

# General Post Office Building

## Background on the construction of the Macao General Post Office Building

Macao experienced rapid economic growth in the early last century. Avenida de Almeida Ribeiro opened and quickly became the most bustling area in the downtown area of the city. The “General Postal Services”, which had up to then been providing postal services, was overburdened with work and therefore the Portuguese Government of Macao allocated a plot of land of around 1000 square metres located on the intersection between Avenida de Almeida Ribeiro and the Senado Square for the construction of the General Post Office Building. The building, which was completed in 1929, has a total of four floors, including the basement floor.

## Architect

José Chan, the architect of the General Post Office Building, was born in Macao in 1896, although his family was originally from Xinhui. After graduating from St Joseph’s College in Rua do Seminário, he was apprenticed to a famous Portuguese architect. He entered the Land, Public Works and Transport Bureau through a recruitment examination and was selected as the chief architect of the Macao Land and Sea Public Works Department in 1934. José Chan was proficient in Chinese, Portuguese and English and well-versed in architecture books, having delved into the study of different architectural theories and schools, seeking innovative designs. In his professional career spanning 44 years, he participated in the design of numerous construction projects, preserving the precious cultural heritage of Macao. He later authored several architectural books and always strove to advance the development of the industry.

## Architectural Art Characteristics and Influences

Under the terms of Decree-Law 83/92/M, the Macao General Post Office Building is classified as a building with architectural interest.

The General Post Office Building reflects the aesthetic standards for official buildings that were popular in Portugal and Europe at the time. The western-styled classical building was constructed using new types of construction technologies and materials, as well as reinforced concrete structures. It demonstrates a strong sense of modernity and to this day exudes a breathtaking charm after standing strong for 85 years.

The architectural artistic techniques employed in the General Post Office Building can mainly be seen in the styling of the external facade. The overall design of the external facade strictly follows the composition techniques used in western classical buildings. The styling of the façade is rich in elements and special attention was paid to the meticulous crafting process. There are also unique and innovative visual effects which have stood the test of time, such as:

- 1) The building was designed to be L-shaped. The architect chose the structure corner to be the axis centre of the building, where the clock tower and entrance are located and it became the central sector of the three longitudinal sections. The facade base of the building stands on a square stone base and doric columns and ionic style columns are used for the decoration of the clock tower of the post office. The tower peak incorporates ornamental curves, triangular pediments and the base uses overhead entrance porches as decoration. A situational contrast was created between the balconies of the first and second level, accentuating the centre of the building.
- 2) Windows of different styles were installed on the street frontages on both sides of the building, including semicircular arch windows, aedicular framed windows and rectangular architrave windows and right-angled sided windows. The arrangement is neat, with both order and variations, emphasizing a lateral sense of rhythm. Full use is made of the length of both sides of the external wall, with each floor separated by a lateral frieze, thereby extending the sight line and strengthening the sense of volume of the edifice, which gives the General Post Office Building a sense of largesse despite only occupying a small area of land.

This western-styled classical building, designed and built by a local Chinese citizen, reflects Macao’s unique economical, societal and cultural aspects in the 1920s. It is a veritable open history book of architecture in Macao and has left an indelible mark in local history.

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## Grand Symbolic Architecture of Thai Postal Services

Thailand’s General Post Office (GPO), presently named the Grand Postal Building, located on Charoen Krung Road, has been regarded as a heritage building in the style of 19<sup>th</sup> century’s architecture (Neo-Classic Art) with historical values. The official inauguration was on 24<sup>th</sup> June 1940 and has so far recognized as a symbol of Thai postal services. In early period, it used to be an office of the Post and Telegraph Department and Communications Authority of Thailand before serving as Thailand’s General Post Office as it is today.

It has been renowned since firstly built for imposingly unique artworks of Siamese GPO – architectural design, cement bas-reliefs of stamp, Garuda moulding on the top of the central portico.

The GPO has been decorated with elegant cement bas-reliefs of eight huge stamps issued during the reign of King Rama V – VIII. Designed by Prof. Silpa Bhirasri (born Corrado Feroci in Florence, Italy) together with his students of Silpakorn School, which later became Silpakorn University, the sculptures are adorned on the wall of the 1,000 square meter Grand Hall, which has no pole at all.

The central part of the northern and southern wings of the Building is decorated with stucco mouldings figuring huge mythic Garuda holding old Thai horns, which is the emblem of the Post and Telegraph Department. The Garuda moulding itself is approximately three times larger than a human size.

The central front doors of the Building are magnificent metal casting sculptures depicting Garudas holding horns.

Because of the structure’s damaged condition over time, for more than 70 years, Thailand Post Company Limited has decided to renovate the building and its utility area for utmost benefits and sustainability taking into consideration of conserving its architecture and invaluable sculptures. On 4<sup>th</sup> August 2013, which marks the 130<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of Thai Postal Services and Thai Postage Stamps, Her Royal Highness Princess Maha Chakri Sirindhorn have graciously consented to preside over the inauguration ceremony of the Grand Postal Building.

The stamp of Thailand Grand Postal Building in this set of stamp is painted by Mr. Pisit Prasitthanadon, who creates a picturesque design presenting Thailand’s GPO in harmony with the Macao’s GPO. The now Grand Postal Building is praised nationwide as the National Heritage of great value that will stand eminent to provide quality services to Thai people for all time.