

**Research Report on  
No. 38 Oxley Road**

**National Heritage Board**

## NO. 38 OXLEY ROAD



### 1. Basic Information

Type:	Residence
Year of Construction:	<i>Circa</i> 1898
Architect/Firm:	Alfred William Lermitt and Johannes Westerhout Architects and Surveyors
Address:	38 Oxley Road Singapore 238629

#### a. History of Oxley Area

The area was named after Dr Thomas Oxley (1805-1886), who was a surgeon and one of the early European planters in Singapore who placed his faith in nutmeg. In 1837, he bought 173 acres of uncleared jungle land from the East India Company and turned it into one of the finest nutmeg plantations, naming it Killiney Estate (or Oxley Estate). The estate was bounded by Orchard Road, Grange Road, Leonie Hill Road, River Valley Road and Tank Road. Dr Oxley's European contemporaries in this era of plantations in Singapore were William Cuppage, who occupied Emerald Hill, and Charles Carnie, who built the first house in Cairnhill in 1840.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Infopedia, "Killiney House (Belle Vue)", [eresources.nlb.gov.sg/infopedia/articles/SIP\\_1129\\_2006-04-05.html](https://eresources.nlb.gov.sg/infopedia/articles/SIP_1129_2006-04-05.html); Singapore Medical Association, *Insight*, SMA News, May 2014, p.26.

Unfortunately, the nutmeg blight descended upon the plantations in 1855-56. As a result, Dr Oxley's nutmeg enterprise folded and he sold his plantation lands.<sup>2</sup> He left for England with his wife and five children on 23 February 1857.<sup>3</sup>

b. Early Development of Oxley and its Surroundings

In the past, many wealthy plantation owners had built plantation-style bungalow-style houses in the area. Today, the area bordering Oxley has been largely redeveloped with condominiums, leaving No. 38 Oxley Road as one of the last remaining bungalow-style original houses in the area.

No. 38 Oxley Road was commissioned by Hermann Cornelius Verloop<sup>4</sup> in 1898. Verloop was a Dutch merchant who lived at No. 11 Lloyd Road, and had a few properties under his name in the vicinity (Cairnhill Road and Mount Elizabeth). The plans for the house were submitted by Lermitt and Westerhout Architects and Surveyors.

Together with No. 40, No. 38 was one of the Gemini "twins"<sup>5</sup> built back then. No. 38 was known as Castor while No. 40 was known as Pollux.<sup>6</sup> The house was first mentioned in *The Straits Times* in 1902 as a venue for auctions, in particular furniture auctions, as the house changed hands frequently then. In 1911, No. 38/Castor was described as an unfurnished lodging with eight bedrooms, one dining room and one drawing room, and was available for rent at 65 Straits dollars.<sup>7</sup>

Oxley Road was described as a middle-class area which was occupied by the Europeans before the war. During the Japanese Occupation (1942-45), the Europeans vacated the area and the Japanese moved in,<sup>8</sup> converting the houses on Oxley Road into comfort houses. The Kempeitai also had a branch on Oxley Rise.<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> *Singapore Free Press and Mercantile Advertiser (weekly)*, 30 July 1890. Recollections of an Old Boy.

<sup>3</sup> Infopedia, "Killiney House (Belle Vue)", [eresources.nlb.gov.sg/infopedia/articles/SIP\\_1129\\_2006-04-05.html](http://eresources.nlb.gov.sg/infopedia/articles/SIP_1129_2006-04-05.html); Donald Davies, *More Old Singapore* (D. Moore, 1956), p.35.

<sup>4</sup> His name was also spelt as Hermanus Cornelius Verloop in the English press – *Straits Times*, 5 April 1900 & 29 November 1924.

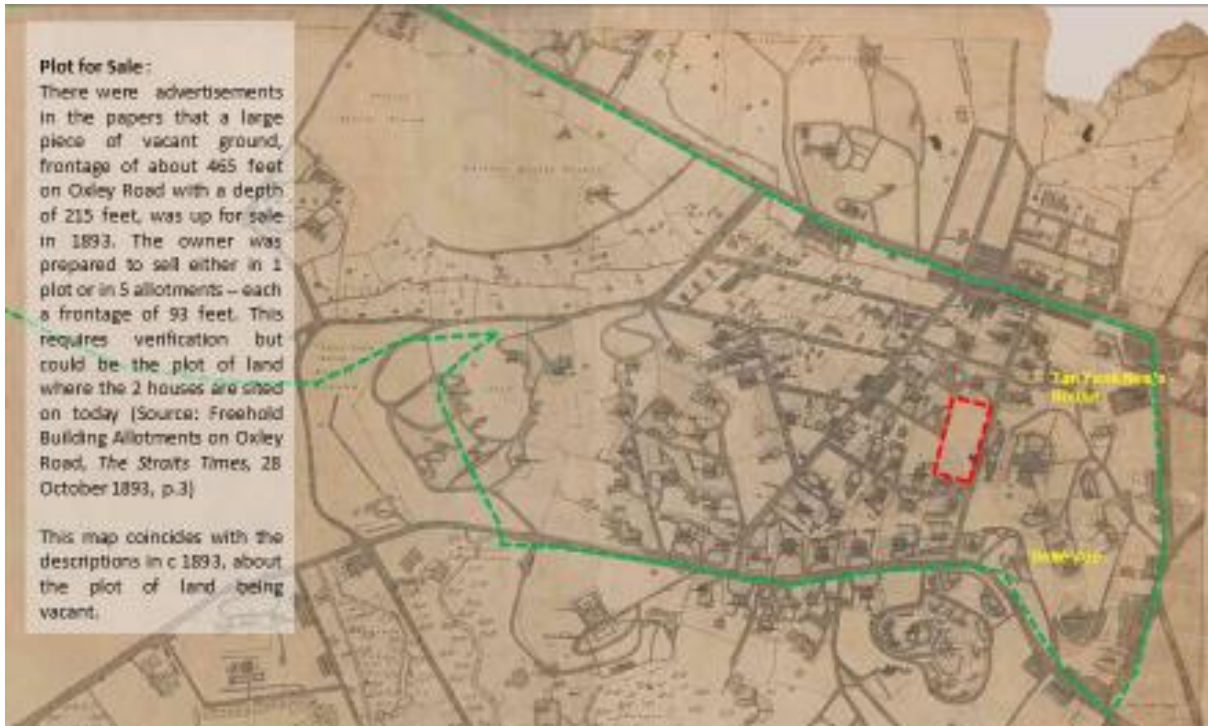
<sup>5</sup> In Greek and Roman mythology, Castor and Pollux were twin brothers who appeared in several prominent myths. They were worshipped as gods who helped shipwrecked sailors and who brought favourable winds for those who made sacrifices to them. The Romans considered Castor and Pollux as the patron gods of horses and of the Roman social order of mounted knights, called *equites*.

<sup>6</sup> Eze Nathan, *The history of Jews in Singapore, 1830-1945*, p.104 (HERBILU Editorial & Marketing Services, 1986). Note that in the early 1900s (c.1898 to c.1916), the address of "Castor Villa" was No. 6-3 Oxley Road. By 1921, the address had changed to No. 38 Oxley Road (*Straits Times*, 21 Jan 1921. Auction Sale).

<sup>7</sup> *Straits Times*, 14 Feb 1911. This was the only news that got the address wrong. It stated the address of No. 6-3 Oxley Road as No. 62 Oxley Road.

<sup>8</sup> *The Singapore Story: Memoirs of Lee Kuan Yew*, Volume 1, p.90 (1998).

<sup>9</sup> *Between 2 Oceans: A military history of Singapore from 1275 to 1971* (2<sup>nd</sup> edition), p.248; Infopedia, "Kempeitai", [eresources.nlb.gov.sg/infopedia/articles/SIP\\_79\\_2005-02-02.html](http://eresources.nlb.gov.sg/infopedia/articles/SIP_79_2005-02-02.html); *The Singapore Story: Memoirs of Lee Kuan Yew*, Volume 1, p.92.



1893 map of Singapore with Oxley estate indicated – site of 38 and 40 Oxley Road indicated in the red dotted rectangle.



Site map of No. 38 Oxley Road. Taken from a copy of Singapore Map, year unknown, most probably after 1932 (railway track along Tank Road no longer indicated).

### c. Mr Lee Kuan Yew's Acquisition of the House

After the Japanese Occupation, in 1945/early 1946, Mr Lee Kuan Yew started renting 38 Oxley Road as his family had to move out of China Building (originally at Chulia Road) and their home in a shophouse at Victoria Street was unsuitable (see Appendix B for chronology on Mr Lee's homes).<sup>10</sup>

- The family had been living in China Building from March/April 1945.
- Before that, the family lived in a shophouse in Victoria Street after they sold their home at 28 Norfolk Road (possibly end 1944), when Mr Lee tendered his resignation from the Japanese Propaganda Department and sold the family home at Norfolk Road with the intention to move the family up north.

At the time when Mr Lee started renting 38 Oxley Road, the building was described as a rambling house with five bedrooms and three others at the back which originally served as the servants' quarters.<sup>11</sup> The house was also empty except for some heavy furniture. George Gaw, a Java-born Chinese friend of the family, who was in charge of the Custodian of Enemy Property, allowed them to have the house at its pre-war rental of 80 Straits dollars a month.<sup>12</sup>

Mrs Lee Kuan Yew (Mdm Kwa Geok Choo) moved into the family home on 30 September 1950 after wedding formalities between her and Mr Lee were completed.<sup>13</sup> Although Mr Lee and his family had stayed there since about 1945, he and Mrs Lee only purchased the house in 1965. The first owner of the land had been Dr Thomas Oxley in 1837. The land had changed hands a few times before it was bought by Verloop. After developing 38 and 40 Oxley Road, he sold the two houses to a Jewish woman, Tila Frankel (related to Julian Frankel, of Frankel Estate). The Lees' rent had been raised from 80 Straits dollars to 118 by 1965. Mr Lee was not sure of ownership and thought the rental was reasonable. Things changed when security became a key concern. When arrest and assassination attempts became real possibilities, the couple decided to buy the house, and they fortified the compound with steel gates, additional brick walls and bullet-proof windows.

## 2. **Historic Interest**

### a. **National Significance**

No. 38 Oxley Road was the home of Singapore's founding Prime Minister Mr Lee Kuan Yew from the 1950s until his death in 2015. People came to the house from the early 1950s to seek legal help from Mr Lee. Over time, it came to be associated with key national events. Today, it testifies to the formation of a new government for Singapore. The individuals who gathered in the basement of No. 38 Oxley Road became key players in the politics of that era, and altered the destiny of the country.

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<sup>10</sup> *The Singapore Story: Memoirs of Lee Kuan Yew*, Volume 1, p.90.

<sup>11</sup> *The Singapore Story: Memoirs of Lee Kuan Yew*, Volume 1, p.90.

<sup>12</sup> *The Singapore Story: Memoirs of Lee Kuan Yew*, Volume 1, pp. 90 - 91. The rental was "to be paid in Straits dollars - some \$80 month, a fairly sizeable sum" in those days.

<sup>13</sup> *The Singapore Story: Memoirs of Lee Kuan Yew*, Volume 1, p.135.

The significance of No. 38 Oxley Road is perhaps best described in the following excerpt from *Men in White*:

“[if] the walls of the home of the founding father of the Republic of Singapore could speak, they would narrate the unending procession of trade unionists, workers, tradesmen, students, journalists, civil servants, professionals and intellectuals passing through its gates in the 1950s asking for Harry, Kuan Yew or Mr Lee.

Here within a pre-war single-storey bungalow which stood on pillars, or *fu jiao lou* as the Mandarin speakers called it, was where the newly returned graduates from England took off from where they left off in their exhilarating Malayan Forum discussions in London.

Here in the basement room was where strained faces sat huddled around a long dining table littered with overflowing ash-trays.

Here beneath the whirring fan with three windows thrown wide open to dispel the heat and humidity was where ideas were tossed up, views argued, options weighed, issues thrashed and decisions made in hush-hush meetings which changed the history of Singapore.

Here towards the end of 1954 was where the People’s Action Party (PAP) was born.”<sup>14</sup>

In fact, several commentaries and reports in the media have acknowledged the national and historical significance of the house. It has been described as “permanently entwined with this Southeast Asian island nation’s history”,<sup>15</sup> carrying “deep historical and heritage value, [for] it was there where modern Singapore’s destiny was made”.<sup>16</sup>

## **b. Association with Historical Event(s), Phase(s) or Activity(ies)**

### **i. A House from Which People Could Seek Help**

As noted in *Men in White* (p. 43), in the 1950s, people used to enter No. 38 freely to approach Mr Lee Kuan Yew who was a lawyer then, for help or for legal consultations. The notable visitors included:

- November 1950: John Eber (Vice-President of the Malayan Democratic Union, MDU) who called on Mr Lee at Oxley Road without notice. Mr Lee asked Eber what they could do about Singapore’s then futile constitutional politics.<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>14</sup> Yap, Sonny, Lim, Richard and Leong Weng Kam. *Men in White: The Untold Story of Singapore’s Ruling Political Party*, p. 43.

<sup>15</sup> Swidney, Neil. “The Singapore Lee Built, and the House He Wants Destroyed.” *Boston Globe*, Jun. 20, 2015.

<sup>16</sup> Balji, P.N. “Comment: Let the Hard Truth about Lee Kuan Yew’s House Prevail”. *Yahoo Singapore News*, Dec. 7, 2015.

<sup>17</sup> *The Singapore Story: Memoirs of Lee Kuan Yew*, Volume 1, pp.138-139.

- Early 1952: Superintendent Richard Byne Corridon (Special Branch Officer) visited Mr Lee at Oxley Road to discuss Samad Ismail's case.<sup>18</sup>
    - Mr Lee had been asked by Yusof Ishak (then owner, editor-in-chief and managing director of *Utusan Melayu*) to represent Samad Ismail, the chief sub-editor of *Utusan Melayu*, who was held with other detainees on St. John's Island since his arrest in January 1951. Mr Lee agreed to take the case.<sup>19</sup>
    - Samad Ismail too became a frequent visitor to 38 Oxley Road after his release from prison in October 1953, and brought along with him his former fellow-detainee Devan Nair. Both were known to Mr Lee as pro-communists. Mr Lee's connection to Samad, together with his representation of Malay workers involved in the 1952 Singapore Post and Telegraph Uniformed Staff Union strike, won him critical Malay support early in his political career.<sup>20</sup>
  - 1954: Robert Soon Loh Boon or Sze Lih Hwa visited Mr Lee at his home with an Indonesian Chinese girl who wanted Mr Lee to represent the students who were persecuted for the May 13 incident.<sup>21</sup>
  - Dennis Bloodworth, a foreign journalist from the British Observer newspaper, known to be a sympathizer to the anti-colonial struggle, was invited to Oxley for dinner.
  - In 1954, students from the Chinese Middle School came to see Mr Lee, to ask him to represent seven students who had been arrested for rioting on May 13. After the case, Lee Kuan Yew was introduced to other Chinese educated unionists, including Lim Chin Siong and Fong Swee Suan, who provided Mr Lee and his group of English-educated friends entre into the world of the Chinese-educated working class. Lim and Fong too came often to Oxley, to plan with Mr Lee and his team the formation of a new left-wing party.<sup>22</sup>
- ii. Formation of People's Action Party (PAP): Discussions that led to the PAP's formation took place in the basement between 1952-1954

In 1953, Dr Goh Keng Swee, Dr Toh Chin Chye, S. Rajaratnam,<sup>23</sup> K. M. Byrne and Lee Kuan Yew began meeting on Saturday afternoons in the basement dining room of 38 Oxley Road to consider the feasibility of forming a political party.

*"The room was in a hot, uncomfortable part of the house facing the setting sun, and even with three wide-open doors and a powerful ceiling fan whirring it could become extremely muggy. But if the atmosphere was soporific, we were not. We were determined that we would be completely different from the supine, feeble, self-serving, opportunistic parties and individuals in the Legislative Council and City Council."*

– Lee Kuan Yew in *The Singapore Story*.<sup>24</sup>

<sup>18</sup> *The Singapore Story: Memoirs of Lee Kuan Yew*, Volume 1, p.157.

<sup>19</sup> *The Singapore Story: Memoirs of Lee Kuan Yew*, Volume 1, pp.156, 157.

<sup>20</sup> *The Singapore Story: Memoirs of Lee Kuan Yew*, Volume 1, pp.146-151, 160.

<sup>21</sup> *The Singapore Story: Memoirs of Lee Kuan Yew*, Volume 1, p.166.

<sup>22</sup> *Lee Kuan Yew: The Man and His Ideas*, p.45; *The Singapore Story: Memoirs of Lee Kuan Yew*, Volume 1, pp.166-179.

<sup>23</sup> *The Singapore Story: Memoirs of Lee Kuan Yew*, Volume 1, p.39. In 1952, Sinnathamby Rajaratnam, leftist journalist of Jaffna Tamil origin - He was introduced to Lee by Goh Keng Swee. He was an associate editor of the Singapore Standard – visited Oxley with the gallery proofs of his editorial scheduled for publication the next day.

<sup>24</sup> *The Singapore Story*, p.160.

Mr Lee invited Samad Ismail and Devan Nair to join the group soon after they were released from prison in October 1953, and the group expanded further in 1954 with the addition in particular of Lim Chin Siong and Fong Swee Swan. Toh, Samad and Fong later recalled that as many as 20 people would huddle around the basement dining table for discussions in the weeks and months leading up to the party's inauguration in November 1954. Dr Toh chaired these meetings, with Lee Kuan Yew acting as secretary and Lee Gek Seng the assistant secretary.<sup>25</sup> These meetings were held secretly, as the internal security regulations then forbade such political meetings. Dr Toh<sup>26</sup> recalled that Ong Eng Guan suggested burying the minutes of the meetings in the garden.<sup>27</sup> After the 1954 party inauguration, UMNO leader and future Malaysian Prime Minister, Tunku Abdul Rahman, was hosted to dinner at Oxley.<sup>28</sup>



Sketch recreation of the basement dining room with the founding members brainstorming the logo for the new political party, published 5 September 2009. Clockwise from Lee Kuan Yew (standing), KM Byrne, S Rajaratnam, Devan Nair, Dr Toh Chin Chye, Dr Goh Keng Swee, Samad Ismail and Rahim Ismail. Illustration: Miel Prudencio Rosales, Straits Times senior executive artist.

<sup>25</sup> *The Singapore Story: Memoirs of Lee Kuan Yew*, Volume 1, p.51, 52 (1998).

<sup>26</sup> *Lee's Lieutenants*, p.5. "It was in the basement of Lee Kuan Yew's house where Toh joined the nucleus of a clandestine political discussion group. He did not belong to the first wave of future PAP founding members who met at Lee's house; he was still in England when the 'basement group' first met." He was the one who pushed for the basement group to register itself as a political party.

<sup>27</sup> *Leaders of Singapore*, p. 78. *Leaders of Singapore*, p. 86.

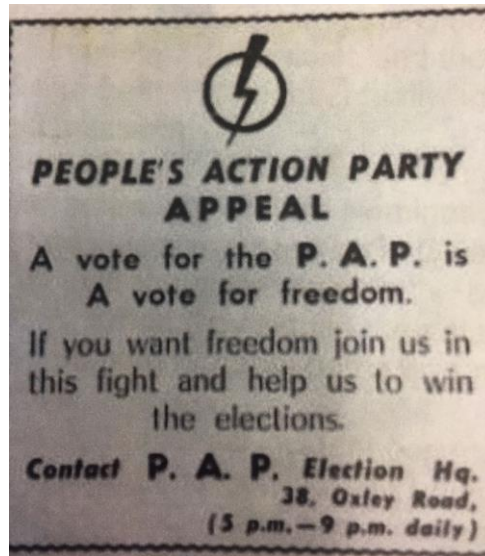
<sup>28</sup> *The Singapore Story: Memoirs of Lee Kuan Yew*, Volume 1, pp.179, 181. It seems that the Tunku and other leaders of the then Singapore UMNO were invited to dinner in Lee's house after the inauguration of the party at Victoria Memorial Hall in end 1954. Mr Lee's book was rather unclear on this. *The Singapore Story: Memoirs of Lee Kuan Yew*, Volume 1, pp.179, 181, "To balance the party's radical reputation and the left-wing background of some of the convenors, I persuaded Tunku Abdul Rahman, by then the leader of UMNO and a member of the Executive Council in Malaya, and Sir Cheng Lock Tan...to speak at the inauguration. I had met Tan at several dinners, and the Tunku had consulted me in my office when he wanted to sue a newspaper in Singapore for libel. Later, I had invited him together with the Singapore UMNO leaders to dinner in my home."



iii. Preparation for the 1955 Legislative Assembly Elections – PAP’s First Elections

PM Lee Hsien Loong recalled that he “was excited by the hubbub at Oxley Road whenever elections happened, and our **(the) home became the election office.**”<sup>29</sup>

In 1981, Mrs Lee shared with oral archives that she laughed at a published advertisement in the newspapers (The Singapore Tiger Standard, 5 March 1955)<sup>30</sup>. It already featured the lightning and circle logo, and invited all interested parties to contact the PAP election headquarters at No. 38 Oxley Road between 5 to 9 pm daily. The family home had become the PAP headquarters.



This was a barely 4-month-old political party making its debut. Silk-screening of PAP banners was done on the porch. Unionists and postal workers prepared “Vote for PAP” posters there too<sup>30</sup>. The wives of PAP members sewed cloth rosettes for their husbands in the house. And in front of the porch sat volunteers from the postal workers union, ever ready for despatch errands.<sup>31</sup>

On the opposite street lived a Hakka businessman, Mr Chong Mong Sang, president of the Singapore Hakka Association. He mobilised the clan’s resources, including cars, to support fellow Hakka Lee Kuan Yew.<sup>32</sup> On election day, there was a lineup of about 100 cars, filled with petrol and ready to ferry voters to the polls, parked all along Oxley Road.<sup>33</sup>

Press conferences were also held at No 38.<sup>34</sup>

<sup>29</sup> “Mr Lee Kuan Yew Wanted His House to be Demolished: Five Things About 38 Oxley Road”, *The Straits Times*, 16 April 2015.

<sup>30</sup> *The Singapore Story: Memoirs of Lee Kuan Yew*, Volume 1, p.187; *Men in White*, p.69.

<sup>31</sup> In *The Singapore Story: Memoirs of Lee Kuan Yew*, Volume 1, p.188. Lee had a second headquarters and people donated money there, “The Singapore Chinese Liquor Retail Association allowed me to use its premises in Bernam Street as my second election headquarters. Many anonymous people came there to give money, while others turned up with bales of cloth for banners”.

<sup>32</sup> *The Singapore Story: Memoirs of Lee Kuan Yew*, Volume 1, p.41.

<sup>33</sup> *The Singapore Story: Memoirs of Lee Kuan Yew*, Volume 1, pp.188-189.

<sup>34</sup> *The Singapore Story: Memoirs of Lee Kuan Yew*, Volume 1, p.187. High possibility that these activities were done at Mr Lee’s house as Oxley was the election headquarters for all four constituencies the PAP was contesting.

iv. PAP's First Headquarters

Until PAP was able to secure its own headquarters, the house at Oxley was its de-facto headquarters. People like Lee Khoo Choy and Chor Yeok Eng recalled later how a few days before Nomination Day, all PAP candidates would gather at Oxley to fill their statutory declaration forms, presided over by the Commissioner of Oaths, banker Kwa Siew Tee (Mrs Lee's father). In its early years as an opposition party, the PAP could not easily find places to rent as landlords were worried about upsetting the authorities. In 1959, PAP won a landslide victory, winning 43 out of 51 seats, and formed the new government.<sup>35</sup>

v. Movable Artefacts

Gifts and other personal items found at the house reflect the relationships forged between Mr Lee, party supporters and state leaders. A key item that made its daily rounds to Mr Lee's study was the red box, bearing the gold stamped letters "Government of Singapore". It would be brought to the house every evening when he returned from the office, and Mr Lee would work on the contents of the red box at night. He would work at a teak desk in this study and read at another desk next to it.



Basement dining room at 38 Oxley Road, October 2011. Straits Times Photo: Stephanie Yeow

vi. A Family Home

Friends and extended family members have stayed in the house. Apart from Lee Kuan Yew's parents, siblings and grandmother, relatives from Indonesia stayed there too, with their Indonesian relatives helping to supplement Mrs Lee (Mdm Chua Jim Neo)'s income in the years after the war.<sup>36</sup>

Mr and Mrs Hon Sui Sen and their daughter stayed in the house for several months before moving to government quarters. This was their second stay with the Lees.<sup>37</sup> Hon had first boarded with

<sup>35</sup> Peter Wilson, *Economic growth and development in Singapore*, p.278 (Edward Elgar Publishing, 2002).

<sup>36</sup> *The Singapore Story: Memoirs of Lee Kuan Yew*, Volume 1, p.137.

<sup>37</sup> *Straits Times*, 2 September 1984. Pa and his friends.

Mr Lee in Norfolk Road as a paying guest in 1942, for about a year, and shared a room with Mr Lee. Mr Lee stayed with Hon in Penang for several days in 1944, when he went to Malaya to look for a safe place for his family to move to during the Japanese Occupation.<sup>38</sup>



*Maurice Baker, Pa and Lee Kuan Yew, with self. Ca. 1946  
at front porch of the Lee household.*

Hon, Joan. *Maurice Baker, Pa [Hon Sui Sen] and Lee Kuan Yew with self [Joan Hon]*. Ca. 1946. Photograph. *Relatively Speaking*. Singapore: Times Books International, 1984. 92. Print.

Family lunches took place at Oxley Road, with Mr Lee, his children and grandchildren dining together on Peranakan food. While Lee Kuan Yew's father, Lee Chin Koon, was alive, the extended family would gather every year at Oxley Road on the first day of Chinese New Year.<sup>39</sup>



Yeow, Stephanie. *The Lee family at the verandah of their home*. May 1965. Photograph. *Lee Kuan Yew: A Life in Pictures*. Singapore: Straits Times, 2013. 22. Print

## vii. After 1959

38 Oxley Road ceased to be a regular meeting place for Mr Lee and his team after the PAP formed the government in 1959. More often than not, they met in Lee Kuan Yew's office – first at City Hall and then later in Istana – and Sri Temasek, the Prime Minister's official residence. But Mr Lee's colleagues, including Dr Goh and other senior colleagues, continued to occasionally drop in

<sup>38</sup> Lee Kuan Yew recalled this in an article dedicated to Hon who passed away in 14 October 1983. "My Dear Friend", *Straits Times*, 21 December 1983, p.1.

<sup>39</sup> *Straits Times*, 16 April 2015. Mr Lee Kuan Yew Wanted His House to be Demolished: Five Things About 38 Oxley Road.

to see him at Oxley through the 1960s, and sometimes for meals. Senior civil servants from that time – including Sim Kee Boon and Ngiam Tong Dow – have recalled going to the house in the 1960s, especially during crises of one variety or another, when Mr Lee would sometimes ask senior officers for briefings.

viii. Summary of Locations Where Nationally Significant Events Took Place

	Location	Event
1.	Basement Dining Room	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Meetings that led to the formation of the People’s Action Party, and at which ideas and decisions affecting Singapore’s future were discussed and formed.</li> <li>- Dinner with then-future Malaysian Prime Minister, Tunku Abdul Rahman, and other UMNO leaders</li> </ul>
2.	Verandah	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Preparations were made for the PAP’s first foray into electoral politics in 1955, with unionists and postal workers spending days preparing posters and addressing election manifestos on the verandah</li> </ul>
3.	Study	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Where Mr Lee would work on the contents of his red box</li> </ul>
4.	Unspecified	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- “Our home became the election office” – Lee Hsien Loong</li> <li>- Several figures (S. Rajaratnam, Lim Chin Siong, Fong Swee Suan, Samad Ismail, Robert Soon Loh Boon, among others) paid visits to Mr Lee’s home, for legal consultation, or to seek advice.</li> </ul>

**c. Association with historic figure(s), community(ies) or group(s)**

i. Founding members of PAP who helped steer Singapore’s development in the early decades of its independence

The team who met in the basement included:

- Dr Goh Keng Swee – hailed as the architect of Singapore’s economic success.<sup>40</sup> He initiated and implemented the development of Jurong as the Minister for Finance after 1959. When Singapore became independent in 1965, he set up the Singapore Armed Forces.<sup>41</sup>
- Dr Toh Chin Chye – founding Chairman of PAP in 1954, and DPM of Singapore from 1959 to 1967. He led the fight for a multi-racial society while in Malaysia, founding the Malaysian Solidarity Convention, which called for a “Malaysian Malaysia”, with S Rajaratnam. He was also credited with building the technological, scientific, and

<sup>40</sup> *Leaders of Singapore*, p. 142.

<sup>41</sup> *Goh Keng Swee: A Public Career remembered*, pp.24, 98.

educational institutions, which helped in the industrialisation of Singapore, when he served as the Minister for Science and Technology.<sup>42</sup>

- S. Rajaratnam – described as the staunchest advocate of the concept of multiracialism and the author of the Singapore Pledge,<sup>43</sup> was a founding member of the PAP. He was appointed Minister for Culture in 1959, Minister for Foreign Affairs in 1965, Minister for Labour (1968-1971), 2<sup>nd</sup> DPM (Foreign Affairs) in 1980 and Senior Minister in 1984.<sup>44</sup>
- Kenneth Michael Byrne – who became the Minister for Law and Labour in 1959, and later Minister for Health. As the Minister for Labour, he introduced new legislation to “improve the welfare of workers and unify the Trade Union movement.” This legislation also established an independent court for the resolution of labour dispute.<sup>45</sup>

ii. People’s Action Party (PAP)

PAP was inaugurated on 21 November 1954 at the Victoria Memorial Hall (present-day Victoria Concert Hall). The party was founded by a group of trade unionists, teachers, lawyers and journalists. Their shared goal was to end British colonialism and establish an independent national state of Malaya comprising the Federation of Malaya and Colony of Singapore. Many of the founding members had studied in the United Kingdom and knew each other through the Malayan Forum, an informal Malayan students’ discussion group in London.<sup>46</sup>

In 1955, the PAP won 3 out of the 4 seats it contested in the Legislative Assembly Elections.<sup>47</sup> The PAP formed the first government of self-governing Singapore after it won 43 out of 51 seats in the 1959 General Elections. The PAP’s campaign in 1959, as in 1955, was conducted in large part out of Oxley Road.<sup>48</sup>

**d. As a symbolic/visual landmark in depicting a cultural identity or perpetuating a collective memory**

As the home of Mr Lee Kuan Yew, Singapore’s founding Prime Minister, No. 38 Oxley Road stands for the values that he and his wife exemplified both in their public and private lives – frugality and discipline in particular. The architectural simplicity of the house is reflective of the times, the site it sits on, as well as the values of its historic occupants.

**e. Rarity**

No. 38 Oxley Road was the only meeting place for discussions that led to PAP’s formation in 1954. The meetings were held there secretly, and the basement was nicknamed “The Underground” as

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<sup>42</sup> *Leaders of Singapore*, p. 83.

<sup>43</sup> “S Rajaratnam”, *Lee’s Lieutenants: Singapore’s Old Guard*, p. 96.

<sup>44</sup> *The Little Red Dot: Reflections by Singapore’s Diplomats*, vol.1, p.35, World Scientific, 2005

<sup>45</sup> “Kenneth Byrne”, *Lee’s Lieutenants: Singapore’s Old Guard*, p. 79.

<sup>46</sup> *Men in White*, pp.54-55; *Lee’s Lieutenants*.

<sup>47</sup> *Straits Times*, 3 April 1955. Labour wins - Marshall will be Chief Minister.

<sup>48</sup> *Singapore Standard*, 1 June 1959. PAP says it again; *Straits Times*, 1 June 1959. Mr. S is very pleased with PAP poll win.

such political meetings were then forbidden under the internal security regulations in effect during the Malayan Emergency.<sup>49</sup>

### 3. Authenticity

No major structural changes have taken place over the last 30 years (the basement was enclosed much earlier), though security around and in the house was strengthened after 1965 – with the addition of bullet-proof window panes, the installation of humps on the road in front of the house, i.e. Oxley Road, and the erection of a guarded entrance at the back for security clearance, among other things. In recent years, steel rails were added to the porch stairs to facilitate Mr Lee’s access, but the original wooden balustrades still stand.

- 1936: Pollux and Castor appear on the map.<sup>50</sup>
- Year unknown: Alterations to No. 38 by E. V. Miller Architect include additional toilets for the house.



Additional toilets at the side of the building. Source: NHB.

- Unknown year: Gate and thick foliage were added.

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<sup>49</sup> *Leaders of Singapore*, pp.78, 86, 115; CM Turnbull, *A History of Modern Singapore, 1819-2005*, p.255; Note – Under Emergency Regulations, no gathering of more than 5 persons were allowed. The 1948 Emergency Regulations were extended by the implementation of the Preservation of Public Security Ordinance in the 1950s and was later replaced by Internal Security Act. Toh Chin Chye was the one who said “Internal Security regulations forbade such political meetings”. It should be “internal security” in small letters.

<sup>50</sup> The two houses, un-named on map, made its earliest appearance in 1909 archival map, accession no. TM000005\_3, “Map of Singapore Town Within Municipal Limits 1906”. This is the earliest map in Archives showing the houses. The first map that the houses were named was c.1930 archival Japanese map, SP000901 & c.1932, SP003011\_1, “Map of Business Area Singapore” or SP006733.



*The house with its security features, taken in recent years. Straits Times File Photo. Published in 14 June 2017. Home of former PM Lee Kuan Yew at 38 Oxley Road at centre of dispute.*

- Unknown year, probably in the 1960s: Back of the house was secured with a rear-guarded entrance for security clearance. House No. 33 was absorbed into the property of House No. 38, to secure the back of Mr Lee’s house.
  - A police constable was shot dead in a house that was back-to-back to 38 Oxley Road in June 1964, as reported in “PC who was ‘shy’ of his Uniform”, *The Straits Times*, 20 June 1964, p. 9. The PC was identified to be Wong Kam Hoong of Orchard Road Police Station. He was found in the back room of the house (probably House No. 33 in the post-1932 map) facing Dublin Road.



Rear end of No. 38 Oxley Road secured. Source: NHB.

- 1972: Two humps were added to the road outside the house, one before Lloyd Road and the other before Orchard Court, to prevent motor vehicles from speeding down Oxley Road. Non-residents could no longer drive through Oxley Road, as reported in “No Entry to Oxley Road”, *The Straits Times*, 16 September 1972.
- “Slowing Down for Security”, in *The Straits Times*, 13 September 1972 (p.11) reported that two convex mirrors were mounted on the slopes facing the house in June 1971, giving the Gurkha guards a view of both ends of the road.
- 1980: Most probably when bullet-proof windows were added.

- Unknown year: Part of the verandah was sealed off, adding an additional room to the building.
- Recent additions (unknown year): The part of the verandah near the stairs at the front portico was extended to allow for a wheelchair lift. Subsequently, a landing and a porch with Perspex glass roof was added to provide ease of access and shelter for the wheelchair lift.



Early photos of No. 38 Oxley Road with the open verandah. Source: Family Home. THE LEE FAMILY, ENG BOW KEE. In The New Paper. Accessed July 31, 2017. <http://www.tnp.sg/news/singapore/38-oxley-road-mighty-mans-modest-home>.



Late additions to the facade of the house. ChannelNewsAsia, 3 July 2017. Different views, not substance, behind 38 Oxley Road dispute: PM Lee.



#### 4. Architectural Interest (based on photographs and a previous study conducted on the building)

##### a. Architectural Style

###### i. An architectural typology born of “multicultural influences”

No. 38 Oxley Road is best described as a house built in the bungalow style. The bungalow is an interesting and complex architectural typology which has a long history dating back to 18<sup>th</sup> century Colonial India.<sup>51</sup> The bungalows in Singapore and Malaya have developed innovations that make them unique. Most architectural historians believe that these innovations are mostly inspired by local vernacular architecture such as the Malay House.<sup>52</sup> In recent research, Jiat-Hwee Chang suggests that these innovations may include more diverse influences such as Creole influences<sup>53</sup> due to the British colonial experience in the West Indies. Nonetheless, the bungalow in Singapore is a unique architectural typology which is a testament to its cosmopolitan past and No. 38 Oxley Road is among the few remaining houses built in this style.

###### ii. Origins in Colonial India

The origins of the bungalow can be traced to vernacular dwellings found in 17<sup>th</sup> century Bengali India<sup>54</sup> and hence the term “bungalow” meaning “house in the Bengal Style”.<sup>55</sup> These dwellings, due to their suitability in India’s climate, were adopted by the British Colonial Administration and developed into their own style of residential architecture which is known as the Anglo-Indian bungalow.<sup>56</sup> A few key features of the bungalow adopted from the vernacular dwellings include wide verandahs, high loft ceilings and deep overhanging eaves.

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<sup>51</sup> Davison, Julian, and Luca Invernizzi. *Black and White: The Singapore House, 1898-1941*. Singapore: Talisman, 2014. p. 11.

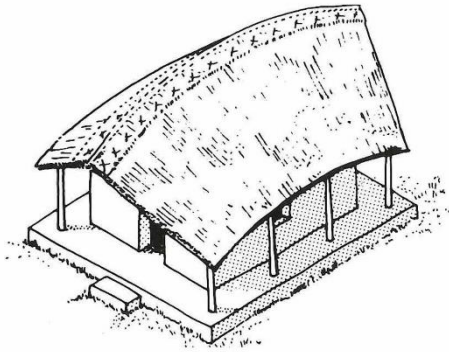
<sup>52</sup> Jiat-Hwee Chang. *A genealogy of tropical architecture: colonial networks, nature and technoscience*. London: Routledge, 2016. p. 40.

<sup>53</sup> Ibid p. 41.

<sup>54</sup> Kip Lin Lee. *The Singapore House: 1819-1942*. Singapore: Times Editions, Preservation of Monuments Board, 1998. p. 38. Lee suggested that the bungalow was derived from the *bangala* hut which features a roof curved at its ridge and verandahs while Edwards proposed that the bungalow could have been derived from one more type of vernacular house type which also features verandahs but with a two tiered roof. Edwards Norman. *The Singapore House and Residential Life, 1819-1939*. Singapore: Talisman, 2017. p. 24.

<sup>55</sup> “The First British Bungalow.” Heritage Calling, March 01, 2017, accessed August 01, 2017, <https://heritagecalling.com/2017/02/24/the-first-british-bungalow/>.

<sup>56</sup> Davison, Julian, and Luca Invernizzi. *Black and White: The Singapore House, 1898-1941*. Singapore: Talisman, 2014. p. 11.



Bangala Hut. Source: *The Singapore House: 1819-1942*. Singapore: Times Editions, Preservation of Monuments Board, 1998. p. 42.

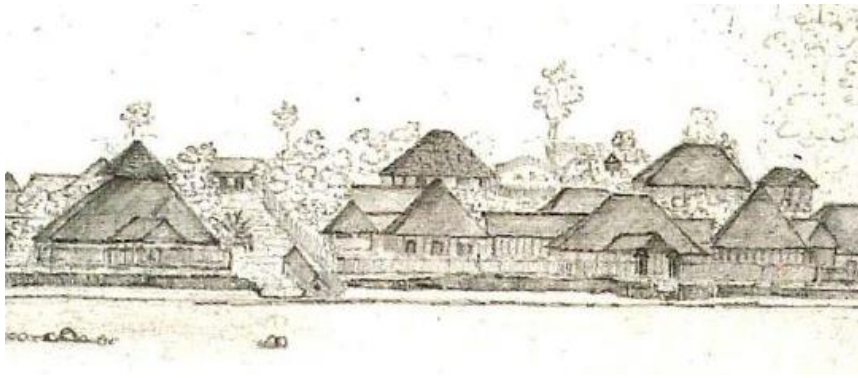


*Englishman's Bungalow in India—Early Form*

Englishman's bungalow. Source: *Bungalow in India*. In MADDY'S RAMBLINGS. Accessed August 1, 2017. <http://maddy06.blogspot.sg/2015/03/an-englishman-at-calicut.html>.

### iii. A new type of bungalow

The bungalow was introduced to Singapore and Malaya by the British in the 19<sup>th</sup> century when the British East India Company was in power in the region. The type of bungalow that was introduced to Singapore during the time of its founding was the Anglo-Indian style bungalow.<sup>57</sup>



Singapore Town, 1823 sketch by Lt. Philip Jackson. Most houses seem to be Anglo-Indian style bungalows. Source: *Black and White: The Singapore House, 1898-1941*. Singapore: Talisman, 2014. p. 14

During the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century, the bungalow in Singapore adopted new local features which distinguished itself from the Anglo-Indian style bungalow.<sup>58</sup> The first description of this new type of bungalow in Singapore can be found in John Cameron's 1865 book<sup>59</sup> and the features in his description can be summarised as the following nine points:

1. Single story/storey
2. Elevated on arched masonry
3. Parallelogram/rectangular in form
4. Lofty ceilings
5. Tiled roofs
6. Broad verandahs

<sup>57</sup> Davison, Julian, and Luca Invernizzi. *Black and White: The Singapore House, 1898-1941*. Singapore: Talisman, 2014. p. 14.

<sup>58</sup> *Ibid.* p. 14 – 15.

<sup>59</sup> Cameron John. *Our Tropical Possession in Malayan India*. London: Smith, Elder and Co., 1865, p. 75 – 76.

7. Classical columns on plinths
8. Deep overhanging eaves
9. A portico in front of the building

An example of a bungalow, Panglima Prang, owned by Peranakan merchant and philanthropist Tan Kim Seng fits Cameron's description in many ways.<sup>60</sup> Built in the 1860s, the single storey rectangular shaped building was elevated above ground and had classical columns, plinths and portico at the front of the building. The building had a broad verandah surrounding most of the building. It had a tiled roof, lofty ceilings and deep overhanging eaves.<sup>61</sup>



Panglima Prang. Source: *A genealogy of tropical architecture: colonial networks, nature and technoscience*. London: Routledge, 2016. p. 43



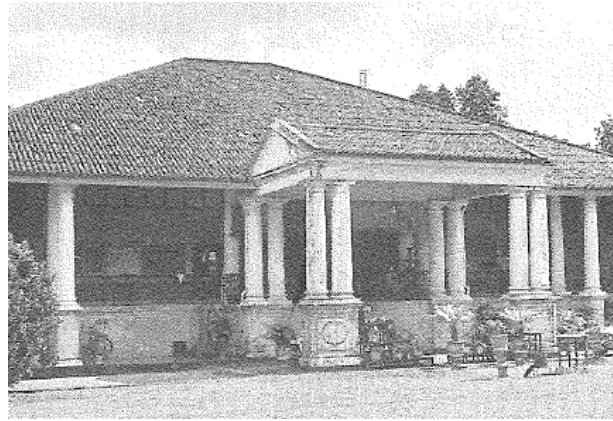
Interior of Panglima Prang. Source: *A genealogy of tropical architecture: colonial networks, nature and technoscience*. London: Routledge, 2016. p. 43 & 44

<sup>60</sup> Jiat-Hwee Chang. *A genealogy of tropical architecture: colonial networks, nature and technoscience*. London: Routledge, 2016. p. 42.

<sup>61</sup> Jiat-Hwee Chang. *A genealogy of tropical architecture: colonial networks, nature and technoscience*. London: Routledge, 2016. p. 42, Kip Lin Lee. *The Singapore House: 1819-1942*. Singapore: Times Editions, Preservation of Monuments Board, 1998. p. 42, Edwards Norman. *The Singapore House and Residential Life, 1819-1939*. Singapore: Talisman, 2017. p. 50.



Anglo Indian Bungalow sitting on a low raised plinth. Source: Thatching Around the World... Around 1900. Accessed August 1, 2017. <http://thatchinginfo.com/thatching-around-the-world-in-around-1900/>.



Panglima Prang elevated some five to six feet above ground. Source: *A genealogy of tropical architecture: colonial networks, nature and technoscience*. London: Routledge, 2016. p. 43

One of the key differences between the new type of bungalow and its predecessor was that they were elevated on arched masonry instead of raised plinths.<sup>62</sup> This is considered an innovation as the arched masonry allowed the house to be cooled through circulation of air underneath the house and provided protection against termite attacks and flooding which could severely damage the building.<sup>63</sup>

This innovation has led architectural historians such as Julian Davison to describe this new type of bungalow as an “Anglo-Malay bungalow”.<sup>64</sup> According to Davison, the idea of elevating the bungalow above ground was “almost certainly borrowed from traditional Malay architecture”.<sup>65</sup> Other architectural historians such as Eu-Jin Seow, Peter and Waveney Jenkins also believe that in general bungalows in Singapore and Malaya adapt several Malay house features.<sup>66</sup>

In recent research (publications in 2016 and 2017), different perspectives on this new type of bungalow have been formed. Norman Edwards, in his book published in 2017, describes this new type of bungalow as a type of plantation villa which is an evolution of the Anglo-Palladian house adapted to Singaporean conditions by George D. Coleman through the integration of Malay house features.<sup>67</sup>

Perhaps the most interesting observations would be the ones made in Jiat-Hwee Chang’s book published in 2016 which analyses the broader development and roots of tropical architecture. Chang suggests that the innovations found in tropical colonial architecture such as those demonstrated in this new type of bungalow were not local adaptations found in Malay architecture but instead “profound cultural amalgamations of Anglo-Indian, Malay, Chinese and even Creole

<sup>62</sup> Davison, Julian, and Luca Invernizzi. *Black and White: The Singapore House, 1898-1941*. Singapore: Talisman, 2014. p. 15.

<sup>63</sup> Ibid, p. 15.

<sup>64</sup> Ibid, p. 16.

<sup>65</sup> Ibid, p. 15.

<sup>66</sup> Eu-Jin Seow sees colonial bungalows are following the “Malay prototype”. Peter and Waveney Jenkins believe that the planter’s bungalow in Malaya took a lot of reference from the Malay house. Jiat-Hwee Chang. *A genealogy of tropical architecture: colonial networks, nature and technoscience*. London: Routledge, 2016. p. 40.

<sup>67</sup> Edwards Norman. *The Singapore House and Residential Life, 1819-1939*. Singapore: Talisman, 2017. p. 46 – 50.

influences”.<sup>68</sup> He argues that the British already had “a long history and extensive experience of building in their tropical colonies, most notably, India and the West Indies” before arriving in Singapore.<sup>69</sup>

Despite the different interpretations of this new type of bungalow, there are two of the nine summarised features of Cameron’s description that are generally accepted by most architectural historians as defining this style of bungalow. The first would be arched masonry elevating the house and the second would be that these houses are only of one storey. This is drawn from the description of the bungalow found in the journals of Major Low,<sup>70</sup> the magistrate and head of Police in Singapore in the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>71</sup> Major Low’s describes this new type of bungalow as a type of single storey house built in the “bungalow style” preferred by “old Indians” due to its “superior coolness” which is distinguished from the “garden house ... which are invariably of two stories”.<sup>72</sup>

#### iv. Later variations

Before going into the architectural description of No. 38 Oxley Road, it is also important to note that these bungalows are highly idiosyncratic although they generally follow Cameron’s 1865 description. Kip Lin Lee noted that towards the 1880s, general trends included spacious verandahs becoming less common and deep overhanging eaves reducing in depth.<sup>73</sup> Beside these general trends, each owner had a different take on their house’s design hence resulting in their own small but unique variations. Below are some examples of these variations found in bungalows towards the turn of the 19<sup>th</sup> century.

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<sup>68</sup> Chang highlights Jay Edwards’ study of creole architecture indicates that “features similar to verandah – such as loggia, piazza and gallery – and timber-framed building elevated off the ground ... could also be found in the creole vernacular houses in the Caribbean and the American Southeast before the late 18th century” and that creole architecture is a synthesised tropical colonial form produced as a result of intermingling of different groups of people. So this argument, the bungalow in Singapore is more than just regional model of colonial architecture formed through lessons learn from Malay architecture but rather a rich and diverse architecture typology born through the confluence of international British colonial history and multi-racial Singapore. Jiat-Hwee Chang. *A genealogy of tropical architecture: colonial networks, nature and technoscience*. London: Routledge, 2016. p. 41, Edwards Jay, *The Origins of Creole Architecture*, Winterthur Portfolio 29, nos. 2/3, 1994.

<sup>69</sup> Ibid p. 41.

<sup>70</sup> Unable to find any source that indicates Major Low’s first name.

<sup>71</sup> Davison, Julian, and Luca Invernizzi. *Black and White: The Singapore House, 1898-1941*. Singapore: Talisman, 2014. p. 17.

<sup>72</sup> Buckley, Charles, *An Anecdotal History of Old Times in Singapore*, vol. 1. Singapore: Fraser & Neave, 1902. p. 356. The old Indians were East India company men who had previously served in India. Davison, Julian, and Luca Invernizzi. *Black and White: The Singapore House, 1898-1941*. Singapore: Talisman, 2014. p. 17.

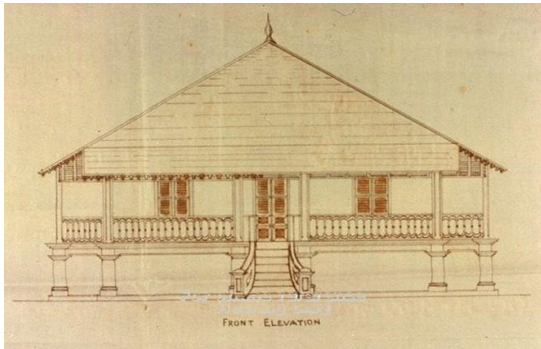
<sup>73</sup> According to Lee, there was a number of factors leading to the decline in spacious verandahs. They include the introduction of glazed windows, the increase in building costs and changes in building material. Lee did not explain why deep overhanging eaves were reduced in depth. Kip Lin Lee. *The Singapore House: 1819-1942*. Singapore: Times Editions, Preservation of Monuments Board, 1998. p. 51.



Photo of a Bungalow (circa 1900) – Reduced verandah, shorter overhanging eaves & wooden columns



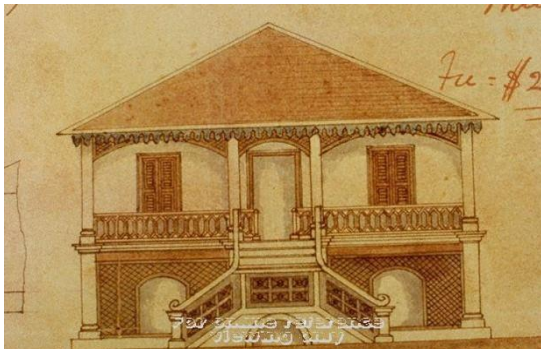
Bungalow for the Peninsular & Oriental Steam Navigation Company (P&O) (1900) – Lack of front portico



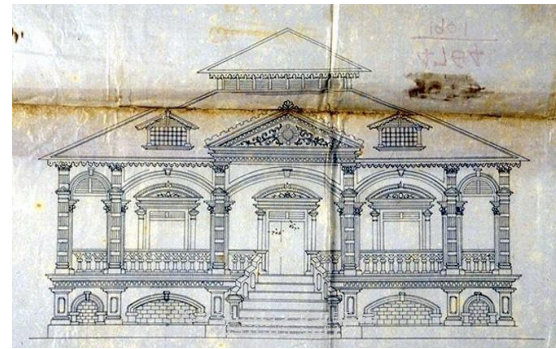
Front elevation of bungalow, 1890 – Lack of front portico and classical columns



Bungalow on Serangoon Road (circa 1896) – Reduced verandah & shorter overhanging eaves



Bungalow on Serangoon Road (circa 1890) – Reduced verandah & & shorter overhanging eaves



Bungalow at 13 Amber Road, Katong, 1901 – Choice of more elaborate classical ornamentation

#### v. Architectural Description of No. 38 Oxley Road

In terms of architectural features, No. 38 Oxley Road matches most of the description of the bungalow mentioned in Cameron's 1865 book. However, having been built closer to the turn of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, No. 38 Oxley Road also contains many of the variations mentioned in section iv. Some of these variations are due to the fact that No. 38 Oxley Road is built on a slope. The following list details the features typical of a bungalow as reflected in No. 38 Oxley Road.



Model of No. 38 Oxley Road on display at National Museum of Singapore. Source: NHB.

1. Single storey

No. 38 Oxley Road is a single storey house which is the bungalow style preferred by the old Indians. However, the building is built on a slope, resulting in a single storey at the front but two storeys at its rear.

2. Elevated on arched masonry

As No. 38 Oxley Road is built on a slope, the space beneath the house was used as a basement rather than left alone as a void. The arched openings are also used for ventilating the basement space. This is a defining feature that makes this house a bungalow.

3. Parallelogram/rectangular in form

The building is built in a rectangular form. However, the shorter elevation is where the entrance to the building is located instead of the long elevation and this is a common variation in bungalows.

4. Lofty ceilings

The lofty ceilings are an important feature in bungalows as they allow hot air to rise and cool air to sink therefore resulting in cooler rooms. The building has a high pitched roof suggesting that the interior ceiling is high. The additional jack roof hints that the lofty ceiling in our tropical climate is still insufficient and the extra vents created by the jack roof are required to let hot air escape.



Jack roof of No. 38 Oxley Road. Source: NHB.

#### 5. Tiled roofs

Tiled roofs were a new feature in the bungalow of Chinese influence and was introduced due to the availability of economical Chinese semi-circular clay pantiles.<sup>74</sup> Previously, roofs would have been in *attap* or thatched material.

#### 6. Broad verandahs

One important feature of the bungalow is its broad verandah(s) where its occupants can escape from the heat of the sun. The verandah is also romanticised as the space of repose for the “Englishman ... watching the sun go down on another day of tireless empire-building in a hot and heathen land”.<sup>75</sup> According to Davison, the verandah defines the bungalow and “every house with a verandah shares some of the qualities of a bungalow”.<sup>76</sup> The verandah has multiple functions. It acts as a space for entertainment, relaxation and also serves as a communal space where its occupants gather. It is therefore not surprising that the Lees spent much family time on the verandah.

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<sup>74</sup> Edwards Norman. *The Singapore House and Residential Life, 1819-1939*. Singapore: Talisman, 2017. p. 47.

<sup>75</sup> Davison, Julian, and Luca Invernizzi. *Black and White: The Singapore House, 1898-1941*. Singapore: Talisman, 2014. p. 12.

<sup>76</sup> *Ibid* p. 12.



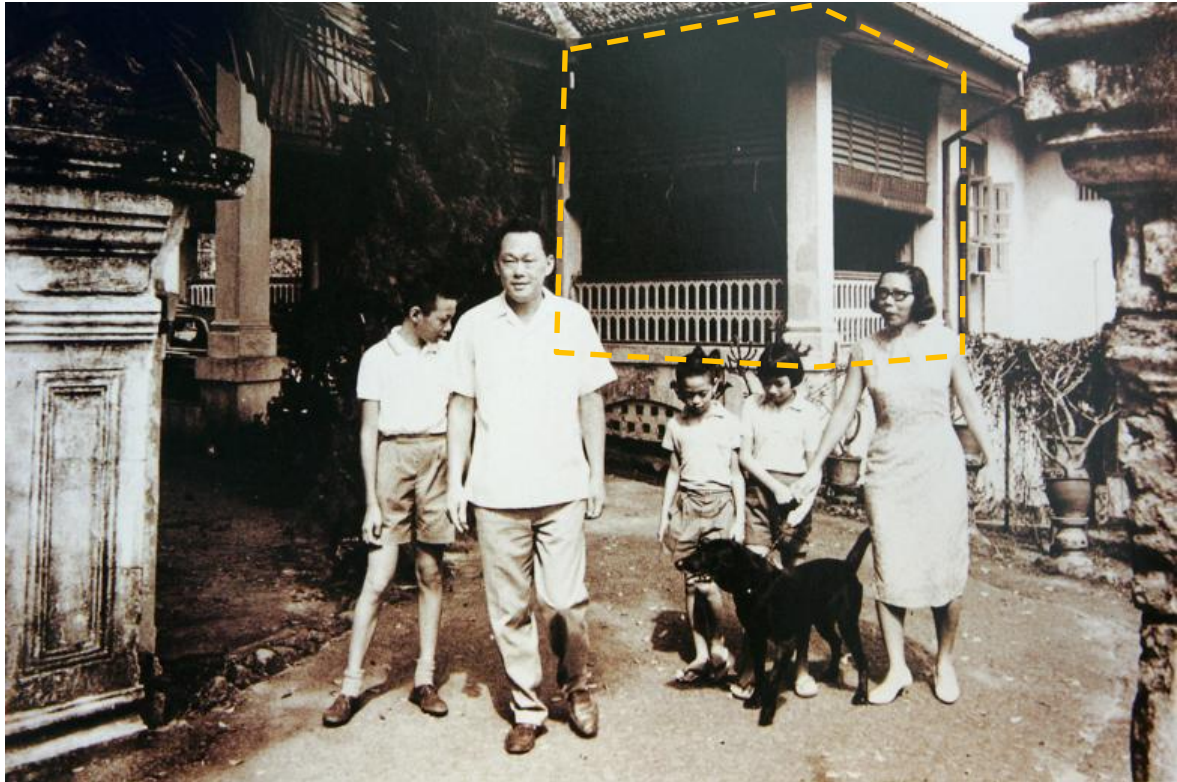


Yeow, Stephanie. *The Lee family at the verandah of their home*. May 1965. Photograph. Lee Kuan Yew: A Life in Pictures. Singapore: Straits Times, 2013. 22. Print

The verandah found at No. 38 Oxley Road is a narrower variation found in bungalows after the 1880s (see Section iv). Part of the verandah was later enclosed and converted into a room.



The verandah with part of it enclosed and converted into a room.



The verandah before it was enclosed. Family Home. THE LEE FAMILY, ENG BOW KEE. In *The New Paper*. Accessed July 31, 2017. <http://www.tnp.sg/news/singapore/38-oxley-road-mighty-mans-modest-home>.

#### 7. Classical columns on plinths

The Classical Orders played an important role in the architecture of Singapore<sup>77</sup> and were used widely in bungalows in its columns. Lee mentioned that in general, the preferred classical order was the Roman Doric or Tuscan order.<sup>78</sup> These orders are simple and elegant, and “befitted the rustic settings of ... rural bungalows”.<sup>79</sup> The columns at No. 38 Oxley Road are of the Tuscan order but are square instead of the usual round shape. It is not known why square columns were chosen.

#### 8. Deep overhanging eaves

The deep overhanging eaves serve two purposes: to channel the rainwater away from the building and to reduce the amount of direct sunlight into the house. However, the eaves of No. 38 Oxley Road are much shorter in depth as this is a common variation found in bungalows after the 1880s (see Section iv).

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<sup>77</sup> Kip Lin Lee. *The Singapore House: 1819-1942*. Singapore: Times Editions, Preservation of Monuments Board, 1998. p. 45.

<sup>78</sup> *Ibid* p. 45.

<sup>79</sup> *Ibid* p. 45.

9. A portico in front of the building

The building has a projecting portico for drop-offs and is decorated with classical columns and plinths. The portico area has seen some changes with the addition of a new porch and wheelchair lift.

Images of No. 38 Oxley Road



**b. Construction**

Not much is known specifically about the materials and construction of No. 38 Oxley Road as a study of its materials was never conducted.

Mr Lee Kuan Yew had noted in an interview for *Hard Truths* in 2011 that the house had no “foundation” and had rising damp problems. Apparently, piling from neighbourhood construction/development had caused cracks in its wall but its pillars were still sound.<sup>80</sup>

### c. Aesthetic Value

No. 38 Oxley Road contains a mix of features that were popular in bungalows of its time and are not commonly found today. These features include:

- Full length louvre windows (French windows).
- Fretted timber balusters.
- Classical columns, pilasters and plinths (Doric/Roman Doric/Tuscan).
- Vented grills that fill the arch masonry.



Left: Full length louvre windows (French windows) and Right: Classical column on plinth. Source: NHB.

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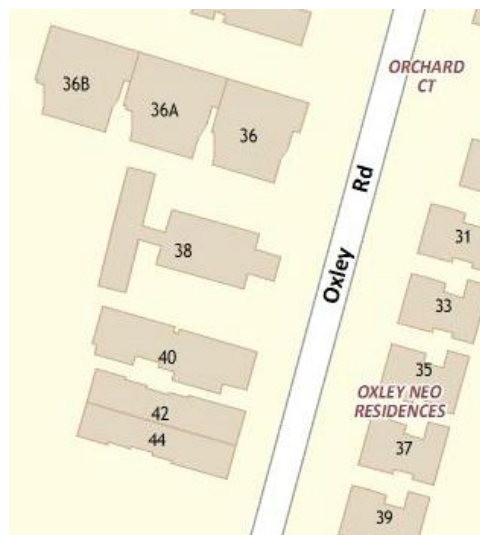
<sup>80</sup> “Mr Lee Kuan Yew Wanted His House to be Demolished: Five Things About 38 Oxley Road”, *The Straits Times*, 16 April 2015.



Bottom Left: Grilled vent for arched masonry; Left middle: Fretted Timber balustrades; and Middle and Right: Classical pilaster, columns and plinths

#### d. Rarity

No. 38 (Castor) is the remaining “twin” today as No. 40 (Pollux) has been torn down and subdivided into three lots (40, 42 and 44) as shown below.



Map of House No. 38 and its surrounding houses. House No. 40 has been replaced with Houses No. 40, 42 and 44. OneMap, 2015.

As expressed by Terence Chong and Yeo Kang Shua, “the house is over a hundred years old, and architecturally speaking, is a rare and unique type of bungalow. It used to have a “twin” bungalow

(No. 40), which was, unfortunately, demolished, leaving No. 38 the only type of its kind left along Oxley Road.”<sup>81</sup>

It is also worthwhile to note that of the more than 200 bungalows which have been conserved to-date, perhaps only an estimated 16 bungalows belong to the same style and era as 38 Oxley Road (see Annex A).

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<sup>81</sup> Chong and Yeo, “Mr Lee Kuan Yew’s House a Chance for Due Process”. *Straits Times*, Apr. 24, 2015.

**Lee Kuan Yew's Family Houses (in Chronological Order)**

- a) Birth (16 September 1923): Born in a 2-storey bungalow at 92 Kampong Java Road
- b) 1923-unknown:
  - i) Stayed in his paternal grandpa's house (143 Neil Road) which was purchased in 1920
  - ii) Moved from his paternal grandpa's house to his maternal grandpa's house in Telok Kurau and spent his primary school years living in the house. Lee recalled that his parents and his siblings occupied one big bedroom, and that they grew up in the house
    - (1) Would go to grandpa Chua's rubber estate in Chai Chee during the holidays
    - (2) Attended a few schools before being sent to Telok Kurau English School for his primary school education. Entered RI in 1936 and subsequently Raffles College in 1940/1941. His tertiary education was disrupted by the war; by mid-Jan 1942, schools were closed.
- c) By 1942, the family was living in 28 Norfolk Road. His mother proposed to move the whole family to her father's home at Telok Kurau.
  - i) During the Occupation years, Lee worked in Shimoda & Co. as a clerk; a clerk typist in Raffles Place and an editor in the Propaganda Department in Cathay from 1943 to end 1944.
  - ii) Lee recounted visiting the Norfolk House every now and then, and the days when the house was occupied by Japanese soldiers. He was abused by the soldiers in that few days.
  - iii) In end 1944, the family sold the tenancy of the house at Norfolk Road to a group of Japanese men who worked for a *kumiai* at a price of \$60,000 banana notes. It was also mentioned that the Norfolk house was a rent-controlled property.
- d) End 1944: Shophouse in Victoria Street: father obtained tenancy of this shophouse from his employers, the oil authority at Alexandra Road. The shophouse was near the junction of Victoria Street and Bras Basah Road and was next to a red-brick corner building, a confectionery and bakery
- e) March/April 1945: China Building. A friend of Mr Lee's parents vacated his flat in China building in March or April 1945 and offered Mr Lee's family to stay in the flat. The Victoria Street shophouse became a place for Mr Lee's business and recreation (as a billiard table was placed upstairs)
- f) Late 1945/Early 1946: 38 Oxley Road