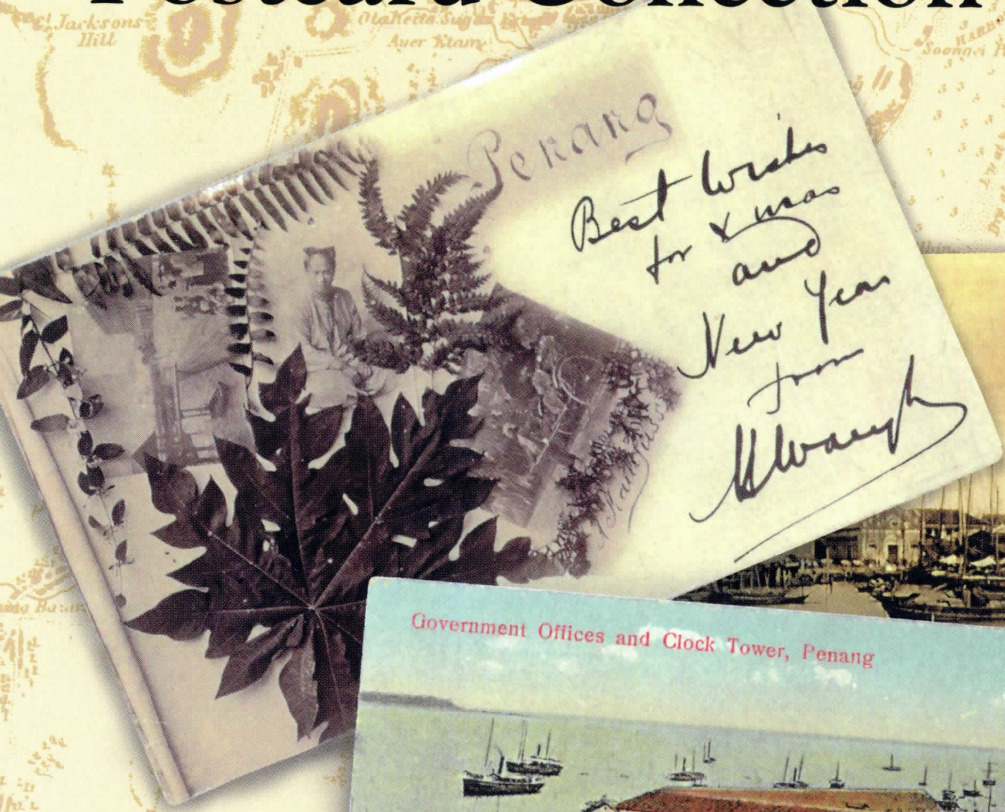


# PENANG

Postcard Collection 1899-1930s



PENANG  
Postcard Collection  
1899-1930s

PUSTAKA PERDANA



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Cover design by Cecilia Mak.

Published by Janus Print & Resources, Penang.

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**Janus Print & Resources**  
120 Armenian Street  
10200 Penang, Malaysia  
Tel: (604) 262 0123, 263 3985  
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Discounts are available for bulk orders,  
schools and non-profit organisations.

Perpustakaan Negara Malaysia Cataloguing-in-Publication Data

Khoo, Salma Nasution

Penang Postcard Collection 1899-1930s / Khoo Salma Nasution  
& Malcolm Wade.

ISBN 983-2885-00-0

1. Postcards – Collectors and collecting – Pulau Pinang.

I. Wade, Malcolm II. Title.

741.68309595113

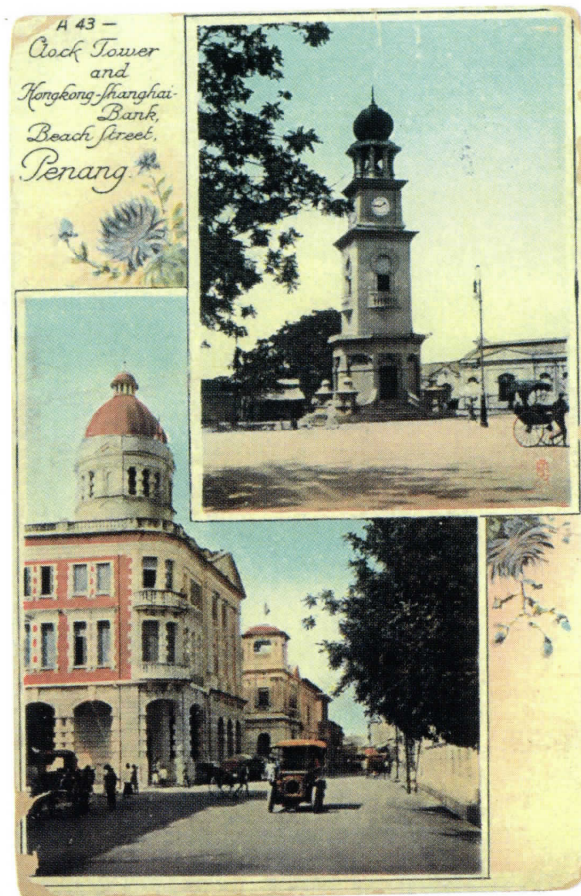
3 ▶

A 43 – Clock Tower and Hongkong-Shanghai  
Bank, Beach Street, Penang.

Imprint: Nikko-Studio.

Front cover background: Map of Prince of  
Wales Island and Province Wellesley, by  
A.J. Thompson, 1839. *Reproduced by  
courtesy of the Penang Museum.*

YAB Dr Mahethi & Yeehy Sr. Siti Hasmeah & family



# PENANG

## Postcard Collection

### 1899-1930s

*for sweet recollections,*

Khoo Salma Nasution & Malcolm Wade

*Fondly,*

*Koh Tsu Koon*

30 October 2003

Caption: Panorama of Penang.  
A rare double card of Penang.  
Reverse, UNION POSTALE  
UNIVERSELLE, Straits  
Settlements (Établissements du  
Détroit) Post Card - Carte Postale

▼ 4

Caption: Rickshaw.

Imprint: Federal Rubber Stamp Co.,  
Penang.

A rickshaw stops by a shop, the side walls of which are plastered with posters in English and Chinese, including an enticing announcement of the 'GRAND CIRCUS, WITH AN ENTIRE NEW COMPANY'. The Chinese notices advertise the movies, with 'daily show, night show, seven o'clock, eleven o'clock', 'No. 3 seat' and 'special discounts', 'cheapsale', 'six cents'. An itinerant woman hawker passes by the shop carrying her wares on a shoulder yoke. Another 'kandar' is left by the road side, while the vendor has rushed into the shop to buy some provisions.



Rickshaw.

Panorama of Penang.



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## INTRODUCTION

# Greetings from Penang

In the early years of the twentieth century, Penang was prosperous and picturesque, attracting travellers, migrants and settlers from East and West. The F.M.S. Railway had just linked up with Prai, shortening the travel time between Penang and the rest of Malaya. As a centre for shipping, commerce, banking and insurance, Penang profited immensely from the tin and rubber boom in the hinterland.

After years of reclamation, Swettenham Pier was finally opened as a berth for deep sea vessels. The mercantile houses along the Weld Quay waterfront presented a new face to all those who approached by ship. Pride and prosperity also manifested itself in a better standard of architecture and public works. With increased revenue, the government built itself the magnificent complex of Government Offices, as well as the handsome Municipal Offices and Supreme Court.

Penang made itself into a centre for regional trade. The populations of south Thailand, northern Sumatra and the northern Malay States looked to Penang for capital, communications, schools and shopping. With still no thoughts

of nationalism, Penang was proud to be part of the British Empire, in the days when the sun never set on it.

We hear of the first photographers working in Penang in the 1860s – John Thompson, a celebrated photographer of the Far East; K. Feilberg who established a branch of the Singapore-based Sachtler & Co.; and a pioneering woman photographer Mrs. J.A. Moniot, wife of a pharmacist.<sup>1</sup>

Professional photographers mainly made their living by taking portraits. The technology then was highly unwieldy – expensive, heavy equipment and large, fragile glass negatives. All photographs had to be carefully premeditated, patiently set up and rather unspontaneously posed for!

The advent of picture postcards allowed photographers the opportunity of having their photographic studies of urban life, natural scenery and all sorts of subjects, published and admired. In an age before personal cameras were affordable, postcard pictures were by far the most widely circulated and consumed

<sup>1</sup> Falconer, 1987: 20, 24

Caption: No. 14 Weld Quay, Penang.  
 Imprint: P.L.I Da Silva, E.&O. Hotel.

Loading and unloading at the Weld Quay waterfront. Note the handsome buildings of the import-export houses, the granite embankment and the barges (tongkang), beached and immobile at low tide.

photographic images. These picture postcards give us realistic glimpses of life back then.

We behold the streets bustling with pedestrians, hawkers, rickshaws and animal conveyances, with only the occasional tram or motor vehicle in sight; the human-scale architecture, well-mannered walkways and civic spaces; the luscious environs of the Padang, the tree-lined boulevards and suburbs, as well as the rustic scenery of the hills and beaches. We marvel at the city shops, their signs and window displays, as well as the ventures in commerce, plantations and industry. Then there are the opening ceremonies, festivals and celebrations of Empire Day. We see the ‘tuan’ and ‘mem’, who fashioned their careers and adapted to lifestyles in the tropics, as well as the countless workers – builders, gardeners, road-sweepers - who made life comfortable, congenial and civilized.

We know that postcards were retailed on ships, at railway stations, in hotels, and at stationery shops. Perhaps like today, they were sold by Indian ‘auto-shops’ and promoted by tourist touts at the harbour, Snake Temple and Kek Lok Si.

The bulk of Penang postcards in this collection were mailed to Europe. Three groups of people, we imagine, bought postcards to mail back home. Travellers, who spent a few hours or days in Penang when their ships called, wrote home to impress their friends and family about the sights they saw. Officers, traders and prospectors heading out East and feeling the first pangs of homesickness sent postcards to their dear ones at home. Foreign residents based in Malaya, regularly used postcards to send news, good wishes and seasons’ greetings.

Though postcards are characterised as ephemera, some were kept either for beauty or sentiment, and eventually came to be considered as ‘collectibles’. Serious collectors and scholars of postcards are called ‘deltiologists’.



## Penang Glossary

Penang is a regional port and an international tourism destination. The second smallest of 13 states of Malaysia, the State of Penang (Negeri Pulau Pinang) consists of two parts, Penang Island (Pulau Pinang) and Province Wellesley (Seberang Perai). In popular usage, however, ‘Penang’ might refer to Penang state, Penang island, the Port of Penang or the city of George Town.

**Penang Island** or ‘Pulau Pinang’, which means ‘betel-nut isle’, is named after the *pinang* tree (*Areca catechu*) which was locally cultivated in pre-British times. Under British occupation (1876-1957), Penang island was officially named ‘Prince of Wales Island’ but popularly called ‘Pinang’ or ‘Penang’.

**Province Wellesley** is the old name for Seberang Perai. The main town, **Butterworth**, is located at Bagan Luar, to the north of **Prye River** (Sungai Prai), while Prye is located on the southern bank. Butterworth is sited directly across the **North Channel** from George Town.

**George Town**, the capital of Penang, is located on the northeast cape of Penang Island. The town developed from Fort Cornwallis and a few adjoining streets, and grew to the west and south. George Town (the correct spelling is two words) attained city status in 1957. The **Port of Penang** is located at the northeastern tip of George Town.

**Penang Hill** on Penang Island is the highest range in Penang, peaking at 2,722 feet or 830 m.



## Brief History of Postcards

The postal stationery card was produced in 1869 in the Austro-Hungarian empire. Picture postcards appeared soon afterward in limited quantities in Europe, but the era of the picture postcard really began in 1898. The best quality cards were printed in Germany, the world leader in lithographic processes.

In the next decade, postcard collecting became the biggest collectible hobby the world had ever known, with hundreds of millions of postcards bought and mailed annually. Among the Penang locals, quite a few educated sons of affluent families began the hobby of postcard collecting, joining collectors' clubs and writing to their foreign pen-pals around the world. The German printing industry, as well as the hobby, collapsed with the outbreak of WW1 in 1914.

The first picture postcards of Penang were produced by 1899. Most of the Penang postcards can be categorized as 'view cards', that is, picture postcards showing popular views of Penang places. The first decade of the 20th century was the golden age of Penang picture postcards – many hand-coloured postcards date from this time. In the late 1920s and 1930s, we find postcards with a white border and caption at the bottom, as well as one-of-a-kind, 'real photo' cards. High quality real photos can reveal greater detail compared with commercially printed cards which appear as printing dots under the magnifying glass.

For researchers of old Penang or old Malaya, Malcolm

9 ▶

Caption: Penang. Dato Kramat Road.  
Imprint: A. Kaulfuss, Penang. No 38.  
Undivided back. Used to Amsterdam 17  
June 1901.

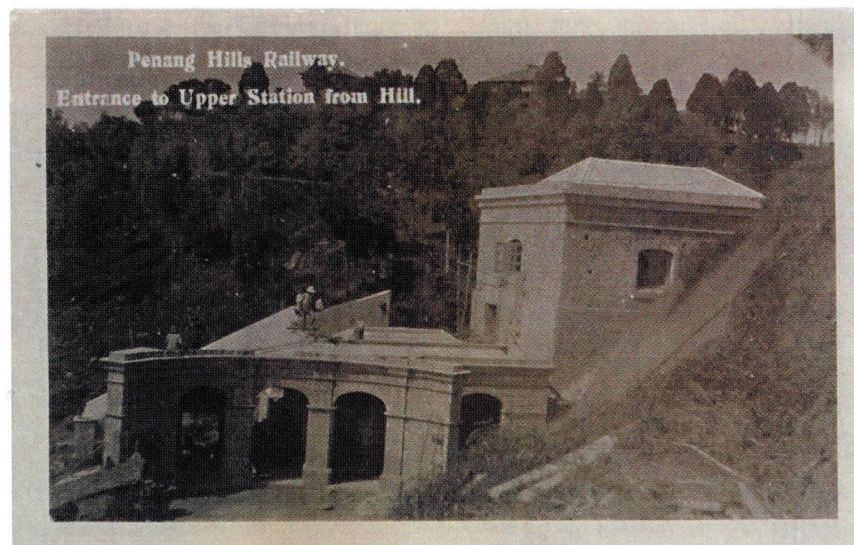
The Magazine Police Station is on the left.  
Tram lines are clearly visible – they were  
used by steam trams, as electrical trams  
had yet to be introduced.

Wade's postcard collection offers a rich repository of historical images of places and people. Some, not all, can be dated within a few years. Put together, they allow us to closely trace the evolution of a place, like certain parts of Weld Quay or the Magazine Road Junction.

In this book, some commentary has been provided for favourite subjects, like Swettenham Pier, the Fort Cornwallis, Penang Hill, certain streets and modes of transport. However, it was not possible to caption all the postcards with the same degree of consistency, as information on certain subjects is lacking. Scenes in rural areas were difficult to identify.

The images provide a great deal of visual information on things such as native boats, traditional signs, popular attire and dress, which are in themselves deserving areas of study. It is hoped that the publication of this book will further stimulate interest in Penang, and help to validate the historic port settlement of Penang as a cultural heritage site of world importance.

*Khoo Salma Nasution*



◀ 8

Caption: Penang Hills  
Railway. Entrance to  
Upper Station from Hill.  
Real photo card, sepia  
finish.

View of the Upper  
Station nearing  
completion, circa 1922.  
Note the Governor's hill  
residence Bel Retiro on  
the skyline.



## Picture Postcards of Penang

by Malcolm Wade & Khoo Salma Nasution

### Photographers

**August Kaulfuss** is the greatest name in Penang cards. A profile of this German photographer appears in the voluminous work, 'Twentieth Century Impressions of British Malaya', which is itself a handsome record of Kaulfuss's photographic works:

Mr. August Kaulfuss is the oldest established European photographer in Pinang, and has taken all the photographs of Pinang and district which are reproduced in this work. He was born at Rohnstock, Silesia, in 1861, and was educated there. When he was fifteen he entered the photographic studio of Otto van Bosch, at Frankfort-on-Main, then the leading photographer of Southern Germany. He remained there two years, and afterwards followed his calling in various parts of Germany. He first came to Pinang in 1883, and has been in business as a photographer there since 1886. Mr. Kaulfuss has travelled extensively, having traversed on foot the whole of the Malay Peninsula, from Province Wellesley in the north to Johore in the south, at a time when there were few good roads and no railways. He explored the country behind the territory of Kedah, prospecting for minerals, and visited Bangkok. He is photographer to H.H. the Sultan of Kedah, and has taken a unique collection of photographs in the Malay Peninsula. He is a member of the Cricket, Turf, and Swimming Clubs, Engineers' Institute, and of the Masonic Lodge Royal Prince of Wales 1,555.

(Wright & Cartwright, 1908: 814)

From another source, we find additional information about his photographic career:

'(Kaulfuss) worked in the Frankfurt studio of the photographer Otto von Bosch c. 1876-78 and then in other studios in various parts of Germany, before serving in the German Navy for about two years. Arrived in Penang 1883 and around 1884 was assistant to the photographer J.M. Nauta; listed as a travelling photographer in 1886. In about 1888 he had a studio in partnership with Albert Schlump at 9 Farquhar Street, Penang, with a rubber stamp manufactory run by William Jones (also a photographer) at 9 Beach Street. From c. 1892 - c. 1908 the photographic studio was transferred to 27 Farquhar Street<sup>2</sup>. From around 1896 Kaulfuss was photographer by appointment to the Sultan of Kedah.

(Source: John Falconer, Curator of Photographs, Oriental and India Office Collections, The British Library)

Through his art as a photographer and publisher, he captured and promoted images of Penang. In a few early montages, he tried to present exotic or romantic compositions, but for the most part, his postcards were realistic and depicted

<sup>2</sup> 'Ernest August Kaulfuss, photographer, Farquhar Street', and 'Hans Von Katte, photographer, Farquhar Street' were both named in *The List of Qualified Jurors* (Straits Settlements Government Gazette, 23 December, 1904).

**A. KAULFUSS,**  
*Photographic Art Studio,*  
*By Special Appointment,*  
*Photographer to H.H. the Sultan of Kedah.* **PENANG.**

Open daily from 7 a.m. to 5 p.m. Sundays and Holidays from 8 to noon.

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**THROUGH LONG EXPERIENCE IN THE EAST.**

All Work guaranteed to stand all effects of climate.

**MOUNTING & FRAMING** executed in the  
 most tasteful manner.

**Views of Penang, Kedah, Perak, &c., always ready on hand.**

More than 100 different kinds of Postcards in Stock  
 of the F.M.S., Penang and Kedah.

Printing done in the latest style on Platino Paper, Bromide and several Processes of P.O.P.

Printing Papers, Plates, and Films always to be had, and special attention paid to Amateurs in their efforts for success.

Advertisement, Straits Times Annual, 1906.

contemporary developments around the settlement, such as the port and shipping, new buildings and amenities, transport and municipal improvements.

During the early 1900s a few series of cards appeared under the Kaulfuss imprint, their main difference being format and imprint rather than subject. The Kaulfuss cards were not confined in subject to Penang, though these were by far the most numerous. Kuala Lumpur, Selangor, Perak all featured and even two of Malacca are recorded. The highest number of the coloured series which is found in this collection is 208 but not all are Penang. Kaulfuss appears to have returned to Europe before 1910, at a time when the coloured cards bearing his name were at their most popular.

Other photographers whose names may be found on Penang picture postcards are as follows:

**H. Bodom.** There is one card inscribed H. Bodom, Penang. He was the proprietor of the Northam House Photographic Studio, 15 Northam Road, Penang ca. 1910-1920. It seems likely that many 'anonymous' cards may have been his work and that, in addition, he may have supplied pictures published under other 'imprints'.

**C.J. Kleingrothe.** This German photographer had a photostudio in Medan from about 1885. In 1891 he worked together with the photographer H. Staffhell, who liquidated his own studio in that year, and from 1901 on Kleingrothe continued on his own. He worked until about 1925, specializing in photographs of tropical agriculture, such as coffee and tobacco. Kleingrothe also produced a portfolio of photographs of Singapore and Malaya entitled 'Malay Peninsula', ca. 1907. Two postcards with his imprint are found in this collection, see page 290.

(Source: Marianne Fluitsma, Department of Historical Documentation, KITLV.)

**M. S. Nakajima.** A Japanese photographer based in Kuala Lumpur. A number of cards are to be found under the imprint of others, but with 'Photograph by Nakajima'.

**Nikko Studio.** A Japanese photographer K. Okaniwa, was the principal of 'Nikko' Photographic Studio at 7 Northam Road. He was considered 'the best photographer in Penang' in the 1920s, having been established here before 1907.

(MacMillan, 1923: 309)

## Producers & Retailers

It is difficult to differentiate between producers and retailers of postcards, particularly in the early days. The following 'imprints' have been found on Penang picture postcards.

- Federal Rubber Stamp Co. 'Stationers, Booksellers, Newsagents, Printers, Bookbinders, Account-Book Makers, Brass-Seal and Rubber-Stamp Manufacturers and General Commission Agents'. With the head office in Kuala Lumpur, the company had branches in Ipoh, Penang (opened in 1913) and Singapore, and also controlled the railway station bookstalls. Cards with a wide variety of this imprint can be found.
- Pritchard & Co., Penang.
- T.N. Shaik Ismail.
- Straits Photo Coy., Penang.
- British Empire Series
- Raphael Tuck & Sons, London. See page 278.
- Tuck's super 'GLOSSO' published by Whiteaway Laidlaw, Penang.
- S.M. Manicum, Penang. See page 294.
- K.M. Mahmed Esoof, Penang.
- A.S. Mahomed Assan & Co., Penang.
- A.M.I. No. 56 Beach Street
- M.J., Penang, with the open scissors trademark.
- No. 35.A. Beach Street, Penang.
- Co-operative Agency S.S.

- T.C.B. Penang.
- Valentine and William, E.&O. Hotel, Penang.
- P.L.I. Da Silva, E.&O. Hotel, Penang.
- F.M.S.R., Crag Hotel, Penang Hills. (Photo by M.S. Nakajima)
- Malay States Development Agency, 111/113, Queen Victoria Street, E.C.
- Missions Etrangères de Paris, 128 rue de Bac.
- Methodist Publishing House, Singapore.
- The Penang Photo Store, 49 Leith Street, Penang. (This address was subsequently occupied by Chungking Photo.)

and possibly others including G.R. Lambert of Singapore and Max H. Hilckes of Singapore, though no Penang cards with their imprints have been discovered. 'Printed in Germany' postcards appear from about 1910 onwards.

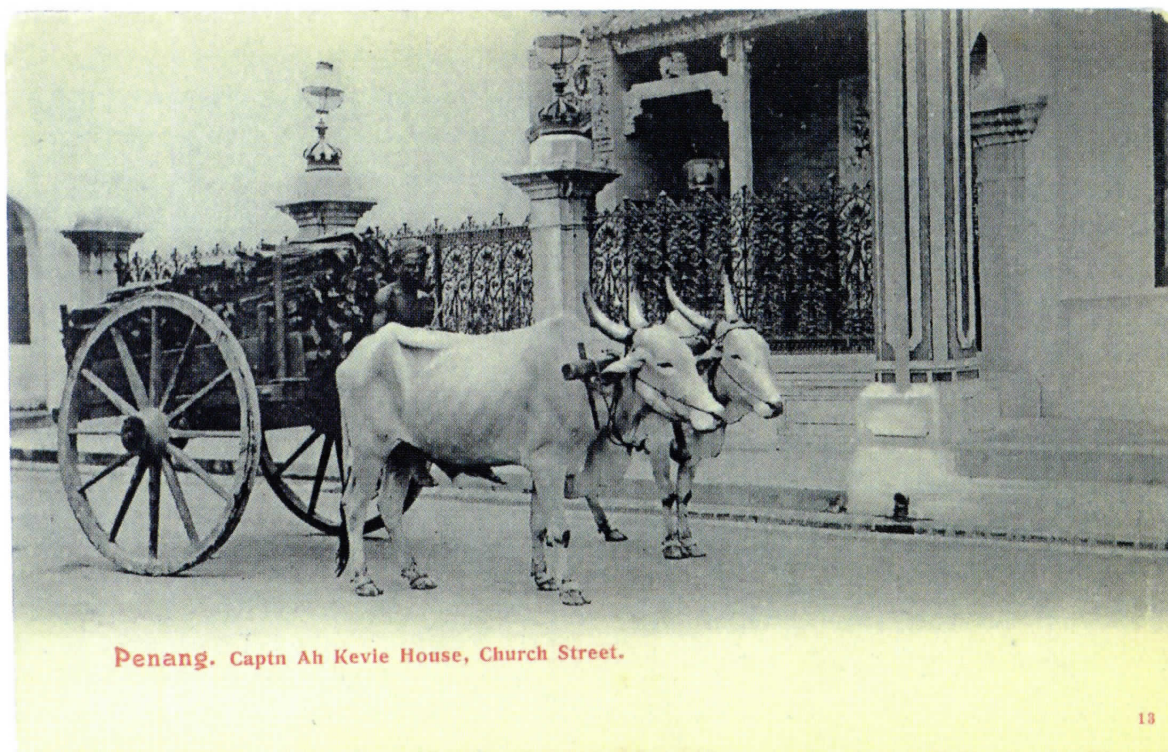
### ▼ 11

Caption: Penang. Captn Ah Kevie House, Church Street.  
No imprint. Undivided back.

The family temple and townhouse of Kapitan Chung Keng Kwee, Kapitan China of Perak and member of the Perak State Council. He was the leader of the Hai San secret society which fought with the Ghee Hin in the protracted Larut Wars of the late 19th century. The temple and townhouse, built in the 1890s, is lavishly embellished with exquisite terracotta sculptures, woodcarving, stone work, stencilled glass and decorative cast iron. Some of the decorative wooden panels were crafted by Chiw Shan Yau, see postcard 92a.

The bullock cart here appears to be transporting firewood, commonly used in cooking stoves.

(Source: Wong, 1963: 77-80)



Penang. Captn Ah Kevie House, Church Street.



◀ 12  
Caption: Post Office, Penang  
Imprint: Printed in Germany.  
This postcard shows the Post Office building at Weld Quay. It was destroyed by Allied bombs at the end of WW2.

## Postcard Postal Rates

by Malcolm Wade

The popularity of the postcard was increased when a picture was added to what had previously been a very useful but very functional means of communication. Early cards had undivided backs (UDB). Initially it was not permitted to write more than a brief greeting on the picture side, and nothing except the address on the reverse.

With the introduction of the 'divided back' ca. 1905 it was possible to write a message in addition to the address. However the message was costly and many card enthusiasts soon realised that if there was no message the card could be sent at the 'Printed Paper' rate so they deleted the word 'POSTCARD' and wrote in either 'Printed Paper', 'Printed Matter' or even 'Book Post'.

The Printed Paper rate was only really used during the days before 1910 when the novelty of the picture postcard led to fanatical collectors who sought to save money by its use. During this period the rate was 1c to all parts of the world!

Numerous card collectors' clubs were established and membership numbers are often found on cards used up to the

early 1930s. Some of the messages found on these cards express in no uncertain terms the dissatisfaction of some members if they did not receive suitable cards. With the advent of regular air services in the 1930s, special airmail rates for postcards were introduced but being expensive were not frequently used. These rates and routes are of interest to postal historians and some are very difficult to find, but they are outside the scope of this book.

### POSTAL RATES FOR POSTCARDS

	Straits and F.M.S.	Britain and Empire	Rest of the World
1.1.1899	1c	3c	3c
1.1.1918	2c	4c	4c
16.1.1922	2c	4c	8c
1.1.1926	2c	4c	6c
8.4.1940	4c	4c	6c
1.1.1941	4c	4c	8c

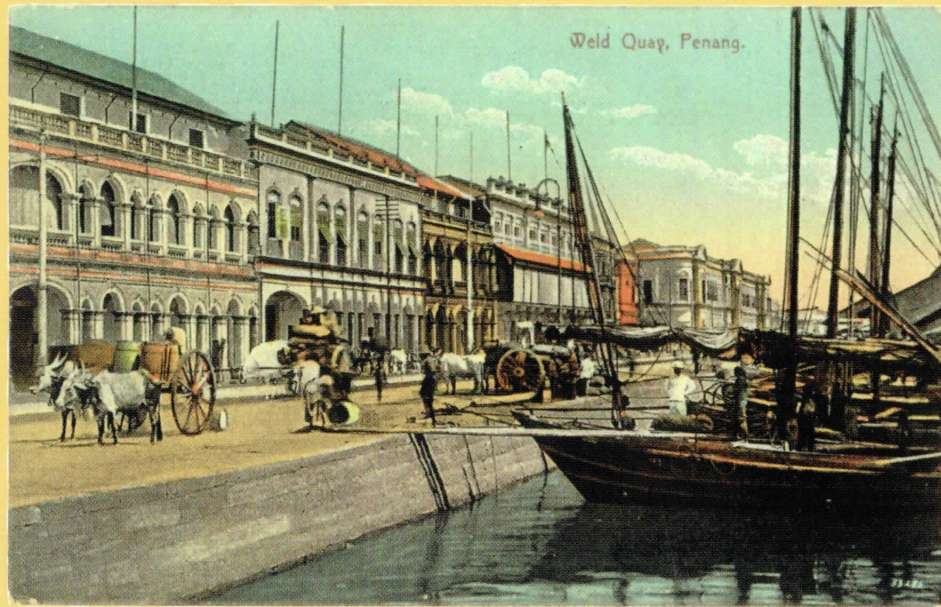


# The Port of Penang

▲ 13

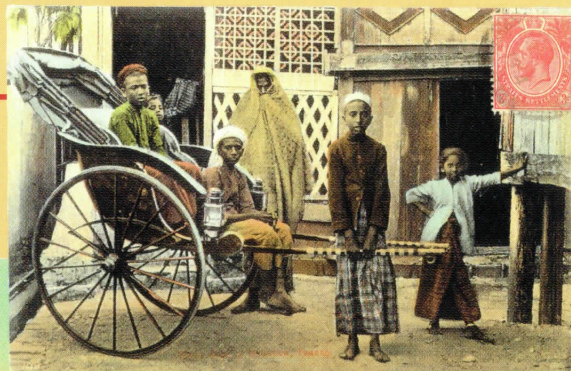
Caption: No. 5 – Penang. F.M.S. Pier & Offices

Imprint: T.C.B. Penang.



In the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, from a bustling port teeming with travellers and migrants, thousands of postcards of Penang were sent off into the world. These picture postcards gave vivid impressions of Penang's centre of commerce and administration, its streets and suburbs, its hill resort and its beaches.

With over 700 postcards compiled by Malcolm Wade, this is the largest collection of prewar Penang postcards ever published. The local historical context is researched by Khoo Salma Nasution, author of the best-selling book, 'Streets of George Town, Penang'. This collection serves as a testimony to Penang's rich heritage, as well as a visual resource for researchers, artists, collectors, and all those who love Penang.



Penang Free School, Penang.

