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LITTLE INDIA: A HISTORICAL & CULTURAL PRECINCT



Little India, 2016

The distinctive Little India precinct melds the old with the new, hosting trades from the past beside modern businesses, old conserved shophouses next to high rise buildings. In this precinct, you can find flower garland vendors next to restaurants serving both traditional and fusion meals, small traditional businesses alongside multi-storey departmental stores. And these are just some ways in which the precinct retains aspects of its history within today's modern context.

It is interesting to note that Little India was never designated by Sir Stamford Raffles as an area for the Indian community. This is unlike Chinatown or Kampong Gelam, which were designated for the Chinese and the Malays respectively in the Raffles Town Plan of 1823. Before Little India got its current name in the 1970s-80s, it was just known as Serangoon, after one of the earliest roads in Singapore and indicated as the "road leading across the island" on an 1828 map.



"Little India", watercolour painting by Poh Siew Wah, 1988
Courtesy of National Heritage Board

Through the Little India Heritage Trail, discover how this once swampy, rural area transformed itself into the colourful and culturally diverse precinct of today. This self-guided trail consists of a Trail Booklet, a Trail Map and on-site Trail Markers. The Trail Booklet provides a history of the area, as well as information about the places of heritage, social and cultural interest. The accompanying Trail Map offers three thematic sub-trails with translations in Mandarin, Malay and Tamil while the Trail Markers showcase old photographs of the site along with further information. We hope you enjoy your journey!

HISTORY OF THE SERANGOON AREA



A print titled "Rochor, Singapore" showing a settlement on the banks of the Rochor River and a Chinese junk in the foreground, published in Fedor Jagor's *Singapore, Malacca, Java: Reiseskizzen* ("Singapore, Malacca, Java: Travel Sketches"), 1866
Courtesy of National Museum of Singapore, National Heritage Board

In the 19th century, there were numerous attractions and opportunities which Serangoon Road offered that drew various ethnic communities there. First, the area included important island waterways such as the Kallang River and Rochor River which facilitated habitation, transportation and commerce. This drew a significant number of people who formed distinct communities along Serangoon Road.

Although Serangoon was still covered with swamps and ponds, it was a district with many kampongs ("villages" in Malay) because of the availability of land, water and opportunities. The main Chinese community congregated around the Syed Alwi Road and Balestier Road

areas while the Javanese were concentrated at Kampong Java. There were also numerous Bugis kampongs that lined the Rochor River.



Kampong Java Road, 1986
Courtesy of Urban Redevelopment Authority

SERANGOON ROAD AND ITS EARLY SETTLERS



A coloured sketch titled "Serangoon, near Singapore", by Robert Morrison, 1857
Courtesy of National Museum of Singapore, National Heritage Board

Serangoon Road got its name from the Malay word *sarangong*, deriving either from a marsh bird called *ranggong* or the term *serang dengan gong* which means to beat a gong. It began as an important artery of commerce and transport for all the plantations in the interior of the island that were along the route to Serangoon Harbour. Though never a major port of call for Singapore's entrepôt trade, this northern harbour was a vital loading and unloading point for the Johore gambier and pepper planters.

Serangoon Road was one of the earliest roads to be laid across the island after those in the town's centre. In 1828, a map drawn by Lieutenant Jackson labelled Serangoon Road as "road leading across the island". The development

of this road, as well as Bukit Timah Road, was greatly linked to the need to transport gambier and pepper crops into town for export.

The road remained a buffalo-trodden dirt-track for many decades. Over time, villages and plantations appeared in a haphazard manner along Serangoon Road, including the stretch from Selegie Road to Syed Alwi Road, which forms the core of present-day Little India.

Serangoon Road proper was laid by convicts who had been brought to Singapore by the British for their labour and held at a prison at Bras Basah Road. The presence of a large number of Indian convicts at the prison, inclusive of those who had settled outside its walls and those who provided supporting trades, formed the genesis of an Indian district. This eventually extended down Selegie Road and into Serangoon Road.



View of the Convict Jail between Bras Basah Road and Stamford Road, c. 1870
Courtesy of National Museum of Singapore, National Heritage Board



Serangoon Road, 1900s
Courtesy of National Archives of Singapore

In time, as the number of Indian settlers increased, the earliest Indian enclaves such as those at Chulia Street and High Street could no longer accommodate the arrival of more immigrants. As a result, after 1900, many Indian immigrants gravitated towards Serangoon, the remaining Indian enclave that still had room for them.

Those who ventured down Serangoon Road were drawn by economic opportunities. They called the Serangoon area *Soonambu Kambam*, meaning "Village of Lime" in Tamil. Lime used to be an important element in the manufacture of Madras Chunam, a kind of cement or plaster brick that was introduced from India and used in construction work. By the late 1820s, the British had set up lime pits and brick kilns along Serangoon Road, which were a source of employment for many Indians.



"Working at the Brick Factory" by Liu Kang, 1954
Courtesy of National Gallery Singapore



Photograph of an old brick kiln by Lim Lam San, c. 1930
Courtesy of National Museum of Singapore, National Heritage Board

After the brick kilns were discontinued in 1860, the development of the Serangoon area centred on agricultural enterprises and trades that were dependent on cattle and buffaloes to transport their produce across the island. The abundance of water from ponds, mangrove swamps and the Rochor River made this area ideal for cattle rearing. It provided the necessary bathing areas for water buffaloes, which were the "workhorses" of Singapore at that time and used for transporting goods and rolling roads.



Postcard titled "Road Rolling by Bullocks, Singapore", 1905
Courtesy of National Museum of Singapore, National Heritage Board

The presence of this industry drew more and more Indian settlers to the area. At the beginning of the 20th century, they included North Indian herdsmen from the border areas of Uttar Pradesh and Bihar who settled on the left bank of the Rochor Canal. Their main temple of worship was the Krishna Temple at Waterloo Street until the mid-20th century. Subsequently, they congregated at the Shree Lakshminarayan Temple at Chander Road even though many had shifted out of the area by then.

While the cattle trade was dominated by Indians, the farming and plantation activities here were largely carried out by Chinese settlers. The swampy ground was fertile and resulted in a variety of thriving agricultural enterprises. There were paddy and sirih (betel leaf) fields on the west of Serangoon Road, and Chinese vegetable gardens at what is now the area between Syed Alwi Road and Balestier Road/Lavender Street. By the early 1840s, sugarcane plantations emerged along Balestier Plain. The transport and irrigation needs of Chinese farmers were likely the main motivation for cutting the Rochor Canal, which was completed in 1836.



"Padi Field" by Choo Keng Kwang, 1977
 Courtesy of National Gallery Singapore



Rochor Canal Road, 1945-46
 Courtesy of National Museum of Singapore, National Heritage Board



Workers at a betel nut plantation in Singapore, c. 1880s-90s
 Courtesy of National Museum of Singapore, National Heritage Board



A complete sirih set with a brass tray, four silver receptacles, a betel leaf holder and nutcracker, 20th century
 Courtesy of Asian Civilisations Museum, National Heritage Board



Postcard of a Chinese Vegetable Garden, c. 1960s
 Courtesy of National Museum of Singapore, National Heritage Board



Postcard titled "Kampong Boyan" showing the Baweanese kampong, 19th century
 Courtesy of National Museum of Singapore, National Heritage Board

Among the early residents of Serangoon Road were also the migrants from Pulau Bawean, an island that is part of present-day Indonesia. The Baweanese established themselves in the Kampong Kapor area in the early 19th century, with their kampong bounded by Sungei Road, Syed Alwi Road and Serangoon Road.

In the 1840s, many of the Baweanese were employed in the construction of the nearby racecourse, and after the racecourse was completed, many of them found employment as horse trainers there. The Baweanese were also employed as carriage and bullock-cart drivers, syces (horse groomers) and gardeners. Kampong Kapor also attracted many Indian Muslims during the 19th century and they were mainly labourers at Tanjong Pagar port and peons (low-ranking workers) in the police force.

THE CATTLE TRADE AND RELATED COTTAGE INDUSTRIES

Many cattle-related industries such as slaughterhouses and milk peddlers were established in and around Kandang Kerbau on the west of Serangoon Road. This village later became known as Kampong Kerbau ("Buffalo Village" in Malay). The Chinese called it *Kam Kong Ka La Bu*, a transliteration of "Kampong Kerbau". By the 1880s, bullock and cow sheds, as well as pony and horse stalls could be found throughout the district.



"新加坡实龙岗旧村落" (Old Village in Serangoon, Singapore), drawing by Tan Choo Kuan showing buffaloes crossing a bridge, 1962

Courtesy of National Museum of Singapore, National Heritage Board



Postcard of a slaughterhouse at Jalan Besar, c. 1910
 Courtesy of National Museum of Singapore, National Heritage Board

One of the two prominent merchants involved in the cattle trade of this area was Isaac Raphael Belilios (1846-1910). Belilios was a Venetian Jew born in Kolkata, India. He arrived in Singapore in the 1860s and started a trading



Belilios Road, 1986
Courtesy of Urban Redevelopment Authority

company for large-scale imports of horses and cattle fodder. Belilios also owned a number of sheep pens and cattle sheds in the Serangoon area. He was instrumental in developing the area around Belilios Road in the 1890s.

The other major cattle trader in Serangoon was Indian Muslim Moona Kader Sultan (1863-1937). While Belilios had his business on the racecourse side, Sultan had his at the Kampong Kapor side near Sungei Road. He arrived in Singapore in the 1870s and went into the money-changing business. Around the 1890s he started the Singapore Cattle Trading Company and in 1898 he built his cattle shed at the junction of Clive Street and Sungei Road. Sultan imported his cattle from Australia, and his business had grown so big by the 1900s that he became known as the "Cattle King".

Numerous abattoirs and tanneries were also established in this area from the late 19th century. Malaccan-born Eurasian businessman Andre Filipe Desker (1826-1898) became the first official butcher in Singapore in 1877.

Before World War II, Dunlop Street was where the cowherds grazed their cattle and milked them before delivering fresh milk to wealthy residents of the city. The deliveries were made

before dawn each day, initially on foot and later on bicycles. Besides being a source of milk and meat, cattle were also in considerable demand as a form of transport until the early 1900s.

While the cattle industry reached at its peak in the 1900s, it was also confronted with mounting challenges during this time. In 1902, the buffalo trade in the Kandang Kerbau district was blamed for damaging roads, and owners were directed to move the buffaloes



An Indian milkman in Singapore balancing a milk container on his head, 1905-06
Courtesy of National Museum of Singapore, National Heritage Board



An Indian man milking a cow, mid-20th century
 Courtesy of National Museum of Singapore, National Heritage Board

to other quarters with the warning that new licenses would not be issued after the expiry of the current ones. By the 1920s, the *Kandang Kerbau* area had become extensively built up, thus forcing the Indian herdsmen who arrived around this time to move their operations to *Kampung Reteh* in *Katong*.

In 1921, a decade after *Belilios* had passed on, the *Belilios* family and *Sultan* merged their businesses to form the company *Belilios and Kader Sultan & Co.* However, the cattle trade was on the decline by the 1930s due to the clearing of swamps to make way for the growth of commercial activities. In 1936, the government completely banned the keeping of livestock at *Kandang Kerbau* and caused *Belilios and Kader Sultan & Co.* to go bankrupt, thereby ending the cattle trade in *Serangoon*.

Until the 1930s, one could also still find *Bengali* and *Tamil* milkmen around *Buffalo Road* and *Chander Road*. They went from house to house with their goats and cows to deliver fresh milk to their clients. With this milk, Indians made the delicacy *thairu* (“yoghurt” in *Tamil*). It was

also a common sight to see Indian women along *Serangoon Road* traveling from house to house to sell their fresh *thairu*.

The old *Tekka Market*, erected in 1915 at the junction of *Serangoon Road* and *Bukit Timah Road*, would have been one of the first centralised sites where retailers sold their cattle produce. One of the main motivations for building this market was so that the retail activities that had intensified along *Serangoon Road* in the 1900s did not clutter the verandahs and roadways.



“KK Fresh Food Market” (Kandang Kerbau/Tekka Market)
 by *Chua Mia Tee*, 1979
 Courtesy of National Heritage Board

FORMER TEKKA MARKET

2 Serangoon Road

Built in 1915, Tekka Market was one of the most prominent landmarks along Serangoon Road during the first half of the 20th century. The area where it was situated was known as *tek kia kha* to the Hokkiens, shortened to *tek kah*, meaning “the foot of the small bamboos” as bamboo once grew on both sides of the Rochor Canal. *Tekka* also means “bamboo clumps” in Mandarin. Tekka Market was also known as *Kandang Kerbau Market* (“buffalo enclosure market” in Malay) due to the predominance of cattle sheds in the area.

By the 1930s, Tekka Market had become very popular for its wide variety of fresh meat, vegetables and seafood. It was frequented mostly by people from the working class and it became known as the “people’s market”. It was very popular with all ethnic groups, and operated from 6am to 6pm daily.

A former watchman at Tekka Market, S Rasoo remembers it as a:

“lively, bustling place with Indian women coming up in their colourful saris, their hair done up in ‘buns’ or single plaits decorated with fragrant flowers, jostling against the pig-tailed houseboys that served the Europeans and wealthy Asians. The noise was deafening, the atmosphere reverberating with the sound of raised voices bargaining over fresh fish, meats, vegetable and fruits. Even in those



Mutton stalls at Zhujiao Centre, c. 1982
Courtesy of National Archives of Singapore

days, the market had a reputation for selling only the best, and people who moved out of the area still returned to shop there.”

When Tekka Market was demolished in 1982, most of the store-holders relocated to the new Zhujiao Market across the street, with the new name being a hanyu pinyin rendition of “Tekka” in the Chinese transliteration system. However, the market was renamed Tekka Centre in 2000 to reflect the history of the place after public feedback that “Zhujiao” bore little resemblance to its past name. The old site of Tekka Market was sold for commercial development.



Tekka Centre, 2016



Interior of Tekka Centre, 2016



A bullock cart transporting pineapples to preserving factories in the Serangoon area, c. 1900
 Courtesy of National Archives of Singapore

Emerging alongside the cattle industry were wheat-grinding sheds, sesame oil presses, rattan works, rubber smokehouses and pineapple factories. Although these industries may seem unconnected, they had a symbiotic relationship, with buffaloes providing labour and waste products such as leftover fibres or husks being used as cattle feed.

For instance, *taukeh* (Chinese businessman of good standing) Tan Teng Niah (c.1862-1925) had a sweet factory at Kerbau Road that used imported sugarcane as the main ingredient to manufacture candies. It is likely that the main bungalow that still stands was part of this factory. An adjoining rubber smokehouse was built in 1916. Sugarcane would have been transported



A pineapple plantation in Singapore, 1890
 Courtesy of National Museum of Singapore, National Heritage Board

to Tan's factories by bullock carts, and after the juices were extracted for manufacturing sweets, the leftover fibres would be reused as fuel for the furnaces of the smokehouse to dry rubber sheets. The remaining fibres would then be used as cattle feed.



Postcard showing bullock carts being used to transport goods, late 19th century
 Courtesy of National Museum of Singapore, National Heritage Board

FORMER HOUSE OF TAN TENG NIAH

37 Kerbau Road



Former house of Tan Teng Niah, 1988
Lee Kip Lin Collection, courtesy of the National Library Board

Although much of the built heritage of cottage industries here has largely disappeared, there remains a single gem in Serangoon Road that serves a reminder of this forgotten heritage – the former house of Tan Teng Niah. Tan's exquisitely restored house is the last Chinese villa found in Little India.

It is an eight-room house that was built for the Tan family. The second storey overhangs the first to form a five-foot way (five feet wide

covered pedestrian walkway), which was once an entrance portico. There are carriage gates leading into courtyards on either side. Over the entrance door, there is a gilded name plate with the calligraphic inscription *Siew Song* ("elegant pine" or "refined pine" in Mandarin). To the Chinese, pine denotes endurance and serves as an expression of their aspirations. Many believe that Tan built the house for his wife and that the inscription referred to her.

The *pintu pagar* (Malay for "swinging wooden half doors") is richly carved and the front room of the house is resplendent with wall scrolls. Within the house, another even more lavish *pintu pagar* can be found, as well as the traditional altar table and shrine complete with photographs of ancestors.

This building was restored and conserved in the 1980s for commercial use under the Kerbau Redevelopment II conservation plan, and the restoration project was awarded the Singapore Institute of Architects Honourable Mention in 1991. Once white with green windows, this is now one of the most colourful landmarks in Little India.



Former house of Tan Teng Niah, 2016

Another industry in this district was pineapple processing. One of the first pineapple processors here were Adolph Landau and LC Joffie, who had a firm at Race Course Road. Landau had started a pineapple plantation in Johore in 1888 and acquired another one in Serangoon in 1898. These plantations provided the fruits that were preserved and canned in his factories.

There was another pineapple factory that occupied four shophouses at the junction of Kerbau Road and Race Course Road. It was owned by Seah Liang Seah (1850-1925), son of Seah Eu Chin (1805-83), an important Teochew merchant of the mid-19th century. Seah's firm, Chin Giap, was located at Serangoon Road, which his son, Seah Eng Keong (c. 1859-1917), took over in 1904. Their brands *Tiger* and *Defiance* became highly reputable and were so successful that during peak periods, 250 men had to be employed to meet canning schedules.

Near Race Course Road was also the area where all the rattan (thin jointed stems of a palm tree mainly used for making furniture) that arrived in Singapore was brought. There was an old cane factory in Rotan Lane where bound rolls of raw rattan of different thickness were soaked in water for days to make them more pliable, before being straightened out and cut to various lengths.

A resident of nearby Belilios Road, Abdullah Bin Abdul Jalil (b. 1914), explains while speaking to the National Archives of Singapore:

"[Kampong Rotan] was the place where they make the walking stick. [...] All the rotan arrived and [they] placed it there. There were small Malay houses over there owned by the people from Malacca."



Postcard titled "The Rattan Industry in Singapore", early 20th century
Courtesy of National Museum of Singapore, National Heritage Board



Photograph of workers washing rattan by Lim Lam San, c. 1930
Courtesy of National Museum of Singapore, National Heritage Board



Seah Liang Seah Estate at Serangoon Road, 1963
Courtesy of National Archives of Singapore

URBAN DEVELOPMENT AFTER 1900

Towards the end of the 19th century, a series of events and policy changes led to a new phase of development for Serangoon Road. The many instances of fire during the 1880s became one of the earliest catalysts for change. On 3 April 1883, a destructive fire swept through the village at Kampong Kapor, razing 110 houses and leaving 1,020 people homeless. Fortunately, the business magnate Syed Mahomed Alsagoff (1854-1927) provided some relief by offering accommodation for 310 people in his houses for two months. This devastation presented an opportunity to rebuild and renew a part of Serangoon Road.

One reason for the frequent fires at Serangoon Road was the poor conditions of the tenement houses at Kampong Kapor, which by this period, had degenerated into slum-like dwellings. In 1911, a Government Gazette was passed to initiate the Kampong Kapor Improvement Scheme. The proposed zone for redevelopment encompassed the area between Jalan Besar and Serangoon Road, from Dunlop Road to Syed Alwi Road.

The scheme included draining the entire Kampong Kapor area to make way for commercial and retail development, which

resulted in the end of many of the water-dependent industries located here. When the area was completely drained in the 1930s, a number of new roads were created, including Rowell Road, Syed Alwi Road, Kampong Kapor Road and Upper Perak Road. The ban on cattle-rearing in this area also greatly accelerated its pace of urban development. However, the transition of Serangoon into a commercialised district was a more gradual one and continued well into the 1950s.

STREETS OF LITTLE INDIA

Buffalo Road

Buffalo Road is possibly the oldest arterial road in the area and appeared on maps as early as 1842. It was so named because cattle were kept at a village located here since 1836. It formed a main access route from Serangoon Road to the racecourse.

In the 19th and early 20th centuries, there were various government facilities between Buffalo Road and Bukit Timah Road, including the Kandang Kerbau Police Station, the lunatic asylum, government stores and bullock stables of the Public Works Department.



Kampong Kapor Road, 2016



Kandang Kerbau Police Station, c. 1960
Singapore Police Force Collection, courtesy of National Archives of Singapore



Buffalo Road, 1986
Courtesy of Urban Redevelopment Authority

Campbell Lane

Campbell Lane was named after Robert Campbell (d.1881), the British managing partner of the mercantile and shipping firm Martin Dyce & Co. in the late 1870s. In 1874, Campbell became a member of the managing committee of the proposed Public Library and Museum in Singapore. In 1878, he was appointed as a member of the Legislative Council.

Today, Campbell Lane hosts a Festival Village during Deepavali every year. During this period, Campbell Lane is filled with pushcarts selling a variety of costumes, jewellery, food, handicrafts, spices and carpets. These pushcarts line Campbell Lane, from Serangoon Road to Clive Street, and the roads are closed to traffic throughout the festival period.

Deepavali is also known as the Festival of Lights. Indians celebrate it to commemorate the triumph of good over evil and light over darkness. Before the day of the festival, Indians will clean their homes, buy new clothes and prepare snacks for visiting guests. During Deepavali, Indian families decorate the doorways of homes with oil lamps and *kolam*, elaborate drawings made from coloured rice powder. This is also a time when Hindus wear bright colours and light firecrackers.

Deepavali was declared a public holiday in Singapore in 1929 and the light-up along Serangoon Road to celebrate Deepavali started in 1985. The light-up has continued to this day and become a great draw for locals and tourists alike.



Deepavali lights along Serangoon Road, 2016



Deepavali Festival Village along Campbell Lane, 2016

Owen Road



G.P. Owen posing with a tiger he shot, c. 1906
Courtesy of National Museum of Singapore, National Heritage Board

Owen Road was named after G P Owen (1856-1928) who was an Irish banker, Superintendent of the Fire Brigade and Superintendent of the Rabies Department until 1903. In his various recreational pursuits, he was made President of the Singapore Sporting Club, Honorary Secretary to the Golf Club, Secretary of the Racing Club and Secretary of the Cricket Club.

Owen was well known for being a great hunter, cricketer, golfer, tennis player and polo player, and was also acquainted with racing. He owned one of the first motorcars in Singapore and his wife was the first female driver in Singapore. She called her car *Ichiban*, meaning "Number 1" in Japanese. Owen was such an avid sportsman and regular supporter of the Sporting Club at Race Course Road that a poem written about him titled *The Secretary* (1920) contains a line in which the poet jibes that people "wondered if [the Sporting Club] 'twere built for him".



Owen Road, 1984
Courtesy of Urban Redevelopment Authority

On 15 March 1986, Hotel New World, located at the junction of Owen Road and Serangoon Road, collapsed and fell across Owen Road. This disaster, which resulted in many injuries and deaths, was the first real test for the Singapore Civil Defence Force (SCDF). Fortunately, the SCDF was able to save a third of the people from the wreckage, and a long queue of blood donors bore testimony to the unity and resilience of Singaporeans.



Rescue operations during the Hotel New World disaster, 1986
Ministry of Information and the Arts Collection, courtesy of National Archives of Singapore

Race Course Road

The first Race Course Road (1840s-90s) has become the present-day Kerbau Road. It provided direct access from Serangoon Road to the racecourse. The current Race Course Road was laid in the mid-1870s.

The area between Race Course Road and Serangoon Road, as well as the racecourse itself were prone to flooding during the pre-World War II years. In the 1930s, small wooden boats were a common sight during such floods. Speaking to the National Archives of Singapore, Kannusamy s/o Pakirisamy (b.

1914) who resided at Buffalo Road at that time, remembers that the boats were not used as a mode of transport but merely for pleasure:

"Flooded times, these boats I used to see them. They never carr[ied] any people or any goods [...] they were simply for joy rides."



Race Course Road, 1986
Courtesy of Urban Redevelopment Authority

During the post-independence period, residential blocks started to appear to the west of Race Course Road, as the first part of the Housing & Development Board's Kerbau Redevelopment Plan. Their roofs were red-tiled, pitched and gable-ended even on the tallest blocks, in keeping with the surrounding older terrace houses.

Syed Alwi Road

Syed Alwi Road was originally named Syed Allie Road after a well-known member of the Arab family in Singapore, Syed Allie bin Mahomed Aljunied (1814-58), who bought a garden from a Malaccan lady, through which

the road would pass. Syed Allie lived on High Street in town. This property was later bought over by Seah Eu Chin's family.

Syed Allie passed away in 1858 at the age of 44. His estate was then wound up by his son, Syed Alwi, the only survivor among his four sons. Syed Alwi was best known for filling in a large swamp purchased by his father. By the 1880s, even with the developments in the racecourse area, there were still only two roads, Dunlop Street and the renamed Syed Alwi Road, which cut across the tract of swampy land between Serangoon Road and Jalan Besar.

In the first decade of the 20th century, the swampy areas of Kampong Kapor were drained and Syed Alwi Road was further extended and developed. There were a number of slaughterhouses at the junction of Jalan Besar and Syed Alwi Road. Hence, Syed Alwi Road was also commonly known as *Sai ek a lui koi thai tu long pi*, meaning "Syed Alwi Street beside the abattoirs" in Cantonese.



Roadside squatters' shops at the junction of Syed Alwi Road and Lembu Road, 1966
Courtesy of Urban Redevelopment Authority



Syed Alwi Road, 2016

Veerasamy Road



Veerasamy Road, 1966
Courtesy of Urban Redevelopment Authority

In 1927, Municipal Commissioner Dr K Kiramathypathy (1891-1958) renamed Jalan Tambah in the Kampong Kapur district as Veerasamy Road in honour of a fellow leader of the Indian community who lived nearby, Dr N Veerasamy (1864-1926). Veerasamy Road is one of the only two roads within the Little India district named after a prominent Tamil Indian, with the other being Chander Road.

Before the 1920s, there were very few doctors in Singapore and most of them were Europeans. Dr N Veerasamy stood out among them as he was one of the first local Indian doctors who was given the license to practice and had a clinic at Rochor Road.

Veerasamy was born in Singapore and was a Municipal Commissioner for over six years. He was the President of the Hindu Advisory Board and prominently connected with the Hindu Association. He was also a member of the Indian Association and Straits Settlements Association.

Streets named after Bungalow Owners



Cuff Road, 1966
Courtesy of Urban Redevelopment Authority

Among the first residential buildings erected along Serangoon Road were bungalows that belonged to European residents. There were offshoot roads leading from Serangoon Road to these private residences that eventually evolved into through roads that exist in Little India today. These include **Cuff Road, Desker Road, Dunlop Street, Norris Road, Rappa Terrace** and **Rowell Road**.



Desker Road at its junction with Kampong Kapur Road, 1966
Courtesy of Urban Redevelopment Authority

Streets named after British Governors and Officials

In colonial Singapore, it was a common practice to name roads after prominent British officials, even if they did not reside there. In Little India, the roads listed below were named after British Governors and officials.

Birch Road was named after James Woodford Wheeler Birch (1830-75), the first British Resident of Perak. He was Colonial Secretary for the Straits Settlements in 1870-74.

Clive Street was named after the British General Robert Clive (1725-74) though he never set foot in Singapore. He was also instrumental in laying the foundations of British rule in India.



Clive Street, 1990
Courtesy of Urban Redevelopment Authority

Dalhousie Lane was named after James Andrew Broun, Tenth Earl of Ramsay and First Marquis of Dalhousie (1812-60). He was one of the youngest and most radical Governor-Generals of India. He visited Singapore in 1850 and this was the only visit by an East India Company Governor-General to the island. The Dalhousie Obelisk was erected in his honour in front of the Victoria Memorial Hall.



Dalhousie Lane, 1980
Courtesy of Urban Redevelopment Authority

Dickson Road was named after Sir Frederick Dickson (c. 1832-91), who was appointed as the Colonial Secretary of Singapore in 1885 and Acting Governor in 1890.



Dickson Road, 1980
Courtesy of Urban Redevelopment Authority

Hastings Road was named after Governor-General Warren Hastings (1754-1826) of India. In late 1818, he was the person who sanctioned Raffles' scheme to establish a new British base in the south of the Malacca Straits.

Kitchener Road was named after Horatio Herbert Kitchener (1850-1916), widely known as Lord Kitchener of Khartoum. He was the Secretary of War in Britain in 1914-16 and visited Singapore in 1909.

Weld Road/Upper Weld Road was named after Governor Sir Frederick Aloysius Weld (1823-91), Singapore's first Catholic Governor from 1880-87. Weld had also been Governor of West Australia and Tasmania, and Prime Minister of New Zealand before he came to Malaya.



Junction of Weld Road and Kampong Kapor Road, 1966
Courtesy of Urban Redevelopment Authority

Roads Commemorating World War I

In 1928, the Municipality decided to name 11 roads on the north side of Jalan Besar after significant places and generals during World War I. One road was named after Ong Sam Leong (1857-1918), not only because he and his family had been a great supporter of the British war effort, but as he was also instrumental in developing this area.

Prior to 1928, **Ong Sam Leong Road** was called Paya Road, suggesting that the area had been covered by marshes as *paya* means "swamp" in Malay. The length of Paya Road was raised before it was renamed Ong Sam Leong Road, and not long after, shophouses were built on both sides of the road.

Verdun Road was named after Verdun in France, one of places where the largest battles of World War I were fought. The shophouses along this street were largely occupied by Chinese residents in the 1930s. During this period, Verdun Road had a notorious reputation owing to the presence of the Boston Hotel whose proprietor operated it as a brothel for European sailors.



Verdun Road, 1966
Courtesy of Urban Redevelopment Authority

MUNICIPAL AND PRIVATE HOUSING

In the early 20th century, an increasing number of Indian migrants were employed by the municipality as daily rated workers engaged in public works. From the 1920s, the colonial government started constructing terrace houses to accommodate these workers. These houses were known as Municipal Quarters. As a collective, they were also called Coolie Lines.

The Public Works Department, in particular, provided housing with adequate amenities for those under their employ, most of whom were Indians. These flats can still be seen in Little India today, such as along Hindoo Road. Although most of them have been converted to shophouses, some have been left empty and have become dilapidated.

Government housing, though pervasive, was still inadequate to meet the needs of all the labourers in municipal employment and renting private property remained the main solution for most of the working classes. In urbanised areas like Little India, many labourers would pool their resources to rent and share a room in a shophouse. These rooms were often so small that each person



Shophouses along Serangoon Road, 1973
Courtesy of Urban Redevelopment Authority

only had a small sleeping area without any living or storage space. In some instances, the upper floor of a shophouse housed up to 10-12 families.

Abdullah Bin Abdul Jalil (b. 1914), a former government employee in 1938-60, recalled while speaking to the National Archives of Singapore that:

“the houses rented along Serangoon Road were two-storey houses. If one could not afford the rent, all parties interested would chip in about two to three dollars each to share one room. One might even sub-let the top or the bottom floors. The people who rented these rooms were mainly Indian immigrants who worked as labourers.”



Municipal housing along Hindoo Road, 1966
Courtesy of Urban Redevelopment Authority

These quarters did not just house those who worked at the Serangoon area, but also provided shelter for government employees working in town. When the second phase of the Kampong Kapor Improvement Scheme began in 1918, there was a great shortage of housing in town. The Municipal Engineers employed 2,000 coolies, but could only house 200 of them. The Water Department could only provide housing for around half of its coolies and the Harbour Board for a quarter of its employees.

In response, the government drew up a plan to accommodate coolies and peons at Kampong Kapor, and clerks at Kampong Java. In Kampong Kapor, 28 blocks were built between Hindoo Road and Rowell Road. These and other blocks in the area would house a total of 4,000 workers. The blocks eventually came under the care of the Singapore Improvement Trust (SIT), which was established in 1927 to oversee the improvement of Singapore's infrastructure.

GROWTH OF TRADITIONAL TRADES

Although the Serangoon area has always been multicultural, various factors helped to establish a significant Indian presence here. As a result, shops and amenities catering to the Indian community flourished, drawing even more Indians until the district eventually took on the semblance of a cultural enclave.

Some of the merchants catering to this community included garland-makers, astrologers, goldsmiths, moneylenders, tailors, restaurateurs, and shop-owners selling luggage, saris, spices and other provisions from India. Even amongst the Indians, certain trades were closely identified with particular groups. For example, the labour supply contractors, money-changers, and provision-shop owners were often Tamils while those who sold mutton and beef at Tekka Market were Tamil Muslims. Many milkmen, bread sellers and bungalow watchmen were North Indians.



Postcard of scenes in Little India showing some of its traditional trades, 1970s-80s
 Courtesy of National Museum of Singapore, National Heritage Board

Amongst the most visible trades along Serangoon Road were the Indian goldsmiths. Gold jewellery plays many important roles in Indian culture and Hindu religion, such as being a family heirloom and a status symbol. It is flaunted during festive occasions and considered an auspicious and necessary gift during important occasions such as marriages. Gold gifts and purchases also serve the more practical purpose of insurance and investment for the future.

With the Indian community congregating along Serangoon, a multitude of goldsmiths started setting up shops in the area. Many were located around Buffalo Road and Kerbau Road, and their staff would dress in traditional outfits called *wayshti*, a South Indian lower body covering consisting of a long rectangular cloth tied around the waist. There were also goldsmith shops owned by Indian Muslims at Serangoon Road, including Anni Mani Jewellers established in 1948 and Batu Pahat Goldsmith established in 1969. Today, these and other goldsmiths can be found along Serangoon Road and Syed Alwi Road.

Along the side streets, garland-makers weaved roses, marigolds and jasmine flowers into garlands for sale. The red, yellow and white colours of these flowers symbolise love, peace and purity respectively. Garlands are worn on special occasions and used to adorn Hindu temple deities. In Hindu culture, people are also garlanded as a show of respect and to welcome them. For these uses, fresh flower garlands can still be bought in Little India.

There were also many fortune-tellers found along Serangoon Road practising palmistry, numerology, astrology and parrot astrology. In the latter, a parrot would be instructed to pick a card from a stack of 27 lucky fortune cards. These parrots were trained to select fortune cards with pictures of deities and lucky messages. They also entertained customers by dancing and interacting with them. In return, they were fed with fruits, nuts and chillies that were supposed to develop their

intelligence. Customers consulted fortune-tellers on a variety of matters such as marriage, money and business, but would also visit them on special occasions such as festivals and birthdays.

Snake charmers were also once part of the street scene of 20th century Serangoon. They would spread a canvas sheet on the ground and entice the snakes to emerge from their baskets with their flutes, often attracting a large crowd. Most of the snake charmers came from the city of Pune in western India.

In Hinduism, snakes are symbols of divine worship. The snakes used by snake charmers would be brushed and spot-cleaned before performances. Afterwards, the snakes were bathed and fed with meat and eggs twice a week.



"Snake Charmer" by Chua Mia Tee, 1977
Courtesy of National Gallery Singapore



Photograph of Indian snake charmers by G.R Lambert and Co., late 19th century
Courtesy of National Museum of Singapore, National Heritage Board

DAYS OF THE RISING SUN: SERANGOON UNDER THE JAPANESE OCCUPATION

When the first bombs fell on Singapore during World War II, Serangoon Road was a target for Japanese bombers. On 8 December 1941, the first day of the Japanese attack, bombs fell near Serangoon. Many people were killed or injured, and several timber yards in Prinsep Street and Albert Street went up in flames. Subsequent air raids further damaged the houses in the Serangoon area.

Speaking to the National Archives of Singapore, Kannusamy s/o Pakirisamy (b. 1914) who resided at Buffalo Road as a child recalled:

"...some houses were damaged by bombs in front of Hindoo Road and [...] Farrer Park, some people went and put camps. [...] The] Japanese bombs [would] be coming three, six, nine, in 'V-shape'. Serangoon Road near the corner of Race Course Road [was] badly damaged. Houses were all damaged."

During the bombing, many turned to places of worship for refuge, believing that these sanctuaries would offer safety. At the Sri Veeramakaliamman Temple, hundreds took shelter when the bombing continued in early 1942. Fortunately, the temple emerged unscathed and this was attributed to the power of the deities by the devotees.

However, other sanctuaries were not as fortunate and one side of the Foochow Methodist Church was destroyed. The Kampong Kapur Methodist Church had a close escape when a Japanese fighter plane crashed into nearby Veerasamy Road and burst into flames, killing the pilot and an old woman tending to her vegetable garden. Along the same road, a fleet of parked buses was mistaken for an army convoy by the Japanese and bombed.

During the battle for Singapore, a big red cross was displayed at Kandang Kerbau (KK) Hospital so that it would not be bombed.

Unfortunately, the British began moving their lorries and guns into the compound one morning and the hospital was bombed within half an hour. KK Hospital had been designated as an Emergency General Hospital for the treatment of casualties during World War II. After the fall of Singapore, the hospital was used as the Civil General Hospital throughout the Japanese Occupation.

At this time, Singapore's second president, Dr Benjamin Sheares (1907-81), was Deputy Medical Superintendent at KK Hospital. As there was only one other doctor at the hospital, both Sheares and the other doctor stayed there and worked in shifts. Midwives were also kept very busy as there were only three nurses to look after an estimated 200 babies.



Oil Portrait of President Sheares by Min Lei Qi, 2000
Courtesy of National Museum of Singapore, National Heritage Board

FORMER KANDANG KERBAU HOSPITAL

1 Hampshire Road

Kandang Kerbau Hospital or KK Hospital has witnessed the births of more Singaporeans than any other hospital on the island. The term *kandang kerbau* ("buffalo enclosure" in Malay) is a reminder of the buffalos that were kept in this district.

Built in 1860 to serve as a general hospital, KK Hospital became a free maternity hospital in 1924 when the Victoria Street maternity hospital relocated there. In those days, maternal and infant mortality rates were high. The hospital's mission then was to provide good maternity care and midwifery training for medical students and pupil midwives to bring the mortality rates down.

After World War II, KK Hospital remained the Civil General Hospital until 1 July 1946 when it resumed its function as the only maternity hospital in the country. During the post-war years, births averaged more than 1,000 a month in the 240-bed hospital. The labour wards were so overcrowded that babies were delivered on trolley beds. To ease the

acute shortage of beds, the length of stay of each patient was shortened from 10-12 days to 3 days.

In response to the growing demands on the hospital, a building expansion programme commenced in 1953 and resulted in the addition of a new wing and an outpatient department, bringing the total number of beds to 316. At that point, it was the largest maternity hospital in the world. In 1966, KK Hospital delivered a record number of 39,835 babies (more than 109 per day) and was listed in the 1968 Guinness Book of Records for delivering the world's largest number of babies in a single maternity facility in a year.



Kandang Kerbau Hospital, 1950
Ministry of Information and the Arts Collection, courtesy of National Archives of Singapore



Kandang Kerbau Maternity Hospital, 1950s

Courtesy of National Museum of Singapore, National Heritage Board
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Kandang Kerbau Hospital Nursery, 1986
Ministry of Information and the Arts Collection, courtesy of
National Archives of Singapore

On 1 April 1990, the KK Hospital ended its 132-year history as a government hospital and embarked on a new chapter as a restructured hospital, to be run as a private company while continuing to be owned by the government. Physical transformation soon took place within the hospital, with more facilities being introduced to meet the needs of women.

In 1997, the government decided to modernise KK Hospital and relocated it to a new building nearby at Bukit Timah Road. It was then renamed the KK Women's and Children's Hospital. Today,

the hospital continues to be Singapore's largest maternity facility and delivers around a third of babies born in the country.

The hospital's former site was taken over by the Land Transport Authority (LTA) in 1997 as a project and engineering site office and was marked as a historic site by the National Heritage Board in 2003. In 2004-05, LTA retrofitted the site to accommodate most of its staff and the site became its new headquarters in 2006. Today, the LTA still occupies the building at Hampshire Road.



KK Women's and Children's Hospital, 2016



Site of Former KK Hospital (now Land Transport Authority Building), 2016

HERITAGE TREE: Rain Tree (*Samanea saman*)


Trunk girth: 7.7m Height: 28m
Courtesy of National Parks Board

In the gardens of the LTA building is this Rain Tree which is over 45 years old. This species was introduced to Singapore in 1876 and originates from South America. Due to its beautiful form and shade-providing canopy, it was planted in the 1900s in coffee and nutmeg plantations and along roadsides. Its sweet fruit pulp is relished by cattle, goats, horses, pigs and even children in some countries. The leaves of the Rain Tree fold up in the evenings and this is why the Malays called it *Pukul Lima*, which means "five o'clock".

On 15 February 1942 Singapore became Syonan-to. The conquering "Tiger of Malaya", General Yamashita himself, is believed to have passed through Serangoon Road. During the first weeks of the Japanese Occupation, New World Park in Serangoon was one of the 28 sites used as a mass-screening centre for the *Dai Kensho* ("great inspection" in Japanese) operation. The operation sought to remove anti-Japanese elements amongst the Chinese population of Singapore and later became known as the *Sook Ching* ("purge" in Mandarin) massacre.

Another site of wartime exploitation included the Siong Lim Saw Mill and Company where residents of Serangoon who lived near Syed

Alwi Road were instructed to gather and were rounded up by Japanese officials. They were told to bring a few days' supply of food and made to sleep on wooden planks for four nights. The area was filthy and there was only one water pipe for more than 1,000 people.

Thousands of Chinese were also gathered at the Raffles College field for one night and then moved to the field at Race Course Road as part of the *Sook Ching*. They were held here for a week, and had to survive on the little rice and salt that the Japanese gave them. On the eighth day, they were marched all the way from Race Course Road to Tanjong Katong Road where they were killed.

During the harsh days of the Japanese Occupation, many who had become unemployed and destitute took shelter at religious institutions, including the Hindu temples in Serangoon. At the Sri Veeramakaliamman Temple, there were more than 20 vagrants sleeping at the temple each night. The merchants along Serangoon Road would occasionally donate rice to them.

In 1943, an earlier trustee of the Sri Veeramakaliamman Temple, G Maruthamuthu, decided to present a sword to General Mohan Singh, then Commander-in-Chief of the Indian National Army. The sword was made in Singapore with a silver blade and gilt handle. It was supposed to be presented on the last night of the Navarathiri festival at the temple in October 1943.

However, General Mohan Singh was indisposed on the appointed day and sent his immediate subordinates instead. These officers prayed to the deity Kalliamman to help them drive Britain out of India. Before leaving the temple, they also urged the worshippers to pray for their success in freeing India from British rule. The presentation of the sword was eventually held in front of the City Council buildings by Maruthamuthu before a large gathering of Indians and detachments of the Indian National Army.



An Indian National Army soldier, 1943
 Courtesy of National Museum of Singapore, National Heritage Board

Besides providing shelter and sanctuary, religious institutions such as the Sakya Muni Buddha Gaya Temple also played another important role. An account tells of British Allied soldiers smuggling correspondences out of Singapore through Reverend Vutthisasara of the Sakya Muni Buddha Gaya Temple. The temple, having been explicitly Thai in orientation, was left untouched by the Japanese authorities as Thailand had cooperated with the Japanese during the invasion of Malaya. This allowed British prisoners of war to smuggle correspondences out of Singapore through the sympathetic Vutthisasara and other monks at the temple.

RECOVERY AND REBUILDING

The war came to an end in 1945 and Indians continued to settle down in Singapore. However, with India's independence, the Indian migrants had to choose a country to belong to as British Singapore did not allow for dual citizenship.

Indian pioneer Rajabali Jumabhoy (1898-1998) spoke to the National Archives of Singapore on the reaction of the local communities to this change:

"The idea of the Bill was that a person who became a British subject under the Act could vote. As such, personally I was very happy,

but I had a difficult time trying to persuade many Indians to become British subjects. [...] They were attached to their homeland [...] It was still an uphill task for me to tell them, to persuade them, that they had been here for many decades. That their families were here, their bread and butter was here, their business was here so why they should not take advantage of registration under the Act. Eventually the majority were persuaded."

Most religious bodies in Little India had to rebuild their places of worship as well as their congregations after the war. The religious activities continued with even greater rigor, albeit with smaller congregations. The road to full recovery took time as many congregation members had either perished or left during the mass migration that occurred in the last days before the Japanese invasion. Some Indians had also been sent to the Death Railway in Thailand during the Japanese Occupation.

The war had also brought about a change in the socio-economic landscape of Little India. At the outbreak of war, many shop owners sold their businesses to their hired hands before they fled the island. Those who survived subsequently moved up the social ladder during the post-war era. Some of those who left for India also returned to rebuild their fortune.

P Govindasamy Pillai, affectionately known as PGP, had five sari shops in Serangoon before World War II. He left for India in 1941 and handed his business over to a relative. He returned after the war to continue his business, and this was possible because his clients had trusted him and remained loyal to him. While new proprietors were just starting to make headway with their businesses in the 1960s, PGP was already moving ahead of competitors and renovating his existing stores. He was also known for his philanthropic efforts and donated to many community institutions including temples.



P Govindasamy Pillai's shop at Little India Arcade, 1990
Courtesy of Urban Redevelopment Authority

Besides contributions to community institutions, PGP and other pioneers of the area such as Rajabali Jumabhoy, were also concerned with the building of a more stable Indian community in Serangoon. In 1950-51, an opportunity arose to bring together the Indians across the island with the visit of India's first Prime Minister, Jawaharlal Nehru, who laid the foundation stone for the Mahatma Gandhi Memorial at Race Course Lane.

Mahatma Gandhi (1869-1948) had espoused the doctrine of *Satyagraha* (loosely translated from Sanskrit as "holding onto truth") which referred to non-violent resistance in the struggle for Indian independence. Through this doctrine, Gandhi urged all Indians from the various states and religions to stand united. For Indians all over the world, Gandhi was a powerful symbol of peace as well as a source of cultural pride. In 1948, he was assassinated by a Hindu fanatic opposed to his concessions to those from other religions, particularly Muslims. A portion of his ashes was brought to Singapore to be



Photograph of Jawaharlal Nehru and Mahatma Gandhi, early to mid-20th century
Courtesy of National Museum of Singapore, National Heritage Board



Mahatma Gandhi Memorial interior, c. 1983
Courtesy of National Archives of Singapore

immersed in the sea here. Thereafter, memorials to commemorate Gandhi were built all over the world and serve as a reminder to Indians, Muslims, Sikhs and Hindus that they all belong to one brotherhood.

Amongst prominent Indians who pushed for the building of the memorial were V Pakirisamy, Rajabali Jumabhoy and PGP. Pakirisamy was President of the Singapore India Association in 1939-41 and a founding member of the Inter-Religious Organisation while Jumabhoy was a founding member of the Indian Association and the Singapore Indian Chamber of Commerce. In addition, many members of the Indian working class and non-Indians also contributed towards the building of the memorial.

The Singapore Indian Development Association (SINDA) used the building as its office in 1991-93, after which it fell into disuse and disrepair. In 2008, the Hindi Society (Singapore) leased the building as its office and restored it. The Mahatma Gandhi Memorial was then elevated to conservation status in 2010.



Mahatma Gandhi Memorial, 2016

URBAN RENEWAL FROM THE 1970S

After Singapore attained full independence in 1965, there was a nationwide drive to clean up and renew the city. The first government Concept Plan for infrastructural development and land use was subsequently completed in 1971. These early development efforts were focused mainly on the town area and later expanded outwards.

In the 1970s Serangoon Road was still a bazaar of Indian textiles and spices, motor workshops and wayside stalls. However, it was also a dilapidating district where many of its 60,000 residents were living in dark and unhygienic cubicles consisting of rooms sub-divided into small compartments. At this time, only minor steps had been taken to clean up the district, with the most significant being the clearance of junks from the Rochor River.

In the mid-1970s, concrete development plans were introduced for this area and the HDB set aside S\$4 million for Kampong Kapor's renewal. By the late 1970s, the demolition of municipal quarters at Kampong Kapor Road, Veerasamy Road, Hindoo Road and Upper Perak Road had started, and affected residents had to be resettled. While these residents

were moved into HDB estates in the new satellite towns, community institutions in the area largely stayed in the vicinity, thereby preserving their cultural identity and practices.

For example, in 1980 it was decided that a replacement market for the old Tekka Market (also known as the Kandang Kerbau Market), had to be completed near the original site before its demolition. The Zhujiao Centre (now Tekka Centre) was thus built across the road in 1981. The government planned for this centre to be a residential-cum-shopping complex that included a wet market, food centre and HDB homes.



Interior of Zhujiao Centre, c. 1982
Courtesy of National Archives of Singapore



A view of junks docked at the harbour at Rochor River, c. 1900
Courtesy of National Museum of Singapore, National Heritage Board



Aerial view of Little India, 1989
Courtesy of Urban Redevelopment Authority



BECOMING LITTLE INDIA: CONSERVATION AREA AND TOURIST ATTRACTION

Little India as we know it today was not officially named as such until the 1980s. This was after a concerted effort by the then Singapore Tourist Promotion Board (STPB) (now the Singapore Tourism Board) to promote the preservation and celebration of Singapore's ethnic quarters. While there was a large Indian community at Serangoon Road, it had not been a tourist attraction like Chinatown and the former Malay Village until this time. Although multicultural in nature, this area was, in some ways, a natural choice for Singapore's "Indian district". For instance, in an article published in the *New Nation* in 1972, members of the public noted that Serangoon Road exuded the "little India' atmosphere".

The first time the name "Little India" was used in reference to Serangoon Road was by the STPB in 1979-80. Prior to this, the public generally considered the core of "little India" at Serangoon to comprise the Kandang Kerbau area, fronting Bukit Timah Road and centring on Tekka Market.

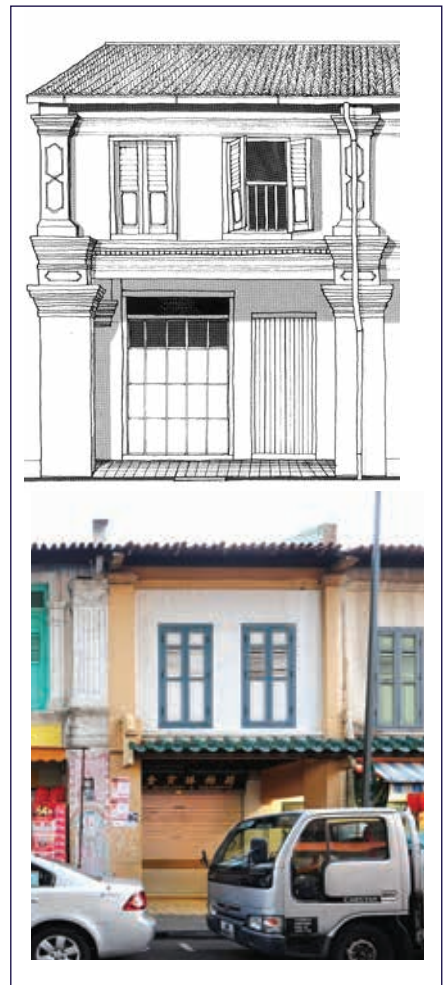
From the 1980s, with urban redevelopment works picking up speed, there was a heightened awareness that the unique characteristics and heritage of cultural sites like Little India had to be preserved. There were two broad thrusts in the conservation plan for this area. The first involved preservation of the area's built heritage and began in 1986, while the second thrust focused on cultural preservation.

The first phase of the government's conservation efforts was completed in 1989. In this year, the Urban Redevelopment Authority (URA) gazetted ten historic sites in Singapore as conservation areas, including Little India. From this point on, greater attention was paid to the preservation of the cultural traits of these historic districts rather than just their physical appearance.

Under URA's Conservation Plan today, Little India is made up of the Little India Historic District and some areas within the Jalan Besar Secondary Settlement. The conservation zone under this plan is defined as being bounded by Serangoon Road, Sungei Road and Jalan Besar. Buildings identified for conservation in this area include shophouses with designs ranging across the Early Shophouse Style (1840-1900), First Transitional Style, Late Shophouse Style (1900-40), Second Transitional Style and Art Deco Style (1930-60).

Early Shophouse Style

Seen at: 60 Buffalo Street



First Transitional Shophouse Style

Seen at: 39 Campbell Lane



Late Shophouse Style

Seen at: 47 Desker Road



Second Transitional Shophouse Style

Seen at: 23 Cuff Road



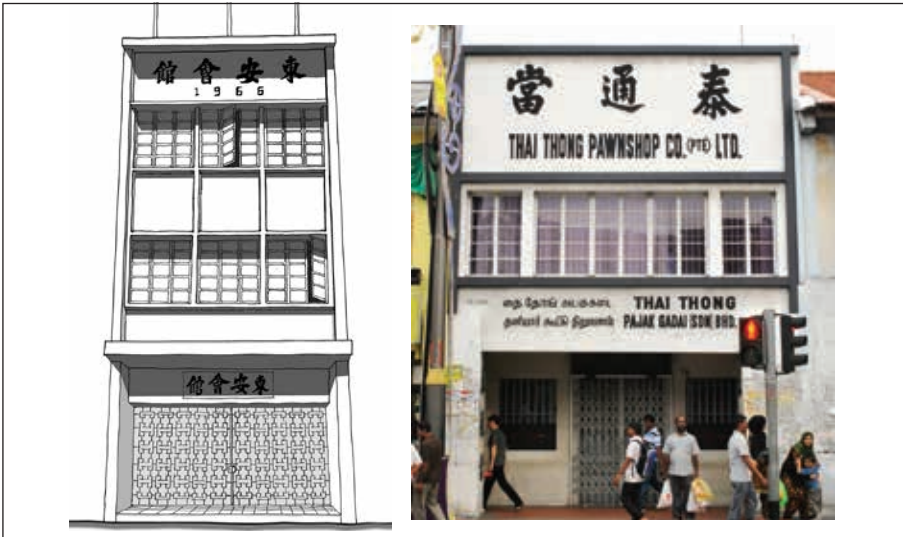
Art Deco Style

Seen at: 35 Cuff Road



Modern Style

Seen at: 74 Serangoon Road



PLACES OF WORSHIP

SRI SRINIVASA PERUMAL TEMPLE

397 Serangoon Road

The Sri Srinivasa Perumal Temple was built on land purchased from the East India Company in 1851 by a group of Indian men who wanted to build a temple for Hindus in the area. A temple named Narasinga Perumal Kovil was then built between 1855 and 1885. Narasinga (also spelled Narasimha) is an avatar of the god Vishnu while Perumal (“the admirable one of the trinity” in Tamil) refers directly to Vishnu or any Vaishnava deity.

In 1914, the Chettiar (migrants from Chettinad in South India) community presented the temple with new idols imported from India on the condition that the Mohammedan & Hindu Endowments Board reconstruct the shrines. Originally, the temple consisted only of a *mandapam* (“main hall” in Tamil, deriving from Sanskrit) and a large pond that was filled in the 1940s for environmental reasons. The pond was fed by a tributary of the Rochor River. Devotees washed and bathed in the pond in

the mornings and after praying at the temple.

In the 1950s, plans to renovate the temple were drawn up by the Muslim & Hindu Endowment Board (previously the Mohammedan & Hindu Endowments Board). Building works started in 1961 and South Indian sculptors were later brought on board to complete the ornamental, plastering and painting works based on a design by a Hindu architect from Chennai, India.

The plans for the building of the *kalyana mandapam* (“marriage hall” in Tamil, deriving from Sanskrit) were submitted in 1962 by the architectural firm Swan and Maclaren. It was largely financed by the businessman and philanthropist P Govindasamy Pillai (PGP) and officially opened by Yang di-Pertuan Negara Yusof Bin Ishak in 1965. At this time, Hindu marriages took place at the *kalyana mandapam* and it was also used for lectures and speeches, as well as the activities of several organisations.



Narasinga Perumal Kovil, c. 1938
Allen Goh Collection, courtesy of National Archives of Singapore



A wood carving from Tamil Nadu, South India, depicting Garuda, 18th-19th century
Courtesy of Asian Civilisations Museum, National Heritage Board

The temple was completed and consecrated in 1966. At this point, many community elders advised that the main deity of the temple be changed from the imposing Sri Narasinga to the gracious Sri Srinivasa (Venkateshwara). The temple was thus renamed Sri Srinivasa Perumal Temple, with the term Srinivasa having multiple meanings such as “a source of light” and “abode of prosperity” in Sanskrit. In 1975, following another donation by PGP, a *gopuram* (“entrance tower” in Tamil, deriving from Sanskrit) was added to the temple. The colourful *gopuram* depicts the story of Vishnu’s earthly visits on his mythical mount, Garuda.

The temple comprises four buildings, with a central sanctuary dedicated to Vishnu. Two smaller sanctuaries, one on either side, are dedicated to Vishnu’s wives, Lakshmi and Andal. A fourth shrine in front of the central building is dedicated to Garuda. In 1978, Sri Srinivasa Perumal Temple was gazetted as a National Monument.



Deepavali prayers at the Sri Srinivasa Perumal Temple, 1978
Courtesy of Singapore Press Holdings Limited



Thaipusam procession in front of the Sri Srinivasa Perumal Temple, 2016

Source: The Straits Times © Singapore Press Holdings Limited. Reproduced with permission.

The main festival celebrated at the temple is Thaipusam. During this festival, male devotees who have made vows over the year carry a *kavadi* (a ceremonial structure made of wood or steel) and make their way to the Sri Thendayuthapani Temple, also known as the Chettiers’ Temple.

SRI VEERAMAKALIAMMAN TEMPLE

141 Serangoon Road



Sri Veeramakaliamman Temple, 2016

The Sri Veeramakaliamman Temple is Singapore’s first temple dedicated to Kaliyamman or the goddess Kali, a fierce incarnation of Shiva’s wife and “Destroyer of Evil”. Also known as the Mariamman Goddess, Kali holds sugarcane in her hands as a show of prosperity. Hindus believe that she destroys ignorance and protects her devotees by maintaining world order. Many pioneering Indian settlers here turned to her for a sense of comfort and security when they first arrived in Singapore. They also asked the goddess for help receive promotions or to be free from illness, while barren women sought her help to regain their fertility.

A legend tells of Tamil pioneers building a makeshift shrine for Kali between 1855 and 1860. It was said that Tamil workers who worked in the lime pits in Kampong Kapur initiated the building of the shrine. Hence, the temple was originally known as the *Soonambu Kambam Kovil* or the “temple at the village of lime”. By 1900, a wooden temple had replaced the shrine and more rooms were added to the building. A statue of Kali was shipped from South India in 1908.



Interior of Sri Veeramakaliamman Temple, c. 1982
Courtesy of National Archives of Singapore

On Tuesdays and Fridays, which are regarded as holy days by Hindus, Indians from other parts of Singapore also came to worship at the temple. The temple was mainly supported by daily-rated municipal labourers who paid subscription charges. In 1908, the temple was officially placed under the care of these employees, with their overseers appointed as the first Trustees of the temple.

Apart from Hindus, there were also Chinese worshippers at the temple though their numbers were small. It was said that the goddess Kali had helped many who asked favours of her. All marriages among municipal workers were performed at the temple while the majority of other Hindu residents in the area also sought the services of the temple.

A large hall was built in 1953 where worshippers were fed during feasts and social occasions such as marriages and ear-piercing ceremonies were conducted. The hall was also used as a place of rest for beggars and travellers.

The need for a new temple arose as early as 1965 although it was not until 1975 that plans were drawn up. A fund-raising campaign was launched in mid-1976 under the patronage of

GPG. In addition to holding a walk-a-jog, selling miniature bricks and seeking pledges from prominent businesses and community leaders, three letters appealing for donations were sent to almost all the Hindus in Singapore. The renovated temple was eventually elevated to conservation status in 2014.



Attendees to an ear-piercing ceremony held at the Sri Veeramakaliamman Temple, 1962
Courtesy of Singapore Press Holdings Limited



Temple priests pouring holy water on the pinnacles of the Sri Veeramakaliamman Temple during a consecration ceremony marking the reopening of the temple after restoration, 2014
Source: Tamil Murasu © Singapore Press Holdings Limited.
Reproduced with permission.



Devotees at the Sri Veeramakaliamman Temple, 2016

KAMPONG KAPOR METHODIST CHURCH

3 Kampong Kapor Road



A student concert at the Kampong Kapor Methodist Church, 1948
Goh Soon Tioe Collection, courtesy of National Archives of Singapore

Kampong Kapor Methodist Church started as the Straits Chinese Church in 1890 when a small group of about 20 Malay-speaking Straits Chinese started meeting at Sophia Blackmore's house at Sophia Road. Blackmore had arrived from Australia and was the first female Methodist missionary in Singapore. From 1891, the congregation met at the Christian Institute at Middle Road, and when they bought the building to establish their own church in 1898, it was known as the Malay Church as well as the Middle Road Church.

In 1916, a church building fund was set up for a new larger church building. Members pledged to contribute a month's salary and businessmen pledged ten percent of their net profits. In 1924, upon Bishop Bickley's death, his family decided to make a sizeable donation of US\$50,000 (equivalent to about US\$706,000 today) towards the church's building fund in his memory.

By 1927, the church was able to secure a site at the corner of Cuff Road and Kampong Kapor Road where it still stands today. The construction of an Art Deco style building commenced in 1929 by architectural firm Swan and Maclaren and the whole church was dedicated to the memory of Bishop Bickley as the "Bishop Bickley Memorial".

By 1952, the church had become the second largest English-speaking Methodist Church in Singapore. In 1957, recognising that it catered to a broader congregation than just the Straits Chinese, the church took on its current name of Kampong Kapor Methodist Church.



Kampong Kapor Methodist Church, 1970
Courtesy of Urban Redevelopment Authority



Kampong Kapor Methodist Church and Christian Education Centre, 1972

Courtesy of Urban Redevelopment Authority

In 1965, a Christian Education Centre was constructed next to the church. In 1987, the church was rebuilt in a quasi-Art Deco style. While the construction was going on, church services continued at the premises of the Anglo-Chinese Primary School at Coleman Street. When the building was completed in 1989, the congregation returned to a fully air-conditioned church, which was gazetted for conservation in the same year.



Back of Kampong Kapor Methodist Church, from Veerasamy Road, 1984

Lee Kip Lin Collection, courtesy of the National Library Board

As part of a joint project with the Methodist Welfare Services in the late 1980s, the Kampong Kapor Methodist Church established the Kampong Kapor Family Service Centre to provide aid to the needy of the Kampong Kapor community. During the 1997-98 recession, the church organised a program called "Feed the Hungry" which fed about 9,000 Indian workers who had lost their jobs.



Kampong Kapor Methodist Church, 2016

By 2000, the Kampong Kapor Methodist Church had over 900 members and mission organisations in Finland, Fiji, China, Taiwan, South Africa and Thailand. By this time, services in Kampong Kapor Methodist Church were held in Peranakan language, English, Mandarin and Tamil, a practice that continues today.

ANGULLIA MOSQUE

265 Serangoon Road



Angullia Mosque, 1980

Ronni Pinsler Collection, courtesy of National Archives of Singapore



Angullia Mosque, 1985

Courtesy of Urban Redevelopment Authority

The Angullias, also known as “Angadias”, were Gujarati Sunni Muslim traders from western India. Like many other Gujarati traders who ventured abroad to set up trading networks, Ebramjee Mohamed Salleh Angullia travelled to Singapore to trade in the 1850s.

It was his grandson, Mohamed Salleh Eusoof (MSE) Angullia, who amassed a fortune in Singapore trading in spices, sugar, timber, pins and cutlery with countries in the region. He then started acquiring properties in Singapore, including grounds at Bras Basah Road, Serangoon Road, Belilios Lane and Mohamed Sultan Road. He also owned land on Orchard Road stretching from the Hilton Hotel to Liat Towers and Paterson Road, hence the name Angullia Park was given to that area. At the centre of this park was another Angullia Mosque which MSE’s son built in 1933.

MSE acquired the grounds along Serangoon Road on which the Angullia Mosque now stands in 1890 and the first Angullia Mosque was built by 1892. Today, only the entrance gatehouse remains from the time of the original building and it is a conserved structure. The current main mosque building was built in 1970 following the demolition of the previous building the year before. The Angullias are still trustees of the Angullia Mosque, which they hold as custodians for the larger Indian Muslim community.



Angullia Mosque, 2016

FOOCHOW METHODIST CHURCH

90 Race Course Road



The church members and Reverend Andrew KT Chen at their Queen Street premises, c. 1936-37
Image courtesy of Foochow Methodist Church

The beginnings of the Foochow Methodist Church can be traced to the work of the German Methodist missionary, Dr HLE Luering, who started a mission in 1897 for rickshaw pullers, coolies and barbers from Foochow, China, residing near Middle Road. The church started with just 20 members and they congregated at the Christian Institute for church services held under Reverend Ling Ching Mee until 1924.

Thereafter, the congregation relocated to the Anglo-Chinese School along Coleman Street and again to the Tamil Methodist Church at Short Street, before ending up at a gospel hall along Queen Street in the early 1930s, where they were taught to read and sing.

The need for a proper church building was felt throughout the 1930s. In 1935, members of the congregation launched a campaign to raise funds for a new building. In 1936, they had enough to acquire a compound house at Race Course Road, where the church still stands today. Soon after, Reverend Andrew KT Chen was appointed.

Chen renovated the house and converted it into a church in 1937. This building was unique for its classical style columns, reflected by its high vents with round windows. The tall windows were made in the Gothic style.

During World War II, the church served as a refuge for many families stranded in Singapore. Unfortunately, it was damaged during the war

when a shell exploded on the north-western corner of the building and caused splinter and ceiling damage. Many documents belonging to the church were also lost during the war.

After the war, Reverend Kao Jih Eng undertook the restoration and extension of the church. Kao travelled all over Malaya to solicit donations. As a result, the front of the building was completely rebuilt based on plans drawn up in 1936. In 1950, the back portion of the church was rebuilt to match the front.



Foochow Methodist Church, c. 1977
Image courtesy of Foochow Methodist Church

In 1987, a three-storey block of apartments next to the church was purchased and converted for use as a Christian Education Centre to commemorate the church's 90th anniversary. In 1993, plans were made to build a second sanctuary above the existing one on the second level and to build another three-storey building linking the church and the Christian Education Centre next door. With the expansion of the church over time, it now offers services in English, Mandarin, Foochow and Tamil.



Foochow Methodist Church, 2016

ABDUL GAFOOR MOSQUE

41 Dunlop Street

The Abdul Gafoor Mosque was built in 1907 to replace the smaller wooden Dunlop Street Mosque built in 1859 and is one of Singapore's oldest mosques. It served the Kampong Kapur area which had a population largely composed of Baweanese and Tamil Muslim immigrants. Many of the Baweanese worked as syces (horse groomers) and horse trainers at the former racecourse nearby while the Tamil Muslims largely conducted business in this area.



Abdul Gafoor Mosque, mid-20th century
Courtesy of National Museum of Singapore, National Heritage Board

Shaik Abdul Gafoor bin Shaik Hyder, the chief clerk in the law firm Khory & Brydges, was one of the two trustees of the Dunlop Street Mosque *wakaf* (Arabic for a religious endowment). He raised funds for the construction of the new mosque through building and renting out shophouses and sheds around the mosque. After Gafoor's death in 1919, the mosque was renamed Abdul Gafoor Mosque in his memory.



Abdul Gafoor Mosque, 1992
Courtesy of Urban Redevelopment Authority

The Mohammedan and Hindu Endowments Board subsequently took over Abdul Gafoor's properties in 1927. This led to modern improvements in the following year when the Board installed electrical lighting, making it one of the first mosques in Singapore to offer such an amenity.



Interior of the Abdul Gafoor Mosque, 1997
Source: The Straits Times © Singapore Press Holdings Limited.
Reproduced with permission.

The mosque was gazetted as a National Monument in 1979 in recognition of its rich architectural and historical value. Its unique architecture blends Saracenic elements like onion-shaped domes and cinquefoil arches with Neoclassical ones, such as the Roman-style pilasters. Above the main entrance is an elaborately decorated sundial that is adorned with the names of 25 prominent Islamic prophets in elegant Arabic calligraphy. The exterior walls of the mosque are embellished with crescent moon and star motifs, which are symbols widely associated with the Islamic faith.



Friday prayers at the Abdul Gafoor Mosque, 2003
Source: Berita Harian © Singapore Press Holdings Limited.
Reproduced with permission.



Abdul Gafoor Mosque, 2016

CHURCH OF THE TRUE LIGHT

25G Perak Road

The Anglican Church of the True Light had its beginnings in 1911. A missionary of the Church of England Zenna Mission in Singapore, Miss Apple, first embarked on the idea of organising a mission for the Heng Hua and Hock Chew Chinese from Fujian province living in Singapore. Part-time school master and journalist for a Chinese newspaper, Guok Koh Muo, subsequently took over from her and led the mission.



Church of the True Light members at Victoria Street, 1919
Courtesy of Church of the True Light

Guok started with a small group and few resources, so he held gospel meetings in the evenings at a friend's barber shop at Bencoolen Street. The congregation soon grew and a larger venue was needed. As a member of the Futsing Association, Guok was able to use the association's Queen Street premises for gospel meetings in the evenings. The congregation attended St Peter's Church at Stamford Road for Sunday services.

For the convenience of its members, the gatherings were later held in the rented premises of an abandoned Buddhist nunnery in Victoria Street. After expiry of its lease, the mission moved to a small building in Johor Road where the number of members greatly increased. Subsequently, the congregation moved to a larger venue at Jalan Besar. It was here that the name "Church of the True Light" was first used.

By 1938 the congregation had once again outgrown its premises. In 1940, a larger site at the corner of Dickson Road and Perak Road

was acquired at a public auction. However, fundraising for a new building proved to be a challenge. The church had its beginnings in one of the worst slums of Singapore and most of its early members were poverty-stricken. Many were poor trishaw riders who could barely afford basic necessities. Hence, Guok toured the whole of Malaya and some neighbouring countries to raise funds to build the church. These fundraising efforts were temporarily halted by the Japanese Occupation from 1942, during which time Guok was ordained a clergyman.

Fundraising efforts for the new church only resumed in 1949, four years after the war. A Church Building Fund Committee was established to make plans for the building of the new church as well as the provision of a free clinic and kindergarten within the building. On 4 October 1951, the foundation stone was laid by Right Reverend Henry Wolfe Baines, Anglican Bishop of Singapore.

A three-storey building was constructed, with the first floor for a kindergarten and clinic, the second floor for Sunday school and youth activities, and the top floor for the sanctuary. The sanctuary has a large Chinese ideogram of the word "love" above the altar. Verses from the Bible are painted onto the pillars and walls in elaborate Chinese script, and the names of donors of the pews are inscribed at the base of the kneelers.



St Andrew's Mission Hospital at Perak Road, with Church of the True Light in the background, 1972
Courtesy of Urban Redevelopment Authority

The building was completed in 1952 and later gazetted for conservation in 1989. The Church of the True Light free clinic commenced operations in 1953 with the help of a medical officer from the St Andrew's Mission Hospital. It had treated a total of 34,122 sick children by the time it closed in 1958. Today, besides its English and Mandarin services, the Church of the True Light also holds services in Tamil, Malayalam, Sinhalese and Hindi.



Church of the True Light, 2016

LEONG SAN SEE TEMPLE

371 Race Course Road

Leong San See Temple ("Dragon Mountain Temple" in Mandarin) is one of Singapore's most ornate Buddhist temples. It was established in 1917 by Reverend Chun Wu who arrived in Singapore in 1913 with only an urn and a statue of Guan Yin, the Goddess of Mercy.

The temple has its origins in another temple of the same name in An Ping District in Fujian Province, China. The temple at Race Course



Leong San See Temple, c. 1950

Courtesy of National Museum of Singapore, National Heritage Board

Road was initially named Leong San Lodge and consisted of a few huts where Reverend Chun took care of the sick, with the central hut housing the statue of the Goddess of Mercy. When Reverend Chun retired, his duties were handed over to his disciple, Reverend Rui Deng.

In 1952, Venerable Sek Kong Hiap (1900-94) was appointed as abbot of Leong San See Temple. He was one of the most important Buddhist figures in Singapore. After becoming abbot, he mooted the plan to establish a new temple, the Mee Toh Temple (with *mee toh* meaning "eternal brightness" in Mandarin), next to the Leong San See Temple. However, realising that there was a more pressing need for a school, he dropped the plans for the temple in 1954 and initiated the building of Leong San School within the temple compound. The school started with only four classrooms and provided free classes in Mandarin.

The school's enrolment grew rapidly and eventually a plot adjacent to the temple was acquired. The Mee Toh School was built there in 1955, and its students often visited the temple to pray. The school was managed by administrators of Leong San See Temple until 1957 when it became a government-aided school that received funding support from the government. In 2004, the school shifted to Punggol though it continues to maintain close links with the temple.



Mee Toh School beside Leong San See Temple, 1972
Courtesy of Urban Redevelopment Authority

In 1956, Venerable Sek spearheaded an appeal to the government to grant a holiday for Buddhists and his efforts paid off when the government gazetted the full moon of the fifth month in the Chinese calendar as a public holiday in celebration of Vesak Day by the Buddhists.

Since the construction of the Leong San See Temple, the main building has remained but many renovations and extensions have been carried out. The main shrine and the left and right wings were completed in 1972. The temple building was elevated to conservation status in 2014.

The central altar is dedicated to Guan Yin and Sakyamuni Buddha. The former is portrayed with 18 hands, demonstrating her boundless mercy and compassion. The altar is framed with ornate and delicate carvings including images of phoenixes, birds, flowers and human figures symbolising the greatness and wisdom of the gods.



Interior of Leong San See Temple, 1991
Ministry of Information and the Arts Collection, courtesy of National Archives of Singapore



Interior of Leong San See Temple, 2016

There is also an altar with the image of Confucius which is popular with many parents who bring their children to pray for intelligence and filial piety. On certain days, free vegetarian food is served to devotees in the ancestral hall.



Leong San See Temple, 2016

SAKYA MUNI BUDDHA GAYA TEMPLE

336 Race Course Road



Sakya Muni Buddha Gaya Temple, c. 1930s
Courtesy of National Museum of Singapore, National Heritage Board

The Sakya Muni Buddha Gaya Temple has its origins in 1927 when a Thai monk, the Venerable Vutthisasara, erected a temporary shelter made of zinc and wooden planks along Race Course Road to house a statue of Buddha that he had carried to Singapore. The name of the temple refers to the Buddha who is also known as Sakyamuni or Siddhartha Gautama.



Statue of the Sakya Muni Buddha in the temple, 1938-39
Courtesy of National Museum of Singapore, National Heritage Board

The temple grew in popularity and, in 1930, Vutthisasara built the present temple with a donation from Aw Boon Haw and Aw Boon Par, brothers best known for the Tiger Balm ointment. The temple is 15 metres tall and

houses a 300-ton statue of Buddha. The statue is surrounded by a seemingly endless chain of lights, leading to the temple's popular name, "Temple of a Thousand Lights".

At the base of the statue is a fresco depicting the important events in Buddha's life. On the right side of this altar are statues of baby bodhisattvas (persons who delay reaching nirvana to help others attain salvation) for whom worshippers leave candy and toys. At the back of the hall, a chamber under the altar houses another Buddha, depicted at the end of his life and reclining beneath a Yellow Saraca tree.

According to the temple, it also houses an ebony and mother-of-pearl replica of Buddha's footprint and a piece of bark from the original Bodhi tree under which Buddha sat. This replica of the footprint was found on top of Adam's Peak in Sri Lanka, a mountain named after the belief of ancient seafaring Arabs that its summit housed the first man Adam's crypt. The temple's architecture reflects an eclectic mix of Chinese, Thai and Indian cultural influences, and the building has been designated as a historic site by the National Heritage Board.



Sakya Muni Buddha Gaya Temple, 2016

SRI VADAPATHIRA KALIAMMAN TEMPLE

555 Serangoon Road



Sri Vadapathira Kaliamman Temple, 1984
Courtesy of Singapore Press Holdings Limited

According to the Sri Vadapathira Kaliamman Temple, there is a popular belief that the temple was started in 1830 with a sole female devotee who had placed a picture of the goddess Kaliamman or Kali, “Destroyer of Evil”, under a banyan tree near the present temple. In another account, it is believed that in the early 20th century, the Tamil Hindus of Potong Pasir, under the leadership of a few Chettiars, built a small hut as a temple at Upper Serangoon Road.

Regardless of its origins, a proper temple was built in 1935 and, during this period, the temple’s main deities included its namesake goddess as well as Vinayakar (Ganesha) and Murugan, both sons of Shiva. In 1943, the temple was expanded to include additional deities.

In 1969, the temple’s management committee decided to commission an architectural firm, Neysadurai and Associates, from India to redesign the temple. Two sculptors and two artists from South India were brought here to work on the motifs of the temple. Although the *kumbabishekam* (“consecration ceremony” in Tamil, deriving from Sanskrit) of the temple was performed in January 1974, the three archway *gopura* (“entrance towers” in Tamil, deriving from Sanskrit) and the decoration of the *mandapam* (“main hall” in Tamil, deriving from Sanskrit) were completed later.

In 2003, the temple underwent further works which included the construction of a new four-storey multi-purpose hall as well



Sri Vadapathira Kaliamman Temple, 2016

as restoration works for the deities. The *maha kumbabishekam* (“grand consecration ceremony” in Tamil, deriving from Sanskrit) of the temple was held in 2005, and the temple was elevated to conservation status in 2014.

The new multi-purpose hall holds the main shrine to Kali and on either side are two smaller shrines dedicated to Vinayakar and Murugan. One of the interesting features of the conserved temple building is its elaborate *vimana* (stepped pyramid-shape tower over main shrine found in South Indian temples) adorned with deities. The tower is visible from a distance and allows devotees to pray even without entering the temple.

SHREE LAKSHMINARAYAN TEMPLE

5 Chander Road



Shree Lakshminarayan Temple, 2016

The Shree Lakshminarayan Temple is Singapore's first dedicated place of worship for North Indian Hindus. Its name derives from a combination of the names of its main deities: "Lakshmi" and "Narayan" (Vishnu). Lakshmi is the goddess of wealth and the consort of Vishnu, while Vishnu is the deity responsible for the preservation and protection of the universe.

The foundation stone for the Shree Lakshminarayan Temple was laid in 1960, although the building was only completed in 1969 with the support of and donation from almost 10,000 North Indian Hindus from all classes. Prior to this, all festivals celebrated by the aforementioned community were organised by the Singapore North Indian Hindu Association and held at different venues.



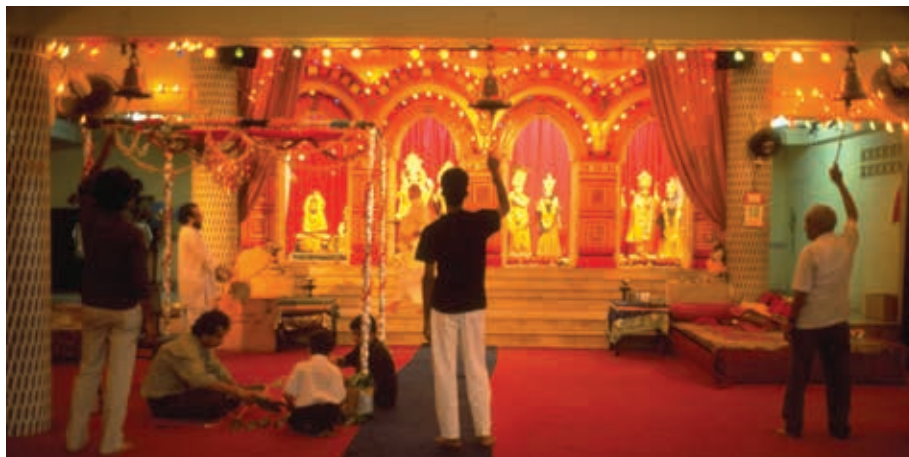
Shree Lakshminarayan Temple, 1985
Courtesy of Urban Redevelopment Authority

The history of the North Indian community in Singapore goes back to the time when Indian herdsmen from the northern and north-eastern states of Uttar Pradesh and Bihar arrived and settled along the Rochor River at the beginning of the 20th century. These herdsmen worshipped Krishna, an incarnation of Vishnu, who was a cowherd. The womenfolk of this community visited the temple every Tuesday afternoon to perform puja ("worship" in Hindi) and offer fruits and flowers to the deities.

The Shree Lakshminarayan Temple building displays a distinctive red and white patterning on its façade and was gazetted for conservation in 1989. The pointed domes on top mark it out as a temple. Besides its namesake deities, the temple also houses other major Hindu deities such as Shiva, Kali and Ganesha.



A Hindu Wedding at the Shree Lakshminarayan Temple, 1990
Ministry of Information and the Arts Collection, courtesy of National Archives of Singapore



Interior of Shree Lakshminarayan Temple with devotees ringing the temple bells, 1990
Ministry of Information and the Arts Collection, courtesy of National Archives of Singapore

COMMUNITY ORGANISATIONS

FORMER HONG WEN SCHOOL

2 Dickson Road



Hong Wen School at Dickson Road, 1972
Courtesy of Urban Redevelopment Authority

The Hong Wen School was first established in 1920 by a Heng Hua Chinese group of elders from Fujian province along with the foundation of the Hin Ann Huay Kuan (*huay kuan* refers to a Chinese clan association) at Queen Street. The school started classes with just 50 students and during its early years, it faced the threat of closure several times.

The school first ceased operations during the economic recession of 1923 and reopened in 1925. Then in 1940, when hostilities broke out between the Heng Hua and the Foo Ching Chinese, the Hin Ann Huay Kuan was raided and Hong Wen School was damaged. The

school stopped classes again during World War II when the building was used by the Japanese as an Operations Centre.



Celebrations in commemoration of International Year of Senior Citizens at Hong Wen School, Victoria Street, 1983
Ministry of Information and the Arts Collection, courtesy of National Archives of Singapore

Hong Wen School also relocated a number of times. It operated out of its Dickson Road premises when the school reopened after World War II around 1945. In the same year, the fund raising campaign to reopen the school was met with overwhelming support, and it started with over 200 students before increasing to over 400 students in under six months.

In 1957, Hong Wen School became a government-aided school and received financial support from the government. Due to the rapid expansion of its enrolment, the school had to rent additional premises to accommodate more students. A night school was also started to overcome the space constraints. In 1961, another storey was added to the school building to provide the additional space required for recreational activities and physical education classes.

However, when urban renewal started in the town area in the 1970s and most of the residents started moving out, the school experienced a stark decline in enrolment. Thus a decision was made to relocate to Victoria



Former Hong Wen School building façade with Art Nouveau tiles at Dickson Road, 1990
 Courtesy of National Archives of Singapore



Close-up of the Art Nouveau tiles on the façade of the building, 2016

Hong Wen School then started pre-primary classes and, by the early 1980s, the school went through a transition period, converting from a Chinese medium school to one that offered English as a first language. In 1992, Hong Wen became a Special Assistance Plan (SAP) school, offering a bilingual education with both English and Chinese as first languages. The school moved again in 2009 to Towner Road where it continues to stand today.

Street. The new school at Victoria Street was completed in 1981 and the enrolment of the school subsequently increased significantly.

The school's former Dickson Road premises was used by the Buddhist Welfare Association until it was redeveloped for commercial purposes in 2010. In 1989, the Dickson Road building was gazetted for conservation because of its architectural merits and especially for the ceramic Art Nouveau tiles on its façade.



Former Hong Wen School building, 2016

SINGAPORE KERALA ASSOCIATION (NOW SINGAPORE MALAYALEE ASSOCIATION)

44 Race Course Road



Singapore Malayalee Association, 2016

Established in 1917, the Singapore Malayalee Association (SMA) is one of the oldest Indian associations in Singapore. It was formerly known as the Singapore Kerala Association. Today, it promotes the interests and development of Singapore's Malayalee community, an ethno-linguistic group originating from Kerala in southern India. It is the association's goal to bring together all Malayalees to forge ties within the community and to promote its heritage and culture.

SINGAPORE NORTH INDIAN HINDU ASSOCIATION

47 Cuff Road

The Singapore North Indian Hindu Association was established in 1921 by members of this community. The premises of the association was also known as *Bharti Bhavan* or *Bharatiya Bhawan* ("Indian building" in Hindi). As the only North Indian Hindu society in Singapore, the association celebrates almost all Hindu

festivals and performs religious rites for North Indian Hindus. It also offers free accommodation to sannyasies (Hindu religious mendicants) passing through Singapore on their way to India or other countries.



Singapore North Indian Hindu Association, 2016



"Jaagran" prayer event at the Singapore North Indian Hindu Association, 2016

Courtesy of Singapore North Indian Hindu Association

ARYA SAMAJ SINGAPORE

113 Syed Alwi Road

Arya Samaj (“society of nobles” in Sanskrit) is a global reform movement of Hinduism, which is focused on the earliest Hindu scriptures, the Vedas, and does not believe in idol worship. Prior to the founding of Arya Samaj Singapore, the Young Men’s Arya Samaj was established in 1914. According to a 1915 newspaper article from *The Straits Times*, it had been formed “on a religious basis, to supply a want felt by members of the Hindu community, and to promote moral, mental and spiritual culture”. This organisation ceased to function in 1926, and the Arya Samaj Singapore was officially registered in 1927.



Arya Samaj Mandir, 1966

Courtesy of Urban Redevelopment Authority

In 1928, Arya Samaj decided to start offering free tuitions in Hindi, Sanskrit and English at its Rowell Road premises. In 1934, the Dayanand Anglo-Vedic School (D.A.V. School), named after the founder of the Arya Samaj Movement in India, was founded by the Arya Samaj Singapore to instruct Indian children in their respective mother tongues. It moved to its present site at Syed Alwi Road in the 1950s. In 1961, a fund was started to construct a new three-storey building for the organisation at the same site.

An extension of the D.A.V. School was opened by Deputy Prime Minister Tharman Shanmugaratnam in 2011. Today, besides its academic arm, the society also organises activities such as prayer, meditation and yoga sessions.



Arya Samaj Singapore, 2016

RAMAKRISHNA MISSION SINGAPORE

Previously 9 Norris Road, now at 179 Bartley Road

The Ramakrishna Mission Singapore was established in 1928 with 125 members and initially operated from Norris Road. The organisation aimed to combat illiteracy amongst the poor, especially the Tamils who lived in the Serangoon area. It started with a night class and a young men’s cultural union. It also held classes and religious discourses for the public.



Former Ramakrishna Mission building, now King of Glory Church, 2016

The organisation subsequently established two schools, the Vivekananda Tamil School in 1932 and the Sarada Devi Tamil School in 1938. The Sarada Devi Tamil School was a government-aided school and admitted not just Hindu girls but also a number of Indian Christian girls and adopted Chinese girls. This school and the Vivekananda Tamil School both closed down in 1981.

The Ramakrishna Mission sold the Norris Road building to the Asian Women's Welfare Association (AWWA) in 1983. They then relocated their main office to their current Bartley Road property. During the 1990s, the organisation established a kindergarten, a counselling centre, a homeopathic centre and started offering yoga classes for the public. Today, the organisation also has a temple dedicated to Sri Ramakrishna at its Bartley premises.

SOH CLAN ASSOCIATION

14 Veerasamy Road



Soh Clan Association, 1966
Courtesy of Urban Redevelopment Authority

The Soh Clan Association was formerly known as Loh San Association and officially registered as a society in Singapore in 1929. It first operated from a temporary office in Telok Ayer Street before moving to a building at Hong Lim Street. The association started a private school housed in its building as a response to the educational needs of the residents in the area. However, it was not long before the space became inadequate to cater to the growing student population.



Soh Clan Association, 2016

The association then moved into another building at Sturdee Road and established Pei Nan Primary School. This school closed down during the Japanese Occupation. In 1947, the association was renamed the Soh Clan Association. It purchased two buildings in 1952 and one of them was at the association's present site at Veerasamy Road.

At this point, the association widened its membership by accepting all Chinese with the family name "Soh", regardless of their dialect grouping (i.e. Hokkien, Teochew, Cantonese and Hainanese), as part of one clan. Throughout the years, it has held various activities for the young and the old, such as picnics and overseas trips. The association has also established a welfare trust that offers bursaries to primary and secondary school students.

KAMALA CLUB

Formerly at Moulmein Road, now operates at various venues

The Kamala Club started off as the Indian and Ceylonese Ladies Club which was formed in 1931. It was founded by social worker and women's activist Checha Davies (1898-



Kamala Club, 1972
Courtesy of Urban Redevelopment Authority

1979), also known as Mrs E V Davies. As club membership was open to non-Indian women, the name of the club was later changed to Lotus Club. By February 1937, there were 90 members.

In 1950, then Indian Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru visited Singapore and was hosted by the Lotus Club and the Ladies Union, a similar organisation comprising Indian and Ceylonese ladies. At his suggestion, the two clubs merged to form the Kamala Club, named after Nehru's late wife, and also meaning "lotus" in Hindi. The lotus was kept as the logo of the new club.

The Kamala Club was provided a small zinc hut to use as a clubhouse by the government at the junction of Rangoon Road and Moulmein Road, along with a large area of land. Through

donations from the business community and various other entities, the organisation built a clubhouse, an office and living quarters. The foundation stone was laid by Vijaya Lakshmi Pandit, Nehru's sister, who was then the High Commissioner of India to the United Kingdom. The hall could hold 100 people and was officially opened by the Governor William A C Goode's wife Lady Ena Goode in 1957.

Amongst the activities conducted by the club were classical Indian dance classes, charity events, sari fashion shows and drama performances. Well-known visiting international dancers of that era performed at the club while many communities rented the hall for weekend functions. In the early 1980s, the government acquired the land where the club stood for the expansion of the Central Expressway (CTE). One of the founding members, Mary Emmanuel then offered her home as a meeting venue and for the safekeeping of the club's records.

Today the club continues to organise events such as talks related to women's empowerment, demonstrations of Indian arts, festival celebrations, as well as yoga and cooking classes. These are held at various venues around Singapore.



Kamala Club, 1972
Courtesy of Urban Redevelopment Authority

TAMILS REFORM ASSOCIATION (NOW SINGAI TAMIL SANGAM)

2 Kampong Kapur Road



Singai Tamil Sangam, 2016

Founded in 1933, the Tamils Reform Association (TRA) was one of the earliest Tamil associations established in Singapore. It was started as part of a regional movement that sought to represent all Tamils in Singapore and advocate for their welfare in relation to issues such as education, marriage and workers' rights. The TRA used to publish a weekly bulletin which evolved into today's *Tamil Murasu*, the first Tamil daily newspaper in Singapore, and has been managed by the Singapore Press Holdings since 1995. The TRA was renamed as Singai Tamil Sangam in 2001.

SINGAPORE TAI GUAN ONG SEE ASSOCIATION

7 Race Course Lane



Singapore Tai Guan Ong See Association, 2016

Established in 1936, the Singapore Tai Guan Ong See Association was initially located at Jalan Besar. It then moved to a three-storey building at Race Course Lane in 1954. At this time, the association provided its members a space for socialising and organised activities to encourage interaction and learning amongst its members. The association established a mutual aid department in the 1962 and began providing welfare services in 1991. Today it also organises annual ceremonies to worship the common ancestors of its members.

NANYANG ANG CLAN GUILD

144 Race Course Road

The Nanyang Ang Clan Guild was first founded as the Ang Clan Association in 1938 to honour its ancestors, look after the well-being of the clan members and promote literacy. Originally situated at the north of the Singapore River, it was then relocated to a shophouse at Boat Quay. It stopped operating during World War II and only resumed in 1948 at rented premises along Kampong Java Road.

In 1950, the Ang Clan Association acquired its own premises at Race Course Road and in 1951 it was renamed the Nanyang Ang Clan Guild. The Mutual Benefit Section was established in 1963 and in 1971, a scholarship fund was also set up with the aim to promote further education. Since 1982, bursaries have been awarded to provide financial assistance to needy clan members. The current five-story building was built and officially opened in 2000.



Chinese New Year celebrations at the Nanyang Ang Clan Guild, 2016

Courtesy of Nanyang Ang Clan Guild

ARAB UNION

Along Serangoon Road (now defunct)

The idea of establishing an Arab Union was first mooted in 1940 for the purpose of looking after the interests of the Arab community in Singapore and to offer assistance to the government administration. There were around 500 Arabs in Singapore at that time. After World War II, the association was known as the Singapore Arab Union and had a clubhouse in Serangoon Road. The activities the union held in post-war Singapore were few and far between. However, the union's hall was frequently used by other organisations as a venue to hold formal meetings and it also functioned as a wedding hall.

SINGAPORE THAMIZHAR EYAKKAM (SINGAPORE TAMILS' MOVEMENT)

35A Norris Road



Singapore Tamils' Movement, 2016

The Singapore Thamizhar Eyakkam or Singapore Tamils' Movement was established on 25 August 1954. It organises activities such as annual celebrations on National Day, nursing home visits, blood donations and participation in events by other Tamil associations.

UMAR PULAVAR TAMIL LANGUAGE CENTRE

2 Beatty Road

Umar Pulavar Tamil Language Centre (UPTLC) is a Tamil teaching and learning centre. It was first established in 1954 as St George's Tamil Primary School. In 1960-72, the school served



Umar Pulavar Tamil Language Centre, 2016

as a Tamil Language Centre for students taking Tamil as a second language while studying in other English medium schools. The primary school officially closed in 1975.

It was subsequently renamed as St George's Tamil Language Centre in 1978. It relocated to Beatty Road in 1982 and changed its name to Umar Pulavar Tamil Language Centre a year later. Today, the centre is housed in a new building completed in 2011, at the same Beatty Road site. The centre also functions as a National Tamil Language Resource Centre and as a Teacher Development Centre for training Tamil Language Teachers.

SINGAPORE GUJARATI SOCIETY

13 Cuff Road



Singapore Gujarati Society, 2016

Prior to the establishment of the Singapore Gujarati Society, the Gujarati community purchased a property at Waterloo Street in 1912 for "the common use of the vegetarian

Gujarati community” according to the society’s website. The Singapore Gujarati Society was established in 1956 and also known as the Singapore Gujarati Yuvak Mandal (“Singapore Gujarati Youth Division” in Hindi).

Most of the society’s original members were employees working for Gujarati businesses, and the business owners themselves only joined the society in the 1970s. The society members established a building fund after the government acquired its Waterloo Street property in the 1970s and the fund was used to purchase a property on Goodman Road in 1979.

The society sold its Goodman Road property in 1992 and built its present building at Cuff Road in 1999. The three-storey building is a multi-purpose events and meeting venue that is also available for rent. Today, the Singapore Gujarati Society promotes the Gujarati language and culture, and has more than 500 members.

BENGALI ASSOCIATION SINGAPORE

1 Beatty Road

The Bengali Association Singapore was established in 1956 to promote Bengali culture and traditional values amongst the immigrant Bengali community in Singapore. The association organises celebrations of festivals for Bengalis such as Saraswati Puja, Durga Puja (prayers to Saraswati and Durga respectively) and Nababarsha (New Year).

SERANGOON MERCHANTS ASSOCIATION

1 Campbell Lane (now defunct)

The Serangoon Merchants Association was originally known as Serangoon Indian Merchants Association and it was registered in 1982 as an association representing over half of the businesses operating in the Little India area. It was established to encourage cooperation amongst these businesses and promote these businesses. The association also advocated for the interests of its members at a time of extensive redevelopment. The Serangoon Merchants Association was dissolved in 2000 when the Little India Shopkeepers & Heritage Association was established.

SINGAPORE INDIAN DEVELOPMENT ASSOCIATION (SINDA)

1 Beatty Road



Singapore Indian Development Association, 2016

The Singapore Indian Development Association (SINDA) was formed in 1991 in response to educational and socio-economic problems faced by Singapore’s Indian community. Its main objective was to raise the academic standards of Indian students, although it also offered other family services in support of this objective. Today, it continues to reach out to the Indian community through programmes and other types of support, in order to “build a well-educated, resilient and confident community of Indians that stands together with other communities”.

LITTLE INDIA SHOPKEEPERS AND HERITAGE ASSOCIATION (LISHA)

48 Serangoon Road



A chariot at a Thaipusam procession, early 20th century
Courtesy of National Museum of Singapore, National Heritage Board

The Little India Shopkeepers & Heritage Association (LISHA) was established in 2000 as a result of joint efforts between the Serangoon Merchants Association and Indian Restaurant Association Singapore and with support from government bodies such as the Singapore Tourism Board (STB) and the Hindu



Devotees surround a coal pit during Theemithi, also known as the Fire Walking Festival, early 20th century
Courtesy of National Museum of Singapore, National Heritage Board



Postcard showing a Navarathri festival performance, c. 1980s
Courtesy of National Museum of Singapore, National Heritage Board

Endowments Board. It aims to promote the heritage, culture, business and commercial activities in the area to both locals and tourists.

Besides addressing the concerns of the various communities in Little India, LISHA also organises celebrations during festivals such as Pongal (harvest festival), Deepavali (Festival of

Lights), Thaipusam (a thanksgiving celebrated during the full moon in the Tamil month *Thai*), Theemithi (Fire Walking Festival), Navarathri (festival of nine days dedicated to the goddess Durga) and the Singapore Food Festival.

INDIAN HERITAGE CENTRE

5 Campbell Lane

First conceived in 2008 and launched by Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong in 2015, the Indian Heritage Centre (IHC) is the third Heritage Institution under the National Heritage Board, with the other two being the Malay Heritage Centre and the Sun Yat Sen Nanyang Memorial Hall. It is the first museum in Southeast Asia with a focus on the diverse heritage of the Indian community.

IHC aims to promote a greater understanding and appreciation of Singapore's Indian heritage and culture, and to showcase the Indian community's roles and contributions in multicultural Singapore. The four-storey building houses more than 440 artefacts, many of which are contributed by members of the Indian community themselves.

The Indian Heritage Centre is open on Tuesdays to Thursdays from 10am to 7pm; Fridays to Saturdays from 10am to 8pm; Sundays and Public Holidays from 10am to 4pm.



Indian Heritage Centre, 2016

COMMERCE AND HERITAGE BUSINESSES



Ellison Building with Rex Cinema visible on the right, c. 1978
Lee Kip Lin Collection, courtesy of the National Library Board

ELLISON BUILDING & REX CINEMA

229 Selegie Road

Ellison Building was built in 1924 and owned by Isaac Ellison (1863-1928) who named the building after himself. Born in Romania in 1863, he arrived in Singapore in 1898, invested in land and became even more successful. He then bought over the International Restaurant at the Arcade along Robinson Road in 1912. The establishment was well-known to shippers and travellers from all over the world at that time.

Ellison was a leading member of the Singapore Jewish community. The Star of David on the Ellison Building is indicative of its Jewish connection to both Ellison and the district, where many Jews owned properties and worshipped at a nearby synagogue at Waterloo Street.



Aerial view of Ellison Building, 1984
Courtesy of Urban Redevelopment Authority

Ellison was also known for his patriotism and charity towards wounded British Servicemen during World War I. In 1915, he spearheaded a donation drive to purchase walking sticks for injured soldiers and collected enough money to purchase more than 3,000 sticks. He also sent 750 slippers to hospitals in Egypt and 2,000 cases of pineapples to men in the British army.

Ellison Building was a landmark in the Serangoon area as it was located beside the Singapore Boxing Stadium (or Rex Cinema after 1946). The patrons who frequented the stadium or the cinema, particularly Indians, often stopped by for meals or snacks at one of Ellison's eateries. Many prominent Europeans used to patronise the Colonial Bar during the 1920s and Governors of Singapore used to watch the races at the Singapore Racecourse from the cupolas on the roof on Sundays. Ellison himself was also part of the horse-racing scene and was known to have owned at least three racehorses.

In the 1940s, Indian sundry shops and some of the earliest Indian vegetarian restaurants such as Krishna Vilas and Ananda Bhavan could be found at Ellison Building. After World War II, some Indian families who had taken refuge in India returned to find their family portraits hanging on the walls of Krishna Vilas. The portraits had been saved from destruction and looting by the owner of the restaurant. The Ellison Building is also architecturally unique. Besides the two cupolas on either end of the roof, it has a curved façade and was elevated to conservation status in 2008.

The Singapore Boxing Stadium was constructed behind the Ellison Building in 1924, the same year as the latter building. It hosted boxing matches by boxers from all over the world. Until World War II, it remained an important part of the Singapore boxing scene.

Opposite the boxing stadium, there was a clinic that was visited by many labourers.

In 1946, Rex Cinema, a new cinema hall was built on that site owned by the Malayan Theatre Ltd. Many Indians would congregate for late night shows at the Rex Cinema, which had midnight movie schedules that were very popular in the 1940s. By 1967, ownership of the cinema had changed hands and it came under Shaw & Shaw Ltd. Today, the cinema is still in operation and has created a niche market for itself by screening Tamil and Hindi films catering to visitors to the nearby Little India area.



BOXING HERITAGE

A second boxing ring was also established in the 1920s at nearby New World Park. New World Park was the first of three amusement parks built in Singapore which thrived from the 1920s to 1960s. The ring in this entertainment centre hosted boxing matches featuring fighters from Australia, Thailand and the Philippines. In the 1960s, a Malaysian boxer and household name, Felix Boy also made an appearance in the ring.



Gateway of the New World Amusement Park, 1946

Courtesy of National Museum of Singapore, National Heritage Board (NHB Disclaimer - The National Museum of Singapore, despite all reasonable efforts, has been unable to trace/identify the copyright owners of this image. It invites the rightful owners to make contact.)



Arch commemorating New World Park in front of present-day City Square Mall, 2016

ANANDA BHAVAN

94 Syed Alwi Road



Ananda Bhavan Restaurant, 2016

Established in 1924, Ananda Bhavan is one of the oldest Indian vegetarian restaurants in Singapore. The restaurant was founded by Kulanthaivelu Muthusamy Kaunder, who, with his brothers, set up the eatery when they came to Singapore in the 1920s. Ananda Bhavan means “house of bliss” in Hindi and was named after the home of India’s first Prime Minister. The restaurant started by serving only South Indian vegetarian cuisine. In recent years, it has included North Indian and Indian Chinese fusion vegetarian cuisine on its menu. Ananda Bhavan has expanded over the years and now has four branches in the vicinity of Little India and one at Changi Business Park.

KOMALA VILAS RESTAURANT

76 Serangoon Road



Komala Vilas, 2016

Komala Vilas is a vegetarian restaurant established in 1947 by Murugiah Rajoo. He arrived from India in 1934 at the age of 14. He was first employed as a shop assistant in the previous restaurant that occupied the unit. When the proprietor returned to

India in 1947, his friends persuaded him to buy the restaurant. The restaurant was then renamed Komala Vilas. The vegetarian restaurant also used to provide free copies of Indian newspapers and Tamil magazines to its customers. Besides being famous for its affordable vegetarian meals, the restaurant's yoghurt (*thairu*) and yoghurt drink (*lassi*) are popular amongst patrons. Currently, besides the main restaurant at 76 Serangoon Road, Komala Vilas has three other restaurants in the Little India area.

GAN LIAN SENG

117 Dunlop Street

Gan Lian Seng is a provision shop today owned by Gan Theng Tuan. The shop was started by Gan's father and initially located along Campbell Lane in the 1950s-60s, on land rented from a temple.



Gan Lian Seng, 2016

The shop sold household goods and furniture, and relocated to Dunlop Street in the 1980s. It now supplies provisions to foreign workers from the construction industry, including those from China, India, Malaysia and Bangladesh. This shop is the oldest surviving Chinese shop in the Little India area.

JOTHI STORE AND FLOWER SHOP

1 Campbell Lane

Jothi Store and Flower Shop was founded in the early 1960s. The small stall sold traditional Indian garlands, betel leaves and prayer items. Its founder, Ramachandra Murugaia, arrived at Singapore in 1948, when he was 17 years old. He named the shop after his first daughter Jothi. Since then, the small shop has grown into a thriving five-storey business in Campbell Lane. Murugaia's son, Rajakumar Chandra, took over the business in 1986. The company has also expanded into Malaysia and started exporting to other parts of the world.



Jothi Store and Flower Shop, 2016

HANIFFA TEXTILES

104-120 Dunlop Street

Haniffa Textiles was founded by O K Mohamed Haniffa in 1962. Haniffa was born into a poor family in Tamil Nadu, India. In 1955, he travelled to Malaysia at the age of 15 to help his father who was a hawker. In 1957, Haniffa made the decision to work in Singapore. When he arrived, he found work as a shop assistant at Jalan Besar, and had to work from 7am to 11pm daily. The hardships he experienced made him even more determined to succeed. He borrowed some money to purchase textiles from a trader in Arab Street on consignment.

Mohamed then started his own roadside shop at Campbell Lane, in front of a laundry shop owned by a Chinese family who had kindly allowed him to use the space. Haniffa eventually rented the entire ground level of the shop and started Haniffa Textiles. When it first opened, Haniffa Textiles sold only textiles but later expanded its range of merchandise to include jewellery, electronics, toiletries,



Haniffa Textiles at Campbell Lane, 1986
Courtesy of Urban Redevelopment Authority



Haniffa Textiles at Dunlop Street, 2016

food and other products. By 1992, Haniffa had expanded into a space covering eight shop spaces at Dunlop Street. Today, the shop remains best known for its silk saris.

MUSTAFA CENTRE

145 Syed Alwi Road

The roots of Mustafa Centre can be traced to 1952, when Mustaq Ahmad's (b. 1951) father Haji Mohamed Mustafa (1916-2001) arrived in Singapore from Uttar Pradesh, India. Ahmad's father and uncle, Samsuddin, started their first business in 1965 in a makeshift shop selling food. In 1971, they ventured into retail due to

the success of Ahmad's enterprising activities, which included selling handkerchiefs at his father's shop. Thereafter, the family started a shop at Campbell Lane that sold readymade garments. By 1973, they had become so successful that they needed to relocate to a larger shop at Serangoon Road.

Ahmad eventually took over the shop and bought a row of shophouses to accommodate his growing business. He subsequently converted the shophouses into a department store and his business continued to grow. By 1995, the business had grown to become Mustafa Centre. By the end of the first year, Ahmad had acquired additional space for expansion in Serangoon Plaza. In 1997, he acquired a neighbouring plot of land to build a new four-storey extension building. According to a 2003 article from *The Straits Times*, the shopping centre has "a reputation for selling just about everything from brinjals to diamonds, cameras and airline tickets". In 2003, Mustafa Centre became the first local department store to be open 24 hours.



Mustafa Centre, 2016

LITTLE INDIA ARCADE

48 Serangoon Road

Little India Arcade consists of a cluster of conserved neoclassical shophouses built in 1913 and is currently owned by the Hindu Endowments Board. An important historical legacy of the arcade is PGP's shop, which was formerly situated at the front of the building. PGP was a prolific philanthropist who gave generously to his community and most of the older Indian temples along Little India are greatly indebted to him for their reconstruction projects.

Little India Arcade was officially opened in 1995 after having undergone conservation to commemorate the spirit of commerce of the district's early Indian settlers. This corner building includes the five-foot way traditional to Malaya's colonial-era shophouses. It is now a prominent landmark in the Little India district and houses an array of eateries and boutique shops offering sweets, curios and other knick-knacks.



Minister for Law and Foreign Affairs Professor S Jayakumar addressing guests at opening of the refurbished Little India Arcade, 1995
Ministry of Information and the Arts Collection, courtesy of National Archives of Singapore



Shops at Little India Arcade, 2016



Little India Arcade, 2016

SPORTING HERITAGE

THE RACECOURSE

The former racecourse was created by the forerunner to the Singapore Turf Club, the Singapore Sporting Club, which was established in 1842 by amateur horse-racing enthusiasts. Its first members included businessman William Macleod Read (1819-1909), merchant Charles Spottiswoode (1812-58) and lawyer and newspaper editor William Napier (1804-79). They requested for a plot of land from the government for regular horse-racing and were granted the Farrer Park site to develop into the Singapore Racecourse.



Spectators at the former racecourse, 1896
Courtesy of National Museum of Singapore, National Heritage Board

The land was levelled, drained and cleared of vegetation within four months and the racecourse opened in 1843. The first race was named the Singapore Cup and subsequent races were held twice a year.

During the first twenty years, horse-racing was mainly the domain of the mercantile community and Malayan royalty. The first record of interest in horse-racing by local Chinese can be traced back to 1861 when Tan Kim Seng, a rich merchant, threw a ball during Race Week. From 1869, the wealthy Chinese began organising the Confucius Cup.

The first Chinese in Singapore to own a racehorse was Tan Keng Swee, son of opium revenue farmer and gunpowder trader, Tan Seng Poh. One of his horses won the Maharajah of Johor's Cup at the Spring meeting of 1879. In 1898, another Chinese, Tan Boo Liat (1875-1934), came into prominence when his horse became the first Singapore horse to win an overseas race and brought home the Viceroy's Cup from India.



Photograph titled "A spring race meeting" by Lim Lam San, 1926
Courtesy of National Museum of Singapore, National Heritage Board



A postcard of the former racecourse, 1904
Arshak C Galstaun Collection, courtesy of National Archives of Singapore

In 1867, control of Singapore was transferred from the Indian government to the Colonial Office. The Sporting Club was then given formal title to 20 hectares of land at nominal rent on the condition that it be kept clear of brushwood and maintained as a public racing ground. Horse-races were major events attended by all strata of society, including labourers, clerks and workers. Even schools were given half-days off when a horse-race was scheduled and the Governor of Singapore would be present on those occasions.

The racecourse also served as a rifle range, a polo field and a golf course during the 1870s-90s. When there were no sporting activities, the grounds became a popular picnic spot. In the 1890s, the British employed Indians for the construction of the grandstand at the old racecourse. From 1891, the Singapore Racecourse was also used for nine-hole golf on Sundays. The



The first biplane exhibition flight at the Race Course, 1911
Lim Kheng Chye Collection, courtesy of National Archives of Singapore

first plane flown in Singapore took off from the racecourse for an exhibition flight in 1911, and the first international flight to Singapore landed here en-route to Australia in 1919.



A parade at Farrer Park, early 20th century
Courtesy of National Museum of Singapore, National Heritage Board



A cricket game at Farrer Park, 2004
Source: The New Paper © Singapore Press Holdings Limited.
Reproduced with permission.

During World War I, the Singapore Sporting Club continued to hold races in an effort to raise war funds and "to keep the sport together for better times". The war affected the import of horses and recovery after the war was slow. In 1924 the Singapore Sporting Club was renamed the Singapore Turf Club, reflecting its focus on horse-racing. Subsequently the Singapore Racecourse was deemed too small and old for their purposes, hence it was moved to a larger site at Bukit Timah in 1933. Subsequently, the site of the old racecourse was renamed Farrer Park in 1935 after Roland John Farrer (1873-1956), who was President of the Municipal Commissioners in 1919-31.

After World War II, Farrer Park became a regular venue for election rallies as well as a favourite sporting venue. The sports played here included hockey, cricket, soccer and football matches. Between 1971 and 1973, the headquarters of the National Sports Promotion Board, the Sports House, was also located at this site. Today, housing blocks cover part of Farrer Park while Farrer Park Primary School occupies the site where Farrer Park Stadium once stood.

SPORTS CLUBS AT BALESTIER PLAIN

In the early 20th century, Balestier Plain was the ideal alternative site for sports such as football, which could not be played at the racecourse grounds. As the plain was under the care of the municipality, the Municipal Football Club was given the right to use the grounds when it was founded in 1918. In 1926, the club was dissolved and the Municipal Services Club (MSC) was formed and inherited the right to use the plain. The MSC also played cricket against other teams like the Indian Association. Interestingly, the MSC's members and its sports teams were multicultural in their composition. Over the years, various other clubs and associations used Balestier Plain as a sports venue. In 2002, it was designated a historic site by the National Heritage Board.

Junior Civil Service Association (now Civil Service Club)

60 Tessensohn Road

The Junior Civil Service Association (JCSA) was first known as the Subordinate Civil Service Association, which was formed in 1906. Its members were subordinate officers of different nationalities belonging to the clerical branch of government service who felt they needed a union. In 1935, the organisation had a membership of over 500. The field on the Balestier Plain was allotted by the government to clubs (including the JCSA) which requested for sporting grounds.

During the 1930s, the association was active in organising sports matches against other teams, which would be played on the Balestier Plain. The club also had lawn tennis courts and indoor facilities for badminton and table tennis. It was renamed as the Singapore Civil Service Association in 1947 and continues to operate as the Civil Service Club today.

Singapore Chinese Recreation Club

49 Balestier Road

The Singapore Chinese Recreation Club was first started as the Straits Chinese Recreation Club in 1885 by the Straits-born Chinese to organise sporting events such as lawn tennis, cricket and Western athletic sports. It was the first Chinese Club that adopted Western sports and they started playing at the open plain below Pearl Hill, but subsequently shifted to Hong Lim Green. After World War II, the club was renamed as the Singapore Chinese Recreation Club to widen its membership.

In 1951, the City Council asked for the return of the Hong Lim grounds as it wanted to build a public playground there. They offered the club a site in Tanjong Rhu in exchange but the club's officials found this site unsuitable because its grounds were subject to tidal floods and it was difficult to gain access to the site. The club officials began looking for alternative sites and applied for a new site in 1953. The club then shifted to its present location at Balestier Road by 1970.



Singapore Chinese Recreation Club, 2016

Singapore Indian Association

69 Balestier Plain



Singapore Indian Association, 1972
Courtesy of Urban Redevelopment Authority

The Singapore Indian Association was established in 1923 by a group of Indians including Rajabali Jumabhoy and Bashir Mallal (1898-1972), both prominent Indians during that time. Its main premises were at Short Street and it sought to promote the social, physical, intellectual, cultural and general welfare of its members. The association became a popular place for young Indians to meet and indulge in sports, particularly cricket, tennis and billiards.



Singapore Indian Association, 2016

The association began raising funds for the construction of a clubhouse at Balestier Road immediately after World War II. In 1950, when the Prime Minister of India, Jawaharlal Nehru, visited Singapore, he officiated at the laying of the foundation stone of the clubhouse. A year later, the clubhouse was officially opened by Commissioner-General Malcolm MacDonald. Over the years, the

Indian Association has produced several national hockey players and has excelled in cricket as well, with many of its members participating in international competitions.



Singapore Khalsa Association, 2016

Singapore Khalsa Association

2 Tessensohn Road

The idea for a Sikh association was first mooted by several students from Raffles Institution in the mid-1920s. In 1931, with the support of more senior members of the community, these young men established the first Sikh social and sporting organisation. The sports played by members of the association included football, hockey, cricket, badminton, kabaddi (Indian contact sport), golf and netball. During the 1960s, the Singapore Khalsa Association's activities expanded to include programmes and talks on Sikh religion, culture and education. Today, the association continues to organise sporting, cultural and social activities for its members.

Ceylon Sports Club

101 Balestier Road



Ceylon Sports Club, 1972
Courtesy of Urban Redevelopment Authority

The Ceylon Sports Club (CSC) was established in 1928. It was reconstituted from the Lanka Union founded in 1920 by some Ceylonese students who were studying at the King Edward VII College of Medicine in Singapore. They believed there was a need for a united Ceylonese body for the promotion of sport, in particular cricket and soccer. The word “union” was adopted because they wanted the name to stand for a united body comprising all groups of Ceylonese students in Singapore, namely the Burghers, Sinhalese, Tamils and Moors. The Lanka Union had no official premises and used the Lanka Dispensary at Serangoon Road as its office.

The union held its sporting events on the Padang until 1922, when it leased a piece of land at Balestier Plain. At the plain, its members erected a small shed that served as a clubhouse and the gardener’s quarters. In 1924, a turf wicket and practice pitch was laid with the help of a prominent Ceylonese cricketer, Dr J A Scharenguival. After a few years, the members wanted to change the association’s name. The

Lanka Union was dissolved and on 1 June 1928, the Ceylon Sports Club was registered. The club recognised the need for a new clubhouse and after raising the necessary funds, a proper clubhouse was built in April 1930.

Before World War II, this clubhouse was used by the British army for the storage of petrol drums. Towards the end of the war for Singapore, the British decided to destroy the clubhouse as a defensive measure so that the Japanese could not use the petrol stored there. Hence, on 14 February 1942, one day before Singapore fell to the Japanese, the clubhouse was destroyed using dynamite.

By 1951, membership of the CSC had increased and the club launched an ambitious fundraising campaign to rebuild the clubhouse. On 13 October 1951, the first Prime Minister of Ceylon (now Sri Lanka), D S Senanayake, laid the foundation stone. In 1954, the new premises for the club were completed and officially opened by Commissioner-General Malcolm MacDonald.



Ceylon Sports Club, 2016

THE ARTS AT LITTLE INDIA

Singapore's Indian arts scene started in Serangoon Road in the early 20th century. In 1939, the Ramakrishna Mission Orchestra, the first Indian orchestra in South-east Asia, was formed by Dr Mangal Chota Singh. It later merged with the Ramakrishna Ladies Orchestra to form the Sangeetha Sabha in 1950. Besides musical performances, the orchestra also performed dances and drama shows, which involved Dr Uma Rajan (b. 1940) who was a prominent artiste and doctor.

SINGAPORE INDIAN FINE ARTS SOCIETY (SIFAS)

2A Starlight Road



Singapore Indian Fine Arts Society, 2016

Little India is today home to the Singapore Indian Fine Arts Society (SIFAS). The society was established nearby at Balestier Road in 1949 with 12 founding members. It was formed with the objective of promoting Indian music, dance and drama in Singapore. Open to all, its membership fee was a dollar a month when it was first established. The first president of the society was K P A Menon, a talented musician and court interpreter.



"Dasavatham" Bharatanatyam performance at SIFAS' Academy Day, 2016

Courtesy of Singapore Indian Fine Arts Society

SIFAS made its inaugural public performance, comprising Indian dances, songs and music, in St Andrew's School Hall on 27 September 1949. In 1950, SIFAS had European, Indonesian and Chinese members besides its Indian members. SIFAS also established an Academy of Fine Arts in the 1950s. In 1993, SIFAS moved to its present premises at Starlight Road. The four-storey building has six spacious dance rooms, 21 classrooms, a teachers' residential wing, an in-house auditorium and a field behind the schoolhouse. Since 2003, SIFAS has been organising an annual classical performing arts festival for the public in collaboration with the Esplanade.

LITTLE INDIA ARTS BELT



Little India Arts Belt at Kerbau Road, 2016

The conservation and restoration of Little India in the last decade has created an important space within the district for the cultivation of the arts. The row of houses along one of the oldest streets of Little India, Kerbau Road, has been turned into the Little India Arts Belt where established and fledging arts performance groups are provided affordable spaces under the national Arts Housing Scheme. Today, the Little India Art Belt has a diverse group of tenants that are artistically unique, adding vibrancy to the area. Past tenants have included art collective Plastique Kinetic Worms, art curatorial team P-10 and art spaces The Other House and Your Mother Gallery. The following are the current tenants of the Arts Belt.

Bhaskar's Arts Academy

19 Kerbau Road



"Ragha Sandhya" event by Bhaskar's Arts Academy, 2015
Courtesy of Bhaskar's Arts Academy

Bhaskar's Arts Academy was established in 1952 as Bhaskar's Dance Academy by Krishna Pillai Bhaskar (1925-2013). It is an Indian performing arts group which actively creates and promotes Indian dance, music and theatre performances. In the 1970s, Bhaskar's Dance Academy was frequently invited to perform at the Istana. In 1989, the Nrityalaya Aesthetics Society was set up as the academy's teaching arm to bring classical Indian arts to the masses. Bhaskar's wife, Santha Bhaskar (b. 1939), is also an established artiste who continues to be involved with the organisation. In recognition of her dedication and cultural innovations, she was awarded the prestigious Cultural Medallion in 1990.

I Theatre

27 Kerbau Road

Established in 2001, I Theatre is a family-focused theatre company that aims to create plays of an international standard for Singapore and the region. It also offers courses in puppetry, theatre crafts and drama skills for students. A division of I Theatre, Creative Edge Theatre Training Ensemble, provides a platform for actors aged 17-25 to develop a strong foundation in acting and establish networks for future collaborations.

WILD RICE

65 Kerbau Road

WILD RICE is a theatre company founded by its Artistic Director, Ivan Heng, in 2000. It is a non-profit charity that aims to nurture

local theatre practitioners and engage with the experiences of contemporary Singapore through its productions. The company also has two youth programmes. FIRST STAGE! is a project that nurtures young talents from the ages of 5 to 12, while young & WILD is dedicated to identifying and nurturing Singapore's young theatre professionals.

Sri Warisan Som Said Performing Arts

47 & 59 Kerbau Road

Sri Warisan Som Said Performing Arts was founded in 1997 by Madam Som Said, a recipient of the prestigious Cultural Medallion award in 1987. This performing arts company blends traditional art forms with contemporary techniques and provides its performers with multi-disciplinary training in the areas of dance, music, theatre and multi-media. Besides performing at local events and overseas festivals, the company also conducts courses and workshops in schools through the NAC-Arts Education Programme.

Maya Dance Theatre

61 Kerbau Road

Maya Dance Theatre is a relatively young dance company founded in 2006 that combines dance and theatre. Its productions embrace experimentation and draw inspiration from Asian aesthetics, melding these with contemporary nuances. Maya Dance Theatre performs both locally and internationally.

Gamelan Asmaradana

63 Kerbau Road

Formed in 2004, Gamelan Asmaradana is Singapore's first professional gamelan ensemble. It is a non-profit arts organisation dedicated to promoting the various styles of gamelan music in Singapore through recitals, performances and workshops. It has four areas of specialisation in gamelan music - classical Javanese, traditional and contemporary Balinese, traditional and contemporary Sundanese, and world-fusion.

STREET ART AND ART INSTALLATIONS

Throughout Little India, there are a number of vibrant wall murals and art installations, some of which are tucked away in unexpected corners of the precinct. These murals and installations add visual vibrancy to the area and depict different and interesting aspects of Little India's heritage. Some of them also perform practical functions such as providing shelter from inclement weather and serving as a space for social gatherings.

Traditional Trades of Little India

by Psyfool
Belilios Lane



This huge mural by local artist Psyfool depicts some of the traditional trades that were commonly practiced by Indians in the Serangoon area. These include garland making, parrot astrology and laundering. This work was created as part of Artwalk Little India 2016, organised by LASALLE College of the Arts and Singapore Tourism Board with the support of the Little India Shopkeepers and Heritage Association.

**A Ride through Race Course Road:
A Community Art Project** by Jaxton Su
Race Course Road



Completed in 2016, this mural depicts the activities around the former racecourse which include horse-racing as well as traditional trades such as garland making. It was a joint effort between the artist Jaxton Su and members of the public including migrant workers in the area, as well as students and teachers from Raffles Institution.

Umbrella Trees

designed by Marthalia Budiman
Hindoo Road



This installation is a result of the Urban Redevelopment Authority's 2015 competition, "My Ideas for Public Spaces: Forgotten Spaces". It was inspired by the trees in the Little India area and serves to provide shelter from both rain and sun in Singapore's tropical climate.

Cattle designed by Marthalia Budiman
Clive Street



This installation of colourful cattle also resulted from the Urban Redevelopment Authority's 2015 competition, "My Ideas for Public Spaces: Forgotten Spaces". It derives inspiration from the history of cattle farming and trading in 19th-20th century Serangoon and pays tribute to the importance of colour in Indian culture.

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SUGGESTED SHORT TRAIL ROUTES

SERANGOON IN THE 1900s

40 Minutes

The early 20th century was a defining period that shaped today's Little India as migrants from India, China and Britain settled in the area and established a diversity of trades and institutions. Follow this trail and explore the rich history of the Little India precinct.



A *tempeh* (traditional soy product) stall at the Tekka Market, 1971
Courtesy of Singapore Press Holdings Limited

Begin your journey at the **Indian Heritage Centre** and obtain an overview of the history of the Indian community in Singapore. Then walk down Serangoon Road and cross over to Kerbau Road, whose name refers to the buffaloes that were kept here in the 1900s.

Walking along this road, you will come across the colourful **Former House of Tan Teng Niah**. The only remaining Chinese villa in Little India, this is a legacy of the time when small Chinese cottage industries thrived alongside the Indian-dominated cattle trade in this area.

Turn around and walk towards Belilios Lane where you will spot the large mural **Traditional Trades of Little India** by Psyfool. Continue towards Belilios Road and turn right to the **Sri Veeramakaliamman Temple** which was built as a shrine by Tamil workers from the lime pits in this area. From here, turn left onto Serangoon Road and left again onto Race Course Lane.

At Race Course Lane, you will encounter a number of **Chinese Clan Associations** which were established to provide social and economic

support for Chinese immigrants from the same clans. Turn left onto Race Course Road and you will come across the **Foochow Methodist Church** at the corner of Rotan Lane. The church was established in 1897 as a Christian mission for working class immigrants from Foochow, China, such as rickshaw pullers and coolies.

Continuing along Race Course Road, keep a lookout on the left for a small unnamed street where you will encounter the origins of this road name in the form of a mural entitled **A Ride Through Race Course Road** by Jaxton Su. The **Former Racecourse** was at the location of the current Farrer Park Field just opposite.

Along Hampshire Road beside the field, you will see the **Former Kandang Kerbau Hospital** (now the Land Transport Authority building) which served as general hospital in the 1900s. In the background, you can also spot the distinctive shape of the new KK Women's and Children's Hospital building.

If you are hungry or wish to rest your feet, walk straight down to **Tekka Centre**, which is the new incarnation of the Tekka Market that was once located across the road and considered the "people's market". Here you can enjoy local hawker fare, or purchase fresh meat to cook at home. Then it's a short walk to Little India MRT station for a ride home.

WALK OF FAITHS

1 Hour

The Little India precinct contains a great number and diversity of religious spaces. These institutions span across all the major ethnic and religious groups in Singapore. This trail provides insights into different religious spaces, architecture and practices found in Singapore.

(Note: Most of these institutions are open to the public but be sure to follow any instructions on appropriate behaviour and clothing.)

Start off at the beautiful [Abdul Gafoor Mosque](#) at Dunlop Street which is one of Singapore's oldest mosques and a National Monument. You may wish to enter the mosque for a visit and if so, do remember to dress respectfully and take off your shoes.

From here, head down Perak Road to the Anglican [Church of the True Light](#) which catered mainly to Chinese trishaw riders during its beginnings. At the end of Perak Road, turn left onto Upper Weld Road and then right to Kampong Kapor Road. Here you will see the architecturally different [Kampong Kapor Methodist Church](#) which started around the same time but catered to the Straits Chinese or Peranakans.



Interior of Sri Veeramakaliamman Temple, 2016

Walk up Veerasamy Road and across Serangoon Road to the [Sri Veeramakaliamman Temple](#) which was originally built as a shrine by Tamil workers from the lime pits in this area. Another Hindu temple and the only North Indian temple in Singapore, the [Shree Lakshminarayan Temple](#) is located down the next street at Chander Road.

Then venture up Rotan Lane to view the [Fochow Methodist Church](#) which developed from a mission started in 1897 for working class immigrants from Fochow, China. After this, walk back down to Serangoon Road and head towards the [Angullia Mosque](#) to take a look at its conserved 19th century entrance gatehouse.

Along the same road, you will encounter yet another National Monument, the [Sri Srinivasa Perumal Temple](#), with its intricately carved *gopuram* (entrance tower) depicting a story from Hindu mythology. Further down the road is the [Sri Vadapathira Kaliyamman Temple](#) with its stepped *vimana* (pyramid-shape tower over the main shrine) adorned with Hindu deities.

Next head up Beatty Road on to Race Course Road to view two Buddhist temples built in a completely different style. The [Sakya Muni Buddha Gaya Temple](#), popularly known as the "Temple of a Thousand Lights", houses a monumental 15-metre tall Buddha statue while the [Leong San See Temple](#), meaning "Dragon Mountain Temple", is dedicated to Guan Yin, the Goddess of Mercy.

You have now completed the longest route on the Little India Heritage Trail! Take a well-deserved break at one of the eateries along Race Course Road or head straight back to Farrer Park MRT for a ride home.

SHOP TILL YOU DROP!

30 Minutes (not inclusive of shopping time)

Little India is home to many traditional businesses that offer experiences that cannot be found elsewhere in Singapore. This trail offers a chance to try authentic Indian food, purchase traditional clothing and hunt for bargains at various shops in this area.



Traditional stores along Campbell Lane, 2016

Start along Campbell Lane and experience the kaleidoscope of sights, sounds and smells along this street. You can visit the [Little India Arcade](#) and enjoy some Indian sweets or have a henna design drawn on your hands. Or you can head to the [Jothi Store & Flower Shop](#) where locals shop for everyday Indian goods ranging from incense sticks to copper utensils.

One street down at Dunlop Street is [Haniffa Textiles](#) which is famous for its saris and Indian clothing, and further down Serangoon Road is where you will find [Komala Vilas](#), an Indian vegetarian fast-food restaurant established in 1947. Try their refreshing *lassi* or have a meal here if you're hungry!

After your break, walk down the five-foot way (or covered pedestrian walkway) along Serangoon Road and enjoy a variety of traditional and modern shops selling everything from clothes to knick-knacks. Feel free to stop and pick up a bargain or just window-shop along this stretch.

Ahead you will see the expansive [Mustafa Centre](#), Singapore's first 24-hour department store which offers everything from diamonds, watches, electronics, clothing, confectionery and fresh foods. Shop to your heart's content here, and when you start to feel tired, head across the road to [Ananda Bhavan](#), Singapore's oldest Indian vegetarian restaurant, for a snack or meal.

LEGEND FOR HERITAGE SITES

Little India Heritage Sites



Indian Heritage
Centre



Little India Arcade



Former Tekka
Market



Former House
of Tan Teng Niah



Shree Lakshminarayan
Temple



Former Kandang
Kerbau Hospital



Former
Racecourse



Foochow
Methodist Church



Sri Veeramakaliamman
Temple



Mahatma Gandhi
Memorial



Angullia Mosque



Sri Srinivasa Perumal
Temple



Sakya Muni Buddha
Gaya Temple



Leong San See
Temple



Sri Vadapathira
Kaliyamman Temple



Kampong Kapor
Methodist Church



Former Hong
Wen School



Church of
the True Light



Abdul Gafoor
Mosque



Places of Cultural / Historical Significance

The Ramakrishna Mission (Former)
Syed Alwi Road
Kampong Kapor Road
Veerasamy Road

Belilios Road
Dunlop Street
Dickson Road
Buffalo Road

Campbell Lane
Serangoon Road
Ellison Building
Selegie and Rochor Roads



"The Race Course, Farrer Park", 1840

Courtesy of National Museum of Singapore, National Heritage Board

The Little India Heritage Trail is part of the National Heritage Board's ongoing efforts to document and present the history and social memories of places in Singapore. We hope to bring back fond memories for those who have worked, lived or played in this historical and cultural precinct, and serve as a useful source of information for visitors and new residents.

Supported by



*A tempeh (Indonesian soy dish) seller attending to customers at Tekka Market, 1971
Courtesy of Singapore Press Holdings Limited*