

# January 2024

## Coming February 10, 2024: The Year of the Dragon

### Happy “Year of the Dragon”!

**J**oin us for Butte’s Chinese New Year parade. The parade dragon will burst from the Butte-Silver Bow Courthouse on 155 West Granite Street at 3:00 p.m. on Saturday, February 10, and then wend its way through Uptown Butte to arrive at the Mai Wah Museum on 17 West Mercury Street. When we celebrate the Chinese New Year in Butte, we perform 150 years of Butte Chinese history and thousands of years of Chinese culture.

The dragon is the most auspicious of all 12 Chinese zodiac animals. Many Chinese parents even plan for Dragon year children, when the birthrate increases significantly. According to tradition, dragon year people are “charismatic, intelligent, and naturally lucky.” The Chinese zodiac system is more than 2,000 years old and is attributed to the mythological Jade Emperor who rules Heaven and Earth.

Bai Juyi, a Tang Dynasty poet, wrote “The Dragon of the Black Pool”:

Deep the waters of the Black Pool, colored like ink,  
They say a Holy Dragon lives there, whom men have never seen.

Besides the Pool they have built a shrine,  
The authorities have established a ritual,  
A dragon by itself remains a dragon but men can make it a god. . .  
When the dragon comes, ah!  
The wind stirs and sighs. . .



“Yellow Dragon Flag” of the Qing Dynasty, adopted 1862 and in use during the early years of Butte’s Wah Chong Tai mercantile and Mai Wah noodle parlor



Jade dragon, more than 5,000 years old—China’s oldest known dragon

## Seven Million People Visited the Mai Wah?

**W**ell, not exactly. . . But more than 7 million people did view *1923*, the prequel to *Yellowstone* and also a Taylor Sheridan production. Butte was transformed into a giant film-set for *1923* and the Mai Wah Museum has a small supporting role. Actress Joy Osmanski played Alice Chow, the Chinese American wife of *Yellowstone* ranch manager Zane Davis (played by Brian Geraghty). Local officials beat Zane and ran Alice out of town for violating anti-miscegenation laws. Passed in 1909, Montana's miscegenation statute was not repealed until 1955.

The cast, production designers, and writers of *1923* really did their homework. The Mai Wah Society thanks Joy Osmanski for her visits to the Mai Wah and her research regarding Chinese American history. Also thank you to Courtney Spitzner (Research – Art Department), Lisa Ward (Art Director), Iman Corbani (Assistant Art Director), and Remy Holt (Alice



Joy Osmanski as Alice Chow in *1923*  
(Paramount Studios photo)

## Qingming Festival or “Tomb Sweeping Day”

**E**ach spring, we celebrate the Qing Ming Holiday at the Chinese section of Butte's Mount Moriah Cemetery. We make an offering of food and wine at the historic altar and “burner” and then sweep and clean the graves a way of honoring the ancestors. We also lay fresh willow sprigs on the graves to symbolize rebirth. After these somber acts it's time to lighten up and enjoy the spring day. We share some wine and snacks, and fly kites.

Qingming 2023 had special significance because of scholar and board member Mark Johnson's project to identify and document Chinese American gravesites in Montana—see his website [bigskychinese.com/cemeteries](http://bigskychinese.com/cemeteries).

Join us for Qingming 2024 on May 18 at Mount Moriah Cemetery.



Qingming Festival by luthienelf



Graves at Billings' Mountview Cemetery,

photo by Mark Johnson



# Butte's Chinese New Year Parade: A Brief History

**H**istorically, the New Year celebration of “Spring Festival” was an important time for Butte’s large Chinese American community. As the community lost population through the 1930s and with the onset of World War Two, the traditional celebration came to an end. When the Mai Wah Society incorporated in 1992 and the Chinn family deeded over the historic Mai Wah/ Wah Chong Tai building to the new group, one of its first priorities was to revive the Chinese New Year parade. A dragon dance is a key element of celebrating the Lunar New Year, with the dragons representing power, good luck, and the pursuit of wisdom.

This began with a papier-mâché dragon created by Mai Wah Society board member Dori Skrukrud and then amped up with a full-size (approximately 30-feet long) dragon donated by the Republic of China (Taiwan). We think of this as “Grandpa Dragon” and it is on display in the “cheater story” windows of the museum. It is a very heavy construction, and the dragon dancers got a real work out carrying it through the streets of uptown Butte!

In 2015, Sun Yat-sen University of Guangzhou donated a marvelous new parade dragon to the Mai Wah. “Junior Dragon” is lightweight and agile, which our dragon dancers from the Butte High School History Club greatly appreciate.

Sun Yat-sen University is a partner institution with Montana Tech. The city of Guangzhou was historically known as Canton, the region where most Chinese Americans emigrated from in the nineteenth century.

In 2024, the dragon will burst from the Butte-Silver Bow Courthouse at 3 pm on Saturday, February 10. Bring your favorite noisemaker and join the parade, followed by hot chocolate and snacks at the Mai Wah Museum.



Sun Yat-sen faculty and Jim Griffin pose with “Junior Dragon” in 2015.



The Dragon Dancers (Butte High School History Club), 2023 Chinese New Year Parade



# Mai Wah Gift Shop Ups Its Game

**F**or the past two years, Jan Munday has stepped up as a volunteer to manage the Mai Wah Museum's gift shop. Many of you who have visited regularly over the years have remarked on this improvement. As a small non-profit, gift shop sales are important to us as a source of revenue that helps keep the lights on. Increased visitation and gift shop sales are also welcome evidence that we are serving our public mission.

Each year, we partner with local artist Shawn Crowe for our Chinese zodiac t-shirt designs. By summer 2024, we expect to have t-shirts with all 12 of Shawn's original designs in stock. We also have coffee mugs with the original Mai Wah phoenix design, wonderful traditional tea sets, puerh tea, fancy chopsticks, and other unique items. Stop by after the parade or during the summer and check us out!



"The Eight Immortals in a Boat",  
soapstone carving, early 20<sup>th</sup> century.  
For sale in Mai Wah Gift Shop



Asian Girl, chalkware, early 20<sup>th</sup> century.  
For sale in Mai Wah Gift Shop

# Hal Waldrup, Preserving the Mai Wah/Wah Chong Tai

**O**ur story begins in the early 1980s, when Paul Eno ran his “Fix-It Shop” in the Mai Wah and Wah Chong Tai building. Paul had been a friend of William Chinn before Chinn’s death in 1980, and William had allowed Paul use of his family’s building.

Hal Waldrup grew up in and around Butte and often passed by the building, peering in the windows and wondering about the old “ghost signs” on the top of the buildings which read, “Mai Wah, Noodles and Chop Suey” and “Wah Chong Tai Company”. Hal worked for a clock repair and sales shop and his boss wanted him to examine Paul’s old clocks for a possible purchase. Paul was in his 80s and quite ill, and when he left to live with family in 1985 he closed up the building, gave Hal the key, and informally appointed him as caretaker. The roof leaked badly and Hal did his best to protect the building’s many precious historical artifacts.



Hal Waldrup with Paul Eno at the Mai Wah, c. 1982

Eno’s family sold the building’s contents to an antique dealer who was not supposed to remove “anything Chinese”. The dealer violated this agreement while Hal did everything he could to preserve Chinese artifacts. In 1986 Hal worked with the Eno family to facilitate the transfer of Chinese artifacts and documents from the building, primarily to the Montana State Historical Society but also to the Butte Archives. A large collection from the building had been sold years earlier to Charles Bovey, the collector who established Nevada City and Virginia City as living ghost towns.

Two other local Butte people were instrumental in Hal’s efforts: John Hughes, a reference librarian, Chinese scholar, archivist, and member of the Butte Historical Society; and Jana Faught, a business woman and co-owner of the neighboring Silver Dollar Saloon. Jana was particularly effective in organizing the fundraisers to help pay for emergency roof repairs in 1987 and tax payments in 1988-1989. Meanwhile, Joyce Chinn visited Butte and expressed hope that the building could be a museum. Hal briefly ran his own clock repair business in the building in 1990, and it was all he could do to keep the vandals and arsonists out.

Hal worked with Ellen Crain, the Butte-Silver Bow Public Archives director, in 1991 on a public exhibit of the Mai Wah Collection. This, along with Jana Faught’s fundraisers, helped bring public attention to the value of the Mai Wah/Wah Chong Tai building and the need to preserve it.

When Jana Faught and other local volunteers formed the Mai Wah Society in 1991, Hal was part of the group. He became tired of emptying rain buckets and the constant emergency repairs, and left the group shortly before his grant for a new roof was approved. In 1992, the Chinn family signed the building over to the newly incorporated 501(c)3 Mai Wah Society. Hal returned as a volunteer in 1997-1998, helping to clean and repair the interior spaces. He also worked as the Museum Manager in 2001 and since that time has been steady in his encouragement for Chinese American history. He is the author of “The Serendipitous Preservation of Butte’s Mai Wah Noodle Parlor and the Wah Chong Tai Company” published in *Montana: The Magazine of Western History* (2012), and *Huie Pock: Pioneer Chinese Doctor* (1991).



## “Remembering Early Chinese Immigrants”, A Grant

The Mai Wah Society is pleased to partner with Professor Hua Li of Montana State University on the grant, “Remembering Early Chinese Immigrants in Montana: a study of artifacts in Butte’s Mai Wah Museum,” funded by Montana State University Outreach and Engagement. Dr. Li’s student-led research project uses our museum’s artifacts to help tell the story of how Chinese immigrants helped shape Montana culture in the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries. As a historical lesson, the project helps contemporary Montanans—a very white majority population—better appreciate the role of Asians in shaping our state and it also helps contemporary Asian Montanans develop a sense of identity with Montana culture.



Dr. Li points out an artifact for interpretation in the Wah Chong Tai mercantile



Students examine artifacts from the Wah Chong Tai display cases

Dr. Li, several other MSU faculty, and the students visited the museum in September. They broke up into teams and spent the day examining artifacts and documents, and taking photos to aid the hard work of translating historical Cantonese script into modern English. Board members Mark Johnson and Pat Munday worked closely with the group to give them full access to our collections. Mark is faculty member with the University of Notre Dame and his research and publications have greatly increased the visibility of the Mai Wah museum and Chinese history in Montana for scholars such as Dr. Li.

Dr. Li has also been instrumental in working with other scholars in organizing a conference on “Representations of East Asian Migrants and Settlers in the Western United States”, to be held at MSU in Bozeman in late September 2024. Both Johnson and Munday plan to present papers at that conference where we look forward to learning about outcomes from Professor Li’s project.

Research group posed in front of the Mai Wah building



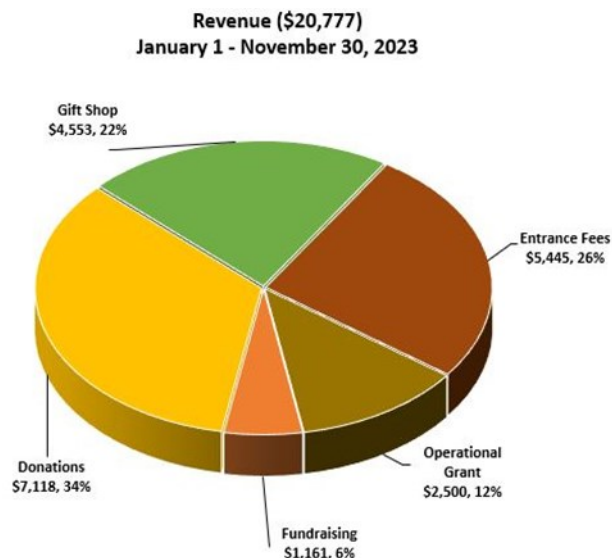
# Annual Treasurer's Report

**T**he Mai Wah is deeply appreciative of the continued sponsorships we receive every year. These include individual and business donations, grants, museum tours, and matching gift donations. We also value continued support from our many volunteers who make the Mai Wah's mission possible.

The charts reflect income and expenses from January 1 – November 30, 2023. The total revenue and expenses do not include the restricted grant of \$12,000 from the Foundation for Montana History which helped fund the investigation into and the education about Montana's historic Chinese cemeteries. These revenues and expenses were fully received and expensed.

The operation grant includes the final payments from Montana Cultural Trust grant used for operational costs during this period.

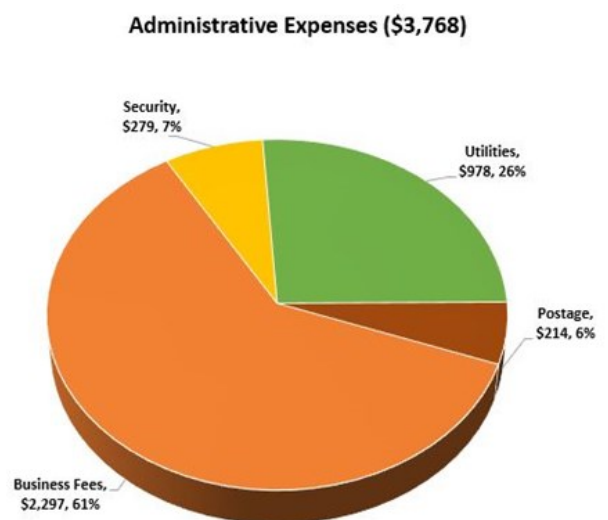
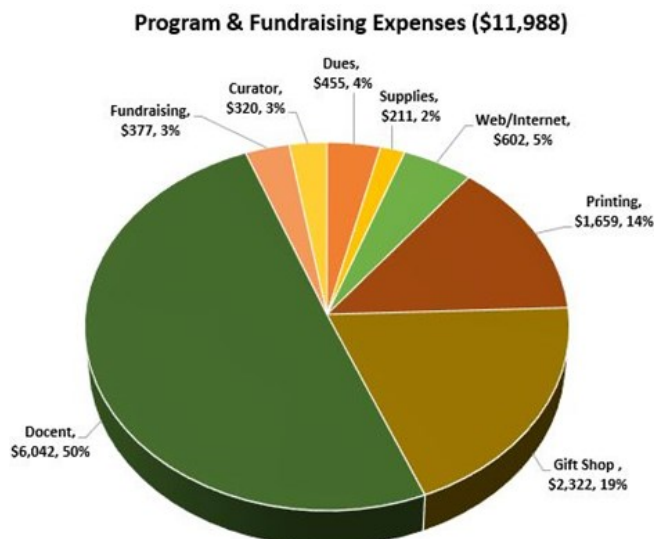
Program, Fundraising, and administrative expenses during 2023 totaled \$15,756. The majority of expenses were related to program, of which about 50% was related to our docent for managing the museum, and around 19% for gift shop inventory purchases.



## Goodbye and a Big Thank You to Kim Tintinger!

After serving 6 years as the Mai Wah's Treasurer, we are sad to see Kim move on to other interests. Kim brought her education, bookkeeping, and administrative skills to the organization. She did an excellent job in moving us forward with updated books, budget reports, and getting the museum's inventory entered into our Square account and purchasing the Square register so that we are now able to accept credit card transactions.

From the Board, a heartfelt Thank You to Kim!





# A Welcome To New Board Members

**T**he Mai Wah Society welcomes two new board members, Kim Kohn and Angie Mullikin.

After a childhood spent moving from state to state, Kim Kohn's deep family roots in Montana drew her to Butte in February 1999 from Oak Ridge, Tennessee. Kim studied Historic Preservation at the University of Mary Washington in Fredericksburg, Virginia, and spent the first third of her career evaluating historic properties, writing national register nominations, and assisting historic districts with design guidelines. She launched the Mainstreet Program in Butte before focusing on her family. After raising two brilliant children, a future geological engineer at Montana Tech and a fierce feminist at the University of Montana, she worked at the Butte Archives for twelve years. She maintained and expanded the vertical files and research library, facilitated a successful lecture series, and enjoyed working with scholars, students, and families conducting research on people, properties, and communities in Butte. In September of 2023, Kim accepted the new position of Assistant Director of the World Museum of Mining, where she can stretch her creative brain by curating exhibits while also engaging her research brain. For almost three years, Kim has also worked in the reference department of the Butte Public Library, where she likes to think she is reordering the library one shelf at a time. In her spare time, Kim enjoys listening to podcasts while gardening, baking, crafting, and embroidering. Kim has enjoyed attending the nation's coldest, shortest, loudest Lunar New Year parade almost every year this century, has shown up uninvited to numerous Mai Wah volunteer events, and is very pleased to participate fully as a member of the Board. She has already started collecting recipes for the Year of the Dragon parade in 2024.

Angie Mullikin joins us as the Mai Wah Society's new treasurer. Angie was born in Choteau, Montana. She attended Montana Tech where she studied business and accounting, and graduated with a Bachelor's in Business Administration in 2007. Angie has spent much of her career working in the public service field, and is currently working for Butte-Silver Bow's Public Works Department. Angie has 6 children and 6.5 grandchildren, with one expected in May of 2024. Angie enjoys sewing, learning about history, and running around the mountains whenever possible with her husband.



Photos at left and below: dishes from the early years of the Mai Wah Noodle Parlor restaurant, donated to the museum by Joyce Chinn

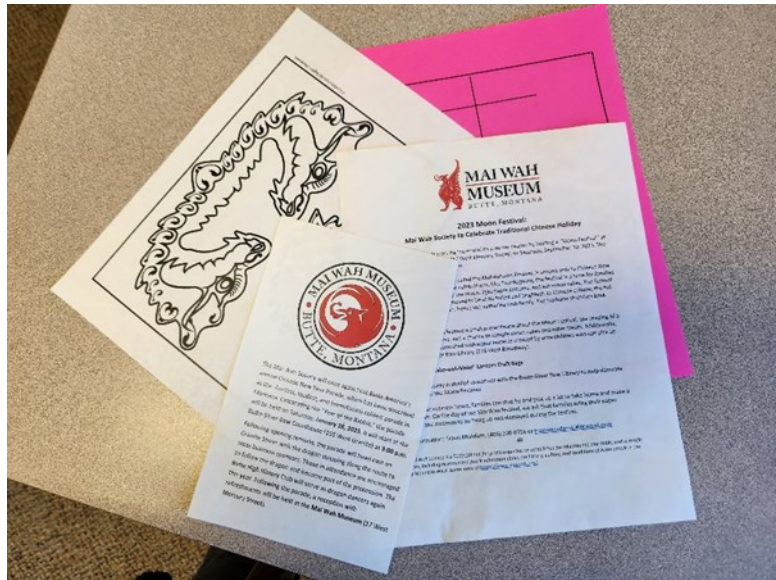




# Butte Library Partnership

The Butte Public Library has partnered with Mai Wah by highlighting Chinese cultural events and festivals over the past year and we look forward to continuing this partnership in the future. Part of the library's mission is education and informing its patrons about our society, history, and culture. The Mai Wah Society has multiple events during the year that provide the library an opportunity to inform residents about Butte's Chinese history.

For the Chinese New Year Parade in January and for the Moon Festival in September, the library assembled and distributed packets for children. In these packets were materials for a craft, a press release about the event and its meaning, and a short history of the Chinese in Butte. Including crafts that children can make prior to the event helps them feel more connected and engaged as participants. Though designed for children, there were no age restrictions and people of all ages could enjoy and learn from the activities. Including a press release for the event, as well as a history of the festival and its meanings, is a brilliant way to provide background information to event goers. They learn about the event and its significance in advance, making their experience more enriching and meaningful. Additionally, including a short history of the Chinese in Butte helps to shed light on the local Chinese community's contributions and presence, adding another layer of cultural awareness.



Manchu or "flowerpot" shoes once worn by Lily Chew Huie. Lily and her husband Sam managed a restaurant at 251 East Park Street in Butte. Donated to the Mai Wah Museum by Tina Huie, Lily's granddaughter.

# The Moon Festival Returns

**T**he Mai Wah Noodle Parlor buzzes with activity and laughter floats into the street beyond. Old friends enjoy delicious mooncakes and reminisce about their homes in southern China. Festivities continue throughout the night until the moon disappears from the sky. Years pass. Fewer and fewer people join the festival, and finally there is none at all. The moon shines on an empty building. No lanterns, streamers, or mooncakes.

One hundred twenty years later, Butte celebrates the festival once more!

The Moon Festival, or Mid-Autumn Festival, began in the Song Dynasty. Legend tells that long ago there were ten suns in the sky, scorching crops and vaporizing water. Hou Yi, a skilled archer, shot down all the suns but one and the Earth was saved. For this, the Goddess of Immortality granted him the Elixir of Eternal Life. Hou Yi planned to spend immortality with his dearly beloved wife, Cheng'e. They agreed to take the elixir in the mid-autumn when they could appreciate the beauty of the full moon together. An evil man named Feng Meng overheard their plan and while Hou Yi was out hunting, he broke in to steal the elixir. Unable to defeat Feng Meng, Cheng'e drank the elixir to prevent it from falling into evil hands. Ah, but the elixir was meant for two people. The extra dose caused her to become so light she floated up onto the moon. Hou Yi was heartbroken and in the years to come, he would wait for mid-autumn when the moon was bright and full enough to see Cheng'e. We now celebrate the full moon on this day to honor Hou Yi's dedication and remember the lovers who could not be united.

The Chinese in Montana would certainly have celebrated too, filling Chinatown with joyous festivities. Though the Chinese presence has mostly faded away, the Mai Wah Museum now honors their memory and culture by reviving the Moon Festival. In late September we gathered to learn about Chinese culture and snack on delicious mooncakes in a place where the holiday was celebrated a century ago. While the Chinese from the old noodle parlor days may be gone, we keep alive the stories they told and the festivals they held.

**“Quiet Night Thought”**  
**A Moon Festival poem by Li Bai**

Moonlight shining through my window  
Perhaps there is frost upon the ground  
Looking up I see the moon  
Looking down I miss my home



Hou Yi shoots the moons from the sky,  
Illustration from Xiao Yuncong (1645)



Goddess Chang'e in the Lunar Palace  
Zhou Wenju, Tang Dynasty



# 2023 Mai Wah Society Supporters

**T**hank you to our donors for supporting the Mai Wah Society. We have three supporter (donor) levels: \$25, \$50, and \$100 and more. Please consider once again supporting us with your donation for 2024. You can use the donation form in this newsletter or visit our website at [www.maiwah.org](http://www.maiwah.org).

We also appreciate additional donations including those from corporate giving programs and local businesses. Happy Year of the Dragon!

## Supporters for 2023

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**Thank You! 谢谢**

### Chinese New Year Blessing Donors

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*Mai Wah Society Newsletter  
January 2024*

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

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Shari Curtis, Travis McAdam, Mary McCormick, Pat Munday,  
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"We are funded in part by coal severance taxes paid  
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