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
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  
Jacqui & 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 Olicer  
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 Skrukud  
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  
Suwen 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 Stanuffer  
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 Olier  
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)

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.

2014 Display Case Sponsors

- Jacquie & 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 Skrukrud
- 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

2015 paid memberships as of 12/22/2014

$100 and more level
- Dee Antimiarias & 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

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

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.
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 takeover, 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.
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.

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!
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.

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!
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.

Mai Wah Society Newsletter
January 2015

MAI WAH SOCIETY BOARD OF DIRECTORS
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