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Penang - Historical City Of The East

By Jerry Hall

Fort Cornwallis marks the point where Francis Light and crew landed on August 11th, 1786 to "take possession" of the island from the Sultan of Kedah. This date was also the birth date of Prince Charles and hence Francis Light named Pulau Pinang as the Prince of Wales Island.

The statue of Francis Light, modelled after his son was relocated from the Penang State Museum to the grounds of Fort Cornwallis. The status now overlooks the fort and it holds a great heritage treasure in the heart of Georgetown.

During Colonel R.T. Farquhar's term as Governor of Penang in 1804, the fort was rebuilt with bricks and stones by convict labour dispatched from India. When Penang was elevated to a Presidency in 1805, there were plans to rebuild a fort further inland, but that would have meant demolishing the existing fort and half the commercial town! Various plans for a new fort were deemed too costly, and so the existing one was later completed in 1810 during Norman Macalister's term as Governor of Penang at the cost of about 80,000 Spanish Dollars.

Today, Fort Cornwallis covers an area of 332,859 sq. ft. This fort was built on the site of Francis Light's historic landing in 1786. Originally a wooden stockade, it was replaced by a concrete structure built by convict labour, in 1804. Today, an open-air amphitheatre, a history gallery, and a handicraft and souvenir centre occupy the interior. Fort Cornwallis also houses a famous Dutch cannon that in some way or another has been associated with virtually every shift in political alliances on the Peninsula since the early 17th century. The cannon arrived on the Peninsula in 1606 as a present from the Dutch to the Sultan of Johor. Only a few years later the Dutch cannon were taken by the Achenese in a raid on Johor's capital. At the beginning of the nineteenth century the cannon was sent to by the Achenese to Kuala Selangor in hopes of establishing an alliance with the Bugis. The cannon's last move, from Kuala Selangor to Penang, followed the British bombardment on Kuala Selangor in 1871.

The fort in its present form was completed sometime in the first decade of the 19th century. It was never accorded a very high priority and after Anglo-French hostility ceased in 1816, the fort lost any semblance of significant importance. In 1922 the moat surrounding the fort was filled in, but the area remained the administrative center of Penang.

Penang – Historical City Of The East

Early survey maps, old photographs and historical records of Fort Cornwallis have shown that the fort was packed with buildings and structures including military barracks and offices as well as a gunpowder magazine, a chapel for Christian worship (which is the oldest in Penang), a harbour light, flagstaff, cannons, cell rooms, a store and guard houses; some of which survived the test of time and are still structurally sound.

In March 2000, the Malaysian Government through the conservation commission is to head a new team to bring back the fort's glory of yesteryears and to fortify the walls and structure that held this marvelous architecture together.

Come Visit Penang, famously known as the Pearl of the Orient. Discover the magical Island in the East.

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be amazed with the sights, great food and multicultural community.

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Penang is such a popular tourist destination and has been visited so many times over, it will be impossible for travelers to recount something that has not been recounted before! In short, a visit to Penang will not be complete if one does not tread a path, follow the road, get around, knock around, go places, sightsee or peregrinate for nowhere else in South East Asia will you find a more peaceful and pleasing island.

One of the main attractions in Penang is the Christendom's St. George. The popularity of Christendom's St. George is far-reaching, touching the religious as well as the secular. Churches named after him are found in many parts of the world, including the historic city of George Town, Penang. St. George has also served as a fountain of inspiration to writers (like Shakespeare), artists and musicians. The most famous depiction of St. George was his battle with a ferocious dragon (such as the one shown here from The Catholic Community Forum) and it is this mortal combat with which the Saint has most often been captured by artists - on canvases, medals and tapestries.

The one located here, on the corner of Lebuhraya Farquhar and Jalan Masjid Kapitan Keling is historically significant in this part of the world because it is the oldest Anglican Church in Southeast Asia.

Visiting national parks, museums and heritage buildings is a favorite pastime of many Malaysians. Such outings allow and encourage us to appreciate our natural and man-made heritage, many of which

are threatened by the onslaught of modern development. There are some who even go as far as to say that such recreation fosters closer bonding between family members, but we'll delve into that later.

Although well known amongst all Penangites, most Malaysians and some tourists, an introduction to one of Malaysia's more better known landmarks dedicated to a most interesting member of the animal kingdom - the Lepidoptera, otherwise more commonly referred to as the butterfly, is still relevant. The Penang Butterfly Farm (PBF), the first tropical butterfly farm ever set up in the world, was founded in 1986. It is located in Telok Bahang, a fishing village located north of the island.

Talk about dreams coming true and ideas taking shape. Out of the strength came forth sweetness - and one man's lifelong fascination with butterflies has resulted in a 1 hectare (and growing!) home and sanctuary to a wide variety of insects, reptiles, fishes and plants. Protected from natural predators and unfriendly environments, butterflies in this sanctuary turn into little Methuselahs, living for as long as 14 days. In their natural habitats, the average lifespan would be about three days.

So what makes butterflies such mesmerizing creatures? What's the attraction? Why a whole farm for such a fragile and short-lived creature?

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