

Rediscovered Past: Chinese Tropical Australia

The Fourth “no fuss” Conference

February 11-12, 2012.

Organised by Chinese Heritage in Northern Australia Inc.

(CHINA Inc)

**Venue: the Hotel Sheridan Plaza, 295 Sheridan Street, Cairns, QLD,
4870.**



Conference Program

Special note: Conference attendees are invited to bring along, if they wish:

- One or two A4 copy historical pictures of a Chinese family or person they have a special interest in (can be an A4 photocopy).
- One A4 page with brief description of who the family/person is and what is known about them
- Material is to be submitted in a folder or an envelope (so they don't get lost) to front desk at time of registration

These images will be put on display during the conference and discussed in Session Six.

SATURDAY, 11 February 2012		
8.30 am – 9.00 am	Registration	
9.00 am – 9.10 am	Welcome and introduction	Mayor Val Scheir Kevin Wong Hoy
9.10 am - 9.30 am	Keynote address	Sim Hayward
9.30 am – 10.00 am	Morning tea. Refreshments provided by the Mayor's Office, Cairns Regional Shire Council.	
10.00 am – 11.30 am	Session One – Industry Chair: Sophie Couchman	Paul McGregor <i>Was Melbourne's Lowe Kong Meng a pioneer of tropical Australia?</i> Sandi Robb & Jan Wegner <i>Chinese in the Sugar: a case study from the Ingham district</i> Julia Volkmar <i>A Company of his Countrymen: Refining the Hop Wah story, work in progress</i>
11.30 am – 11.40 am	Short break	
11.40 am – 1.00 pm	Session Two – Developing and settling the north Chair: Jan Wegner	Sandi Robb <i>Chinese marriage & families: a statistical look at the pattern of settlement across Queensland 1850-1920.</i> Kevin Rains <i>Chinese involvement in the Beche-de-mer and Pearling Industries of North Queensland.</i> Kevin Wong Hoy <i>Far from the glory of heaven: Joseph Tear Tack (1857-1901), a Methodist minister in nineteenth century Australia</i>
1.00 pm – 2.00 pm	Self-catered lunch	Nearby cafes

2.00 pm – 3.30 pm	<p>Session Three – family history and biography</p> <p>Chair: Kevin Rains</p>	<p>Darryl Low Choy <i>Sojourners, Settlers, Selectors and Subjects: Interpreting a family history through a palimpsest approach.</i></p> <p>Myra Timmerman <i>Possibly both a ‘whiteman’ and a Chinese: a work-in-progress on James Ah Ching</i></p> <p>Helen Ellems & Jana Kahabka <i>My ‘Half Full Lations’: Unravelling the threads</i></p>
3.30 pm – 3.40 pm	Short afternoon break.	Book launch: Cedars of the West: the Ah Foo family story
3.40 pm – 5.00 pm	<p>Session Four – Chinese of the Northern Territory and elsewhere</p> <p>Chair: Darryl Low Choy</p>	<p>Sophie Couchman <i>Souveniring Chinese in the Northern Territory</i></p> <p>Kevin Wong Hoy <i>Cheon of the Never Never: Cooking with flair in the Northern Territory, 1902-1919.</i></p> <p>Kevin Rains <i>Men of influence: Three Chinese interpreters.</i></p>
<p>7.00 pm - Conference dinner at the Hotel Sheridan Plaza. The restaurant is licensed and the cost is \$30 per head.</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><u>Buffet</u></p> <p style="text-align: center;">Soup, pumpkin, (coconut/curry) Veggie spring rolls Veggie fried rice Prawn crackers Crumbed calamari Goujons fish Chicken curry Sweet chilli beef stir fry Steamed Rice</p>		

SUNDAY, 12 February 2010		
8.30 am – 9.00 am	Registration	
9.00 am – 10.30 am	Session five – archaeology, collections and interpretation Chair: Kevin Rains	Melissa Dunk <i>Rediscovering material culture: An insight into the overseas Chinese in Atherton Chinatown, Queensland 1880-1920</i> Gordon Grimwade <i>The Hou Wang Temple Atherton.</i> CADCAI <i>Does the Cairns historic Lit Sung Goong Temple Collection have relevance for current and future Chinese and wider mainstream communities in North Queensland?</i> Jonathan O'Donnell <i>Technology for Chinese- Australian historians</i>
10.30 am – 11.00 am	Morning tea	
11.00 am – 12.30 pm	Session six: Speaking to the past Facilitator: Sandi Robb	A participatory session on photographs brought by attendees to the conference.
<p>1.00pm Yumcha at Jade Plus, 358 Sheridan Street, North Cairns, across the road and just a short walk from the Sheridan Plaza conference venue, at 295 Sheridan Street.</p> <p>CHINA Inc has made a tentative booking for approximately 40 conference participants, who will be seated at tables catering for various numbers of diners. Each table pays \$15.00 per person for a set starter menu (below). However, tables may place an order additional yumcha dishes and pay the relevant extra charges above the set price. (Specially ordered dishes may take time to arrive from the kitchen.) Each table is expected to settle its own account by the end of lunch.</p> <p><i>Jade Plus</i> is a BYO restaurant. You are encouraged to bring your own beer or wine. There is no cover charge. Cold water is available and Chinese tea may be purchased.</p> <p><i>Please advise the volunteers at the conference registration table of your name/s, if you wish to be part of the yumcha lunch. The total number of diners has to be communicated to the restaurant before 11.00 am on Sunday.</i></p>		

Starter menu at \$15.00 p.p.

**Teriyaki chicken skewers
Vegetarian Spring Roll
Prawn Toast
Steamed Dim Sim
Prawn dumpling
Garlic salt & pepper squid
Special fried rice
Fried noodles with soya sauce**

Forward conference registration by 3 February 2012 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\$45.00
11 Feb only - AUD\$30.00	12 Feb only - AUD\$15.00
Conference dinner and lunches are pay-as-you-go	

Post your registration fee to Sherry Du Toit, Treasurer, at 2/6 Balmoral Close, Mount Sheridan, QLD, 4868.

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

Abstracts and presenter details



Cairns and District Chinese Association Inc. (CADCAI) Heritage Group.

Does the Cairns historic Lit Sung Goong Temple Collection have relevance for current and future Chinese and wider mainstream communities in North Queensland?

Most people today are unaware of Cairns' early Chinese history and would be surprised to learn that Sachs St., now Grafton St., was the site of a bustling Chinese settlement. Built on Sachs St. in 1886, the Lit Sung Goong Temple catered to the social and spiritual needs of a generation of early Chinese pioneers who worked and settled in the Cairns region in the late 19th and early 20th century. It was an important centre for community gatherings, festivals and celebrations, and a place to thank the gods and pay respects to ones forebears. As in China, the local temple also provided accommodation and shelter for travellers and for those who didn't have kin. With the White Australia Policy came a decrease in the Chinese population during the 1920s and 30s. Furthermore, the new generation of Australian born Chinese increasingly abandoned traditional culture, language and religious practices as they became part of mainstream Australian culture. This meant that the temple's importance began to wane. Despite this, the temple survived up until 1964 at which point the community could not afford its upkeep. The land was sold and the temple demolished; but not before the temple furnishings were salvaged and stored throughout the community at businesses, houses and sheds. Nearly half a century on, Chinese language and cultural events are once again being practiced, and the Lit Sung Goong artefacts have been brought together and are being preserved at great cost by the CADCAI community volunteers.

What is the value of preserving this collection and its relevance to the current communities in North Queensland? Is this a wasted effort? We say the collection has substantial value and relevance to today's NQ communities and that preservation of the stories and artefacts from the past must be valued not by the cost to preserve but by what is being preserved – i.e. the artefacts, and stories of the historic emergence of the Chinese Australian community in FNQ and the journey of this vibrant community to the high profile community in the region today.

CADCAI (Cairns & District Chinese Association Inc) is a community-based organisation dedicated to promoting Chinese culture. The Association was formed in 1978 and subsequently incorporated in 1986. To this very day, CADCAI continues to support and organise a great number of activities.

Its members are drawn from diverse backgrounds, comprising Australian-born Chinese (many of whom are direct descendents of the early settlers),

migrants from China, Hong Kong, Malaysia, Singapore, Vietnam, Thailand, and other places such as New Zealand, Jamaica, Pakistan and other places, as well as non-Chinese with an interest in Chinese culture and heritage.

CADCAI can often be seen at a number of local events, whether they be multicultural festivals, historical celebrations or more recently, the Chinese New Year Festival.

CADCAI also has major plans to establish a Chinese Cultural and Heritage Centre in Far North Queensland. For more information on this project, please go to <http://www.cairnschineseheritagecentre.com.au/>

All information about upcoming events, activities or general details about the Association can be found on this site.

Sophie Couchman

Souveniring Chinese in the Northern Territory

Many who came to what is now referred to as the Northern Territory in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries did so as visitors, as travellers or on work contracts. They took souvenir photographs as part of documenting and remembering their stay. Chinese people, places and activities were a visible and integral part of life in the Northern Territory and the rest of the tropical north of Australia. In the Northern Territory Chinese and their descendants outnumbered white settlers from the late 1870s through to the 1900s and represented a third to a fifth of the non-Indigenous Territory population into at least the 1930s. This paper will explore how Chinese were photographically souvenired in civic, view, type and event photography in the Northern Territory. These photographs reveal how Chinese Australians were both included and excluded in how the colonisation of the Northern Territory was documented and remembered in souvenir photography.

Dr Sophie Couchman is part-time curator at the Chinese Museum in Melbourne and an honorary research fellow at La Trobe University. Her PhD looked at how Chinese in Australia have been photographed from the 1870s until the 1930s. As part of her PhD she built the Chinese-Australian Historical Images in Australia website (<http://www.chia.chinesemuseum.com.au>). Sophie Couchman has also researched the social history of Melbourne's Chinatown between 1900 and 1920 for a Masters thesis at Monash University.

Melissa Dunk

Rediscovering material culture: An insight into the overseas Chinese in Atherton Chinatown, Queensland 1880-1920

Chinese migrants were present in Queensland in the latter half of the 19th Century, arriving at the Palmer Goldfields as early as 1873. This presentation will examine the assemblage of artefacts that were recovered from the 19th Century Chinese settlement site that is located at Atherton Chinatown. During several archaeological investigations conducted across the site in 1981, 1986, 1987, 1991, 1993 and 2003, the collection of material culture comprises artefacts discovered across the 4.6 hectares of the site, as well as gifts given back to Atherton Chinatown. This collection is currently held by the National Trust of Queensland.

Atherton Chinatown is located alongside Piebald Creek on the outskirts of the Atherton Township, approximately 60 kilometres southwest of Cairns. The site is of particular significance as it was a centre of cultural and commercial activity for the overseas Chinese in the area. The results of the research conducted after these archaeological investigations enabled me to establish a catalogue of the disparate collection of artefacts, mainly ceramics, which were recovered across Atherton Chinatown.

In examining this assemblage my aim was to provide insight into the Chinese community at Atherton and help define its social organisation. It has also been possible to compare this assemblage to those from other selected Chinese sites in Australia to determine whether the assemblage reveals information about the interaction between the Chinese and European communities and if, ultimately, this interaction affected the cultures and values of the Chinese migrants at this time.

Melissa Dunk has a passion for overseas Chinese archaeology. She completed a Bachelor of Archaeology with Honours at La Trobe University. Her thesis involved analysis of the artefact assemblage from the Atherton Chinatown. Her current research involves a joint project looking at Chinese porcelain ware patterns across Australia.

Helen Ellems (Bing Chew) and Jana Kahabka

My ‘Half Full Lations’: Unravelling the threads

Like many of the remnant families of Croydon’s golden days the heritage of the Bing Chew family exhibits rich hybrid vigour. This project will follow my family’s Chinese threads and in the process will expose the alliances and moral customs of earlier Croydon times.

Rosie and Olfere, an Aboriginal couple from the Clara River moved to Archer, just near the Croydon airport, and had my great grandmother Minnie who was a turning point in the cultural structure of the family. Minnie married Tommy Bing Chew in 1909 and had an indefinite number of kids with him including Peter, Mary Susan (Sue Ping), Rosie, Harry, Archie, Jack, Annie, Marjorie, Edward and Norma Beatrice.

Many died young. They worked on Oakland Park and Strathmore Stations where Tommy was the cook.

Annie married Chin Foo Sue Ah Sam linking us to other Chinese families. When Chin Foo Sue died Annie had a child called Walter Phillip Ah Sam with Obadiah Phillip Lucas, also of mixed Chinese heritage. Mary Sue Ing married Vincent Dowling and Marjorie married Ernie Diehm

It was always known that Tommy went back to China when he was 70 and that Minnie didn't want to go. Some of the later children may have been born after Tommy's departure because Minnie then 'married' Albert Edward (Boxer) Ah Foo, sixth child of Emily Ann (Henley) and James Ah Foo, consolidating the China connection and revealing another extraordinary dynasty.

Minnie had my grandmother Norma Beatrice, and even though she was named Bing Chew it was very possible she was Boxer's child. My grandmother Norma had my dad Wayne, who was also named Bing Chew, and the story goes that my true grandfather wanted to marry Norma but his family wouldn't allow it.

It is the disclosure of this secret fathering that has set me on the trail of my family's heritage through its inscrutable Chinese connection.

Helen Ellems is a descendant of early Croydon resident, Tommy Bing Chew, and she is researching the history of the Bing Chew family.

Jana Kahabka is the manager of the Culture and Tourism Heritage Centre in Croydon. North Queensland.

Gordon Grimwade

The Hou Wang Temple Atherton.

The Temple of Hou Wang, Atherton was opened in 1903 and is now the only known example of a timber and iron temple style that was once common across much of Australasia. The artefacts within it were all imported from Guangdong late in the 19th and early 20th century and, while many items have been lost over the years it is the most intact collection still in context. Since ceasing to be a place of worship about 50 years ago it has been progressively conserved by its present owners, the National Trust of Queensland. Archaeological research has helped uncover many aspects of life in the adjacent settlement site. This presentation provides an over view of its development, use and rebirth as a cultural tourism icon. Recent funding has enabled the development of new site signage, a travelling exhibition and an iconic new piece of public art: a large dragon.

Gordon Grimwade is a north Queensland based archaeologist and historical geographer whose primary interests are in Chinese Australasian settlement in north Australia. Gordon is a Senior Lecturer in Archaeology

at Flinders University, an Adjunct Researcher at the Sustainability Research Centre, University of Sunshine Coast and a regular contributor 'Dig' a US based magazine for young people interested in archaeology.

Sim Hayward

Sim Hayward is a leading local Cairns business person. She is company director of Sims Foods and former part owner of Asian Foods, Griffith Street Cairns.

Darryl Low Choy

Sojourners, Settlers, Selectors and Subjects: Interpreting a family history through a palimpsest approach.

This paper examines the richness and the depth of a family history that can be identified and explored through a palimpsest approach. This approach facilitates a vertical examination of the family's history through a generation by generation series of cycles as opposed to the more conventional approach which entails taking a number of horizontal slices through that history.

The original idea of a palimpsest is a manuscript page from a scroll or a book from which the text has been scrapped off in order to use the page again. The word comes through the Latin from the Greek (*palin* = "again" and *psao* = "I scrape").

Applying this concept in a historical perspective has seen historians beginning to use the term as a description of the way people experience times, that is, as a layering of present experiences over faded pasts. In similar ways to which archaeologists have applied the concept, it can represent a record of material remains that is suspected of having formed during an extended period but cannot be resolved in a way that temporally discrete traces can be recognised as such. In a family historical sense this might apply to attitudes to assimilation in a new country, or the imperative to "fit in" in the dominant society, or to pursuing educational goals especially in a quest to "better oneself or one's family".

In the case of the author's paternal and maternal families, who first ventured to Australian shores from China from the 1860/70s, it is revealing and educational to (re)examine their stories and those of successive generation through a palimpsest approach. Looking at their stories through a palimpsest lens sheds new light and raises new theories on hitherto perplexing events and circumstances that have surfaced in the family history to date. The paper will illustrate the approach through examples of palimpsest derived interpretations of this family history.

Darryl Low Chow is Professor of Environmental and Landscape Planning in the School of Environment, Griffith University. He is currently researching values-led planning and indigenous landscape

values; resilience and peri-urbanisation of the landscape; and climate change adaptation for human settlements. He chairs the Queensland State Government's Regional Landscape and Open Space Advisory Committee and is a member the CEOs Committee for Natural Resource Management. He is an advisor to the NSW Natural Resources Commission on planning for natural resource management. He is the National President for Toc H Australia.

Darryl Low Choy has also had a distinguished military career. Major General Darryl Low Choy commenced his military career as an Army cadet with the Innisfail State High School Cadet Unit. He enlisted in the Army Reserve as a Private in 1964 and rose to the rank of Major General before retiring in 2007 after 43 years of service. He is a qualified military engineer and he commanded the Queensland 7th Brigade from 1993 to 1996. From 1997 to 2004 he held the three most senior Reserve appointments in the Army and the Australian Defence Force.

Paul McGregor

Was Melbourne's Lowe Kong Meng a pioneer of tropical Australia?

The 19th century Melbourne Chinese merchant Lowe Kong Meng is reputed to have been heavily involved in the Chinese pioneering and settlement of northern Australia. In some accounts in his era he is mentioned as being involved in beche-de-mer procuring in the Torres Straits, as being responsible for the 'vast design of conducting the entire immigration to Northern Queensland', as an investor in the Hop Wah Sugar Company, and as attempting to establish a regular service of trading vessels between Melbourne and Darwin. Yet, in the report by British consular official Crawford in 1877, he recounts an interview with Kong Meng, in which Lowe repudiated the existence 'of his business agencies farther north than Townsville'. Having been born of a Chinese merchant father in Penang in 1830, and raised as Malaya was experiencing the mass arrival of Chinese labourers for mining and plantation agriculture, Kong Meng would have been well aware of the potential for northern Australia to be a similar region for tropical Chinese endeavour. The circumstantial evidence points to his deep engagement in the north, however this paper will attempt to demonstrate how far the documentary evidence confirms his role in tropical Australia.

Paul Macgregor is an historian who is the convenor of the Melbourne Chinese Studies Group, and was the curator of Melbourne's Museum of Chinese Australian History from 1990 to 2005. He is the editor of *Histories of the Chinese in Australasia and the South Pacific* (1995), and joint editor of both *Chinese in Oceania* (2002) and *After the Rush: Regulation, Participation and Chinese Communities in Australia 1860-1940* (2004). He has organised three international conferences on the Chinese diaspora in Australasia, and has curated numerous exhibitions on the history and material heritage of Chinese Australians. He was also involved in the development of five major research projects: the Australia-China Oral History Project, the Thematic Survey of Sites

of Chinese Australian History, the Chinese Heritage of Australian Federation project, the Chinese Historical Images in Australia project, and the (Chinese on the) Mt Alexander Diggings Project. His current researches are exploring 19th and early 20th century Chinese Australian business activity and its links with Asia, material culture, religion and modernity.

Jonathan O'Donnell

Technology for Chinese-Australian historians

This demonstration will quickly show how to create an on-line exhibition from scratch. Chinese-Australian history encompasses a wide range of people, from people tracing their family tree to local history groups and academic historians. Often they are working in rural areas with no funding. This demonstration will focus on ways to create a simple on-line exhibition with free tools, hosted on a free site. I will incorporate techniques that will be useful to people on slow connections. All tools and sites shown will be available on the Web after the talk.

Jonathan O'Donnell is interested in both technology and history. He has been working with the Web since it was invented, and still remembers the pain of his early learning curve. As such, he tries to educate others to the usefulness of the Internet in ways that are engaging and straightforward. At RMIT he looks at issues related to the Internet and the law, such as privacy and identity online.

Kevin Rains

Chinese involvement in the Beche-de-mer and Pearling Industries of North Queensland.

From the 1870s through to the early 20th century, one of the most lucrative activities in northern Australia was harvesting beche-de-mer and pearl shell from the reefs. Although pearling and beche-de-mer fishing have often been viewed as separate industries, in everyday practice they overlapped, with fishing fleets gathering both resources. The chief market for the products was Asia, and those involved in the extraction came from many cultural backgrounds. In north Queensland, Japanese dominated as boat captains, while crews and divers were often Malay, Melanesian or Aboriginal. What is little known is the high level of Chinese interest. Chinese were heavily involved as boat owners and backers as well as being among the chief buyers and on-sellers of produce. This paper examines that involvement, as well as some of the key issues faced by the Chinese, through the case study of Tommy Ah Kum (later Lai Fook and Sons), a merchant firm based in Cooktown and Thursday Island.

Men of influence: Three Chinese interpreters.

One of the early observations made by Europeans of the early Chinese in Queensland was their high level of self-organisation. Working cooperatively through social and

economic networks based on kinship and shared origins, it seemed as though Chinese communities were entirely self-reliant. This was not the case. Not only were Chinese and non-Chinese economic activities interconnected, but Chinese immigrants interacted in many ways with colonial authorities and society. This included protecting their interests in law courts.

Due to barriers set in place by language, culture and persecution, individual Chinese tended to negotiate the colonial authority system through representation. Influential people or firms were enrolled to act as negotiators. Some of these mediators were European solicitors, merchants or government officials, but others were from the Chinese community. The latter were people who had relatively good English language skills as well as some understanding of the European political and legal processes. Often they were business and community leaders.

This paper examines three Chinese negotiators who were active in far North Queensland during the 19th century – Louis Fon Sing, Samuel Ernest Asheu and the Chinese Consul to Cooktown, Chin Ti Chack. All were involved in the Palmer River gold-rush and were influential in the affairs of the Chinese community of the district.

Dr Kevin Rains is an archaeologist, heritage manager and history researcher. He completed a PhD in archaeology from the University of Queensland in 2005, and his thesis examined the Chinese social landscape of early Cooktown. He has worked since 2001 in the general field of heritage management and archaeological research for consultancy firms and state and local government. He has attended and presented papers at various conferences on Chinese Australian history and heritage, and is a founding member of the research association, Chinese Heritage in Northern Australia Inc. Recently he has written a biography on one of Queensland's early Chinese Australian families, *Cedars of the West: the Ah Foo Family Story*.

Sandi Robb

Chinese marriage & families: a statistical look at the pattern of settlement across Queensland 1850-1920.

The study of Chinese marriage patterns throughout Queensland, 1850 to 1920, has been largely unexplored until recent times. Very little statistical data is available to researchers to provide an accurate or tangible analysis into the range of Chinese marriage patterns undertaken by early immigrant settlers. By scrutinizing marriage and family statistics associated with Chinese families, and through comparing marriage patterns to the expansion of settlements across the State, interesting results have emerged. Compiled from a range of government sources including Births Deaths and Marriages, justice records, inquests and school admission rolls this paper hopes to provide some insight into the prevalence of Chinese marriages during this period, the geographical location of Chinese families and the patterns of marriage which resulted when first generation born Chinese Queenslanders came of marriageable age.

Sandi Robb is a PhD candidate at James Cook University where she has been researching and writing her thesis *Chinese Families in North Queensland* for the last 10 years. Sandi has worked as a cultural heritage officer for the Queensland Government for the last 7 years and also manages a private consultancy business as a researcher/ cultural heritage consultant. She has lived and travelled throughout North and North West Queensland but remains based in Townsville with her family of three teenagers and a lazy old cat.

Myra Timmerman

Possibly both a ‘whiteman’ and a Chinese: a work in progress on James Ah Ching

James Ah Ching, my great grandfather, arrived in Queensland c. 1875. After he settled at Cairns, he married Sarah Hadley and became a naturalised Briton. Early records have him registered as a storekeeper and although he pursued an interest in agriculture and in acquiring freehold land as one of the biggest landowners in the Cairns area, his town-based storekeeping activities also continued (1890-1895). James and Sarah produced seven children.

He was known to be a liberal drinker attracting many Anglo-Australian ‘friends.’ When bankruptcy and his supplies of French wines diminished, his ‘friends’ found better things to do.

In this paper, the focus has been on gathering new information about the life of James and Sarah Ah Ching. How did Europeans and other Chinese consider James Ah Ching? Was he a ‘whiteman’ or was he Chinese?

Myra Timmerman is a descendent of early Cairns based entrepreneur and land owner, James Ah Ching, and is currently researching the Ah Ching family.

Julia Volkmar

A Company of his Countrymen: Refining the Hop Wah story, work in progress

In 1882, 130 years ago, the renowned Chinese Australian Hop Wah [Hap Wah] venture celebrated the first crushing of sugar cane in the fledgling District of Cairns in their new mill appropriately christened 'The Pioneer'. Stockland Cairns now stands on the heart of the land. This unparalleled agricultural enterprise with its prominent selector, spokesman and manager Andrew Leon holds a unique, highly significant and largely unacknowledged place in the history of Cairns and Far North Queensland.

While much has been written of this pioneering enterprise of 1878-1886, published material contains puzzling inconsistencies. Over the past year essential information has been gathered for an appropriate commemoration of Andrew Leon's legacy from early Cairns reminiscences, scholarly and local history works of the 1970s, more recent research as well as archival sources. Among the questions that emerge from conflicting information are: Did 'Hop Wah' really mean 'Good Luck' which some have termed ironic? Were there '100 Chinese' in the Hop Wah Syndicate as commonly recounted? How large was the Hop Wah plantation (accounts vary from 621 to 2,528 acres)? Who was Andrew Leon, variously referred to as Leong Chong, Andrew Lee On, Andrew Leong or Leung?

This paper begins to address these basic questions concerning Hop Wah, 'A Company of his (Andrew Leon's) country men', in order to clarify and refine what is known and what is said.

Julia Volkmar is a Cairns artist working on a memorial work to the Hop Wah plantation and sugar mill.

Jan Wegner and Sandi Robb

Chinese in the Sugar: a case study from the Ingham district

The story of Chinese in the gold and tin mining industries of North Queensland in the 19th century is well known. Less attention has been paid to those Chinese brought in to work the sugar plantations in the wet tropics. This article examines the lower Herbert River area around Ingham, where around six plantations used a mix of South Sea Island, Chinese, Javanese, Indian, 'Malay' and Japanese labourers before the Queensland and Commonwealth governments turned the industry 'white' at the end of the century. Unlike Cairns, where the Chinese made a successful transition to sugar farming and commerce in the 20th century and a small community still exists, the lower Herbert's Chinese community dwindled away between the First World War and the 1950s. While some Chinese became storekeepers, market gardeners and farmers, their smaller numbers, the lack of a viable alternative industry such as maize or banana farming, stronger racial prejudice in the district, and discriminatory legislation combined to discourage continued settlement. It is also suggested that the strong Italian presence in the area from the 1910s may have provided competition for the Chinese in a niche that they made their own elsewhere: that of successful small farmers and hard-working, reliable labourers in the canefields.

Dr Jan Wegner lectures at the James Cook University's Cairns Campus, teaching history and heritage. She volunteers in history activities off campus as well, principally with the Far North Queensland branch of the National Trust and the Cairns Historical Society museum. Her major research area is in mining history and heritage. She also researches North Queensland regional history and environmental history, and her current project is a history of weeds in Queensland.

Kevin Wong Hoy

Cheon of the *Never Never*: Cooking with flair in the Northern Territory, 1902-1919.

Cheon became one of Australia's best known Chinese chefs due to the writing of Mrs Aeneas Gunn whose account of her thirteen months, as the manager's wife at Elsey cattle station in *We of the Never Never* (1908), introduced him to nationwide as well as international audience. The real life stories of most of the characters from the *Never Never* were rated by newspaper editors to be of high interest to the Australian public. Articles about the lives of individuals on which the *Never Never* characters were based appeared in print for some thirty to forty years after the date of the book's first publication. Cheon is a critical member of this cohort, yet there is only limited information about him made available through newspaper items and other published studies. This deficiency is currently being addressed by new research; however this endeavour is not the primary focus of this paper.

Rather, the account of his cooking for the population of Elsey station is amongst the best accounts of cooking by a Chinese chef from nineteenth and early twentieth century Australia. In this paper, the account of Cheon of *Never Never* will be compared with other reports about Chinese cooks – how they are represented in history, and the feasts of Chinese cooking comparable with the Christmas fare at the Elsey. Despite there being only meagre information published on Cheon, the nature of his contribution to our appreciation of Chinese cooks in Australia is worthy of attention.

Kevin acknowledges the assistance provided by a Northern Territory History Grant.

Far from the glory of heaven: Joseph Tear Tack (1857-1901), a Methodist minister in nineteenth century Australia.

Although it was only during the last six years of the Rev Joseph Tear Tack's life that his Christian ministry stretched as far as northern Australia, his illustrious reputation preceded him. His religious journey in Australia began in Victoria, progressed into northern NSW, then to the Northern Territory and finally into north Queensland. He has to be considered a high achiever and possibly a Chinese Australian pin-up boy within the Wesleyan missionary movement, but at only 44 years-old, his earthly life ended at Cairns in 1901. He was survived by his wife, Emma, and five young children.

Whilst concentrating on the ministry of Rev Tear Tack, this presentation examines how the church of which he was a member managed and supported him and his family. The paper discusses the attitudes of other churchmen to their Chinese brother as well as examining the theme of doing God's work on earth yet being subject to the seemingly more powerful forces of racial thinking in Australia.

Kevin Wong Hoy is a Chinese Australian by birth and a Chinese Australian historian. He completed a MA thesis on Chinese naturalised British subjects in north Queensland in the Asian Studies Program at La Trobe University. Currently, he is working on a history of Cheon, the cook from *We of the Never Never* (partly funded by a NT History Grant 2010). Other Chinese Australian projects include consultancy on the Queensland Dragon travelling exhibition (2009-2010), completing a history of the See Poy House, Innisfail for the Cultural Heritage Branch, Environmental Protection Agency, Queensland (2008); managing the *Buckland Chinese Australian Heritage project* dedicated to the Chinese miners who died or were buried at the Buckland Valley (Victoria's Heritage Grants 2007) and compiling a report from research undertaken for the *Bridges of Memories: exploring diversity, identity, community project* for the Museum of Chinese Australian History (2006).

Kevin is president and a founding member of Chinese Heritage in Northern Australia Inc; a life member of the Historical Society, Cairns; and an ordinary member of the Cairns and District Chinese Association Inc.
