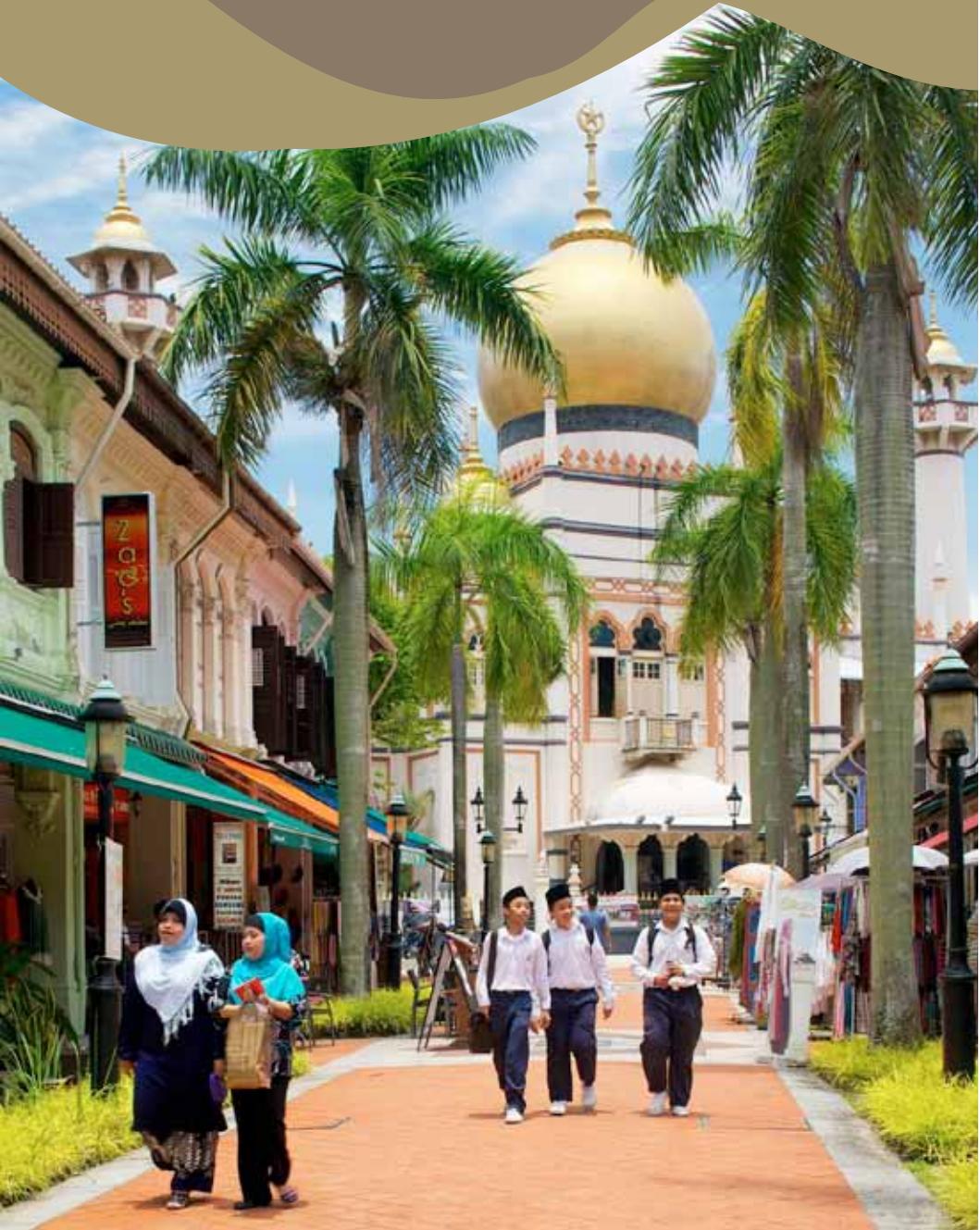


# Kampong Glam

A HERITAGE TRAIL



# Kampong Glam

## HERITAGE TRAIL

Did you know that the stretch of Bussorah Street near Masjid Sultan was once known as Kampong Kaji (Pilgrim Village) and the stretch nearer Beach Road was Kampong Tembaga (Copper Village)? Or that Arab Street was called *Jawa Koi* (Java Street) by the Chinese and *pookadai sadakku* (flower street) by the Tamils? Sultan Gate was lined with blacksmiths and Baghdad Street with diamond craftsmen and traders. Where a car park now stands along Kandahar Street, there was the *Pondok Java* which housed Javanese migrants and was famed for the Javanese theatre and arts performances it used to host.

These are just some of the stories behind Kampong Glam's streets and lanes. Steeped

in history, culture and memories, Kampong Glam is one of Singapore's most colourful districts. It was where the Malay royalty once resided, and where one of the most significant and important mosques in the country, Masjid Sultan, is located. It was where many diverse communities, such as the Javanese, Sumatrans, Baweanese, Banjares, Arabs, Chinese and Indians once called home. Though Kampong Glam is no longer a residential area today, these communities have left their mark in different ways, from the buildings in the area and long-time businesses to vernacular place names.

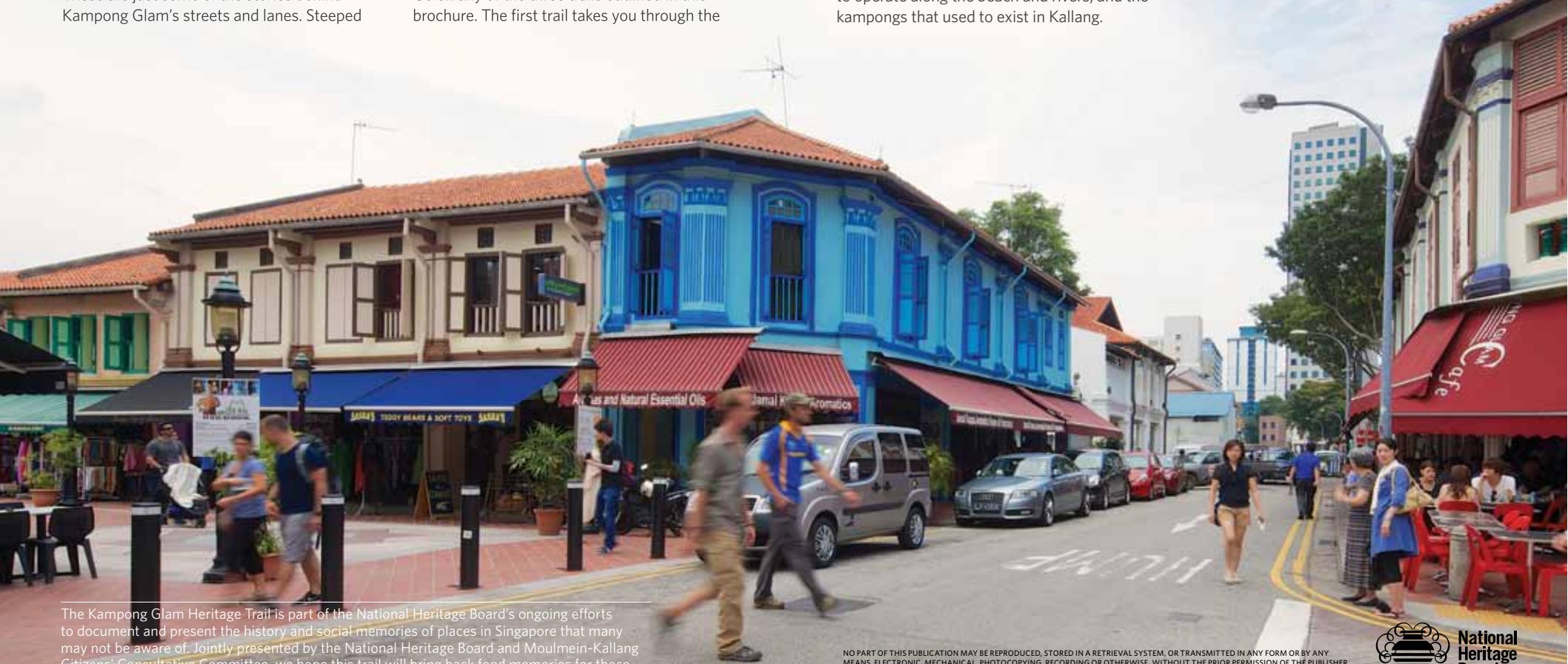
Interested in discovering this fascinating place? Go on any of the three trails outlined in this brochure. The first trail takes you through the

meandering, bustling streets of Kampong Glam's conserved area, covering Arab Street, Beach Road, Jalan Sultan and Victoria Street. Start at the Malay Heritage Centre, formerly the residence of Malay Sultans and their families, and follow the trail thereafter to find out what life used to be like in Kampong Glam, from its culture and communities to its trades and crafts.

You can also choose to go on a second trail around the sprawling area adjacent to Kampong Glam. This used to be part of a port town which included Kampong Glam and stretched from Beach Road to Kallang and Rochor Rivers. Though it has seen extensive redevelopment since the 1960s, gems such as the Masjid Hajjah Fatimah (Hajjah Fatimah Mosque) and the headquarters of St John Ambulance, Singapore, can still be found there. Here, you can learn more about the boat and ship yards that used to operate along the beach and rivers, and the kampongs that used to exist in Kallang.

The last trail leads you to visit Kampong Glam's outlying area along Victoria Street and Kallang Road. You will see one of the country's oldest Madrasahs, (Islamic schools), the only mosque started by Malabar Muslims and the first Tamil Catholic Church in Singapore.

Ready to explore? Well, put on the sun block and bring the camera along! Look out for the many food stalls, eateries and restaurants along the way which serve up local delicacies such as *nasi biryani*, *nasi padang* and assortments of traditional Malay *kuih* (cakes) as well as a whole range of international and middle eastern cuisine. And for a souvenir and trophy or two, check out long-time establishments selling batiks, hand-crafted perfumes and pilgrim belts!



The Kampong Glam 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 that many may not be aware of. Jointly presented by the National Heritage Board and Moulmein-Kallang Citizens' Consultative Committee, we hope this trail will bring back fond memories for those who have worked, lived or played in the area and serve as a useful source of information for new residents and visitors.

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## » TRAIL ONE Kampong Glam

- 1) Malay Heritage Centre (Former Istana Kampong Gelam)
- 2) Gedung Kuning
- 3) Former Pondok Java and Sultan Gate
- 4) Former Chong Cheng School and Chong Pun Girls' School
- 5) Madrasah Alsagoff Al-Arabiah
- 6) North Bridge Road
- 7) Arab Street
- 8) Bali Lane
- 9) Haji Lane
- 10) Bussorah Street (Former Kampong Tembunga)
- 11) Bussorah Street (Former Kampong Kaji)
- 12) Masjid Sultan

The story of Kampong Glam began in 1819 when Sir Stamford Raffles (1781–1826) established a treaty between the British East India Company, Temenggong Abdul Rahman (d. 1825) and Sultan Hussein (1776–1835) to set up a trading post in Singapore.

Soon after signing the treaty, the Sultan brought his family and entourage from Riau in hundreds of boats. They settled in Kampong Glam, where the sultan built a walled compound. The area rapidly became the centre for the Malay and Muslim communities and immigrants from the region, such as Celebes (present-day Sulawesi), Java, Banjar, Sumatra and Malaya came to trade and work, settling in and around Kampong Glam.

In 1822, a plan drawn up by Lieutenant Jackson (1802–1879), dividing the town into sections for specific settlements and purposes, further shaped Kampong Glam's development. The Bugis traders were relocated near Kallang River. The land adjacent to the sultan's property was

assigned to the Arabs.

Kampong Glam soon became a flourishing centre of Malay and Islamic culture, with the mosque built by the sultan, madrasahs, Malay schools and printing houses. Its streets bustled with specialised trades of all kinds and even Indian, Arab and Chinese communities had a significant presence in the area.

In 1989, the core area of Kampong Glam, bounded by Ophir Road, Victoria Street, Jalan Sultan and Beach Road, was gazetted for conservation by the Urban Redevelopment Authority (URA). Today, it has become a largely commercial precinct while retaining a significant Malay and Muslim identity.



*Kampong Glam in the town plan of Singapore drawn up by Lieutenant Jackson in 1822.*

(SOURCE: COLLECTION OF NATIONAL MUSEUM OF SINGAPORE. ON DISPLAY AT THE SINGAPORE HISTORY GALLERY)

### THE NAME "KAMPONG GLAM"

A common explanation has it that "Kampong Glam" came from the Malay word *gelam*, the name for the cajeput tree (*Melaleuca leucadendron*). Found locally, the tree is known for its many uses. Its bark can be utilised for weaving and to caulk boats, making them watertight. Its fruit can be used as food seasoning and its timber for building boats. Its leaves yield oil which treats a variety of ailments. This oil used to be part of traditional Malay medicine which was prepared and sold in Kampong Glam.

Another explanation proposes that it came from the Orang Gelam, who had a settlement near the Singapore River. The Orang Gelam, who knew Kampong Glam as "Seduyong", provided several services to the temenggong of Singapore, such as serving as boatmen. Skilled navigators, their lives revolved around the sea and building and servicing vessels. By the mid-1800s, the Orang Gelam had relocated to several places such as Pulau Brani. Most of them assimilated with the Malays by the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

*"Next to the Chinese your attention will be directed to the Bugis settlers. They at present occupy the whole extent from Campong Glam to the mouth of the Rochor River, but it is conceived that they may be more advantageously concentrated on the spot beyond the residence of the Sultan. In this case a part of Campong Glam, immediately adjoining the Sultan's residence, may be occupied by the Arabs according to a plan that will be submitted by Lieutenant Jackson ..."*

### RAFFLES' LETTER IN 1822 TO THE TOWN COMMITTEE IN SINGAPORE

# Malay Heritage Centre



Start your exploration of Kampong Glam with a visit to the Malay Heritage Centre, which showcases the culture, heritage and history of the Malay community in Singapore.

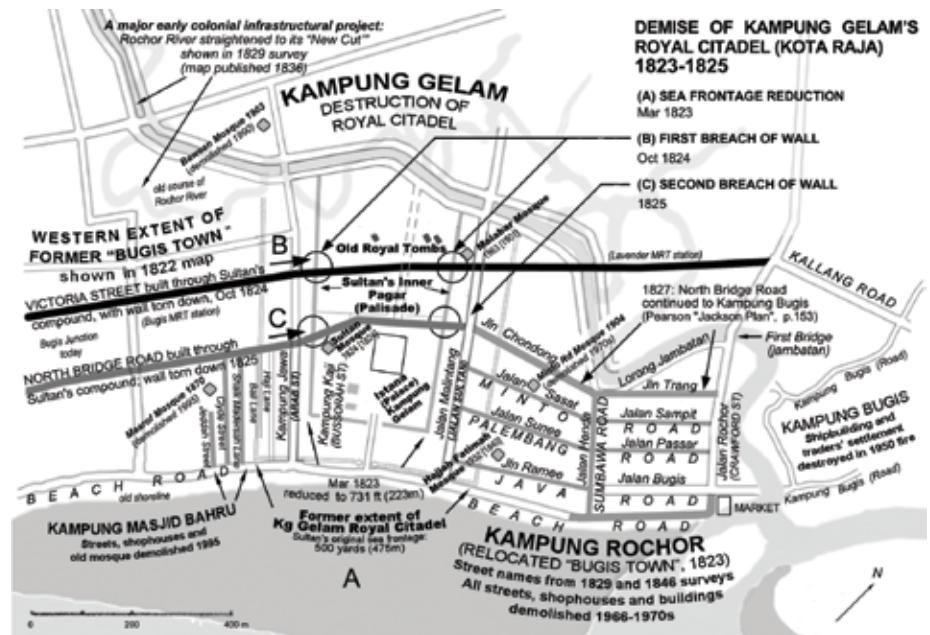
The building housing the centre was once the residence of Malay royalty in Singapore and also referred to as "Istana Kampong Gelam" (Kampong Gelam Palace). It was preceded by at least two istana buildings which were part of a larger walled compound that has been referred to as the *kota raja* (royal citadel).

The first istana in the compound, a large timber palace with attap roofs, was completed in 1819. Sultan Hussein stayed there for some years before moving to Melaka, where he passed away in 1835. His son, Tunku Ali (1825–1877) returned to Singapore in 1840 and commissioned the current building, which combines traditional Malay motifs with the Palladian style – a style derived from the architecture of Italian architect Andrea Palladio (1508–1580) which was popular in England in the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries.

For years, the British refused to acknowledge

Tunku Ali as sultan. In 1855, the Governor of the Straits Settlements William Butterworth (1801–1856) negotiated a treaty between Tunku Ali and Ibrahim (d. 1865), son of the late Temenggong. Ali acquired the title of Sultan and received a fixed allowance from the government, while acknowledging Ibrahim as the ruler of Johor with the exception of Muar. When Sultan Ali passed away in 1877, his eldest son, Tunku Alam (d. 1891), was not recognised by the British as Sultan. However, the Malay community organised a ceremony in 1879 proclaiming him as "Sultan Ala'u'din Shah al Mulak (Ruler of Johore and Muar)".

In 1897, the court decided in a dispute between members of the royal family that the Kampong Glam property belonged to the Crown. An ordinance was then enacted by the British government in 1904 to provide an income



Map of Kampong Glam, illustrating the former extents and destruction of the *kota raja* in the early 1820s, and the demolition of streets and buildings in the later part of the 20<sup>th</sup> century.  
(SOURCE: DR IMRAN BIN TAJUDEEN, NATIONAL UNIVERSITY OF SINGAPORE, 2012)

for Sultan Hussein's descendants. The building continued to serve as a residence for the family. For a period of time during the 20th century, it even housed a club, Kota Raja Club, which regularly organised leisure activities for the community in Kampong Glam.

In 1999, the government announced plans to develop a Malay Heritage Centre, which would involve conserving and redeveloping Istana Kampong Glam and the adjacent Gedung Kuning. This required the residents to relocate and a new scheme of payment to the beneficiaries was introduced. Restoration works were undertaken and the Malay Heritage Centre opened in June 2005. Further renovations were carried out between 2011 and 2012 and the redeveloped centre was launched in September 2012 by the Prime Minister of Singapore, Mr Lee Hsien Loong.

*"During my time, people could not enter the Istana freely. Once I entered the compound to take the jambu fruit from the tree ... I made friends with the gardener, that's how I got in. If they saw you, you'd be beaten ... The Kota Raja Club organised evening concerts at the istana twice a month. The concerts would be over two nights, Saturday night and Sunday night. This was in 1948 or 1949. By this time they didn't restrict entry into the grounds. There was a stage and the concerts were called 'Bermalam Di Kota Raja' (Night at Kota Raja). The kampong people used to go to watch. This was in the compound of the Istana. We had to pay for tickets. Once a month they would screen movies there."*

HAJJAH YUHANIS BTE HAJI YUSUF (B. 1931), WHO GREW UP AT 27 BUSSORAH STREET

TRANSLATED FROM MALAY. INTERVIEW WITH ORAL HISTORY CENTRE, NATIONAL ARCHIVES OF SINGAPORE

73 Sultan Gate  
**Gedung Kuning**



Meaning “Yellow Mansion” in Malay, Gedung Kuning was believed to be built at around the same time or slightly earlier than the former Istana Kampong Gelam.

Gedung Kuning is constructed mainly of wood and brick, and reflects European influence externally. However, like the former Sultan’s Istana next to it, its form and internal layout derives from the architectural style of a traditional Malay house.

The house served as a residence for much of its history. Tunku Mahmud, a grandson of Sultan Hussein, was known to have stayed in the house. Haji Yusoff, a merchant of Javanese descent, first purchased the mansion in 1912. He sold it some years later, but would subsequently buy it again.

The mansion remained in the possession of Haji Yusoff and later his descendants till 1999, when the government acquired it for redevelopment. The renovated and restored building was opened to the public in 2003, housing a restaurant.

**HAJI YUSOFF (1855-1950)**

Haji Yusoff was born in Kampong Glam in 1855. His father, Haji Mohamed Noor bin Haji Ali, came to Singapore from Java in the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century. Haji Mohamed Noor lived in Kampong Glam, near the istana, and had a food stall near the mouth of the Kallang River.

Also known as “Haji Yusoff Tali Pinggang”, Haji Yusoff bin Haji Mohamed Noor was known for his successful business producing *songkok* (a brimless headwear) and *tali pinggang* (a belt with a small pouch) which were sold locally and exported regionally. His brand of *tali pinggang* was distinctive and popular with pilgrims making the *haj* (pilgrimage) who would use it to keep their money safe. Similar belts are still sold in Kampong Glam today. Haji Yusoff was also a property owner, and had land and houses in Malaya and other parts of Singapore including North Bridge Road, Selegie Road, Middle Road and Joo Chiat.



(IMAGE COURTESY OF URBAN REDEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY)

Gedung Kuning in 1993,  
before restoration works.

*“There used to be a traditional healer at Gedung Kuning, a lady. Many people go there to treat their injuries, like sprains and broken limbs. She would pour some blessed water over the injury, set the bone and then bandage it. I remember that I sprained my wrist playing football once when I was a child, and she treated me, and after a few days I was well!”*

MR ROSLI BIN RIDZWAN (B. 1952), WHO GREW UP AT 26 BUSSORAH STREET

## Former pondoks of Kampong Glam



Preparing satay at Sultan Gate, 1987.  
(SOURCE: NATIONAL ARCHIVES OF SINGAPORE)

Pondoks, or communal lodging houses were a feature of Kampong Glam and its vicinity before redevelopment took off in the 1980s. These pondoks were usually set up to house newly arrived migrants from their respective hometown in present-day Indonesia and Malaysia.

Each pondok generally comprised a number of rooms and shared facilities, and could accommodate 40 people or more. There would usually be a communal hall where residents could gather for prayers and kenduri (feast).

Communities from Pulau Bawean in present-day Indonesia established a number of pondoks in Kampong Glam and the present-day Beach Road Garden estate. These pondoks usually took their names from the hometowns of the residents. For example, Pondok Sangkapura and Pondok Daun in Kampong Glam were both named after places in Bawean, as was Pondok Sungai Topo at Jalan Klapa. Around Kandahar Street, there was Pondok Melaka, where traders from Melaka stayed, bringing along merchandise such as rattan goods, cincaluk (Melakan style fermented shrimp) etc.

At Sultan Gate, there was Pondok Java, or Pondok Jawa, as it was commonly referred to. A lodging house for Javanese arrivals, the single-storey bungalow housed mostly bachelors at first, giving rise to another name, Rumah Bujangan (House of Bachelors). In later years, families stayed there.

Pondok Java was also a centre for Javanese culture. The owner of Pondok Java, Wak Dargo, was a Javanese who was familiar with the traditional arts and music. Regular performances of wayang wong (classical Javanese theatre), wayang kulit (shadow puppet theatre) and ketoprak (a form of popular theatre) were staged, and Javanese from other parts of Singapore flocked there to attend. Locals recalled that sounds of Javanese gongs and gamelan often resonated from the pondok.

Many of Pondok Java's residents were itinerant hawkers known for selling satay (grilled meat on sticks), ketupat (rice dumpling wrapped in coconut leaves), mee rebus (yellow noodles in a thick gravy) and mee siam (vermicelli in a spicy gravy). Most of them peddled their ware at the former Alhambra and Marlborough Cinemas along Beach Road, forming the original Satay Club which later relocated to the Esplanade.

The pondok continued functioning into the 1980s till Kampong Glam underwent redevelopment. Due to structural safety issues, Pondok Java was demolished in 2003.

*"My great grandfather used to stage wayang wong ... Between Sultan Gate and Kandahar Street, near the corner of Pahang Road there was a pondok ... In this corner, where the pondok was, the Javanese satay sellers used to gather here. From there the satay sellers would disperse all over Singapore. There was a stage there at the pondok. Not a very high stage, about the height of a table. My great-grandfather played the wayang wong there. He was the pioneer."*

**MR SHADAT KADARISMAN BIN HARON (B.1921), PIONEER MALAY FILM DIRECTOR WHOSE FAMILY CAME FROM JAVA.**

(TRANSLATED FROM MALAY. INTERVIEW WITH ORAL HISTORY CENTRE, NATIONAL ARCHIVES OF SINGAPORE)

*"The people at Pondok Java were from Java and on 17 August, they would celebrate Indonesia's Independence Day. It was like a fun fair, with kuda kepang (traditional dance using horses as props), people selling food like mee siam, mee rebus, satay and bandung ice lollies. Then they would have a wayang kulit show, using a screen put up with banana tree trunks."*

**MR YUSMAL BIN HASSAN (B. 1947), WHOSE FAMILY RAN THE ORIGINAL SABAR MENANTI NASI PADANG STALL AT KANDAHAR STREET.**



Pondok Java, 1997.  
(SOURCE: NATIONAL ARCHIVES OF SINGAPORE)

## Shophouses of all styles



As you walk along the trail, observe the shophouses lining the streets. Shophouses are a distinctive architectural legacy of Singapore's past. They are terraced buildings, usually two to four storeys high, which are designed to serve as a merchant's residence and business premises. Shophouses usually have narrow frontages and deep interiors.

Fine examples of various architectural styles are found in Kampong Glam. Kandahar Street, for instance, is a showcase of various styles. Nos. 44 to 54 are good representations of the Late Shophouse Style. Such shophouses, generally built between 1900 and 1940, are known for their flamboyant ornamentation such as colourful tiles and elaborate bas reliefs. No. 18 is a typical Art Deco shophouse. Usually built between 1930 and 1960, Art Deco shophouses emphasise geometry over ornamentation.

Along North Bridge Road, you can find examples of the Early Shophouse Style, such as No. 780, which is typical of Singapore's earliest shophouses, mostly built between 1840 and 1900.

Simple two-storey buildings, early shophouses usually have timber-framed shuttered windows and doors. Nos. 695 to 709 are characteristic of the First Transitional Shophouse Style. These shophouses, built around the early 1900s, display more decoration than their predecessors but are not as ornamented as later shophouses.

### FORMER KAMPONG DALAM

Around Pahang Street, near Sultan Gate, the area was once known as "Kampong Dalam" (Inside Village) to people staying in Kampong Glam. It was noted that the Malay royal family had priority over Kampong Dalam and would cordon the area off when they had ceremonies taking place.



Pahang Street, which was also known as Kampong Dalam, 1997. (SOURCE: MINISTRY OF INFORMATION, COMMUNICATION AND THE ARTS) COLLECTION, COURTESY OF NATIONAL ARCHIVES OF SINGAPORE

There used to be a field at Kampong Dalam where locals often played football, including legendary national players such as Dolfatah and Majid Ariff. Football clubs were then popular in Kampong Glam. The Kota Raja Community Centre, which was opened in 1963, was built on this site. It closed in late 1988 and the building now houses retail shops.

"Pahang Street was known as Kampong Dalam in the past, and it was all lined with shophouses. We even had a Kampong Dalam football team, with our own tee-shirts!"

MR ABDUL MUNAF BIN ISRIN (B.1960), WHO GREW UP IN KAMPONG DALAM

"The television at the Kota Raja Community Centre was where we would gather, whether it was Chinese, Malay or Indian shows! The sarabat man would set up his stall nearby and we would buy just one cup of teh tarik and some biscuits, and all we would share, Sikhs, Chinese, Malay children. At the open space outside the centre, every morning, a Chinese ah pek (uncle) would dry ikan bilis and squid and I would get free squid from him. When it used to rain and flood, we were so happy, because it was time to play!"

MDM ZUBAIDAH BINTE MARLIAN (B.1959), WHO GREW UP ON KANDAHAR STREET

## Sultan Gate



Blacksmith working at 39 Sultan Gate, 1993. (SOURCE: NATIONAL ARCHIVES OF SINGAPORE)

Sultan Gate probably took its name from the fact that the road leads to one of the entrances to the former Istana Kampong Gelam. The Hokkien name for the road, *ong hu khau* (palace entrance), and the Tamil name, *raja kottai* (King's palace) suggests the same. It was also noted that there was a well in the middle of Sultan Gate, and the Hokkiens referred to the street as *twa che kha* (foot of big well).

Kampong Dalam (p.11), as the area was called, was reserved for its masons and blacksmiths. Pahang Street was where stone masonry in Singapore was concentrated, giving rise to the Hokkien name *pak chio koi* (masonry street). Sultan Gate, on the other hand, was reputed for its blacksmiths, which similarly led to its Hokkien name, *pakti koi* (blacksmith street).

According to locals, masonry was practised by Javanese craftsmen before the Chinese, mostly Hokkiens and Teochews, dominated the trade in the early 1900s. Tombstones, stone mills, grinding slabs and mortar and pestles were some of

the items crafted by the masons here. The granite was sourced from different quarries, including those in Pulau Ubin and Mandai. Smaller items such as the *giling* (stone mill) used for grinding spices and rice usually took a day to make while tombstones would take up to three days. The work, from sanding and polishing to engraving, was done by hand. The crafted items were also exported to places such as Borneo. Before World War II, it was said that there were at least ten masonries on Pahang Street alone. There were also masons operating along Beach Road. By the 1960s, however, the trade began declining as



Tombstone engraver at Sultan Gate, 1990. (SOURCE: NATIONAL ARCHIVES OF SINGAPORE)

*"A lot of interaction between the neighbours, Chinese and Malays alike, living in Pahang Street ... Children often mingled and grownups would sit around to chat. Even during the 1964 racial riots, the Chinese stayed indoors not to avoid their Malay neighbours, but to avoid the Malays from other areas."*

**CHEN SUEI NAN (B.1935), WHOSE FAMILY RAN A STONE MASONRY IN PAHANG STREET**

(TRANSLATED FROM CHINESE. INTERVIEW WITH ORAL HISTORY CENTRE, NATIONAL ARCHIVES OF SINGAPORE)

stone began to lose its popularity as a material and fewer people took up the craft. The masonries at Pahang Street closed down by the 1990s when redevelopment of the area took off.

Sultan Gate, on the other hand, was where blacksmiths and foundries were located. Other foundries also operated at Pahang Street, Jalan Sultan, North Bridge Road and Beach Road. By the early 1900s, most of these foundries were operated by the Chinese, in particular the Hakkas. A number of the foundries worked with brass as well. Household items and tools were some of the items made here. In the 1950s, it was

reported that there were at least seven to eight foundries at Sultan Gate. By the late 1990s, there were only two blacksmiths left at Sultan Gate. The last foundry closed down in the mid-2000s after a fire.

**30-32 Aliwal Street**  
**Former Chong Cheng School**  
**and Chong Pun Girls' School**



This Art Deco building, designed by the local architect partnership of Chan Kui Chuan and Tan Koh Keng, used to house the former Chong Cheng School (崇正学校) and Chong Pun Girls' Schools (崇本女校). Both were Chinese schools started by the Hokkien community. They provided much-needed education during a time when Singapore's educational infrastructure was lacking.

Chong Cheng School was founded in 1903 as a boys' school. It was called Yang Zheng School (养正学堂) before changing its name to Chong Cheng School in 1909. The school operated in various locations along Beach Road before moving to this school compound at Aliwal Street in 1938.

Chong Pun Girls' School started at Thian Hock Keng Temple at Telok Ayer Street, in the premises of Chong Wen Ge, one of the earliest known educational institutions run by the Chinese community. By 1916, it was already holding primary classes for girls. Originally called Yu De Girls' School (育德女子学校) before changing its name in 1917, the school later moved to the same premises as Chong Cheng School at Aliwal Street. The schools were housed in separate wings while sharing common facilities such as the school hall. Records show that most their students came from Kampong Glam and its vicinity.

The schools were funded by donations from their founders, trustees and philanthropists including the Haw Par brothers and Tan Kah Kee (1874-1961) and organisations such as the former Sun Tian Gong temple at Malabar Street. Chong Cheng School was also noted for its calibre of teachers and students. Some of its

well-known alumni includes Chinese magnate, Lee Kong Chian (1893-1967), Chinese community leader and businessman, Tan Eng Joo (1919-2011) and former President of Singapore, Ong Teng Cheong (1936-2002). Chong Pun Girls' School and Chong Cheng School ceased operations in 1982 and 1984 respectively. The building was conserved in 2011 by the Urban Redevelopment Authority.

*"The Japanese Occupation for a few years ... the children were all growing up, and had no place to receive education. So when the Japanese left, these children needed education, and there were not enough schools. So I thought of having one morning session and one afternoon session ... The school was modelled after China's schools, and textbooks came from China too. The curriculum was also based on China's ... but with some adaptations."*

**MR TAN HUNG TOH (B.1894),  
FORMER PRINCIPAL OF CHONG CHENG SCHOOL.**

(TRANSLATED FROM CHINESE. INTERVIEW WITH ORAL HISTORY CENTRE, NATIONAL ARCHIVES OF SINGAPORE)

**SINGAPORE TIMBER ASSOCIATION**  
**341B Beach Road**

The only trade association in Singapore today representing the timber industry, Singapore Timber Association traces its lineage to a few earlier organisations - the Singapore Steam Sawmillers Association, Singapore Electric Sawmillers Association and Singapore Timber Exporters' Association. The two sawmill associations merged in 1953 to form the Singapore Sawmillers Association. This was later dissolved to make way for the Singapore Timber Manufacturers' Association which was registered in 1983. In 2001, it

combined with the Singapore Timber Exporters' Association, established in 1956, to form the Singapore Timber Association.

The timber industry used to have a significant presence around Kampong Glam. Vessels bearing sawn timber and logs from the region plied Rochor River. There were sawmills located at Beach Road, Lavender Street and around Kallang Basin. Timber was also used by the ship and boat-building workshops in this area. Such scenes, however, gradually vanished by the mid-1970s as most sawmills in Singapore closed down due to new pollution control measures.

111 Jalan Sultan  
**Madrasah Alsagoff Al-Arabiah**  
**(Alsagoff Arab School)**



Established in 1912, Madrasah Alsagoff Al-Arabiah is the oldest surviving madrasah in Singapore. Its beginnings can be traced to the late 19th century when Syed Mohamed bin Ahmed Alsagoff started a small school in the family house at what was then Java Road (present-day Beach Road Garden estate).

The school taught Muslim boys the tenets of Islam. To ensure its continuity, he left a sum of money and an endowment for the school in his will.

As the number of pupils outgrew the premises at Java Road, his nephews, Syed Omar bin Mohamed Alsagoff (1854-1927) and Syed Abdulrahman bin Taha Alsagoff (1880-1955), contributed more funds to the endowment and established the madrasah here at Jalan Sultan. Students were taught Islam, Arabic and English. The formal opening of the school took place in March 1913, officiated by Sir Arthur Young, Governor of the Straits Settlements (1911-1920).

The madrasah started accepting girls in the 1940s. As the enrolment of girls increased and that of boys declined over the next two decades, the trustees of the school decided to convert it into a girls' school.

The school moved to temporary premises in Kembangan in 1989 and remained there till 1992 when an extension building was added to the madrasah, providing better facilities for students. Today, its students are also schooled in secular subjects such as Mathematics, Science, and Malay Language in addition to Islamic studies, Arabic and English.

**SYED MOHAMED BIN AHMED ALSAGOFF  
(1836-1906)**

Syed Mohamed bin Ahmed Alsagoff was the son of the Hadhrami, Syed Ahmed bin Abdulrahman Alsagoff, who came to Singapore with his father in 1824. Syed Ahmed married Raja Siti, who was the only daughter of Hajjah Fatimah after whom a mosque at Beach Road (p.43) is named.

After his father passed away, Syed Mohamed took over the family business, Alsagoff and Co., which his grandfather established in 1848. The company flourished under Syed Mohamed's stewardship. He also owned the first steamship in Singapore, expanded the family business of transporting pilgrims on the haj and owned rubber, sago, coconut, coffee and pineapple plantations at Kukup in Johor. In Singapore, he founded the Straits Cycle and Motor Co., and Express Saw Mill Co.. With part of this property, he endowed the Syed Mohamed bin Ahmed (S.M.A) Wakaff,

the income of which was allocated to various purposes such as the upkeep of the Madrasah Alsagoff and Hajjah Fatimah Mosque, the poor in his ancestral homeland Hadhramaut (located at the southern part of the Arabian Peninsula), the poor in Mecca and Medina (in Saudi Arabia), his relatives, and the Muslimin Trust Fund.

*"During the war [World War II], Madrasah Alsagoff fed the poor people every day at lunchtime and in the evening."*

**HAJI SAHLAN BIN AHMAD (B. 1993), WHO USED TO LIVE ALONG JALAN SULTAN.**

*"The main mawlid (Prophet Mohamed's birthday) celebration would be at Madrasah Alsagoff. This was in 1931. They had lorries. The children would get up on the lorries and sing. We would sing and carry flags. Very happy. The lorries would go round the kampong. We would sing songs like 'Geylang Si Paku Geylang' and songs in praise of the Prophet Muhammad. I used to sit in the lorries as well ... We would have a feast first at the madrasah, then we'd get on the lorries for the procession."*

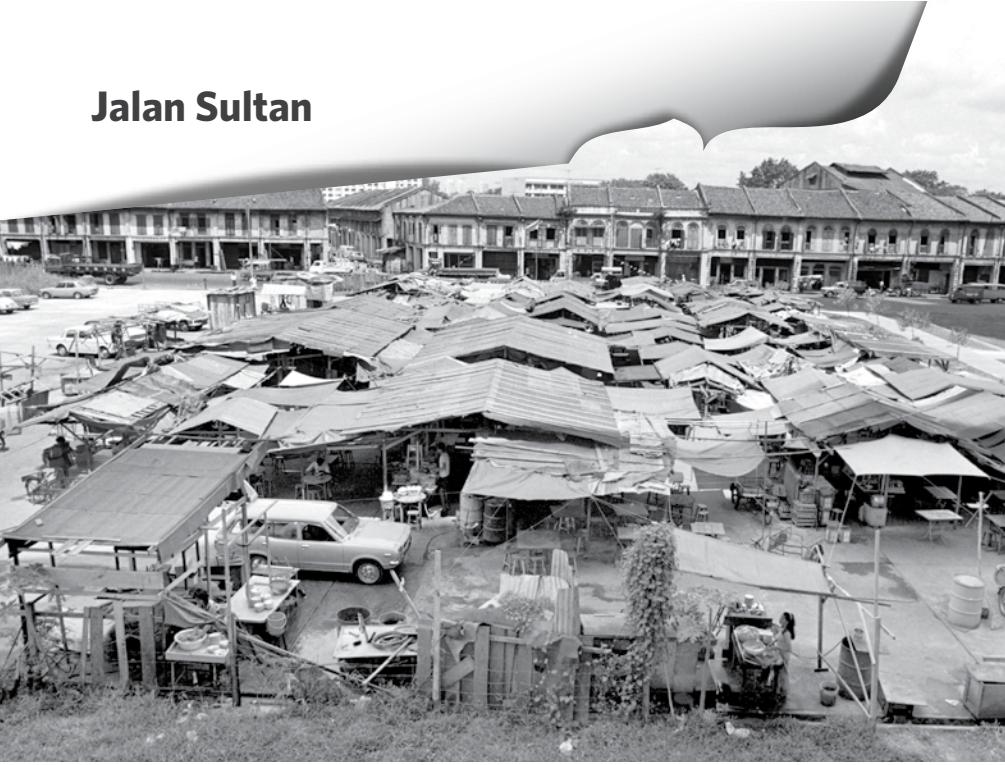
**SALAMAH BTE TAMBY (B.1922), WHO WAS BORN AT BUSSORAH STREET.**

(QUOTES TRANSLATED FROM MALAY. INTERVIEWS WITH ORAL HISTORY CENTRE, NATIONAL ARCHIVES OF SINGAPORE)



*Procession to mark Prophet Mohamed's birthday, which started from Jalan Sultan and then walking to other parts of Kampong Glam and finally ending at Geylang, 1961.*

## Jalan Sultan



The sprawling hawker "centre" at Jalan Sultan, 1975. (SOURCE: THE STRAITS TIMES © SINGAPORE PRESS HOLDINGS LIMITED. REPRINTED WITH PERMISSION)

One of the oldest streets in Singapore, Jalan Sultan originally appeared as "Jalan Malintang" in early maps of Singapore and marked the eastern boundary of the sultan's compound.

By the mid-1800s, the road was known by its current name. Locals, however, referred to it as "Pasir Gembur" (loose sand).

The road was famous for its vibrant food scene. Hawkers operating out of makeshift stalls sold their ware round the clock, offering delicacies such as *satay*, *mee rebus*, *thosai* (South Indian pancake made of fermented batter) and *prata* (South Indian fried pancake). The hawkers were resettled to the food centre along Beach Road (present-day Golden Mile Food Centre) in 1975.

*"They called Jalan Sultan 'Pasir Gembur' because whenever a horse carriage went by, a lot of dust would be kicked up. Red earth."*

**MR SHADAT KADARISMAN BIN HARON (B.1921), PIONEER MALAY FILM DIRECTOR WHOSE FAMILY CAME FROM JAVA.**

(TRANSLATED FROM MALAY. INTERVIEW WITH ORAL HISTORY CENTRE, NATIONAL ARCHIVES OF SINGAPORE)

### PUBLISHING AND PRINTING IN KAMPONG GLAM

Up till the 1990s, Kampong Glam was a thriving hub for Malay publishers and printers. In the 19<sup>th</sup> century, present-day Bussorah Street had a number of local printers who printed Islamic literature and Korans which were distributed in the region. Translations of legends and folklore of Arabian and Persian origins were published as well. The Jawi Peranakans (Malay-speaking people of mixed Malay-Indian Muslim descent) and the Javanese owned most of these print shops. By the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, there were a number of prominent Malay-language publishers in Kampong Glam, such as the Malay Press, Ahmad Press, Al-Latiffia Press and Warta Malaia Press. These publishers played an important role in promoting Malay language and the Malay literary and intellectual scene.

One of the most well-known publishers was the Al-Ahmadiah Press, established at 101 Jalan



Mee seller at Jalan Sultan, 1980. (SOURCE: QUEK TIONG SEE COLLECTION, COURTESY OF NATIONAL ARCHIVES OF SINGAPORE)

Sultan in 1920. It was set up by Malay nobility from the Natuna Islands, Riau, who also ran a flourishing trading company, Ahmadi & Co. Midai. The company, which had a branch at Minto Road traded in goods such as spices and were reportedly the first Malay company to own a steamship. With the success of the trading company, the owners ventured into printing. In the early years, the press only printed materials in Jawi and Arabic. By the 1940s, the press had begun printing in Rumi (Romanised Malay). It also published a variety of lifestyle magazines and fictional works.

Another important player was the Royal Press, which started in 1924 at 745 North Bridge Road. Renamed Malaysia Press in 1962, the company produced Singapore's first post-war Malay magazine, *Hiburan* (Entertainment).

This publishing scene gradually declined by the 1980s for a number of reasons, such as the emergence of large publishing companies in

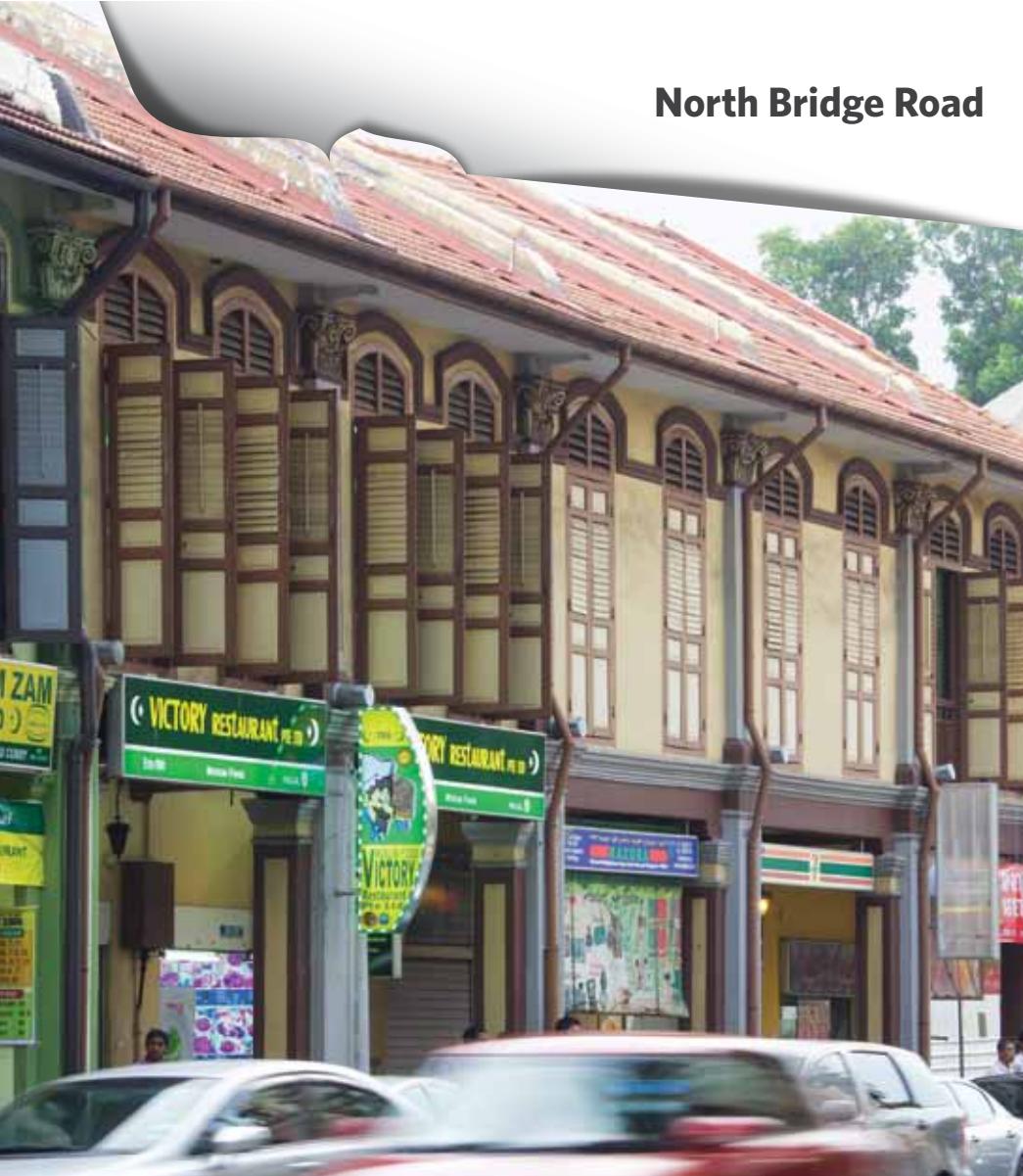
Peninsular Malaysia. Most the publishers closed down by the 1990s.

*"When I first arrived, I worked as a pengatur huruf, a compositor, at Ahmadiah Press ... My wages were \$2 a week ... At that time the press was all manual. The letters were arranged by hand by the compositors and the machines were powered by our feet. No motors. The machine to cut the books was also manual ... There was a high level of discipline at the press. As a worker I couldn't walk around to see what everyone else was doing."*

**HAJI RAJA MOHD SHAFIK BIN RAJA HAJI OMAR (B.1919), A BUGIS FROM PULAU PENYENGAT IN RIAU WHO MOVED TO SINGAPORE IN 1932.**

(TRANSLATED FROM MALAY. INTERVIEW WITH ORAL HISTORY CENTRE, NATIONAL ARCHIVES OF SINGAPORE)

# North Bridge Road



One of the earliest roads built in Singapore, North Bridge Road is so called because it runs north of Presentment Bridge (present-day Elgin Bridge).

This road has always been one of the liveliest commercial streets in the Kampong Glam area. Businesses were set up by diverse communities and various trades have come and gone, such as tailors, printers and gemstone craftsmen. However, some long-established trades have survived and today, North Bridge Road is still the place for

pilgrimage goods, attar (oil-based, non-alcohol perfumes), murtabaks (fried bread stuffed with meat) and biryani (a rice dish), handcrafted jewellery and nasi padang. Take a walk along this road and find out more about the stories behind the businesses here!

## NASI FROM PADANG

Literally meaning "Padang rice", *nasi padang* is a typical Sumatran dish comprising steamed rice served with a variety of dishes, many of which feature coconut gravy, such as *daun ubi tumbuk* (cassava leaves cooked in coconut milk and spices), *rendang* (meat simmered in spices and coconut gravy) and *opor nangka* (young jackfruit curry). In Kampong Glam, *nasi padang* eateries have been serving generations of loyal fans since the 1940s.

## WARUNG NASI PARIAMAN

### 738 North Bridge Road

One of the most well-known *nasi padang* places in Singapore, Warung Nasi Pariaman began in 1948 as a stall in a Chinese-run coffeeshop at the same location. The founders, Mr Isrin bin Ibrahim and Mdm Rosna binte Zainah, came from the Minangkabau province of Pariaman, West Sumatra. Mr Abdul Munaf bin Isrin (b. 1960), a second-generation owner remembers how the family used to run the business in the past, "We used to cook the dishes at our home, 10 Pahang Street. We would bring the food over to the stall at North Bridge Road. To get our ingredients, we would go to Pasar Besi (the former Clyde Terrace market) or Tekka Market. Kampong Glam was already known for *nasi padang* by the 1950s. Our family, the family behind Sabar Menanti and another Sumatran lady called Hajjah Ratna ran the most popular stalls." Today, the family continues to prepare *nasi padang* dishes according to traditional recipes.



## RUMAH MAKAN MINANG

### AND SABAR MENANTI I AND II

### 18 Kandahar Street, 48 Kandahar Street and 747 North Bridge Road

These three long-time *nasi padang* shops were established by the children of the founders behind the original Sabar Menanti, formerly located on Kandahar Street. The founders, Haji Marlian bin Athar and Hajjah Rosemah binte Mailu, came from the province of Pariaman as well. Mr Yusmal bin Hassan (b. 1947), son of Hajjah Rosemah, recalls, "There used to be food stalls along Kandahar Street, where our stall was then. My parents set up the stall in the late 1940s and ran the business from early morning to late night every day. From young, we helped to prepare, cook and sell the food. There were many Indonesian traders in this area then, and they would come to eat at our stall. We were especially famous for our *lemak ikan gulai* (fish in coconut curry)." Sabar Menanti proved to be so popular that the family went on to set up more outlets. Today, each restaurant has its own distinctive dishes based on the recipes created and handed down by Hajjah Rosemah.

"My mother came on her own to Singapore in the 1940s, bringing her son, nephew and niece, after she divorced her husband in Pariaman. She could speak Dutch well and the Dutch ship gave her free passage to Singapore because of that. When she came, she started working with an old lady at Java Road, making a living by embroidering and embellishing kutang (a kind of ladies' apparel). That was how she met my father, who cycled from kampong to kampong to sell the embroidered kutang. Later, when they opened the *nasi padang* stall, my mother came up with the recipes. During the haj season, she would supply *nasi padang* to pilgrims waiting to board the pilgrim ships at Pasir Panjang."

**MDM ZUBAIDAH BINTE MARLIAN (B. 1959),  
PROPRIETOR OF RUMAH MAKAN MINANG.**

## MURTABAK, BIRYANI AND MORE

North Bridge Road also attracted a number of South Indian entrepreneurs to set up stalls selling distinctive fare such as *murtabak* and *biryani*. Today, a number of long-established brands still operate here, such as Singapore Zam Zam and Victory Restaurant. For a taste of how *biryani* was served to dignitaries in the colonial past, drop by the Islamic Restaurant.

## ISLAMIC RESTAURANT

### 745 North Bridge Road

One of the oldest restaurants in Kampong Glam, Islamic Restaurant was started by Mr M. Abdul Rahiman, who came from Madras, India, in 1900. He started as a chef with the Alsagoffs (p.17) before striking out on his own in 1914 by renting a stall at 797 North Bridge Road. After seven years, he bought over the shophouse and started the Islamic Restaurant. The restaurant quickly gained a reputation for its food, in particular the *nasi biryani* (a rice dish) and *roti mariam* (fried bread). It was highly popular with local and foreign dignitaries and the restaurant catered for many of their events as well. The business grew over time, and today, his descendants continue to expand the brand. Pop by the restaurant, where artefacts and photographs belonging to the family are exhibited.

*"Every night, we would give unsold food to needy families. It's a family tradition and we still do this today. We also run a community kitchen and work with charity groups to support underprivileged groups through culinary education."*

**MR KALIL A WAHAB (B. 1961), GRANDSON OF M ABDUL RAHIMAN AND CEO OF ISLAMIC GROUP OF COMPANIES**



## THE ART OF ATTAR

Attar, or non-alcohol perfumes crafted from high-grade essential oils, are an important part of Islamic culture and Kampong Glam is where generations of patrons have flocked to for high-quality, *attar*. Today, businesses in Kampong Glam continue this age-old trade, and North Bridge Road, as well as Arab Street, is where some of the oldest shops can still be found.

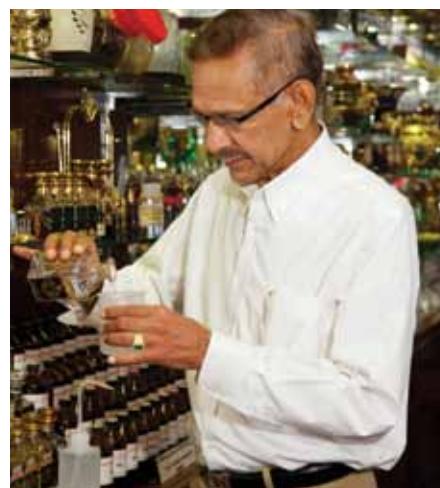
## JAMAL KAZURA AROMATICS

### 728 North Bridge Road

The Jamal Kazura brand, one of the oldest surviving *attar* businesses in Kampong Glam, was started in 1933 by Mr Mohamed Hanifa Kazura, a Tamil Muslim trader who came here from Tembilahan, Riau. His first shop at 728 North Bridge Road carried a diversity of goods, including religious books, perfumes and gemstones. The business gradually focused solely on perfumes as it proved to be lucrative. Oils were sourced from different parts of the world and Mohamed Hanifa Kazura and his family honed their skills at distinguishing and blending scents to an art. This craft continues to be practised at *attar* shops run by his descendants today at North Bridge Road, Bussorah Street and Arab Street.

*"North Bridge Road used to be lined with shops of all kinds – gold shops, spice shops, many gemstone traders. Retail activities stopped at about 6 pm every day when I was growing up. It was very quiet then. But community was a lot more close-knit. Everyone knew each other, and they would go, 'Oh you're from that shop.'"*

**MR JOHARI KAZURA (B. 1975), WHO GREW UP ALONG NORTH BRIDGE ROAD AND PROPRIETOR OF SIFR**



## GETTING READY FOR THE HAJ

Singapore used to be the pilgrimage hub in the region (p.31) and Kampong Glam was a centre for pilgrimage-related services such as travel agencies, boarding houses and shops selling goods for the long journey. These included stout money belts, shawls, towels etc. Though Singapore is no longer the regional centre for the *haj*, a few shops still carry on the business in Kampong Glam now.

## V.S.S. VARUSAI MOHAMED & SONS

### 719 North Bridge Road

Established in 1935, V.S.S. Varusai Mohamed & Sons is one of the last few shops in Kampong Glam specialising in pilgrimage goods. The business was started by Mr V.S.S. Varusai, a Tamil Muslim who came here from Rangoon, Burma, in 1924. The entrepreneurial immigrant began by selling socks and stockings in the five foot way shophouses along North Bridge Road. Realising that there was a demand for money belts, he modified an existing design to create "The Varusai Makkah Zam Zam Belt" and patented it in 1935. In the same year, he bought two shophouses on North Bridge Road and opened a factory at Jalan Pekan (defunct, in present-day Crawford Court estate) to manufacture the belts. His store also sold other pilgrimage goods such as perfumes, skull caps and incense burners. Another popular item was steel trunks, known for their strength and security. The trunks and belts were exported regionally. V.S.S. Varusai's descendants operate the business today and the belts are still made locally. Another shop across the road, Haji Syed Abu Thahir Trading Company, selling similar goods, is also run by his descendants.

## SETTING GEMS BY HAND

In the past, North Bridge Road was famed for its Banjarese and Indian gemstone traders and craftsmen who would set the stones in hand-crafted jewellery pieces. Besides aesthetic reasons, some patrons and sellers also believe that the stones contain magical properties and can protect wearers from evil powers. The trade has declined with the popularity of costume jewellery.

## MESRA ENTERPRISES

### 741 North Bridge Road

Rows of semi-precious stones and artefacts line the cabinets in this shop run by Mr Maon bin Ismail, who took over from his late mentor Mr Osman bin Jaafar in 2002. For over forty years, the late Mr Osman was known by locals as the go-to-man for stones and to set their jewellery. Recalling the heyday before the late 1980s when people used to queue outside the shop, Mr Maon also remembers Banjarese craftsmen who dominated the trade in this area. As Kampong Glam developed, the trade vanished and this remains as one of the few such shops left in this area. With over 100 different kinds of stones imported from countries such as Indonesia, Myanmar and Iran, he continues the traditional trade of setting stones in silver and copper today.



## Associations and Clans



### SINGAPORE MALAY CHAMBER OF COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY (DEWAN PERNIAGAAN DAN PERUSAHAAN MELAYU SINGAPURA) **15 Jalan Pinang**

The Singapore Malay Chamber of Commerce and Industry was established in 1956 to promote greater participation of Malays in business and to represent the Malay business community in official dealings. Then known as the Singapore Malay Chamber of Commerce, the chamber was started by a group of enterprising Malay leaders, including the first President of Singapore, Inche Yusof bin Ishak (1910 - 1970) and former Chairman of the UMNO (United Malays National Organisation) branch in Singapore, Inche Abdul Hamid bin Allwie.

Some of its founding members were from an earlier trade association started in 1946, the Singapore Malay Electrical Association. Despite its name, the association went beyond the electrical industry and included representatives from other trades. This was later succeeded by the Singapore Malay Chamber of Commerce. The membership grew steadily and the chamber was active in raising the profile of Malay businesses locally and regionally. In 1995, the association's name was changed to Singapore Malay Chamber of Commerce and Industry to reflect its wider role. Its first office was located at Victoria Street, and it operated in various locations before moving to Jalan Pinang in 2009.

### SINGAPORE METAL AND MACHINERY ASSOCIATION

#### **7A Jalan Kubor**

Originally called "Ngo Kim Kong Hoey" (五金公会 [Five Metals Trade Association]), this trade association was founded in 1935. The term "five metals" refers to gold, silver, copper, iron and tin. By the early 1900s, the metal industry was dominated by the Chinese. Most of them started as rag and bone men scavenging scrap metals and went on to set up shops selling metal ware, tools and machinery parts. The demand for metal surged in the post-war years, and Singapore was an important metal and machinery trading centre in the region, supplying to Indonesia, Malaysia and even the Middle East. As machinery took on more prominence over time, the association's name was changed to Singapore Metal and Machinery Association in 1975. The association operated from various locations before purchasing two shophouses at Jalan Kubor in 1948. Its current headquarters was built in 1950.

*"From Kallang Road to Victoria Street, there used to be more than a hundred businesses in the ngokim (five metals) trade, including those in the scrap metal business. Many of them were of the surname "Kuah", from Anxi county. The headquarters for the Kuah Si Association also housed our patron deities in the past. During the deity's birthday celebrations, we would stage opera and puppet shows along Jalan Kubor for two days, followed by feasting with tables set up all over the street. It was very grand."*

### MR KWA TIONG GUAN, WHOSE FAMILY HAD A BUSINESS DEALING IN METALS AT 462 VICTORIA STREET IN 1933

*(Facing page): The Singapore Malay-Muslim Economic Congress, which was jointly organised by the Singapore Malay Chamber of Commerce, the Central Council of Malay Cultural Organisations, and the Singapore Malay Teachers' Multi-Purpose Co-operative Society, took place from 13 to 15 September 1985.*

(SOURCE: SINGAPORE MALAY CHAMBER OF COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY)

### NANYANG KUAH SI ASSOCIATION

(南洋柯氏公会)

#### **3B Jalan Kubor**

Nanyang Kuah Si Association was started in 1954 to promote mutual aid among the Hokkien immigrants of the surname "Kuah" (柯). Many of its founding members were also behind the establishment of the Singapore Metal and Machinery Association. Nanyang Kuah Si Association operated in the premises of Ngo Kim Kong Hoey (later Singapore Metal and Machinery Association) until 1961, when its new headquarters at the present site was completed. Besides serving its kinsmen, the association also has strong ties with Chinese clans of the surnames of Xin (辛) and Cai (蔡), with whom they share common forefathers.

### SINGAPORE LOO CLAN ASSOCIATION

(新加坡呂氏公会)

#### **1A Jalan Klapa**

Officially registered in 1950, the Singapore Loo Clan Association is a clan for Chinese of the surname "Loo" (呂). It began operations at Havelock Road before purchasing Nos. 1 and 7 at Jalan Klapa in 1951. After some years of using the premises, the clan undertook renovation works and officially moved into its new office at No. 1 Jalan Klapa in 1963.

### DID YOU KNOW?

This area between Victoria Street and North Bridge Road, bounded by Arab Street and Jalan Sultan, used to be part of the walled compound belonging to the Malay royalty. The street names in Malay suggest that this area could have once been an orchard. By the early 1900s, it was noted that this was quite a diverse place, populated by Banjarese, Baweanese and Chinese communities.

**JALAN KЛАРА** – Coconut street

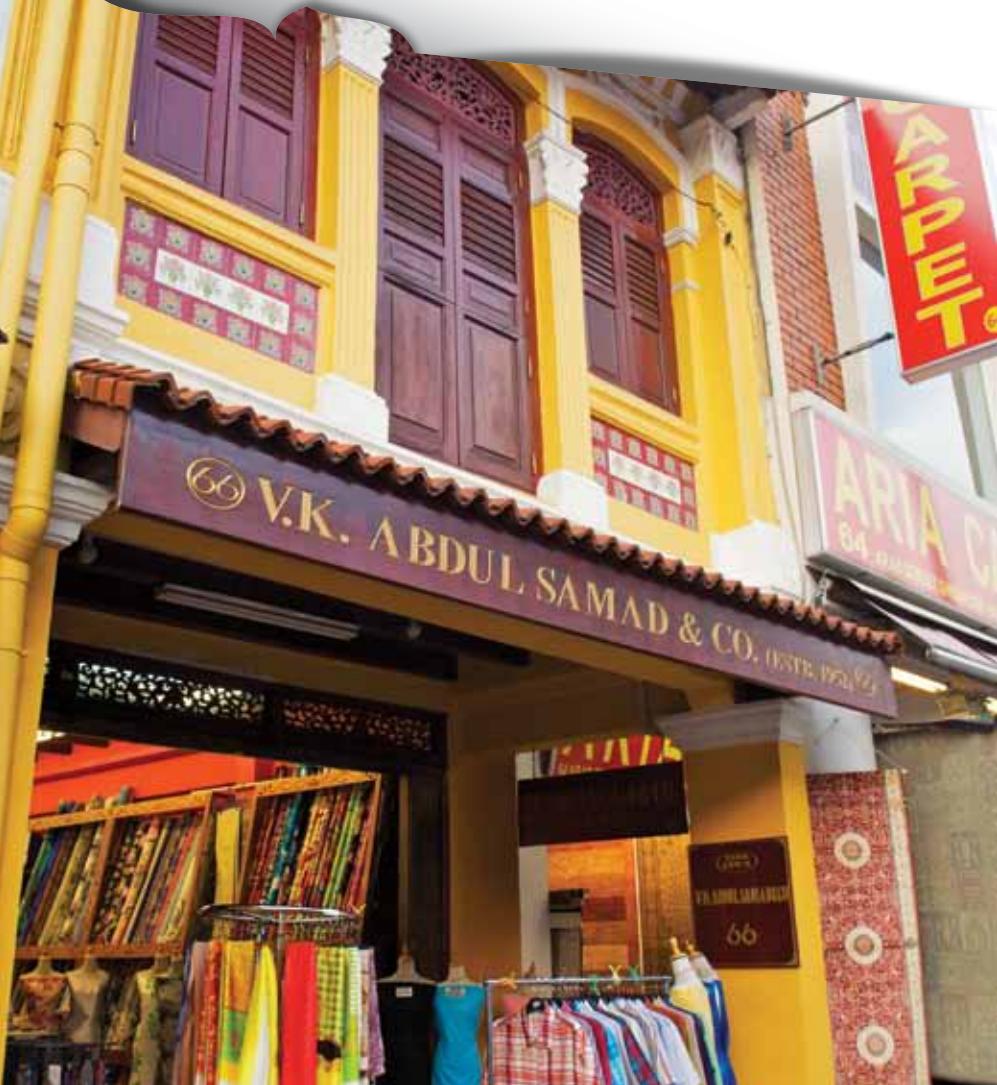
**JALAN KUBOR** – Cemetery, referring to the Malay burial grounds across Victoria Street

**JALAN KЛЕДЕК** – Sweet potato street

**JALAN PISANG** – Banana street

**JALAN PINANG** – Areca nut street

## Arab Street



Arab Street is one of the few streets in Kampong Glam that has retained its original name from the early 1800s. It was probably named as such as the area was designated for the Arab community in the 1822 town plan of Singapore.

The community here, however, has always been diverse. A busy commercial area, Arab Street has been attracting traders and entrepreneurs from places such as present-day Indonesia, India, China and the Middle East since its early days. They started businesses ranging from eating houses, rattan shops

and goldsmiths to textile shops, money changers, bookshops and printing presses. Today, a number of shops on this street, such as H. Hashim bin H. Abdullah, a bookstore opened in the early 1900s, are still run by the descendants of pioneers who came here decades ago.

*"An early walk through Kampong Glam will serve to give a stranger a good idea of the habits and occupations of the different classes. Near the residence of the Sultan he will meet with Malays, lounging about near the doors of their houses, chewing betel, with their sarongs, which usually hang loosely about the waist, wrapped round the body to shelter the wearer from the cool morning breeze."*

*The main street, however, will have a very different appearance. There Chinese mechanics will be busily employed forging ironwork, making furniture, or building boats; and the level green near the sea will be occupied by Bugis, who have landed from their prahus (ships) to mend their sails, or to twist rope and cables from the materials which they have brought with them.*

*In a portion of the back part of the kampong, natives of Sambawa, a far distant island to the eastward of Java, will be found chopping young trees into billets for fire-wood, and making hurdles for fencing; and in another, Bengali washermen hanging out clothes to dry, and dairymen of the same nation milking their cows to supply the break-fast tables of the Europeans. On the roads Klings will occasionally be encountered conducting tumbrils drawn by buffaloes cased in mud and dirt...."*

GEORGE WINDSOR EARL, AN ENGLISH NAVIGATOR, IN THE EASTERN SEAS, 1837

### KAMPONG JAWA (JAVA) OR JAVA KOI

To locals, this road was more commonly referred to as Kampong Java by the Malays or *Jawa koi* (Java Street) by the Chinese. For a long time, Arab Street was largely populated by the Javanese. They were engaged in various occupations such as running eating houses and food stalls, and selling goods such as fruit and Javanese leaf cigarettes. Javanese women also set up stalls to sell flowers along the five foot way, giving rise to the Tamil nickname, *pookadei sadakku* (flower street). Over time, however, the Javanese presence gradually diminished in this area due to factors such as the redevelopment of Kampong Glam, leading to resettlement of the original residents.

*"Arab Street was Kampong Java (Java). They sold flowers there ... Kling (local slang used by some to refer to Indians) shops there sold jamu (herbs) and medicines. Flower shops, rojak shops ... At Kampong Jawa they sold textiles, kain pelakat (type of sarong) ... At the end of Kampong Jawa, there were stone steps for people to sail off to Pontian, Benut, Batu Pahat. They would go up boats. 'Pilots' they were called. This was at Beach Road, at the end of Arab Street ..."*

MR OMAR BIN HAJI ABDUL RAHIM (B. 1906)  
AT PALEMBANG ROAD

(TRANSLATED FROM MALAY. INTERVIEW WITH ORAL HISTORY CENTRE, NATIONAL ARCHIVES OF SINGAPORE)



Arab Street, 1955. Singapore



Hari Raya Puasa shoppers along Arab Street, 1960.

(SOURCE: THE STRAITS TIMES © SINGAPORE PRESS HOLDINGS LIMITED. REPRINTED WITH PERMISSION)

## THE ARAB COMMUNITY

The Arab community has left their imprint on Kampong Glam in many ways, such as the two madrasahs (p.16 & 57) in this area. In the early days, Arab traders used to own whole stretches of properties in Kampong Glam. Today, you can still find a number of long-time businesses in Kampong Glam belonging to Arab businessmen, such as Basharahil Brothers and Toko Aljunied.

**Aljunied Brothers** at No. 95, for instance, carries agarwood (an aromatic, resinous wood) and its related products, frankincense and myrrh from Oman and Greece and a wide variety of perfume oils from the Middle East and France. Here, one can also find Black Seed (*Nigella Sativa*) products, traditionally used in the east to strengthen the immune system, and the prized Arabian honey from Wadi Do'an in Hadhramaut. The shop is popular with locals and has a fair share of customers from the Middle East. Aljunied Brothers was established in 1966 by Mr Syed Haroon Bin Hassan Aljunied and his sons, Mr Abdullah bin Haroon Aljunied and Mr Junied Bin Haroon Aljunied. Syed Haroon started his business by selling perfumes and had earlier set up Toko Aljunied

in 1938, then located at 737 North Bridge Road. Aljunied Brothers is now managed by his grandsons, Mr Hasan and Mr Ahmad Abdullah Aljunied.

**Aidid Trading Co.**, at 74 Bussorah Street, is another Arab-owned shop engaged in the import-export of agarwood and its products, honey and dates. Started in 1967 at Telok Ayer by Mr Syed M. A. Aidid, a Hadhrami Arab from Penang and now run by his son Mr Syed Alwi Aidid, the company moved here in the early 1990s when it started importing dates for sale. Agarwood, used to make incense and perfume, is sourced from Southeast Asia and mainly exported to customers in the Middle East. Dates, are popular with the local Muslim population, are imported from Medina in Saudi Arabia. The company also deals in a product which the Aidid family's ancestral homeland Hadhramaut is famous for – the prized Hadhrami honey, which is among the most expensive in the world. Besides being consumed in food and drink, the honey is also used for medicinal purposes.

Another Arab-owned business here is **Café le Caire** at No. 39. Opened by Dr Ameen Talib



Clockwise from top: A Javanese lady selling flowers along Arab Street, 1971. (SOURCE: THE STRAITS TIMES © SINGAPORE PRESS HOLDINGS LIMITED. REPRINTED WITH PERMISSION) • An Arab trader on the back lane of Arab Street, c. 1970s. (SOURCE: RONNI PINSLER COLLECTION, COURTESY OF NATIONAL ARCHIVES OF SINGAPORE) • Rattan shop along Arab Street, 1980. (SOURCE: SINGAPORE TOURISM BOARD COLLECTION, COURTESY OF NATIONAL ARCHIVES OF SINGAPORE)

in 2001, the café occupies the first shophouse owned by his grandfather, Sheikh Salim bin Mohamed bin Talib, on Arab Street. Sheikh Salim was a native of Hadhramaut who came to Singapore around 1902 where he engaged in trade and invested in real estate. Dr Ameen Talib, who set up the Kampong Glam Business Association in 2004, started the cafe to offer an alternative nightlife that does not include alcohol. The late-night café promoted Arabian culture through food and music. He also introduced shisha (waterpipe) through the café. Since the 1980s, businesses in Kampong Glam had declined significantly and most shops would close by late afternoon. Following the success of Café Le Caire, Arab Street began to see a gradual revival as a commercial and entertainment district.

*"One of my closest friends in primary school was staying in the first house after the mosque at Bussorah Street. We would go for prayers together on Friday. After that, we hang out and go for lunch at the Islamic or Jubilee, or another one of those old-time biryani restaurants. That was in the early 1960s. The present Kampong Glam Cafe at the*

*end of Bussorah Street used to be Kampong Glam Radio. In those days, Muslims who wanted to buy electrical appliances would go there."*

**MR SYED ALWI AIDID, MANAGING DIRECTOR OF AIDID TRADING CO.**

*"Most meaningful to me was Chinese New Year here in the 1960s and 1970s. My grandmother would make red agar agar (jelly) for our Chinese neighbours here at Kampong Glam. I helped her to distribute them. Our neighbours were very happy to receive the agar agar and gave me angpaos (red packets)!"*

**MR HASAN ABDULLAH ALJUNIED, WHO RUNS ALJUNIED BROTHERS WITH HIS BROTHER MR AHMAD ABDULLAH ALJUNIED.**

## Former Kampong Bali



Junction of Beach Road and Bali Lane, 1963. (SOURCE: NATIONAL ARCHIVES OF SINGAPORE)

The former Kampong Bali comprised the current Bali Lane and the neighbouring Shaikh Madersah Lane (defunct) which ran parallel to it, around present-day Ophir Road. The kampong's development from the 1850s was partly due to the pilgrimage trade (p.33) which had by then expanded from Kampong Jawa around Arab Street and Haji Lane.

The population then was mostly Javanese from Bali, Lombok and Sumbawa. Shaikh Madersah Lane was known colloquially by the Chinese as "sin Bali" ("new Bali"), while Haji Lane was "gu Bali" (old Bali). Kampong Bali was also where one of the first *bangsawan* (Malay opera) troupes was formed in Singapore. For a period, the back of Bali Lane had stalls for horses, which were later converted to motorcar stalls in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century. By the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, more Chinese had moved into Kampong Bali, many of them

setting up lodgings for indentured labourers, known as coolies. While some of the coolie quarters were not specific to any Chinese province, surname or dialect group, others were. The coolie lodging house at Bali Lane, Ho Guan, for instance, housed Chinese lightermen (who worked on barges which transported goods) from Jinjiang in Fujian, and another quarters along the same street, Chuan Koon Kang, housed mainly those with the surname "Ng".

According to former residents, the majority of

the Chinese population staying at Bali Lane were Hokkiens from Jinjiang, and there were more than 10 Jinjiang Hokkien coolie quarters there. Each village clan worshipped a particular god in the quarters, and the celebration of the gods' birthdays helped the residents to maintain close ties with each other. Newcomers who could not afford rent at first could stay in the quarters and repay the rent after they found work. Such coolie quarters were gradually phased out over time as Singapore grew less reliant on entrepôt trade.

*"The coolie quarters acted as a base for lightermen, who because of the nature of their work, had to be away from shore for an indefinite period of time. The coolie quarters functioned as a channel for communication, mostly letters and parcels, between China and Singapore for these lightermen. Our clansmen would stay in these coolie quarters because it allowed them to remain connected to their motherland."*

MR KOH SOON CHEM (B. 1936), A JINJIANG HOKKIEN WHOSE FATHER STAYED AT HO GUAN AND WORKED AS A LIGHTERMAN.

(TRANSLATED FROM CHINESE. INTERVIEW WITH ORAL HISTORY CENTRE, NATIONAL ARCHIVES OF SINGAPORE)

### FORMER CLYDE TERRACE MARKET

Built in 1872, Clyde Terrace Market stood near the junction of Beach Road and Rochor Road. The sea lapped at its front until the 1920s, and produce could be unloaded at high tide from *tong-kangs* which carried cargo. It was also known by its iron structure, as *Pasar Besi* in Malay and *ti pa sat* in Hokkien.

The market was enlarged three times to include vegetable, fish and chicken sections. The latter two were torn down in the 1970s while the vegetable and dried goods section continued until the stalls moved to Pasir Panjang wholesale market in 1983. The market was also a haunt for Chinese secret society members who extorted protection money from the hawkers. There were a number of small jetties along the beachfront where goods could be unloaded from ships. These jetties were controlled by different Chinese clans on the coastline.

*Pasar Besi* was the main market serving the residents for Kampong Glam. Most of the food businesses in Kampong Glam and around also depended on the market for supplies. The market was demolished in 1983, and The Gateway now stands on part of the site.

*"The Pasar was just by the sea. Beside it was the customs office. Sampans used to come up to Pasar Besi. There were stone steps. They came up via the stone steps. I used to go to Pasar Besi all the time. We bought onions, vegetables, and meat."*

HAJJAH HASNAH BTE SAHLAN (B.1919), WHO WAS BORN AT KAMPONG KAJI AT BUSSORAH STREET

*"I was about 10 years old at the time [during the Japanese Occupation]. We had to use ration cards to buy things. In the morning I would go to Pasar Besi. I would wait there until they opened the gates. When the gates opened, we would rush in. We would line up and take the oil. We got about four to five bottles. It was coconut oil, for cooking. Sometimes they gave palm oil, the yellow one. Meat once a month. We had to line up. Tapioca, bananas. Whenever you go to the market, you'd bring the card. There was an office where they issued the card. We had to pay for these food items. Fish was not rationed; you could buy them straight off."*

HAJJAH YUHANIS BTE HAJI YUSUF (B.1931), WHO WAS BORN AT BUSSORAH STREET

### FORMER MASJID BAHRU

By the 1870s, the pilgrim trade had expanded beyond Kampong Bali to Kampong Masjid Bahru at the area around were then Clyde Street and Jeddah Street. This is now an open space near Parkview Square. Masjid Bahru ('New Mosque') was built at the end of Jeddah Street (defunct) in the 1870s. It was also known as Al Ma'arof Mosque and reportedly patronised by the Javanese. Like the first Masjid Sultan, Masjid Bahru had a tiered-roof in the form of a pyramid. The mosque and the kampong were demolished in the 1980s to make way for urban redevelopment.

*"Kampong Masjid Baru was at Clyde Street. Everyone made capal (sandals) there. Clyde Street, Jeddah Street. There were four houses of Malaccans there selling cincaluk (Melakan dish of fermented shrimps), turtle eggs, belacan (shrimp paste) ..."*

HAJI ALI BIN HAJI SHUKUR (B. 1904), WHO WAS BORN IN KAMPONG TEMBAGA ALONG BUSSORAH STREET.

(ABOVE QUOTES TRANSLATED FROM MALAY. INTERVIEWS WITH ORAL HISTORY CENTRE, NATIONAL ARCHIVES OF SINGAPORE)

## Bussorah Street



Bussorah Street and its immediate vicinity are often regarded as the heart of Kampong Glam by former residents. It was originally called "Sultan Road" and renamed "Bussorah Street" in 1910 after a place in present-day Iraq.

However, the street was more popularly known by its vernacular names. Located right in front of Masjid Sultan (p. 37), it was famed for its food, its culture, community spirit and distinctive districts such as Kampong Tembaga, Kampong Intan and Kampong Kaji. Read on while you stroll down the street, and imagine how this place used to look like.

### FORMER KAMPONG TEMBAGA

'Tembaga' means 'copper' in Malay. The Chinese used to call this stretch of Bussorah Street *pak tang koi* (Coppersmith Street). Kampong Tembaga derived its name from the Javanese coppersmiths who were once active there. They crafted and repaired implements and utensils. The trade gradually declined in the post-war years due to factors such as the availability of cheaper utensils.

*"When I was a child, Kampong Tembaga was full of Javanese copper smiths ... My father made copper pots, woks ... steamers, kettles, buyung (jar), talam(tray), dulang(a type of tray) - all from copper. We bought the copper from a Chinese shop in sheets of 18 inches by 4 feet ... We made a lot of loyang (moulds) for baking kuih ..."*

**HAJI ALI BIN SANAT (B.1904), A JAVANESE WHO WAS BORN IN KAMPONG TEMBAGA. HAJI ALI HAD AN UNDERTAKER BUSINESS IN KAMPONG TEMBAGA AND WAS AN ESTABLISHED CARTOONIST.**

(QUOTES TRANSLATED FROM MALAY. INTERVIEW WITH ORAL HISTORY CENTRE, NATIONAL ARCHIVES OF SINGAPORE)

### FORMER KAMPONG INTAN

Adjoining Bussorah Street is Baghdad Street. Former residents however refer to Baghdad Street as Kampong Intan, or Diamond Village. The street used to have a number of Banjarese from Kalimantan who were diamond traders and smiths. Besides the diamond smiths, there were also other trades along Baghdad Street – rice shops, songkok (brimless Malay headwear) makers, book shops and goldsmiths.



*Friends and relatives of pilgrims making the haj to Mecca gathered at Bussorah Street to send them off, 7 January 1972. (SOURCE: THE STRAITS TIMES © SINGAPORE PRESS HOLDINGS LIMITED. REPRINTED WITH PERMISSION)*

### FORMER KAMPONG KAJI (HAJI)

This stretch of Bussorah Street near Masjid Sultan was once known as Kampong Kaji (Pilgrim Village), *kaji* being the Javanese pronunciation of *haji* (pilgrim) as there were many Javanese living here.

Up till the mid-1970s, Singapore was the pilgrim hub in Southeast Asia. Muslims making the *haj* (pilgrimage) to Mecca would come to Singapore from present-day Borneo, Malaysia, Thailand, the Philippines, and, in particular, Indonesia due to Dutch restrictions on the pilgrimage. They would board the *kapal haj* (Pilgrim ship) on an arduous journey to Jeddah, which could take a few weeks. In the late 1800s, it was recorded that as many as 10,000 pilgrims arrived in Singapore annually.

Bussorah Street, reputed for its *sheikh hajis* – pious men known in the community for their knowledge of the *haj* – was where most of the pilgrims and their accompanying families stayed while waiting for the ships. Here, a whole array of services was available. There were *sheikh hajis* to prepare them spiritually, pilgrim brokers to take care of logistics, cheap lodging houses, money-changers and shops selling necessary supplies such as food, blankets, shawls and *tali pinggang* (money belts popular with pilgrims going on the *haj*). When the time came for the pilgrims to depart, usually ten days after their arrival, prayers were usually held at Masjid Sultan and there would be a huge send-off. The pilgrims would also pass through Kampong Kaji after they returned from the *haj*.

Though pilgrims began making the journey by air after 1975, and no longer had to pass through Kampong Glam, former residents continue to call Bussorah Street "Kampong Kaji" even today.

*"The hajis paid for a full package - \$300 to cover everything. One haji and twenty family members to send them off. My grandfather would settle everything, charter bus, boarding, food. If there were no hajis, we rent the rooms out to other people from places like Pakistan, South Africa, sometimes even refugees."*

**MDM ALIJAH BTE ABDUL LATIFF (B.1947), BORN AT 62 BUSSORAH STREET, WHOSE GRANDFATHER WAS A SHEIKH HAJI.**



Bussorah Street, 1973. (SOURCE: THE STRAITS TIMES © SINGAPORE PRESS HOLDINGS LIMITED. REPRINTED WITH PERMISSION)

### LIFE ON BUSSORAH STREET

Bussorah Street was once known for its distinctive way of life, which was shaped by the large Javanese community here. The street was rather diverse too. Besides the Javanese, there were residents from Sumatra, Banjar and Riau. While the side to the left of Masjid Sultan was occupied by mainly Malays, the opposite side had more Indians and Arabs living there. The Chinese also owned businesses here.

The community here was noted for its decorum. It was reported that up till the mid-1900s, outsiders would not enter Bussorah Street unless they covered their heads. The residents also tended towards a more formal manner of speech, influenced by Javanese pronunciation and lingo. The community here was generally more cultured, and there were a number of educators and white-collar professionals. The ladies were also known for their skills in sewing fine embroidery.

*Gotong-royong* (mutual assistance) was very much a way of life here. During events such as weddings, *kenduri* (feasts) and funerals, everyone would help out. The bonding was so strong that the neighbours preferred to marry within their community here.

Islam lies at the heart of the community. The residents looked after Masjid Sultan collectively. At one point, the Chief Kadi (a person versed in Islamic law and acts as a judge in civil and criminal matters) lived at No. 59. He would declare the start of fasting and Hari Raya. Muslim villages in other parts of Singapore would send a

representative here to await the news as well.

In the late 1980s, when redevelopment of Kampong Glam took off, the residents were gradually resettled to other parts of Singapore. Many of them still return to worship at Masjid Sultan regularly.

*"When it was time for Ramadan or Hari Raya, the residents would crowd outside the Chief Kadi's house in the evening, waiting to see if he would announce the start of Ramadan. The news would come in from Malaysia to the Kadi, and he would come out of the house and announce on the steps that Ramadan or Hari Raya would start the next day. Then everyone would go home and prepare."*

**MR. HYDER ALI (B. 1947) WHO USED TO LIVE AT 56 AND 58 BUSSORAH STREET.**

*"When we left Bussorah Street, my lips smiled, but my heart cried. I was born here. Our kampong was not beautiful, my house was not pretty, but our hearts were peaceful. We had neighbours and friends. We cooked for each other."*

**MDM SALAMAH BTE TAMBY (B.1922), BORN AT BUSSORAH STREET.**

(TRANSLATED FROM MALAY. INTERVIEW WITH ORAL HISTORY CENTRE, NATIONAL ARCHIVES OF SINGAPORE)

*"Outside the houses, on the five foot way, we used to have ambin, or platforms to sit and to sleep on. If a more senior person was on the ambin, we had to salam (greet) and walk on the road, instead of walking past the ambin on the five foot way. Chinese New Year was like a festival for us too, because the Chinese shopkeepers would set off firecrackers and give angpaos (red packets) to us."*

**MR ROSLI BIN RIDZWAN (B.1952), WHO GREW UP AT 26 BUSSORAH STREET.**

*"Weddings were celebrations for everyone. The tent would be decorated with coconut leaves and colourful flags from all over the world, put up by our ex-Navy neighbours who collected them. The food was served on a sahan (large platter), four people to one sahan. As children, we had to 'earn' the food by helping to clean the dishes with sawdust!"*

**MOHAMED PATAIL (B.1951), WHO GREW UP AT 45 BUSSORAH STREET.**

*"Every day we sold kuih, meesiam, nasi dishes. Every house sold food, one house kuih, another mee and so on. Sometimes, after school, I would take kuih and went house to house to sell them. The food we had then, you can't get today anymore."*

**MDM MOSLIMAH BTE HAJI ABDUL KARIM (B.1950), A FORMER RESIDENT**

### FOOD PARADISE

When it came to food, Bussorah Street was where Muslims from all over Singapore flocked to during Ramadan for the famous street bazaar which stretched to Muscat Street. Residents here would showcase their culinary specialties – from kuihs and snacks to rice and noodle dishes. Some of the more distinctive dishes included *nasi rawon* (rice with black beef soup), *nasi jengenan* (rice with peanut gravy), *mee mydin* (noodles topped with shrimp and gravy) and *kuih* such as *lambing sari* (cake made of green bean and coconut milk), *kuih lapis* (glutinous rice cake eaten with grated coconut syrup), *pulut urap* (glutinous rice cake eaten with coconut seasoned with spices) etc. The stalls would operate from afternoon till late night. Outside of Ramadan, the residents peddled their food along the five foot way and around the neighbourhood on a daily basis as well.

According to some former residents, Bussorah's famous food was a result of creativity and resourcefulness. Many of the residents were not well-to-do and these dishes, such as *nasi rawon*, resulted from clever use of limited or leftover ingredients, such as tripe and internal organs. Other residents highlighted that the pilgrims who stayed here during the *haj* season brought culinary influences as well, as they swapped recipes with the owners of the lodges they stayed in.



Food stalls along Bussorah Street during Ramadan, 23 April 1988.

(SOURCE: MINISTRY OF INFORMATION, COMMUNICATION AND THE ARTS COLLECTION, COURTESY OF NATIONAL ARCHIVES OF SINGAPORE)



Foodstalls along Bussorah Street during Ramadan, 1963.

(SOURCE: THE STRAITS TIMES © SINGAPORE PRESS HOLDINGS LIMITED. REPRINTED WITH PERMISSION)



"Wak Ketok" cartoon character.  
(COURTESY OF FARIDAH EHSAN)

## A VIBRANT PLACE

Music was a feature of life on Bussorah Street since the early days. It was known for its *keroncong* (a style of Indonesian music featuring the stringed instrument *keroncong*) and Malay singers and actors including the legendary P. Ramlee, Siput Sarawak, Salbiah Harun and S. Roomai Noor would come to No. 12 and No. 37 during the 1940s to practise with the Bintang Keroncong Orchestra and Kampong Glam Youth Keroncong Orchestra.

Malay talents, including R. Maroeti and Salamah Basiron (songwriters of popular hits between the 1960s and 1980s), well-known radio personality Aminah Siregar and cartoonist Haji Ali bin Haji Shukur Sanat, called Bussorah Street home as well.

The street also inspired filmmakers, even

from Bollywood and Hollywood, to shoot scenes here, such as the 1964 Italian-American film, "Sandokan: Pirate of Malaysia". Residents here would act as extras. On a side note, Singapore's first Malay film after World War II (1939–1945), "Seruan Merdeka" (Voice of Freedom) was shot in the former Istana Kampong Glam in 1947 by a film company, Malayan Art Production, located at Kandahar Street. The story revolved around Malay and Chinese youths struggling together to overthrow British colonisation and the Japanese. Bussorah Street was also a place where several important associations were located, such as the Java Peranakan Club and Angkatan Wanita Sedar (a women's organisation). The Federation Malays' Welfare Association, established in 1949 to provide welfare assistance to Malays, had its temporary premises at No. 10.

*"The famous song 'Oh Fatimah' written by Salamah Basiron and sung by A. Ramlie and the Boys was written for my aunt, Masayu Fatimah. Masayu is the title for women who are related to the royalty in Palembang and Masagos is the title for men. She was beautiful, and had a long neck. They called her Meleleh, as her eyes were always twinkling."*

MR JEAN FRANCOIS NORDIN (B.1960), PROPRIETOR OF LE BISTRO PARISIEN

*"My grandfather created the cartoon character "Wak Ketok" to try to encourage Malays to do better. He had his inspiration by walking around Kampong Glam, and from the characters he met, the scenes he saw, he would draw. The cartoons were published in Utusan Melayu and some other publications."*

FARIDAH EHSAN (B.1961), GRANDDAUGHTER OF HAJI ALI BIN HAJI SHUKUR SANAT, A CARTOONIST

## WHERE THE OLD AND NEW MEET

Bussorah Street and its vicinity today are lined with new businesses. Amidst them, however, there are old-time shops to be found. At a corner of Baghdad Street, Kampong Glam's **last surviving sarabat stall**, or Indian tea stall, still runs a busy business from morning till late night. The proprietors, who came from Uttar Pradesh, India, have been pulling tea and selling their signature *teh halia* (ginger tea) in Kampong Glam since the 1950s.

The owner of **Singalang Jaya** at No. 9 Baghdad Street, Mr Baharuddin bin Sulaiman, is the last *songkok* maker in Kampong Glam. Born in Malaysia in 1934, he learnt the art of making *songkok* when he was a child. He came to Singapore in 1952 and worked for a Malabar Muslim businessman making and selling *songkok* at the very same location. The *songkok* were also exported to Indonesia. In 1970, he bought over the business and renamed it "Singalang Jaya" after a mountain in Sumatra, where his forefathers came from.

**Malay Art Gallery** at 31 Bussorah Street is another old business. Established around 1970 by the late Syed Hussain Aljunied, a descendant of Syed Omar Aljunied, one of the pioneer traders to settle in Singapore, the business started at 737 North Bridge Road, selling gem stones, *keris*

(a distinctive Malay dagger), and antiques. Syed Hussain's passion for collecting started when he was a teenager, during his frequent travels with his father. The gallery played an important role in supporting Malay artists during the 1970s. Syed Hussain converted the upper level of the shophouse into an art gallery in 1971. Here, he funded exhibitions of works by local and regional artists such as A. Ghani Hamid, Sarkasi bin Said, Tunku Seri Indra, Kartika Affandi and A. Ghafar Ibrahim. Affected by urban redevelopment in the 1980s, the Malay Art Gallery moved to Geylang, before moving back to Kampong Glam in 2000. Today, Syed Hussain's passion and knowledge of antiques, especially the *keris*, is continued by his son, Syed Abubakar Aljunied.

Some of the new businesses are run by old faces too. The proprietor of **Le Bistro Parisien** at 20 Baghdad Street, Mr Jean Francois Nordin, has fond memories of life along Bussorah Street in his childhood. His maternal grandmother's family came from Palembang in present-day Indonesia and settled here. The culture of food here sparked his lifelong passion for food. Another story of an old boy returning to kampong roots is Mr Hyder Ali, the owner of **Bushra Café** at No. 25 Baghdad Street. Hyder Ali's father came from India and set up a textile shop, A. Mohamed Shariff, at No. 64 Arab Street in the 1930s. The shophouse built by his father in 1953 on the plot was the first three-storey structure on the street. His family stayed at 56 and 58 Bussorah Street till the property was acquired by the government in the 1990s. In 2011, Hyder Ali decided to start a café right where he was born and grew up.

## DID YOU KNOW?

Bussorah Street used to be called "Sultan Road" and Baghdad Street was "Little Cross Street". These streets were renamed in 1909 by the Municipal Commission. Muscat Street, Aliwal Street and Kandahar Street, which were previously unnamed, were officially named at the same time. These names were taken from places in the present-day Afghanistan, India, Iraq and Oman. Pahang Street was named after a place in present-day Malaysia. The layout of the streets has since remained the same except for Muscat Street, which has been realigned to become two streets flanking Bussorah Street.

**3 Muscat Street  
Masjid Sultan**



End your exploration of Trail 1 at this grand and imposing mosque, Masjid Sultan. Every year, during the fasting month of Ramadan, Muslims gather in the vicinity of the mosque to await the prayer call to break their fast.

An important focal point for Muslims in Singapore and the most prominent landmark in Kampong Glam, this building was constructed in the early 1920s. However, its history goes back to a century before that, to a few short years after Sir Stamford Raffles, Sultan Hussein and Temenggong Abdul Rahman signed the treaty in 1819 (p.3).

In 1823, the sultan wanted a mosque near his residence at Kampong Glam. Raffles allocated funds from the British East India Company towards its construction. A simple structure with a three-tier tiled roof, the mosque was constructed between 1824 and 1826. In 1879, the grandson of Sultan Hussein, Sultan Alauddin Alam Shah (d. 1891), also known as Tunku Alam, and a Tunku Aleema gave more land to the mosque.

By the early 1900s, it was decided that the mosque would be demolished and rebuilt. The present building was commissioned in 1924 and designed by the Irish architect Denis Santry of Swan and MacLaren. The work was done in phases over the years as funds were being raised, and prayers continued to be conducted in the midst of the construction.

The mosque was designed in the Indo-Saracenic style, with domes, minarets, and balustrades. The building's most striking features are its two large golden-yellow domes. The cost of the rebuilding was funded from donations from the Muslim community. In addition to monetary contributions, the community also donated glass bottles, which were incorporated into the base of the dome. The grave of Tunku Alam lies at the front of the mosque.

When war broke out in Malaya in 1941, people of different ethnicities and creeds sought shelter in the mosque and one of its minarets served as an observation post to look out for enemy aircraft.

Masjid Sultan was gazetted as a national monument in 1975. The annex building, designed in a similar style to the mosque, was officially opened in 1993. It houses an auditorium, a multi-purpose hall, classrooms and meeting rooms.

*"They had a pondok during the fasting month to give out the porridge, which they cooked themselves. In the afternoon, at around 5pm, we would line up and collect the porridge ... The mosque was full for the Hari Raya prayers. It was never empty. Even for the daily prayers, full of people."*

**HAJJAH YUHANIS BTE HAJI YUSUF (B.1931), WHO WAS BORN AT BUSSORAH STREET.**

(TRANSLATED FROM MALAY. INTERVIEW WITH ORAL HISTORY CENTRE, NATIONAL ARCHIVES OF SINGAPORE)

*"The mosque is the heart of Kampong Glam. All of us who lived at Bussorah Street, we were involved in taking care of the mosque. During Ramadan, as children, we would wake up early to queue, to hit the bedoh (drum) before the azan (call to prayer), at around 4 am. We were all part of the mosque. Thursday night, we would help to mop and clean the mosque to prepare for Friday prayers."*

**MOHAMED PATAIL (B.1951), WHO GREW UP ON BUSSORAH STREET.**



*Relatives and friends of the pilgrims going to Mecca assembling at the Sultan mosque, 1971*

(SOURCE: THE STRAITS TIMES © SINGAPORE PRESS HOLDINGS LIMITED. REPRINTED WITH PERMISSION)



## » TRAIL TWO From Beach Road to Kallang River

- 1) Masjid Hajjah Fatimah 2) Golden Mile Food Centre 3) St John Ambulance Headquarters, Singapore  
4) Golden Mile Tower and Golden Mile Complex 5) Rochor River and Kallang River

Kampongs, communal houses, shipyards, timber yards, motor workshops, schooners – the scene at the Kallang River, Beach Road and the area now known as Beach Road Garden was vastly different in the past.

Soon after the British East India Company arrived in 1819, the old Kampong Glam waterfront, Rochor River and Kallang River became focal points of port activity and the area grew into a bustling port town, which Kampong Glam was part of. There were waterfront kampongs near the mouth of the Kallang River. Occupations here included operating boat-taxis and boat rentals, boat repairs, and making leaf cigarettes and cigarette wrappers. Vessels could be moored directly to the houses which were raised on piles above the waterways.

One of the earliest groups to settle in this area was the Bugis, who traded in goods such as coffee, gold dust and spices. They settled at the area now known as Beach Road Garden estate and also at Kampong Bugis which straddled the Kallang and Rochor rivers. They were joined by

others such as the Javanese, Baweanese, Banjarese, Melakan Malays, Arabs, and Chinese. The names of the old roads such as Jalan Bugis, Palembang Road, and Java Road reflected the diversity of the communities here. These roads disappeared with the development of Crawford Estate in the 1960s which saw demolition of almost the entire area, sparing only Masjid Hajjah Fatimah.

At the same time, winds of change were blowing at Beach Road where merchants used to display their goods along the shore and where the waterfront was a hive of shipping activity. The area bounded by Beach Road, Crawford Street, Nicoll Highway and Bras Basah Road was conceptualised as the “Golden Mile” which would see the development of towering flats, office blocks, and commercial buildings. These new



In the early 1800s, the road names, which were derived from place names and communities in the region, were entirely different, as this 1836 map shows. (SOURCE: NATIONAL ARCHIVES OF SINGAPORE)

plans resulted in the resettlement of families, stores, warehouses, timber yards, charcoal and firewood importers, and industries such as furniture and rattan makers. Shipping and trading were relocated to Telok Ayer Basin and then to Jurong.

Despite its modern façade, this area still has hidden surprises and stories of old. Explore Trail 2 now to find out more!

### DID YOU KNOW?

The names of the roads in this area reveal the history of this precinct. While the layout in this area has changed radically since the 1960s, some of the former roads are still in existence.

**BEACH ROAD:** One of the earliest roads in Singapore. It used to run along the shoreline, hence the name “Beach Road”.

**MINTO ROAD:** Named after Earl Minto, Governor-General of Bengal (1807-1813)

**SUMBAWA ROAD** (defunct): Name of an island in present-day Indonesia

**PALEMBANG ROAD** (defunct): Name of a district in Sumatra, present-day Indonesia

**JAVA ROAD:** Name of a district in present-day Indonesia. Hokkiens referred to it as peh tha hang (white pagoda street), after the white minaret of Masjid Hajjah Fatimah.

*“Junks and ships from places such as Indonesia came here to trade. They brought goods - pineapples, wildlife, charcoal, timber. Charcoal was one of the main trades. Many of the goods came from the Riau Islands. Between Sumbawa Road and Java Road, there were Chinese workshops building tongkangs. At night, they would put rollers under the newly-built tongkangs and push them down to the sea. The coast was nearer then.”*

**CHIA HOON CHYE (B. 1933), WHO WITNESSED THE CHANGE IN THE CRAWFORD AREA OVER THE YEARS.**

4001 Beach Road  
**Masjid Hajjah Fatimah**



*Masjid Hajjah Fatimah at Java Road, c. 1950s.*

(SOURCE: NATIONAL MUSEUM OF SINGAPORE, COURTESY OF NATIONAL ARCHIVES OF SINGAPORE)

Begin the trail at Hajjah Fatimah Mosque, the only structure left of the former settlement here. The mosque was built between 1845 and 1846 at this site which used to be the residence of its founder, after whom it is named.

In the late 1830s, Hajjah Fatimah escaped harm when her house was ransacked twice by thieves. In gratitude, she donated funds and land for the building of this mosque. The mosque underwent reconstruction in the 1930s during which the main prayer hall was rebuilt in the Saracenic style, with features such as pointed arches and a dome.

Its architecture shows a blend of Eastern and Western styles. The wooden balcony above the entrance gate reflects a Moorish design. European influences can be found in the pilasters with Doric capitals on the first three tiers of the minaret. The parapets of the minaret are inset with green glazed Chinese porcelain tiles. The minaret has a unique design, consisting of an eight-sided peak atop a two-tiered octagonal tower on a square base.

The mosque was gazetted as a national monument in 1973. By then, it was in need of repairs and its minaret was tilting slightly due to the sandy soil it was built on, leading it to be nicknamed the "Leaning Tower of Singapore". Restoration works were carried out and the foundations were strengthened to stop the gradual tilting of the minaret.

The grave of Hajjah Fatimah lies in a locked mausoleum in the compound of the mosque.

#### HAJJAH FATIMAH

Hajjah Fatimah was a wealthy Malay lady from Melaka who was married to a Bugis prince. Widowed at a young age, she took over her husband's business with great success, conducting extensive trade and owning many steamers and sailing vessels. A philanthropist, she built several houses for the destitute. The honorific "hajjah" indicates that she had made the pilgrimage to Mecca. Her daughter, Raja Siti, married Syed Ahmed bin Abdulrahman Alsagoff - a Hadhrami who came to Singapore in 1824.

#### KOTA NONG CHIK (NONG CHIK COMPOUND)

At Java Road, near Hajjah Fatimah Mosque, there used to be a walled compound built by Syed Ahmed bin Abdulrahman Alsagoff, known

as "Kota Alsagoff" and also as "Kota Nong Chik". "Nong Chik" was of the term used to address his only son, Syed Mohamed bin Ahmed Alsagoff (1836 – 1906). "Nong" was the Bugis term of address for the eldest son and "Chik" being the term for the youngest son. As he had no brothers, he was the "eldest and youngest" son.

Kota Nong Chik was the home of the Alsagoff family and business centre for Syed Ahmed and his son. The compound consisted of a large mansion, several houses and a hall which could accommodate hundreds of people. During celebrations such as the 27<sup>th</sup> day of Ramadan when food and money were distributed to thousands, additional tentage would be erected on the open space in front of the hall. The compound was demolished in the 1960s to make way for redevelopment.

*"At Palembang Road there was a doctor. We called him Doctor Alsagoff. Consultation was 10 cents. It was a clinic for poor people. It was run by the Alsagoff family ... In the past they used to call the mosque at Java Road Masjid Nong Chik."*

**HAJI SAHLAN BIN AHMAD, WHO LIVED ALONG JALAN SULTAN THEN MOVED TO BUSSORAH STREET IN 1957.**

(TRANSLATED FROM MALAY. INTERVIEW WITH ORAL HISTORY CENTRE, NATIONAL ARCHIVES OF SINGAPORE)

*"One of the houses had a big white marble platform in the front, and the SMA Wakaff Fund would distribute food to the poor every Friday after prayers. The needy would come and stay there to eat. The food was cooked by the servants. Three days before Hari Raya, we would carry paper lanterns and walk around. When Hari Raya came, we would visit each other. We would only have sweets, such as dates, chocolates, candies and dried fruit. We also put oil lamps around the perimeter."*

**MDM AYESHA BTE AHMAD ALSAGOFF (B. 1944), WHO GREW UP IN KOTA NONG CHIK.**

## Former Port Town



The area around Crawford Street undergoing redevelopment, 1967. Ships could be seen in the distance.

(SOURCE: THE STRAITS TIMES © SINGAPORE PRESS HOLDINGS LIMITED. REPRINTED WITH PERMISSION)

The area occupied by today's Beach Road Garden estate and stretching to the Kallang River was once part of a bustling port. This development can be traced back to 1819 when Sir Stamford Raffles signed a treaty to establish a trading port in Singapore. The port at Singapore attracted traders and migrants and grew rapidly.

After signing the treaty with Raffles, Sultan Hussein brought his family and followers from Riau and settled at Kampong Glam (p.5). His presence attracted more traders from neighbouring regions such as Java, Sumatra, Riau, and Melaka. While the vicinity of the Singapore River grew into a commercial and administrative district, Kampong Glam and its surroundings also rapidly developed as an extensive port town. Trading along the beachfront continued well into the 20th century and ships bearing goods from the region continued to dock there until the 1970s.

### THE BUGIS COMMUNITY

The Bugis traders played an integral part in the early development of this area (the present-day Beach Road Garden estate and Kallang) into a port town. Originally from south Sulawesi in present-day Indonesia, the Bugis were among the earliest communities to arrive in Singapore. Famed as skilled fighters and astute seafaring traders, they dominated the trade in Riau in the early 19th century. However, Dutch controls in Riau led to clashes, and approximately 500 of them fled to Singapore in 1820, bringing with them their prized trade connections.

The Bugis initially settled in Kampong Glam around the sultan's istana. In 1823, after the Jackson Plan was drafted (p.3), they were relocated to the present-day Beach Road Garden estate and Beach Road area. Their distinctive *prahus* (sailing vessels) became a familiar sight at the shore near Beach Road and along the Kallang River. The *prahus* would arrive annually around September during the south-east monsoon, and become floating shops, leaving again on the north-west monsoon in November. They also set up tents

along the shore at Beach Road to display their goods. Singapore remained an important centre of their trading operations well into the middle of the 20th century.

The Bugis trade was a distinctive feature of the port town from the early 19th century. The *prahus* sailing in and docking along Beach Road and the Kallang River were familiar sights well into the mid-20th century. The goods they traded in included opium, gold, textile, birds' nest, tortoise shell, mother-of-pearl, sea cucumber, spices, rice, nuts, agarwood, rattan, iron pans, earthenware, and slaves.

The Chinese merchants, who were middlemen for the Bugis barter trade, eagerly looked forward to the trading seasons. The Chinese merchants and Bugis traders would sit and talk about business matters which lasted hours, and such negotiations could go on for a week. This process was not always smooth, with brawls breaking out between the Chinese and the Bugis. After clearing his cargo, the Bugis trader would then look for a return cargo for his onward journey.

*"We used to go to the beach along Beach Road. There were a lot of small boats and a lot of Bugis ships... The Bugis used to bring their prahus and came here to sell things, spices, wood."*

- MDM MOSLIMAH BTE HJ ABDUL KARIM (B. 1950),  
FORMER RESIDENT OF BUSSORAH STREET

420 Beach Road

## St. John Ambulance Headquarters



*"Faithful to its motto "For the Service of Mankind", the way in which it endeavours to live up to its humanitarian ideals is well-known ... The Brigade consists of men and women of all races and creeds and from all walks of life, yet we see them mingling together in complete harmony, bound by one common ideal – the desire to be of service to the people of Singapore."*

INCHE YUSOF BIN ISHAK (1910 – 1970), YANG DI-PERTUAN NEGARA OF SINGAPORE, AT THE ST. JOHN AMBULANCE BRIGADE ANNUAL INSPECTION AT JALAN BESAR STADIUM, 17 JULY 1966.

This building is home to the headquarters of St. John Ambulance, which began as a voluntary uniformed body in 1887 in England. It is dedicated to providing the public with first-aid, emergency relief and home nursing services.

The organisation played an especially important role in Singapore during the first half of the 20th century. Back then, Singapore's medical infrastructure was severely underdeveloped. St. John Ambulance was pivotal in providing emergency medical services and training volunteers in first-aid. Public courses began in the early 1930s and the first brigade was formed in 1938, headed by Dr J. S. Webster, a radiologist at the General Hospital. In 1939, the Director of Medical Services, Singapore, Dr R. D. Fitzgerald, took over and coordinated the work from his office in the former Fullerton Building (present-day Fullerton Hotel).

By the late 1930s, St. John Ambulance had grown significantly and the Singapore headquarters became in charge of St. John Ambulance sub-centres in Malaya. Just before war broke out in Malaya in 1941, the government incorporated St. John Ambulance into the Medical Auxiliary Services under the Passive Defence Services in Singapore and Malaya. Some members gave their lives in the course of duty while others were imprisoned during the Japanese Occupation (1942–1945). In the post-war years, St. John Ambulance continued its humanitarian work. During civil emergencies, its volunteers were at the frontline of relief work. Branches were also set up in the Singapore's rural areas.

As the organisation developed, it became clear that it needed a well-equipped facility. In 1949, it began operating from the former St. Peter's Church at Stamford Road before moving to another site at Gilstead Road in 1957. Meanwhile, it had purchased a plot along Beach Road to construct its permanent headquarters. The foundation stone was laid on 23 November 1957 by Sir Robert Brown Black (1906–1999), the Governor and Commander-in-Chief of Singapore. On 23 July 1960, the building was officially opened by Yusof bin Ishak, the Yang di-Pertuan Negara of Singapore.

### DID YOU KNOW?

The building originally comprised two storeys before another storey was added to cater for an assembly hall in 1964.

*"During emergencies such as the Potong Pasir flood in 1967, we would be there to help in relief work, such as providing blankets and helping displaced family members find each other. Many people were poor in those days, and the Social Welfare Department, which was in charge of such work, was short of manpower then."*

MR YEO LEE HOCK (B. 1944), A LONG-TIME MEMBER OF ST. JOHN AMBULANCE

## The Golden Mile Development



The area from Jalan Sultan to Crawford Street used to be covered with mostly shophouses and residences. Businesses selling all sorts of merchandise could be found, with some streets specialising in specific goods. For example, Crawford Street was where egg wholesalers were concentrated during the 1950s and 1960s, and buyers from the region would go there to buy eggs. Due to its strategic location near the town, this stretch of land was part of an extensive planned development strategy carried out by the government during the 1960s. Districts within five kilometres of the town, such as the Crawford area, Kallang and Outram, were marked for projects that included shopping complexes, hotels, public housing, community facilities and luxury apartments.

Acquisition of land was carried out in the early 1960s in the Crawford area. Clearance of settlements and demolition of buildings were launched in 1963 along Beach Road and 1966 in Crawford. Reclamation was carried out along the shoreline. The reclaimed area was coined "Golden Mile" and the intention was to develop it for tourism and luxury housing. Further inland, by 1967, there were already government housing flats completed. Only Masjid Hajah Fatimah (p.43) was left untouched amidst the redevelopment.

### GOLDEN MILE COMPLEX 5001 Beach Road

This shopping, commercial and residential complex was one of the earliest large-scale buildings designed for mixed use in Singapore. Originally also known as 'Woh Hup Complex', the building was designed by architects from Design Partnership (now DP Architects Pte Ltd). The complex was officially declared open in 1972. The three lower floors accommodated commercial spaces such as shops and office spaces within a central atrium that ran the full length of the building.

It is the first building in Singapore to use step-terracing in its architecture, which reduces the impact of noise from road traffic. The narrow slab form of the building enhances natural ventilation, and the staggered atria for offices and shops allow natural light into the building. All the apartments have balconies and a view of the waterfront. The building is crowned with two-storey penthouses.

A "Little Bangkok" emerged here in the 1980s as it became popular with Thais working in Singapore and shops selling Thai products and food were opened here. The complex is also a hub for travellers taking buses to Malaysia and Thailand.

### GOLDEN MILE FOOD CENTRE

#### 505 Beach Road

Completed in 1975, this food centre was originally built to house resettled hawkers from the famous Jalan Sultan street market (p.19). Today, some of the original hawkers still operate here. The food centre is also known for its 'Army Market' located on the third storey, which started out selling mainly army paraphernalia such as mess tins, water bottles, boots, socks, fatigue T-shirts, and towels. In the 1980s, the merchandise offered here expanded to include camping equipment and clothing. As army fatigues made their way into street fashion, the 'Army Market' attracted more customers than national servicemen looking for army supplies. The market became increasingly hip and fashionable as youngsters selling street fashion and vintage clothing started moving in. By 2002, street fashion shops were occupying half the retail space. The centre underwent a face lift in 2012.

*"Minto Road was mostly Baweanese. There were two main groups – one from Sangkapura in Pulau Bawean and the other from Tambak. The Baweanese from Tambak worked mostly on ships and at piers. Those from Sangkapura worked as drivers. The hawkers in this area were very famous, and satay sellers here would go to Rex Cinema at Mackenzie Road and Jalan Besar to sell. As a child, I used to help my father sell satay. I would also go to Rochor River with other boys. When tongkangs brought charcoal from Malaysia or Riau, the coolies would carry the charcoal from the tongkangs to the bank. Sometimes they dropped some charcoal into the river and we would jump in to fish it out."*

**MR MISIRI BIN WATHIMAN (B.1947), PRESIDENT OF JAVANESE ASSOCIATION. HE GREW UP ON PALEM-BANG ROAD.**

# Kallang River



Kampong Bugis. S. P.



(Left): Kampong Bugis, circa 1890. (Above): Houses were built on piles above the water, which was the key means of transportation, at kampongs of the Kallang River, circa 1860. (SOURCE: NATIONAL ARCHIVES OF SINGAPORE)

The name of the Kallang River is closely tied to its history of the Orang Biduanda Kallang who lived in boats in its swamps and waterways until the early 19th century. The Orang Biduanda Kallang were boat dwellers who avoided the sea and restricted their activities to the river.

They set up fishing stakes near the mouth of the river and also collected forest products. Soon after the arrival of the British, Temenggong Abdul Rahman (d. 1825), who was governing Singapore then, moved them to the Pulai River in Johor.

Porcelain sherds dating to the late 16<sup>th</sup> and early 17<sup>th</sup> centuries were recovered during the dredging of the Kallang River in the late 1960s and early 1970s, suggesting that there was trading activity in the area around the 17<sup>th</sup> century. A 1604 map indicated the presence of a "Xabrandaria" (Shabandar in Malay, meaning "Harbour Master") in this part of the island.

Following the establishment of a trading port in Singapore by the East India Company in 1819,

the area around the Kallang river mouth rapidly became part of a port town (p.45) that stretched from Kampong Glam to Kallang Bay. The waterfront at Kampong Glam, the Rochor River, and Kallang River were focal points of a bustling maritime commerce until the 1970s.

## KAMPONGS OF KALLANG

The settlements which developed near the mouth of the Kallang River were Kampong Bugis and the Kallang kampongs.

Kampong Bugis was located on the land between the Kallang and Rochor rivers. The Bugis (who originally came from Sulawesi in present-day Indonesia) came to Singapore in 1820. They

moved to this area in 1823. Besides Kampong Bugis, there was also Kampong Soo Poo and the kampongs of Kallang such as Kampong Kallang Pasir, Kallang Pokok, Kallang Laut, Kallang Batin, Kallang Rokok, Kallang Darat, Kallang Puding, and Kallang Kopet.

The kampongs were initially settled predominantly by the Bugis and Orang Laut ("People of the Sea"). They were later joined by others, such as people from Pulau Bawean and Palembang in present-day Indonesia. The main activities at the kampongs included ship repair, boat rentals and boat-taxi services, making cigarettes from nipah leaves, and fishing. Most of the Kallang kampongs were demolished in the 1930s to make way for the Kallang airport. Kampong Bugis was razed by a fire in 1951. By then, most of its population was Chinese.

## DID YOU KNOW?

Up till the 1970s, boat and ship yards were a common sight along the beach front along Beach Road and the Crawford area.

"Kopet" comes from the word that means 'nursing'. The people who lived there were under the command of the raja, or the sultan. So when the queen bears a child, they would make a declaration and look for mothers who had just given birth in order to nurse this child of the Sultan ... So the people of Kallang Batin were also under the raja, but were of a different group. They were involved in the ceremonial gatherings. There was a royal orchestra for royal ceremonies. They were involved in the singing, the syair [poetry] for ceremonial days. This was Kallang Batin. They had their own leader... The Kallang Batin island was near Crawford Street. Most of the Kallang Batin people, if they wanted to reach the main island of Singapore, did so by sampan. The Kallang Kopet people had to go by land. They did not use the sampan."

MR HASSAN BIN ABDUL HAMID (B.1925), BORN AT KAMPONG KALLANG ROKOK

(TRANSLATED FROM MALAY. INTERVIEW WITH ORAL HISTORY CENTRE, NATIONAL ARCHIVES OF SINGAPORE)



### » TRAIL THREE Along Victoria Street

- 1) Malabar Muslim Jama'ath Mosque 2) Muslim Cemetery 3) Madrasah Aljunied Al-Islamiah  
4) Stamford Primary School 5) Queen Street Bus and Taxi Terminal  
6) Church of Our Lady of Lourdes

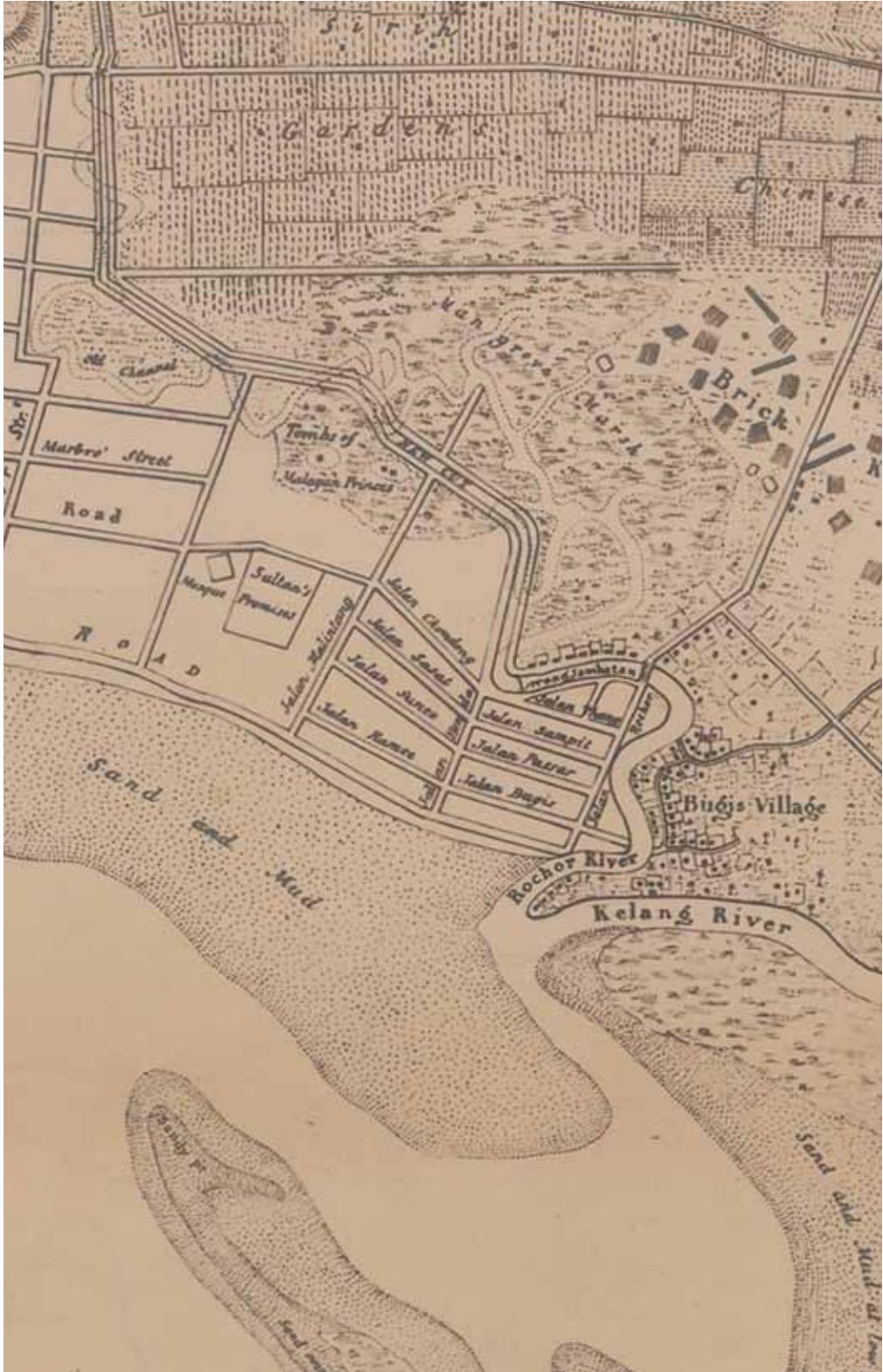
The third trail for this district brings you to some of the most interesting sites in Singapore where you get to find out more about the Malabar Muslim community, visit one of the oldest surviving local madrasahs and a church more than 120 years old.

Drop by one of the busiest hubs of transport services between Singapore and Malaysia at Queen Street and remember with nostalgia the former Victoria Street Wholesale Market, where local and Malaysian Chinese families flocked to for reasonably-priced dried goods and seafood.

Lying on the fringe of Kampong Glam's core historic district, this area used to be covered with marshes and mangroves in the early 19th century. The earliest indication of land use here

was along present-day Jalan Kubor, where tombs were marked in maps dating from the 1820s and 1830s. The cemeteries which used to occupy this area were also more extensive than they are today and the land where the Malabar Muslim Jama'ath Mosque stands now used to be burial ground.

Ready to start? Begin your exploration with the Malabar Muslim Jama'ath Mosque, located at the junction of Jalan Sultan and Victoria Street.



*Mashes, mangroves and tombs covered this area in the early 1800s, as shown in this map dated 1836.  
(SOURCE: NATIONAL ARCHIVES OF SINGAPORE)*

471 Victoria Street  
**Malabar Muslim  
Jama'ath Mosque**



Officially opened in 1963, this is the only mosque in Singapore built and managed by the Malabar Muslim community. The Malabar Muslims were known to have migrated to Singapore from Kerala, India, by the early 1900s.

They congregated largely in the eastern part of Singapore and also had a significant presence around Kampong Gelam. To look after the community's interests, the association, Malabar Muslim Jama'ath, was formed in 1927 and officially registered in 1937. It began operations in a shophouse in Changi before moving to Bussorah Street.

In the 1950s, the Malabar Muslims began raising funds to build a mosque. Donations were received from both Muslims and non-Muslims, and support was given by prominent personalities such as Sultan Ibrahim bin Abu Bakar of Johor (1873-1959). The mosque's site was previously used as burial grounds for Indian Muslims before another mosque was built there in the early 1900s, later demolished to make way for the new building. A. H. Siddique, an immigrant from northern India, reportedly waived his fees for designing the mosque.

On 10 April 1956, the foundation stone was laid by the Mufti of Johor, Tuan Syed Alwi Adnan. The mosque was officially opened by the Yang di-Pertuan Negara of Singapore, Inche Yusof bin Ishak (1910-1970) on 24 January 1963. The mosque soon became an important spiritual and social centre for the Malabar Muslim community.

The building's walls were originally painted

before they were tiled completely by 1995. Today, the mosque serves a diverse community. Friday prayers are conducted in Arabic and translated into several languages including Malayalam and Urdu.

#### DID YOU KNOW?

Malabar Muslims were known for running provision shops, called "kaka" shops (Malayalam: elder brother), and food businesses. Dishes such as *biryani* (a rice dish) and *murtabak* (fried bread stuffed with meat) were popularised by Malabar Muslim-run eateries. Along North Bridge Road, Singapore Zam Zam Restaurant, Victory Restaurant and the former Singapore Restaurant, all selling *murtabaks* and *briyani*, were established in 1908, 1910 and 1911 respectively by Malabar Muslims. During the *haj* season in the past, the restaurants were important food suppliers to pilgrims and their families. Today, Singapore Zam Zam and Victory still serve dishes that keep to original recipes.

#### HAJI AMBO SOOLOH (1891-1963)

Haji Ambo Sooloh (also spelt Embok Suloh) was a Bugis businessman, a philanthropist and a leading figure in the Malay community. He helped set up the *Utusan Melayu*, a prominent Malay newspaper launched in 1939. He was appointed Justice of Peace in 1927 and was active in the Kesatuan Melayu Singapura (Singapore Malay Union) and patron of Persatuan Bolasepak Melayu (Malay Soccer Association) and the Darul Taklam football club. Haji Ambo passed away in 1963 and was buried in the cemetery behind Malabar Muslim Jama'ath Mosque.



*The mosque before it was tiled completely, c. 1960s.*  
(SOURCE: LIM KHENG CHYE COLLECTION, COURTESY OF NATIONAL ARCHIVES OF SINGAPORE)

*"Ambo Sooloh and Haji Badruddin were the prominent people at the time. They were Bugis from Java Road ... Ambo Sooloh was rich but he mixed around with the common people like us."*

#### MDM SALAMAH BTE TAMBY (B.1922), FORMER RESIDENT OF BUSSORAH STREET

(TRANSLATED FROM MALAY. INTERVIEW WITH ORAL HISTORY CENTRE, NATIONAL ARCHIVES OF SINGAPORE)

## Madrasah Aljunied Al-Islamiah



Madrasah Aljunied Al-Islamiah is one of the oldest surviving madrasahs in Singapore. It was established by Syed Abdul Rahman Aljunied, the grandson of Syed Omar bin Ali Aljunied. The madrasah opened its doors to the first batch of 10 students in 1927. Today, its enrolment exceeds 1,000.

The building was originally situated nearer the main road on Syed Omar's land which he had given for use as a burial ground. The proposal to build a madrasah was raised in the 1920s after the British government stopped the use of the land as a burial plot. Over the years, it attracted more students from Singapore and from neighbouring countries such as Malaysia, Indonesia, and Brunei. As the school expanded, more classrooms were added in 1941. The outbreak of World War II (1939-1945) however, saw many of its students and teachers return to their respective homelands.

In the 1950s and 1960s, new subjects were introduced to the curriculum, including English, Mathematics, Science, Geography, History, and Malay while religious knowledge and Arabic continued to be a major part of the curriculum.

The old two-storey building was closed in 1996 for redevelopment while the school moved to temporary premises at Winstedt Road. The current building, built further away from the main road than the original building, incorporates Islamic features such as a central courtyard and a domed roof with a crescent moon. It was completed in 1998, and the official opening was held in 2000.

### **SYED OMAR BIN ALI ALJUNIED (1792 - 1852)**

Syed Omar bin Ali Aljunied was a prominent businessman, philanthropist, and a leader of the Arab community in Singapore. He was an Arab from Hadhramaut (located at the southern part of the Arabian Peninsula) who ventured to India and Palembang before coming to Singapore in 1819. He was a prominent trader and owner of considerable real estate. The goods he traded included spices and textile, and he is attributed with the introduction of muslin for men's clothes in Hadhramaut. He was famous for his piety, donated generously to charity, and endowed a number of mosques. Masjid Omar Kampong Melaka at Keng Cheow Street (off Havelock Road) was built in 1820 as a wooden structure on land which he donated. He also gave land for the Pauper's Hospital in 1844 which later became the Tan Tock Seng Hospital.

### **MALAY BURIAL GROUNDS AT JALAN KUBOR**

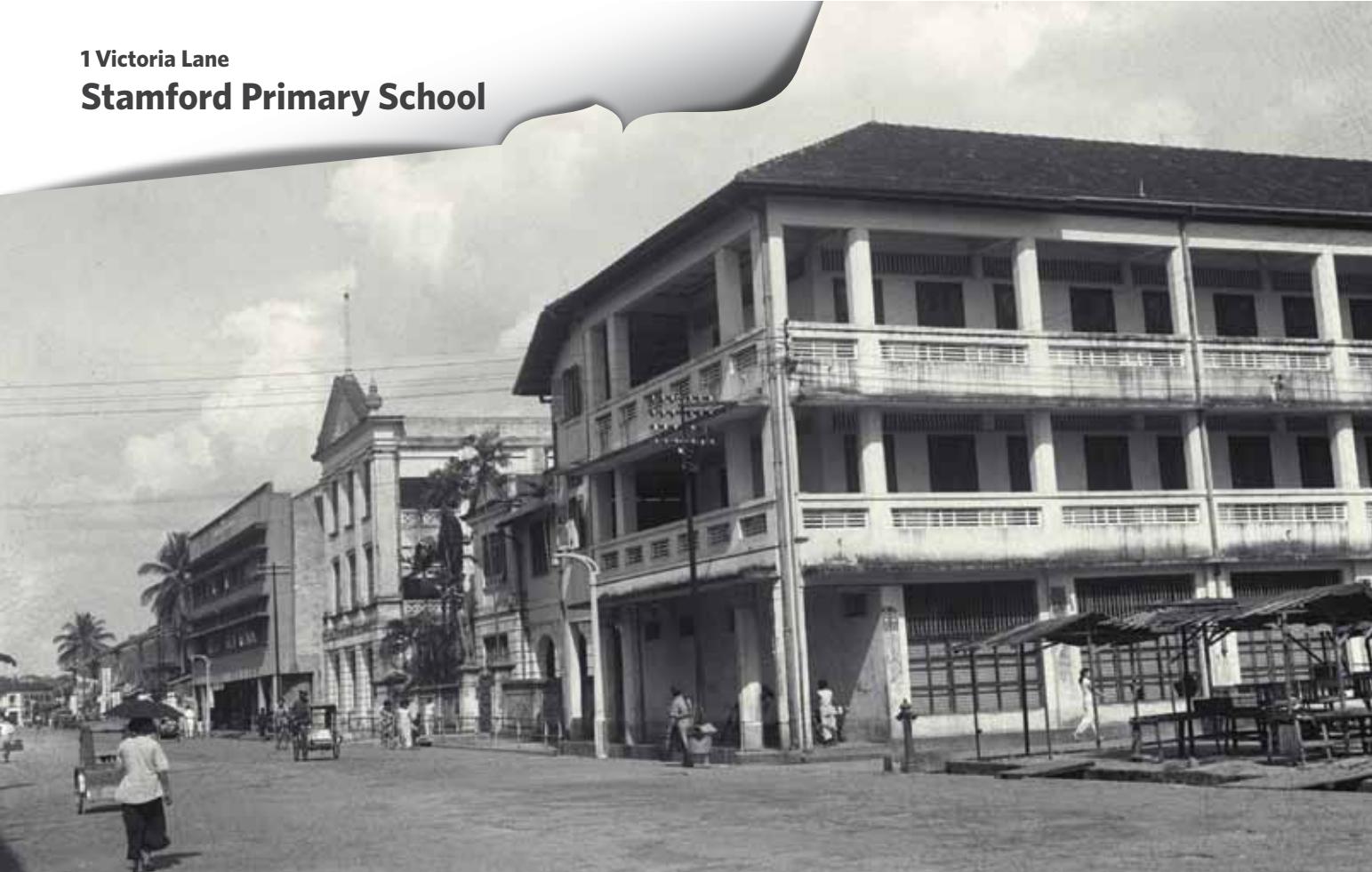
In the early maps of Singapore, these burial grounds were marked as "Mohamedan cemetery" and "Tombs of Malayan Princes". According to 19th century reports, there were three distinct burial plots here - a 5 1/3 acre Malay cemetery, the 3-acre Sultan's family burial grounds located within the Malay cemetery and a cemetery for Indian Muslims. In 1875, the municipality closed down the Malay cemetery but agreed to the Sultan's request that his family could continue to use the royal burial grounds. The sultan's burial grounds were walled in and the graves were situated in elevated plots. It was noted in the early 20th century that non-Muslims were not allowed to enter them.



Madrasah Aljunied Al-Islamiah, 1982.

(SOURCE: THE STRAITS TIMES © SINGAPORE PRESS HOLDINGS LIMITED.  
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## Stamford Primary School



*Stamford Girls' School, in the foreground of the picture, 1951.*

(SOURCE: THE STRAITS TIMES © SINGAPORE PRESS HOLDINGS LIMITED. REPRINTED WITH PERMISSION)

Stamford Primary School has its origins as the Stamford Girls' School, Singapore's second government girls' school to be established. The school addressed the urgent need for education in the post-war years when it started.

Located at Waterloo Street then, it opened with only 600 places, leading to a wild scramble for enrolment forms by parents on 2 January 1951 at the school.

The school was first housed in the former premises of Gan Eng Seng School, which prior to that, housed a school for Japanese children during pre-war years.

In the 1980s, the government launched an exercise to merge existing old schools to form bigger units for greater efficiency and effectiveness.

As such, Stamford Girls' School combined with Waterloo Girls' School, which was established in 1955 and functioned in the building adjacent to Stamford Girls' School. The new school, named Stamford Primary School, began operating as a co-ed school in 1984. Two years later, it moved to its current address at Victoria Lane. In 1987, it also absorbed Selegie Primary School. The new combined school was officially opened in 1988.

### EDUCATION IN KAMPONG GLAM

Besides the madrasahs (p.17 & 57), Kampong Glam had a number of other schools. Among them were Kampong Glam Malay Girls' School, which was located at the present site of Stamford Primary School and offered primary education, Victoria Bridge School, an English-language school, and Kota Raja Malay School.

Kota Raja Malay School was established by the early 1930s and was located in the former premises of Victoria Bridge School at the junction of Jalan Sultan and Victoria Street. It offered education in Malay before English was introduced sometime after the Second World War. The school was at one time the biggest Malay school



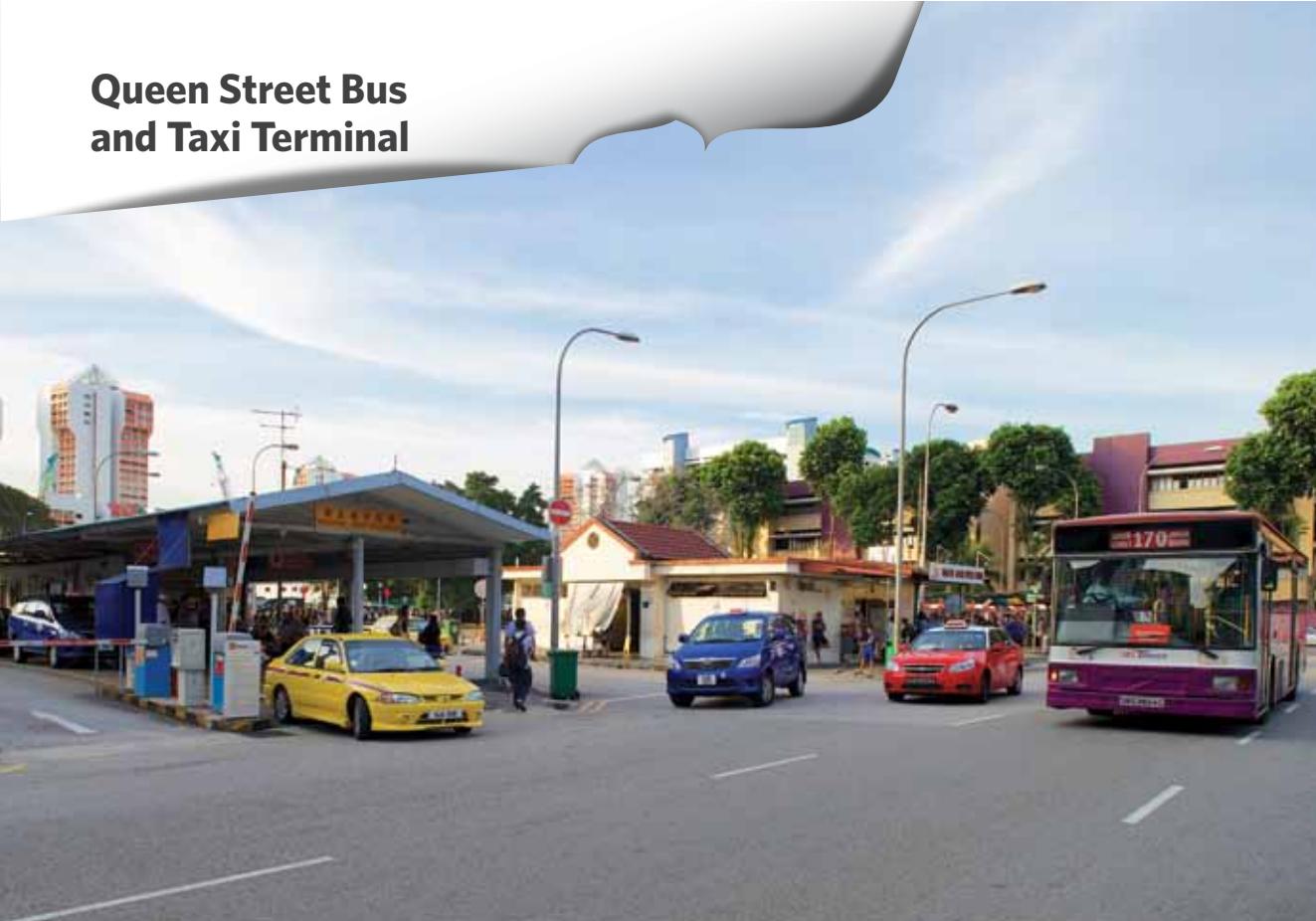
*Kota Raja Malay School, 1951. (SOURCE: THE STRAITS TIMES © SINGAPORE PRESS HOLDINGS LIMITED. REPRINTED WITH PERMISSION)*

for boys in Malaya, with about 600 students. It was known for its calibre of students and was a popular choice for those living in Kampong Glam and around. School enrolment gradually declined by the late 1970s, however, and it was integrated with other government schools subsequently.

*"I was from Kota Raja Malay School. Many of the Malay boys in Kampong Glam went to that school. It was famous for turning out cik gu (teachers) and principals. The school taught in Malay at first and English was introduced later."*

**MR MISIRI BIN WATHIMAN (B.1947), WHO GREW UP AT PALEMBANG ROAD.**

## Queen Street Bus and Taxi Terminal



This terminal serves buses and taxis which take passengers to and from Malaysia. The site of the taxi terminal was previously used for seasonal durian sales.

Prior to the establishment of the taxi terminal in 1984, taxis plying between Singapore and Johor Bahru parked at Rochor Road. The bus terminal started in 1985, bringing the Malaysia-bound buses which previously picked up passengers from bus stops at Queen Street and Waterloo Street under one roof. Several companies operate the bus services, which ply the routes between Singapore and various destinations in Malaysia including Kuala Lumpur.

*"I coordinate the different passengers to help them find people to share taxis with. The busiest times are after 5 pm, and on Fridays, the queues would stretch all the way to the roadside!"*

**MALLIKA D/O POOBALAN (B.1963), WHO HAS BEEN WORKING FOR 12 YEARS AT THE TAXI TERMINAL COORDINATING SHARED TAXIS**



Dried goods store at Victoria Street Wholesale Centre.  
(ALL RIGHTS RESERVED. NATIONAL LIBRARY BOARD 2007)



(Top): Logs on the Rochor River, 1953. (SOURCE: THE STRAITS TIMES © SINGAPORE PRESS HOLDINGS LIMITED. REPRINTED WITH PERMISSION)

### FORMER VICTORIA STREET WHOLESALE CENTRE

Between 1997 and 2012, the Victoria Street Wholesale Centre stood along Queen Street, housing tenants mainly engaged in the sale of dried goods such as spices and dried seafood. The centre was popular with shoppers looking for such goods at reasonable prices. Most of these shops were family-owned and spanned more than one generation.

The wholesale centre was developed to house tenants of the former Ellenborough Market at Tew Chew Street, who had to relocate in 1997 as the market made way for the development of the North East Mass Rapid Transit Line. A few shops from the old Blanco Court, where Raffles Hospital now is, also relocated to the centre. Blanco Court was popular for its hawker food and shops selling party goods and decorations at affordable prices.

The original tenancy period of the wholesale centre was six years, but the leases were subsequently renewed by the Housing Development

Board. In 2009, it was announced that the centre would have to move by 2012. A new one-stop wholesale centre with space for 60 tenants was completed at Kallang Avenue by end of 2011 and the Victoria Street Wholesale Centre closed in 2012.

### DID YOU KNOW?

The Rochor River used to be an important waterway for the timber industry. Along its banks, sawmills and wood factories could be found. Tongkangs carrying logs from Indonesia and Malaysia would transport their load to the industries via the Rochor River. There also used to be charcoal dealers operating along its banks. Such scenes declined by the 1970s due to redevelopment. The Rochor River is now undergoing works under the government's 'Active, Beautiful, Clean Waters Programme', to be transformed into a vibrant waterway lined with pedestrian-friendly promenades. This work is expected to be completed in 2014.

## Church of Our Lady of Lourdes



Built in 1888, Church of Our Lady of Lourdes is the focal point for the Indian Catholic community in Singapore. The story of the church, however, can be traced back to the mid-1800s, when the Catholic Church started a mission to reach out to the Indian community.

Before the church was built, Indian Catholics worshipped mainly at the Church of the Good Shepherd (present-day Cathedral of the Good Shepherd) at Queen Street, where the congregation was mainly European and Eurasian, and at the Church of Saints Peter and Paul, also along Queen Street.

In the 1880s, the mission to serve Indian Catholics was further strengthened when a French missionary, Father Joachim Alexandre Marie Meneuvrier, was assigned to the Indian community of some 60 believers. In the following year, he reported that he was taking care of about 300 Indian Catholics.

With the growth in numbers, he began looking for a piece of land to construct a church for the congregation. A 4,900 sq m<sup>2</sup> site at Rochor was subsequently provided by the government in 1885. By this time, there was already a sizeable Indian population in this area.

On 1 August 1886, the foundation stone of the church was laid by Sir Frederick Weld (1823–1891), Governor of the Straits Settlements. Swan and Lermit, a local firm, drew the plans for the church and the presbytery, and supervised the construction. The church was completed and consecrated in May 1888.

The church quickly grew to be an important spiritual and social centre for Indian Catholics.

Bus services going to and from Johor were located nearby at Queen Street and Indian Catholics who alighted from the buses could attend church functions before proceeding to Serangoon, where the main Indian enclave was located. With its large compound, there was also space for youths to engage in sports and for events to be held.

Besides being a spiritual institution, the church was also active in education. It opened a school for the children in its community in 1888, at the same time as the church's opening. In 1927, a Tamil school for girls was started as well. It was housed in a single storey wooden building which was later replaced by a concrete structure in 1962. The school became a private secondary school by the late 1960s, providing education for those who could not gain admission to government or government-aided schools. This school closed down in the late 1990s as Singapore's educational infrastructure had become well-developed by then. Another Tamil girl's school was also established by the church in 1937 in Yio Chu Kang.

The church was gazetted as a national monument in 2005 in recognition of its historic and social significance.

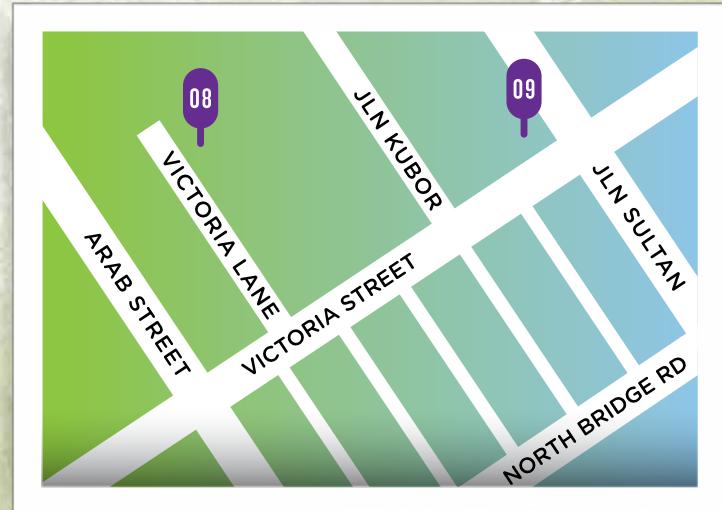
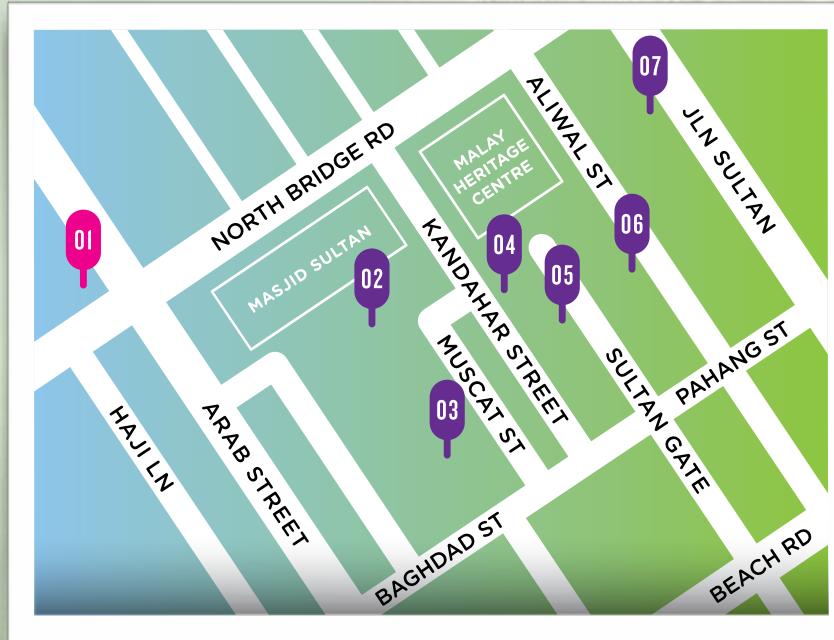


*Candlelight procession at the Church of Our Lady of Lourdes, commemorating the Feast of Our Lady of Lourdes, 1972. (SOURCE: THE STRAITS TIMES © SINGAPORE PRESS HOLDINGS LIMITED. REPRINTED WITH PERMISSION)*

## CREDITS

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Madrasah Aljunied Al-Islamiah  
Madrasah Alsagoff Al-Arabiah  
Malabar Muslim Jama'ath Mosque  
Malay Art Gallery  
Malay Heritage Centre  
Masjid Hajjah Fatimah  
Masjid Sultan  
Mesra Enterprises  
Misiri bin Wathiman, Mr  
Mohamed Patail, Mr  
Mohd Khair, Ustaz  
Mohd Nasim, Mr  
Moslimah bte Hj Abdul Karim, Mdm  
Mahmoud Matlub, Ustaz  
National Museum of Singapore  
Nanyang Kuah Si Association  
National Archives of Singapore  
Pinsler, Ronni, Mr  
Rosli bin Ridzwan, Mr  
Rumah Makan Minang  
Sabar Menanti II  
Singalang Jaya  
Singapore Malay Chamber of Commerce  
and Industry  
Singapore Metal and Machinery Association  
Singapore Press Holdings  
Singapore Timber Association  
St John Ambulance, Singapore  
Stamford Primary School  
Syed Abbas Alsagoff, Mr  
Syed Abubakar Aljunied, Mr  
Syed Alwi Adid, Mr  
Syed Hasan Abdullah Aljunied, Mr  
Syed Mohdar Alsagoff, Mr  
Urban Redevelopment Authority  
VSS Varusai  
Warung Pariaman  
Yeo Lee Hock, Mr

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STORYBOARD

1) Kampong Glam Storyboard

TRAIL MARKERS

2) Masjid Sultan 3) Bussorah Street 4) Former Istana Kampong Glam  
 5) Gedung Kuning 6) Former Chong Cheng School and Chong Pun  
 Girls' School 7) Madrasah Alsagoff Al-Arabiah 8) Madrasah Aljunied  
 Al-Islamiah 9) Malabar Muslim Jama'ath Mosque 10) St. John  
 Ambulance Headquarters 11) Masjid Hajjah Fatimah 12) Kallang River



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