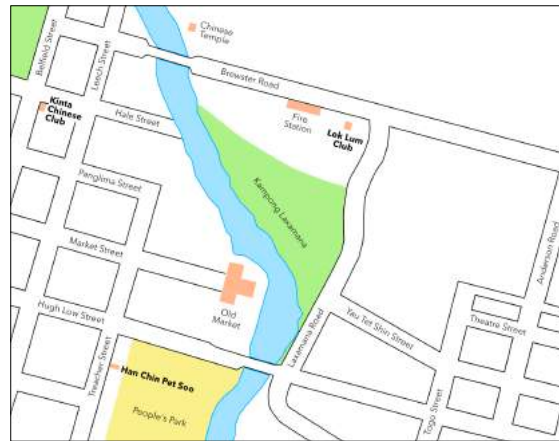


# Lok Lum

Founded in 1915, the Lok Lum Club originally occupied a beautiful mansion on Brewster Road in New Town, just north of Kampong Laxamana. The club was the pet project of Lim Seng Chew, who served multiple terms as its president and *de facto* host. While other *towkays* had their Chambers of Mines and their Chambers of Commerce, Seng Chew had his club – and it was elite: among the more prominent and frequent patrons were Leong Sin Nam and his family; Lee Guan Swee; Chew Boon Juan; Lee Ah Weng; and the sons of the late Leong Fee.



1 The map shows the Lok Lum Club in relation to (1) *Han Chin Pet Soo*, set up by Hakka miners; and (2) the Kinta Chinese Club – these being two other prominent Chinese *towkay* clubs that existed in 1915. (*Han Chin Pet Soo* is shown in its location at the time; the club-house was moved a decade or more later.)

2 The Lok Lum Club was not the first such institution in town. The Ipoh Club, for Europeans only, was founded in 1892, its original club-house a simple *attap*-roofed structure built across the street from the present railway station. *Han Chin Pet Soo* was founded in 1893. The Perak British Subjects Association was founded (at the Ipoh Club) in 1899. In 1902 the Kinta Chinese Club opened on Hale Street. The Indian Association was formed in 1906. In 1907 the Birch Club, primarily for European civil servants, was opened next to the old railway station. And Ipoh's YMCA was founded in the early 1910s.

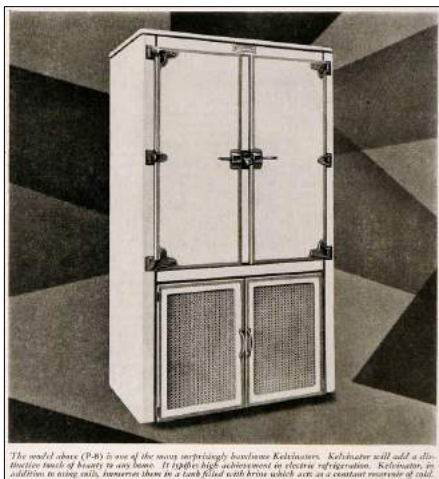


3 The 1915 club-house is on the right. It faces Brewster Road. On one side it is flanked by Laxamana Road, while on the other side (not visible) was the fire station and, for some years, a Chinese school. On the left side of the image is a large building constructed in the 1930s by Chua Cheng Bok, its corner lot occupied by Sim Lim Finance, which opened its Ipoh branch in the late 1960s. The photograph was likely taken in the mid-1970s, before the club-house made way for the Yik Foong Complex, whose construction began in 1979. Sim Lim's assets were taken over by Hong Leong in 1993.



4 Lim Seng Chew co-managed Leong Fee's Tambun Mines with Harry Nutter and the Pearse brothers: he was responsible for the Chinese (*i. e.*, non-Indian) portion of the work-force. Also a miner and entrepreneur in his own right, he enjoyed the good life, touring the world in the company of other Ipoh *towkays*. The Lok Lum Club was not his first social foray. In 1913, for example, together with Khong Kam Tak, Chung Thye Phin, and others he had helped establish the Perak Chinese Recreation Club. One of Seng Chew's sons became a prominent lawyer, while one of his daughters married an architect who had assisted in the design of the Cheng Bok Building. (The architect's father had been among Ipoh's leading real-estate developers.) Almost the only enterprise of Seng Chew's that was not a roaring success was the ill-fated Bank of Malaya – but then again, that venture failed during the Great Depression, when times were hard even for bankers; and other astute people were caught up with Seng Chew in the same unlucky project, including several other members of the Lok Lum Club.

5 The “electric refrigerator” installed at the club-house was a Kelvinator, advertised world-wide as the one favoured by John Rockefeller and Henry Ford. In Ipoh, itself a “millionaire’s town,” there were a few Kelvinator “fridges” in private homes; plus one in the Kinta Chinese Club and one at the Station Hotel.



6 In 1930, flush toilets, too, were a rarity. Apart from a few in private homes, the only “water-borne sanitary facilities” were for guests at the Station Hotel; for members at the Ipoh Club; and a new public facility adjoining the new central market. A town-wide sewage scheme was rejected by the Sanitary Board in the mid-1930s because the FMS government refused to help fund it. Only in the 1960s was a proper system initiated.

In operation Lok Lum was, unsurprisingly, something like a Chinese version of the Ipoh Club. A propitiously-named social and business venue, it had rules about who could be a member and who could be a guest – and certain exceptions were made. Membership was by application and there was usually a waiting-list before one could be admitted.

Inside the club-house, the furnishings and decor were just what one would expect: traditional Chinese luxe. There were sitting-rooms, smoking-rooms, dining-rooms, a library, and a large kitchen run by an impeccable chef. From time to time a game of *mah-jong* was played, although in the old days this was not strictly legal.

In the late 1920s, additional features made the club an even more inviting place. When Ipoh's new water-supply system was completed, the club-house was quickly connected. A large and powerful electric refrigerator was imported from the United States – which enabled the chef to enhance the variety and quality of his offerings. A modern sanitary installation was put in place. By 1930, Lok Lum was unquestionably the finest Chinese club in Perak.

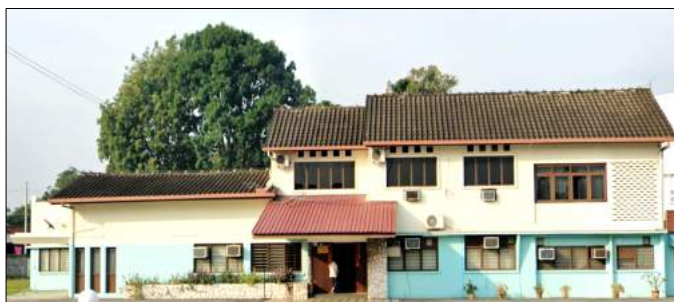
PRIVATE SUPPLIES FOR DOMESTIC PURPOSES.	
KINTA.	
(a) Flat Rates :	
(i) Single-storey terrace dwellings ... ..	2 per mensem
(ii) Shop-houses and terrace dwellings other than single-storey terrace dwellings ... ..	4 .. "
(iii) Private residences ... ..	8 .. "
(b) Metered Supplies :	
(i) The Convent, Ipoh, up to 49,000 gallons per mensem no charge and for amounts taken in excess thereof	5 cents per 1,000 gals.
(ii) The Elin Orphanage, Ipoh, up to 15,000 gallons per mensem no charge and for amounts taken in excess thereof	5 .. "
(iii) State-aided schools	5 cents per 1,000 gals. per mensem
The following Clubs and Institutions within the Sanitary Board area of Ipoh, 25 cents per thousand gallons, from 1st May, 1930 :	
Young Men's Christian Association	Ipoh Chinese Athletic Association
Perak Turf Club	Buck Club
Ipoh Club	Sturrock Club
Ipoh Golf Club	Lok Lum Club
Ipoh Catholic Club	Ceylon Association
Keohil Club	

7 The list, published in 1930, shows how various customers were billed for their water consumption. Ipoh's original water-works was built in 1896; expanded in 1902; and completely replaced in 1905. By 1918 even more water was required. To improve pressure at the tap and at hydrants, larger mains were re-laid in 1924 but even then a new reservoir was needed, so the entire system was re-done again in the late 1920s. Then, when the Kinta Swimming Club was built, the old reservoir was used to supply it.

But then came the Occupation. When Japanese officers looked for a lair where they could indulge their instincts, they first considered the newly constructed premises of the Perak Chinese Amateur Dramatic Association on Osborne Street – but were dissuaded by president (and community leader) Chan Kye Choo. Someone may have pointed out that the Dramatic Association could organize performances to raise money for the occupying forces. At any rate, the Association's premises were spared and the Japanese took over the Lok Lum club-house instead. Years later, Tan Chong Tee, a member of the Resistance who worked with Lim Bo Seng and others in Ipoh, and was tortured for it, said that the Japanese had raped the town. It was perhaps a mercy that Seng Chew did not live to see it. He had died in 1937.

And yet the club survived – and recovered – and to this day it prospers.

9 In the late 1970s, the club moved to a site on Gopeng Road, not far from Istana Kinta. The club president today is William Teoh, a miner, planter, and property developer. The Octagon tower, on the site of the old Yau Tet Shin market on Cowan Street, is one of his projects. He is also a community leader, in Chinese education generally and in Teochew matters in particular.



**IPOH BENEFIT SHOWS**  
**Demel.**  
**IPOH, Feb. 25.—The Perak Chinese Amateur Dramatic Association gave two performances last week-end in aid of the Wounded Soldiers' Comfort Fund. Capacity houses attended both the shows, the total proceeds amounting to nearly \$14,000.**

8 The article appeared in the *Syonan Shimbum* in 1943. Life during the Occupation was riddled with difficult compromises.

10 As often happens with Chinese terms, over the decades the name of the club was rendered variously in English – “Lok Lam,” “Lock Lum,” “Loke Lam,” and so on – but in the old days the club itself normally used the name “Lok Lum,” as did the government. Today, the most prominent transliteration is probably the one displayed by the club at the entrance to its compound at 99 Gopeng Road.



11 There is a street in Ipoh named after Lim Seng Chew. Built after the war and altered a number of times, it runs off Chung Thye Phin Road. The map shows the area as it was circa 1958 (not every road or drive is included and all structures are shown in simplified outline). The Ave Maria School had been founded (under another name) in the 1930s and moved to the area shortly after the war. Foo Yet Kai lived on Jalan Lim Seng Chew. The Khong family owned a home nearby on Hugh Low Street but had vacated it a few years earlier; for some years it was used as an office by a mining company. Adjacent was the late Cheong Chee's house – he had died in 1954. Across Hugh Low Street was King's Villa, one of Lam Looking's former homes, this one acquired from the Straits Trading Company.

