

MEDIA RELEASE

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SERENDIPITOUS DISCOVERY OF TECK KEE BOUNDARY MARKER LEADS TO RESEARCH AND SHOWCASE ON PROMINENT TEOCHEW BUSINESSMAN AND COMMUNITY LEADER

Visitors can look out for the marker at Sun Yat Sen Nanyang Memorial Hall



Teck Kee boundary marker being assessed and cared for at the Heritage Conservation Centre, before being displayed. (Photos courtesy of National Heritage Board).

Singapore, 23 February 2022 - Did you know that Jalan Teck Kee, a small road off Yio Chu Kang Link was named after Chop Teck Kee, a company owned by Teochew businessman and community leader, Sim Liang Whang (沈联芳)? New insights into this Chinese business pioneer and community leader were revealed today, with the announcement of the discovery of a Teck Kee boundary marker¹, by National Heritage Board (NHB).

2 The discovery took place during the extraction of the Hong Hin boundary marker of the estate of Peranakan businessman and community leader Tan Kim Seng at Ulu Pandan Forest – more commonly known as Dover Forest – back in October last year. The Teck Kee boundary marker was found to be lying in close proximity of the Hong Hin boundary marker. Following extraction and further

¹ *Boundary markers are typically used to identify and establish the location of land properties. During the colonial period, landowners were required to install boundary markers at critical points (usually corner or turning points) on their properties.*



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research, the boundary marker was identified as the only known one that delineated land owned by Sim Liang Whang.

3 A Teochew businessman in the 1900s, Sim Liang Whang (1856 – 1921) played a significant role in the development of the local Chinese community. He joined the Tongmenghui (or Chinese Revolutionary Alliance) Singapore branch in 1905 and contributed to the revolutionary efforts of Dr. Sun Yat Sen. The pioneer was also one of the founding members of revolutionary newspaper *Chong Shing Yit Pao* in 1907, as well as one of Singapore’s earliest banks — Sze Hai Tong Banking & Insurance Company Limited (later renamed Four Seas Communications Bank Limited, and subsequently merged with OCBC Bank), and Tuan Mong School.

4 Engraved with three Chinese characters which read “Teck Kee’s Boundary” (“德記界“), the marker delineated two land lots owned by Sim Liang Whang from 1910 to 1921. The land covered a total area of 1.75 hectares, which extended from Dover Forest to the north bank of the Sungei Ulu Pandan canal. [Please refer to the **Annex** for more information about the marker’s specifications and Sim Liang Whang as a pioneer.]

5 Following conservation treatment at NHB’s Heritage Conservation Centre, the boundary marker has been accessioned into the National Collection and is now on display at the Sun Yat Sen Nanyang Memorial Hall’s (SYSNMH) Gallery 4 – *Chinese Business Pioneers*.

6 Mr Alvin Tan, Deputy Chief Executive (Policy & Community) of NHB, said: “The boundary marker is of historical significance because it is the only known boundary marker associated with Sim Liang Whang, and it is the only artefact associated with the Chinese pioneer that we currently have in the National Collection. Moving forward, we will work with SYSNMH to educate current and future generations of Singaporeans about his life and contributions as part of the memorial hall’s efforts to showcase the stories of the early Chinese pioneers of Singapore.”

7 Mr Winston Lim, General Manager at SYSNMH, said: “The showcase of the boundary marker at SYSNMH complements our ongoing efforts to enhance gallery content and artefacts for our audiences. Gallery 4 of the memorial hall spotlights influential Chinese leaders and businessmen such as Sim Liang Whang who were instrumental in shaping the Chinese community in Singapore. We hope that visitors will discover new stories on the life and contributions of these business pioneers when they visit this permanent gallery.”

8 NHB has also produced a video which will feature behind-the-scenes footage of the extraction and conservation of the boundary marker, as well as research findings uncovering the lesser-known aspects of Sim Liang Whang’s story. The video will be uploaded on NHB’s resource portal, roots.gov.sg, today.

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About the National Heritage Board

The National Heritage Board (NHB) was formed on 1 August 1993. As the custodian of Singapore's heritage, NHB is responsible for telling the Singapore story, sharing the Singaporean experience and imparting our Singapore spirit.

NHB's mission is to preserve and celebrate the shared heritage of our diverse communities, for the purpose of education, nation-building and cultural understanding. It manages the national museums and heritage institutions, and sets policies relating to heritage sites, monuments and the National Collection. Through the National Collection, NHB curates heritage programmes and presents exhibitions to connect the past, present and future generations of Singaporeans. NHB is a statutory board under the Ministry of Culture, Community and Youth. Please visit www.nhb.gov.sg for more information.

ANNEX

Specifications of Teck Kee boundary marker

- Dimensions – 82cm (length) x 17cm (width) x 14cm (depth)
- Weight – 26kg
- Material – Granite
- Inscription – “德記界”
 - Hokkien pronunciation: Teck Kee
 - Mandarin (Pin Yin) pronunciation: De Ji

About Sim Liang Whang (沈联芳)

- Sim Liang Whang (1856 – 1921) was a Teochew businessman and community leader in early 20th century Singapore. Born in Chao'an District (潮安县) in Guangdong Province, Sim came to Singapore in his teens and subsequently established Chop Teck Kee and was the sole proprietor. As a businessman, he traded in commodities such as pepper, gambier and rubber.

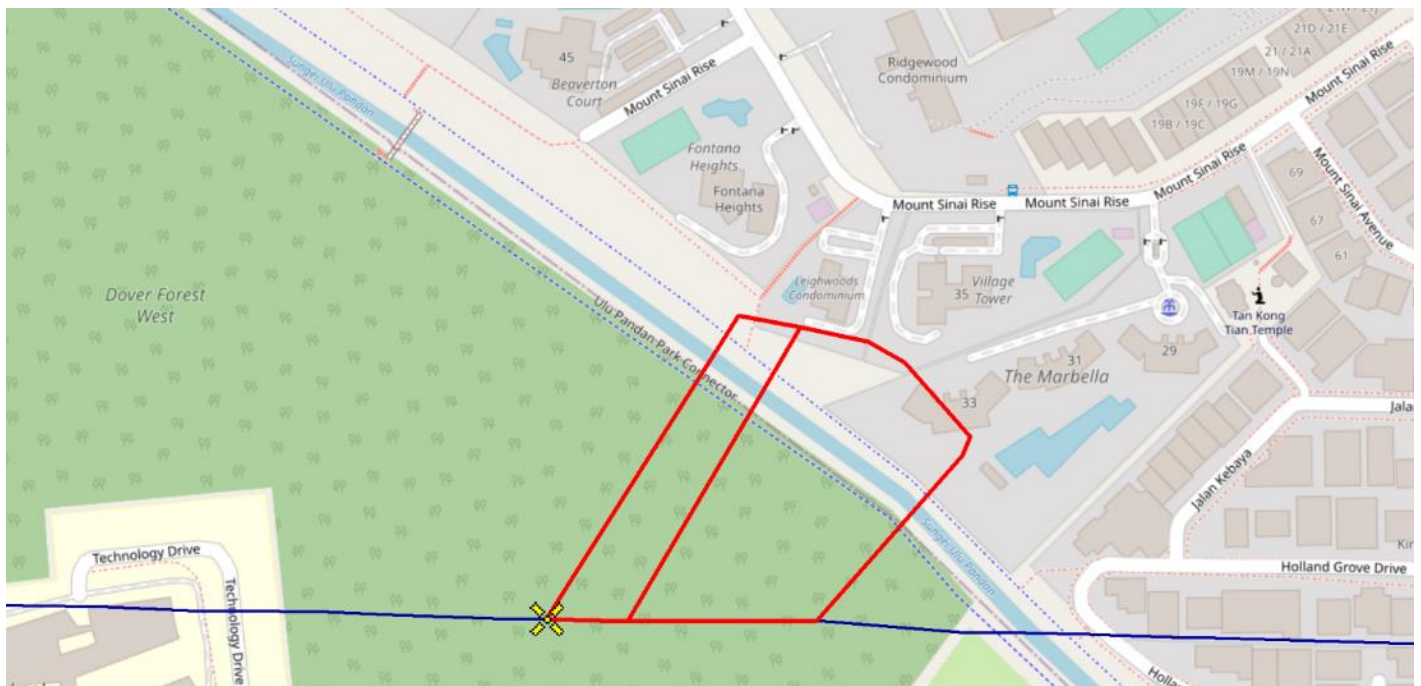
Note: The marker is inscribed with the Chinese characters “德記界” (i.e. Teck Kee's boundary), which was derived from the name of Sim's company, Chop Teck Kee.

- In 1905, Sim Liang Whang joined the Tongmenghui (or the Chinese Revolutionary Alliance) Singapore branch with his eldest son, Sim Boon Kwang (沈文光), and contributed to the revolutionary efforts of Dr. Sun Yat Sen. In 1907, together with Chinese business pioneers Teo Eng Hock and Tan Chor Lam as well as others, Sim founded revolutionary newspaper *Chong Shing Yit Pao* (中兴日报) in Singapore, which ceased publication in 1910.
- He was also one of the founding members of Tuan Mong School (端蒙学堂) which was established by Teochew clan leaders in 1906. Tuan Mong School was a 'new style' primary school that adopted China's education system and policies and used textbooks imported from China. These schools were set up with the support of the Qing government during the period to promote education in Nanyang.
- In addition, Sim Liang Whang was also a founding member of one of Singapore's earliest banks – Sze Hai Tong Banking & Insurance Company Limited in 1907. The bank was later renamed Sze Hai Tong Bank Limited in 1957, and Four Seas Communications Bank Limited in 1964. OCBC acquired it in 1972, and subsequently merged with it in 1998.

- Sim Liang Whang had four known names and/or aliases. Within the Chinese community, he was known as: Sim Liang Whang (沈联芳) and Sim Keok Choon (沈克俊). Sim Liang Whang was the name that was commonly found in Chinese records, while Sim Keok Choon is believed to be his original name. In English records, Sim was recorded as Sim Choon Kee (沈俊记) or Sim Teck Kee (沈德记). Sim Teck Kee was a common name formation used by Chinese businessmen in the past. They would combine the proprietor/owner's surname and business name.

About Sim Liang Whang's Estate at Ulu Pandan

- Based on ongoing research, there were two lots in Ulu Pandan owned by Sim Liang Whang, occupying a total area of 1.75 hectares.
- Sim's landholdings at Ulu Pandan extended from today's Dover Forest to the north bank of Sungei Ulu Pandan and the southern fringes of Leighwoods and The Marbella condominiums. (See map below for more details).



Historical land lot boundaries showing Sim Liang Whang's land lots are outlined in red. The original site of Teck Kee boundary marker is denoted by a yellow cross. (Image courtesy of NHB).

- The earliest map of Singapore showing the details of Sim Liang Whang's two land lots was a 1924 topographical map series (please refer to the map below). Details for this map series were obtained from surveys conducted between 1921 and 1923. Features on this map would date to the period when Sim Liang Whang last owned the land in February 1921.
- Based on the map, it could be established that rubber was the main crop cultivated in the area.

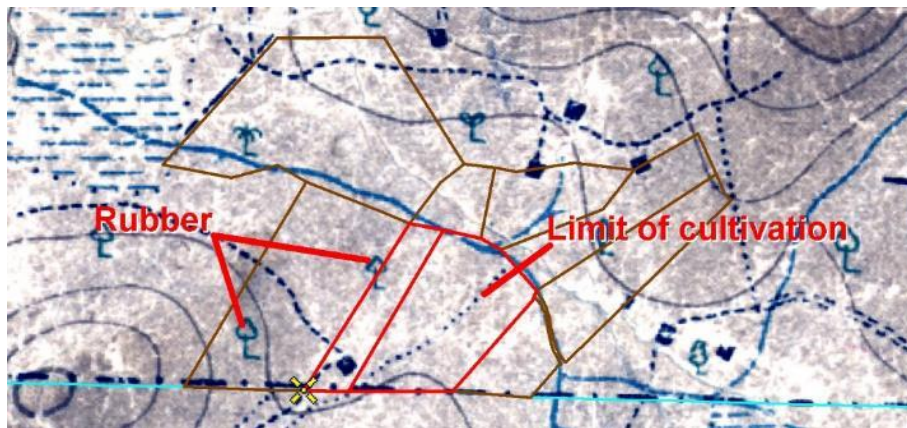


Figure: Extract of 1924 topographical map showing the land use pattern for the two land lots owned by Sim Liang Whang.

Source: https://www.nas.gov.sg/archivesonline/maps_building_plans/record-details/f9bed36a-115c-11e3-83d5-0050568939ad