

Dentons Rodyk – a part of Singapore's history

February 15, 2019

As Singapore's oldest law firm, we have inevitably been a part of several significant events and changes in Singapore's history. Our firm traces its beginnings to the partnership of Woods & Davidson, founded by Robert Carr Woods and James Guthrie Davidson in 1861. After the death of Woods, Bernard Rodyk joined Davidson in 1877. The firm was renamed Rodyk & Davidson.

This year, as Singapore marks a key turning point in its history – the 200th anniversary of Sir Stamford Raffles' arrival in its nation – Dentons Rodyk is honoured to be one of the participating centennial groups in the special Chingay Parade 2019, Bicentennial Edition.

Some highlights from our firm's history include:

- The late Robert Carr Woods was the first editor of The Straits Times.
- The late Bernard Rodyk was a long-time trusted adviser of the Maharajah (later Sultan) Abu Bakar of Johor.
- K. Thamboosamy Pillai, the clerk of the firm's co-founder, the late James Guthrie Davidson, went on to found the Sri Mahamariamman Temple – Kuala Lumpur's oldest Hindu temple – and was a co-founder of the prestigious Victoria Institution in Kuala Lumpur.
- The firm was intimately associated with Singapore's two leading English newspapers of the day – The Straits Times and the Singapore Free Press. Another firm lawyer Charles Burton Buckley not only wrote the earliest published record of Singapore history in English in 1903 but also revived the Singapore Free Press in 1885.

We have also taken on some major cases and transactions in the recent decades. This includes many firsts in corporate law in the 1970s and 1980s, such as handling the 1978 initial public offering of business company Singapore Bus Service (SBS), and the 1985 listing of Singapore Airlines.

Through it all, we remain committed to not just our core business, but to our community as well. Our Global Vice-Chair and ASEAN CEO Philip Jeyaretnam, SC served as president of the Law Society of Singapore, and our firm has received the Law Society Volunteer of the Year awards (for a large-sized practice) in recognition of our contributions to the Society's work and activities.

We continue to contribute to our broader community by remaining active in pro-bono work, being involved in various programs such as the Criminal Legal Aid Scheme (CLAS), the Law Society's Community Legal Clinics, and long-standing partnerships with National University of Singapore the Singapore Management University.

Our firm is thankful for this opportunity to reflect on how our nation came to be, how far we have come, and how we can go forward together.

About Dentons Rodyk

Dentons is the world's largest law firm, delivering quality and value to clients around the globe. Dentons is a leader on the Acritas Global Elite Brand Index, a BTI Client Service 30 Award winner and recognized by prominent business and legal publications for its innovations in client service, including founding Nextlaw Labs and the Nextlaw Global Referral Network. Dentons' polycentric approach and world-class talent challenge the status quo to advance client interests in the communities in which we live and work.

Dentons Rodyk & Davidson LLP is a limited liability partnership registered in Singapore with Registration No. T07LL0439G, and a member of Dentons' global legal practice.

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