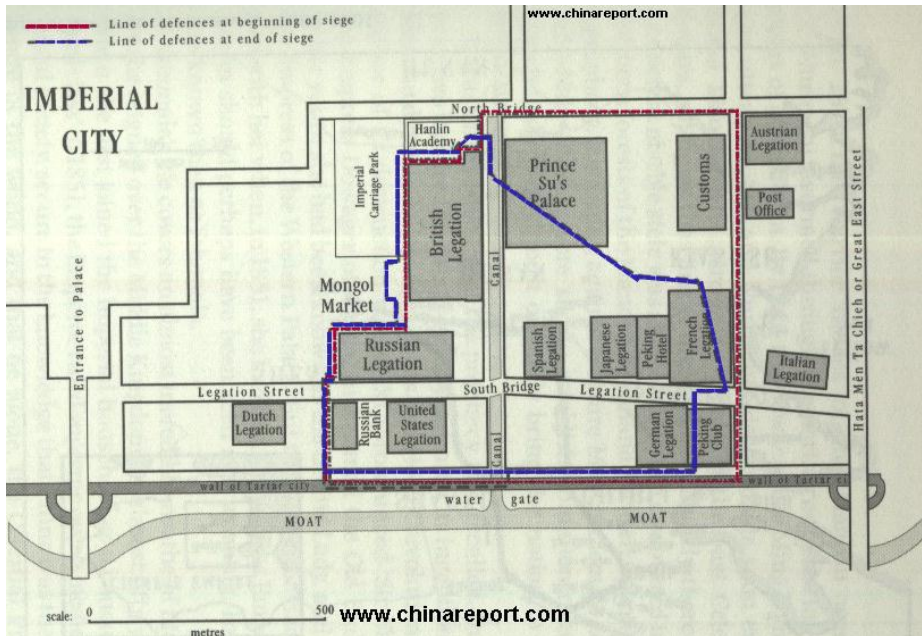


Map¹ of the Former Legations Area in Beijing Depicts a Mix of Historic Details and Current Day Items.

First of All, the Legations Area of current day Beijing is bordered in the West by TiananMen Square, bordered to the North by East Chang An (Eternal Peace) Avenue, bordered in the West by ChongwenMen North Street (Nei Dajie') and last, bordered to the South by QianMen East Street (=Dong Dajie'), at the location of the Former City Wall and Moat.



The West Border of the original former Legations Area extended as far as what is now the National Museum of History (formerly The Museum of the Revolution & The Museum of Chinese History) which was constructed on the ruins of buildings burnt down during the 1900 AD Boxer War in Beijing. As one can tell from the Map these included

among things the Mongol Market and the Imperial Carriage Park, an adnex of the Imperial Palace, at Chang An Avenue. The National Museum of History was constructed in the 1950's as part of the new Architecture of Post-Revolutionary TiananMen Square.

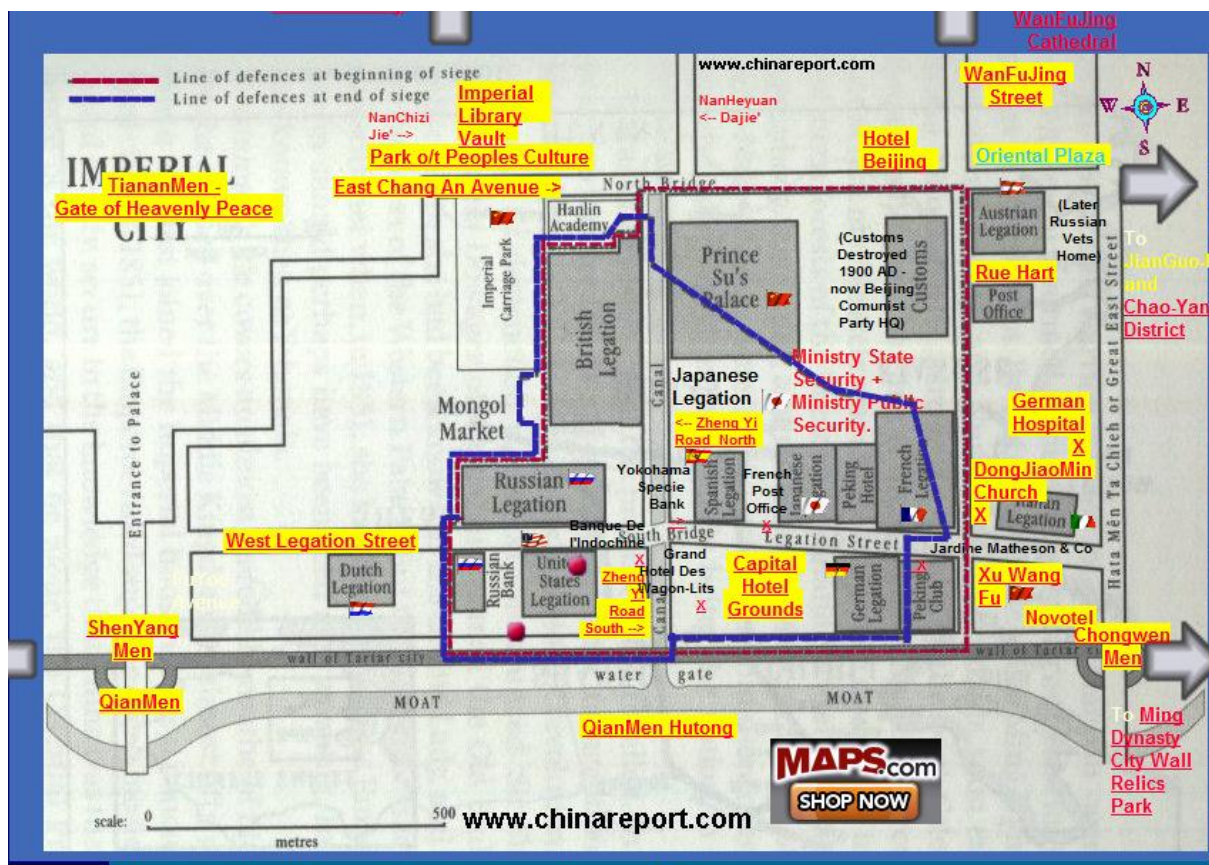
As mentioned, the North Border today, as in the Past, is the historic and important Chang An Avenue, which leads along the Northern Side of TiananMen Square and Tian An Men Gate of Heavenly Peace. The Only changes to this area are the disappearance of the Outer Imperial City Walls and Gates in the Area where Zheng Yi Road, Nanchizi Dajie', NanHeyuan Dajie' and Chang An Avenue come together. Only one of the Gates remains standing today, giving access North to Nanchizi Dajie' and the Park of the Peoples Culture. The bridge which stood at the North End of Zheng Yi Lu (=the "Canal Street"), in front of the Gate giving access to TiananMen Square in the past has disappeared along with the Gate.

Legations Street - Before the Legations Quarter officially came into Beijing, the area depicted was already the location of some of the Empire's Ministries. When the British and Allies gained Victory in the first Opium War of 1860-1861 AD, the former Chinese Street of XXX was assigned as the Area where Foreign Victorious Nations could open up their Legations. Hence in Time xxx (help us Fill in this Detail ? Leave your opinion on the China Report Message Board annex Forum !) street turned to be "Legations Street". Find Legations Street as the official main street of the Legations Quarter running from the East Flank of TiananMen Square in the West, to what was known as Great East Street but currently is known as ChongwenMen North Street in the East.

¹ That's the map on P2.

Legations Street was intersected by the South Bridge crossing the (Imperial) Canal, now Zheng Yi Road. As such there was a Western Section of Legations Street and an Eastern Section.

Canal Street - Before the demolition of the City Walls in the 1950's, Beijing's City Wall was intersected by an Imperial Canal leading from the Imperial City in the North, through the Legations Quarter, to the City Moat outside the Wall in the South. There it connected to the Grand Canal. The Canal was filled in in the 1950's along with the demolition of the City Wall, creating QianMen Dajie running West to East and Zheng Yi Road, running North to South and Vice Versa. The South Bridge can still be found as a hinted bulge in the road at the height of the intersection of Zheng Yi Road and Legations Street at the former Yokohama Specie Bank turned Minsheng Bank. The North Bridge has disappeared without a trace beneath the pavements of East Chang An Avenue, widened in the 1950's for the Famous Grand Military Reviews and other mass happenings.



Rue Marco Polo or "Customs Street" - Rue Marco Polo was named so by the French and was the location of the Maritime Customs Office, an office of the Chinese Government. As a result everyone but the French had named the Street Customs Street.

The Customs Office had been located in the area since the far past days of the Yuan Dynasty in Beijing (then Khanbalik), as the important trade and supply route of the Grand Canal connected to the City to the south-east, just outside the City Walls.

Taxes were levied on the grain imports to City through this Office during the Yuan Dynasty, Ming Dynasty and Ching Dynasty. Later, during the days of The Legations the Customs Office was thoroughly modernized under Leadership of (Later Sir) Robert Hart, who lived north and adjacent the Customs Office. Due to his important role in the affairs of the Legations in Beijing the Street

running eastward from the Customs Office and behind the Austro-Hungarian Legations was named Rue Hart. It was the location of the British Post Office in the Legations.

Due to his large contribution to the modernizations of the Chinese State Machinery (and Coeffers), his efforts in rescuing Chinese interest from western onslaught in the post-boxer war negotiations and more, the Street was the only street not "cleaned up" during political actions of the Cultural Revolution Era, leaving the Rue Hart Street sign the only such sign surviving in Beijing until this day. Find the Former Rue Marco Polo or Customs Street, in the French claimed Eastern parts of the Legations Quarter connecting to QianMen East Street in the South, then intersecting with Legations Street, passing Rue Hart and the current Communist Party Branch of Beijing Headquarters to connect up with Chang An Avenue across from Wanfujing Street in the North.

A Walk through History: Foreign Legation Quarter

Just south of the Forbidden City, a street called Dongjiaomin Alley is lined with buildings that look like they're straight out of early 1900's London or New York.

By Angela Pruszenski

Just south of the Forbidden City, a street called Dongjiaomin Alley is lined with buildings that look like they're straight out of early 1900's London or New York. A stark contrast from the mixture of traditional Chinese buildings and official government offices that characterize this area of Beijing, Dongjiaomin Alley's buildings are the leftovers from when Western powers first established themselves in China's capital.



The Chongwen Methodist Church was rebuilt by the Qing government following the Boxer Rebellion.

Dongjiaomin Alley can be interpreted in English as the "East Diplomatic Personnel Alley," which describes its purpose as Beijing's Qing-era foreign legation quarter. After the Second Opium War (1856-1860), the street was opened for foreign embassies and a number of Western countries established bases there. As the number of foreigners living in Beijing grew, the neighborhood grew to include churches, hotels, and restaurants. In essence, Dongjiaomin Alley became a city within the city. The foreign legation quarter came under siege in 1900 during the Boxer Rebellion, which led to an increase in the number of foreign troops stationed on the street.

Dongjiaomin Alley remained Beijing's foreign legation quarter until the founding of the People's Republic of China in 1949, when many of the embassies' staff fled to Nanjing, then Taiwan. The remaining embassies were moved to other areas of the city.

The alley's roots actually date back to the Yuan dynasty, when it was first named "Dong Jiangmi Xiang," or "East Sticky-rice Lane." Beijing has never been suitable for growing rice; historically, rice was transported from southern China into Beijing by riverboat. Many of the businessmen involved in rice trade set up residences in the hutongs of Beijing's Chongwenmen neighborhood.

"There was a grand canal from southern China to Beijing which transported rice and they sold the rice along this area," Clara Tong, China Culture Centre tour guide and designer of this walking tour, explains. "Chongwen Gate used to serve as the customs house for collecting taxes on rice."

A walking tour of this historic neighborhood should take about two hours; the China Culture Center offers a three-hour version that includes the nearby hutongs, which are more authentic and undisturbed than other popular ones in Beijing.



The hutong areas surrounding Chongwenmen are more authentic than some of the city's more popular, redeveloped hutong neighbourhoods.

The tour route starts at the Beijing Christian Chongwenmen Church, near the Chongwenmen subway station. Originally named Asbury Church, the church was established in 1870 by the American Methodist Church, and the complex grew to include a hospital and a school (now the Beijing No.125 Middle School). Asbury Church was burnt down during the Boxer rebellion in 1900, but the Qing government appropriated money to rebuild the church in 1902. Today, the church is highly influential among Protestants in China.



Dongjiaominxiang's tree lined sidewalks next to handsome Western style buildings create a historic backdrop for a summer promenade.

After crossing Chongwen Street and walking west on Dongjiaomin Alley one can reach the heart of the foreign legation quarter. Unfortunately, as some of the former foreign legation buildings have been turned into government offices, photography is not allowed in front of some landmarks. Other buildings have been turned into restaurants and hotels.

As one walks, the buildings take on a distinctive appearance reminiscent of historic Western cities. The first landmarks encountered are the former German barracks on the left and the former German-Asia bank on the right, built as part of the settlement after the conclusion of the Second Opium War in 1860.

"This part of history was painful for Chinese people," Tong said. "This street is so close to the Forbidden City; can you imagine that a place belonging to Chinese people was given to other countries and they built walls to forbid Chinese people from entering?"

St. Michael's Catholic Church sits on the corner of Dongjiaomin Alley and Taijichang Street.

Built in the Gothic style characteristic of French cathedrals, St. Michael's Church also carries a surprising Chinese detail: a Chinese dragon head for draining rainwater protrudes from above the front doors. Though it was converted to a primary school after the founding of the People's Republic in 1949, St. Michael's was restored as a Catholic church in the late 1980s and still functions as a Catholic church and a popular wedding spot for locals. The French embassy and historic post office, now a restaurant, are directly across the street.

On the south side of Dongjiaomin Alley across from St. Michael's Church is the original Belgian embassy. "The embassy is an imitation of a villa belonging to King Leopold II, the king of Belgium from 1865 to 1909," Tong says.

For an in-depth tour, take a stroll up Taijichang Street, where the Italian Embassy and the Customs office were situated. The next two streets intersecting with Dongjiaomin Alley are also lined with old foreign legation buildings. The Beijing Municipal Government occupies the old Italian Embassy on Taijichang Street, while the British Embassy is now home to the Administration of Public Security.



St. Michael's Catholic Church is built in the traditional Gothic style, but with a Chinese dragon head protruding between the two front doors to help drain rainwater.

Continuing west on Dongjiaomin Alley reveals the old Japanese, German, Russian, and Dutch embassy buildings, along with essentials to foreign life including the old site of the Standard Chartered Bank and other international financial centres. The centre of social life in Beijing was the 6 Nations Hotel, now the Dongjiaominxiang Hotel. Foreign visitors chose this hotel for its location in the centre of the foreign legation quarter and the restaurant was one of the swankiest in the city. "If a rich man wanted to woo a woman, he would take her here," Tong jokes about the hotel restaurant.

The stroll down Dongjiaomin Alley ends at the back entrance to the former American Embassy complex at Chi'enmen 23, where there's a plaque detailing the street's history. The stately buildings at Chi'enmen 23 are now home to two of the city's best restaurants, Maison Boulud and Ristorante Sadler. Tong noted that the United States was more lenient on the Qing government after the Boxer Rebellion, forgiving some of the war restitution costs and even inviting some Chinese students to study at American universities for free. "So, at that time, Chinese people learned a lot from Western countries," Tong says. "They went abroad and learned the techniques to build new railways and water power stations; so although this was a painful period for the Chinese, it facilitated the Xinhai revolution in China."



The former American embassy is now home to high-end restaurant Maison Boulud.

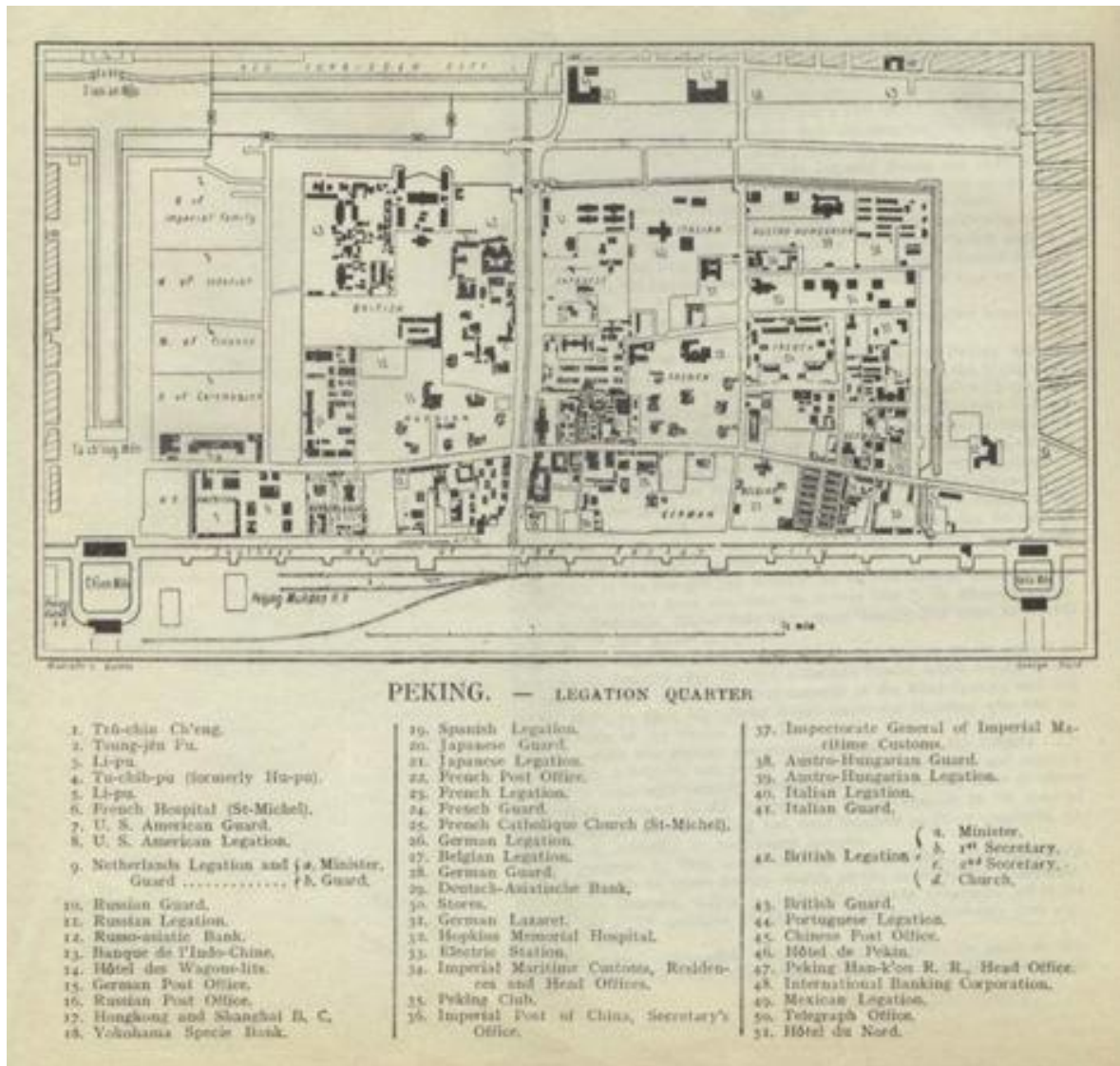
An art gallery occupies the southeast building and visitors can access the roof for a stunning view of the busy Qianmen area. Across the street, near the Qianmen gates is the old railway station, now a museum about the city's railway history. The station was Beijing's first railway station, situated close to the Qianmen gate as a convenience to government officials and foreign travelers in the legation quarter. Operations moved to the current station east of Chongwenmen in 1959.



The view from a rooftop in Chi'enmen 23 overlooks the old railway station and Qianmen gate.

The tree-lined alley surrounded by elegant, historic western-style buildings is an unexpected departure from the rest of the city's traditional buildings but an inseparable part of Beijing's history. A living documentation of China's first formal relations with the West, however tumultuous, Dongjiaomin Alley represents a historical background for a summer promenade.

Walking the Legation Quarter



Earlier this week, I decided to take a walk from the Beijing by Foot series. (One of my goals, before I leave Beijing, is to go through all 40 of the walks. They are like doing a giant treasure hunt.) I chose the Legation Quarter walk as I've meandered through the Qianmen area many times and never quite managed to hit the Quarter itself.

Located near Tian'anmen Square, the tree-lined Legation Quarter is Beijing's oldest embassy area, dating back to the end of the Second Opium War. Located on Dongjiaomin Lane, the area was first designated by the Emperor Yongle for farming and animal husbandry; during that time, it was known as Dongjiaomi Lane. Its name was later changed during the Legation Quarter period.

From J.E. Hoare's book *Embassies in the East*, a history of British embassies in East Asia (this book is partially available on Google Books and even with missing pages, it's a fascinating read), the beginning of the Legation Quarter as it is now:

While in Beijing for the exchange of ratifications, both the English and the French ambassadors demanded accommodation for the permanent missions they wished to establish. This the Chinese



Formerly called Rue Hart, this street is now Taijichang Toutiao; it was named for British Inspector General Sir Robert Hart.

were obliged to provide under the terms of the treaties. That autumn of 1860, the French and the British were each assigned a palace to the south-east of the Forbidden City near the long established Russian Orthodox Church. This was an area long associated with the presence of foreign envoys in Beijing, for it was near the site of the hostel where the Korean, Annamese, Burmese and Mongolian envoys who arrived on their regular tribute missions were lodged. There they were also coached in the elaborate etiquette necessary for their presentation at court. Now it was also to see the beginning of the official French and British presence in Beijing, and the birth of the

Beijing legation quarter.

The Legation Quarter was also a locus for anti-foreigner sentiment in the years leading up to the Boxer Rebellion, as Chinese citizens were forbidden to enter the area, and was famously under siege during the uprising itself. Hoare's book has an account of the siege from the British legation's point of view, where as the siege went on, the inhabitants found themselves eating horsemeat and mule meat.

Ironically, as many of the former legations have become government buildings, they are still largely forbidden to the public. I was even forbidden from entering the [Ch'ien Men 23](#) entertainment and restaurant complex, formerly the American Legation. I must have looked too poor to eat at Maison Boulud.



The Rue Hart sign is still faintly visible at the end of the street, across the street is his former residence.



St. Michael's Church



The former French Legation.



I love that this massage parlour is now housed in what might have been a gentleman's sports club.



The British Legation. Before it became the legation, it was the residence of the Dukes of Liang. Now it is the Ministry of State Security.



Old French post office, now a Sichuan restaurant.



Not exactly sure what this building used to be, possibly part of the Japanese legation according to the map above, but the detailing is stunning



Statue in Zhengyi Lu Park. This street used to be a canal.



The Japanese Legation is now the headquarters of the Beijing municipal government.



Perhaps the gate into the Netherlands Legation.



The Yokohama Specie Bank.



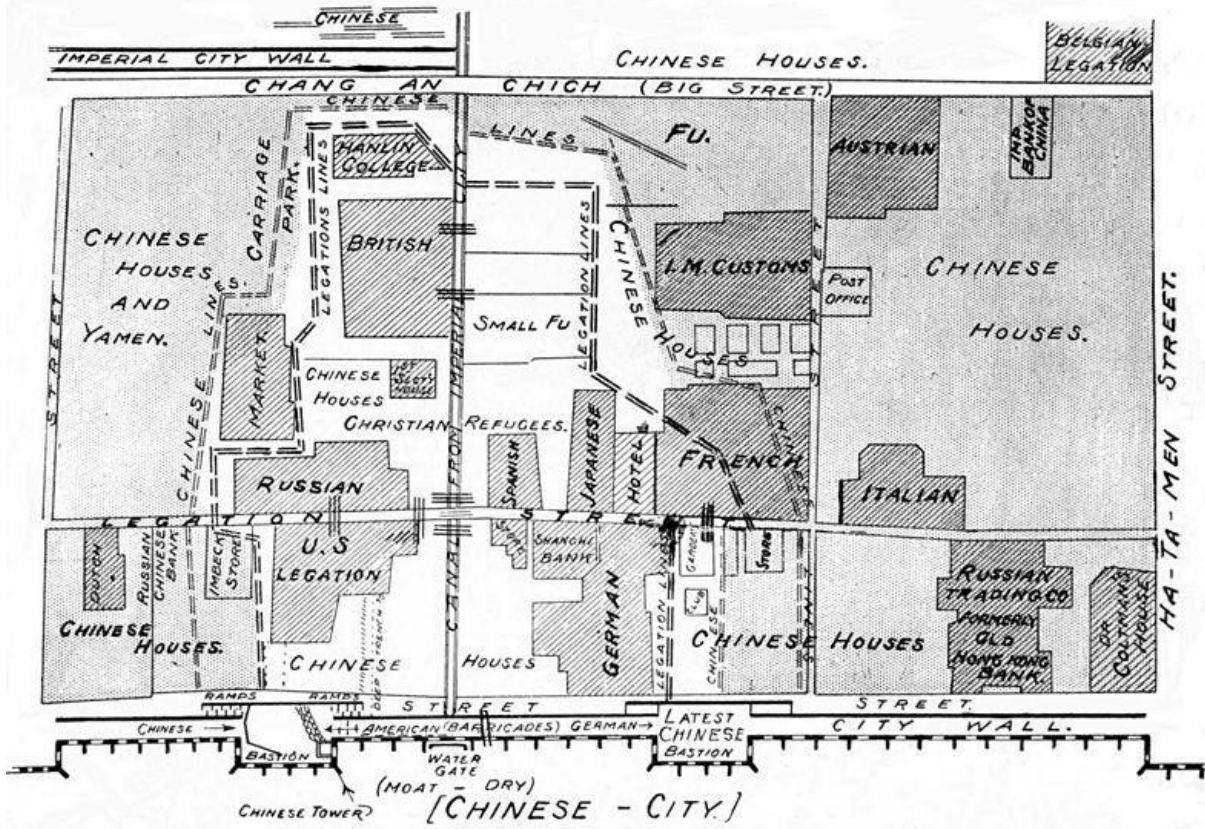
Inner courtyard of the Yokohama Specie Bank. (Technically, you're not supposed to enter, but I promised the guards I wouldn't move beyond my vantage point at the front gate.)



No idea what this lovely building with its age on its sleeve is! Maybe the building for the Russian Guard.



Possibly the Russo-Asiatic Bank. No matter what it is, it's a gorgeous building.



THE LEGATIONS AT PEKING, 1900.
From a sketch by Capt. John T. Myers, U.S. Marine Corps.
(By permission of the Board of Control, U.S. Naval Institute.)

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