



Glimpses of Old Penang

IN CONJUNCTION WITH
THE 30TH ANNIVERSARY OF STAR PUBLICATIONS (MALAYSIA) BERHAD.

2 OCT 2002

NASKAH PEMELIHARAAN

PERPUSTAKAAN NEGARA MALAYSIA

APB 01077615

M
954.5113

KHO

2/06
02

TEXT BY NEIL KHOR JIN KEONG

EDITED BY MALINI DIAS



Foreword



DATUK STEVEN TAN
Managing Director
Star Publications (Malaysia) Berhad

PENANG was the birthplace of the first paper in this country, the *Prince of Wales Gazette*. In this earliest of newspapers which was started in February 1805, the people of George Town were informed of the happenings in their community and in the world. In the late 19th century and as the population in Penang grew, the *Penang Gazette*, another venerable newspaper, transformed news reporting to include more challenging community based stories. Following that, Penang's papers, like the *Straits Echo*, gained a respected voice in their critique of happenings.

This gave birth to a newspaper tradition that has continued to this day. The first issue of *The Star* appeared in Penang in September 1971. In the early years the paper, through its news reports and its distinct style, expressed the character and temper of the people of Penang. It also reflected their aspirations. During the chairmanship of the late YTM Tunku Abdul Rahman Putra, Father of Independence and Father of Malaysia, *The Star* was remembered for the Tunku's "As I See It..." column. Since the late 1980s, *The Star* has broken new ground and has expanded out of Penang. It is today a truly national paper.

This book is therefore a tribute and an expression of appreciation to the people of Penang from a newspaper that has now

established a spot for itself in Penang's history. *The Star* is the only paper from Penang that has successfully established itself as a national paper.

The book project had its beginning in the "Penang in Pictures" contest held in 1987 of which Star Publications was a co-organiser. The collection of photographs from the contest is an invaluable record of Penang's development and of its unique heritage. Subsequently in July 2001 Star Publications and the Penang Heritage Trust launched the Penang Story Project. The project led to a further documentation of Penang's past in an international conference held in April 2002.

And so as Star Publications celebrates its 30th anniversary, we pause awhile to look back to the past through this attractively produced volume. This book captures in print a few pages from the fascinating story of colonialism, migration, religious celebrations and multiculturalism, and nationalism and nation-building.

This volume is Star Publications' acknowledgement and tribute to all who have supported the paper. It is also a testimony of our abiding commitment to be a family-oriented paper and to further enrich the tradition of journalism started in Penang some 200 years ago.

Memories of Old Penang



DATUK KAMAL HASHIM

Regional Director of Star Publications (Malaysia) Berhad &
Chairman of the Penang Story Project

I FEEL fortunate to have spent my youth in Penang. This grand old city holds so many fond memories. The air was clean, the roads were quiet and safe and the faces friendly and familiar. Riding a bicycle or a motorcycle along the coastal roads around the island was a favourite past time of the young people then. Datin Su Hj Akil, my wife, remembers riding to school trailing behind her seniors like the late P. Ramlie. We enjoyed picnics by the clean secluded beaches and hiking trips up cool Penang Hill. Those were the days before "traffic jams" existed in our vocabulary. I am convinced that even the temperature was a considerable few degrees lower than it is today!

Amongst my earliest childhood memories were those eventful years of the Japanese Occupation. Even though I was still very young then, I remember our family house (*Penawar*) to be a refuge for family and friends. It was located in Ayer Itam, an area outside the city centre which provided a safer shelter away from the bombings. On hearing the siren I remember how I clung to my aunt as we made our way to the riverbank for safety with the rest of the family. There my father had set up a shielded rest area where our extended family would spend many hours together before returning to the house at the sound of the second siren.

After the war, especially in the 1950s, many entertainment places started to mushroom all over the city reviving the social habits of many Penangites. Party lovers started perfecting their

quickstep whilst the more adventurous ones were heading for jiving marathons. There were also various other entertainment like *boria* plays and stage shows. I remember all too clearly the starched baggy pants and slick hairstyles as we spruced ourselves up in anticipation of the exciting evening ahead.

The heady times gradually made way for a more meaningful era as we all supported the call for Independence in 1957. I was privileged to witness the vigour and excitement of it all as my late father, Tan Sri C.M. Hashim, actively participated in the struggle for independence under the leadership of the late Tunku Abdul Rahman. Later on, I was honoured to have the opportunity to serve under the late Tunku when he became the Star Publication's chairman.

Finally, no memory of Penang would be complete without the mention of its wonderful gastronomic experience. Whilst our people have gone on to become successful entrepreneurs, famous professionals and great entertainers, we all come back to Penang for the food. Yes, we Penangites are truly proud of and passionate about our incomparable cuisine. I remember when a mere 80 cents could buy us a generous plate of *nasi kandar* in Hutton Lane and many senior citizens would agree with me when I say that the original taste has yet to be matched!

I hope that this reminiscence has offered a glimpse of a bygone era. While the old days cannot be recovered, we must remember the words of Winston Churchill who said, "the longer you look back, the farther you can look forward".