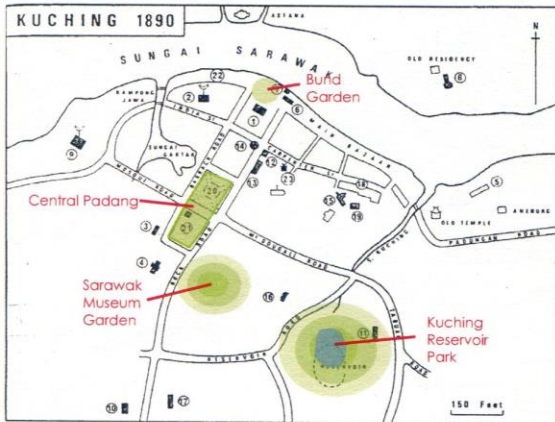


THE GARDENS OF OLD KUCHING

Kuching has always been known as a Garden City ever since its development during the Brookes' reign. However, its many gardens have undergone transformations over the years. The following summaries reminisce about these old gardens, some of which we may still find traces of today.



Map of Kuching in 1890. (source : "Kuching 1839-1970", Elizabeth Pollard)

The **Bund Garden (1905-1993)** sat right on the waterfront, in front of the Old Court House. This small green space featured a Chinese pavilion and a fountain, set within a geometric layout. The garden was demolished to make way for the Kuching Waterfront in 1993. Its Chinese pavilion was subsequently relocated to the waterfront as a heritage icon.

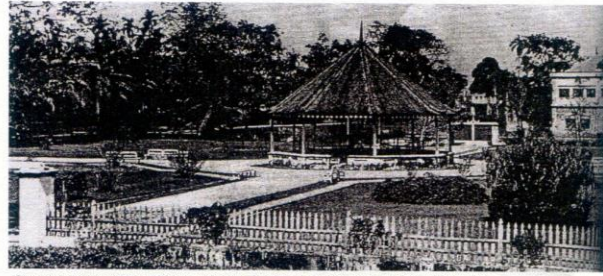


Old photograph of the Bund Garden (source : "Kuching in Picture 1841-1946". Ho Ah Chon).

A short stroll away from the river along the South-west axis, past the Old Courthouse, lies the **Central Padang (1890s)**. This enormous parade ground, which once had a road passing through it, has been the site of numerous significant historical events associated with the lives of Kuching people.

Rajah Charles Brooke built a **Bandstand** in the padang and hand-picked a Filipino band from Manila to play there. After a time, the bandsmen were recruited locally with public performances 2 evenings a week. However, this structure was removed in 1922. A new bandstand was built in the Museum Garden.

In 1961, a **War Memorial Garden** was built on the south side of the padang. The **Centenary Fountain (1967)** followed. The fountain had flickering and colourful lights that illuminated the water jets. It was demolished in the 1990s to make way for a pedestrian underpass.



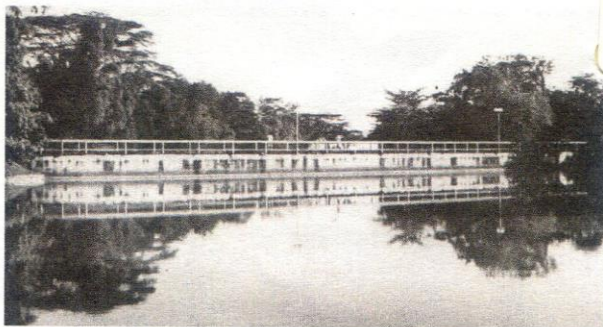
Bandstand built by Charles Brooke (source : "Kuching 1839-1970", Elizabeth Pollard)



The War Memorial Garden with the fountain (center) and war monument (bottom right). (source : "Kuching in Picture 1841-1991". Ho Ah Chon).

Diagonally across the Central Padang in the south eastern direction, stands the Sarawak Museum. The **Museum Gardens (1891)**, approximately 6 acres, was originally a Chinese cemetery, evidenced by the few last remaining tombs dating back to 1860s. It houses the charming Chinese Summerhouse which remains a popular spot for Kuchingites to enjoy a leisurely bowl of ice kacang and belacan bihun. The Heroes Monument was also built on the museum grounds in the mid-1990s.

The **Kuching Reservoir Park (1895)** was originally built by Charles Brooke as a reservoir for Kuching residents. When the completion of a dam at Matang Mountain rendered its function obsolete in 1934, the Kuching Reservoir was then converted into a recreational park. Surrounded by old government quarters, this green lung of Kuching city is well-utilized to this day by locals for social and recreational activities.



Kuching Reservoir Park with the dam structure which was demolished later. (source : "Kuching in 1991". Ho Ah Chon).

The parks and gardens of Kuching have breathed life into the city for over a century, leaving us with a glorious expanse of nature right in the centre of our urban landscape. While the uses of the gardens of Kuching have changed over the decades, their importance as recreation areas remains undiminished. To this day, housing estates are still required to maintain 10% green belt within their grid development. As such, they must be maintained and preserved. After all, in a state of such natural wonder, gardens and parks must also be part of our heritage.