

Rediscovered Past: Valuing Chinese roles across the north

**The Third “no fuss” Conference
February 13 -14, 2010.**

**Organised by Chinese Heritage in Northern Australia Inc. (CHINA Inc)
at the Hides Hotel, Lake Street, Cairns. QLD. 4870.**



Conference Program

SATURDAY, 13 February 2010		
8.30 am – 9.20 am	<p>Registration and refreshments.</p> <p>Refreshments provided by the Mayor’s Office, Cairns Regional Shire Council.</p>	
9.20 am – 9.30 am	Welcome and introduction	<p>Mayor Val Scheir Kevin Wong Hoy</p>
9.30 am – 11.00 am	<p>Session one Chair: Kevin Wong Hoy</p>	<p>Kevin Rains <i>From Market Gardens to Picture Theatres: the Life and Times of Jimmy Ah Foo.</i></p> <p>Winton District Historical Society & Museum Inc <i>Mar & Mar: a tale of two Chinese gardeners in Winton.</i></p> <p>Darryl Low Choy <i>Settlers... NOT Sojourners: The Chinese contribution to the settlement of far north Queensland.</i></p>
11.00 am – 11.20 am	Self-catered morning tea	At nearby cafes

11.20 am – 12.50 pm	Session two Chair: Sandi Robb	<p>Kevin Wong Hoy <i>The biggest department store in the north, Chinese owned and operated See Poy & Sons Ltd.</i></p> <p>Gordon Grimwade <i>We Got No Tucker.</i></p> <p>Jonathon Richards <i>Chinese victims of crime.</i></p>
12.50 pm – 1.50 pm	Self-catered lunch	Nearby cafes
1.50 pm – 3.20 pm	Session three Chair: Kevin Rains	<p>Alastair Kennedy <i>The 1st AIF's Queensland Chinese-Australian Diggers and their British War Brides.</i></p> <p>Shane Marsterson <i>A case study on the Chinese people of Mareeba from 1880 onwards.</i></p> <p>Sandi Robb <i>Funding the future, who's gonna pay? : Rural and remote LGA's- problems faced to protect Chinese Cultural Heritage.</i></p>
3.20 pm – 3.30 pm	Short afternoon break.	
3.30 pm – 5.00 pm	Session four: Chair: Jan Wegner	<p>Kevin Wong Hoy <i>Temple skywells at Bendigo, Croydon and Darwin: are these reminders of a cultural collision with the original Etruscans from Asia Minor?</i></p> <p>Penny Johnson/James Cook Museum <i>The 'Queensland Dragon-Chinese in the North' Exhibition.</i></p> <p>Ray Supple <i>Artefacts and landscapes of the Palmer Goldfield; an audit of the goldfield's cultural heritage.</i></p>
<p>7.00 pm - Conference dinner at Lemonade Tree Restaurant (Chinese-Indonesian cuisine) at Shop 1, 94 Abbott Street, Cairns.</p> <p>The cost per head is \$30 for two courses shared on the table. BYO drinks, corkage is extra (\$6 per bottle).</p>		

SUNDAY, 14 February 2010		
9.30 am – 10.00 am	Registration	
10.00 am – 11.00 am	Session five	<p>Cairns And District Chinese Association Inc (CADCAI) <i>Video presentation on the group of CADCAI Chinese Youth about their recent "finding their roots" trip to China.</i></p> <p>Kevin Rains <i>Drawing a line: anti-Chinese legislation in north Queensland from Separation to World War II.</i></p>
11.00 am – 11.10 am	Self-catered morning tea	At nearby cafes
11.10 am – 12.30 pm	Session six, hypothetical discussion and closure Chair: Darryl Low Choy Panel: CHINA Inc members and guests	<i>Topic: The White Australia policy impacted in various ways on immigration and the lives of Chinese in Australia: was it a curse or a blessing for northern Australia? What might have happened without it?</i>
1.30 pm Yumcha at the Golden Boat Restaurant, 34-40 Lake Street, Cairns.		

Forward conference registration before 3 February 2010 by cheque or M/O made payable to Chinese Heritage in Northern Australia Inc. Registration can also be paid for on the day at the conference venue. Receipts issued at conference.

Whole conference	AUD\$30.00
13 Feb only - AUD\$20.00	14 Feb only - AUD\$10.00
Conference dinner and lunches are pay-as-you-go	

Post your registration fee to Kevin Rains at 5 Railway Street EAST IPSWICH QLD 4305.

Conference details can also be found on the CHINA Inc website:
<http://www.chinainc.yolasite.com>

PRESENTOR ABSTRACTS

SATURDAY SESSIONS

S1.

Kevin Rains

From Market Gardens to Picture Theatres: the Life and Times of Jimmy Ah Foo

This paper is an account of Jimmy Ah Foo, his wife of forty years, Evelina, and their thirteen children. Jimmy was a Chinese publican, market gardener and businessman who lived in Queensland from the mid-1860s through to 1916. He was a popular, enterprising individual and his story has become part of the folklore of outback Queensland. His children also inherited his entrepreneurial spirit, some establishing hotels, restaurants and being among the early pioneers of picture theatres in rural Queensland. This paper brings together archival sources with recollections and photographic evidence of Ah Foo descendants. It reveals a significant contribution by Jimmy and his family to the communities in which they lived, and explores the complexity and variety of experiences of Chinese Australians settlers in the late 19th and early 20th century.

Winton District Historical Society & Museum Inc

Mar & Mar: a tale of two Chinese gardeners in Winton.

The last Chinese market garden in western Queensland was established at Winton in 1927 and ceased in 2000. It was worked by two generations of Chinese owners, father and son, both known as Willie Mar. Well patronised and subject to the harsh western Queensland conditions, Willie Mar's market garden and shop became a local household name, highly regarded for its produce and unique watering pond system. Hard working and humble in nature, both owners were popular in Winton. The death of the younger Willie Mar final ended 124 years of Chinese activity in the West, as cooks, construction workers, shepherds and gardeners.

The Winton District Historical Society & Museum is unable to attend. Sandi Robb has kindly agreed to present the Society's paper.

Darryl Low Choy

Settlers ... NOT Sojourners: The Chinese contribution to the settlement of far north Queensland

Chinese immigrants to Australia during the gold rush era of the nineteenth century have commonly been considered sojourners. They were seen as temporary residents who had travelled to this foreign land to "make-it-rich" and then return home to utilise their fortune to achieve the three most sought after things that would have been totally beyond their reach had they remained in their homeland. These three most desired

aspirations were to: (1) buy land, (2) build a house and (3) get married. The great majority of the Chinese did return home after the cessation of the gold rushes and hence the term, “sojourner,” is appropriate in their case.

Whilst the Chinese involvement in early Australian history has largely been examined through the “sojourner” theory, the term does not apply to all would-be fortune seekers, particularly the families that remained in Australia and moved into history as pioneer settlers of the nation’s settlement frontier. These Chinese families settled permanently in Australia and thereby contributed to its development. Thus we need to examine the contribution of this latter group through a “settlers” paradigm in order to gain a fuller appreciation of their individual and collective contributions to this country.

This raises the question as to their motives, and what the particular drivers were behind these Chinese families settling permanently in Australia during the late 1800s and early 1900s in the face of intense institutional discriminatory laws and policies of the (then) xenophobic Australian society?

This paper examines an anti-sojourner thesis in respect to the far north Queensland settlement frontier drawing on the experiences of four families who contributed through their association with the mining industry, commerce and agricultural enterprises. It will utilise the experiences of the author’s paternal and maternal families utilising both written and oral historical evidence. Drawing on family and official primary and secondary sources, the paper will seek to answer the questions posed.

S2.

Kevin Wong Hoy

The biggest department store in the north, Chinese owned and operated See Poy & Sons Ltd

The confinement of Chinese into imagined ‘Chinatown’ precincts by Australian historiography might explain why some researchers have difficulty seeing the wood for the trees. Perhaps, the notion that ‘See Poy & Sons’ equals ‘Chinese’ equals ‘significant only to Chinatown’ may have misguidedly led researchers’ attention away from the firm’s importance and its commercial and historical significance to the story of Queensland.

In this presentation, the significance of the firm, See Poy & Sons, and the See Poy family will not only be discussed as operators of a splendid mercantile institution, with international connections, catering for clientele from all sectors of Innisfail (Geraldton) and beyond, but also as an archetype of Chinese Australian community leadership and success in the north.

The research into the See Poy house was funded by the Environment Protection Agency, Queensland, and was generously assisted by (late) Tiger See Hoe, Junior See

Poy, William & June Sue Yek, Herbert & June Sue Yek, and Duane & Catherine Amos.

Gordon Grimwade

We Got No Tucker

This paper provides an overview of the overland migration of Chinese migrants from the Northern Territory to Queensland in the late 19th and early 20th centuries.

The route of some 2000 kilometres was taken by many Chinese migrants with minimal preparation. Overland migration was fraught with danger but it provided potential to enter Queensland without facing the challenges of poll taxes and migration enquiries and it was relatively cheap – if travellers survived the vagaries of limited resources, an alien environment and Aboriginal attacks.

Archival research has revealed cases of Chinese being arrested as they entered Queensland on the ‘Coast Track’ via Borroloola and Burketown and on the southerly route through Camooweal. Police records and newspaper reports provide harrowing accounts of privation. There are limited first hand accounts by Chinese themselves. One relates to Lee Leong and a couple of mates who left Pine Creek with only their billies, and some tea and sugar. At one stage, they had to drag a rotting kangaroo carcass from a pool to get sufficient water.

Research to date has identified several sites with links to this migration route: camping sites, police outposts and the old ‘Coast Track’ itself. These will be briefly discussed.

Major research for this project was made possible through the John Oxley Fellowship, State Library of Queensland and a Northern Territory History Grant.

Jonathon Richards

Chinese victims of crime

This paper outlines current research being undertaken on the police and inquest files held at the Queensland State Archives. This is a work-in-progress, focussing on serious crimes perpetrated against Chinese in northern Queensland until the turn of the 20th century. While racism has often been blamed as the cause of violence against Chinese people, the documentary evidence shows that the causes were complex and variable.

S3.

Alastair Kennedy

The 1st AIF's Queensland Chinese-Australian Diggers and their British War Brides

Some 15,400 war brides sailed for Australia in 1919 either with, or to be reunited with, their Australian Digger husband or fiancées. On examining AIF Service Records I found that 12 Australians of confirmed Chinese descent had married British girls whilst in the UK. Of these, one wife refused to go to Australia; one soldier took a local discharge in England and settled with his bride in Bristol; 9 sailed with their husbands to Australia after the war; and one girl who had become officially engaged to a Chinese-Australian when he was in England, was given a free passage to Australia as a fiancée and married her soldier in Sydney.

Six of these British women married Chinese-Australian Queenslanders. My paper will tell their stories.

Shane Marsterson

A case study on the Chinese people of Mareeba from 1880 onwards

Over 2005-2009 students undertaking specific Cultural Heritage and Community History units in conservation land management at the Australian Agricultural College, Mareeba Campus were guided to study local Chinese heritage and culture. The assessment and protection of a 110 year-old market garden place is presented in this paper as well as first hand information from interviews with key elderly residents of Mareeba. The activities, experiences and relationships of the Chinese market gardeners along the adjacent Barron River and the associated Chinese town shopkeepers are also provided. Interviews were recorded and transcribed and narrators marked the location and names of the residents on a relevant 1914 map of the area. The information is being used to document and share information on the roles and contributions of the Chinese people at Mareeba before it is lost.

Sandi Robb

Funding the future, who's gonna pay? : Rural and remote LGA's- problems faced to protect Chinese Cultural Heritage.

At the best of times rural and remote communities in north and north-western Queensland face huge problems when it comes to protecting their cultural heritage. But when it comes to Chinese cultural heritage sites –they're at the bottom of the list and even when they make it on. This paper acknowledges some of the problems surrounding protection of rural and remote Chinese cultural heritage sites, community dynamics, the opportunities available and the funding difficulties. At a time when resource sustainability is at the forefront of global economies, funding the future, that is, investing in community heritage assets remains a hard and vexed topic.

S4.

Kevin Wong Hoy

Temple skywells at Bendigo, Croydon and Darwin: Are these reminders of a cultural collision with the original Etruscans from Asia Minor?

Chinese temple construction commenced in Australia more than 150 years ago, but only a handful of these have survived. Of specific interest to this presentation are the brick, timber and corrugated iron, nineteenth-century temple at Emu Point, Bendigo, Victoria, the concrete, timber and corrugated iron remains of the Croydon temple, north Queensland (opened during the early twentieth century) and the post-cyclone Tracy temple at Darwin. A particular architectural feature, constructed of brick in one and of concrete in the others, forms a link with contemporaneous and earlier buildings of southern China.

This paper not only discusses the anticipated architectural connections between Chinese Australian temples and the comparable building stock of south China, but also hypothesises on the likelihood of a connection with ancient Etruscan-Roman architecture.

Penny Johnson (James Cook Historical Museum)

The 'Queensland Dragon-Chinese in the North' Exhibition

This presentation will give an overview of the response by the visiting public to the exhibition and the proposed displays that will help tell more of the stories relating to the Chinese of the Cooktown region.

The feedback from the exhibition in June and July of 2009 has encouraged the new manager, staff and the National Trust of Queensland to look at future plans for expanding upon the information and current displays relating to the presence of Chinese and the contributions they made.

The travelling exhibition shares some fascinating insights about the Chinese who lived and worked during the gold rush period. It also gives examples of some contemporary Chinese families with connections to the north.

Local residents, including some Aboriginal families, have expressed a desire to research and share some of the stories of their Chinese heritage by including that information in displays to be presented at the James Cook Museum.

It is envisaged that these stories will be used to complement the panels that relate directly to Cooktown region, which will be returning in mid-2010 for permanent display.

The connections between some local residents and their Chinese heritage will be explored as the basis for future research and displays through the cooperative efforts of Cooktown and District Historical Society, James Cook Museum and the National Trust of Queensland, local historians and residents, with the assistance of established Chinese community groups, organisations and individuals with expertise in these

areas and supported by the Museum Development Officer, Museum Resource Centre, Far North Queensland.

Ray Supple

Artefacts and landscapes of the Palmer Goldfield; an audit of the goldfield's cultural heritage

The Palmer Goldfield Reserve contains important evidence of alluvial and small scale reef mining activity and the associated settlements and infrastructure. The goldfield was the most productive alluvial goldfield in Queensland and is especially important for the evidence it contains of the work and lives of the 18,000 Chinese who were mining here in the late 1870s. The paper will explain the nature of the cultural heritage artefacts, features and landscapes that were recorded during a survey undertaken in August 2009 to assess the potential of sites within the reserve for listing on the Queensland Heritage Register.

SUNDAY SESSIONS

S1.

Cairns and District Chinese Association Inc.

Video presentation on the group of CADCAI Chinese Youth about their recent "finding their roots" trip to China and what it meant to them.

Kevin Rains

Drawing a line: anti-Chinese measures in north Queensland from Separation to World War II.

This paper presents research into the various measures put in place by State and Federal governments to control and exclude Chinese residents. At the time of separation from New South Wales, Queensland welcomed Chinese workers who arrived to help develop its vast pastoral and agricultural estates, and over the succeeding decades Chinese immigrants made an enormous contribution to the colony in many fields. More than half of the Chinese population was concentrated in the north, where there were flourishing mining, fishing and agricultural enterprises. Growing anti-Chinese feeling, however, saw the successive introduction of legislation that attacked the Chinese in different ways. The impacts of these measures were particularly pronounced on the Chinese communities of the north. These communities did not passively accept their lot, however, and there were a variety of ways in which resistance was expressed and organised.

S2.

HYPOTHETICAL

A 'Geoffrey Robertson' panel discussion led by Darryl Low Choy

Topic: 'The White Australia policy impacted in various ways on immigration and the lives of Chinese in Australia: was it a curse or a blessing for northern Australia? What might have happened without it?'