

January 2025

Coming January 29, 2025: The Year of the Snake

Year 2025 is the “Year of the Snake:”

Mai Wah to hold Chinese New Year Parade

The Mai Wah Society will, once again, host Butte America’s annual Chinese New Year Parade, which has been described as the shortest, loudest, and (sometimes) coldest parade in Montana. We plan to hold the event on Saturday, February 1, 2025, from 3:00-4:30 p.m. Stay tuned to our Facebook page for the latest updates. This is the first Saturday after the Lunar New Year’s official start with the new moon on January 29.



Legend of the White Snake,
painting from the Summer Palace in Beijing

Lunar New Year 2025 finds us celebrating the “Year of the Snake.” Snakes are the sixth animal of the Chinese zodiac. According to legend, Snake hitched a ride on the horse’s leg in the celestial race for the order of the zodiac.

People born in the Year of the Snake set clear goals and work hard to achieve them. They are also sensitive to others’ feelings, form good friendships with people born under the sign of Ox or Rooster, and become secret friends with those born in a Monkey year.

Snake stories and references are common in Chinese mythology, and Chinese kids grow up learning some variation of the Legend of the White Snake. It’s a romance story and one version begins when two snakes from Mount Emei transform into young women. Bai Suzhen, the white snake woman, falls in love with and marries Xu Xian. Bai Suzhen drinks a potion that reveals her true form and poor Xu dies of shock. Bai steals a magical plant to revive Xu, but upon waking he fears his snake-wife and is imprisoned by a Buddhist monk. Bai and her friend, the green snake woman Xiaoqing, lose a battle to free Xu. When Xu realizes Bai’s love for him, he quits worrying about her snake-nature, escapes the temple, and rejoins Bai. The monk is relentless in pursuing Bai and eventually imprisons her under a pagoda. Before imprisonment, Bai had child who is raised by green snake woman. The child learns magic from her and eventually frees his mother. We might find various lessons in the White Snake legend: repression of women in ancient China, a celebration of love that overcomes social constraints, and male fear of female seduction are all possible readings.

Moon Festival: Celebrate the Harvest

Historically, Butte’s Chinese-American community celebrated many traditional holidays from their homeland. Over the years, the Mai Wah Society has revived these celebrations, beginning with the Chinese Lunar New Year Parade, then Qingming (“Tombsweeping”), and most recently the Moon Festival. Also called Mid-Autumn Festival it celebrates the harvest through family gatherings, hanging brightly colored lanterns, and eating a special pastry known as mooncakes.



David Stonehocker, Mai Wah President, hangs lanterns made by kids for the Moon Festival.

Screenshot from CCTV production by Rick Liu.

This year’s celebration was notable for many reasons. First of all, Shari Curtis, a board member and librarian, set up a paper lantern making activity that brought a lot of parents and children to our celebration. Next, Shihua Chen Brazill, a Chinese-American who is a professor with Montana Tech, read the traditional poems, “Thoughts in the Silent Night” by Li Bai and “The Moon Festival” by Su Shi. Then in a lucky coincidence, a visiting Chinese exchange student happened to be in Butte. She and Shihua sang the popular song, “The Moon Represents my Heart” by Teresa Tang.

Throughout the day, the museum and then the festivities were featured in a story by television journalist Rick Liu of CGTN (China Global Television Network, a division of CCTV). Mr. Liu explained the history and nature of the museum, led the camera to some key exhibits, and interviewed children and filmed participants at the Moon Festival. You can find the story at tv.cctv.com/2024/09/17/VIDEx-TeESM8OHTLrQvNtGPv240917.shtml?spm=C55953877151.PnBseTLNFz7W.0.0



A Visitor and Shihua Chen Brazill sing a duet of “The Moon Represents my Heart”



Pat Munday and Shihua Chen Brazill read traditional poems in Mandarin and English

Shelley Wong Poetry Reading

On July 27th the Mai Wah Museum hosted Shelley Wong, a 4th generation Chinese American Poet. Ms. Wong has many awards and accolades some including National Book Award for Poetry, Lambda Literary Award and Anthology of Asian American Women Poets. Her mission is. “Writing poems to affirm other people like me, who have felt unseen and unheard in literary and artistic spaces. I am interested in the transformative possibilities of a poem, the lyric, free verse forms, the field of a page, and how poetry intersects with other forms of art. Poetry is for everyone, and we are in the golden age of poetry because of the people of color writing today.” It was an honor to host such a talented Chinese American artist for the Mai Wah Event.



Building Rehab Continues

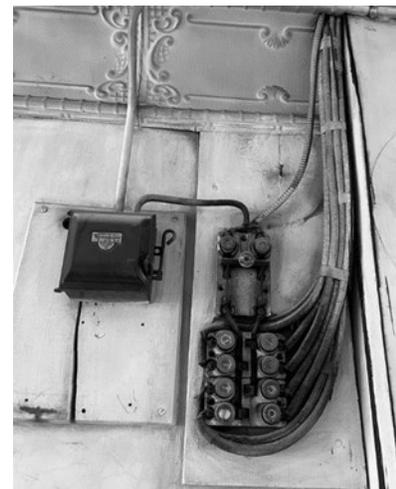
Butte’s premier preservation contractor, Rex Builders, is again at work at the Mai Wah/Wah Chong Tai building, this time rehabilitating the windows and doors on the two side elevations. It’s a sizeable project made possible by generous donations from YOU our supporters and grant funds from the City-County Government of Butte-Silver Bow’s Urban Revitalization Agency. Completion of the project will bring efforts to secure the building’s exterior envelope and preserve its historic architectural character to a highly successful conclusion. It also will allow the Mai Wah Society to focus its attention on implementing much needed upgrades to the building’s interior and developing new exhibits.



Top floor windows and kitchen door on west side are finished, work continues on lower floors.

Electrical Project

Since opening in the early 1990s, the Mai Wah/Wah Chong Tai building has been without electricity on the upper floor where the historic Mai Wah Noodle Parlor restaurant was located. The outdated knob-and-tube wiring was deemed unsafe and simply disconnected from the circuit. We are in the process of obtaining bids for the top floor wiring project as well as some additional outlets, switches, and upgrades in other parts of the building. Having power on the top floor will greatly enhance our various exhibits there. Stay tuned for more news about this in 2025!



Qing Ming 2024

Each year, the Mai Wah Society commemorates Butte’s Chinese American legacy with a celebration of the Qing Ming (“Tomb Sweeping Day”) holiday. The ceremony and festivities are held in the Chinese section of Butte’s Mount Moriah Cemetery.



Offerings of food and wine at the funerary platform



Kite flying after the ceremony

Butte Silver Bow Library Partnership

The Mai Wah Society partners with the Butte Public Library to teach the history of the Chinese here in Butte and Montana. For every major event at the Mai Wah (New Year, Tomb Sweeping, Lantern Festival) the library produces take-n-make kits. Each kit contains information about the event in Chinese culture, the details of the local event, a broad history of the Chinese in Butte, and a craft for the family to make together. The library performs its educational mission by providing families access to local history and culture. It also involves local people with the Mai Wah and our events. This partnership brings the community together .



A dragon for the Chinese New Year Parade



Lantern craft for the Moon Festival

Illustrated History

Mai Wah board member Mark Johnson, along with his son Thomas Johnson and illustrator Rich Lee, are at work producing an illustrated history of Montana's Chinese communities. The project is supported by The Foundation for Montana History and the Mai Wah Society.

Climbing Gold Mountain takes Johnson's archival research to a broader audience, reimagining it in a vivid and engaging visual format. The book explores how Chinese migrants navigated challenges in hostile environments, supported families back in China, and fought for their rights while bridging cultural divides to make a home in Montana.

The project's illustrator, Rich Lee, brings expertise and sensitivity as an Asian American artist, ensuring the characters and culture are depicted with dignity and authenticity. Together, Mark, Thomas, and Rich aim to create a compelling narrative that highlights the struggles, successes, and enduring legacy of Montana's Chinese communities. By sharing these often overlooked stories through this visual format, Montana's diverse history will be available to a broader audience.

Stay tuned for updates on *Climbing Gold Mountain*, and join us in celebrating the rich, layered history of Chinese Montanans!



2024 Mai Wah Society Supporters

Thank 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.

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

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Thank You! 谢谢



Mai Wah Society

DONATION FORM

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.

The Mai Wah Board is very financially responsible with our funds. In a cost savings effort to maximum the leverage of donations we are offering donors a choice to receive the annual newsletter via mail or email. If you wish to receive the newsletter via email, please include an email below. Being included in the email list you will also receive special event information about 4 times a year.

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For Calendar
Year 2025

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- \$25
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and send to
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Thank You! 谢谢

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*Mai Wah Society Newsletter
January 2014*

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



"We are funded in part by coal severance taxes paid based upon coal mined in Montana and deposited in Montana's Cultural and Aesthetic Projects Trust Fund."

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