



# History of the Danish Embassy in Bangkok

IN DENMARK, HISTORY & HERITAGE, THAILAND / BY GREGERS MØLLER / ON FEBRUARY 28, 2013 AT 06:40 /

The Danish Embassy in Bangkok is located in the middle of what is today downtown Bangkok. It is hard to believe that just one hundred years ago, this area was just a swamp to the east of the city.

## SCANDASIA WEEKLY ENEWSLETTER

Sign up for our Weekly eNewsletter

Type your email to get our helpful calendar of Nordic events every Monday morning +plus the latest Scandinavian news in Asia – delivered right to your inbox!

## SCANDASIA MAGAZINE

### History of the Danish Embassy in Bangkok

By Gregers Møller

The Danish Embassy in Bangkok is located in the middle of what is today downtown Bangkok. It is hard to believe that just one hundred years ago, this area was just a swamp to the east of the city.

The development of the area goes back to 1892, 24 years into the reign of King Rama V, when Chao Sua Yom a wealthy Chinese immigrant was commissioned to dig a canal linking the Chao Phraya River near Wat Yannawa to Hua Lam Pong canal. The soil from the excavation was used to build a road running along each bank of the new canal and the concession-holder was granted ownership to a strip of land 1,600m wide on both banks of the new canal.

In recognition of his services, Chao Sua Yom was awarded the royal title Luang Sathon Rachayuk and the name of the road and canal were subsequently changed to Sathon in his honor.

Luang Sathon parceled the land on the banks of the Sathon canal into smaller lots and sold it to rich merchants, both foreign and Thai. European styled mansions were built on some lots, other lots became orchards and plantations.

The area, where the Danish Embassy is today located, was bought by 'The Borneo Company', one of the earliest British companies in South East Asia. The Borneo Company opened a branch in Bangkok in 1856 following introductions made to King Mongkut by the Danish explorer and merchant Ludwig Verner Helms who early on was recruited to join the company by the British 'White Rajah' Brooke of Sarawak. This was all a result of 'The Bowring Treaty' (1855) between Great Britain and the Kingdom of Siam.



The building prior to renovation.



After renovation and addition of the emblem, area and veranda.

**Building History**  
In 1954, Denmark's appointed its first Ambassador to Thailand, Carsten Seidenfaden, who consequently served 1955-1959. Carsten Seidenfaden was a prominent botanist and a world class expert on orchids. It is thus to his botanical interest that Denmark has today not only an old embassy in Bangkok, but also a vast, beautiful park around it with plenty of interesting flora and fauna.

Carsten Seidenfaden recommended shortly after he arrived that the Ministry for Foreign Affairs in Denmark acquire the large piece of land along Soi 14 (Maha Vajiravudh Rajavidyalaya Soi 1) from the Borneo Company. On 29 July 1955, the permission was given on the condition that the acquisition and reconstruction of the existing site on the plot did not exceed the amount of 1.2 million kroner.

The Danish engineering company Christiani & Nielsen was given the contract to transform the property into an embassy with the villa as the residence and a chancery opposite. The expansion added the current reception area in the residence where guests enter the building and the "volunt" opening staircase up to the second floor of the residence.

The chancery building opposite site was where the embassy's staff were located, but only on the ground floor. The second floor was the attaché's residence and the room used until the mid 1990s.

The lotus pond with the little 'Harmand' replica placed on the lawn between the residence and the chancery was also added as part of the renovation.

Denmark has today not only an old embassy in Bangkok, but also a vast, beautiful park around it with plenty of interesting flora and fauna.

Carsten Seidenfaden recommended shortly after he arrived that the Ministry for Foreign Affairs in Denmark acquire the large piece of land along Soi 14 (Maha Vajiravudh Rajavidyalaya Soi 1) from the Borneo Company. On 29 July 1955, the permission was given on the condition that the acquisition and reconstruction of the existing site on the plot did not exceed the amount of 1.2 million kroner.

The Danish engineering company Christiani & Nielsen was given the contract to transform the property into an embassy with the villa as the residence and a chancery opposite. The expansion added the current reception area in the residence where guests enter the building and the "volunt" opening staircase up to the second floor of the residence.

The chancery building opposite site was where the embassy's staff were located, but only on the ground floor. The second floor was the attaché's residence and the room used until the mid 1990s.

The lotus pond with the little 'Harmand' replica placed on the lawn between the residence and the chancery was also added as part of the renovation.

The location, including the canal, from the ground floor to the second floor in the Ambassador's residence.



The renovated office building and capitol's residence.

**THARATHIP RESORT**  
Stylish & Green

Tharathip Resort on Koh Phangan is a great resort (officially) located in a beautiful area. The resort is a beautiful and modern resort with a swimming pool, a spa, a bar, a restaurant and a lounge. The resort is a great place to relax and enjoy the beautiful views of Koh Phangan.

Tharathip Resort offers a wide range of services, including a swimming pool, a spa, a bar, a restaurant and a lounge. The resort is a great place to relax and enjoy the beautiful views of Koh Phangan.

Tharathip Resort / 73 Moo 6, 1, Phangan, Koh Phangan, Suratthani 84280  
Tel: +66 (0) 77 217 983-2, +66 (0) 8 7880 4408 / Website: www.tharathipresort.com / E-mail: info@tharathipresort.com

**Surrounded by Nature**  
Located in Thung Nai Phay Yai, Koh Phangan, Thailand.  
One of Koh Phangan's most beautiful beaches.  
Value to your vacate. Welcome you to enjoy the best of Koh Phangan.

**CENTRAL COTTAGE RESORT**

Central Cottage Resort is a beautiful resort located in Thung Nai Phay Yai, Koh Phangan, Thailand. The resort offers a wide range of services, including a swimming pool, a spa, a bar, a restaurant and a lounge. The resort is a great place to relax and enjoy the beautiful views of Koh Phangan.

Central Cottage Resort / Thung Nai Phay Yai, Koh Phangan, Suratthani 84280 THAILAND  
Tel: +66 (0) 77 443 138, +66 (0) 77 445 031 / Fax: +66 (0) 77 445 032 / Email: info@ccr.cottage.net / www.centralcottage.net

Open publication

ARCHIVES

Select Month

PHOTO GALLERY

Archive up to 2013

The development of the area goes back to 1892, 24 years into the reign of King Rama V, when Chao Sua Yom a wealthy Chinese immigrant was commissioned to dig a canal linking the Chao Phraya River near Wat Yannawa to Hua Lam Pong canal. The soil from the excavation was used to build a road running along each bank of the new canal and the concession-holder was granted ownership to a strip of land 1,600m wide on both banks of the new canal.

In recognition of his services, Chao Sua Yom was awarded the royal title Luang Sathon Rachayuk and the name of the road and canal were subsequently changed to Sathon in his honor.

Luang Sathon parceled the land on the banks of the Sathon canal into smaller lots and sold it to rich merchants, both foreign and Thai. European styled mansions were built on some lots, other lots became orchards and plantations.

The area, where the Danish Embassy is today located, was bought by 'The Borneo Company', one of the earliest British companies in South East Asia. The Borneo Company opened a branch in Bangkok in 1856 following introductions made to King Mongkut by the Danish explorer and merchant Ludwig Verner Helms who early on was recruited to join the company by the British 'White Rajah' Brooke of Sarawak. This was all a result of 'The Bowring Treaty' (1855) between Great Britain

and The Kingdom of Siam.

#### Building history

In 1954, Denmark appointed its first Ambassador to Thailand, Gunnar Seidenfaden, who consequently served 1955-1959. Gunnar Seidenfaden was a prominent botanist and a world class expert on orchids. It is thanks to his botanical interest that Denmark has today not only an old Embassy in Bangkok, but also a substantial park around it with plenty of interesting flora and fauna.

Gunnar Seidenfaden recommended shortly after his arrival that the Ministry for Foreign Affairs in Denmark acquired the large piece of land along Soi Attakarnprasit – today Sathorn Soi 1 – from the Borneo Company. On 29 July 1955, the permission was given on the condition that the acquisition and re-construction of the existing villa on the plot did not exceed the amount of 1.2 million kroner.

The Danish engineering company Christiani & Nielsen was given the contract to transform the property into an embassy with the villa as the residence and a chancery opposite. This expansion added the current reception area in the residence where guests enter the building and the “modern” spiraling staircase up to the second floor of the residence.

The chancery building opposite was where the embassy’s offices were located, but only on the ground floor. The second floor was the attache’s residence and this remained so until the mid 1990’s

The lotus pond with the Little Mermaid replica placed on the lawn between the residence and the chancery was also added as part of the Christiani & Nielsen transformation of the property. Denmark’s first tourism promotion in Thailand.

In 1956 the whole project was concluded and the Danish Embassy in Bangkok was a reality.

In the early 1990’s, the chancery was renovated. The apartment of the attache on the second floor was changed into offices and the living room of the attache became the current Ambassador’s office. In 1993 it was decided that the Danish Ministry for Environment and Energy should establish its own development cooperation organization called DANCED and to create offices for this new organization, a further expansion was undertaken on the ground floor to the west where part of the garage was located.

Since then, no further expansion has taken place; only minor maintenance projects.

In 2007, the responsibility for Danish public property was transferred internally from one financial authority to another under the Danish government. For the purpose of this transfer, the value of the property was that year estimated to be 90 million kroner. Given the current land prices in Bangkok, this estimate is probably rather conservative.