

= Yue Hwa Building =

Yue Hwa Building (Chinese : 越華大廈 ; pinyin : Yùhuá dàshà) is a historic building located at the junction of Eu Tong Sen Street and Upper Cross Street in Chinatown , Singapore . Built by Swan and Maclaren in 1936 , it was then the tallest building in Chinatown and was known as Nam Tin Building (南天) , owned by Lum Chang Holdings . The building housed the six @-@ storey Great Southern Hotel (the first Chinese hotel with a lift) , along with a few shops and cabarets that were popular among Chinese travellers . In 1994 , Lum Chang Holdings sold the building to Hong Kong businessman Yu Kwok Chun , who converted it to the first Yue Hwa Chinese Products department store in Singapore . The renovation process , which conserved the exterior while adding features such as an atrium and waterfall to the interior , won the building the Architectural Heritage Award by the Urban Redevelopment Authority in 1997 .

= = History = =

= = = Great Southern Hotel = = =

Also known as Nam Tin Hotel , the Great Southern Hotel in Singapore 's Chinatown was built by Swan and Maclaren in 1936 . Started as a boutique hotel , it was the tallest building in Chinatown when it was completed . It was also the first Chinese hotel in Singapore with a lift .

Owned by Lum Chang Holdings , the building housing Great Southern Hotel was called " Nam Tin " in Cantonese , meaning " southern sky " . Besides the hotel , Lum Chang Holdings also leased out the building to several tenants who operated shops and other businesses . People commonly referred to the entire Nam Tin building as the Great Southern Hotel when the hotel subsequently became very popular . The Nam Tin Building became a major shopping hub for customers who found it fashionable to patronise the building 's shops , outlets and cabarets . Chinese operas used to be staged at the building as an occasional attraction .

Operated by the Cantonese , the Great Southern Hotel catered more to Chinese travellers , including celebrities from Hong Kong and China . This was unlike the upmarket hotels like Raffles Hotel , Goodwood Park Hotel and Adelphi Hotel which then accommodated mainly Europeans and English @-@ speaking visitors . As a boutique hotel with shops and entertainment outlets for rich Chinese immigrants , the Great Southern Hotel was considered as the " Raffles Hotel of Chinatown " .

= = = Yue Hwa Chinese Products = = =

In 1993 , Lum Chang Holdings sold the building at a price of S \$ 25 million to Yu Kwok Chun , who was the head of a Hong Kong @-@ based multinational corporation with its flagship department store , Yue Hwa Chinese Products Emporium . The company , set up by Yu 's father in 1959 , is a global corporation of 35 companies involved in investments , travel and general trading . Yue Hwa 's three department stores in Hong Kong are popular with both Hong Kongers and tourists . Besides agricultural produce from various provinces of China , the stores also sell jade carvings , handicrafts , antiques and medical products such as ginseng , antlers and cordyceps .

In February 1994 , the Great Southern Hotel ended its operations from the building as the hotel faced increasing competition in the hospitality industry . At the time of its closure , the hotel was operating only 40 rooms that were equipped with a double @-@ bed and a ceiling fan , catering mainly to budget travellers from Malaysia and Indonesia . The other seven existing tenants of the building vacated their businesses after the building was sold , and were each paid a compensation sum .

As the 999 @-@ year leasehold building has been gazetted by the Urban Redevelopment Authority (URA) for architectural conservation , the new owner was asked to preserve the building 's façade . There were , however , no similar restrictions on its interiors . Renovation works were carried out on

the building from 1994 to 1995 . The Nam Tin building was then converted into the Yue Hwa Chinese Products department store , and was renamed Yue Hwa Building . The department store was opened on 9 October 1996 , and sells a range of traditional Chinese products including herbs , medicines , porcelain , furniture , arts and crafts , garments and textiles .

= = Architecture = =

= = = Original design = = =

Being one of the tallest buildings in Singapore in the early 20th century , the Great Southern Hotel was an important landmark of Chinatown . Designed by Swan and Maclaren , the architectural style of the Nam Tin Building was that of the Modern Movement . The building was designed to be strictly functional . The grey @-@ coloured façade of the Great Southern Hotel seemed to consist only of the bare essentials , with ordinary designs like strong horizontal lines with angular arches and simple cornices . The building was fitted with steel frame windows , with metal railings and grills , which were considered fashionable in the 1930s . The loggia on the uppermost floor was a little lighter in colour with the use of cast iron balustrades and brackets , and there was extensive use of green glass .

At six storeys , the Great Southern Hotel was the first Chinese hotel to have a lift . The original design accommodated offices on the first storey , the hotel on the second and third storeys , a restaurant on the fifth storey , and a tea house on the roof terrace as well as a cabaret . The restaurant on the fourth floor was later converted into the owner 's office . The whole of the fifth floor was occupied by a then @-@ well @-@ known cabaret , the Southern Cabaret . Shops and entertainment outlets , including a Hainanese kopitiam , were situated on the ground floor .

= = = Restoration = = =

The architectural firm engaged for the S \$ 25 million restoration project was O.D. Architects of Bukit Pasoh Road . In accordance with URA 's conservation guidelines for Nam Tin Building , the architects preserved the building 's roof @-@ top garden and balconies facing Eu Tong Sen Street .

The interior of the building were revamped to accommodate an open layout suitable for a department store . Non @-@ structural interior walls were torn down . A new atrium was created by constructing a wall on the second storey , and could be used as an exhibition hall . A four @-@ storey high waterfall was built at the back of the building , which has a new three @-@ storey extension . A stained glass skylight was used as an interface to join the old and new parts of the building . New escalators and lifts were added to serve all six floors of the building . As a result , total floor space was increased from 3 @, @ 700 to 4 @, @ 600 square metres (39 @, @ 800 to 49 @, @ 500 square feet) , with 4 @, @ 650 square metres (50 @, @ 000 square feet) of retail space created for use by the store .

Together with the acquisition of the Nam Tin Building in 1993 , Yue Hwa Chinese Products invested a total of S \$ 100 million to set up its first store selling Chinese products in Singapore . For its conservation and restoration work , the Yue Hwa Building won URA 's Architectural Heritage Award in 1997 .