

Biographical Notes

Wong Siew Qui (1888 - 1980) – Businessman/politician

Wong Siew Qui, popularly known as S. Q. Wong, was the fourth son of businessman-philanthropist Wong Ah Fook. Born in Singapore in 1888, Wong attended Raffles Institution, before being sent to England to complete his education. He attended Blundell's School, a private school at Tiverton, before reading law at Cambridge University.¹

Wong joined the Middle Temple in London, and qualified for the Bar in April 1910. After being called to the Bar, Wong was appointed Attorney-General of Guangdong Province following the 1911 Revolution in China. It was then that he married Ng Yung Chee (1892 – 1943) in Guangdong. Wong had been betrothed to Ng, the daughter of a government official in Macau, when she was 14 years old, and he, 18. The couple had 12 children.²

Wong returned to Singapore in 1913 and joined the law firm of Chan and Swee Teow. Two years later, in 1915, he set up his own practice – Cooper and Wong – in Johore.³ But Wong left legal practice shortly after for the business world.

Wong's business interests were wide and varied. His first investments were in mining and real estate, but soon expanded to include rubber, banking and insurance. Wong's name was most closely associated with the Great Eastern life Assurance Company, the Overseas Assurance Company and Overseas-Chinese Banking Corporation. He sat on the boards of these companies, as well as the Kempas Rubber Company and Kuchai Tin Berhad until his 80s.⁴ He was also on the board of the Malaya Tribune, which was published between 1914 and 1951.⁵

In addition to business, Wong played an active role in public life, both in Singapore and in Malaya. He served as a councillor of the Singapore Municipal Commission for 17 years, from 1921 to 1938. Between 1927 and 1939, Wong was a member of the Singapore Improvement Trust. He also sat on the Prison Inquiry Commission in 1948.⁶ In Johor, Wong served on the Johor State Council (1921-1938) and Johor Executive Council (1933-1942). He was made a "Dato" by Sultan Ibrahim of Johor in 1941.⁷

Wong was a long-time member of the Straits Chinese British Association (SCBA). He was a committee member for many years, and served as the Association's president between 1924 and 1925.⁸ In his capacity as SCBA member, he was involved in the reorganisation of the Chinese Company of the Singapore Volunteer Corps.⁹

¹ Chinese Women's Association, *Chinese Women's Association: 100 fabulous years* (Singapore: Editions Didier Millet, 2015), p. 47; "It's health first when you are 82", *The Sunday Times*, 1 November 1970.

² Chinese Women's Association, *Chinese Women's Association* pp. 45-48.

³ Chinese Women's Association, *Chinese Women's Association* p. 46; W. Feldwick, ed., *Present day impressions of the Far East and prominent progressive Chinese at home and abroad* (London: Globe Encyclopedia, 1917), p. 836; Victor Sim (comp), *Biographies of prominent Chinese in Singapore* (Singapore: Nan Kok publication company, 1950), p. 24; Song Ong Siang, *One hundred years' history of the Chinese in Singapore* (Singapore: Murray, 1923), p. 355.

⁴ "It's health first when you are 82", *The Sunday Times*, 1 November 1970; Chinese Women's Association, *Chinese Women's Association*, p. 47; Feldwick, *Present day impressions*, p. 836.

⁵ "Last Tribune today", *The Straits Times*, 31 January 1951.

⁶ "It's health first when you are 82", *The Sunday Times*, 1 November 1970.

⁷ "It's health first when you are 82", *The Sunday Times*, 1 November 1970.

⁸ SCBA, "Ex president looks back 40 years. Dato S Q Wong tells of three notable events", *SCBA golden jubilee souvenir*, p. 14.

⁹ SCBA, "Ex president looks back 40 years. Dato S Q Wong tells of three notable events", *SCBA golden jubilee souvenir*, p. 14.

During the Japanese Occupation (1942-1945), Wong served as the vice chairman of the Overseas Chinese Association (OCA), an organisation formed to mediate between the Japanese administration and the local Chinese community.¹⁰ He also chaired other subcommittees in the OCA during the war.¹¹

As a prominent businessman and public figure, Wong hosted many social events at his home.¹² He was also a founder member of Island Country Club.¹³

Wong died in 1980 in Singapore.¹⁴

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¹⁰ Joshua Chia, "Overseas Chinese Association", *Singapore Infopedia*. Retrieved from https://eresources.nlb.gov.sg/infopedia/articles/SIP_1222_2006-12-09.html;

¹¹ "Chinese landlords to reduce rents", *Syonan Shimbun*, 29 November 1942; "Syonan O.C.A. Forms Publicity Department", *Syonan Shimbun*, 17 February 1944.

¹² Chinese Women's Association, *Chinese Women's Association*, p. 47

¹³ "Hole in one at Island", *The Straits Times*, 4 May 1952.

¹⁴ Chinese Women's Association, *Chinese Women's Association*, p. 47