



Orchard Road, c. 1890  
Courtesy of National Museum of Singapore, National Heritage Board

The Orchard Heritage Trail is part of the National Heritage Board's ongoing efforts to document and present the history and social memories of places in Singapore. We hope 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 visitors.

# ORCHARD HERITAGE TRAIL

A COMPANION GUIDE



Supported by



Orchard Road, c. 1930s  
Courtesy of National Museum of Singapore, National Heritage Board



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# ORCHARD ROAD: FROM NUTMEG ORCHARDS TO URBAN JUNGLE



*The junction of Orchard Road and Scotts Road, 2018*

The Orchard Road area is best known to Singaporeans and tourists as a haven for shopping centres, entertainment offerings, food and beverage outlets and high-end hotels. However, the Orchard Road of the past was very different from the Orchard Road of today.

During the early 1800s, Orchard Road was a rural lane that ran past cemeteries, hills, gambier farms and nutmeg orchards. By the mid-1800s, the area had started to transform into a residential neighbourhood. As a result, a number of social and religious institutions, as well as businesses, were established to serve the communities living in the area.

As the mid-1900s approached, a number of entrepreneurs recognised and capitalised on Orchard Road's prime location by introducing

businesses and services that catered to a variety of modern pastimes. The area then became known for its commercial and entertainment offerings such as shopping centres, cinemas and discotheques.

The Orchard Heritage Trail uncovers the history and the transformation of the area and highlights its various historic landmarks and institutions. It tells the story of how Orchard Road was transformed from a countryside retreat to the heart of Singapore's tourism and retail scene, whilst offering insights into the communities who have lived and worked in the area over the years.

We hope this self-guided trail will help you explore and rediscover the Orchard Road area as a place rich in heritage, and which has generated many fond memories for Singaporeans through time.

# THE ORIGINS OF ORCHARD ROAD

The earliest records of Orchard Road can be found in maps from the late 1820s which depicted an unnamed road that began at a point between Government Hill (now Fort Canning Park) and Mount Sophia, and continued north-west towards Tanglin. The name Orchard Road appeared in a map drawn by John Turnbull Thomson in 1844 which showed the road running through the District of Claymore. The map also depicted nutmeg orchards on both sides of the road. These orchards are believed to have resulted in the road being named Orchard Road.

Orchard Road also had a number of local names. For example, it was called Tang

Leng Pa Sat Koi or "Tanglin Market Street" in Hokkien after a market that once stood between Cuppage Road and Koek Road (near present-day The Centrepoint).

Tamils used the name Vairakimadam or "Ascetic's Place" for the section of Orchard Road closer to Dhoby Ghaut. This may have referred to Sri Vairavimada Kaliyamma, a Hindu shrine formerly located at the junction of Killiney Road. Another explanation is that the name is a corruption of *vairavimadam*, meaning "a place where roads meet." The hilly area of Orchard Road near Tanglin was also known as Mettu Than or "high ground" in Tamil.



*The "Plan of Singapore Town" by John Turnbull Thomson showing nutmeg orchards (represented by dotted lines) around Orchard Road (in red), 1846 edition  
Courtesy of National Archives of Singapore*



Orchard Road before the area was developed, c. 1900  
Collection of Singapore Philatelic Museum, donated by Mr Koh Seow Chuan

### PHYSICAL LANDSCAPE

Orchard Road was initially located in a valley flanked by many hills. For instance, the present Istana grounds was the site of Locks Hill and Mount Carolina, while the Oxley Road area was known as Western Hills. Emerald Hill, Cairnhill, Mount Elizabeth and Claymore Hill are some of the surviving names that serve as reminders of Orchard Road's location within a valley.

In the early 1800s, a freshwater stream known as Sungei Brass Bassa ran parallel to Orchard Road through Dhoby Ghaut and emptied into the sea at the end of Stamford Road. The stream was popular as a washing and bathing area in the 1800s. However, the colonial authorities deemed public bathing to be indecent and tried to ban it with little success. In 1866, horrified European observers reported that they saw:

*"... a party of Klings [a term used to describe Indians at that time] taking their evening bath in the dirty ditch, misnamed a river... as we continued our evening ramble along Orchard Road, we surprised three Chinamen taking their dip in a horrible puddle, but nevertheless enjoying it much, as one might judge from their smiling faces."*

Cattle farmers also tended to their livestock at Sungei Brass Bassa and the animal droppings led to complaints about pollution. The authorities noted in 1892, however, that "a great many well-to-do people, shopkeepers, and so on, were as much to blame in the matter as the worst *dhobie* or the dirtiest cattle-keeper".

In the late 1800s, the stream was renamed Stamford Canal after parts of it were converted into a canal. By the 1970s, most of Stamford Canal had been paved over. Today, a small portion of the canal is visible behind MacDonald House at Dhoby Ghaut.



Stamford Canal, 1900s  
Lim Kheng Chye Collection, courtesy of National Archives of Singapore



Stamford Canal, 2018

### FIGHTING FLOODS, THEN AND NOW

In 2010 and 2011, torrential downpour brought on flash floods in several areas of Singapore including Orchard Road. Rainwater submerged parts of Orchard Road and flooded the carparks and ground levels of shopping malls such as Lucky Plaza and Liat Towers.

However, flooding at Orchard Road is nothing new, given its location in a valley next to Stamford Canal. Floods were commonplace even in the 1800s. One particularly large flood took place in 1869 and submerged Orchard Road under five feet of water. Newspapers then reported that "Dhoby Ghaut was for the time converted into a lake".

Despite periodic efforts to widen and deepen Stamford Canal, floods were still frequent up to the 1980s.

Recalling Orchard Road's floods in the 1970s, Sherlyn Lee (b. 1968) said:

*"My mother's car stalled a few times because of the high water level... We would get out and push the car or wait until the rain stopped. My parents acted like it was so normal!"*

Former Orchard Road resident Yvette Cheak (b. 1950) recounted similar scenes:

*"The drains are now covered but before that there used to be flooding and cars would break down. The neighbourhood boys would all run out to help push the cars and get rewarded by the owners with 20-30 cents."*

The situation improved after the low-lying Orchard Road was raised in the 1980s. To lessen the chances of future floods, the Public Utilities Board has since been progressively improving the area's drainage.



A flood at Orchard Road, 1920s  
Courtesy of National Museum of Singapore, National Heritage Board

# FROM ORCHARD TO GARDEN

## GAMBIER PLANTATIONS

Orchard Road was once lined with estates which cultivated gambier (*Uncaria gambir*), a crop used in the manufacturing of leather goods. Gambier was also traditionally used in Southeast Asia for medicinal purposes and as an ingredient in betel chewing.

From the 1700s, the leather industry started to use gambier for tanning raw animal hides. This led to an increase in demand and the establishment of gambier plantations in this region. When the British arrived in Singapore in 1819, there were an estimated 20 gambier plantations on the island. These plantations were mostly cultivated by Teochews, a Chinese dialect group from Guangdong province in China.

Some of these plantations were located along the area that would become Orchard Road. However, as gambier rapidly drains the soil of nutrients, plantation owners often had to relocate to a new site every few years. By the late 1830s, the gambier plantations had relocated from Orchard Road to new plots

further inland in the Tanglin area which was known as Twa Tang Leng in Teochew, meaning “great east hill peaks”.

By 1843, even the Tanglin plantations had been abandoned. An article in *Singapore Free Press* described Tanglin then as consisting of “barren looking hills covered with short brushwood and lalang [a fast-growing grass], which had sprung up in deserted gambier plantations.



A gambier plantation, 1900s  
Courtesy of National Museum of Singapore, National Heritage Board

## PROMINENT GAMBIER MERCHANTS

### Seah Eu Chin

Seah Eu Chin was a Teochew pioneer who came to Singapore in 1823 and made his fortune from gambier. He became the first local merchant to own large-scale gambier plantations in 1835, when he acquired land between River Valley Road and Bukit Timah Road for his gambier plantations.

Seah's success made him one of the richest members of the Chinese community and

earned him the nickname “Gambier King”. In 1845, together with other prominent members of the Teochew community, Seah founded the Ngee Ann Kongsi, a mutual help organisation for the local Teochew community that is still active today.

### Tan Yeok Nee

Another major gambier merchant was Tan Yeok Nee, who was also a Teochew pioneer. Unlike Seah, Tan's gambier plantations were mostly in Johor, Malaya. In 1870,

he was conferred the title Major Cina (Johor's highest ranking Chinese official) by Maharaja Abu Bakar.

In 1882-85, Tan built a grand family home at Tank Road (now 101 Penang Road). The house was constructed in a traditional southern Chinese architectural style, with two large central halls separated by wide courtyards.

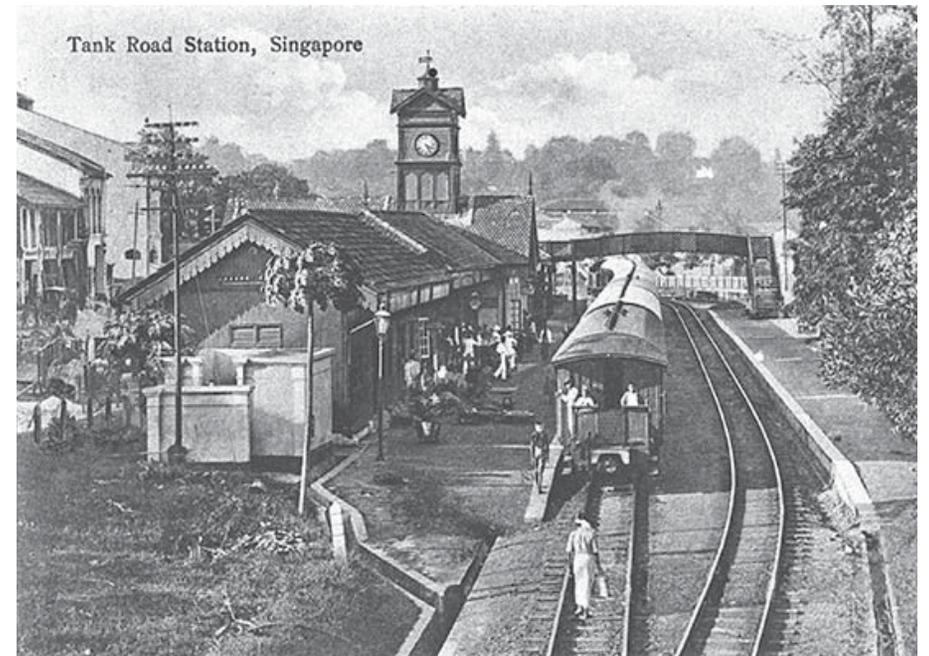
Its roof is distinguished by intricate timber carvings, decorative plaster reliefs and colourful porcelain pieces known as *qian ci* or *jian nian*. The *qian ci* are arranged in mosaic patterns or form figures on the ridges. In the front courtyard, there are koi (carp) carvings at the roof junctions, which spout water from their mouths when it rains.

Tan Yeok Nee later sold the house and returned to China. During this time, the Singapore-Kranji railway line was being built and the house was

acquired for use by the station master of the nearby Tank Road Railway Station from 1902. Later, the building housed charities such as St Mary's Home, an orphanage and boarding school for girls, in 1905-32 and The Salvation Army in 1938-91. The House of Tan Yeok Nee was gazetted a National Monument in 1974.



House of Tan Yeok Nee, 1910s  
Courtesy of National Archives of Singapore



Tank Road Railway Station, 1910  
Courtesy of National Archives of Singapore

## NUTMEG ORCHARDS

Sir Stamford Raffles, who established Singapore as a British trading post, was a keen botanist. During his second trip to Singapore in June 1819, he sent for nutmeg (*Myristica fragrans*) and clove (*Syzygium aromaticum*) seedlings from Bencoolen (now Bengkulu in Sumatra, Indonesia), where he was Governor-General in 1817-22. These seedlings were planted on the slopes of Government Hill (now Fort Canning Park) and maintained by William Farquhar, Singapore's Resident and Commandant in 1819-23.

Raffles' aim was to determine which plants could be successfully cultivated in Singapore for profit. During his final visit to Singapore in 1822, he instructed botanist Nathaniel Wallich to plan a larger Botanical and Experimental Garden. The garden was located between Government Hill and Bukit Selegie (now Mount Sophia) and included the Dhoby Ghaut and Bras Basah areas.

During the 1820s, this garden contained more than 600 nutmeg trees and 300 clove trees. However, the government later lost interest in the site and the garden became defunct in 1829. A second attempt at a botanic garden started in 1836, when some prominent European residents founded the Agricultural and Horticultural Society. The society was granted a small plot at Government Hill, which it sought to develop into a lucrative nutmeg estate.

The society wanted to grow nutmeg trees as they produce two spices highly prized in Europe at that time: nutmeg and mace. Nutmeg refers to the ground nutmeg seed while mace is the red pulp (or aril) that partially covers the seed. Both spices are used for seasoning and preserving food.

The society's members probably held the view that Singapore was suitable for cultivating nutmegs as it has a similar climate to the Maluku Islands in Indonesia, where nutmegs originated. A number of other European residents also acquired former gambier estates around Orchard Road in the 1830s-40s and converted these estates into nutmeg orchards in the hopes of turning a profit.

## NUTMEG PLANTERS AND THEIR ESTATES

One of the earliest nutmeg orchard owners was Dr Thomas Oxley, an Irish surgeon. In 1837, Oxley acquired a 70-hectare plot between Orchard Road and River Valley Road, which he named Killiney Estate after an Irish resort. In 1842, Oxley built a villa called Killiney House on his estate. In the same year, postal clerk William Cuppage established a nutmeg orchard at the nearby Emerald Hill.

Next to Cuppage's nutmeg orchard was Cairnhill, where Scotsman Charles Carnie built his house and established an orchard in 1840. "Cairnhill" is said to be a corruption of "Carnie's Hill" although another possible explanation is that it derives from the term "cairn", which refers to a heap of stones, and is common in Scottish place names.

Near Cairnhill was another orchard called Claymore, which had more than 5,000 nutmeg trees. Claymore belonged to William Scott, after whom Scotts Road was named. Scott also cultivated crops such as cocoa, cotton, betelnut, durian and rambutan in his orchard. On his estate, Scott built a house named Hurricane Cottage (later Hurricane House).

Another nutmeg planter was Charles Robert Prinsep, who had a large orchard in the area bounded by Prinsep Street, Mount Sophia and



The estate of Charles Prinsep, c. 1860  
Courtesy of National Museum of Singapore, National Heritage Board

Mount Emily. Part of Prinsep's orchard later became the site of Government House (now the Istana).

Further up Orchard Road, Mount Elizabeth was also the site of a nutmeg orchard owned by a magistrate's clerk, Thomas Hewetson, while in the Tanglin area, there was another nutmeg estate owned by lawyer William Napier.

Nutmeg cultivation is a long-term endeavour as the trees require about a decade to bear fruit. Unfortunately for Singapore's nutmeg orchard owners, a mysterious disease broke out in 1857 and wiped out the orchards within five years. Later in 1897, Henry Nicholas Ridley, Director of the Botanic Gardens, would determine that a beetle was the cause of the disease.

With their orchards destroyed, the owners had to either persevere and adapt, or sell their orchards and leave. Cuppage remained on his estate and replaced nutmegs with other fruit trees. Carnie, Oxley and Prinsep sold off their orchards and eventually left Singapore.

From the 1850s, newspaper advertisements started to appear for properties around Orchard Road, some of which still claimed, inaccurately, that the land was suitable for nutmeg or spice plantations. The era of nutmeg orchards, however, was over, and Orchard Road began to develop as a residential suburb.



Orchard Road, c. 1890  
Courtesy of National Museum of Singapore, National Heritage Board

## NUTMEGS ALONG ORCHARD ROAD TODAY

Today, visitors can see nutmeg trees at the Singapore Botanic Gardens (for example, along the Red Brick Path) or the Spice Garden at Fort Canning Park. Orchard Road's nutmeg heritage is also commemorated in two public artworks, both of which were created in 2009. *Nutmeg and Mace* by Kumari Nahappan is a large bronze nutmeg in front of ION Orchard while Michele Righetti's *Nutmeg Grove* is a red-and-black steel sculpture of a nutmeg seed at Orchard Central.



"Nutmeg and Mace" by Kumari Nahappan at ION Orchard, 2017



"Nutmeg Grove" by Michele Righetti at Orchard Central, 2017

## SINGAPORE BOTANIC GARDENS

1 Cluny Road; the Tanglin Gate is just off Napier Road

*(Please note that additional information on the Singapore Botanic Gardens can also be found in the Bukit Timah Heritage Trail Companion Guide produced by the National Heritage Board and available on Roots.sg.)*

### The genesis of a botanical garden

Despite the failure of nutmegs, there was still much interest in horticulture amongst wealthier residents in Singapore. This led to the formation of another Agri-Horticultural Society in 1859.

The society's members included avid horticulturists who wanted to establish a botanical garden where they could enjoy flowers and other plants in a pleasant landscape. One founding member of the society was the prominent merchant Hoo Ah Kay, also known as Whampoa, who helped to secure a location for a botanical garden at Tanglin.

### An English landscape garden

The Tanglin site was a former gambier plantation that had become overrun by scrubland. To transform the area into a landscaped garden, the society appointed Lawrence Niven as Manager of the Botanic Gardens in 1860. Niven was chosen for his horticultural experience as a Superintendent in Prinsep's former nutmeg orchard.



*Singapore Botanic Gardens, late 1800s*  
Courtesy of National Museum of Singapore, National Heritage Board

Niven was responsible for the present look of the Singapore Botanic Gardens. He introduced an informal landscape style now known as the English Landscape Movement, which highlighted the area's natural contours. The result was a tropical version of an English garden with rolling hills, curving paths, flower beds and rich patches of natural vegetation.

Complementing the greenery was Swan Lake, which was excavated in 1866 and holds the honour of being Singapore's oldest ornamental water body. Niven also turned the Gardens' highest point into a terrace for military bands. From 1862, this site became a popular place for concerts and is today the location of the Bandstand gazebo. Under Niven, the Gardens' main entrance, now known as the Tanglin Gate, was completed in 1864.

In 1868, a plantation-style bungalow was built as the residence for the Gardens' Superintendents and Directors, and functioned as such until 1969. Originally known as the Director's House, the bungalow was renamed Burkill Hall in 1992 after Isaac Henry Burkill, Director of the Gardens in 1912-25, and his son Humphrey Morrison Burkill, Director of the Gardens in 1957-69. Burkill Hall is the oldest surviving building in the Gardens, and was conserved in 2008. It now serves as a function venue and is located within the National Orchid Garden.



*Swan Lake, late 1800s*  
Courtesy of National Museum of Singapore, National Heritage Board



*Burkill Hall, 1959*  
Courtesy of the Singapore Botanic Gardens Archives, National Parks Board

### From private garden to public park

The Botanic Gardens was originally a private garden open mainly to members of the Agri-Horticultural Society, who also enjoyed perks such as free seeds, plants and cut flowers. Non-members could only visit on certain days of the week and had to pay a fee.

To raise funds to maintain the Gardens, the society organised events such as horticultural fetes and fairs from 1862. Despite these efforts, the society could not bear the costs of running the Gardens and sought help from the colonial government. In 1874, the debt-ridden society transferred the Gardens to the government, and the Gardens became a public park which was free for all visitors.

After Niven returned to Scotland in 1875, Henry James Murton, the Gardens' first botanically qualified Superintendent, introduced many new plant species into the Gardens. In the same year, one of the earliest zoos in Singapore opened at the Gardens. The zoo's enclosures were located around the Bandstand Hill, Swan Lake and along Cluny Road, and its first animals included a rhinoceros, a tiger and a leopard.

However, the zoo experienced a series of unfortunate incidents from 1876, when someone entered the zoo's enclosures and killed a bear, an emu, a cassowary and several kangaroos. In the late 1890s, a crocodile escaped into Swan Lake and later attacked a coolie collecting water. The zoo finally closed in 1905 due to rising costs.

One of Murton's most important legacies was the Economic Garden at the Gardens' northern end, which he set up in 1877. In 1878, Murton planted several rubber seedlings from Kew Gardens in England in the Economic Garden. These trees would later serve as the source of seeds for rubber plantations in Southeast Asia and beyond.

### “Mad Ridley” and the Malayan rubber industry

After Cantley’s death in 1888, Henry Ridley took over as Director of the Botanic Gardens. As Director, Ridley transformed the Gardens into a regional research centre for imperial botany focusing on plants of economic value to the British Empire. Ridley firmly believed that the Brazilian Pará rubber would become a major economic crop due to rising demand for latex.



Workers tapping rubber, 1900s  
Courtesy of the Singapore Botanic Gardens Archives, National Parks Board



A rubber sheet, mid-1900s  
Courtesy of National Museum of Singapore, National Heritage Board

Using the trees in the Economic Garden (now National University of Singapore Bukit Timah Campus), Ridley conducted research into ways to tap and process rubber more efficiently. He even filled his pockets with rubber seeds to give to planters and other businessmen in Singapore and Malaya to promote the crop.

Initially, few people shared Ridley’s vision or heeded his advice, and some even gave him nicknames such as “Mad Ridley” and “Rubber Ridley”. In 1896, Tan Chay Yan, a prominent landowner and planter, agreed to plant rubber trees in a small estate of 16 hectares near Melaka, Malaya. This estate became so successful that by 1901, Tan had expanded it to 1,200 hectares.

Encouraged by Tan’s success, other planters began growing rubber trees. By 1917, the Economic Garden had supplied about seven million rubber seeds to various planters. Due to the high demand for rubber tyres and electrical insulation, Malaya became the world’s largest rubber supplier by 1920, and most of this rubber was exported from Singapore.

### National flower and diplomatic tool

The Botanic Gardens also played a crucial role in the development of Singapore’s orchid industry. In 1893, Ridley wrote in *The Gardeners’ Chronicle* about a “very beautiful plant”, an orchid which he named *Vanda Miss Joaquim* after Agnes Joaquim, the Armenian horticulturist whom he credited with creating the hybrid a few years prior. This orchid was



A *Vanda Miss Joaquim* orchid flower, 1970s  
Courtesy of National Museum of Singapore, National Heritage Board



A staff member at the Gardens, Sanusi bin Sareh, propagating orchids, 1959  
Courtesy of the Singapore Botanic Gardens Archives, National Parks Board

chosen to be Singapore’s National Flower in 1981 because of its lasting quality and ability to bloom all year round.

Eric Holttum, Director of the Gardens from 1925-49, pioneered large-scale production of orchid hybrids. In 1928, he set up an orchid propagation centre in a building that was later named Holttum Hall. Back then, orchids were difficult to propagate due to their tiny seeds. The centre allowed the Gardens to create new hybrids and propagate large quantities of orchids in a short time. This development made the Gardens and Singapore a regional centre for the cultivation and export of orchids.

To display the Gardens’ orchids, the Orchid Enclosure was opened in 1955. This became the place where visiting dignitaries viewed the Gardens’ orchid collection and had new hybrids named after them. The tradition of naming orchids after visiting VIPs started in 1956 with *Aranthera Anne Black*, which was named after the wife of the Governor of Singapore Sir Robert Brown Black.

This tradition continued after Singapore’s independence and has continued to play a key role in the country’s diplomatic efforts. Rashida



The building that housed Holttum’s orchid laboratory (now Holttum Hall, housing the Singapore Botanic Gardens Heritage Museum), 1920s  
Courtesy of the Singapore Botanic Gardens Archives, National Parks Board



First Lady of Indonesia Tien Suharto with the *Dendrobium Tien Soeharto* orchids named after her, 1974  
Ministry of Information and the Arts Collection, courtesy of National Archives of Singapore

Zali (b. 1958) recalled seeing foreign dignitaries arriving to view orchids in the 1970s, when she was living in the Gardens' staff quarters:

*"When there were visitors like prime ministers, we would be in front of the Orchid Enclosure, where the orchids would be named after the visitors... We would be standing all along the road to wait for them and wave. There were prime ministers from different countries. I got to see the wife of President Suharto."*

The original Orchid Enclosure was redeveloped into part of the present Ginger Garden in the late 1990s. Around this time, a new National Orchid Garden was created and officially opened in 1995 by then Senior Minister Lee Kuan Yew.

### People's Concerts and a Garden City

The Botanic Gardens also played a vital role in nation-building by serving as a venue for multicultural events. In 1959, when Singapore attained internal self-rule, the Gardens became one of the main venues for the Aneka Ragam Ra'ayat or "People's Concerts".

Organised by the Ministry of Culture until the mid-1960s, these concerts celebrated Singapore's multicultural heritage with performances by different communities. The first Aneka Ragam Ra'ayat was held on 2 August 1959. Addressing a crowd of 22,000, then Prime Minister Lee Kuan Yew said:

*"It is fitting that the first of these concerts should be held in the Botanic Gardens, for, in a way, this beautiful place symbolises what we all want... [The concerts are] part and parcel of our search for a national identity. Here, under open skies, Malays, Chinese, Indians will, I hope, discover the materials for a national art and national culture. It is in this hope that Aneka Ragam Ra'ayat makes its debut."*

The Gardens was also key to Singapore's "Garden City" vision, introduced by Prime Minister Lee in 1967 to make Singapore an attractive place for residents, investors and tourists. To support this vision, the Gardens' staff provided expertise in the propagation and maintenance of thousands of trees and shrubs, which were planted at parks, housing estates and roadsides all over Singapore.



Then Prime Minister Lee Kuan Yew at the Aneka Ragam Ra'ayat in the Botanic Gardens, 1959  
Ministry of Information and the Arts Collection, courtesy of National Archives of Singapore



Visitors heading to the Aneka Ragam Ra'ayat in the Botanic Gardens, 1959  
Ministry of Information and the Arts Collection, courtesy of National Archives of Singapore

### A "KAMPONG" IN THE GARDENS

Until the 1980s, there was a "kampong" (Malay for "village") in the Botanic Gardens. This was the Gardens' staff quarters, which comprised an estimated 50 households and more than 500 residents. Former resident Rashida Zali recalled:

*"My father was born in 1921, and the quarters was already in existence then. Before my father, my grandfather was already working here. I was born in 1958 and grew up here. Even when I set up my own household, it was here too, in the Botanic Gardens staff quarters... We had many fruit trees around the quarters. There was also a mosque. As children, we all went to Tanglin Besar Malay School [now Tanglin Mall]."*

Describing life in the quarters during the 1960s, Rashida further added:

*"Our staff quarters was a popular place. Many people came by for festivals such as Maulud Nabi [birthday of the Prophet Muhammad] as well as for Friday prayers. It was so festive when we celebrated Hari Raya and gotong royong [worked together] to cook a feast for everyone. People from elsewhere came to join us, but we were the ones doing the cooking. Usually we made lontong, rendang, lodeh, sambal goreng, ayam asam merah - the usual Hari Raya food. I really enjoyed it then."*

Another former resident, Juriah bte Sabudin (b. 1958), shared that her mother worked in the herbarium. She recalled that the quarters consisted of long barracks-like buildings:

*"There were 10 households per barrack. Inside, there was a living room and a kitchen. As children we played sorot sorot [a sliding game] using empty boxes to slide down the hill. We also played batu serambat [five stones] and batu rounders [rounders]."*

Juriah shared that she first met her husband in the Gardens, where he was working as a

ranger - similar to how her parents had also met each other in the Gardens. Of their daily routine, she said:

*"We reared chickens. In the mornings, the roosters would crow and we would wake up for solat [morning prayers]. During the fasting month, people would knock on each other's doors to wake each other to bangun sahur [partake in the pre-fast meal] - no need for an alarm clock."*

The residents moved to flats in the early 1980s and the area was later converted into the present Evolution Garden.



Juriah bte Sabudin outside her house in the Gardens' staff quarters, 1970s  
Courtesy of Juriah bte Sabudin, Singapore Botanic Gardens, National Parks Board



Neighbours at the staff quarters working together to cook a wedding feast, 1970s  
Courtesy of Juriah bte Sabudin, Singapore Botanic Gardens, National Parks Board

### Towards Singapore's first UNESCO World Heritage Site

In the 1990s, Dr Kiat W Tan, Director of the Botanic Gardens from 1988-96, oversaw a masterplan to rejuvenate the Gardens. This included the construction of the new Shaw Foundation Symphony Stage on Symphony Lake, which was completed in 1995, then rebuilt in 2005, and is now a site for regular free concerts.

In 1998, a new Visitor Centre opened near the junction of Cluny Road and Nassim Road, followed by the Ginger Garden in 2003. In 2006, the present Botany Centre, located close to Tanglin Gate, was completed. This facility includes a library, a herbarium and orchid breeding laboratories that visitors can view through glass panels.

The next major milestone for the Gardens was achieved after Dr Nigel Taylor became Director of the Botanic Gardens in 2011. In 2013, Singapore announced plans to nominate the Gardens for inscription as a cultural site under the World Heritage Convention of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO).



A performance at the Shaw Foundation Symphony Stage, 2013  
Courtesy of the Singapore Botanic Gardens Archives, National Parks Board

The Gardens was chosen for several reasons. It was the birthplace of Southeast Asia's rubber industry and contributed tremendously to the region's economic development in the early 1900s. Its grounds also present an outstanding example of the English Landscape Movement in the tropics and contain sites of historical value. Some of these sites include the Rain Forest, Swan Lake and Palm Valley alongside conserved buildings and structures such as Ridley Hall, Burkill Hall, Holttum Hall and the Bandstand gazebo.

The Gardens also contains 60 Heritage Trees, which are endorsed under the National Parks Board's Heritage Tree Scheme for their large size and significant historical, social or botanical value. The most famous of these Heritage Trees is an old tembusu (*Cyrtophyllum fragrans*) near Swan Lake that is featured on Singapore's \$5 currency note. This 30-metre-tall tembusu, designated as a Heritage Tree in 2001, is believed to be older than the Gardens. The tree is a popular site for photoshoots and a natural playground for generations of children.

For Singaporeans, the Gardens is also a site of rich social memories. Besides concerts and performances, the Gardens served as a



Visitors at the Bandstand during Hari Raya Puasa and the 2nd day of Chinese New Year, 1965  
Ministry of Information and the Arts Collection, courtesy of National Archives of Singapore



Tembusu Heritage Tree, 2018  
Courtesy of National Parks Board

popular spot for families to introduce potential spouses to each other. Betty Seow Guat Beng (1910-98) recalled that before World War II, arranged marriages were common and families would arrange for a walk in the Gardens to allow the prospective couple to meet. Seow told the National Archives in 1989:

*"They'll take the girl out to Botanical Garden [sic] or cinema and the boy will have a look. The boy will send his picture, the girl will send [her] picture*

*to the man. Then they decide whether they like each other or not."*

The Gardens was also an immensely popular attraction during festive holidays. Maar Salleh (b. 1948) recalled in an interview with the National Archives in 2004, that during the 1950s-60s, the Gardens was:

*"... a centre of attraction during the festive seasons - not only the Malay Hari Raya. Even during the Chinese Lunar New Year, I could witness lorryloads of people coming to the Botanic Gardens just to spend some of their leisure time there."*

After considering the social, historical and natural significance of the Gardens, UNESCO announced on 4 July 2015 that the Singapore Botanic Gardens would become the country's first World Heritage Site. Today, visitors can learn about the Gardens' journey to become a UNESCO World Heritage Site at the Singapore Botanic Gardens Heritage Museum in Holttum Hall near the Tanglin Gate. The Heritage Museum is open from 9am to 6pm daily, except for the last Monday of every month.

## SITES OF INTEREST IN THE SINGAPORE BOTANIC GARDENS

### Gazebos

The Gardens contains two well-loved gazebos. The first is a distinctive octagonal gazebo built in 1930 on the Bandstand Hill. It has been used for concerts over the years and is also a favourite location for bridal photoshoots. Another graceful gazebo has stood in the Gardens since 1969 and is now located by Swan Lake. The Gothic-style cast-iron structure is believed to date back to the 1850s, when it first stood at a house on Grange Road. Both gazebos were gazetted as conserved structures in 2009.



*A concert at the Bandstand gazebo, 1950s*  
Courtesy of the Singapore Botanic Gardens Archives, National Parks Board



*The Swan Lake gazebo, 2013*  
Courtesy of the Singapore Botanic Gardens Archives, National Parks Board

### Herbarium (now Ridley Hall)



*A staff member, Sumiah binte Pijah, mounting plant specimens at the herbarium, 1959*  
Courtesy of the Singapore Botanic Gardens Archives, National Parks Board

Nathaniel Cantley, who replaced Murton in 1880 as Superintendent, supervised the construction of a library and herbarium (a facility where plant specimens are preserved for research) in the Gardens in 1882. The building housing the library and herbarium was later named Ridley Hall after Henry Nicholas Ridley, the Gardens' first Director in 1888-1912, who used it as his office and laboratory. Ridley Hall was conserved in 2008.

### Plant house

In the 1880s, Cantley also built the Plant House where potted plants and flowers were displayed. The Plant House was also a venue for public flower shows. The original Plant House was torn down in 1958, but two flights of brick steps that led to it have survived. Many of the bricks bear arrow-like markings, which remained a mystery for many years.

The mystery of the markings was solved in 1995, when visiting Australian war veterans pointed out that the steps were made by prisoners-of-war during the Japanese Occupation (1942-45). At that time, arrows were used as symbols to indicate property belonging to the colonial government, which included those imprisoned by the authorities.



*Bricks on the steps leading to the Plant House garden with arrows made by Australian prisoners-of-war, 2012*  
Courtesy of Dr Nigel Taylor, Singapore Botanic Gardens, National Parks Board

The Japanese were unaware of this symbol and its meaning, and the prisoners-of-war made these markings as a subtle act of defiance to indicate that they had become the "property" of the Japanese army.

### Tanglin Gate

The original Tanglin Gate was constructed in 1886 and replaced in 1988 by a new gateway featuring ornamental columns and ornate metal gates. This gateway was replaced in 2006 by the present Tanglin Gate, which has motifs based on the *Phanera kockiana* climber and designed by famous Singaporean artist Eng Siak Loy. The 1988 gateway has been reinstalled at the Gardens' Bukit Timah entrance.



*The present Tanglin Gate, 2000s*  
Courtesy of the Singapore Botanic Gardens Archives, National Parks Board



*The original Tanglin Gate of the Botanic Gardens, 1959*  
Courtesy of the Singapore Botanic Gardens Archives, National Parks Board



*The second Tanglin Gate, now located at the Bukit Timah entrance, 1999*  
Courtesy of the Singapore Botanic Gardens Archives, National Parks Board

### GREEN SPACES AT ORCHARD ROAD

Besides the Botanic Gardens and the former nutmeg orchards, there were other green spaces at Orchard Road. Former resident Yvette Cheak recalled visiting orchards filled with fruit trees in the 1950s:

*“Just after the Thai Embassy, there was a farm that had rambutan, mangosteen, chiku and other fruit trees. It was an orchard and we used to visit the children there and sometimes were allowed to pluck the fruit. This place is now International Building and Lido Theatre.”*

Today, no traces remain of these orchards. Nonetheless, the Orchard Road area has a number of parks that serve as green lungs and provide natural habitats for flora and fauna.

Dhoby Ghaut Green, developed by the Urban Redevelopment Authority (URA) in 2009, serves as a community and events space above Dhoby Ghaut MRT. It includes a 250-seat outdoor amphitheatre with a design inspired by the weaves of a rattan basket. The park also has an arts centre for exhibitions and courses.

Istana Park, opened in 1996, occupies an area that was established as Orchard Park in 1971. Istana Park was designed to enhance the prominence of the Istana’s entrance. Its centrepiece is a 26-metre-long, four-

storey-high Festival Arch. The Arch’s design symbolises its role as a gateway to the Civic District, where many National Monuments and other historical landmarks are located.

Another green lung along Orchard Road is the Penang Road Open Space next to Killiney Post Office. This park houses a garden with plants that provide nectar for butterflies or food for their caterpillars. It forms part of an Orchard Butterfly Trail developed in 2010 by Nature Society in partnership with National Parks Board and Singapore Tourism Board. The trail includes butterfly gardens located at various parts of Orchard Road such as Istana Park and Nassim Green off Tanglin Road. Since it was developed, the trail has attracted over 50 butterfly species.



*Dhoby Ghaut Green with the amphitheatre on the right, 2010s*  
Courtesy of National Parks Board



*Istana Park with the Festival Arch in the centre and Istana Heritage Gallery on the right, 2017*

### Flora and fauna at Orchard Road

It may surprise some, but Orchard Road is a choice location to spot native wildlife that has adapted to the city environment. Since the 1970s, an avenue of mature angsana trees has lined much of Orchard Road. These trees, together with Orchard Road’s parks, support biodiversity by providing habitats for fauna such as birds and butterflies.

Orchard Road’s roadside vegetation also offers refuge to the changeable lizard (*Calotes versicolor*), while the common flying dragon (*Draco sumatranus*) can often be seen gliding from tree to tree right along Orchard Road.



*Changeable lizard, a common reptile that can be found at Orchard Road, 2016*  
Courtesy of Marcus Ng

Stamford Canal at Dhoby Ghaut is another habitat where visitors can see many fishes, which provide food for the collared kingfisher (*Todirhampus chloris*) and little heron (*Butorides striata*). At the butterfly gardens, visitors may spot the olive-backed sunbird (*Cinnyris jugularis*), which resembles a hummingbird and feeds on nectar.



*Butterflies that can be seen at the Butterfly Trail @ Orchard, 2017 (from left): blue pansy and plain tiger*  
Courtesy of Marcus Ng



*Birds that can be seen at Orchard Road, 2016 (from top): olive-backed sunbird and collared kingfisher*  
Courtesy of Marcus Ng

### ROADS NAMED AFTER FAUNA AND FLORA

A number of roads around Orchard Road are named after various fauna and flora. For example, a housing estate called Kimlim Park off Grange Road has roads named after the Malay terms for animals. These include Jalan Arnab (“rabbit road”), Jalan Kelawar (“bat road”), Jalan Tupai (“squirrel road”), Lengkok Angsa (“goose bend”) and Lengkok Merak (“peacock bend”).

A legacy of Orchard Road’s now vanished nutmeg orchards is Nutmeg Road, which can be found off Mount Elizabeth Road behind Lucky Plaza. This road leads to another housing estate called Kimsia Park, which has roads that have botanical names taken from Malay such as Jalan Jintan (“cumin road”), Jalan Lada Puteh (“pepper road”) and Jalan Kayu Manis (“cinnamon road”).

# AT HOME AT ORCHARD ROAD

*"After leaving town, [Orchard Road] passes through a narrow valley, with a series of little hillocks on either hand, and upon which many houses have been built. The road is very pretty, being lined by tall bamboo hedges and trees which, uniting above, form a complete shade. The bungalows are generally built of brick and stucco, and are surrounded by large compounds of gardens. Beyond the residences are the remains of many nutmeg plantations, then succeeds a strip of thin jungle, then the Chinese pepper and gambier plantations, and then comes the jungle in earnest."*

– Description of Orchard Road in 1873 by Frank Vincent in *The Land of the White Elephant*

From the 1800s, various communities including the Chinese, Malays, Indians and Jews, settled down in the Orchard Road area. Besides homes, they built places of worship, cemeteries, schools and community organisations. By the late 1800s, Orchard Road had developed into a quiet suburb that offered residents peace and privacy away from the town by the Singapore River.

Some of the residents in the Orchard Road area also established social institutions and



Orchard Road, c. 1870  
Courtesy of National Museum of Singapore, National Heritage Board

clubs where they could gather to dine, drink and dance. As each community built its own institutions, the multicultural legacy of Orchard Road can still be glimpsed today in the historic buildings and neighbourhoods that remain here.

## EARLY ACTIVITIES ALONG ORCHARD ROAD

In the early 1800s, the Orchard Road area was considered as belonging to the outskirts of town, as the commercial centre of Singapore then was located by the Singapore River. As Dhoby Ghaut was closest to the town area and had a freshwater stream to provide water, it was the area where many of the early activities of Orchard Road took place.

Until 1827, a garrison of sepoy (Indian soldiers employed by the British) was based at the foot of Government Hill. This garrison included Indian washermen who laundered clothes in the stream known as Sungei Brass Bassa. The area was subsequently named Dhoby Ghaut after this activity as *dhoby* means "washerman" in Hindi, while *Ghaut* or *ghat* in Hindi refers to the area along a riverbank used for bathing or washing. In Tamil, Dhoby Ghaut was called Vannan Theruvu or "Street of the Dhobies".

Tan Wee Him (b. 1948), who grew up at the nearby River Valley Road, described the scene at Dhoby Ghaut to the National Archives in an interview conducted in 2006:

*"That stretch, of course the name Dhoby Ghaut derive[s] from, there's a lot of Indian laundry shop[s] while in those days they call it dhoby... And there's a small, little piece of green... a park right in front there. You'll find all the [laundry was hung] to dry in that garden."*

A former laundryman, Ng Seng Mun (b. 1926), told the National Archives in an interview conducted in 1987:

*"The dhobies were scattered beside the Cathay Building... The early days, even Chinese shops along town... they also used the same name [for] laundry, as 'dhoby shop' to attract European customers."*

Near Sungei Brass Bassa, there were also temporary quarters for Indian convicts, who were first brought to Singapore by the British in 1825 as indentured labourers. In 1841, the convicts were rehoused in a new prison facility along Bras Basah Road. This facility included a temporary hospital and cattle sheds on the present sites of the Orchard Presbyterian Church and Young Men's Christian Association (YMCA).

As it was then outside town limits, Orchard Road was also used as a burial site during the 1800s. The oldest cemetery there was located in what are now the Istana grounds.



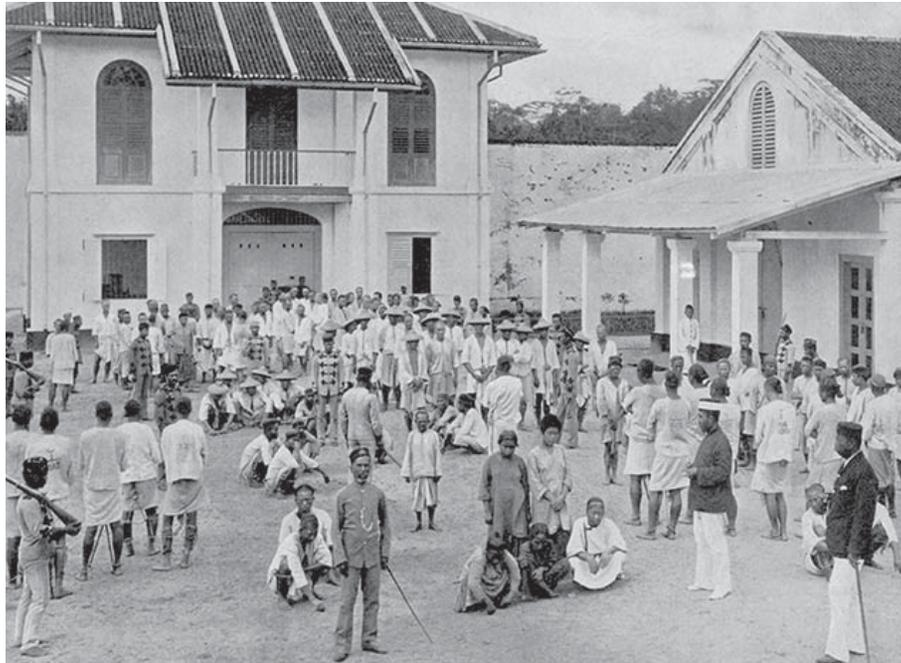
Laundry laid out to dry at Dhoby Ghaut, c. 1890  
Courtesy of National Museum of Singapore, National Heritage Board

This cemetery served as a burial ground for Bencoolen Malays, who came to Singapore from West Sumatra, Indonesia, in the 1820s and settled around Bencoolen Street. *Kramat Road* and *Kramat Lane* nearby referenced the *keramat* (graves of holy persons) in this cemetery, which existed until 1973.

The second oldest burial site along Orchard Road was a Jewish cemetery established in 1841. The cemetery catered to the sizeable number of Jewish traders who had migrated to Singapore after it became a British port. This cemetery was located between Orchard Road and Penang Road. It was in active use until 1903 and was exhumed in 1983 to make way for Dhoby Ghaut MRT. Singapore's Jewish cemetery is now located at Choa Chu Kang.



Indian dhobies washing laundry in a stream, c. 1890  
Courtesy of National Museum of Singapore, National Heritage Board



Prisoners and guards in the convict prison compound at Bras Basah Road, c. 1900  
Illustrated London News Collection, courtesy of National Archives of Singapore



Exhumation activities at the Jewish cemetery at Orchard Road, 1983  
Ronni Pinsler Collection, courtesy of National Archives of Singapore

The Teochew community also had a cemetery, Tai Shan Ting, at Orchard Road. It was established by the Ngee Ann Kongsi in 1845 between Grange Road and Paterson Road. Tai Shan Ting was located on a hilly area and thus an ideal burial site according to Chinese feng-shui (geomancy) beliefs. The cemetery was exhumed in the 1950s to make way for Ngee Ann Building, a modern apartment and shopping complex.

Just south of Tai Shan Ting, there was a Muslim cemetery known as Bukit Wakaf. This cemetery was established in the late 1800s on land donated by the Aljunieds, a Yemeni-Arab family who were prominent landowners and philanthropists. The cemetery was in use until the late 1920s and later exhumed in 1983.

### A RESIDENTIAL SUBURB

From the mid-1800s, Orchard Road had become a desirable suburban address with mainly British road names. For instance, Thomas Oxley's former estate became a neighbourhood of about 40 houses by 1862. The roads in this area were named after places in the British Isles, such as Somerset Road, Devonshire Road, Dublin Road and Killiney Road.

Today, two surviving houses on Oxley's former estate can be seen at 165/167 Penang Road. Built in the late 1800s, this Victorian-style building appears to be a single house but is actually composed of two semi-

detached units. In the late 1900s, this building was occupied by Tong San Association and a private school. It was conserved in 2000 and later restored as part of Winsland House II.

Rajabali Jumabhoy (1898-1998) recounted that in the early 1900s, Orchard Road was "mostly inhabited by the executives of British big business firms". Jumabhoy had migrated to Singapore in 1916 from India to trade in spices. Speaking to the National Archives in 1981, he added:

*"They had huge bungalows with land covering five to ten acres. From the Grange Road and Orchard Road corner onwards there used to be bungalows right up to the Botanic Gardens, Cluny Road and further down."*

Besides European residents, many Jews of Baghdadi origin also settled around Dhoby Ghaut, Bras Basah and Selegie Road. As a result, part of this area became known to the community as *mahallah* ("place" or "neighbourhood" in Arabic).

In 1921, a Jewish entrepreneur, Joseph Aaron Elias, built Amber Mansions at the corner of Orchard Road and Penang Road. This was one of Singapore's first apartment buildings and had a shopping arcade on the ground level. The building was demolished in 1984 to make way for the development of Dhoby Ghaut MRT.



165/167 Penang Road, 1990  
Courtesy of Urban Redevelopment Authority



A row of bungalows at Tanglin, late 1800s  
Courtesy of National Museum of Singapore, National Heritage Board



Belle Vue, 1977  
Ronni Pinsler Collection, courtesy of National Archives of Singapore



Amber Mansions, 1982  
From the Lee Kip Lin Collection. Courtesy of the National Library Board, Singapore.



*Eden Hall, 2014*  
Photo by Sailors Society licensed under Creative Commons CC BY-NC-ND 2.0

A number of other prominent Jewish residents also lived along Orchard Road. The most notable was businessman Reuben Manasseh Meyer, who bought Oxley's old residence, Killiney House, in 1890. Meyer later expanded Killiney House and renamed it Belle Vue.

Another Jewish businessman, Ezekiel Saleh Manasseh, built Eden Hall at Nassim Road in 1904. Designed by architect Regent Alfred John Bidwell, the house features white plaster decorations on grey walls which earned it the nicknames "Wedding Cake" and "Wedgwood House" (Wedgwood is a fine porcelain brand). Since 1955, Eden Hall has served as the official residence of the British High Commissioner to Singapore.

In the late 1800s, there was also a Teochew community at Orchard Road. These Teochews settled at Kampong Teochew, located on the Grange Road side of the Tai Shan Ting cemetery. Nearby was a religious shrine established in 1892 known as the Lee Temple, which was managed by the Singapore Teochew Lee Clan Association. Kampong

Teochew existed until the 1950s while the Lee Temple relocated to Tessensohn Road in 1981.

### **Black and white houses**

A number of colonial-era bungalows, including many in the Tanglin area, are built in a style known as "black and white" or mock Tudor-Elizabethan (after an architectural style popular during the English Tudor era in the 1500s). The characteristic black and white colours of their façades are due to the use of partially exposed dark timber frames and white plaster walls.

The earliest known black and white house in Singapore is Atbara, which was built in 1898 at Gallop Road off Tyersall Avenue. Named after a Sudanese river and town where a major battle took place, Atbara was owned by Scottish lawyer John Burkinshaw and designed by Bidwell. Apart from its striking black and white façade, Atbara features Moorish (North African Muslim) elements such as cloud-like arches supporting the building and onion-shaped topknots (decorative top sections) on the external staircase.



*Atbara, 1984*  
From the Lee Kip Lin Collection. Courtesy of the National Library Board, Singapore.



*Inverturret, 1985*  
From the Lee Kip Lin Collection. Courtesy of the National Library Board, Singapore.

Another black and white house, Inverturret, was built near Atbara in 1906. Between 1939 and 1999, Atbara and Inverturret served as the French Embassy and French Ambassador's residence respectively. These conserved houses were restored in 2012 and became part of the Singapore Botanic Gardens' new Tyersall-Gallop Core extension in 2015.

Black and white houses can also be found along Nassim Road and Goodwood Hill.

These were built in the early 1900s to serve as residences for colonial officials. There are also black and white houses at Seton Close off Tanglin Road, which were built in the 1920s to house civil servants.

### **Notable non-European homes**

The Orchard Road area was a mostly European neighbourhood until the early 1900s, when a few wealthy Chinese businessmen started to build homes in the area. One of them was Aw

Boon Haw, who was known as “Tiger Balm King” after the ointment from which he made his fortune. In 1926, Aw built a family villa called Jade House at Nassim Road.

Jade House featured a tower-like turret and contained a sizable jade and carved minerals collection which was opened for public viewing and made the house a popular attraction. The Aw family donated most of their collection to the National Museum of Singapore in 1979. Jade House was demolished in 1990 and the site is now occupied by the Nassim Jade condominium.



Jade House, 1964  
Ministry of Information and the Arts Collection, courtesy of National Archives of Singapore



A phoenix carving, late Qing period, from the Aw Boon Haw Jade Collection  
Courtesy of National Museum of Singapore, National Heritage Board



Wellington House, 2018

Another notable residence built by a local Chinese entrepreneur is Wellington House at Grange Road. This bungalow was built in 1938 by the family of Chee Swee Cheng, a Melaka-born entrepreneur. Its name was chosen as Chee’s family felt that “well” meant “good” and sounded like the word “wealth”.

The architect of Wellington House, Ho Kwong Yew, designed the bungalow in the Modern style and gave it a curved profile and long windows. The bungalow also contained an unusual feature for its time - a flat roof with a rooftop garden - and it was conserved in 2008.

### SERVING THE RESIDENTS: THE POLICE AND POST OFFICE

By the mid-1800s, Orchard Road had evolved into a residential area and the authorities started setting up public services for residents, which included a police post and a post office. The police post was established at the junction of Orchard Road and Paterson Road in the 1850s and later became Orchard Road Police Station. In 1980, a new divisional police headquarters was built at Napier Road, replacing Orchard Road Police Station. The mall ION Orchard

was then built at the site of the former police station in 2009.

The Tanglin Post Office, located on the site of the present Tanglin Mall, opened in 1897 and provided postal services. It moved to its current location at the junction of Tanglin Road and Napier Road in 1974. Another post office opened in 1902 at Orchard Road facing Buyong Road. This post office closed down in 1962 and was replaced by the present Killiney Post Office, which was renovated in 2009 to house a café-bar on its second storey (formerly the postmaster’s quarters).



The police post at the junction of Orchard Road and Paterson Road, 1880s  
Courtesy of National Museum of Singapore, National Heritage Board

### HOME TO THE DIPLOMATIC COMMUNITY

In the 1890s, Siamese King Rama V (1853-1910), also known as King Chulalongkorn, bought Hurricane House (located at the present Draycott Drive area) and the surrounding land. The king then used Hurricane House as his residence during his visits to Singapore. This marked the beginning of a significant diplomatic presence at Orchard Road. Although Hurricane House was sold towards the end of King Chulalongkorn’s reign, the Siamese government once again purchased a plot at Orchard Road in 1897 where it built the

Thai consulate (now the Royal Thai Embassy) in 1960. The old embassy building was later rebuilt as a new diplomatic complex that reopened in 2017.

The Indonesian Embassy was also located on Orchard Road at the former Wisma Indonesia building. Built in 1963, Wisma Indonesia was a



King Chulalongkorn (Rama V) of Siam, late 1800s  
Courtesy of National Museum of Singapore, National Heritage Board

striking building with high pointed roofs that recalled Minangkabau houses in Sumatra, Indonesia. After Konfrontasi broke out between Indonesia and Malaysia (which then included Singapore) in 1963, Wisma Indonesia was seized by the government.

The building was later returned to Indonesia in 1967, two years after Singapore separated from Malaysia. During the 1980s, Wisma Indonesia was redeveloped into Wisma Atria and the Indonesian Embassy relocated to Chatsworth Road.

### WHAT WAS KONFRONTASI?

Konfrontasi was a policy of armed confrontation by Indonesia against the newly formed Federation of Malaysia during the period 1963-66. It involved incursions and bombings in parts of the federation, which Indonesia perceived as a neo-colonial project. Singapore was part of the federation until 1965, and one of the most devastating attacks during this time took place at MacDonald House at Dhoby Ghaut. Please refer to page 56 for more information.



The former Wisma Indonesia, which housed the Indonesian Embassy and a mosque, c. 1970s  
Courtesy of National Museum of Singapore, National Heritage Board



Royal Thai Embassy, 2017

There are also a number of other embassies located around Orchard Road. The Indian High Commission has occupied a bungalow at Grange Road since 1948 while the Burmese Consul (now the Myanmar Embassy) has been located at St Martin's Drive off Tanglin Road since 1954.

In close proximity to Orchard Road, the embassies of Japan, Philippines, Russia and Saudi Arabia are located along Nassim Road. The British High Commission is located along Tanglin Road, while the Australian High Commission and the American Embassy are located along Napier Road.

Most of these foreign embassies are not open to casual visitors but the Thai Embassy organises regular fairs and festivals that are open to the public.

### THE ISTANA

The grandest site at Orchard Road was not a private residence nor an embassy, but the former home of the British Governor, known as the Istana today. In 1867, the colonial government bought 43 hectares of land on Charles Prinsep's former nutmeg estate. Colonial Engineer Major John Frederick Adolphus McNair then designed Government House, which was built by 3,000 Indian convict labourers.

Completed in 1869, Government House has a design that was influenced by neoclassical architecture, with tall columns inspired by classical (ancient Greek and Roman) architecture. It also incorporated tropical architectural features such as wide verandahs and louvred windows for ventilation. On a clear day, its position on a hill provided a view all the way to the Indonesian islands and the hills of Johor before modern skyscrapers blocked the view.

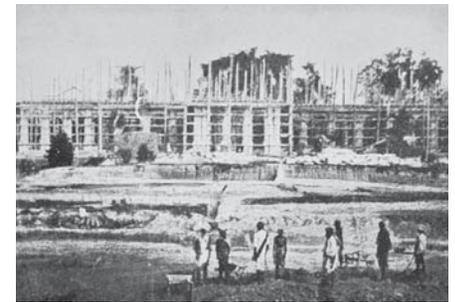
After Singapore attained self-governance in 1959, Government House was renamed Istana Negara Singapura ("Palace of the State of Singapore" in Malay). It became the residence of the Yang di-Pertuan Negara (Head of State), Yusof bin Ishak, who started the tradition of an Istana Open House in 1960. After independence in 1965, he became Singapore's first President.

The building's name was subsequently shortened to the Istana, and it became the

official residence of the President. However, none of the Presidents stayed in the main building. President Yusof bin Ishak resided in Sri Melati, a bungalow on the Istana grounds. Built in 1869, Sri Melati was demolished in the 1970s due to severe termite infestation. In its place, a residence called the Lodge was built in 1974, which was used by Singapore's third President C V Devan Nair.



President Yusof bin Ishak and Puan Noor Aishah welcoming guests to the Istana, 1966  
Yusof Ishak Collection, courtesy of National Archives of Singapore



Government House under construction, c. 1868  
Courtesy of National Museum of Singapore, National Heritage Board



Government House, c. 1869  
Courtesy of National Museum of Singapore, National Heritage Board

## Sri Temasek

Sri Temasek is a smaller building near the Istana that housed the Colonial Secretary, the second-highest-ranking official during British times. Its name references Temasek, an ancient name for Singapore which means “sea town” in Javanese. After Singapore achieved independence in 1965, Sri Temasek became the official residence of the Prime Minister.

This two-storey bungalow is surrounded by timber verandahs similar to those of traditional Malay houses. A unique Chinese moon-gate, which serves as a screen, can be found on the

bungalow’s second storey. The Istana and Sri Temasek were collectively gazetted a National Monument in 1992.



*Sri Temasek, when it served as the Colonial Secretary’s residence, 1932*  
Diana Good (Nee Shelley) Collection, courtesy of National Archives of Singapore

## VISITING THE ISTANA

Members of the public can visit the Istana during Open House days, which are held to celebrate the following occasions: Chinese New Year (second day), Labour Day, Hari Raya Puasa, National Day and Deepavali. The opening hours are usually from 8.30am to 6pm.

The public can also view the monthly ceremonial changing of the guards at the Istana’s main entrance. This ceremony usually takes place on the first Sunday of every month, except for July and August. It begins at 5.45pm and typically ends with a Silent Precision Drill display.

In addition, the public can visit the Istana Heritage Gallery at Istana Park, which showcases the history of the Istana and selected state gifts received from foreign leaders. The gallery is open daily from 10am to 6pm, except for Wednesdays, and entry is free.



*The ceremonial changing of the guards at the Istana, 1 April 2018*

## A statue carved by the Indian convict labourers

The Indian convict labourers who built Government House carved a 56.5 cm-high wooden statue of an Indian man holding a bowl, which they regarded as a guardian. In the early 1900s, the statue was given a facelift to look like a clean-shaven Malay man and named *mandor* (“supervisor” in Malay), probably by Government House’s then predominantly Malay domestic staff.

During the 1990s, the statue was rediscovered in a storeroom, restored and is now installed at the Istana. A replica of this guardian statue can be seen at the Istana Heritage Gallery and another reproduction of the statue is on display at the Indian Heritage Centre.



*Replica of the mandor statue in the Istana Heritage Gallery, 2017*

## CONSERVED NEIGHBOURHOODS

### Emerald Hill

Emerald Hill was the site of a former nutmeg orchard which started to take shape as a residential neighbourhood in the early 1900s. The area was acquired in 1900 by businessmen Seah Eng Kiat and Seah Boon Kang, who then sold smaller parcels of land to new owners to build terrace houses and shophouses.

By the 1930s, Emerald Hill consisted of at least 112 houses, 45 of which were occupied by Peranakan families. Peranakans, also known as Straits Chinese or Babas, are the descendants of early Chinese immigrants who married locals and settled in Southeast Asia.

Heng Chiang Ki (b. 1923), who moved to Emerald Hill in 1929, noted that the Emerald Hill community was:

*“mostly Peranakans... and some Teochews, Hokkiens and Cantonese, Hainanese, Malays and a few Indian families.”*

Tan Sock Kern (b. 1918), who migrated to Singapore from China in 1926 and lived at Emerald Hill as a child, shared a similar experience. “The whole of Emerald Hill Road



*Shophouses along Emerald Hill Road, 1969*  
Courtesy of Urban Redevelopment Authority



*Townhouses along Cuppage Road, 1969*  
Courtesy of Urban Redevelopment Authority

was a Baba street,” she told the National Archives in 1993. Relating the differences between *singkeh* (“new arrivals” in Chinese) such as herself and her Peranakan kin, she explained:

*“In China, when we meet our relatives, we bow. When I bow[ed] to my uncles and aunties [in Emerald Hill], my cousins would giggle... They never bow[ed]... They [spoke] a very Chinese type of Malay but my neighbours [were] real Peranakans and so they [spoke] Peranakan Malay, which is different from the Malay spoken by Malay[s].”*

Emerald Hill’s development into a residential neighbourhood spilled over to nearby Saunders Road and Cuppage Road. A banker, Boey Lian Chin, built 17 terrace houses along Cuppage Road in 1905-07. These houses were conserved in 1977 and now form Cuppage Terrace.

### Life at Emerald Hill then and now

Many of the buildings at Emerald Hill are traditional shophouses linked by sheltered verandahs known as five-foot ways. The shophouses still retain their *pintu pagars*, which are fence-like pairs of revolving doors. These doors offer residents ease of entry while keeping strangers from peering into the house.

Emerald Hill also has number of traditional terrace houses, which blend elaborate European elements such as neoclassical columns with local features such as colourful wall tiles and panels bearing Chinese motifs like flowers and birds. Many of these houses have been renovated since they were first built in the early 1900s, and some have plaques on their façade indicating that they are recipients of the Architectural Heritage Awards by URA for their high-quality restoration. Some of the houses also have an additional storyboard plaque with information about their history.

An example of a house that has received the Architectural Heritage Award is 65 Emerald Hill Road, the long-time home of Bobby Yeo (b. 1957), whose father Yeo Khee Lim, a businessman and philanthropist, moved to Emerald Hill in 1951. Yeo recalled that there were many hawkers in the area during the 1960s:



65 Emerald Hill, 1988  
Courtesy of Urban Redevelopment Authority



Conserved houses at Emerald Hill, including  
65 Emerald Hill, 2018



Orchard Road Railway Bridge, c. 1913  
Courtesy of National Archives of Singapore

"At Emerald Hill, we could buy food even at midnight. There was a chicken congee shop which I miss. Even the satay, they would come to our doorstep to cook it."

Tong Siew Yin (b. 1950), who stayed at 198 Orchard Road next to Emerald Hill, recalls enjoying similar fare during the 1960s:

"Every Sunday morning, at the bottom of Emerald Hill, an Indian man would sell delicious mee siam. We'd go down with a rice bowl and 10 cents. There was also a you zha kueh [fried dough stick] hawker. A pushcart carrot cake hawker was there too. And an Indian ice ball seller and a char kuay teow man in the afternoon. Those were wonderful idyllic days."

The community of Emerald Hill was a close-knit one. Well-known local architect and professor Lee Kip Lin used to frequent the area as a schoolboy and recounted that it was a "friendly neighbourhood" where "the street echoed to the laughter of children and the cries and sounds of itinerant hawkers".

Writing in his book *Emerald Hill: The story of a street in words and pictures*, Lee added that "for the housewives the Orchard Road Municipal Market [at Koek Road] was conveniently close" while "entertainment was within walking distance at the Palladium Theatre".

According to Bobby Yeo, Emerald Hill's proximity to the Pavilion Theatre (previously Palladium Theatre and now Orchard Gateway) gave Emerald Hill Road the name *Tang Leng Tiam Yia Yee Hang* or "Tanglin Cinema Street" in Teochew.

Rosy Nakhooda (b. 1936), a resident of nearby Saunders Road since 1947, recalled:

"At the end of the road, there was a football field. During the war, neighbours planted tapioca on it, so it had high ridges. We kids used to run around, play catch and hide-and-seek there. Lalang grew on top of the ridges and we could run between them."

Nakhooda added that while Emerald Hill was dominated by Peranakans, she also had Indian and Jewish neighbours:

"When I was growing up, there was an Indian family here who played mahjong. The sounds of the area then were two things: piano playing, as many children had lessons, and mahjong tiles."

A railway bridge once spanned Orchard Road in the early 1900s and served a line that went between Emerald Hill and Cuppage Road. This was part of the Singapore-Kranji Railway (also known as Singapore-Johor Railway) that was opened in 1903 and linked Woodlands to a station

at Tank Road. The railway stopped operating after Tanjong Pagar Railway Station opened in 1932. Tan Sock Kern recalled:

"From my house [at Emerald Hill], we could just see the trains, and at night, we could hear the rail... The train ran across the road on a little high bridge."

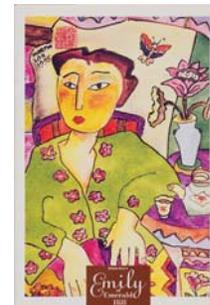
Emerald Hill was gazetted as a conservation area in 1989 and as a result, its historic buildings cannot be demolished nor can they have their façades altered. In addition to the government's efforts, residents of Emerald Hill have also been active in preserving their historic neighbourhood.

In 2007, a group of homeowners formed the Emerald Hill Conservation Association to ensure that the area's historical roots are retained. For instance, to preserve the area's residential character and maintain its continuity as a community, the association has successfully partnered the relevant authorities to upgrade the landscaping and overall period infrastructure such as its brick-paved streets, and to maintain residences in the majority of the estate by restricting commercial establishments to the lower end of Emerald Hill, adjacent to Orchard Road. The association has further received support for gazetted a traditional colour scheme for houses in the estate.

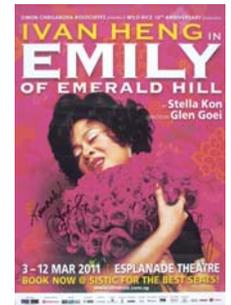
## EMERALD HILL IN FICTION

Emerald Hill has been immortalised on stage by *Emily of Emerald Hill*, a play written by local playwright Stella Kon. The play tells the story of Emily Gan, who marries a wealthy man but suffers various tragedies including the death of her son. The play was partly based on Kon's memories of Oberon, her family home at Emerald Hill, which was owned by Kon's grandfather, banker Seow Poh Leng and his wife Polly Tan.

Another local writer whose work features Emerald Hill is Goh Sin Tub, who wrote *The Nan-Mei-Su Girls of Emerald Hill* and *The Ghost Lover of Emerald Hill and Other Stories*.



A 1996 programme of a production of *Emily of Emerald Hill* by well-known actress Neo Swee Lin with cover art by renowned Peranakan artist Martin Loh  
Collection of The Peranakan Museum



A 2011 poster of a production of *Emily of Emerald Hill*  
Collection of The Peranakan Museum

## Cairnhill

Like Emerald Hill, Cairnhill started to develop into a residential area after the failure of Charles Carnie's nutmeg orchard. Carnie's house was acquired in 1884 and redeveloped into a bungalow for the manager of Chartered Bank. Terrace houses also began to appear along Cairnhill Road in the early 1900s.

One former resident was Tan Sock Kern, whose father bought two adjacent houses at Cairnhill in 1929 for their family of fourteen children. Another former resident was Lim Kim San, the first Chairman of the Housing & Development Board (HDB) in 1960-63. Speaking to the National Archives in 1985, Lim said that he played games such as kites, tops and catching fish in the drains. He added:



A sketch of Charles Carnie's house in Cairnhill by J T Thomson, 1848-49  
Courtesy of National Museum of Singapore, National Heritage Board



The road leading to Cairnhill, 1880s  
Courtesy of National Museum of Singapore, National Heritage Board

*"There were cows next to our place. The Indians were keeping cows... on the empty land. And you watch[ed] them milking cows and goats. And then [they played] the drum. So at dusk, you'll hear the boom, boom, boom."*

One of Cairnhill's most prominent houses is Tan Chin Tuan Mansion, which was built around 1926 by rubber tycoon and philanthropist Tan Kah Kee. The mansion was later sold to Tan Chin Tuan, a banker who became Chairman of the Oversea-Chinese Banking Corporation (OCBC) in 1966.

Tan Chin Tuan Mansion occupies a commanding spot at the junction of Cairnhill Road and Cairnhill Circle. The mansion's distinguishing exterior features include a tower with a bell-shaped turret and a large porch supported by several round columns while its interiors contain detailed teak doors and panels, along with Art Nouveau-inspired terrazzo floor tiles. It was conserved in 2003 and subsequently restored as a condominium's clubhouse.

## SCHOOLS AND YOUTH ORGANISATIONS

Over time, the population of Orchard Road grew, and in the early 1900s, its residents founded schools and youth organisations in the area to cater to the educational and fitness needs of the young. Some of these schools have since relocated, but their former campuses have been repurposed for new uses.

### Former Singapore Chinese Girls' School building (now Chatsworth International School)

37 Emerald Hill Road

*(Note: This site is not open to the public but its exterior can be viewed from Emerald Hill or Cairnhill Road.)*

One of the oldest schools in the area was the Singapore Chinese Girls' School (SCGS), founded in 1899 by Dr Lim Boon Keng, lawyer Song Ong Siang and scholar Khoo Seok Wan to provide Chinese girls with modern education. This was considered a radical idea within the Chinese community as education was regarded to be unnecessary for girls at that



An SCGS class photo belonging to Tong Siew Yin (front row, fourth from left), 1967  
Courtesy of Tong Siew Yin

time. SCGS was originally located at Hill Street before it moved to a new two-storey building at the site of Claregrove, Dr Lim's former home at Emerald Hill, in 1926.

Tan Sock Kern was a former SCGS pupil who became its principal in 1952. She recalled that in its early years, most pupils wore a samfu (a short-sleeved blouse with loose trousers). A principal named Miss Nesbitt then introduced a uniform consisting of a white top with sky-blue trousers. Tan recounted:

*"People outside called us the 'kan chia' (rickshaw puller) School because of the trousers. It was the only [girls'] school that wears trousers... [Miss Nesbitt] wanted the trousers because it was easy for [the students] to do drill[s] and running and things of that sort. And I understand none of the girls like[d] that uniform."*

Tong Siew Yin recalled that by the time she attended SCGS in the 1960s, the uniform had been changed to a sleeveless ensemble similar to the present-day outfit:

*"During my time, SCGS ha[d] blue and green uniforms: blue for the morning session and green for the afternoon [session]. Many girls living in the area would go and study there."*

After World War II, SCGS was opened to students of all races. In 1994, the school relocated to its new premises at Dunearn Road. The former school building at Emerald Hill was declared a historic site by the National Heritage Board in 1997 and it currently houses Chatsworth International School.

### Former Anglo-Chinese School campus (now Cairnhill Arts Centre)

126 Cairnhill Road

Another prominent school located in the Cairnhill area was Anglo-Chinese School (ACS). ACS was founded in 1886 by Reverend William Fitzjames Oldham, founder of the Methodist Church in Singapore and Malaya. The school first started in Amoy Street but moved to Coleman Street within a year due to expanding enrolment. In 1888, Oldham Hall, a boarding school, was established on Oldham Lane off Dhoby Ghaut.

In 1928, ACS moved the upper level classes to a new building at Cairnhill. The three-storey school building was designed by Frank Brewer, who incorporated modern Chinese elements such as upturned roof eaves and geometrical motifs on the beams and walls. Former ACS student Felix Chia (1927-2010) recalled to the National Archives in 1994:

*"It [was] a school on a hill. We [had] to climb about 40 steps to reach the playground and the classes."*

In 1950, the secondary school at Cairnhill moved to a new campus at Barker Road. The former premises later housed the Teachers' Training College, Vocational Instructor Training Centre, Adult Education Board and the Centre of Music and Dance of the Nanyang Academy of Fine Arts. It was restored in 1993 and now houses the Cairnhill Arts Centre.

### Young Men's Christian Association (YMCA)

1 Orchard Road



YMCA, 1910s  
Lim Kheng Chye Collection, courtesy of National Archives of Singapore

The oldest surviving community organisation in the area is the Young Men's Christian Association (YMCA). YMCA was established in London, UK, in 1844 to provide healthy social, physical and educational activities for young men. Its Singapore branch was built as an Edwardian-style brick structure at Orchard Road in 1911.

Fondly known as the "Y", the building offered classes for different commercial and technical subjects. The YMCA also set up Singapore's first public swimming pool using a refitted water tank at Fort Canning in 1919, and later constructed tennis, basketball and volleyball courts nearby.

N I Narayanan (b. 1928), a former resident of the area, recalled that in the 1930s:

*"Opposite Dhoby Ghaut, there used to be a triangular playground with a swing and see-saws. On the other side of the road was the*

*YMCA. The triangular playground was a well-known landmark which gave rise to the YMCA's Hokkien nickname, Sar Kar Por or 'three-cornered place'."*

After World War II, the "Y" underwent an extensive renovation and reopened its doors in 1946. It continued to organise educational and social activities, and had a restaurant and rooms for reading, billiards and games. The old "Y" was subsequently redeveloped into the present nine-storey building in 1984.

### Young Women's Christian Association (YWCA), Fort Canning Lodge

6 Fort Canning Road



Puan Noor Aishah (second from right) at the foundation stone laying ceremony for a new YWCA hostel at Fort Canning, 1967  
Yusof Ishak Collection, courtesy of National Archives of Singapore

Nearby, the Young Women's Christian Association (YWCA) owns and manages the YWCA Fort Canning Lodge, which has occupied this site since 1914. The YWCA is Singapore's oldest women's organisation and was founded in 1875 by British missionary Sophia Cooke to advance the development of women and girls. The new building at Fort Canning was completed in 1997 and provides meeting and training facilities, as well as affordable lodging in the city. The revenue from the Fort Canning Lodge helps to fund YWCA's community services for the needy.

### Boy Scouts and Girl Guides

The Singapore Boy Scouts Association (now Singapore Scout Association) was founded by Frank Cooper Sands in 1910 to nurture

boys to be physically active and to contribute back to society. The Scouts operated from a room in the YMCA until the 1930s. In 1959, the association built a new headquarters at Buyong Road called Sands House. The Scouts moved out of Sands House in 1987 to their current headquarters in Bishan.

The Girl Guides also started their Singapore branch at Orchard Road. Singapore's first Guide Company was founded in 1917 at St Mary's Home, which then occupied the House of Tan Yeok Nee. In 1941, the Guides moved to a new headquarters at Buyong Road, which was known affectionately as "the Hut". In 1965, a new Guide House opened at Clemenceau Avenue, which became the Guides' headquarters until 1999, when they also relocated to Bishan.



Yang Di-Pertuan Negara Yusof Ishak at the birthday anniversary of Lord Baden-Powell of Gilwell, founder of the Scout Movement, at Sands House, 1962  
Yusof Ishak Collection, courtesy of National Archives of Singapore



Lady Anne Black, wife of the Governor of Singapore, at the Girl Guides' Headquarters at Buyong Road, 1955  
Ministry of Information and the Arts Collection, courtesy of National Archives of Singapore

### COMMUNITY SERVICE ORGANISATIONS

Orchard Road is also where a number of other longstanding community service and healthcare organisations were first established in Singapore. Many of them, such as the Singapore Red Cross and the Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals, will be familiar names for Singaporeans. Today, some of these organisations continue to operate in the district, while others have since relocated to other parts of Singapore.

### Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (SPCA)

One community service organisation that started out at Orchard Road is the Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (SPCA). The Singapore SPCA was originally founded in 1876 but it became inactive and was revived in 1947 by Englishwoman Lucia Bach. Bach leased a bungalow named Burnside at Tomlinson Road, operating it as a boarding house and maintaining kennels on its grounds for stray dogs.

In 1954, the SPCA moved to Orchard Road, near Buyong Road. Speaking to the National Archives in 2006, Tan Wee Him recalled:

*"That was where the pound was, where people who want to abandon their dogs go. They park their car on the roadside of Orchard Road, dash into this slight little doorway and then they dump their dog or cat there and they dash out again."*

When the area was redeveloped in 1984, the SPCA moved to Mount Vernon Road before relocating again to 50 Sungei Tengah Road where it is based today.



The entrance to the SPCA on the side of the former Orchard Road Post Office, 1982  
From the Lee Kip Lin Collection. Courtesy of the National Library Board, Singapore.

### Children's Aid Society and Children's Society



*Children's Aid Society at Tomlinson Road, 1940s*  
Children's Aid Society Collection, courtesy of National Archives of Singapore

Next to Burnside at Tomlinson Road was Melrose House, home of the Children's Aid Society during the period 1930-70. This society was established in 1902 to take care of destitute or orphaned European or Eurasian children in Singapore.

Lucia Bach felt that there was a need for a similar organisation for local children and established the Children's Society (now Singapore Children's Society) in 1952. This society looked after the welfare of local children, especially those who were sickly and malnourished, and whose parents lacked the means to provide proper care.

After Singapore's independence in 1965, the Children's Aid Society expanded to cater to children of all backgrounds from broken homes and relocated to its present premises

at Clementi Road in 1970. The Singapore Children's Society also relocated to a shophouse at Towner Road in 1955 and is now based at Tiong Bahru Road.

### Gleneagles Hospital

6A Napier Road

The area's oldest healthcare provider is Gleneagles Hospital at Napier Road opposite Singapore Botanic Gardens. This hospital was originally established by the British European Association (now British Association) to provide medical services to British citizens.

Gleneagles Hospital occupies the site of Harvestehude, a house named after a place in Germany, which was built in the early 1900s by German resident Gustav C W Wolber. During the late 1930s, the house was taken over by two British ladies who converted it into a boarding house named Gleneagles after a scenic valley in Scotland.



*A ward in Gleneagles Hospital, 1965*  
Courtesy of Gleneagles Hospital

In the 1950s, a luxury hotel called Gleneagles Hotel was built next to Harvestehude but it was taken over in 1958 by the British European Association for use as a hospital. The former Harvestehude building served as staff quarters and was renamed Macauley House. In 1978, Macauley House was redeveloped into a five-storey medical block and in 1987, part of it was again redeveloped into the current ten-storey hospital complex.

### Singapore Red Cross

15 Penang Lane

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

The society operated from a number of temporary locations before relocating permanently to its current building, Red Cross House. The building was officially opened in 1961 by Yang di-Pertuan Negara Yusof bin Ishak, who was also then Patron of the SRC.

Red Cross House was originally a two-storey building with a boomerang-shaped concrete canopy over its main entrance. It was designed by Dr Ho Kok Hoe, a pioneering architect

who was also President of the Singapore Art Society. A third storey was added in the 1970s and the building was conserved in 2014.

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



*Red Cross House, 1960s*  
Courtesy of Singapore Red Cross



*A blood donation drive by the Singapore Red Cross, 1960s-70s*  
Courtesy of Singapore Red Cross



*A mural in Gleneagles Hospital's lobby depicting the houses and buildings of Gleneagles Hospital from the past to the present day, date unknown*  
Courtesy of Gleneagles Hospital

In addition, SRC delivers first aid training and works with community partners to organise regular blood donation drives as part of its ongoing efforts to protect and save lives. In 2014, SRC opened its second thrift shop, Shop@Redcross, at Red Cross House, to raise funds for its local humanitarian efforts.

### LANDMARKS OF FAITH

The communities who had settled in the Orchard Road area also built places where they could pray and perform the rituals of their faiths. As a result, Orchard Road became the site of many religious landmarks including mosques, Hindu and Chinese temples, a synagogue and a church.

#### Former Sri Sivan Temple

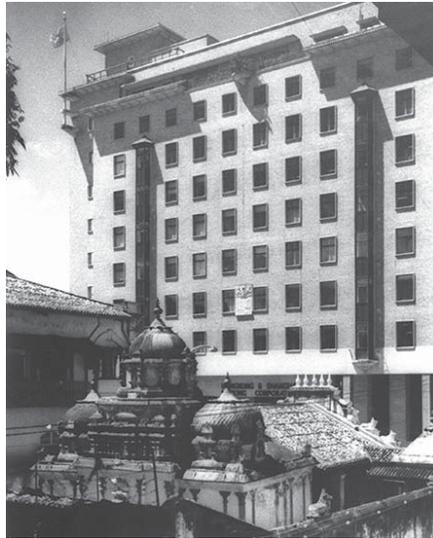
The first known religious site at Orchard Road was the Sri Sivan Temple, said to have been founded in 1821. The earliest worshippers of this Hindu temple would have included the sepoys and dhobies who lived and worked at Dhoby Ghaut and Stamford Road. The Sri Sivan Temple was located across the road from the present MacDonald House. It was dedicated to the god Siva and housed a Sivalinga (a rock phallus symbolising Siva) that was brought to Singapore from Benares (now Varanasi), India, in 1855.

N I Narayanan recalled visiting the temple as a child in the 1930s, when he was living at Buyong Road:

*“Every day I would have my lunch at the Sivan Temple. On the right side of the temple, there used to be two or three huts where the priest was staying. I remember going there to have my meals in the afternoons.”*

At this time, many devotees participating in the annual Thaipusam procession would stop at this temple en-route to the Chettiar’s Temple. During this festival, devotees bearing kavadi (a ceremonial structure) would walk from the Sri Srinivasa Perumal Temple at Serangoon Road to the Chettiar’s Temple at Tank Road. Narayanan recalled:

*“The devotees used to come in front of the Sivan Temple, lie prostrate and then go to the Chettiar*



*Sri Sivan Temple at its Dhoby Ghaut site facing MacDonald House, 1950s*  
Attributed to National Museum of Singapore, National Heritage Board, courtesy of National Archives of Singapore



*Devotees during a Thaipusam procession, early 1900s*  
Courtesy of National Museum of Singapore, National Heritage Board

*Temple. One of my friends used to carry the kavadi – he was a very small man, but he ran so fast you couldn’t catch him because he was under the influence of the God, you see. At that temple, he’d stop, offer prayers and run on.”*

The Sri Sivan Temple made way for Dhoby Ghaut MRT station in 1984 and relocated to its current site in Geylang East in 1993.

#### Former Sri Vairavimada Kaliamman Temple

Another former Hindu temple at Orchard Road was Sri Vairavimada Kaliamman Temple, which was established at a choultry (resting place) at Killiney Road in the 1860s. The

choultry catered to plantation workers and dhobies who worshipped the goddess Kali, also known as the “Destroyer of Evil”.

In 1921, the temple had to relocate as there were plans to build a railway line through its original site. At this time, a plot of land at Somerset Road was acquired, but the new temple was only completed and consecrated in 1933. The temple had to relocate again in 1970 when its land was acquired for redevelopment. It then moved to Toa Payoh where the present Sri Vairavimada Kaliamman Temple was consecrated in 1986.

#### Orchard Road Presbyterian Church

3 Orchard Road

*(Note: Visitors are welcome if there are no services but please inform the staff before entering.)*

The oldest church at Orchard Road is Orchard Road Presbyterian Church, which was built in 1878. Prior to its construction, local Presbyterians (a Christian denomination) worshipped at Mission Chapel, a worship hall established at Bras Basah Road (site of the present Raffles Hotel) in 1823. In 1875, the Presbyterian congregation was granted land at Orchard Road by the government for a new church.

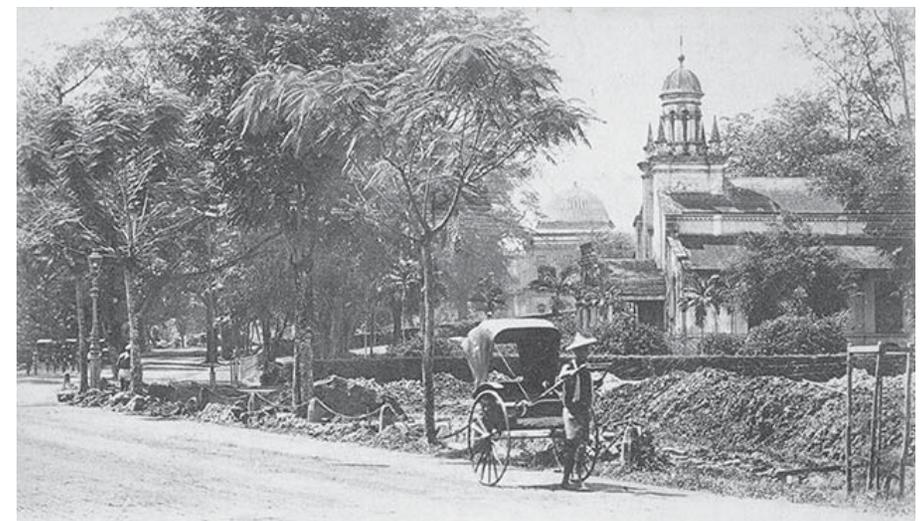
The new church was designed in a simple but elegant neoclassical style with a small roof dome. In Malay, the church was known as Greja Kecil or “small church” due to its size. Its early congregation included many Scots, so it also became known as the Scots Church during colonial times.

After independence, the demographics of the congregation changed, with locals making up more than half the congregation by the end of the 1970s. The church underwent an extension in the mid-1970s to increase its capacity but the overall look of the church was maintained by building the extension annex at a lower height than the original church cupola.

Today, the church caters to the diverse local Presbyterian community with services in English, Mandarin, Indonesian and German.



*Mission Chapel, late 1800s*  
Courtesy of National Museum of Singapore, National Heritage Board



*Orchard Road Presbyterian Church, early 1900s*  
Courtesy of National Museum of Singapore, National Heritage Board

### Sian Teck Tng temple

57 Cuppage Road

(Note: This site is not open to the public but its exterior can be viewed from outside the temple compound.)



*Sian Teck Tng temple, 1983*  
From the Lee Kip Lin Collection. Courtesy of the National Library Board, Singapore.



*Sian Teck Tng temple, 2017*

Some residents of Emerald Hill, especially the womenfolk, frequented a Chinese temple at Cuppage Road known as Sian Teck Tng (“Hall of Good Merit” in Teochew). This temple was built in 1904 as a *zhaitang* (or vegetarian convent) for female devotees. The temple’s director was Beh Soon Ching, who founded a similar hall in 1894 at Devonshire Road called Tong Sian Tng (“Hall of Common Goodness”) for male devotees.

In the past, Sian Teck Tng housed an estimated 40 widows and unmarried women who served the temple by reciting scriptures and performing religious rites. The main deity at Sian Teck Tng is Guan Yin, the Goddess of Mercy.

### Chesed-El Synagogue

2 Oxley Rise

(Note: This site is open to the public only by appointment.)

Chesed-El Synagogue was built at Oxley Rise in 1905 by Jewish businessman Sir Manasseh Meyer and it is Singapore’s second oldest synagogue. The oldest, the Maghain Aboth Synagogue at Waterloo Street, was also built by Meyer as a prayer hall for local Jews in 1878.

However, Meyer later felt that the Maghain Aboth Synagogue had become too crowded so he built a private prayer hall next to his house Belle Vue in 1905 and named it Chesed-El (“bountiful mercy and goodness of God” in Hebrew). Belle Vue was demolished in 1982 but Chesed-El remained and was gazetted a National Monument in 1998. It now serves the local Jewish community as a prayer hall and a community gathering place.



*Chesed-El Synagogue, c. 1950s*  
Courtesy of National Museum of Singapore, National Heritage Board



*The interior of Chesed-El Synagogue, 2016*  
Courtesy of Marcus Ng

### Former Angullia Park Mosque

Angullia Park Mosque was built in 1933 on the present site of Wheelock Place by Ahmad Mohamed Salleh (AMS) Angullia. Angullia was a prominent member of the Muslim and Gujarati communities in Singapore. He was also a Justice of the Peace and a trustee of various mosques and Muslim organisations. The former Simons Road near the mosque was renamed Angullia Park in 1920 after him.

Angullia’s family came from Gujarat, India and his father, Mohamed Salleh Eusoo (MSE) Angullia, was a landowner and philanthropist who built the Serangoon Road Angullia Mosque in the 1890s. MSE Angullia later bought land in the area now occupied by Wheelock Place, Liat Towers and Hilton Hotel, paving the way for AMS Angullia to build Angullia Park Mosque.

Designed by British architect E V Miller, Angullia Park Mosque had a marble pulpit and was described as the “prettiest” mosque in Singapore in a 1934 article in *The Singapore Free Press and Mercantile Advertiser*. The site of the mosque was acquired for redevelopment in the late 1970s, and the mosque was demolished in 1988.



*Former Angullia Park Mosque, 1973*  
Courtesy of Urban Redevelopment Authority

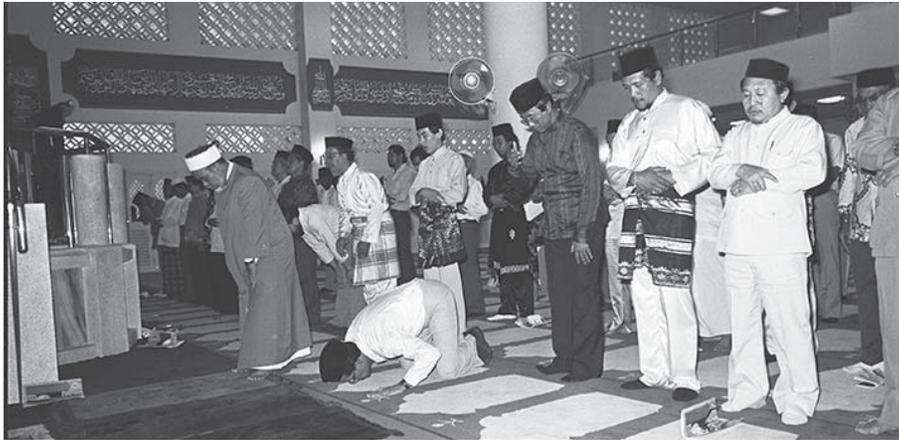
### OTHER FORMER MOSQUES AT ORCHARD ROAD

There used to be other mosques around Orchard Road, including one at the former site of the Indonesian Embassy, Wisma Indonesia. This mosque closed down in the 1980s as the Wisma Indonesia building was redeveloped into the shopping mall Wisma Atria. There were also smaller mosques located in villages along Exeter Road (formerly Paya Lane) and Ellis Road (off Tanglin Road) that have since made way for redevelopment.

### Masjid Al-Falah

22 Bideford Road

The plan to establish Masjid Al-Falah was developed in the 1980s, when Angullia Park Mosque was slated for demolition, so as to ensure that Muslims living and working in Orchard Road would continue to have a prayer and a gathering place. *Masjid* is Arabic for “mosque” while *falah* means “success”. The mosque was opened by Dr Ahmad Mattar, then Minister for the Environment and Minister-in-charge of Muslim Affairs in 1987.



A prayer session at the official opening of Masjid Al-Falah, 1987  
Ministry of Information and the Arts Collection, courtesy of National Archives of Singapore



Masjid Al-Falah, 2017

Today, Masjid Al-Falah is the only mosque in the Orchard Road shopping belt. The mosque is the first of its kind in Singapore, as it is located on the podium of a 32-storey commercial building. Masjid Al-Falah is frequented by Muslims of various races from Singapore and abroad.

The mosque also welcomes people of all faiths, promotes inter-faith dialogue and engagement, and is active in youth outreach. It was upgraded in 2015 to increase its capacity and during the renovation, ramps and lifts were installed for wheelchair users, along with Braille notices for visually impaired visitors.

## SOCIAL CLUBS

Some of Orchard Road's residents established clubs where they could gather to dine, drink and dance. The earliest club in Orchard Road was the German Teutonia Club (Teuton refers to people of German origin), which was originally founded in 1856 at North Bridge Road. In 1861, the club acquired land at Scotts Road, where it became so successful that a grander clubhouse with a castle-like central tower, designed by Bidwell, was built in 1900.

Teutonia Club became a popular hub for social and musical gatherings for the German community at this time. However, these parties came to a halt during World War I (1914-18) when Germans in Singapore were declared enemies and imprisoned, while the club was confiscated by the British government.

In 1918, the former clubhouse was bought by three Jewish brothers – Morris, Ezekiel and Ellis Manasseh, who renamed it Goodwood Hall



The original Teutonia Club building, 1894  
Courtesy of National Museum of Singapore, National Heritage Board

after a famous English racecourse. Goodwood Hall became a popular venue for weddings, recitals and balls. The Manassehs then expanded the building in 1929 into Goodwood Park Hotel. The hotel's notable guests included Queen Beatrix of the Netherlands, Nobel Laureate William Golding and actor Jackie Chan.

In 1947, Ezekiel Manasseh's stepson Vivian Bath took over the hotel. He added more rooms and a kidney-shaped swimming pool, making it the first hotel in Singapore with a pool. In 1968, the hotel was acquired by banker Khoo Teck Puat, who made it the flagship hotel of the Goodwood Group, Singapore's first local hotel chain. The historic Tower Wing of the hotel was gazetted a National Monument in 1989.

The second oldest club in the Orchard Road area is The Tanglin Club, which was founded in 1865 by British residents. The original clubhouse was built in 1867 on the former Claymore orchard. Before the war, membership was restricted to Britons of high social standing. In 1962, the club amended its rules to admit members of all races after a request by the government that locals

should make up at least half the membership of Singapore-based clubs. In the late 1970s, The Tanglin Club rebuilt its old clubhouse into a four-storey facility which was opened in 1981.

Besides The Tanglin Club, a number of other prominent clubs continue to or used to operate in the Orchard Road area. They include The American Club, located at Scotts Road since 1955, and The Hollandse Club at Cairnhill which catered to the Dutch community during the period 1911-50 before it relocated to Camden Park.



A painting of the original Tanglin Club building by Walter Walkington, 1970  
Courtesy of National Museum of Singapore, National Heritage Board



The rebuilt Teutonia Club, c. 1900  
Courtesy of National Museum of Singapore, National Heritage Board

# ORCHARD ROAD AT WAR

*(Please note that additional information about the impact of the war on Orchard Road can also be found in the Singapore in World War II: A Heritage Trail booklet by the National Heritage Board, available on [Roots.sg](http://Roots.sg).)*



British and Indian soldiers guarding Japanese prisoners-of-war outside YMCA, September 1945  
Courtesy of National Museum of Singapore, National Heritage Board

*"I was asleep, and it was about 4 or 5 o'clock in the morning. Suddenly there were a lot of explosions. The next day, it was confirmed as an air raid which meant the war had started."*

– Heng Chiang Ki (b. 1923), a resident of Emerald Hill, speaking to the National Archives about the first air raid on 8 December 1941.

Between December 1941 and August 1945, Orchard Road experienced the hardships of war as the Japanese attacked and occupied Singapore. For residents such as Heng, the war was initially more exciting than frightening. He recounted:

*"Prior to the war, we had a lot of... civil defence practices – the ARP [Air Raid Precautions] they called it... But this time, it's real action so everybody was excited about it. I think part of the reason is because we still felt at that time that the British would be strong enough to prevent [the Japanese] from coming further."*

After the second air raid, residents began to build bomb shelters although many of these were make-shift shelters. Emerald Hill resident Felix Chia recalled:

*"We built an air raid shelter where the dining hall was. It was nothing, just a wooden structure, rectangular wooden structure, then topped and backed by sand bags in gunny sacks. When the bomb hit Singapore Chinese Girls' School which was very near where I stayed, I could see the earth move. I thought it was a direct hit on my house, it was so bad. Then after that we got used to it, every now and then. Luckily we survived,*

*we survived. Only two houses were hit and the Singapore Chinese Girls' School."*

Government House (now the Istana) was also a target during the air raids. When the Japanese invaded Singapore, the staff hid in a cellar which was linked to a tunnel that led to an exit. Unfortunately, their escape route was discovered by the Japanese, who sealed it by throwing grenades into the tunnel and killing a number of the staff.

After the Japanese victory on 15 February 1942, Count Hisaichi Terauchi, Supreme Commander of the Southern Expeditionary Army Group that occupied Southeast Asia, moved into Government House. The house was also used to accommodate visiting Japanese VIPs.

Nearby, the Cathay Building was where the Japanese flag was first flown as one of the conditions of the British surrender. Subsequently, this building housed the Japanese Broadcasting Department, the Japanese Military Propaganda Department and the Japanese Military Information Bureau. The cinema inside was renamed Dai Toa Gekijo ("Greater East Asian Theatre" in Japanese) and used to screen Japanese propaganda films.

The Cathay Building also became the site of macabre scenes intended to instil fear amongst the locals. Heng recalled to the National Archives in 1982 that those caught stealing were beheaded and "their heads were put on display opposite the Cathay Cinema".

Another site of horror was the YMCA building because its rooms were used as cells by the Kempeitai (Japanese military police) to torture prisoners. Two notable survivors were teacher Elizabeth Choy and her husband Choy Khun Heng, who were imprisoned for nearly 200 days for aiding prisoners-of-war.

Other survivors included the father and brother of Tan Wah Meng (b. 1919), who were imprisoned in 1942. Relating his father's experiences to the National Archives in 1983, Tan said:

*"They asked a lot of questions. And sometimes if you don't answer properly, they start slapping you, kicking you, all this thing; they torture you."*

At Cairnhill, a row of terrace houses and the ACS building were converted into "comfort houses" where women were forced to sexually service Japanese soldiers. Tan Sock Kern shared that one of her father's houses became a restaurant while another was used as the headquarters to oversee the administration of these comfort houses. She recalled:

*"There was a barricade built from Cairnhill Circle and one in Scotts Road, junction of Cairnhill. And nobody can walk through here except Japanese soldiers. When they come in, they register for a woman."*

During this trying and difficult period, the Sri Sivan Temple at Dhoby Ghaut served as a place of refuge. N I Narayanan shared:

*"Our friends used to go and stay in the temple, as it was a protected place. People were staying there during the war because they had no other place to go for safety."*

When the Japanese Occupation ended on 12 September 1945, thousands gathered opposite the YMCA to celebrate by singing carols during Christmas that year. The carollers also made a bonfire of wood from the former cells in the YMCA building.

Today, a Japanese cannon captured by the British is displayed at the Gun Terrace in the Istana grounds as a symbol of Singapore's liberation from war.



The Allied Victory Parade at Scotts Road, 12 September 1945  
Courtesy of National Museum of Singapore, National Heritage Board

# LIFE ON ORCHARD ROAD

During the early 1900s, Orchard Road was already an emerging retail hub because of the presence of shophouses, car showrooms and open-air markets. However, the area's real transformation into a street known for shopping, leisure and hotels started in the 1950s.

From the 1980s, Orchard Road emerged as a regional tourist destination with coordinated annual campaigns such as the Orchard Road Christmas Light-up and Great Singapore Sale. In addition, it became a choice location for large-scale public events and youth activities with the Swing Singapore street parties and the National Youth Council's presence at Somerset.

## BEFORE THE SHOPPING MALLS

Many entrepreneurs established businesses around Orchard Road after it became a residential estate in the late 1800s. One such entrepreneur was lawyer and Municipal



Bullock carts along Orchard Road, early 1900s  
Courtesy of National Museum of Singapore, National Heritage Board



Orchard Road, c. 1930s  
Courtesy of National Museum of Singapore, National Heritage Board



The back of the Orchard Road Municipal Market bustling with food vendors, c. 1900  
Collection of Singapore Philatelic Museum: Donated by Prof Cheah Jin Seng

Commissioner Edwin Koek, who opened the area's first wet market between Koek Road and Cuppage Road in 1880. Ten years later, it was acquired by the government and rebuilt as Orchard Road Municipal Market.

Orchard Road Municipal Market proved to be popular with households at Emerald Hill. Bobby Yeo recalled that in the 1960s: "All the housewives in full Peranakan dress would go to the market every morning." Tong Siew Yin, who stayed nearby in the 1960s, also recalled that her mother bought groceries there:

*"My mother liked to buy fish there because it was fresher. But fruit was expensive because they sold fruit to ang mohs [Westerners] - the ang mohs were buying fruit there because they realised Cold Storage was more expensive, but [the market] was still expensive for us!"*

Orchard Road Municipal Market was demolished by 1979 and the site was redeveloped as Orchard Point in 1982.

## ORCHARD ROAD MUNICIPAL MARKET'S FOUNTAIN

In 1902, a six metre-high cast iron fountain was installed in front of Orchard Road Municipal Market. This fountain was originally installed at Telok Ayer Market (now Lau Pa Sat). It was relocated to Katong in 1930 and later forgotten. After it was rediscovered in 1989, the fountain was finally transported to and installed in the courtyard at Raffles Hotel.



Orchard Road Municipal Market with the cast iron fountain on the right, 1903  
Courtesy of National Museum of Singapore, National Heritage Board

In 1905, Cold Storage started operations at the site of present-day The Centrepoint. It originally operated as a small deli before it grew to become Singapore's first supermarket. Back then, Cold Storage sold frozen produce imported from Australia and catered mainly to the European residents of the Orchard Road area.

Rosy Nakhoda remembered shopping at both Orchard Road Municipal Market and Cold Storage. She shared:

*"My family used to get our regular essentials such as meat and vegetables from the wet market. For Western things like milk and butter, we went to Cold Storage. It was quite small then. They had two storeys but there was no lift, so you had to walk up."*

According to Cold Storage, the supermarket played an important role during the early years of Singapore's history. Whenever there were riots or disturbances, the authorities would approach the company to ensure that there were sufficient supplies of essential food items such as rice, bread and condensed milk. Cold Storage also commissioned the national song *We Are Singapore*, which was launched in 1987 at Mandarin Hotel (now Mandarin Orchard Singapore) to celebrate Singapore's 22nd year of independence.

Other than Cold Storage, there was another prominent supermarket at Orchard Road named Fitzpatrick's. Fitzpatrick's was established in 1947 by two former butchers from Cold Storage, George Holt and W F



Cold Storage, 1973  
Courtesy of Urban Redevelopment Authority



Fitzpatrick's, 1973  
Courtesy of Urban Redevelopment Authority

Fitzpatrick. It started out as a small grocery store but by 1958, it had grown significantly and was re-launched as a large, modern supermarket. In 1985, Fitzpatrick's joined the Cold Storage chain. Former shopper Tan Wee Him recalled his experiences at Fitzpatrick's in the 1970s:

*"Fitzpatrick[s] ha[d] a first electronic door that automatically opens itself when you step on the sensor in front of the door. So every time... you park your car right in front of the supermarket, you get off your car. You step into this rubberised floor which is actually the sensor, and the door automatically opens up... that was something very exciting then to a lot of people."*

Tong Siew Yin, who lived in a row of shophouses close to both supermarkets in the 1960s, described the other shops that could be found in the area:

*"There was Swatow Lace Company, Tong Ah Dentist and a Chinese curio shop. 198 Orchard Road was a charcoal shop and we lived upstairs with several families. Later, it became a shoe shop and the ladies came to buy shoes."*

#### Former Amber Arcade

One of Singapore's first shopping centres, Amber Arcade, started operations in 1921. It was located on the ground floor of Amber Mansions at Dhoby Ghaut, and it housed

a number of tenants such as University Bookstore, Foster's Steakhouse and the British Council. Sharing his memories of Amber Arcade, Tan Wee Him said:

*"Directly opposite the Presbyterian Church was Amber Arcade, where you'd find a row of shops starting off with RCA [a record store]. Next to it was the clinic of Dr Chia Chin Tong. The next few doors were selling children's clothing. And of course a very famous sewing machine company called Singer had its office there."*



Amber Arcade, 1968  
From the Lee Kip Lin Collection. Courtesy of the National Library Board, Singapore.

#### Former Heeren Building

The Heeren: 260 Orchard Road

Another mixed-use building in the Orchard Road area was built by businessman Chee Swee Cheng at the junction of Cairnhill Road in 1931. It was named Heeren Building after Melaka's Heeren Street, with *heeren* being Dutch for "gentlemen". It had shops on the ground floor, and offices and apartments on the upper floors. It was well-known for Beethoven Record House, Ali Joo Fur Salon, Poh Kim Tailor and Heeren Beauty Salon.

The original Heeren Building was demolished in 1990 and replaced by The Heeren, which was completed in 1997. To commemorate its heritage, the building's owners have retained the original Heeren Building's "torches", which once stood on the roof. These now flank the rear entrance of The Heeren along Cairnhill Road.

In 2015, The Heeren's owners marked Singapore's 50th year of independence by commissioning an artwork by Chong Fah Cheong titled *Budak-Budak* ("Children" in Malay) that is installed in front of The Heeren. The sculpture features children playing on a giant *kamcheng*, a Peranakan porcelain jar. The children represent future generations while the jar symbolises the wisdom and culture that are passed down over generations.



Heeren Building, 1982  
From the Lee Kip Lin Collection. Courtesy of the National Library Board, Singapore.



*Budak-budak* at The Heeren, 2017

#### Torque of the town: Orchard Road's former car showrooms

During the late 1800s, Dhoby Ghaut was the site of numerous firms offering horse carriages and stables. In the early 1900s, when carriages were being replaced by motorcars, Orchard Road became a hub for car showrooms.

One of the first car dealers to operate in the Orchard Road area was Cycle & Carriage, which opened a showroom at Dhoby Ghaut in 1916. Across the road, Borneo Motors opened a showroom on the site of the present Plaza Singapura in 1925 selling Chevrolet, Cadillac and Chrysler cars. Further up the road, General Motors used to have a showroom at the site of Paragon, while Champion Motors operated at the site of Lucky Plaza, selling Audi and Volkswagen cars.

In the 1980s, these car dealers left Orchard Road for new showrooms at Leng Kee Road and Alexandra Road after their properties were acquired for redevelopment. The only surviving former car showroom in the area is 20 Orchard Road, which was built in 1925 by Wearne Brothers as the Malayan Motors showroom for Ford and Morris cars. This building has a distinctive scallop-shaped central arch with a two-storey projecting window and was used as a showroom until 1980.

In 1987, the Singapore Manufacturers' Association (SMA, now Singapore Manufacturing Federation) occupied the building, which became known as SMA House, and it became a showroom for made-in-Singapore products. Since 2002, the building has housed a campus of the Management Development Institute



Borneo Motors (now Plaza Singapura), 1950s  
Courtesy of National Museum of Singapore, National Heritage Board



A row of motorcars outside the C.F.F. Wearne and Company garage at Orchard Road, c. 1910s  
Courtesy of National Museum of Singapore, National Heritage Board



Malayan Motors (now SMA House), 1982  
From the Lee Kip Lin Collection. Courtesy of the National Library Board, Singapore.

of Singapore (MDIS), Singapore's oldest not-for-profit professional institute for lifelong learning. SMA House, along with the three-storey shophouses next to it, were conserved in 2000.

### Shanghainese tailors

Before World War II, Orchard Road was already a fashion hub, but instead of boutiques offering ready-to-wear outfits, fashionable ladies headed there to have their dresses tailored by dressmakers at clothing houses. Many of these clothing houses were owned by Shanghainese tailors who were prominent in the local dressmaking scene during the mid-1900s.

In 1939, the dressmakers established the Shanghainese European Ladies Dressmakers Association, which was based at Devonshire Road. The association helped to connect members with clients as well as exchange, sell or buy tailoring equipment.

After the war, the dressmaking trade at Orchard Road started to decline due to increasing rent, competition from modern garment factories and boutiques, and the departure of their main European clientele from Singapore.

### MACDONALD HOUSE

40 Orchard Road

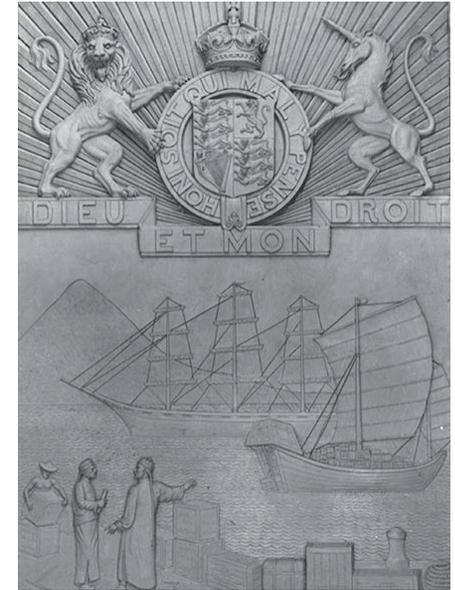
The first post-World War II landmark at Orchard Road was MacDonald House, built by the Hong Kong & Shanghai Banking Corporation (HSBC) in 1949. The building was named after Malcolm John MacDonald, then Governor-General of Malaya.

According to N I Narayanan, HSBC was persuaded to develop MacDonald House by Moshe Nassim, a prominent auctioneer:

*"He was a shrewd salesman and could predict land values. Nassim told the bank that Orchard Road was the place of the future in Singapore – buy this plot. So they bought it and built MacDonald House."*

Designed by architect Reginald Eyre of Palmer and Turner, MacDonald House was reported by newspapers to be "Malaya's First

Completely Air-conditioned Building". HSBC sold MacDonald House in 2003 and the building was gazetted a National Monument the same year.



The plaque showing the HSBC logo on the façade of MacDonald House, c. 1948  
Lina Brunner Collection, courtesy of National Archives of Singapore

### THE KONFRONTASI BOMBING

(Note: See page 30 for more information on the Konfrontasi.)



MacDonald House in the aftermath of the bombing, 10 March 1965  
Ministry of Culture Collection, courtesy of National Archives of Singapore

MacDonald House also occupies a dark chapter in Singapore's history as the site of a bombing on 10 March 1965. Planted by saboteurs during Konfrontasi, the bombing killed three people and injured more than thirty. The two saboteurs were later arrested and hanged.

The execution of the two saboteurs strained diplomatic ties between Singapore and Indonesia, which only recovered after May 1973, when then Prime Minister Lee Kuan Yew visited Jakarta and scattered flowers on the graves of the two men as a gesture of goodwill. In 2015, a memorial to the victims of the Konfrontasi was unveiled nearby on Dhoby Ghaut Green.

HSBC's logo can still be seen on a plaque on the front façade and HSBC monograms are evident on two balconies above the pavement. There is also a night-safe (deposit slot) on the building's exterior, which was once used by HSBC's clients to deposit money after the bank's operating hours.



Macdonald House, 2017

## EARLY ENTREPRENEURS OF ORCHARD ROAD

### C K Tang

During the 1950s, the Scotts Road side of Orchard Road was a quiet neighbourhood. As Rosy Nakhooda recalled:

*"Orchard Road at night in the 1950s was very quiet. There were huge bungalows set back from the road. My mother and cousin would go for walks after dinner, and there were lots of orchards on both sides. It was a much narrower road then and Orchard Road was a two-way street."*

This quiet scene started to change on 20 October 1958 when businessman Tang Choon Keng opened his signature department store, C K Tang, by the Scotts Road junction of Orchard

Road. Tang had arrived in Singapore in 1923 from Swatow, China, and worked as salesman of fine lace and linen which he brought from his hometown. Tang's customers included residents of Amber Mansions, but he ventured as far as Holland Village and Katong to seek out new clients.

In 1932, Tang opened his first store at a rented shophouse along River Valley Road. As his business grew, he relocated to a row of seven shophouses at River Valley Road (now Gainurn Building, named after Tang's father, Tang Gain Urn). After World War II, Tang learnt that some Orchard Road residents were preparing to leave Singapore and decided to buy their land, which was located across from the Teochew cemetery.

Tang felt that Orchard Road was a good business location as residents of Tanglin and Holland Road, as well as people from Johor, would pass by the area on their way downtown. Tang was quoted as saying:

*"People used to tell me it was not an auspicious place to start a business. Why buy such a deserted place, and one in front of the graveyard? I would tell them, 'One day this place will boom.'"*

Tang then commissioned architect Ang Keng Leng to design a five-storey building based on the Imperial Palace in Beijing, China, as Tang felt that a building with such distinctive features would attract the attention of shoppers. Consequently, the original C K Tang building had a pagoda-like roof with green tiles, which was supported by large red columns.

Wendy Lim (b. 1961) shared:

*"I remember Orchard Road had C K Tang with its old Chinese building architecture. Busloads of Malaysians went to shop there."*

As the first department store along Orchard Road, C K Tang quickly became a landmark shopping destination. The original building was replaced by the larger Tang Plaza in 1982, although some of the distinctive features of



The former C K Tang department store shortly before it was demolished to complete Tang Plaza (partially constructed on the left), early 1980s  
Courtesy of C. K. Tang Ltd



Tang Choon Keng at his desk, with a photograph of Tang Plaza by his side, 1980s  
Courtesy of C. K. Tang Ltd



The tin trunk that Tang brought from Swatow and kept all his life  
Courtesy of C. K. Tang Ltd

the original building such as a green-tiled roof and red colonnades were incorporated into the design of the new plaza.

Today, its 33-storey pagoda-like tower and podium house the Marriott Tang Plaza Hotel (known as Dynasty Hotel until 1995) and Tangs Department Store.

### Lien Ying Chow

Tang was not the only person who foresaw that Orchard Road would become a major shopping hub. Lien Ying Chow, the founder of Overseas Union Bank (OUB) in 1947, had a similar vision for the area. When Lien became Chairman of the Ngee Ann Kongsu in 1953, he sought to develop the land owned by the organisation at Orchard Road to raise funds for its charitable and educational activities.

To make way for the abovementioned development, the Ngee Ann Kongsu began exhuming the Tai Shan Ting cemetery from the early 1950s. The exhumed remains from the cemetery were later interred at the Teochew

Memorial Park at Yishun, which provides a resting place for about 20,000 cremated remains from former Teochew cemeteries. To this day, the Ngee Ann Kongsi performs annual prayers and ancestral rites at the Memorial Park to pay respect to the deceased.

Writing in his autobiography, *From Chinese Villager to Singapore Tycoon*, Lien explained:

*"My first duty as chairman of Ngee Ann Kongsi was to develop the property on Orchard Road... We hoped that developing Orchard Road into a commercial and shopping area would raise enough funds for our college... I remember people then saying that the spirits of the dead would haunt me and punish me for [building over the cemetery]. But I felt that since I was doing this for the sake of the Teochews and for education, as well as for the good of Singapore, no harm would come to me."*

The first building to be completed on the site of the former cemetery was Ngee Ann Building, which opened in 1957. This 10-storey

building housed apartments and shops. Based on her memories of Ngee Ann Building in the 1960s, Wendy Lim said:

*"Mont D'or Coffee House was along a stretch of shops where Ngee Ann City is today. I was about 5 years old then and it was a real treat to be taken there for Western food and their famous cakes."*

In 1963, the land next to Ngee Ann Building was leased to an Indonesian company, which built Wisma Indonesia. The funds from the rental enabled the Ngee Ann Kongsi to set up Ngee Ann College (now Ngee Ann Polytechnic) in the same year. Ngee Ann Building was torn down in 1985 and the area redeveloped into Ngee Ann City, which opened in 1993. The revenue from Ngee Ann City continues to allow Ngee Ann Kongsi to fund its educational and charitable projects.

Lien was also responsible for another Orchard Road landmark, Mandarin Hotel, which was Singapore's tallest building and largest hotel with 700 rooms when it opened in 1971.



Orchard Road with Tang Plaza on the left; the former Ngee Ann Building and Wisma Indonesia across it; and Mandarin Hotel in the background, early 1980s  
Courtesy of National Museum of Singapore, National Heritage Board



Ngee Ann City with Wisma Atria in the background, 2017

As a strong believer of the growth potential of the tourism industry in Singapore, Lien set up Overseas United Enterprise, which bought the hotel's site from the Ngee Ann Kongsi in 1964.

Lien then named the hotel Mandarin after a famous hotel in Hong Kong. The 40-storey hotel featured Top of the M, Singapore's first revolving rooftop restaurant, and Chatterbox, a 24-hour coffee house famous for its chicken rice. Today, the hotel is known as the Mandarin Orchard Singapore.



Diners at Top of the M, the revolving restaurant on the 39th floor of the Mandarin Hotel, 1985  
Courtesy of Mandarin Orchard

### Early hotels at Orchard Road

Mandarin Hotel was the largest hotel at Orchard Road when it opened, but it was not the first. Before World War II, the area had colonial-era hotels such as Goodwood Park and Hotel de L'Europe. The latter, which opened at Penang Road in 1934, was renamed Cockpit Hotel in 1960 as it was popular with flight crews. In 1972, Cockpit Hotel was rebuilt as a 13-storey hotel distinguished by its many arched windows and balconies. In 1998, it was redeveloped into a condominium.



Mandarin Hotel when it was completed in 1971  
Courtesy of Mandarin Orchard

### Ng Teng Fong

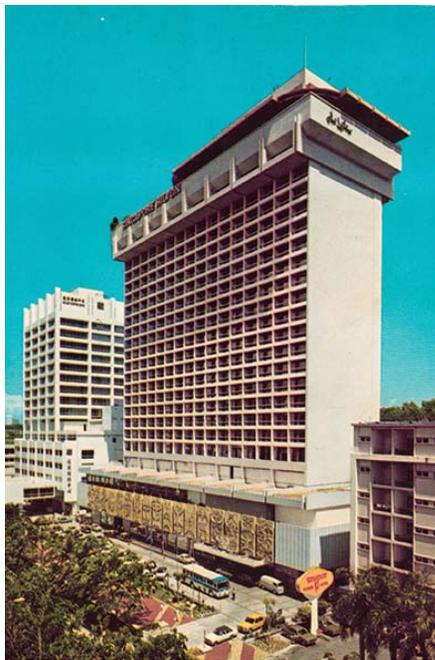
Far East Organization was a major developer of hotels and shopping centres in Orchard Road during the 1960s-70s. The organisation was headed by entrepreneur Ng Teng Fong, who became known as the “King of Orchard Road”. Born in Fujian, China, Ng worked at his family’s soya sauce factory in Weld Road before he established Far East Organization in 1960. Like Lien and Tang, Ng believed that tourism would grow in this area, and anticipated that this would lead to a demand for hotels.

Ng’s first foray into the hotel industry was a joint venture to build Hilton Hotel in 1969. The hotel features a striking façade showcasing one of the largest public artworks in Singapore entitled *Eulogy to Singapore*. The artwork comprises a series of 15 carvings by Malaysia-born artist Gerard D’Alton Henderson. Next to Hilton Hotel was Hotel Singapore Intercontinental, which Far East acquired in 1972 and renamed Singapura Forum Hotel. This hotel was sold in 1982 and is now the site of Forum The Shopping Mall.

Ng then ventured into retail with the opening of Far East Shopping Centre in 1974. Back then, it was the first shopping mall to feature an internal atrium and external escalators. Ng proceeded to build Lucky Plaza in 1978, which was known for its glass-walled bubble lifts and claimed to be the world’s first multi-storey, fully air-conditioned shopping centre.

During the 1980s, Lucky Plaza was a major fashion hub and housed boutiques by local designers such as Benjamin Tay, Henri Ho, Tan Yoong and Watson Tan. Today, Lucky Plaza remains a popular shopping and dining spot, especially amongst the Filipino community.

In 1983, Far East Plaza was opened at Scotts Road. This mall featured the first computerised musical fountain on mainland Singapore. It broke records for property prices in 1981 when all 114 shops were snapped up within two hours. It also became famous for the Far East Kids, youths who frequented the mall sporting colourful outfits and punk-like hairstyles.



Hilton Hotel with *Eulogy to Singapore* on its façade, 1970s  
Courtesy of National Museum of Singapore, National Heritage Board



Lucky Plaza, 2017



Far East Plaza, 2007  
Courtesy of Far East Organization

### Rajabali Jumabhoy

Another entrepreneur closely associated with Orchard Road was Rajabali Jumabhoy, who started as a spice trader in the 1910s and rose to become a founder of the Singapore Indian Association and the Singapore Indian Chamber of Commerce. In 1955, he was elected into the Legislative Assembly, but he left politics in 1959.

Jumabhoy bought two family bungalows at Scotts Road after the war. In the late 1970s, his company Scotts Holdings started to redevelop these bungalows into Scotts Shopping Centre, which opened in 1982. With service apartments on its upper floors, Scotts was easily recognisable because of its curved, stepped-back façade. It was also one of the first malls to have an air-conditioned food court, Scotts Picnic, which offered local and international cuisine. Scotts Shopping Centre was redeveloped into Scotts Square in 2006.



Scotts Shopping Centre with its distinctive curved upper façade, 1984  
David Ng Collection, courtesy of National Archives of Singapore



Diners at Scotts Picnic food court, 1985  
Ministry of Information and the Arts Collection, courtesy of National Archives of Singapore

### RETAIL FROM THE 1970s

#### Dhoby Ghaut

During the 1970s, there were a number of retail developments that took place along other parts of Orchard Road. For example, Supreme House was completed in 1971 at Dhoby Ghaut and housed a branch of Metro Department Store and eateries such as Skillets Coffee House and Kublai Khan (a Mongolian barbecue). Renamed Park Mall in 1989, the building became a fashion hub with a showroom for local designers called Style Singapore. Park Mall was demolished in 2017.

Another Dhoby Ghaut landmark, Plaza Singapura, opened in 1974 as one of the largest shopping centres in the region at the time. It was known for its anchor tenant, the Japanese Yaohan Department Store, which



Supreme House, c. 1970s  
Courtesy of National Museum of Singapore, National Heritage Board

### Public art at Plaza Singapura

Plaza Singapura's concourse was once home to two iconic sculptures by local artist Ng Eng Teng. Titled *Contentment* and *Wealth*, these sculptures were relocated to the National University of Singapore in 1997. Today, Plaza Singapura plays home to two newer public artworks: *Jelly Baby Family* (2012) by Italian artist Mauro Perucchetti, and *Our Memory Lane* (2016), a nostalgic wall mural by local artist Yip Yew Chong.



"Our Memory Lane" at Plaza Singapura, 2017



"Jelly Baby Family" in front of Plaza Singapura, 2016  
Courtesy of the National Heritage Board



Plaza Singapura, 1990  
Singapore Tourist Promotion Board Collection, courtesy of National Archives of Singapore

had amenities such as an in-store bakery and children's play area. Plaza Singapura also housed other popular businesses such as Yamaha Music School, Swensen's Restaurant and Ponderosa Steakhouse. In 2012, Plaza Singapura was refurbished and linked to Atrium@Orchard, a new commercial building above Dhoby Ghaut MRT.

### Somerset

At Somerset, the 20-storey Specialists' Centre housing several medical specialists' clinics opened in 1972. Gareth Phua (b. 1971) shared:

*"I remember how crowded Specialists' Centre was, especially during sales periods for John Little. Specialists' Centre had what I think was the first Famous Amos cookie store, and I vividly recall the wonderful smell of freshly baked cookies as I walked from the entrance."*

The building also housed Orchard Store, which Phua described as "the first dedicated scale-model and train store in Singapore". Recalling this store, Chris Lee (b. 1982) said:

*"I frequently visited Orchard Store which sold plastic model kits of aircraft, tanks, etc. I bought fighter plane model kits there, including brands like Airfix, Revell, Tamiya, and Hasegawa."*

Specialists' Centre and the adjoining Hotel Phoenix were subsequently redeveloped in the 2010s to become Hotel Jen and Orchard Gateway.

The nearby Cold Storage also continued to be a popular landmark in Orchard Road during the 1960s-70s. Besides the supermarket, it hosted a popular café called the Magnolia Snack Bar. Yvette Cheak, who studied at SCGS, has fond memories of the Magnolia Snack Bar and recalled:

*"We used to wait till school was dismissed to go to the milk bar for milkshakes and ice cream. It was really something we students looked forward to and would save up for."*

In 1983, Cold Storage was redeveloped into The Centrepoint. This mall became known for shops such as Times the Bookshop (now Times Bookstore), Supreme Records and The Attic record store. Phua recalled:

*"Centrepoint was the latest kid on the block when I was old enough to know Orchard as a shopping belt. When Times opened, it had a dedicated children's books corner, complete with wooden stools, where children and parents felt welcome to sit and browse. Another memory was that my very first film camera was purchased from Max Photo around 1993. I am very happy to see that till today [in 2018], Max Photo is still at the same spot."*

The Centrepoint made the headlines in 1985 and 1986 for a group of youths who hung out at the shopping mall and were dubbed the Centrepoint Kids. They stood out for their garish attire and hair-dos, and usually visited the mall after school and stayed until closing time. Some shoppers complained that the Centrepoint Kids blocked walkways, blasted loud music and smoked.



Specialist's Centre and Hotel Phoenix, with Cold Storage seen on the right, c. 1972  
Courtesy of National Museum of Singapore, National Heritage Board

However, surveys by psychologists indicated that the Centrepoint Kids were not delinquents. Instead, these survey findings revealed that they were simply youths searching for their identity and trying to express themselves in new ways. By 1986, the Centrepoint Kids had moved on to other hang-outs.

Next to The Centrepoint is Peranakan Place, a cluster of six conserved shophouses at the junction of Emerald Hill Road that were converted into retail outlets in 1985. The first tenants included Bibi's (a Peranakan food eatery), shops selling Peranakan antiques, and Baba Corner, a small museum about Peranakan culture.

Today, Peranakan Place houses eateries and shops, and next to it is the Singapore Visitor Centre, operated by the Singapore Tourism Board.



Shophouses next to Cold Storage (now Peranakan Place), 1969  
Courtesy of Urban Redevelopment Authority



Singapore Visitor Centre (left), Peranakan Place (right) and The Centrepoint (far right), 2017

### Recent developments at Orchard

By the 1980s, Orchard Road had established itself as a world-famous shopping belt. However, it remains a site of continuous renewal with new landmarks being built, such as ION Orchard which opened in 2009, and Knightsbridge

Mall which opened at Bideford Road in 2010. In 2009, two new malls, 313@Somerset and Orchard Central, also opened at Somerset.

Next to Orchard Central is Orchard Gateway which opened in 2014. Targeted at youth, Orchard Gateway also houses Library@Orchard, which contains books about lifestyle, design and applied arts. An upcoming facility to be built at the Cairnhill Road junction (facing The Heeren) will be Design Orchard which will showcase the works of local designers.

The urban landscape has also evolved to include wider sidewalks and more underpasses to make Orchard Road more pedestrian-friendly. Announced in 2017, new plans for the area include making parts of Orchard Road car-free, removing barriers to pedestrian connectivity, creating new spaces for pop-up experiential concepts and supporting more street-level activities.

### ION Orchard's Food and Heritage Trail

ION Orchard is one of Orchard Road's newest malls, and it is also a shopping mall which actively promotes Orchard Road's heritage. The mall offers a regular Food and Heritage Trail, which visitors can sign up to for free through ION Orchard's website.



ION Orchard during its opening, 2009  
Courtesy of ION Orchard

### SCREENING AT ORCHARD ROAD

Besides shopping, Orchard Road has been synonymous with entertainment since the early 1900s, as residents flocked to the area's cinemas after work and school. The first cinema in Orchard Road was Palladium, which opened in 1914 facing Emerald Hill Road. Palladium was renovated and renamed Pavilion in 1925. The cinema was demolished in 1971 and replaced by Specialist's Centre (now Orchard Gateway).

Rosy Nakhooda described Pavilion as "a cute little movie theatre" and added:

*"They used to show real nice matinees on Sunday mornings: children's films, cowboys and cartoons. I used to love them and my friends would buy a dollar ticket."*

Film buff Irene Hoe (b. 1949) shared:

*"I used to be a movie nut. [But] somehow, I can't recall any movie I saw at the Pavilion except for the original black and white Pride and Prejudice. One of the best things about going to a movie*

*there was going across the street to the Magnolia Milk Bar for a lime freeze after the movie."*

The second cinema in the area was The Cathay, Singapore's first air-conditioned cinema, which opened at Dhoby Ghaut in 1939. Behind the



Pavilion Cinema, 1930s  
Courtesy of National Museum of Singapore, National Heritage Board



Cathay Building, c. 1950  
Courtesy of National Museum of Singapore, National Heritage Board

cinema stood the 16-storey Cathay Building, which opened in 1941 as Singapore's first skyscraper. Designed by Frank Brewer of Swan & Maclaren, it was gazetted a National Monument in 2000.

After World War II, the Cathay Organisation's rival company, the Shaw Organisation, built Lido Cinema at the junction of Scotts Road and Orchard Road. Opened in 1959, Lido was billed as the most luxurious cinema in Singapore with an ultra-wide cinema screen. Next to Lido was the 10-storey Shaw House, which contained offices, showrooms and a hotel. The original Lido and Shaw House were demolished in 1990 and replaced by the present Shaw House and Shaw Centre complex.

Following the opening of Lido, the Cathay Organisation opened Orchard Theatre at Grange Road in 1965. Orchard Theatre boasted a curved screen and was the first building in Singapore to have an escalator. It also housed a popular bowling alley called Jackie's Bowl. Orchard Theatre was redeveloped into Cathay Cineleisure Orchard (now Cineleisure) in 1997.



Lido Cinema (left) and Shaw House, c. 1970  
Courtesy of National Museum of Singapore, National Heritage Board



Orchard Theatre, 1994  
Courtesy of National Archives of Singapore

### Filming at Orchard Road

Orchard Road was not only a place where movies were screened but also a place where movies were made. Perhaps the most well-known film which featured scenes of Orchard Road was *Saint Jack*, a 1979 Hollywood production starring Ben Gazzara as Jack Flowers. The movie included Orchard Road landmarks such as Hilton Hotel and Glutton's Square. Orchard Road was also the location for a street chase scene in *The Last Blood*, a 1991 Hong Kong action film starring Andy Lau, Alan Tam and Eric Tsang.

### MUSIC AND NIGHTCLUBS AT ORCHARD ROAD

From the late 1960s, the Orchard Road area also became a hub for discotheques and nightclubs. Singapore's first disco, Gina's A Go Go, opened at Tanglin Road in 1966. Following this, a number of other discos were set up here and popular ones during the late 1960s included Pink Pussycat at Prince's Hotel Garni (now Grand Park Orchard Hotel), and Golden Venus at Orchard Hotel. The latter organised tea dances where young patrons could dance to live music on weekend afternoons. However, tea dances were banned in Singapore in 1970 following cases of overcrowding and fights.

For live music in the 1980s, youths flocked to Rainbow Lounge at Ming Arcade at Cuscaden Road which operated from 1983-88. The brainchild of local writer and impresario Dr Goh Poh Seng, Rainbow Lounge hosted notable local musical acts such as The Quests, Naomi and the Boys, and Straydogs.

Another music icon at Cuscaden Road is Hard Rock Café, which opened in 1990 and featured local and international rock music acts. This restaurant stood out for its frontage, which featured a 1961 Cadillac car mounted above its entrance. The car was taken down and auctioned for charity in 2016 when the restaurant closed for a makeover. Hard Rock

Café continues to be known for its collection of music memorabilia, including instruments and clothing from famous rock stars.

Located along Scotts Road was another former entertainment landmark known as Tropicana. Tropicana was opened in 1968 by businessman Shaw Sung Ching and earned a reputation as a cabaret that featured live and even risqué entertainment involving acrobats, magicians, singers and topless dancing girls. It was highly popular until the late 1970s, when competing cabarets such as Neptune emerged at Shenton Way. It closed in 1989 and Pacific Plaza was built on its site in 1993.

Within Pacific Plaza, there were two new discos named Studebaker's and Venom which were popular in the 1990s. During this period, a number of new discos opened in the Orchard Road area, including Sparks at Ngee Ann City and Fire at Orchard Plaza.



A luggage tag from the former Prince's Hotel Garni, which was home to the Pink Pussycat discotheque, 1960s  
Lim Kheng Chye Collection, courtesy of National Archives of Singapore



A Halloween party at Rainbow, a disco at Orchard Road, 1980  
Ronni Pinsler Collection, courtesy of National Archives of Singapore



Hard Rock Café, 1990-94  
Singapore Tourism Board Collection, courtesy of National Archives of Singapore

### DINING ON THE STREET

In the 1960s, the Koek Road and Koek Lane area was well-known for its hawker stalls that sold local favourites such as *goreng pisang* (fried bananas), *ice kacang* (shaved ice flavoured with syrup), *satay* (grilled meat skewers), *orh luak* (oyster omelette), Hainanese curry rice and beef noodles. Tan Wee Him recalled that Koek Road was a haven for food lovers:

*"In the old Koek Road, you'd find a lot of coffee shops which sell satay beehoon [vermicelli with a spicy sauce]. Koek Road was also famous for its gai zhok [chicken porridge]."*

P R Gopal (1936-2014), who also frequented the area in the 1960s, told the National Archives in 2002:

*"My favourite joint was Koek Road, where you could have your char kway teow [stir-fried flat noodles with cockles], mee goreng [fried noodles] and sup kambing [mutton soup]... I remember when Mr Lee Kuan Yew became Prime Minister, he used to send his security guards to buy the kway teow there. In the same stretch of coffee shops, there was a monsoon drain. There you had Teck Kee pau [now known as Teck Kee Tanglin Pau]. It was so unhygienic, but the pau was very tasty."*

In 1966, the Koek Road hawkers were relocated to an open space across from Emerald Hill called the Orchard Road Car Park Hawker Centre, more commonly known as Glutton's Square (now Orchard Central). Bobby Yeo



Glutton's Square as a carpark in the day (top) and a hawker centre in the evening (bottom), 1977  
Courtesy of Urban Redevelopment Authority

explained that the area was a carpark by day but "after 6pm, the vendors would come in and operate until 4am the next morning".

Glutton's Square was popular with both locals and tourists despite frequent complaints about congestion and exorbitant prices. This led the Consumers Association to compare the place to a giant man-eating shark by calling it "Jaws

Centre". The hawkers at Glutton's Square also disposed of leftovers into the Stamford Canal nearby. Due to hygiene concerns, Glutton's Square was closed down and its hawkers relocated to sheltered food centres at Newton Circus and Cuppage Centre in 1977-78.

Meanwhile, visitors to the Singapore Botanic Gardens would recall enjoying meals at the

### First McDonald's in Singapore



McDonald's at Liat Towers, 1985  
Ministry of Information and the Arts Collection, courtesy of National Archives of Singapore

The first McDonald's outlet in Singapore opened at Liat Towers on 20 October 1979 and

set the world record for the most hamburgers served in a single day. In the early 1980s, groups of teenagers liked to hang out at fast food outlets along Orchard Road, giving rise to the nickname "McDonald's Kids". They were criticised by some for loitering and wasting their time.

To find out more about these teenagers, managers from McDonald's dressed in plain clothes and mingled with them. Eventually, the fast food chain offered some of these teenagers employment in its restaurants. As more shopping malls such as Far East Plaza opened, these spaces became the new hangouts for youths.



A stall at Glutton's Square, 1971  
Paul Piollet Collection, courtesy of National Archives of Singapore

Taman Serasi Hawker Centre along Cluny Road. Opened in 1974 as a second Satay Club (the first was at the Esplanade), Taman Serasi was well-known for stalls offering satay, *laksa* (noodles in a spicy coconut gravy) and *teh tarik* (literally "pulled tea" in Malay, which is aerated by repeatedly pouring it between two mugs).

Another famous dish from the hawker centre was *roti john* (literally "John's bread"), a dish made by stuffing minced mutton, onions and a fried egg into a French loaf. Taman Serasi Hawker Centre closed in 2001 to make way for the widening of Cluny Road and an expansion of the Gardens' entrance.

### COURTING TOURISTS TO SINGAPORE

With the opening of Paya Lebar Airport in 1963, Singapore's appeal as a tourist destination grew. To develop the tourism industry in Singapore, the Singapore Tourism Promotion Board (STPB, now Singapore Tourism Board) was established in 1964 and moved to Tudor Court at Tanglin Road in 1970, to be close to the growing Orchard Road tourist belt.

Tudor Court comprises a row of black and white terrace houses built in the 1920s as civil servants' quarters, which were conserved in 2005. STPB relocated to a new nearby headquarters called Tourism Court in 1995 and Tudor Court was later converted into retail outlets. While STPB was located at Tudor Court, it started to develop the surrounding area as part of its efforts to promote the Orchard Road area as a tourist belt.

The Singapore Handicraft Centre was established in 1976 to showcase traditional handicrafts of Singapore and Southeast Asia, such as Chinese brush-painting, songket-weaving, batik painting, brass engraving, jade-carving, carpet-weaving and wood-carving.



Tudor Court, 2017



Singapore Handicraft Centre, late 1970s  
Courtesy of National Museum of Singapore, National Heritage Board

Next to the Singapore Handicraft Centre was Rasa Singapura (“The Taste of Singapore” in Malay), which opened in 1978 and featured some of Singapore’s best hawker cuisine. To draw crowds, the Singapore Cultural Theatre opened nearby in 1979 and hosted cultural performances and art exhibitions. A pedestrian mall was created in the 1970s by decking over Stamford Canal from Mandarin Hotel to Tanglin Road so that pedestrians could better access these new facilities.

The Singapore Handicraft Centre, Rasa Singapura and the Singapore Cultural Theatre closed in 1989 and their sites were redeveloped into Tanglin Mall and Trader’s Hotel (now Hotel Jen).

### Christmas at the Equator

By the 1960s, many hotels and department stores were lighting up their façades to attract shoppers and diners during Christmas. However, these light-ups were uncoordinated. In the 1980s, STPB began to work closely with Orchard Road’s hotels and retailers to attract tourists through more coordinated initiatives.

STPB wanted to introduce a revitalised image of Christmas, and this resulted in the first 20-day coordinated light-up by Orchard Road’s hotels and department stores in 1984. The streetscape was also transformed into a tunnel of lights which featured more than 100,000 bulbs installed over a two-kilometre stretch



Christmas light-up at Orchard Road, late 1980s  
Courtesy of National Museum of Singapore, National Heritage Board

from Ming Court Hotel (now Orchard Parade Hotel) to the Istana.

Encouraged by the success of its first light-up, STPB extended the light-up period in 1985 and launched a “Christmas at the Equator” theme featuring a glamorous tropical Christmas with Santa Claus in holiday attire amid palm trees. Since then, the Christmas light-up has become a signature annual event for Orchard Road and it was also extended to other areas such as Marina Bay and Harbourfront in the 2000s.



Christmas decorations at The Centrepoint, 1994  
Courtesy of Lina Koh

### The Great Singapore Sale

Another Orchard Road retail innovation that continues to this day is the Great Singapore Sale. The sale was started by then STPB to help boost overall earnings of department stores in Orchard Road, and to encourage more tourists to visit Singapore for a shopping spree by coordinating and compacting mid-year sales of all department stores within a selected period.

To promote this sale, STPB developed a campaign called the Great Singapore Sale, which was launched on 17 July 1994 together with the first Singapore Food Festival. A stretch of Orchard Road from the junction of Paterson Road to The Centrepoint was closed to traffic to mark the occasion and the street was converted into an “outdoor catwalk” featuring the latest fashions, vintage cars, giant shopping trolleys and floats.

Today, the Great Singapore Sale has grown into an island-wide event.



Clowns promoting the Great Singapore Sale, 1997  
G P Reichelt Collection, courtesy of National Archives of Singapore

### A YOUTH HUB

The Great Singapore Sale was not the first time that Orchard Road was closed to traffic. That distinction is held by the Swing Singapore street parties that started in 1988. In that year, a National Day countdown party was organised around Orchard MRT by the Singapore Armed Forces Reservist Association (SAFRA).

The countdown party attracted more than 100,000 party goers, which was five times the expected turnout. To everyone’s disappointment, the organisers decided to call off the party early as they felt that they could not ensure the safety of the growing crowd.

Following that incident, there were calls for another Orchard Road street party and SAFRA responded by organising a party named Swing Singapore in 1988. This party featured popular DJs and singers such as Moe Alkaff, Leslie Pillay, Hamish Brown, Gurmit Singh, Rahimah Rahim, Jacintha Abisheganaden, Dick Lee and Clement Chow.

The singers and DJs performed from cherry-pickers nine metres above the crowd and the street was transformed into an outdoor disco using multi-coloured searchlights. The entire event was planned in just 17 days and drew an estimated 250,000 revellers. It was the largest outdoor party held in Singapore at that time.

Kelven Tan (b. 1962), who was tasked with organising the party as an Entertainment Manager for F&N, shared that it was then



Party-goers dancing at the inaugural Swing Singapore, 1988  
Ministry of Information and the Arts Collection, courtesy of National Archives of Singapore

Deputy Prime Minister Goh Chok Tong who came up with the name for the event and said:

*“It was an experience to be standing on Orchard Road on this momentous occasion... when the national songs played, people were singing ‘Count On Me Singapore’ and they were dancing to it... it was nation-building through the hearts of the people... because there was never a street party before.”*

The second Swing Singapore took place on 19 August 1989 and featured a new dance routine called the Orchard Swing. It attracted an estimated 300,000 revellers, a number which grew to 500,000 the following year. The event was replaced by the Padang Campfire countdown in 1992 as the organisers wanted a more family-friendly celebration.

Swing Singapore may be just a memory now, but Orchard Road continues to be a popular hangout for youths. In 1996, the National Youth Centre (renamed The Red Box in 2016) and Youth Park opened at Somerset Road to offer youths a space to gather, share their experiences and hold events and performances.

Another youth-oriented space, Skate Park, opened in 2006 at Somerset Road. This park

offers ramps for skateboarders, BMX bikers and other urban sports enthusiasts. It also features Singapore’s first permanent graffiti walls where youths can express their creativity through graffiti art.

Across the road is \*SCAPE, a non-profit centre for youth development. \*SCAPE was the response to the findings of surveys involving local youths where respondents requested for a space for recreational, social and community use. Completed in 2010, the five-storey \*SCAPE building offers social spaces and facilities such as dance studios, a theatre, an art gallery as well as music and recording studios.



Swing Singapore, 1990  
Ministry of Information and the Arts Collection, courtesy of National Archives of Singapore

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# SUGGESTED SHORT TRAIL ROUTES

## ORCHARD ROAD'S HISTORICAL GEMS

40 min on foot; or 30 min with a bus ride (2.2km)

The Orchard Road area has a history that spans almost 200 years, and it contains historical landmarks which are the legacies of communities who lived and worked at Orchard Road long before it became a street known for its shopping malls.



Start your journey at the gate of the **Royal Thai Embassy**, which was part of the Claymore nutmeg orchard in the 1800s, and contained a house called Hurricane Cottage (later Hurricane House). During the late 1800s, King Chulalongkorn of Siam (now Thailand) bought Hurricane House. The house later served as Siam's Consulate (now the Royal Thai Embassy).\*

From the embassy, walk to the Shaw House Orchard MRT entrance, take the underpass to Scotts Square and head to **Tang Plaza**. C K Tang was Orchard Road's first department store opened in 1958 as its owner Tang Choon Keng recognised Orchard Road's potential as a shopping hub. The original C K Tang building was redeveloped into Tang Plaza in the 1980s.

Next, walk up Scotts Road to **Goodwood Park Hotel**, a National Monument built in 1900 as a German social club called the Teutonia Club. Then head back towards Far East Plaza, where you can take a bus or proceed to walk to the bus stop opposite Mandarin Orchard.



From here, you can see **Ngee Ann City** across the road, which was built by the Ngee Ann Kongsi on the site of its former Teochew cemetery in the 1980s. Next to Ngee Ann City is **Mandarin Orchard Hotel**, Singapore's tallest building when it opened in 1971.

Behind the bus stop is **The Heeren**, the site of the original Heeren Building which was built in 1931 by Chee Swee Cheng, a Peranakan businessman. Here, you can find a sculpture called **Budak-budak** which serves as a reminder of the area's Peranakan heritage.

Another Peranakan landmark located nearby is the **former Singapore Chinese Girls' School**, which operated from eminent Peranakan Dr Lim Boon Keng's former house in 1926-94. The blue-and-white school building can still be seen today. Please note that this building is not open to the public.

Cross Cairnhill Road and continue down Orchard Road until you reach Peranakan Place, the gateway to **Emerald Hill**. This conserved residential neighbourhood contains many traditional shophouses and terrace houses from the early 1900s. Please be respectful of residents when taking photographs and when you are ready to head back, Somerset MRT is just across the Orchard Road.

\*The Royal Thai Embassy is not open to walk-ins but it hosts regular cultural festivals which are open to the public. Please check the embassy's Facebook page for further information.

## COMMUNITIES AND CEMETERIES

1 hour 15 min on foot (3.6km)

The Orchard Road of today is filled with shopping centres, restaurants and entertainment outlets, but the Orchard Road of the past had a different character and was filled with places of worship, schools, homes, community organisations and cemeteries.

Start your journey from Exit B of **Dhoby Ghaut MRT**. This area was the former site of the Sri Sivan Temple, the first known religious site in Orchard Road. This Hindu shrine served worshippers such as dhobies (laundrymen) who worked at a *ghat* (stream bank) by Stamford Canal. Behind the temple was a former Jewish cemetery established in 1841.



Follow the footpath and cross Handy Road to see **Orchard Road Presbyterian Church\*** and the **YMCA** on its left. These spaces served as places of worship and community service respectively for Orchard Road's early residents. Cross back to **Dhoby Ghaut Green**, walk up Penang Road, cross over to **Red Cross House**, which was built in 1960, and learn about the Red Cross Society's charitable efforts.



Next, head back to Penang Road and cross Clemenceau Avenue on the left to reach the **House of Tan Yeok Nee**. This National Monument is a grand Teochew mansion with two main courtyards. You can admire its intricate architecture, then head towards Cuppage Road, where you will find **Cuppage Terrace**, a row of conserved pre-war shophouses.



At the end of Cuppage Road stands **Sian Teck Tng**, a century-old Buddhist temple and former women's home. Please note that this site is not open to the public. After viewing the temple, you may wish to take a short break at The Centrepoint, a site where the Cold Storage chain of supermarkets first started.

From The Centrepoint, head towards **Emerald Hill**, a conserved residential neighbourhood. As you walk up Emerald Hill, you will pass by traditional shophouses as well as the former **Singapore Chinese Girls' School**. Please note that the school building is not open to the public.

Turn onto Hullet Road, turn left at Cairnhill Road to reach the Orchard Road junction, and walk over to Bideford Road behind **The Heeren**, where you will find **Masjid Al-Falah**. Masjid Al-Falah is the only mosque on Orchard Road today. Please remember to remove your shoes if you wish to enter the mosque.



From the mosque, continue your journey towards Orchard MRT, and you will spot **Ngee Ann City** across the road which was the site of a former Teochew cemetery. This trail ends at **Tang Plaza**, where Orchard Road's first department store, C K Tang, opened in 1958. This venture marked the beginning of Orchard Road's transformation from a residential area into a modern shopping street.

\*Visitors may enter Orchard Road Presbyterian Church after informing the staff if there are no services being conducted.

## FROM ORCHARD TO GARDEN

2 hours on foot; or 1.5 hours with a bus ride (4.7km)

The Orchard Road area was once covered with nutmeg orchards and although these orchards are long gone, the area still offers plenty of green spaces including the Butterfly Trail @ Orchard and Singapore's first UNESCO World Heritage Site.

Begin your journey at **Dhoby Ghaut Green**, outside Dhoby Ghaut MRT Exit B. This area was once part of a Botanical and Experimental Garden established by Stamford Raffles in 1822. Today, it is a community space featuring an open-air amphitheatre and Visual Arts Centre.



From here, cross Penang Lane to reach **Istana Park**, which contains a lily-pond and a lush garden that is part of the Butterfly Trail @ Orchard. Looking across Penang Road, you can see the **House of Tan Yeok Nee** which once belonged to Tan who owned many gambier estates in the 1800s. The building was gazetted a National Monument in 1974.



Next, cross Buyong Road and at the Oxley Road junction, cross over to **Penang Road Open Space**. This space contains another butterfly garden. This area used to be Thomas Oxley's nutmeg orchard in the 1840s before it became a residential neighbourhood. Across Somerset Road, you can see a beautiful conserved building (part of **Winsland House II**) from this residential era.



Proceed past Killiney Post Office, head to Orchard Road, cross at the Koek Road junction and head up **Emerald Hill**. This conserved area was once a nutmeg orchard but is now a quiet historical neighbourhood known for its terrace houses and traditional shophouses. At the top of Emerald Hill, turn left and cross to **Cairnhill Road** where you will find a row of conserved pre-war terrace houses.

Walk down Cairnhill Road towards Scotts Road, turn left and walk past **Goodwood Park Hotel** (the former Teutonia Club) to reach **Far East Plaza**, where you can stop for some refreshments. From Far East Plaza, you can continue walking towards Tanglin Road or you can take bus 105 and alight opposite the **Singapore Botanic Gardens**.

If you prefer to walk, take the underpass outside Scotts Square, exit via Shaw House, and head towards Tanglin Road. You will pass by the **Royal Thai Embassy**, formerly the Claymore nutmeg orchard. At Nassim Road, you will be able to spot some black and white colonial houses, as well as a butterfly garden. The conserved **Tudor Court** can also be seen across the road.



At the junction of Tanglin Mall, turn right to Napier Road and head to the **Singapore Botanic Gardens**, which is the last stop on this trail. You can obtain a map at the Botany Centre near the Gardens' Tanglin Gate or you can head to the nearby Holttum Hall, which houses a Heritage Museum, to learn how the Gardens evolved from a gambier plantation to a UNESCO World Heritage Site.

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