

MEDIA RELEASE

For Immediate Release

NEW ORCHARD HERITAGE TRAIL REVEALS THE FASCINATING TALES AND HISTORY BEHIND ONE OF SINGAPORE'S MOST WELL-KNOWN PRECINCTS

The National Heritage Board's 18th heritage trail brings together stories from the community to uncover the lesser-known sides to Orchard.



Orchard Road before the area was developed, c. 1900

Collection of Singapore Philatelic Museum, donated by Mr Koh Seow Chuan

Singapore, 29 August 2018 – Prior to its transformation into a bustling shopping district, the Orchard area was a valley flanked by the hills of Emerald and Cairnhill amongst others. It provided fertile land for plantations and orchards growing economic crops such as nutmeg and housed cemetery grounds to bury the departed. The *Orchard Heritage Trail* brings these many different aspects of the area's history together, and presents a side to Orchard many might not know about.

2. The new *Orchard Heritage Trail* is the National Heritage Board's 18th heritage trail and charts Orchard's metamorphosis into the heart of Singapore's tourism and retail scene, through its long-standing iconic landmarks, and tales of the communities that lived and worked there over the years. In fact, many firsts for Singapore happened in the Orchard area, including Singapore's first supermarket, Cold Storage, which remains at its original location at Centrepoint Shopping Centre, and also the first public swimming pool by YMCA at Fort Canning. The trail also includes six National Monuments, and a UNESCO World Heritage Site.

Understanding Orchard through the eyes of the community

3. As with all of NHB's heritage trails, the *Orchard Heritage Trail* is a self-guided trail which features 71 heritage sites that dot the Orchard area spanning from Dhoby Ghaut to Tanglin. The trail features 10 trail markers (six of which have been installed, with four more to be installed over time), which provide fascinating insights into Orchard Road's history, and lesser known facts about the precinct. Please refer to **Annex A** for the full list of sites and markers.

4. The trail covers various landmarks, such as former residences of early pioneers such as Lim Boon Keng and Tan Yeok Nee who left an indelible mark on the development of the area, and the places of worship that were built as different communities flourished in the area. It also featured the stories of various communities including the Chinese, Malay, Indians and Jews settled in the Orchard Road area during the 1800s. Some notable community groups included the Indian washermen (or *dhobies*) after whom Dhoby Ghaut was named; the Teochew community who resided in Orchard's own kampong, Kampong Teochew; and the Peranakans at Emerald Hill.

5. As part of its research for the heritage trail, NHB gathered personal memories and photographs from former and current residents and regular visitors of the area. An open call was conducted through Facebook, which attracted stories and memories from Singaporeans from all walks of life. These accounts reveal little-known stories of spaces, such as a fruit orchard that used to exist next to the Thai Embassy, the old wet market between Koek Road and Cuppage Road, and insights into the everyday lives of the Peranakan community on Emerald Hill from the mid-1990s.

6. NHB also worked with students from Nanyang Polytechnic's School of Interactive & Digital Media to produce animated clips about the heritage of the Orchard area, from a youth's perspective. These clips will be featured on NHB's heritage portal *Roots.sg* as part of the Orchard Heritage Trail's digital offerings.

7. Mr. Alvin Tan, Assistant Chief Executive (Policy & Community) said: “Through our latest trail, NHB hopes to showcase the Orchard area’s history and diversify its attractions by highlighting that Orchard is more than just a place where ‘you shop till you drop’. In doing so, we hope that locals and tourists alike will enjoy the ‘hidden stories’ of Orchard, explore its historical landmarks, and reacquaint themselves with the area’s often overlooked heritage gems.”

Three thematic routes for easy exploration of its history, people and green spaces

8. The *Orchard Heritage Trail* includes three specially curated thematic routes that allow visitors to explore different aspects of Orchard’s multifaceted history, according to their interests and in their own time. The three routes are:

- **“Orchard Road’s Historical Gems”** (40 minutes; on foot | 30 minutes; on foot and bus) – This route brings visitors around the historical landmarks along Orchard Road. It presents the legacies of the communities who lived and worked at the area long before it became a street known for its shopping malls. Some sites include widely recognised buildings such as Singapore’s first department store C K Tang, Goodwood Park Hotel, which is a National Monument that was built in 1900 as a German social club, and The Heeren, site of the former mixed-use Heeren Building.
- **“Communities and Cemeteries”** (1 hour 15 minutes; on foot) – This route explores places of worship, schools, homes, community organisations and cemeteries. This route includes the only mosque on Orchard Road – Masjid Al-Falah, as well as Sian Teck Tng, a century-old Buddhist temple and former women’s home.
- **“From Orchard to Garden”** (2 hours; on foot | 1 hour 30 minutes; on foot and bus) – Designed for nature lovers, this route takes visitors to the various green spaces that exist or used to exist within the Orchard area, including the Butterfly Trail @ Orchard and Singapore’s first UNESCO World Heritage Site, the Singapore Botanic Gardens.

9. The *Orchard Heritage Trail* companion guide and map (the latter is available in four languages – English, Mandarin, Malay and Tamil) can be downloaded from *Roots.sg*. Printed

copies of these will also be available at NHB museums and heritage institutions, as well as the Singapore Visitor Centre at Orchard Gateway.

10. For more information, please refer to:

- **Annex A:** Orchard *Heritage Trail* – List of heritage sites, and information on heritage markers
- **Annex B:** Five things you never knew about Orchard
- **Annex C:** Full list of NHB's 18 heritage trails

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ORCHARD HERITAGE TRAIL MARKERS



YMCA and Orchard Road Presbyterian Church, mid-1900s

Courtesy of National Museum of Singapore, National Heritage Board

Orchard Road Presbyterian Church and YMCA

The current sites of Orchard Road Presbyterian Church and Young Men's Christian Association (YMCA) were previously the locations of cattle sheds and a temporary hospital for Indian convicts, who were brought in to Singapore as indentured labourers by the British.

Orchard Road Presbyterian Church started as Mission Chapel at Bras Basah Road. In 1875, the government granted the congregation a plot of land for a new church. This became Orchard Road Presbyterian Church, which was designed in an elegant neoclassical style with a small roof dome.

The church's early congregation included many Scots, and as a result, it was also called Scots Church. In Malay, it was known as Greja Kechil or "Small Church" due to its size. Today, the church caters to the diverse local Presbyterian community with services in English, Mandarin, Indonesian and German.

Next to the church is the Singapore branch of YMCA, which was established in 1902 to promote healthy physical and social activities for young men. It was located at Armenian Street before relocating to its current site in 1911. During World War II, the Kempeitai (Japanese Military Police) occupied the YMCA building and used it as a detention centre.

YMCA resumed its activities after the war, and its membership expanded. In 1984, YMCA's original building was replaced by its current 9-storey building. Today, YMCA continues to provide a range of educational and community services for the public.



House of Tan Yeok Nee

The House of Tan Yeok Nee was built in 1882-85 as a family home by Tan Yeok Nee, a gambier merchant from Chaozhou, China. When he first arrived in Singapore, he made a living as a cloth pedlar. However, he later established himself as a successful gambier and pepper planter in Johor, Malaya, and began trading in these commodities.



**The former headquarters of
Salvation Army at the Former House
of Tan Yeok Nee, c. 1980s**

Courtesy of National Museum of
Singapore, National Heritage Board

The House of Tan Yeok Nee is a Teochew-style residential building with two courtyards. Its intricate roof is decorated with wooden carvings, painted plaster reliefs, and colourful porcelain pieces known as *qian ci* or *jian nian*.

Tan Yeok Nee later sold the house and returned to China. During this time, the Singapore-Kranji railway line was being built and the house was acquired for use by the station master of the nearby Tank Road Railway Station from 1902. Later, the building housed charities such as St Mary's Home, an orphanage and boarding school for girls, in 1905-32 and The Salvation Army in 1938-91. The House of Tan Yeok Nee was gazetted a National Monument in 1974.



**Orchard Road Municipal Market,
1903**

Courtesy of National Museum of
Singapore, National Heritage Board

Former Orchard Road Market and Glutton's Square

This area between Koek Road and Cuppage Road was once the site of Orchard Road's first market established in 1880 by lawyer and Municipal Commissioner Edwin Koek. In 1890, the market was acquired by the government and rebuilt as Orchard Road Municipal Market. It sold fresh produce and was well-patronised by residents of the nearby Emerald Hill.

In 1905, Cold Storage, which later developed to become Singapore's first supermarket, opened nearby. It sold frozen produce imported from Australia and catered mainly to the European residents of the Orchard Road area. The Cold Storage building also housed Magnolia Snack Bar, a popular café known for its milkshakes and ice cream.

Besides these establishments, there were also hawker stalls along Koek Road which sold local favourites such as *char kway teow* (stir-fried flat noodles), *sup kambing* (mutton soup) and *satay beehoon* (vermicelli in satay sauce). In 1966, these hawkers were relocated to an open space facing the present Centrepoint, known as Glutton's Square (now Orchard Central). This space served as a carpark in the day and transformed into a bustling open-air hawker centre in the evening.

During 1977-78, the hawkers of Glutton's Square were relocated to sheltered food centres at Newton Circus and Cuppage Centre due to hygiene concerns. Around the same time, on the other side of Orchard Road, the Orchard Road Municipal Market made way for Orchard Point shopping centre while Cold Storage was redeveloped into Centrepoint.



Shophouses at Emerald Hill, 1969

Courtesy of Urban Redevelopment Authority

Emerald Hill

Emerald Hill was the site of a former nutmeg orchard established in 1837 by a postal clerk, William Cuppage. The area was acquired in 1900 by businessmen Seah Eng Kiat and Seah Boon Kang, who then sold smaller parcels of land to new owners to build terrace houses and shophouses. During this period, Emerald Hill became a popular address, especially for Peranakan (Straits Chinese) families.

In the mid-1900s, Emerald Hill Road became known as Tang Leng Tiam Yia Yee Hang or “Tanglin Cinema Street” in Teochew, as the road faced a cinema. This cinema opened in 1914 as Palladium and was renamed Pavilion in 1925. In 1971, the cinema stopped operations and its site was later developed into Hotel Phoenix and Specialist’s Centre (now Orchard Gateway).

Emerald Hill was also home to the Singapore Chinese Girls’ School (SCGS) during the period 1926-94. SCGS was established in 1899 at Hill Street to provide Chinese girls with a modern education. In 1926, the school relocated to Emerald Hill and occupied the site of Claregrove, a house belonging to one of the school’s founders, Dr Lim Boon Keng.

Emerald Hill, together with Peranakan Place and Cuppage Terrace, was collectively designated as a conservation area in 1989. In 1994, SCGS relocated to its new premises at Dunearn Road but its former premises are still around today.



A prayer session at the official opening of Masjid Al-Falah, 1987

Ministry of Information and the Arts Collection, courtesy of National Archives of Singapore

Masjid Al-Falah

Masjid Al-Falah was established in 1987 to cater to the Muslim community working and living in or visiting the Orchard Road area. *Masjid* is Arabic for “mosque” while *falah* means “success”. The mosque is the first of its kind in Singapore, as it is located on the podium of a 32-storey commercial building.

Masjid Al-Falah was established at a time when the older mosques in or around the area were relocating to other parts of Singapore to make way for Orchard Road’s redevelopment. It is frequented by Muslims of all races from Singapore and abroad.

Prior to its opening, the most prominent mosque in Orchard Road had been the Angullia Park Mosque, which occupied the site of the present Wheelock Place. It was built around 1933 by Ahmad Mohamed Salleh Angullia, a prominent member of the Muslim and Gujarati communities in



Singapore. He was also a trustee of various mosques and Muslim organisations.

A number of other mosques used to be located around Orchard Road, including one at the former site of the Indonesian Embassy, Wisma Indonesia. This mosque closed in the 1980s when Wisma Indonesia was redeveloped into Wisma Atria. There were also smaller mosques located in villages along Exeter Road (formerly Paya Lane) and Ellis Road (off Tanglin Road).



Tudor Court, 1988

Courtesy of Urban Redevelopment Authority

Tanglin

During the early 1800s, Tanglin was a hilly district covered by gambier plantations. “Tanglin” is likely to be derived from an old Teochew name, Twa Tang Leng, which means “great east hill peaks”. By the 1840s, these plantations were replaced by nutmeg orchards. However, these orchards failed within a few years and were soon replaced by homes for wealthy residents.

In the early 1900s, many houses in Tanglin and nearby Nassim Road were built in a style known as “black and white” or mock Tudor. These houses had white plastered walls framed by dark timber beams. Tudor Court, built in the 1920s to serve as quarters for civil servants, is an example of this colonial-era architectural style.

In 1970, Tudor Court was officially opened by then Minister for Finance Hon Sui Sen as the headquarters of the former Singapore Tourism Promotion Board (STPB, now Singapore Tourism Board). In the same decade, STPB started to develop the area around Tudor Court as part of its efforts to promote the Orchard Road area as a tourist belt.

The Singapore Handicraft Centre was established to showcase traditional handicrafts of Singapore and Southeast Asia. Next to it, a food centre known as Rasa Singapura featured some of Singapore’s best hawker cuisine. During the 1990s, these two sites were redeveloped together and became Tanglin Mall.



Red Cross House (*Marker to be installed at a later date*)

Courtesy of National Heritage Board

Red Cross House

Orchard Road is home to the Singapore Red Cross (SRC), which was founded in 1949. This humanitarian organisation provided crucial first aid, social welfare and relief services in the years before such services were widely available in Singapore. For example, SRC was actively involved in relief work for local disasters in the 1960s-80s such as the Bukit Ho Swee fire in 1961, the Potong Pasir floods in 1966 and a cable car accident in 1983.

The society operated from a number of temporary locations before relocating permanently to its current building, Red Cross House. The building was officially opened in 1961 by Yang di-Pertuan Negara Yusof bin Ishak, who was also then Patron of the SRC. Red Cross House was originally a two-storey building with a boomerang-shaped concrete canopy over its main entrance. It was designed by Dr Ho Kok Hoe, a pioneering architect who was also President of the Singapore Art Society. A third storey was added in the 1970s and the building was conserved in 2014.

Today, SRC continues to serve the less fortunate locally and in the region. It continues to run the Red Cross Home for the Disabled, which was started in 1952 and provides day care, respite care and residential care to persons with multiple disabilities. Its volunteers also provide first aid coverage at national and community events such as the National Day Parade, Southeast Asian (SEA) Games and Singapore Grand Prix.



Winsland House II (*Marker to be installed at a later date*)

Courtesy of National Heritage Board

Winsland House II

Winsland House II consists of a pair of Edwardian-era semi-detached houses that were built in the 1910s, along with a new office development built in the early 2000s. It sits on a former 173-acre nutmeg estate that was first developed by Dr Thomas Oxley.

Besides serving as residences, these properties have housed the Singapore Tong San Association, a clan association, and the Orchard School of Arts and Commerce, a private college.

In the 1990s, the land was sold for redevelopment and the new corporate owner offered the building for conservation. Restoration works, which took place in 1996-97, retained aspects such as the open verandahs in their original condition. The airy and shady verandah spaces are an example of how European building aesthetics were adapted to the tropics. The restored building was conferred the URA Architectural Heritage Awards in 2002.



Cuppage Terrace (*Marker to be installed at a later date*)

Courtesy of Urban Redevelopment Authority

Cuppage Terrace

Cuppage Terrace consists of a row of 17 Malacca-style terrace houses built in 1905-07 by Boey Lian Chin, who was the managing director of the (now defunct) Kwong Yik Banking Corporation. The houses were intended for the growing middle classes who wished to live away from the overcrowded city centre.

These two-storey terrace houses have a distinctive and uniform façade design with full-height French windows on the upper floors. These windows are unique to the era and designed with arched openings and moveable jalousies (shutters made of rows of angled slats) that are crowned with glazed fan-lights (semi-circular windows). Each house also features a five-foot way on the ground floor, which is a characteristic feature of old colonial-era architecture in Singapore.

In 1976, the Urban Redevelopment Authority (URA) embarked on a comprehensive, landmark redevelopment of the Cuppage Road precinct. Cuppage Terrace was earmarked for rehabilitation and adaptive reuse as commercial spaces, while the rest of the precinct was rebuilt.

Together with Emerald Hill and Cairnhill, Cuppage Terrace was collectively gazetted as a conservation area in 1989. With the pedestrianisation of Cuppage Road in the 1980s, Cuppage Terrace has become a popular evening destination with its many cafes, restaurants and bars.



Tang Plaza (*Marker to be installed at a*

Tang Plaza

During the 1950s, the Scotts Road side of Orchard Road was a quiet neighbourhood. This began to change on 20 October 1958 when businessman Tang Choon Keng opened his signature department store, C K Tang, by the Scotts Road junction of Orchard Road.

Tang had arrived in Singapore in 1923 from Swatow, China, and worked as salesman of fine lace and linen which he brought from his hometown. In 1932, Tang

<p><i>later date)</i></p> <p>Courtesy of C. K. Tang Ltd</p>	<p>opened his first store at a rented shophouse along River Valley Road. As his business grew, he relocated to a row of seven shophouses at River Valley Road (now Gainurn Building, named after Tang's father, Tang Gain Urn). After World War II, Tang learnt that some Orchard Road residents were preparing to leave Singapore and decided to buy their land, which was located across from the Teochew cemetery.</p> <p>Tang felt that Orchard Road was a good business location as residents of Tanglin and Holland Road, as well as people from Johor, would pass by the area on their way downtown. Tang thus commissioned architect Ang Keng Leng to design a five-storey building based on the Imperial Palace in Beijing, China, as he felt that a building with such distinctive features would attract the attention of shoppers. Consequently, the original C K Tang building had a pagoda-like roof with green tiles, which was supported by large red columns.</p> <p>As the first department store along Orchard Road, C K Tang quickly became a landmark shopping destination. The original building was replaced by the larger Tang Plaza in 1982, although some of the distinctive features of the original building such as a green-tiled roof and red colonnades were incorporated into the design of the new plaza. Today, its 33-storey pagoda-like tower and podium house the Marriott Tang Plaza Hotel and Tangs Department Store.</p>
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ORCHARD HERITAGE TRAIL LIST OF SITES

1. Former Government Hill (now Fort Canning Park)
2. Former cemeteries, Sri Sivan Temple and Amber Mansions (now Dhoby Ghaut MRT)
3. House of Tan Yeok Nee (*National Monument*)
4. Former Tank Road Railway Station
5. Istana & Sri Temasek (*National Monument*)
6. Istana Park & Istana Heritage Gallery
7. Singapore Botanic Gardens (*UNESCO World Heritage Site*)
8. Dhoby Ghaut Green
9. Penang Road Open Space
10. Stamford Canal
11. Young Men's Christian Association (YMCA)
12. Orchard Road Presbyterian Church

13. Former Teochew Cemetery (now Ngee Ann City)
14. Oxley's Former Houses at 165/167 Penang Road (now Winsland House II)
15. Angullia Park & Former Angullia Park Mosque
16. Eden Hall
17. Black & White Houses in the Orchard area
18. Former Hurricane House (now Royal Thai Embassy)
19. Former Wisma Indonesia (now Wisma Atria)
20. Embassies and High Commissions in the Orchard area
21. Former Jade House
22. Wellington House
23. Emerald Hill & Peranakan Place
24. Former Singapore Chinese Girls' School
25. Cuppage Terrace
26. Cairnhill
27. Tan Chin Tuan Mansion
28. Former Sri Vairavimada Kaliyamman Temple
29. Chesed-El Synagogue (*National Monument*)
30. Sian Teck Tng
31. Masjid Al-Falah
32. Former Teutonia Club (now Goodwood Park Hotel) (*National Monument*)
33. Tanglin Club
34. American Club
35. Former Anglo Chinese School
36. Former site of SPCA (Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals)
37. Former site of Children's Aid Society
38. Gleneagles Hospital
39. Singapore Red Cross Society
40. Former Cathay Building (*National Monument*)
41. Former Koek's Market / Orchard Road Municipal Market
42. Former Cold Storage Supermarket (now Centrepoint)
43. Former Heeren Building (now the Heeren)
44. Former Car Showrooms (now SMA House and other shophouses)
45. MacDonald House (*National Monument*)
46. Memorial to the Victims of Konfrontasi
47. Tang Plaza
48. Mandarin Hotel (now Mandarin Orchard)
49. Former Palladium/Pavilion/Specialist's Centre (now Orchard Gateway)
50. Hilton Hotel
51. Former Singapura Forum Hotel (now Forum The Shopping Mall)
52. Far East Shopping Centre
53. Lucky Plaza
54. Far East Plaza
55. Orchard Parade Hotel
56. Former Scotts Shopping Centre (now Scotts Square)
57. Former Supreme House (later Park Mall, now demolished)
58. Plaza Singapura
59. Shaw House Complex
60. Former Orchard Theatre (now Cineleisure Orchard)
61. Former Glutton's Square (now Orchard Central)
62. Former discotheques

63. Hard Rock Café
64. Former Tropicana (now Pacific Plaza)
65. McDonald's at Liat Towers
66. Tudor Court
67. Former Orchard Road Police Station (now ION Orchard)
68. Former Singapore Handicraft Centre and Rasa Singapura (now Tanglin Mall)
69. Former Singapore Cultural Theatre (now Hotel Jen)
70. The Red Box and Youth Park
71. Skate Park & *SCAPE

Five things you never knew about Orchard Road

- 1** The **Orchard Road of the past was once lined with estates that cultivated gambier**, which were important ingredient in the production of leather goods. Even before Raffles arrived in Singapore in 1819, there were already an estimated 20 gambier plantations on the island, mostly owned by the Teochews who were among the early settlers in Singapore.
- 2** The Cathay Building is **Singapore's first skyscraper** (and Singapore's first air-conditioned cinema) that was built near the start of Orchard Road in 1941. The 16-storey building played an important role during the British surrender to invading Japanese forces in Singapore. As one of the conditions of their surrender, the British had to fly a Japanese flag and a white flag at the top of Cathay Building for ten minutes.
- 3** The Young Men's Christian Association (YMCA) is the oldest surviving community organisation in Orchard and it is located at the coveted address of 1 Orchard Road. It set up **Singapore's first public swimming pool** in 1919 using a refitted water tank at Fort Canning. It also has an old Hokkien nickname *Sar Kar Por* (three cornered place) named after a popular triangle playground that was located opposite the building.
- 4** Cold Storage started operations in 1905 at the site of present-day The Centrepoint. Starting as a small deli, it grew into **Singapore's first supermarket** that sold frozen produce imported from Australia to European residents of the Orchard Road Area. The company even commissioned the national day song *We Are Singapore*, which was launched in 1987 at Mandarin Hotel to celebrate Singapore's 22nd year of independence.
- 5** The present day **Ngee Ann City was built on the site of the former Tai Shan Ting cemetery**. The cemetery, which sits on land owned by Ngee Ann Kongsi, was exhumed from the 1950s for development by the association to help raise funds for its charitable and educational activities. Even to this day, it performs annual prayers and ancestral rites at the Teochew Memorial Park at Yishun where the remains were reinterred. Part of the land was later leased to an Indonesian company who built Wisma Indonesia (Wisma Atria today) and the funds from that rental helped Ngee Ann Kongsi to establish Ngee Ann College (Ngee Ann Polytechnic today).

Heritage Trails Developed by the National Heritage Board

1. Bukit Timah Heritage Trail
2. Yishun-Sembawang Heritage Trail
3. Ang Mo Kio Heritage Trail
4. Balestier Heritage Trail
5. Jalan Besar Heritage Trail
6. Kampong Glam Heritage Trail
7. World War II Heritage Trail
8. Tiong Bahru Heritage Trail
9. Queenstown Heritage Trail
10. Resilience Trails
11. Toa Payoh Heritage Trail
12. Jurong Heritage Trail
13. Singapore River Walk
14. Jubilee Walk
15. Bedok Heritage Trail
16. Little India Heritage Trail
17. Tampines Heritage Trail
18. Orchard Heritage Trail

For more information, please visit <https://roots.sg/visit/trails>