

January 2015

17 West Mercury Street • Butte, Montana 59701 • 406.723.3231 • www.maiwah.org

MAI WAH NEWS

The Chinn Family Reunion

They came from Massachusetts, New Jersey, Washington, New York, Minnesota, Georgia, Indiana, Oregon, Virginia, California, and Wyoming. Twenty-six members of the Chinn Family came to Butte for a grand reunion in June 2014.

Some had never been here, and some had never met each other, but the emotional reunion was a way to connect to parents and grandparents who lived in and were born in the Mai Wah buildings.

The family gathered at the Butte Archives to re-connect and share family photos, then they headed to Helena for a special behind-the-scenes tour of artifacts from the Mai Wah held by the Montana Historical Society. Some of those artifacts will be on display in the MHS exhibit on Chinese in Montana, opening next March.

The next morning, Dick Gibson gave the family a trolley tour of Butte, including visits to cemeteries where Lou Chinn and William Chinn are buried. Lou was grandmother to the oldest generation here for the reunion, and William Chinn, her son, was father of Yvonne and Joyce, from whom the Mai Wah Society received the buildings that house the museum.

The afternoon was a public open house at the Mai Wah, with around 100 visitors who met many of the family members. Butte-Silver Bow Chief Executive Matt Vincent, who had proclaimed that week Butte Chinese Heritage Week, was there to welcome the visitors.

The Molloy family from Seattle donated a collection of Margaret Woo Chinn's Chinese dresses to the Mai Wah Museum. Margaret was married to Howard Chinn who grew up in Butte. Their children, Howard Chinn and Honnay Molloy, and Honnay's daughters made the donation. Curator Janna Norby has catalogued the dresses this fall and we plan to have some on display for next season.

The Mai Wah deeply appreciates the generosity of all the family members to the Museum. It was a joy to host their reunion.



Chinn Family reunion group photo by Pat Munday



**Chinese New Year 2015 Year of the Sheep
Parade date: Saturday February 21**

Sponsored by the
Mai Wah Society



Membership

In 2012, the Mai Wah Society rejuvenated its membership program that had been languishing for some time. We have three calendar-year membership levels, \$25, \$50, and \$100. All levels are significant help in our operations and we hope you'll consider joining, using the membership form in this newsletter. All levels include free admission to the museum. We're thrilled to list here our members for 2014 as well as major donors—thanks! Your membership makes a difference!

\$100 level

Dee Antimisiaris
 Patricia Bik
 Debbie Bishop
 Julie Bushmaker
 Hon & Christine Chan
 Ruben Chan & Ginger So
 Arvin Chin
 Alvin Chin
 Joyce Chinn & Jon Roush
 Karen Davidson
 George Everett
 Gretchen Geller & Butch Gerbrandt
 Jim Griffin & Jane Faught
 Richard Gibson
 Judy & John Jacobson
 Nancy Kiraly
 Albert Mah
 George Mah
 Jacquie & Travis McAdam
 Greg and Honnay Chinn Molloy
 Pat & Jan Munday
 Brad, Cyndy, Kyle, & Brayden Myers
 Thomas Nance
 Winnie Nishimine
 Richard Nelson & Kristi Dunks
 Yvonne & Robert Olinger
 Chuck & Lyza Schnabel
 Paul & Toni Seccomb
 Roger So & Alice Young
 Janet Sperry
 Steven Wong

Paid Members, 2014

\$50 level

Todd, Anne & Raina Baker
 Kathy Carlson
 Joseph & Evelyn Chan
 Judith Bishop Condren
 Erik Hammerstom & Aimee Hamilton
 Don & Rosemary Herron
 Norlene Holt
 Beth Judy
 Hua Li & Philip Williams
 Brian McGregor
 John & Courtney McKee
 Debbie Mueller
 Joyce Nowacki
 Ed & Susie Renfrow
 Diane Sands
 Noorjahan Parwana & Mark Syverson
 Celia & Jeff Schahczenski
 Dori Skrukrud
 Rose Sladek
 Victor Sloan & Sandra Gong
 Janet Sperry
 Elizabeth Sperry
 Sonny Thornborrow
 Butte Weekly
 Priscilla Wegars
 Betty Wing

\$25 level

Debbie Alt
 Jeanette Barnes
 Greg Bishop
 Joseph P. Borlo
 Linda Borton
 Cynthia Chin
 Bill Crane
 Leslie Doyle
 Lon Johnson & Ron Fournier
 James Garris & Michael Hampton
 Carlin Good
 Kathy Griffin
 Suiwen Huang
 Tina Huie
 Mike Huset
 Nola Johnson
 Connie Kenney
 Byron Jeong Lee
 Sue Leferink
 Robbie Liben
 Emma MacKenzie
 Byron & Kay McAllister
 Murray McCord
 Greg Nokes
 Lucy Pesanti
 Fred & Melinda Quivik
 Craig Reese
 Larry & Debbie Smith
 Ginger So
 Bobbi Stauffer
 David Stonehocker
 Tom Susanj
 Maryett Swafford
 Gary Weisz
 Lee & Steve Whitney
 Steve Wing
 Henry & Carol Tong
 Michael Wong
 Jeff Wong
 Donna Young
 Richard Young

2014 donors (over \$50)

Greg and Honnay Chinn Molloy
*and the descendants of Howard Yen Chinn
 in his memory*
 Debbie Bishop
 Jasmine Chan
 Ruben Chan & Ginger So
 Roger & Alice So
 Joyce Chinn & Jon Roush
 Albert Mah
 George Mah
 Dee Antimisiaris
 Karen Davidson,

In memory of Dr. John G. Davidson
 Arvin Chin
 Alvin Chin
 Jim Griffin & Jana Faught, *Hoyt
 Curator Fund*
 Yvonne & Robert Olinger
 Hon & Christine Chan
 Janet Sperry
 Gretchen Geller
 Diane Sands
 Beth Judy
 Priscilla Wegars, *Hoyt Curator Fund*



Business Blessings –Thanks!

Business blessings, started in 2010, have become a popular part of the Chinese New Year celebration in Butte. We appreciate the support and hope that the Dragon Dance brought prosperity to the following businesses this year:

2014 Business Blessing Donors

**Quarry Brewing
Butte Plaza Mall
NorthWestern Energy
Headframe Spirits
Silver Dollar
InstyPrints
Butte Weekly
Bad Beaver Bikes
Main Stope Gallery
Lisa Wareham Photography
Cavanaugh's
BSB Court House
BSB MIS Dept.
Hadnagy Butte Frame Shop
Gamers
Venus Rising
Butte Public Library
Phoenix (IBRC/MainStreet)**

2014 Display Case Sponsors

Jacque & Travis McAdam
Wah Chong Tai
Richard Gibson
Wah Chong Tai
Todd, Anne & Raina Baker
Butte Chinese Experience
Brad, Cyndy, Kyle, & Brayden Myers
Butte Chinese Experience
Dori Skrukud
Butte Chinese Experience
Tom Susanj
Digging Butte's Chinatown
Emma MacKenzie
Digging Butte's Chinatown
Tom Nance
Digging Butte's Chinatown
Mary Murphy & Dale Martin
Digging Butte's Chinatown

Montana Shares

Montana Shares is a partnership of 40 statewide non-profit organizations and the Mai Wah is a proud member. Montana Shares and member groups are devoted to improving the quality of life for Montanans and their communities through workplace giving (payroll deduction) campaigns. You should also know that Shares will always honor donor choice and strive for strict fiscal accountability. Our annual campaign is underway at workplaces around the state.



You can participate in several ways: 1) contribute through your current workplace campaign or ask that Montana Shares be included in your workplace campaign, 2) contribute individually, and 3) if there is no campaign in your workplace, ask that Montana Shares be an option for all employees. For more information, please call Montana Shares at 1-800-2625 or in Helena 442-2218, or visit the Shares website at www.montanashares.org. In Butte, please call Deb Bishop at 782-4867 or email at info@maiwah.org. There is a Montana Shares link on our webpage at www.maiwah.org. Every contribution, small or large is acknowledged and truly appreciated.

2015 paid memberships as of 12/22/2014

\$100 and more level

Dee Antimisiaris & family
Jasmine Chan
Jim Griffin & Jana Faught
Laurence Huie
Janet Sperry

\$50 level

Debbie Alt
Judith Condren
Celine & Steve Fisher
Tom & Laurie Michalek
Debbie Mueller
Pat & Jan Munday
Bill & Debbie Nokes
Roger & Alice So

\$25 level

Debbie Bishop
Linda Borton
Judy Chadwick
Sandra Champlin
Kathy Emmons-Norman
Peggy Guccione
David Koskenmaki
Byron & Kay McAllister
Murray McCord
Bruce McKee
Emily Munday
Mary Murphy & Dale Martin
Susan Vuke

谢谢 THANKS!

Unlocking secrets in the basements

Mai Wah volunteer Tom Nance spearheaded a massive undertaking last summer to clean junk and debris – most of it not historic – from the basements beneath the Wah Chong Tai and Mai Wah buildings. Much of this area, including the sub-sidewalk vaults, was virtually inaccessible.

The toilet in one corner – known, but blocked from access by junk and stored stuff – revealed original toilet paper, probably at least 65 years old. As Tom sifted the dirt in the floor, he discovered a gaming marker (like a lop-sided marble) like many found in the 2007 archaeological dig. The presence of this one in the Wah Chong Tai basement suggests that gambling may have been going on there – long suspected, but this helps support, but does not prove, that supposition.

In the Wah Chong Tai sidewalk vault, which originally had two entrances from ground level and a double-door entrance from the basement, Tom discovered chunks of coal – enough to confirm that the metal porthole in the sidewalk, which still opens, was the coal delivery chute for the buildings. Butte in general got natural gas as its primary heating source in the early 1930s, which is probably when the Mai Wah Noodle Parlor was plumbed for gas. Some coal-burning stoves may have served parts of the buildings for some years after that, but the coal Tom found is probably 1930s coal.

Tom uncovered a patch in the basement floor that was made with a sign—the Wah Chong Tai sign in English



Volunteer Tom Nance with the newly accessible historic toilet in the Wah Chong Tai basement.

that appears in our 1905 photos of the mercantile. With the store out of business, it just became patching material.



View of the basement entrance to the sidewalk vault. Some of the wall boards have 1898 newspapers glued to them.

Tom gave the Mai Wah Society about 60 hours of hard, dirty labor to make the basements accessible. Dick Gibson, Debbie Bishop, John Little, and others contributed to the effort. The first visitors were about 30 Mai Wah members who were guided through the basement on a special tour at the end of September, to close out our regular season.

We plan to make the basements available for regular tours on occasion next season, but they will need to be scheduled, guided tours because the floors still have numerous problems.

Coming attractions

Curator Janna Norby has been researching Margaret Woo Chinn's dresses donated to the Mai Wah by Honnay Chinn Molloy and her daughters Elizabeth and Kathryn. The following is from Janna.

During the Republican Period in China (1913-1949), fashion flourished, peaking in the 1930s. This short, post-imperial, but pre-Communist era, saw the amalgamation of traditional and Western styles in all aspects of society and culture. This is seen, most noticeably, in the upper and middle class's transformation of acceptable Chinese dress. The original cheongsam first seen in 17th century drawings was loose and boxy, revealing only the wearer's head, hands, and the tips of the toes. By the 20th century, it was replaced by the now common, shorter, tailored, form-fitting gown with only traditional accents.

Dresses in Cheongsam (Cantonese) or Qipao (Mandarin) style are quickly identified by an opening from the neck to under the right arm, a "mandarin" style, and a fairly narrow cut, often with a slit. Created in China in 1937 for Margaret Woo, the Mai Wah Society's Woo Chinn Collection is a representation of this style of dress, in a wonderful variety of fabrics. From cotton and polyester to silk and velvet, the cheongsams of the Woo Chinn collection are diverse sample of the accessible, acceptable, and fashionable dress in the pre-World War II period.

World War II began significantly earlier in China, with the invasion of Shanghai by Japan in 1937 and Margaret showed incredible forethought to purchase these dresses before leaving. With possible trade embargoes, uncertainty of shipping routes and the lack of available consumer goods as well as the eventual Communist take-over, Margaret's purchases were fortuitous indeed.

The Margaret Woo Chinn Dress Exhibit is made possible by a generous financial gift to the Mai Wah by the descendents of Howard Yen Chinn and Margaret Woo Chinn in their memory, and by a matching anonymous donation to the Hoyt Curator Fund.



MW2014.03.01: white silk with red, blue, green, black and yellow flowered pattern and hand-stitched red satin frogs and piping.

Coming Attractions

For the summer 2015 season, we will have four new banner displays, including two that recall the Lamb and Huie Families. We have a nice photo collection from the descendants of Dr. Wah Jean Lamb, and recent visits from Tina Huie and Larry Huie, descendants of Sam and Lily Huie, have provided us with information about their family. Sam was a nephew of Dr. Huie Pock. We have one more banner display to create for the Chinn Family as well.

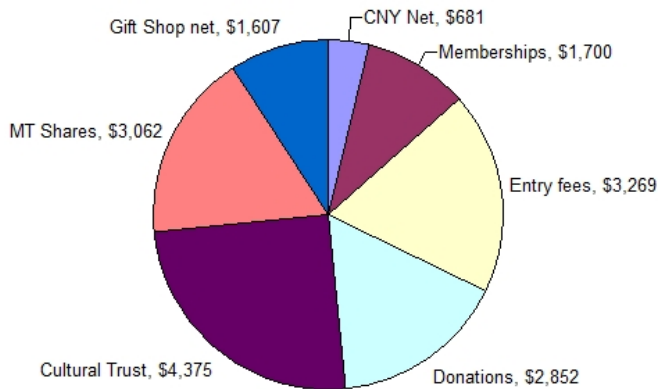


Butte, April 4, 1920. Mrs. Wong Que, tailor, and Mrs. Leong Wing (poultry vendor). From Lamb Photo Collection.

Finances

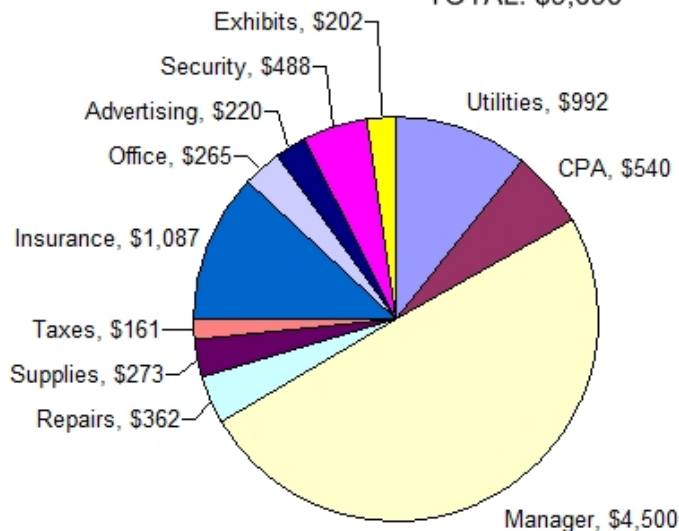
2014 preliminary revenue

TOTAL: \$17,546



2014 preliminary expenses

TOTAL: \$9,090



The Mai Wah is deeply appreciative of the memberships, sponsorships, and donations listed earlier in this newsletter. We also value donations in the form of time—sometimes the most valuable commodity.

The charts at left do not reflect income and expenses related to specific, encumbered accounts such as our curator and some exhibits. Last year these charts showed a loss of \$588.

If you are interested in helping the Mai Wah as a volunteer docent, someone who staffs the front desk during the summer and provides guests with their introduction to the Museum, we'd love to have you. If you would like to do a day here and there, or some more regular schedule, we'll train you in what you need to know.

谢谢 THANKS!





Mai Wah Society

MEMBERSHIP & DONATIONS

Memberships and donations to the Mai Wah help make possible all the programs we have—from tours to special educational programs to new exhibits. The Mai Wah Society is a 501(c)3 non-profit, so donations are tax deductible as allowed by law.

**For calendar
year 2015**

NAME _____

ADDRESS _____

City, State, Zip _____

Phone _____

E-mail _____

Membership levels (check one)

- \$25 (free museum admission, 2 guest passes)
- \$50 (free museum admission, 2 guest passes, \$5 discount on t-shirt)
- \$100 (free museum admission, 2 guest passes, \$5 discount on t-shirt, 15% gift shop discount, private tour for up to 10 people)

Amount enclosed for donation above membership: _____

**Please make check payable to Mai Wah Society
and send to
P.O. Box 404, Butte, MT 59703**

Thanks very much!



Mai Wah Society
 P.O. Box 404
 Butte, MT 59703
 www.maiwah.org



*Mai Wah Society Newsletter
 January 2015*

**Chinese New Year 2015
 Year of the Sheep**

**Parade date: Saturday
 February 21
 Starts 3:00 p.m.
 At the Court House**

**Regular season:
 June-September.
 Off-season tours can be
 arranged with advance
 notice.**

**MONTANA
 CULTURAL
 TRUST**



Partial funding for the Mai Wah's operations was provided
 by Montana's Cultural Trust

MAI WAH SOCIETY BOARD OF DIRECTORS

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