arriving in the wee hours of the morning from Singapore, where I was pursuing a National University of Singapore post-

graduate degree, the first Toong Fong bus plying the Kuala Lumpur-Seri Kembangan-Serdang route catapulted me straight to the Universiti Pertanian Malaysia (now Universiti Putra Malaysia) campus.

While hastily putting on the robe, helpfully collected by a friend from the Student Office days earlier, someone enquired about the absence of my coat. We all had a good laugh as unending research commitments had completely taken my mind off something as important as that.

Fortunately, topping the class and securing special awards from the Malaysian International Shipping Corporation Bhd and Esso helped make up for the embarrassment. Later, as friends and their families headed to photo studios for memorable snapshots, I was back in Puduraya waiting for the next Singapore-bound express bus.

Looking back at the countless trips made over the years, sights along Jalan Pudu proved most memorable compared with other parts of Kuala Lumpur as it was usually along this stretch that the journey was reduced to a crawl due to incessant traffic.

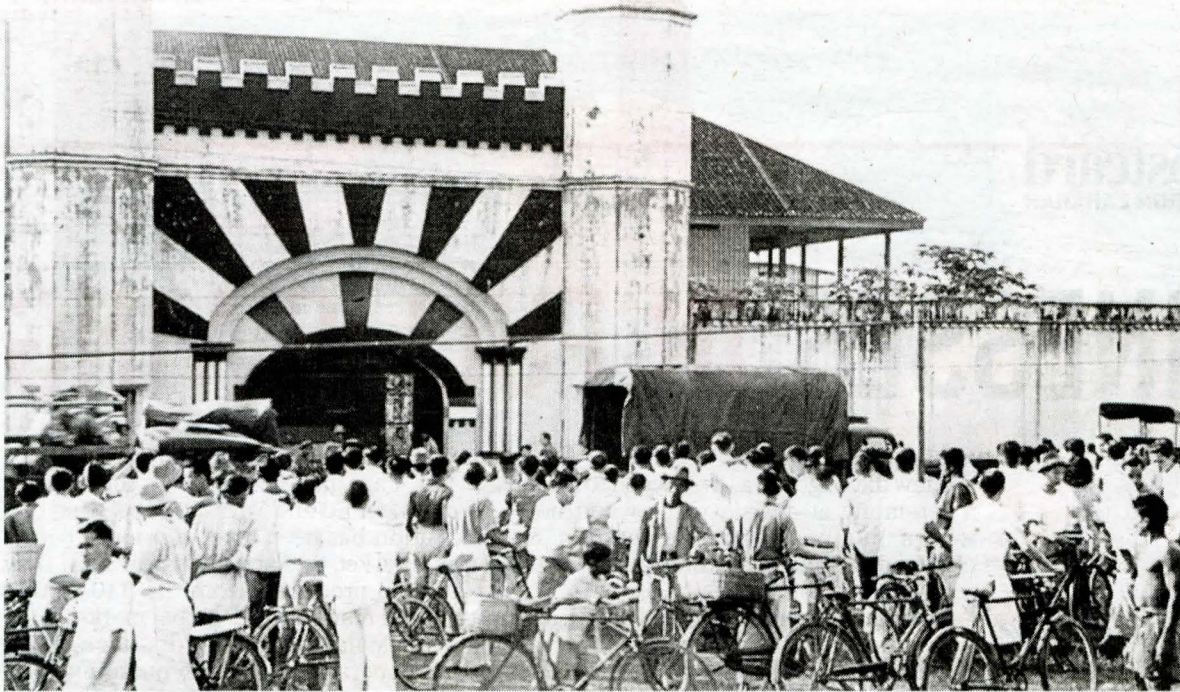
Although Jalan Pudu starts at the junction with Jalan Yew, close to where the Pudu wet market is located, the Toong Fong bus from Serdang always bypassed this area as it entered Jalan Pudu a



Some photographs in the collection featured key Kuala Lumpur landmarks, like this one taken in front of the Kuala Lumpur Railway Station.



The iconic Pudu wet market in the early 1970s.



Jubilant crowds gathered in front of Pudu Jail after the Japanese Occupation.

little further down the road after exiting Jalan Hang Tuah (formerly Shaw Road). The two major landmarks that remain fresh in my mind until today are Pudu Jail and Tung Shin Hospital.

HISTORIC JAIL

The history of Pudu Jail can be traced all the way back to the early days of Kuala Lumpur. Built on the site of a former Chinese burial ground and close to the original Pudu village that was established in the 1880s when the British decided to set up two brick-making factories to speed up Kuala Lumpur's development, the prison was the only jail in Selangor at that time.

Almost immediately after its completion in 1895, Pudu Jail was struck by misfortune when a severe cholera outbreak claimed the lives of several hundred inmates. Subsequent investigations identified the culprit as the water supply system, which depended entirely on a former cemetery well. Apparently, this solitary source was compromised during the prison's four-year-long construction, resulting in the water becoming badly contaminated with deadly pathogens.

Constructed using convict labour, Pudu Jail was initially used to incarcerate both men and women serving short prison sentences. Later, as serious crimes grew in tandem with the growing population, the penal institution began meting out corporal punishments. Conducted within the prison grounds and in full view of the other inmates, caning served both as punishment to the receiver and deterrent to the onlookers.

During World War 2, Pudu Prison was home to thousands of Allied prisoners of war. Lack of manpower prompted the Japanese authorities to allow captured officers to control their own men. This top-down approach effectively maintained order until hostilities came to an end in September 1945.

The early days of post-war Malaya, however, saw a reversal of fate when warders, Japanese officials and their collaborators occupied the vacated cells while awaiting judgment at special tribunals set up by the British Mil-



The street scene around the Pudu area in the early 1930s.

itary Administration.

Although Pudu Prison saw few inmates in the form of captured communist terrorists during the 12-year Malayan Emergency, which began in 1948, the jail continued to serve its purpose without fear or favour. Over a decade later, it gained nationwide attention following the capture of notorious criminal Wong Swee Chin on Feb 16, 1976. Sentenced to death over a spate of armed robberies, Wong, who also went by the name Botak Chin, was executed five years later.

In 1986, a group of prisoners held two prison staff members hostage for six days before the police's counterterrorism team swung into action and ended the drama without bloodshed. The perpetrators were sentenced to death for their crime and were hanged in Pudu Prison on Oct 10, 1989.

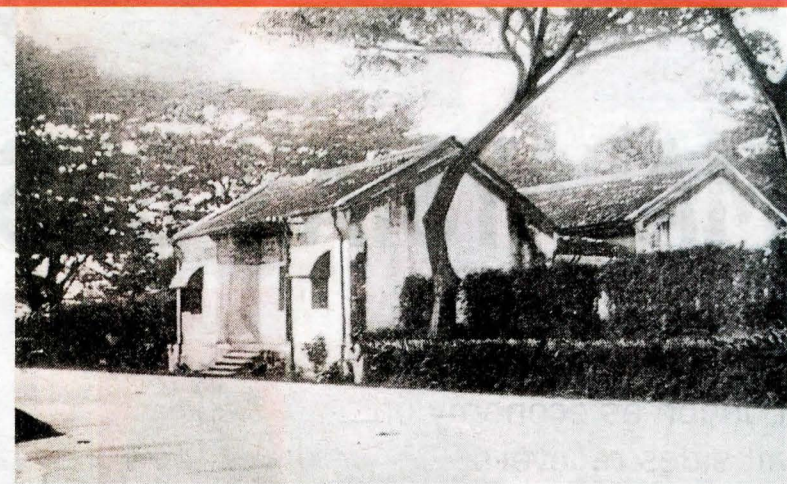
As the new millennium approached, the authorities called time on Pudu Jail and its inmates were subsequently transferred to prisons in Kajang and Sungai Buloh. Serving briefly as a museum, Jalan Pudu's century-old landmark was demolished in December 2012. Through urban revival, the place is now home to the Bukit Bintang City Centre.

ENDURING HEALTHCARE CENTRE

Located a little further down Jalan Pudu is another enduring local institution. Securing its place in history as the first Chinese medical establishment in Kuala Lumpur, Tung Shin Hospital came into existence during the time when immigrant work-

ers arrived by the droves to work on newly opened tin mines all over Selangor. This exponential population growth eventually extended the colonial government-sponsored healthcare service beyond its upper limits.

Noticing this glaring inadequacy and realising the dire threat faced by society as a whole, Yap Kwan Seng immediately set plans in motion to provide free medical care for the underprivileged, including sick tin mine labourers. In order to achieve this benevolent act, the fifth and also last Kuala Lumpur Kapitan China established the Pooi Shin Thong



Tung Shin Hospital in the early 20th century along Jalan Pudu.

charity in 1881 at a Petaling Street shophouse manned by two traditional medicine practitioners.

Made during the time when our capital was nothing more than just a small village on the cusp of greatness, the act to set up Malaya's first Chinese medical clinic is believed to be Yap's greatest philanthropic achievement, apart from a slew of other social contributions made to assist the needy.

After taking into account the overwhelming response received as the population continued to boom in the 1890s, Yap decided to improve services further by turning the small private clinic into a full-fledged community hospital.

Since its official opening at the current Jalan Pudu premises on Nov 22, 1895, the community-managed Tung Shin Hospital continued receiving support from wealthy donors to further improve services. As a show of deep appreciation, the medical institution named wards after those who contributed generously towards its cause.

For instance, the Haw Par Ward came into existence thanks to the generosity of the famed Tiger Balm brothers, Aw Boon Haw and Aw Boon Par. Given a prominent place right next to the main en-

trance, the ward was initially used as a grand hall, medical department and library before becoming a medical staff hostel today.

With the incorporation of western medicine after the Japanese Occupation and the establishment of the Tung Shin Academy of Nursing in 1992, Tung Shin Hospital today has celebrated countless milestones in its proud and long history as the first and longest running non-profit hospital offering medical services covering both key disciplines.

Looking back, Pudu has definitely come a long way since its humble beginning as an obscure village set amidst a dense tiger-infested jungle in the late 19th century. Successfully overcoming daunting challenges and shrewdly taking advantage of abundant opportunities to become an integral part of modern-day Kuala Lumpur, Pudu has surmounted a fair share of familiar landmarks to the passing of time and embraced exciting new additions while holding on steadfastly to the rest.

Continuing to grow from strength to strength, Pudu's contribution to Malaysia's dynamic capital can only get better as our nation marches confidently towards a promising future.



Tung Shin Hospital owes its origin to a shophouse in Petaling Street.