



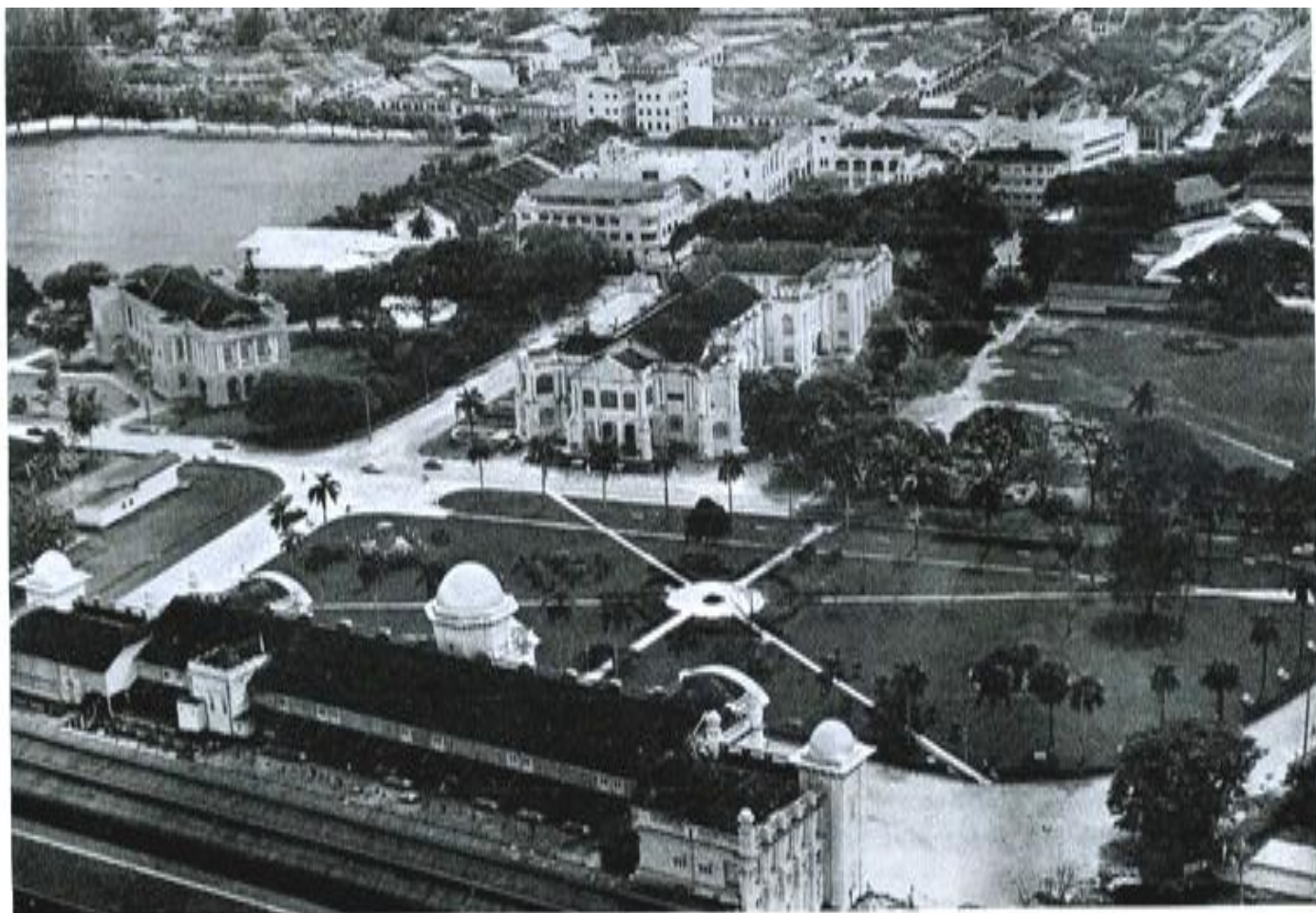
Ipoh's railway station, built in 1917, was one of a group of buildings in the town centre completed during World War One.

The development of Ipoh architecture

Architecture in Ipoh is an interesting blend of Chinese-style shophouses, classical and modern buildings. It is described here by Ipoh architect David Chow

The Supreme Court in Ipoh, facing the railway station, was built nearly ten years later than the station — in 1928.





Aerial view, looking over the railway station, shows the Town Hall, Supreme Court and Ipoh padang; oldest part of town.

SOME 65 YEARS AGO the town centre of Ipoh was confined to the portion of Hugh Low Street north of the Hugh Low Street Bridge and made up of a few short rows of single-storey attap roofed traditional eastern shophouses and business premises alongside an uneven mud road. To the south of this bridge were vast areas of swamps and rubber plantations. After the turn of the century, around 1917, the magnificent structure of the railway station was built in the classical style. Two other imposing buildings, the Supreme Court and the Town Hall, followed in similar classical idiom a few years later.

Parallel with the growth of the tin mining enterprise was the gradual expansion of the "old" town southwards over the bridge and here we find rows of Chinese-style shophouses built with full-storey classical Greek proportions and stucco mouldings, combined with pitched Chinese tiled roof in bright colours.

Banking premises and larger office blocks were decidedly reminiscent of architectural style in eighteenth century England with their bold exterior columned portico and giant, well-proportioned Roman Doric columns and pilasters, projecting finely moulded stucco architraves and hosts of other

classical motifs. In the outskirts of town were found spaciouly designed half-timber houses for Government officials.

By 1925, the "old" town of Ipoh had extended southwards to form the "new" town, with two major streets, Hugh Low Street and Brewster Road, running parallel to each other north to south with arterial roads arching out in an east-west direction. From 1925 to 1945 and followed by the British Military Administration, building activities were normal and there was no significant change in the architectural scene other than the multiplication of shophouses and some expansion of the town centre.

The setting up of the Town Board brought about a greater control over unauthorized building activities and by 1954 the Town Board had published its first building by-laws. By this time, the upsurge of the building industry throughout the Federation of Malaya had caught up with Ipoh and from 1954 the architectural development gathered a new momentum.

The need for more adequate housing for the ever-increasing population has always been a big problem for fast-growing towns and cities. In Ipoh several large housing estates were built around 1954 answer this problem. The

Close-up of the Ipoh clock tower, the memorial to a former British Resident.





There is much modern housing in Ipoh, such as houses in new estate off Kampar Road (left) and the Waller Court low-cost flats.



Shophouse architecture in Ipoh contrasts with modern houses of the Canning Garden housing estate just off Tambun Road.



This is one of Ipoh's oldest streets, Belfield Street, seen from Station Road.

Kampar Road Housing Scheme, designed by the Housing Trust, consisted of a total of 243 units of varied types of houses together with 12 shophouses which were built at a cost of ranging between \$3,000 to \$20,000. These houses were designed simply, without mouldings and trimmings, and depended on the application of colours for lively effect.

Almost a similar architectural approach was used in the privately-developed Canning Garden Housing Estate along Tambun Road. This covers over 198 acres of converted agricultural lands with a planning target of over 1,300 units which will house over 6,000 people. The construction materials were brick walling, louvred glass windows and redland roofing tiles.

Of interest architecturally was the Sungei Rokam scheme, a low-cost housing for a Malay settlement. Constructed mainly of timber in the Malay tradition, these houses were raised on timber columns resting on stone base with tie beams which also serve as floor joints. A total of 400 units had been built and a future mosque will probably be sited in the central park right in the midst of the settlement, which covers over 100 acres of land.

One other housing scheme of interest in its planning layout was the Sungei

Senam housing scheme in Ashby Road. Over 150 single-storey two bedroom and double-storey three bedroom transit quarters were laid out in harmony with the beautiful contours of this area. The terrace blocks were built of varied lengths to create interest and great care was exercised in the disposition of open area in relation to the quarters.

Whilst on the subject of housing, the most important contribution to date is the design of 17 blocks of four-storey flats known as Waller Court in Anderson Road, for the Ipoh Town Council. The total of 536 units are arranged in two staggered rows of blocks over a site approximately one-third of a mile in length and 200 feet in width. In between these blocks of flats are shophouses and open play areas. An interesting feature is the linking of these blocks of flats by reinforced concrete bridges at all levels. The cross walls are of 4½" reinforced concrete load-bearing wall throughout. The project started in October 1960 and was opened in May 1962.

Other contributions towards the architectural development in Ipoh come from the Public Works Department, the Ipoh Town Council and to a smaller extent, the private firms of architects. The federal building programmes for the improvement and expansion of the three public services of health — education and social welfare — have resulted in the Public Works Department producing many new schools, hospital units, and police buildings within the last five years.

The Ipoh Town Council in early 1961 invited architects throughout the Federation and Singapore to submit designs for a proposed \$475,000 Yau Tet Shin Market and Shopping Centre to be built in Cowan Street. In April of 1961 the shopping centre was under construction based on the winning design. Essentially consisting of a circular block and a rectangular block linked by two covered ways, the two-storeyed shopping centre had an interesting projecting shell roof and balcony terminating in two gradual ramps.

Through these projects have been introduced into the architectural scene newer methods of construction, with better cladding materials and, most important of all, a better understanding of good clean functional architecture. The future is unmistakably bright with bold projects which include the Tasek Industrial Estate, 18 storey low-cost flats, a first-class hospital ward and many others. With the growing awareness that good clean architecture can be a good business proposition coupled with the increasing vigour of building, Ipoh will no doubt soon equal other big cities of the Federation in architectural maturity.

IPOH: THE TOWN THAT TIN BUILT



Two modern Ipoh buildings: a new hotel and St. John's Ambulance Hall (below).



Another contrast: modern Yau Tet Shin market is surrounded by old shophouses.

