

Mai Wah building at 100

As the Mai Wah celebrates the centennial of its construction in 1909, there's news—a new rest room, a new paint job, and interior restoration in progress.

Butte architect George DeSnell designed the Mai Wah for the Wah Chong Tai Company; two years later, in 1911, he was working on plans for the Nebraska Building—today's Acoma.

Plumbing, sheet rock, electrical connections, and tile in the new rest room have taken longer than expected, but thanks in part to a grant from the Montana Cultural

Trust we expect this work to be complete this fall. Façade painting was supported in part by a grant from Butte CPR, and was finished in July.



Herb Keating Memorial Fundraiser: October 17

Herb Keating served on the Mai Wah Society's current board of directors until his death last spring. Herb was born in Cambridge, Massachusetts, and spent his youth in the Boston and Cincinnati areas. He received his B.A. from Fairfield University in Connecticut and came to Montana with the VISTA program in 1973. He was awarded his Master of Science degree in rehabilitation counseling from Eastern Montana College in Billings where he met his wife Karen Girardot. Herb served as a vocational services director for several years with facilities for the developmentally disabled in Kalispell and Bozeman. From 1985 to 2007, he was a certified rehabilitation counselor.



He was a consummate professional and touched the lives of many of the clients, whom he served not just as an advocate, but also as a friend.

Herb loved life and people and he took full advantage and appreciated all that life had to offer. He cherished his family and friends. Herb loved the West and enjoyed the great outdoors. He loved to cook and eat, good conversation, a good party, holidays, road trips, and a good night at the poker table. Herb loved to laugh and could take a joke as well as give one. One of his passions was photography and he served as the "official" photographer for the Mai Wah's New Year's parade for many years. His photographs of the archaeological dig on Mercury Street are displayed at the Museum for public view.

He was actively involved in numerous professional and cultural associations including the Mai Wah Society, Montana Association for Rehabilitation, Rehabilitation Association of Montana, Society of Human Resource Management and the American Cancer Society.

Herb will be greatly missed and his life and love of live music will be honored and celebrated at a fundraiser for the Mai Wah Museum on Oct. 17th.



Erik Hammerstrom assists with book collection, mercantile, and more

The Mai Wah has over the years, had many hours of volunteer service rendered by people interested in our mission and in the rich history that we hold. Erik Hammerstrom, a doctoral candidate at Indiana University in religious studies and history of Chinese Buddhism, is one such volunteer. He was able to spend time this summer analyzing the John Hughes Memorial Library, housed at our Mai Wah building, producing a document that we will be able to use to make decisions about the future of the collection and its disposition.



Erik Hammerstrom and Janet Sperry worked on new acquisitions at the museum.

Erik researched the characters on the newly found opium pipe and spent the day in Nevada City working on the many objects in their Chinese collection. The Mai Wah is cooperating with the Montana Heritage Commission to determine the best distribution of the objects in our efforts to “restock the mercantile” at the Wah Chong Tai building and how best to interpret the Virginia City Chinese experience.

Erik and Janet Sperry and Marge Antolik of the McFarland Curatorial Center examined over 100 objects noting them for future reference. Jim Griffin took photographs of many of the items and furniture that will soon reoccupy the Wah Chong Tai Mercantile room.

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 2009/2010 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.

Erik says “In among the books were books on Christian theology, world geography, a classic Chinese novel, and a set of volumes with Chinese morality tales associated with Chinese religious beliefs. These were amazing books to see and hold, and some of them, especially several textbooks in English, had handwritten Chinese notes in them. Janet also found a prompt sheet with important English phrases on it, written on the back of a Silver Bow Co. Bank deposit slip. All in all, these books represent a great indicator of how cultured the Butte Chinese were and give the lie to the idea that they were illiterate or unlearned.”



Erik translates the inscription on the opium pipe found at the Mai Wah as “A heart as pure and still as ice.” It is a line from a poem by the prominent Tang Dynasty poet, Wang Changling (698-795 a.d.). Erik feels that the words likely reflect the opium-induced pleasure felt by the smoker.

Guangxi Connection: New photo exhibit

Since 1999, Montana has been the sister state of Guangxi Zhong Autonomous Region, in southwest China. In September 2009, a high-level delegation from Guangxi, led by Mr. Wu Heng, Vice Chairman, Standing Committee of Guangxi People's Congress, and Mr. Chen Dake, Director General, Guangxi Science & Technology Dept., visited Montana to renew ties and promote cultural exchanges. In their visit to Butte, they presented the people of Montana with a large collection of photographs of Guangxi. The Mai Wah Museum is the proud recipient of this collection, opened at a ceremony on September 22.

Earlier this summer, the Mai Wah hosted an educational program on Guangxi presented by Ms. Lianying Tang, a



(photo provided by Lianying Tang)

dynamic speaker who introduced us to aspects of Guangxi culture from language and traditional medical arts to food and ethnic minority groups—a striking similarity to Butte in its early days.

(See page 5 for photos of the September 22 ceremony)

Dig It! The Mai Wah Goes to School

A small but mighty contingent of volunteers converged on the Mai Wah Museum August 15th to learn more about Butte's historic Chinatown and introduce Montana's fourth- through sixth-grade students to the culture that once flourished there.

Mitzi Rossillon, lead archaeologist for the 2007 excavation of a Butte Chinatown site, provided an extensive collection of reports and reference books for volunteers to tap into. Mitzi's brainchild to excite kids about archaeology by compiling excess excavation artifacts into an educational trunk is now one step closer to completion.



Volunteers Ann Haggett (Dillon), Jayne Mitchell (Anaconda), Susan Schott (Bozeman), and Kim Kohn (Butte), joined Mitzi and Butte educator Debbie Mueller in selecting artifacts and designing an identification handbook for the trunk. The effort is being funded by the Montana Archaeological Society with the support of the Mai Wah Society. Board member Dori Skrukud was on hand all day, serving as gofer and cheerleader.

A local Chinese restaurant, bearing the same name as the pattern of many of the porcelain dish artifacts recovered from the excavation, was lunch headquarters. When the group reconvened, Dori treated them to an extensive museum tour. Then it was back to work, as the intrepid enthusiasts continued their race to have 20 items chosen for the trunk and written up by day's end. They passed the 75% mark handily. The final product will contain two additional lessons – one on stratigraphy and one on the limits of archaeology – and will be circulated by the Montana Historical Society in Helena. Target completion date for the trunk is September 2010.

Article and photo by Debbie Mueller

JOIN THE MAI WAH SOCIETY

FOR A FUN EVENING OF MUSIC,
DANCING, AND GAMES

TO HONOR AND CELEBRATE
THE LIFE OF HERB KEATING

SATURDAY OCT. 17TH

AT THE MOFAB
405 W. PARK, BUTTE

SPECIAL GEEZER HOURS
7:00 - 10:00 P.M.



MUSIC BY THE

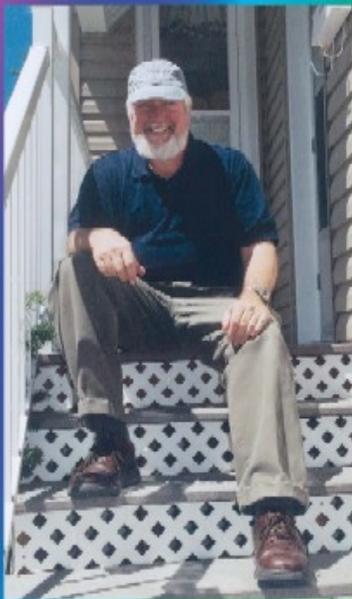
FOSSILS

\$10 SUGGESTED DONATION
PLAY GAMES - WIN PRIZES!

BASIC BAR PROVIDED BY KAREN GIRARDOT

FEEL FREE TO BRING SNACKS AND
BEVERAGES OF YOUR CHOICE

DON'T FORGET THE ARTICHOKE DIP!



Contributors to this Newsletter: Robert Edwards, Dori Skrukrud, Jim Griffin, Jana Faught, Janet Sperry, Dick Gibson, Debbie Bishop, Shain Wolstein, Debbie Mueller

Museum visitation report



Shain Wolstein, museum and gift shop manager, reports that from June 23 when then museum opened, through mid-September, total visitation was 103, including 19 children (free admission). About half the visitors came by way of the “Butte Pass” — a promotion through the Butte Chamber of Commerce and clearly beneficial to the Mai Wah.

This season’s manager, Shain Wolstein (photo, left), brought

seven years of experience in Butte history to the Mai Wah. He spent five years with the BSB Public Archives, where he worked as a tour leader as well as an archives technician for collections. Shain also worked with ARCO’s historical photo database, and most recently was Senior Researcher and Community Liaison for the Butte Project, a project of the Dennis and Phyllis Washington Foundation intended to produce a detailed documentary of Butte history.

This year’s low visitation numbers are a concern of the board, and plans are in the works to drive more tourists to the museum. Ideas include improved signage within Butte, as well as working with Old Butte Historical Adventures to provide guided tour services and promotion.



Above: Officials gather at the Mai Wah for the Guangxi Photo Exhibit opening ceremony. *Below:* Robert Edwards accepts a gift from Mr. Wu Heng, Vice Chairman, Standing Committee of Guangxi People’s Congress, delegation leader. Paul Babb (left) also accepted a gift for Butte-Silver Bow.



One of America’s best parades!

Readers Digest has named the Mai Wah Chinese New Year’s Parade one of the six most interesting parades in America!

Mark your calendars for the 2010 Year of the Tiger parade, which will begin as usual at the Butte-Silver Bow Court House on Saturday February 20.





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

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Mark Your Calendar:
Mai Wah
Annual Meeting
Monday, Nov. 16
6:00 p.m.
Broadway Café
Pizza etc. courtesy Mai
Wah Society

New Acquisitions



These figurines and six others were donated recently by Jim Apken. The one at left represents a goddess—the central figure or part of a small altar suite (we know this because she is seated).

At right is probably a Dragon Maiden or Dragon Princess, an attendant to Guanyin, the Goddess of Mercy and Compassion. Three figures (Guanyin and her two attendants) would have probably been found in Chinese homes in Butte's Chinatown.

These figurines belonged to the Yee Chai family since 1900. That family moved from Canton, China, to Macau and established the Yee Chai Shop there in 1938.

Catalogued by Janet Sperry (*Left*: MW2009.01.02. *Right*: MW2009.01.01)

