



# Sun Yat Sen Nanyang Memorial Hall

By Anne H Perng

*Sun Yat Sen Nanyang Memorial Hall façade in 2006, photo courtesy of SYSNMH*

When the Sun Yat Sen Nanyang Memorial Hall (SYSNMH) reopens in early October after a year-long renovation, the re-launch will commemorate the 100th anniversary of the 1911 Chinese Revolution. Managed under the National Heritage Board's new Heritage Institutions Division, the SYSNMH will emphasise Singapore's contributions to Sun Yat Sen's revolutionary journey and the impact the revolution had on Singapore.

The black-and-white bungalow in the Balestier area was originally built in 1880 by businessman Boey Chuan Poh. It was rubber magnate Teo Eng Hock who gave the house the name *Wan Qing Yuan* when he bought the villa for his mother Madam Tan Poh Neo in 1905. The translation of *Wan Qing Yuan* symbolised happiness and peace for her retirement years. As a keen supporter of the Chinese revolutionary cause, Teo Eng Hock offered the villa to Sun Yat Sen for his activities and Sun formed the Singapore branch of the *Tongmenghui*, or the Chinese Revolutionary Alliance, there in April 1906. The *Tongmenghui* had been formed earlier in

1905 in order to increase support and fundraising efforts under Sun's leadership. By 1908, *Wan Qing Yuan* had become the headquarters of the *Tongmenghui* for Southeast Asia, or Nanyang. Some six million overseas Chinese lived in Southeast Asia, or approximately 79% of the overseas Chinese diaspora around the world, so Singapore's contribution to the eventual 1911 Revolution was not insignificant.

Visitors can expect a revamped museum highlighting four major themes: Teo Eng Hock and other key community leaders, the role of Nanyang as a base for the Chinese Revolution, the social impact that the success of the Chinese Revolution had on Nanyang and the Singapore Chinese as well as the development of Nanyang Chinese culture focusing on education, literature, print culture and economic contributions.

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*Bin Chan-House 1950s, photo courtesy of Singapore Press Holdings*



*Sun and founding members of Singapore Tongmenghui at Wan Qing Yuan, 1906, photo courtesy of the National Archives of Singapore*