The Mai Wah Society has received a grant from the Montana Historical Society’s County History Initiative to research and display the most important of the 60,000 artifacts unearthed in the 2007 Chinatown archaeological dig. The $2,000 grant will also support printing a brochure on the artifacts.

Janet Sperry and Dick Gibson are spearheading this effort, expected to culminate in an exhibit opening by next June.

Some of the artifacts that may be exhibited and interpreted include a pistol, a whole opium pipe bowl, and a tiny medicine bottle made of clear glass with Chinese characters painted in gold on one side. Ink bottles, a gaming die, a marker button, a rusty alarm clock, even the 1900 silver dime can all contribute to our understanding of the Chinese experience in Butte.

We’ve also applied for a grant from the PPL Montana Community Fund to expand from this exhibit into a summer program focusing on Chinese heritage. Stay tuned—we expect an answer on our application by mid-April!

Below: excavation in progress, Week 4, Summer 2007

Montana Historical Society’s support for the exhibit project is greatly appreciated. The dig itself was underwritten by support from the Butte-Silver Bow Urban Revitalization Agency.
Mai Wah’s Board of Directors now counts 13 members with a wide range of affiliations and backgrounds. Newest members are Noorjahan Parwana, Conservation Program Director with the Big Hole Watershed Committee, and Dan Rapkoch with NorthWestern Energy.

Mai Wah Board members serve two-year terms. Re-elected to the Board were Robert Edwards, who serves as Chair, and Todd Baker. Together with new members their terms expire in 2011. Robert is CEO of Silver Bow Properties, and Todd is an attorney.

Members continuing in their 2-year terms are Steve Beck (Beck Seminars, providing motivational and educational programs from his base in Illinois), Debbie Bishop (Montana Developmental Center in Boulder, MT), Chuck Carrig (Archaeologist, US Bureau of Land Management, Dillon), Jana Faught (Butte-Silver Bow Arts Foundation), and Richard Gibson (Gibson Consulting, geology and history tours and freelance writer).

Also serving continuing terms on the Board are Jim Griffin, Co-Treasurer (Montana State University Educational Opportunity Center, Butte), Claudia Rapkoch, Vice-Chair (spokesperson, NorthWestern Energy), Dori Skrukrud, Secretary-Treasurer (Community Development Dept., City & County of Butte-Silver Bow), and Janet Sperry (Montana Historical Society Registrar, retired).

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2010 is the Year of the Tiger

(Chinese tiger character below)