

China Grove:

Renton's *Kuang Gong* in the Talbot Coal Mine

By Tom Monahan and Steve Anderson

Preface

In early September of 1885, coal miners in Rock Springs, Wyoming attacked a Chinese encampment and murdered eleven miners (*kuang gong* in Chinese) while scattering hundreds more into the cold desert night. News of this misdeed and the subsequent killing of three Chinese hop-pickers in Issaquah was widely celebrated by labor agitators in the Puget Sound region. In time, "mob rule" led to the removal of many Chinese immigrants from the small coal mining towns of Western Washington, including Renton.¹

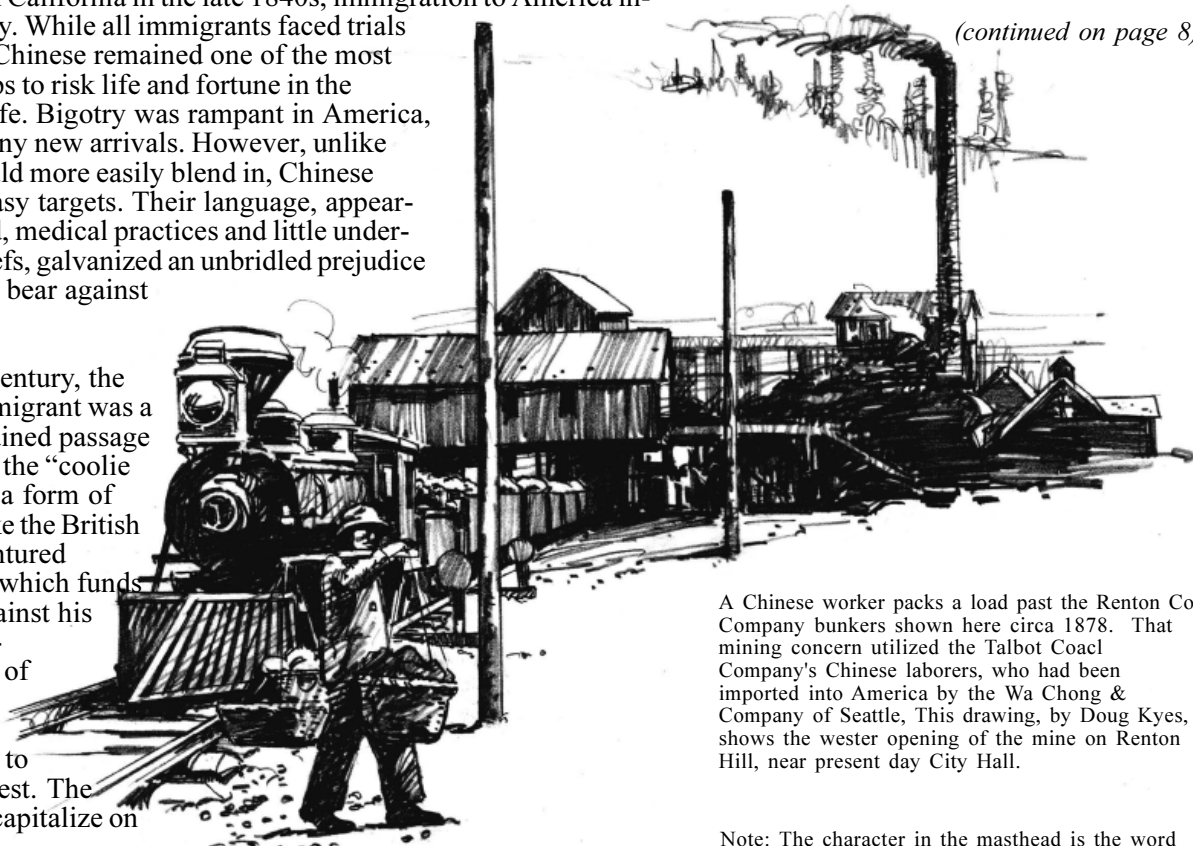
The expulsion of the Chinese was the final act in a twenty-year-old drama that had been slowly rising to a crescendo of hatred and violence. With the discovery of gold in California in the late 1840s, immigration to America increased dramatically. While all immigrants faced trials and hardships, the Chinese remained one of the most unique ethnic groups to risk life and fortune in the search of a better life. Bigotry was rampant in America, especially against any new arrivals. However, unlike Europeans who could more easily blend in, Chinese immigrants were easy targets. Their language, appearance, clothing, food, medical practices and little understood religious beliefs, galvanized an unbridled prejudice that was brought to bear against them.

During the 19th Century, the typical Chinese immigrant was a young male who gained passage to America through the "coolie trade."² This was "a form of bondage...not unlike the British and American indentured servant system, [in which funds were borrowed] against his skills to secure passage."³ Thousands of Chinese used this less-than-advantageous means to get to the Pacific Northwest. The first partnership to capitalize on

the "coolie trade" in Seattle was Chin Ching-Hock and his partners Woo Gen, Chin Quong, and Chin Gee Hee.⁴

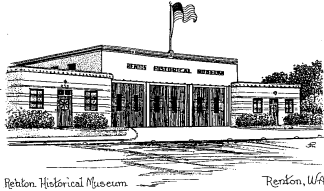
This partnership, organized as the Wa Chong Company, recruited young men in China, paid their passage to America, contracted their labor to the various mines, railroads and lumber

(continued on page 8)



A Chinese worker packs a load past the Renton Coal Company bunkers shown here circa 1878. That mining concern utilized the Talbot Coal Company's Chinese laborers, who had been imported into America by the Wa Chong & Company of Seattle. This drawing, by Doug Kyes, shows the wester opening of the mine on Renton Hill, near present day City Hall.

Note: The character in the masthead is the word "miner" in Chinese or *Kuang Gong*.



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Renton.
Ahead of the curve

President's Report

By Barb Horton

Dear Members of RHS and the Renton Community.

Here are the highlights of the business activity of the 2nd quarter of 2003. The Board has 4 new Trustees who will be supporting your organization. They are Larry Sleeth, Dan Foley, Laura Clawson, and Doug Kyes. We conducted an orientation for these folks and all but one person was able to attend. We're ready to go!

By-Laws Update

Executive Committee met several times during the 2nd quarter to draft the recently adopted Bylaws update and incorporate standing rules. The entire Board was given a month to review and comment on it. We held a final vote to adopt the Bylaws in the May 28th Board meeting, in time to distribute them in the Annual Meeting.

We will conduct "Straw Poll" in this Quarterly to determine if the Membership wants to amend the Articles of Incorporation to give the Membership a vote on Bylaw revisions. Please watch for this, we want your opinion!

City/Society Agreement

The City Attorney has reviewed the City/Society Agreement. I sat down with Jim Shepherd and went over the Attorney's comments. We discussed these in detail and worked up a compromise that we were unable to finalize before Jim retired. These materials were handed off to Dennis Culp, who is the new Manager of the Community Services Department of the City of Renton. Dennis needed orientation time in his new position, so we'll resume work on the Agreement soon!

The Custer Estate

Derek Almo, Secretary, and I went and signed the final papers on Friday, June 20, 2003 for the sale of the Custer House. The final amount after commissions, etc., was \$209,000. Our intention is to commit these funds to the long-term goals of the Society. Since this decision is in work, I can't report it at this time.

The Annual Membership Meeting:

The Annual Meeting was a very successful event this year! We combined the administrative work of Trustee elections and reports with a volunteer recognition event, which was held at Coulon Park. This forum gave us the opportunity to recognize many important contributors to the organization, as well. We concluded with a storyteller, who came with fascinating story about an "adopted" native American grandmother who taught him to weave baskets in the traditional way.

I have entered my final year as President and I am pleased to say that the goals I set for my Presidency are well on their way to being met!

Thank you for your support!

Barbara Horton
President, Renton Historical Society

The Renton Historical Society Board meets on the fourth Wednesday of every month from 6:00 to 7:30 p.m., at either the Renton Community Center or the Renton Historical Museum. Please call the museum for meeting locations on the following dates: August 27th; September 24th; October 22nd; November 26th.

Public hours for the Renton Historical Museum are Tuesday - Saturday, 10:00am to 4:00pm and by appointment for archival and photographic research purposes Wednesday through Fridays, 1:00 to 4:00 pm. Admission: \$3 per adult, \$1 per child (ages 8 - 16) and Renton Historical Society members are always free. Free days: first Wednesday and third Saturday of the month.

Notes



In memory of Hugo Toschi who recently passed away and who was one of Renton's all-time nice guys.

Hugo was an outstanding basketball player at Renton High and at the University.

When he came home from the Service after WWII he eventually got involved in coaching the local town team named the A&B Sportsmen. Earlier years the team was called "Johnson's Grocery".

When I quit college in 1951 I came home to Renton and played for Hugo Toschi and the Renton Sportsmen. He was an excellent coach and was very successful that one year I played for Toschi.

We were proud-very proud when for the first time Renton's semi pro basketball team, A&B Sportsmen, went to the national AAU tourney in Denver.

We had won the Seattle AAU championship, then the state AAU championship; then the northwest championship (Washington, Oregon, Idaho, Montana).

Team members I remember were Bob Logue, Gordy Nielsen, Nick Puhich, Bob Malone, Norm Willis, Chuck Long, Mel Bunstine, Ben Raykovich, and Gordon Anderson

Bob Logue



Endowment Committee Report

The Endowment Committee met on the 23rd of July with the Chair Ken Becker presiding and committee members Allan Unbedacht, Naomi Mathisen, and Steve Anderson attending. It was reported that the fund rested at \$1,197,432 on June 30th. Currently 90% resides in fixed income investments and 10% resides within equity investments. Ken Becker indicated that \$1,000,000 of Custer money was transferred into the fund last quarter via

board election. The committee voted to balance the portfolio back to its original 60/40 level prior to the Custer money's influx, placing the money in broad mutual funds already held by the Society. Other investment opportunities were discussed; with no decisions being made that this time. There was discussion relative to the annual transfer of funds from the Society – and discussions with the Society's Executive



Committee are planned to determine what amount and at what time such transfers will take place. Only the interest generated by these invested funds will be used as sustained support to the Renton Historical Society. Chairman Becker requests that Society members who might be interested in participating within the endowment program's activities contact the museum. We are looking for individuals who have retirement funds invested, are fairly conservative with their investing and who understand market research and have a desire to further the Society's goals. The Board will consider all candidates. As there were no other investment decisions to be made, the meeting adjourned. The committee meets quarterly at the museum, with the next meeting on October 22nd, 2003.

All memorials, life membership dues and directed gifts go toward the fund's working capital. All gifts are tax deductible as allowed by law. Consult your tax advisor. Please call 425/255-2330 for more information, or email at saanderson@ci.renton.wa.us for more information regarding including the Renton Historical Society in your living will or bequest.

Donations

Carrie & Greg Bergquist

Dale & Michelle Collier

James & Carolyn Fenner

Jan Fluter

Ewart Harris

Sylvia Langdon

Vernon & Jonelle Petermeyer

John Thompson

Lee & Kathy Keolker-Wheeler

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Scott & Gaye Faull McClellan

Endowment

Medora Nelson Estate

New Members

Dale & Michelle Collier

Bert & Shirley Custer

Del & Elin George

Ewart Harris

Maryann Mason

Randy Moore

Marcia Murphy

Jim Organ

Elsie Carpine Ortiz

Vernon & Jonelle Petermeyer

New Life Memberships

Barbara Bridges

Louise George: Volunteer Of the Year 2003

At this year's annual meeting of the Renton Historical Society, Louise (Delaurenti) George was recognized as the Museum's Volunteer of the Year 2003. A lot can be said about Louise, however, in the twenty years she has so solidly served as a museum volunteer, she sums it up by simply stating: "I've enjoyed it thoroughly . . . [and they have all been] wonderful people to work with." She is also quick to point out that "My biggest surprise was to receive the award this year and I still cannot believe it!"



Louise George received the Volunteer of the Year 2003 Award from Steve Anderson, the Museum Director.

The daughter of Fiorenzo and Matilda (Giovannelli) Delaurenti, Louise was born into a coal mining family in Newcastle, Washington, in 1918. Her maternal grandfather, Stephen Giovannelli and maternal great grandfather Anton Zucca were also coal miners, and homesteaded in Roslyn, Washington Territory. Louise is proud of the fact that she holds a certificate authenticating the pioneer roots of the Delaurenti family.

Louise graduated from high school in 1936 and went right to work, first as a secretary in the United Mine Workers of America's offices in Renton and Seattle, then later with the AFLCIO. During those pre-war years, Louise honed her secretarial skills, until 1943 when a friend, Mary Lotto,

persuaded her to join the Women Marines. In what turned out to be a wonderful growing experience, Louise was assigned duties with the Quartermaster corps in Washington, D.C. through November 1945. Building strong ties with the other women Marines in that setting, she maintains contacts even today with many of the women that she served with during that period. Following her time with the Marines, Louise volunteered at the USO at SeaTac Airport, typed for the Northwest Kidney Center and kept very, very busy.

In 1972, she married Lou George, who unfortunately died of a heart attack just two short years later. Louise returned the next year to Renton after working 25 years for the King County Elections Department in 1973 – but Lou's death cut short her first retirement. In 1975, she returned to work, this time as an executive secretary for First Interstate Bank, until 1982 – at which point she retired once more.

In 1983, Museum Director Ernie Tonda caught wind of Louise's second "retirement" and immediately began recruiting her to help him, Ethel Telban, Margaret Tharp, Rose Gigli and Pearl Anderson get things moving at the new Museum. Louise got straight to work typing letters, raising money, assisting with the newsletter, and helping with general administrative work around the office. She remembers with fondness the Society's first book sale, fashion shows, luncheons, selling pie and ice cream at the 4th of July booth and other fundraisers. When asked which event stands out the most, Louise stated that "it was when the City of Renton recognized the need for paid staff at the museum." This one event, for Louise, marked the successful completion of ten years worth of lobbying with the mayor and city council members.

Aside from her many years of faithful service, Louise claims she has been rewarded with many new friends and experiences that she could not have obtained elsewhere. Remaining very active within the community, Louise is a regular at St. Paul's Catholic Church, where she also works as a volunteer. She also takes part in the Women Marines Association – recognizing high school Marine Corps Junior ROTC students.

Louise has adapted to change throughout her life, and that is no different within the Renton Historical Museum setting, where change has been rapid over the past ten years. In keeping it all in perspective, Louise just shrugged and stated that change is inevitable – how you deal with it is your choice. Thanks Louise for helping us make this transition and for your continued support of the Museum's operation!

Stewart & Ellen Pope 2003: Recipients of the George W. and Annie Lewis Custer Heritage Citizenship Award

Awarded to citizens, both past and present, of Renton, the **George W. and Annie Lewis Custer Heritage Citizenship Award** recognizes significant contributions made towards accomplishing the Society's goals and objectives, though not directly involved in the Society's business. Stewart and Ellen Pope, life members since 1993, have made significant financial contributions to the Renton Historical Society. Their many gifts of cash and/or stocks have come with or without request, often in the form of memorials or outright, unrestricted donations. It was the Popes who jump-started the Renton Historical Society's Endowment program back in 1997 with a gift of stock that nearly tripled the endowment almost single-handedly. Old timers to Renton, the Popes were involved in business here in town for many years, Ellen being active in many social circles, while Stew participated in an active business life. The couple, which now split their time between Rancho Mirage, California and Seattle, received their award at this year's annual Society Meeting picnic with their grown children in attendance. Thanks Stew and Ellen for all your support and encouragement! Congratulations!



Ellen and Stuart Pope receiving the George W. and Annie Louise Custer Award from Barb Horton, Renton Historical Society President.

Volunteer Recognition Picnic and Annual Membership Meeting - June 1, 2000

Right: Jim Ploegman, the story teller, with his own hand-made baskets. Barb Horton is giving her Annual Membership Meeting Speech.



Below: The crowd enjoys the food.

Membership Dues

A reminder for those who have not paid their dues for 2003.... Your continued support of the Renton Historical Society is appreciated.



Artifact Collections Activity

By Steve Smith & Pearl Jacobson

Over the past half year, we've been working on adding items to the museum's collection. As we've received many more items than listed, please know that this is only a sampling of the total number of objects that have arrived. We are continually accepting objects that relate to Renton history, so if you have a box of materials that you're thinking of taking to the thrift store, and it has items that depict Renton's past, let us go through it first!

2003.001.0003 - Purchase

Red, short-sleeved T-shirt advertising Kenworth Motors. Map of Washington on front with Renton identified by a star with name in white. Kenworth truck and "Kenworth Leading the Way" on the front of the T-shirt. Circa 2000.

2003.001.0005 - Purchase

Commemorative plate used for advertising. Given to customers of Square Deal Grocery Renton, Washington as a complimentary gift. Jas. Martin, proprietor. Has picture of Gatun Dam at the Panama Canal on the face. White with shaded edge with gold trim along edge. Sterling China. Circa 1918.

2003.001.0010 - Purchase

A large central Puget Sound Salish clam gathering basket with tumpline, designed to aid in the procurement of shellfish. The body is woven loose to allow sand and water to drain from the clams. Circa 1900, and made in cedar root, and imbricated in bear grass (light color) and horsetail root skin (dark color) to form an open weave pattern.

2003.001.0012 - Purchase

A medium central Puget Sound Salish coiled berry basket without tumpline, worn from the belt and designed to aid in the procurement of different types of wild berries. The body is tightly woven of coiled cedar root and imbricated in bear grass (light color) and horsetail root skin (dark color). Circa 1880—1900.

2003.001.0013 - Purchase

A small central Puget Sound Salish coiled berry basket without tumpline, worn from the belt and designed to aid in the procurement of different types of wild berries. Muckleshoot/Duwamish origin by design. The body is tightly woven of coiled cedar root and imbricated in bear grass (light color) and horsetail root skin (dark color). Circa 1880 - 1900.

2003.002.005 - City of Renton

A U S WEST cellular telephone, believed to be a mobile unit issued by the City of Renton. With the manufacturer Motorola on aerial, the object is light gray with dark gray face. Assigned telephone was # 999-6405. Circa 1980s.

2003.002.006A-F - City of Renton

A series of chargers, pagers and belt clips. The objects were used by the City of Renton as the first mobile communication system with its employees. The objects were manufactured by, or for, the Motorola Corporation. Circa 1980s.

2003.005.0001 - Grace Dawson

Short, white apron made from canvas type material used by workers at The Lumber Market, Phone 415, Renton, Wash. 3 pockets at bottom for pencils, etc. and waist ties. Stack of lumber and "For Building Material See and the name and address" on front of apron. Circa 1940.

2003.006.0001 - Jerene Battisti

Silver cornet with gold inlay manufactured by Buescher of Elkhart, Ind. Pat. Oct. 29, 1907. This cornet was used by Arch Rutherford when he played in a band in Ohio. He came to Renton about 1920. He continued to play in Renton but not in an organized band (Arch is Jerene Battisti's grandfather). Circa 1910.

2003.008.0001 - Tom Monahan
Renton American Legion hat size 7-3/8": black wool with gold trim on fold. Side A: "American Legion" with a circular embroidered patch blue/black background with gold trim & text; embroidered in gold floss "Washington" and "30" year star. Side B: Embroidered in gold floss "Renton" and "19". Originally estate of Umberto Barei (member 1919-1949). Circa 1930s.

2003.010.0001 - Carrie Bergquist

A clear 1-quart glass pitcher used to prepare baby formula. Embossed with "STORK" and a picture of a stork on the pitcher, with measurements in blue on side of pitcher. Included a glass handle along one side. Item used by Gloria Cartright, in Renton, WA, with her children, George and Carrie (Bergquist). Circa 1949.

2003.012 - Bernice Jorgensen

6180—Photograph of Renton High School 7th Grade Girls. Circa 1930.
6190—Postcard photo image of Sartori School and student body in front of building. Circa 1922.
6192—Photograph of Renton City Hall on Wells Avenue with City Councilmen in foreground. Circa 1922.

2003.013.0001 - Louise George

USO Pin presented to P.F.C. Louise Delaurenti (George) as a token of appreciation for volunteering at the USO. From USO Club, P. O. Box 569, Renton, Washington. Gold USO with pin clasp. Red, white, and blue paper ribbon attached. Circa 1943.

2003.014.0011A-D - Barbara Pozner

Movie posters from four of the largest box office (grossing) films of all time.
◆ Star Wars—1977
◆ The Empire Strikes Back—1980
◆ Raiders of the Lost Ark—1981
◆ Return of the Jedi—1983

2003.016.0001 - Pearl Jacobsen

Speed Queen brand washing machine. Gyrator agitator type washing machine with porcelain tub and electric motor. Purchased 1950 in Renton, WA. Used by donor until early 1960's. Utilized by a family of four until replaced by an automatic washer. Circa 1949.

2003.017.0001 - Nancy Monahan

Stone Indian arrowhead found in the yard of William and Nancy Monahan at 1808 Shattuck Ave. S., Renton, Washington. It was found in the 1970s while Nancy was working in her garden. Date unknown.

2003.018 - Mary Anita Russell Jones

6193—Henry Ford Elementary School 6th grade class. Miss Padden is the teacher. Taken in front of Henry Ford School. Circa 1932.

2003.019.0001 - Albert “Vaughn” Miller

Liquid 10 Quart metal bucket from Renton Ice Cream. Made by Superior Metal Products Co., Inc. Belonging to the Miller family, the bucket was used to deliver ice cream to various places where the ice cream was to be served. Circa 1930s.

2003.020.0001 - Maynard Pillie

Wooden clothes drying rack. Belonged to Auie & Jakoba Pillie residing along 180th Avenue in Renton, WA. Date unknown.

2003.021.0001 - George “Mike” Michael

US Rifle Caliber .30 M1 Garand. The M1 was the designated service rifle of World War II, and the Korean War, for the United States Military. It was designed for semi-automatic fire using a spring steel clip containing 8 rounds. The US Rifle M1 was the first semiautomatic rifle to be the standard small arm of the US Military, and the first semiautomatic rifle to be adopted by a major military power.

2003.021.0002 - George “Mike” Michael

A World War II United States military uniform (Eisenhower blouse) from 70th Infantry Division (“Trailblazers”). The 70th Infantry Division, was “in the line” for 86 consecutive days of combat. The “Trailblazers” liberated 58 towns and took 668 prisoners in penetrating the Siegfried Line and driving through the Saarland (western Germany). The uniform contains Corporal Strips.

- ◆ Badges and Medals
- ◆ US Forces Badge
- ◆ Enlisted Man’s Infantry Insignia
- ◆ 70th Infantry Division Patch
- ◆ World War II Patch-Honorable Discharge
- ◆ 8th Service Command Patch
- ◆ Combat Infantry Badge
- ◆ Purple Heart
- ◆ Good Conduct Medal
- ◆ Victory Medal
- ◆ European-African-Middle Eastern Campaign (with one campaign star)
- ◆ American Campaign 1941
- ◆ American Defense
- ◆ Marksmanship Qualification Badge (Rifle-Expert)



2003.022.0002 - Beatrice Mathewson

A small prescription box from Shaw Bros. Drug (Renton Ten Cent Drug) located at 220 Wells Street, Renton, Washington. Phone number of Renton 5-4391. Containing mouth lozenges labeled “A. C. Troches”. A red box with a red and white lid, and labeling printed in blue. Circa 1960.

2003.023 - Mike Potoshnik, Jr.

425—Three Photographs of Mike Potoshnik Sr.’s Service Station on Sunset Highway in the Renton Highlands and an oral history about Prohibition. Circa 1930.

2003.024.0009 - Howard and Jacqueline Call

Black, wool hat with an American Legion insignia and Renton, Wash. on left side of hat. Right side of hat has 19 on it. Gold braid trim on hat. From National Headquarters of the American Legion, Indianapolis, Ind. Size 7 1/4. Belonged to Harold A. Bartlett, 512 N. Wells St., Renton, WA. Circa 1957.

2003.025.0001 - Charles G. Divelbiss

Ceramic Electrical plug receptacle found in the St. Charles Place building. The building was formerly home to Custer Hardware. Circa early 1900s.

2003.029 - Mike Richter

6206 - Dump truck and other equipment laying asphalt on I-405 above PACCAR plant. Circa 1964.

2003.030.0001—Doug & Sonja Kyes

Acrylic painting of canoes upon the Black River based on a photo from the Society collection.

2003.031 - Char Baker

6320 - Slides taken of opera performances at Renton High School Auditorium. Circa 1976, 1978 and 1982.

2003.032.0001 - Marilyn Monaghan Ragle

Silk flag for a window with one star on a white background and dark outline. This flag hung in the window of Mary Monaghan in honor of her son, William P. Monaghan who served in the U.S. Navy during World War I in 1918. All households having a son in the service during WWI displayed a similar flag. The Monaghan house was at 629 Cedar St., Renton. Circa 1918.

(Kuang Gong Story continued from page 1)

camps of the Pacific Northwest and kept track of their pay. Their driving motivation was to provide their fellow countrymen an opportunity to come to America where they potentially would gain prosperity and respect. Ultimately, each of their clients desired to return home a wealthy man.⁵

Adding to the many difficulties of coming to America were the problems that the Chinese immigrants left behind. As various rebel factions contended with China's emperor for control, civil war, refugees, poverty and political strife rocked the county. The colonial aspirations of many European nations compounded the problems by aiding various rebel movements in a bid to take control of the country's vast resources and trade. To escape this tumultuous environment, China's young men came to America via middlemen like Seattle's Wa Chong Company. Each immigrant also knew that on his return trip home he risked death at the hands of warring factions or his own absolute ruler, the Emperor of China.⁶

Wa Chong in Renton

During 1873, Renton's first coal mine was opened for business by local settler Erasmus Smithers and mine engineers T.B. Morris and C.B. Shattuck. Located on the east side of Renton Hill in Maple Valley, the mine provided work for the town's largely Euro-American population.⁷ Only slightly affected by an economic panic that ravaged banks and savings accounts in 1873, the mine's growth progressed slowly over the next few years.⁸ Realizing that an opportunity existed to increase Renton's coal output *and* line their own pockets, Seattle businessmen John Collins, John Leary, J.F. McNaught and mine manager M. Paddin incorporated the Talbot Coal Mining Company in 1874 and began operations that same year.⁹ Decidedly a Seattle venture, this mine's location on the opposite side of the hill, south of Smither's Renton Coal Company's claims, included the rights to 320 acres of hilly surface land and the mineral rights to the coalfields lying beneath. Wa Chong's middlemen were contracted to supply the Talbot Coal Mine's operations with workers

**Renton Town Site
1873**

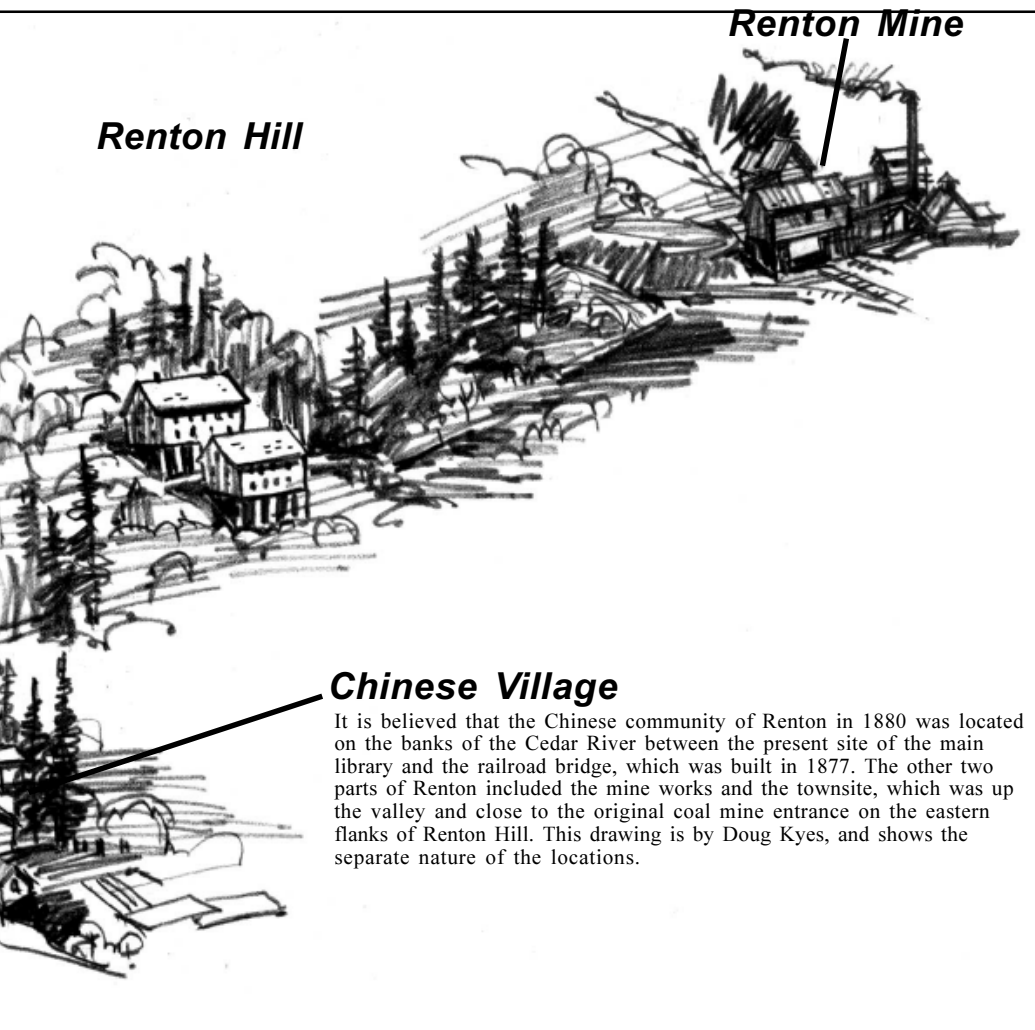


at this time.¹⁰ In the process, Renton's citizens had their first contacts with Chinese laborers.

At first, both coal companies delivered their product via an inefficient system that utilized mule teams, tramways, coal barges and pulleys. As a result, only a fraction of Renton's potential coal found its way to Seattle docks during their first few years of operation. Within a year or so, Smither's group abandoned its first site and reestablished works on the western slope of Renton Hill, just north of the Talbot Coal Company claim. In 1877, the Seattle and Walla Walla Railroad connected Renton to Elliott Bay. This dramatically increased the productivity, efficiency, and capacity of coal delivery from the two mines to awaiting ships at Seattle's docks.

Living Conditions

With the S. & W.W. Rail Road came 320 additional "celestials."¹¹ Many of these Chinese laborers did not remain as Renton residents, but rather, traveled with the railroad's construction, living in temporary quarters and tents. The town's first Chinese business was Gum King & Company. This business came to town with the railroad workers in 1877.¹² Gum King catered to the ethnically specific culinary needs of Wa Chong's railroad and mineworkers. While no records survived to tell us what exotic items stocked Gum King's shelves, we do know that dried fruits, mushrooms, meats, fish, crackers, poultry, pork, shellfish, seaweed, rice and tea were standard items that typically were imported directly from China. These foodstuffs would have seemed very exotic to "meat and potatoes" residents of Renton, which at that time was a "toil worn mining town struggling to survive hard times in an aura of coal dust and sweat of hard, hard work."¹³ As the Talbot Coal Company only rented space to one "U Ku" and a "China Sam," both of whom ran laundry businesses on Company property, it is



Renton Hill

Renton Mine

Chinese Village

It is believed that the Chinese community of Renton in 1880 was located on the banks of the Cedar River between the present site of the main library and the railroad bridge, which was built in 1877. The other two parts of Renton included the mine works and the townsite, which was up the valley and close to the original coal mine entrance on the eastern flanks of Renton Hill. This drawing is by Doug Kyes, and shows the separate nature of the locations.

safe to say that the mine's other Chinese workers occupied "a group of small huts, steep-roofed, weather-reddened, and long-shingled [where they] have planted narrow gardens on the [Cedar's] river-bank, and have set up tiny coops for their beloved ducks and chickens."¹⁴ A contemporary described their homes "as picturesque and foreign a scene as though it were a home village on the Yang-tse- Picturesque as it may have seemed, the location of this village¹⁶ reflected a not-so-subtle form of segregation that filtered through every aspect of Chinese life in Renton. Literally living on "the other side of the tracks"¹⁷ the Chinese resided in social isolation with only the temperamental Cedar River as a close neighbor and occasional houseguest.¹⁸

Renton's other residents were clustered either against the western base of Renton Hill or on the opposite side of the hill at the original 1873 Renton Coal Company's works. The separation was so complete that one reporter noted: "The town and the [mining] works of the [Talbot Mining] Company are wide spread, or rather much separated, the bunkers and shipping point being at the end of the railroad, the opening of the [Renton Coal Company] all by itself a half mile distant, the camp of the Chinese between the town, the town of the single men and saloon a quarter of a mile beyond the tunnel, and the store, boarding house, blacksmith shop and town of the families a half mile over the hill in another direction, and near the mouth of the first tunnel. No two of the town's divisions are in sight of each other, while if all were together it would be quite a place."¹⁹

This is not to say that all of the Chinese lived in the aforementioned waterfront shantytown. Gum King, like the laundrymen spoken of earlier, more than likely lived at his place of business. Polly Adams also remembered an "outlandish dwelling" owned by "an ancient Chinese man...who ran a tenement for a strange assortment of bachelor men who needed cheap housing." It [consisted

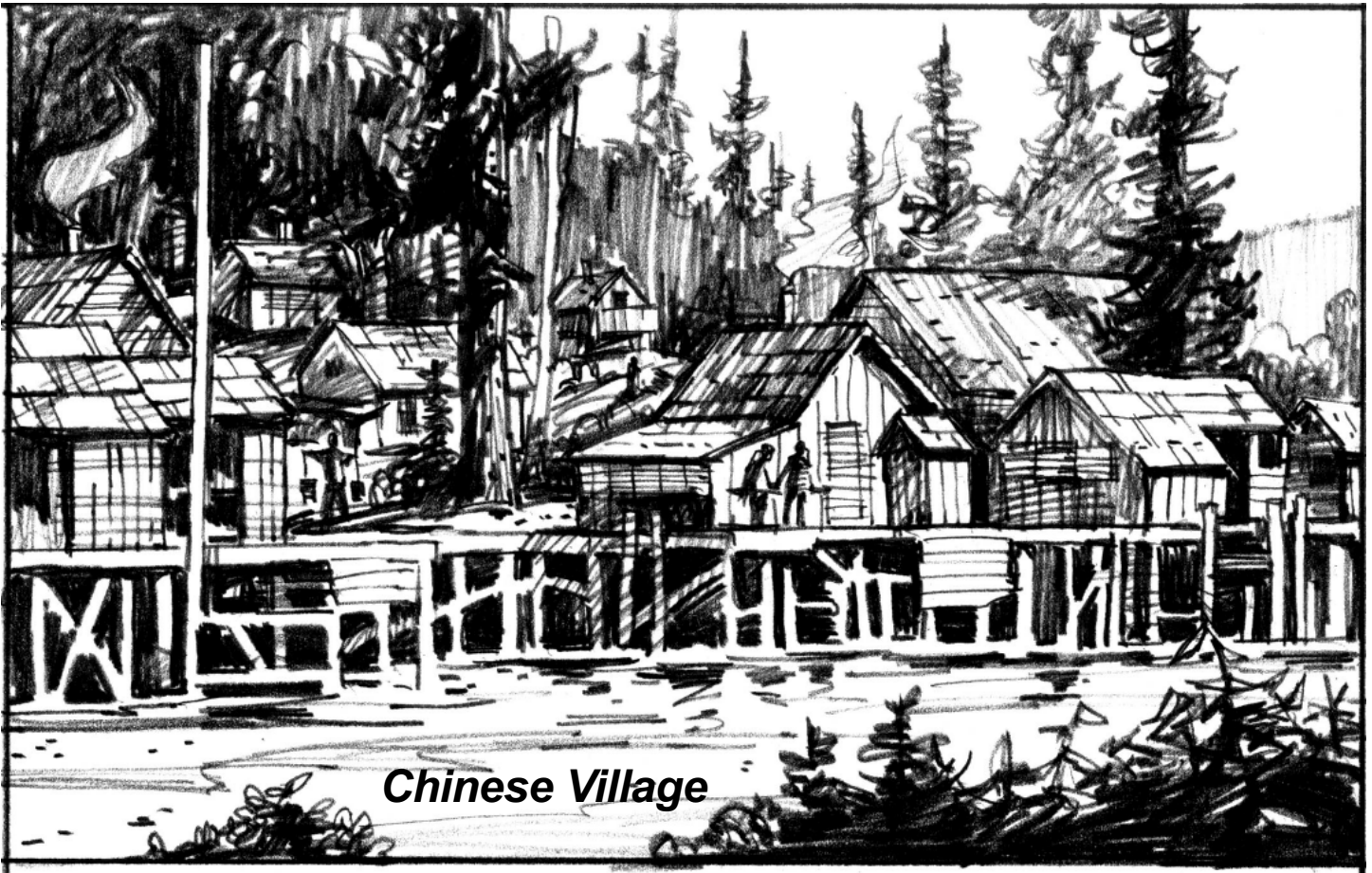
of a] sagging forty foot [long] string of tiny sleeping rooms and because it was perched on steep sloping lot it was necessary to prop up the side facing our yard with a forest of rickety pole supports."²⁰ This could have been the bachelor's quarters situated on the haunches of Renton Hill or one of the many boarding houses that catered to single Euro-American miners.

Working Conditions

By 1880, Renton possessed less than four hundred souls – twenty-six of which were Wa Chong's workers. Aside from the choking dust in summer and the knee-deep mud in winter, the town's only distinguishing landmarks at this time were the mine companies' structures and "a great hill of dusty slag."²¹

Laboring under the same meager conditions as their Euro-American counterparts, the Chinese workers were compensated far less. Using "peculiar shovels of a type preferred by Chinese" they earned just \$27 per month per person (as opposed to \$85 or more per month for most Euro-American miners).²² Furthermore, these young Chinese men did the dirty and often times dangerous work that was shunned by everyone else. They also had a reputation for being able to labor patiently and live cheaply, which allowed them to succeed where other miners could not or would not.²³ While digging coal on the night shift paid slightly better than day shifts, Chinese workers also built and repaired roads, installed and repaired tracks, worked on buildings, reinforced mine timbers and sorted coal in the bunkers. The bunkers work was exceedingly dusty and arduous, as described in the following article: "...the car loads dumped into the bunkers are so combined that the coal falls upon screens permitting all the small pieces to drop through upon other screens that give it a second sifting, below which the dust is carried away in a flume. It is necessary, however, to pick over the main body of the coal in order to reject slaty (sic) fragments...for this duty Chinese are

(Kuang Gong Story continued on page 10)



Chinese Village

employed, their ability to stand all day bending over a sliding stream of coal and rapidly pick out the waste being far superior to that of any white man, who grows lame and impatient at such confining and persnickety work.”²⁴ Unlike the Euro-Americans working the coal, Chinese miners were financially penalized for either including too much “slaty” or clay material in their cars, or for allowing too much of it to pass by in the sorting bunker.

By 1880, the seven man 12 hour shifts, running 24 hours a day at the Talbot mine, were being shared with the Renton Coal Company, their days and tasks being recorded in the RCC’s ledger books.²⁵ Very little else is recorded about the Chinese miners, their picturesque village or what happened next.

An End for All

The first of many “stakes through the heart” of the Talbot Coal Company’s operations came when the federal government passed the Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882. This act placed a number of onerous restrictions and conditions upon current and future Chinese wishing to live and work within the United States. But even this did not pacify labor’s rabble-rousers. Labor unrest had been growing for several years prior to that time, and the Exclusion Act became the federal stamp of approval for the prejudice-driven pounding of imported Chinese laborers.

(Kuang Gong Story continued on page 12)



Chinese dress, appearance, culture and life styles made them a target for prejudice.

Renton Museum Report

By Steve A. Anderson, Museum Supervisor

Contained within this mailing of the *Renton Historical Quarterly*, you will find three important documents enclosed for your information and viewing. The first two are informational in nature: 1) *Renton Heritage 2002: The Annual Report of the Renton Historical Society* and 2) the Centennial walking tour booklet. Each item contains information presenting current status and historical information about Renton, the Society, and the Museum's operations in 2002. The Walking Tour booklet has been printed to keep you on track when you go through the Centennial Committee's markers that are spread throughout the city. These are great pieces to take in at your leisure, and to keep as benchmarks of the Renton Historical Society and the City's progress in bringing heritage services to your doorstep.

The final piece that you'll find enclosed is one that **requires your immediate attention** and I'd appreciate it if all dues paying members and life members of the Society please return these to the Museum as soon as possible. Voting by the membership on this important issue will determine the future direction the board takes in developing the bylaws and constitution of your organization, and your input is vital for them to make a well-informed decision.

As the memorial page of this quarterly indicates, the ranks of the Society/Museum supporters have shrunk in significant ways this past quarter. We have lost several founding life and annual members who helped to breath life into this 37-year-old organization, and their absence has already been felt throughout Renton's community. The staff of the museum was saddened with the loss of Rose Gigli, who served the museum for many years processing memberships and helping in the office. As her eulogy is presented elsewhere within this edition, I'll not mention more on that here.

The staffing of the curator's position here also continues to be a struggle as our current curator Steve Smith recently took a full time position with a for-profit exhibit production company in Seattle, a change that he is very happy about – but that leaves us again in the lurch and without a curator of collections. We all wish him best of luck in his new endeavor as a project manager. On another front, our office administrative assistant Daisy Ward had a debilitating run-in with pneumonia this spring that nearly kept her out of action for a month. She back now and doing fine, just a little tired.

Recently, the *Renton Reporter* published an article that addressed the various properties and objects contained within the Charles L. Custer bequest to the Renton Historical Society. The Custer family saved nearly **everything!** And while it would have been a noble attempt to save it all, we must remember that objects used in this museum must have a purpose, either research or exhibit, so that the mission of public education can be satisfied – *and not every object made that grade*. The Custer bequest included real estate and an

estimated 12-13,000 objects contained within the Custer home. The properties and some of the more common objects have been sold to sustain the Society and this Museum's long-term mission to bring history to Renton's citizens. The money raised is earmarked to improve our permanent collection and care for what we already have on site. We plan on keeping approximately 3-4,000 objects, photographs and pieces of ephemera (old paper). Another thing the article did not indicate was the fact that a number of other local charities have also been the recipients of the Custer Estate – provided objects that we decided not to keep for the museum's permanent collections or Society use. A sampling of these charities is listed here for your information.

1. Renton Highlands Community Church, Renton
2. Renton Clothing Bank, Renton
3. The Salvation Army, Renton Branch
4. Young Women's Christian Association (YWCA), Renton
5. City of Renton Senior Center, Renton
6. Washington State Historical Society, Tacoma
7. Maple Valley Historical Society, Maple Valley
8. Southwest Seattle Historical Society, Seattle
9. Goodwill Industries, Renton
10. Madelyn Helling County Library, Nevada City, California
11. Wellston Historical Association, Wellston, Ohio
12. Burien/Highline Historical Society, Burien
13. Fort Nisqually Living History Museum, Tacoma
14. Renton Rotary Club CAPER Auction, Renton
15. City of Renton Shops Division, Renton
16. City of Renton Facilities Division, Renton
17. Habitat for Humanity, Renton

If we could not find a home for an item, it is important for you to know that in cleaning out the Custer home, all care was taken to keep as much material out of the county landfill as possible. To that end, we have transported pickup trucks full of newspapers & paper items, wood, tin cans, glass jars, plastic, bottles and metal/iron materials to the recycling bins of Renton and King County.

We now enter a more intense period of work on the existing museum collection and the Custer Estate pieces, which must be melded into one cohesive and useful group of artifacts representative of Renton's past. It shall be an interesting and thought provoking time for us here at the museum, as it will mean reassessing all of the objects that have come into the museum over the past 37 years, weighing their value against the Custer materials and coming to conclusions about each. In some cases, we will be forced to make a decision as to whether or not to keep an item or remove it from the collection – as storage space is at a premium. We shall also be assessing the collection's contents, noting weaknesses and strengths, all the while placing it in writing, so that those who come after us

will also know how things stand at this point in the history of the museum. The Collections Plan, as we're calling this living document, will also define what we collect in the future, and how we plan our exhibitry, both long and short term.

It looks like we'll be at this for a few years, so if you have any interest in working within a museum setting as a volunteer registrar or objects cataloguer, give our Volunteer Coordinator, Dorota Rahn, a call and get down here, pronto!



Steve Anderson, Director
Renton Historical Museum

Henry Villard, the great savior/robber baron of the Northern Pacific Rail Road drove the next stake in when it was announced that his railroad was bankrupt – (an act that he would repeat several times during his tenure with the NPRR). As King County historian Clarence B. Bagley explained: “The collapse of the ‘Villard Boom’ in 1883 was followed by great financial depression for about five years.”²⁶ The collapse tightened the money market, depressed the commodities market (which reduced the price of coal) and finally eliminated employment for many of the region’s Euro-American laborers. The low paying, dirty and dangerous jobs that had traditionally been assigned to Wa Chong’s Chinese laborers now began to look pretty good – considering that in many cases the only alternative was starvation.

The violence escalated in the fall of 1885 with the aforementioned Wyoming incident – an incident that spawned numerous Chinese expulsions all over King County’s coal country. “That same year the Orientals were driven out of Tacoma and their quarters burned. In Seattle, after months of unrest, 196 of them were forcibly hustled aboard a steamer bound for San Francisco and riots nearly engulfed those left behind before a Home Guard and the territorial militia could restore order.”²⁷ The “Home Guard” and its counterpart “The Loyal League” were founded to maintain order and quell civil unrest. Interestingly enough, several of the Talbot Coal Company’s owners, notably Collins, McNaught and Leary, were members of Seattle’s Home Guard and all registered Loyal League members. And while this does not label them as “Chinese sympathizers” outright, it goes a long way to indicate where their sympathies were placed.

Records are not clear as to when the Talbot Coal Mine closed for good.²⁸ The most reliable sources say that it occurred sometime between 1884 and 1886. Labor troubles and a depressed market are cited as being the primary reasons for its closure. To be sure, the loss of the mine’s Chinese labor force must have had a significant impact on its ability to operate financially in the black. One could go so far as to say that the Chinese laborers employed at the Talbot Mine played as noteworthy a role in developing the coal resources of Renton as any other immigrant group in town at that time.

Post Script

Sadly, Renton’s prejudice against Asian residents did not end with the expulsion of the Chinese from the Talbot Mine. In April 1900, the citizens of Renton submitted a petition to the King County Board of Commissioners protesting the use of Asian laborers on county funded road projects. This time, the primary target for white anger was a group of 1,000 Japanese laborers, although the old bias against the Chinese was brought to the surface again as well. King County Commissioner James L. Boyce responded to the petition by stating that since private contractors who work for the city could hire whomever they chose, it was out of the cities jurisdiction to interfere, as long as state law was complied with.²⁹

Renton today is a vastly different place than it was 120 years ago. Poised to become the next major gateway from the Orient, people from every part of Asia have come to Renton for a better life. New Chinese immigrants and Americans of Chinese ancestry now own and operate numerous successful businesses. Chinese culture and cuisine are very popular and integrated into



The Chinese laborers who came to America were hard workers who did the down and dirty jobs no one else would do. Above two workers hand-cut a beam using a pit saw.

the city and throughout the country - so much so that they escape notice by most residents. While racism remains a problem in all societies, Renton’s Chinese population is thriving and growing larger every day. The community that once viewed Chinese people as cheap labor to be exploited now provides Asian immigrants with an opportunity to pursue the American dream.

Authors’ note: We would like to thank Ron Chew, Director and Bob Fischer, Curator of the Wing Luke Asian Museum in Seattle for their timely and helpful comments and critique of this article. We would also like to acknowledge the artwork of Doug Kyes, Renton Historical Society Trustee and Renton Arts Commission member. Doug provided the wonderful illustrations that grace this article. If you have any comments about or knowledge of the Chinese experience in Renton from this era or later, please forward that information to the museum for inclusion in our files. - S.A.A & T.M. -

Visit Wing Luke!

If this story of Renton’s Chinese workers has piqued your interest about the Asian experience in King County’s history, we suggest you visit the Wing Luke Asian Museum in the International District of Seattle. The museum is nestled in at 407 7th Avenue, Seattle, 98104 (for those who like to use computer mapping programs like Mapquest.com.) Once inside WLAM, you’ll be immersed in exhibits, videos and activities that interpret Seattle and greater King County’s distance and recent Asian history.

Membership in the WLAM is available, and the museum is currently featuring numerous exhibits, programs and activities. Call 206.623.5124 for more information.

The museum’s hours are Tuesday through Fridays, 11 a.m. to 4:30 p.m., and weekends, noon to 4 p.m. Admission: \$4 Adults, \$3 Students/Seniors, \$2 Children 5-17, and the first Thursday of the month is always free!

Renton Chinese: The 1880 Census

In 1880, the federal government took a census of all the people living in and around Renton. Though Chinese women were not listed on the census, it is believed that they did occupy a place in Renton's Chinese community.

The Talbot Coal Mine's ledgers for this period (1880-1885) payments to the "Wa Chong & Co." appearing as early as April 30, 1880 and continue throughout the first month of 1881. The ledger book does not identify Wa Chong's foreman by name, but census records from 1880 indicate that 27 Chinese "miners" lived in the Renton vicinity at this time. These included:

Joseph Ah (26 yrs.)
 Chung Sing (24 yrs.)
 Joke Char (22 yrs.)
 Jung (26 yrs.)
 Gum King [Merchant] - (18 yrs.)
 Toho (23 yrs.)
 Poah (30 yrs.)
 Chun (25 yrs.)
 Dao (26 yrs.)
 Lice (25 yrs.)
 Living (26 yrs.)
 Sing (27 yrs.)
 Hing (33 yrs.)
 Seuy (52 yrs.) – (book-keeper?)
 Wa Fa (28 yrs.)
 Chun (24 yrs.)
 Bat (40 yrs.)
 Gam (22 yrs.)
 Toy (28 yrs.)
 Ton (22 yrs.),

Footnotes

- ¹ Bagley, Clarence B. *History of King County Washington, Volume I*. S.J. Clarke Publishing Co., Chicago, 1929, page 347. Hereafter cited as Bagley's *History*.
- ² Hildebrand, Lorraine B. *Straw Hats, Sandals and Steel, The Chinese in Washington State*, Published by the Washington State Bicentennial Commission, Tacoma, 1977. The term "coolie" was derived from "kuli" – an Indian word for burden bearer. Further, the Chinese words "ku" and "li" translate as "bitter strength" or "bitter work" in English, and the word lived up to both definitions. Hereafter cited as Hildebrand's *Chinese in Washington*.
- ³ Ibid. Page 6.
- ⁴ Chin Gee Hee would also found the Quong Tuck Co. and build the Sunning Railway in Toisan – email note from Bob Fischer, Wing Luke Asian Museum.
- ⁵ Europeans coming to America came to stay, while Chinese immigrants eventually returned home.
- ⁶ The Opium Wars disrupted the old life and economy of southern China. A number of peasant revolts occurred in the 1840s, coming to a head in the Taiping Rebellion, the biggest rebellion in Chinese history. The leader of the Taipings was Hung Hsiu-ch'uan, from a village near Canton. Believing that God had chosen him to save the world, he adopted a confused version of Christianity as his guiding doctrine and set out to overthrow the Manchus and change society. The combination of religious fervor and anti-Manchu sentiment attracted a following that rose to over 30,000 within a short time. In 1852 the T'ai-p'ing T'ienkuo (Heavenly Kingdom of Great Peace) was proclaimed. In 1853 the rebels took the city of Nanjing and made it their capital.
- ⁷ In the 1870s and 1880s, Renton's population was made up of Austrian, Welsh, Irish, English, Scottish, Hungarian, Swedish, Norwegian, Finnish, Danes, Belgians and Eastern Europeans, who immigrated to America via a commonly used route. After raising the necessary funds, the oldest male would book 3rd class steerage on an Atlantic steamer, disembark in New York, travel to the Pacific Northwest and then sought employment. He often had friends or relatives already here who helped him "fit in" and blend into the new settings. His ultimate goal was to raise enough money to get his entire family to join him.
- ⁸ The Panic of 1873 behaved like a miniature recession tightening money sources and shrinking local job markets.
- ⁹ The partners for this mining company included Seattle's mayor, a city councilman, a financier/businessman and Padden, who was the superintendent of the works. They never issued stock for the company, preferring to hold it privately.
- ¹⁰ The Talbot Coal Company also hired a Chinese bookkeeper – he was paid \$5 to keep track of the Wa Chong laborer's debts and credits.
- ¹¹ "The term 'celestials' refers to what many in the west called China – 'The Celestial Empire' due to the Chinese calling their home 'Tien Sha' (All Under Heaven). But that is only the western translation of the word 'Tien' which can also just mean the 'sky' or 'the above.' The west gives it the loaded term 'Heaven' with all of its religious connotations or in the 18th and 19th centuries as 'Celestial.' The term is generally regarded today as a derogatory term based on the 'Orientalist' western view of China and as less than proper name for people of Chinese ancestry. Source: email (7/03/03) from Bob Fischer of the Wing Luke Asian Museum, Seattle.
- ¹² Unpublished Renton Historical Museum's Renton Chronological Timeline by Stan Greene.
- ¹³ Polly (Lona Fischer) Adams to Marian (Duff) Thompson, April 1966. Hereafter cited as The Adams Letter.
- ¹⁴ Ingersoll, Earnest. "From the Fraser to the Columbia," *Harper's Monthly*, May 1884, pp. 869-881. Hereafter cited as Harper's 1884 article.
- ¹⁵ Ibid.
- ¹⁶ Though the exact location of Renton's China Town has been lost to time and modern development, there are very strong indicators, both in the historical record and through oral traditions, that the village was located at the foot of Renton Hill, abutting the Cedar River's western bank just downstream from where I-405, the railroad bridge and Houser Way bridge currently crosses the river, between the bridges and the Renton Public Library.
- ¹⁷ McDonald, Lucile. *The Seattle Times*, December 18, 1955 "Railroad Ended Renton Coal Barges" "James Adderson, an early resident of Renton, heard of the Chinese workers when he was a boy. His mother said they had lived near the Milwaukee Road tracks. Hereafter cited as McDonald's *Times* Article.
- ¹⁸ The Cedar River flooded regularly and as a free, unchecked river was continuously choked with debris.
- ¹⁹ Burge, David. *Where the Water Took Wing*, cited as Daily Pacific Tribune, July 25, 1877. See page 30.
- ²⁰ See Adams Letter.
- ²¹ Ibid.
- ²² See McDonald's *Times* Article. James Adderson, an early resident of Renton, was present when the old Talbot Mine was entered underground through the Renton Mine, such shovels and wooden tramways were found at that time.
- ²³ Lavender, David. *Land of Giants: The Drive to the Pacific Northwest 1750-1950*, Doubleday & Company, Inc., Garden City, NY. 1958, page 348. Hereafter cited as Lavender's *Giants*.
- ²⁴ See *Harper's* 1884 article.
- ²⁵ The Talbot Coal Company Ledger Book for the year 1880-81 is in the possession of the Renton Historical Museum and is catalogued as Scrapbook #54.
- ²⁶ See Bagley's *History*. p. 350
- ²⁷ See Lavender's *Giants*.
- ²⁸ The Talbot Mine did have a second life, however. Reopened by the larger Renton Coal Company later in the century, it was worked via tunnels that connected the two systems underground.
- ²⁹ *White River Journal*, April 21, 1900, pg.3

Rentonians

Memorials shown were received from those noted in reduced print from April 15, 2003 to July 15, 2003.

Remembered



denotes former Society Life Member

denotes former Society member

Leonard Bakken

Bert & Shirley Custer

Sylvia Bakken

Bert & Shirley Custer

Eleanor Bausano Beattie

Betty J. Sipila; Robert & Gilda Youngquist

Dorothy Bruce 

Harold Bruce

Dorothy Bunstine 

Peggy Bevan-Anderson; George & Christine Grubestic; Betty Richards; Mr. & Mrs. Ron Leetch; Lillian Rosenstrom

Tim Chinn

Hazelle DuBois

Dale Church

Merna Lasco

Eugene "Gene" Church

Merna Lasco; Mike & Beth Potoshnik; Jim & Fran Bourasa; Greg & Carrie Bergquist

Lena Church 

Merna Lasco

Donald N. Custer

Bert & Shirley Custer

Rose Custer

Bert & Shirley Custer

A.W. Dimmitt

Velma Dimmitt Willingham

Aldo Favro

Louise George; Florence Delaurenti; Gloria Duffey; Mario & Victor Tonda; Carrie & Greg Bergquist; Bruce & Sarah Jane Hisey; Mary Postishek; Bert & Shirley Custer

Jerome Fauli 

Louise George; Florence Delaurenti; Mike Rockey; Sharon & Ron Clymer; Bea Mathewson; John & Eleanor Bertagni; Rick & Terre Scappini; Pam & Louie Barei; Eileen Button; Vivian Cook; Beth & Mike Potoshnik; Ellen Razwick; Jerry & Barbara Shellan; Chrissie & George Grubestic; Bill & Anne White; the Bevan family; Tom & Jana Tobacco; Mildred Fauli; Robert & Gilda Youngquist; Mr. & Mrs. James Bourasa; George & Lillian Poff; Dorothy Lansing; Phyllis Webb; Katie Gilligan; McLendon Hardware; Elmer Huffman; Dorlene Bressan & family; Martha Kingen; Gerri Dalsanto; Mary & Louis Sutter; Louise Bertozzi; Madeline Donckers; Gary Slotnik; Daniel Zgolinski; Diana Ribera

Kei Fujikado

Bob & Jean Hendrickson

Rose Gigli 

Louise George; Bea Mathewson; Anonymous; Daisy Ward; Zelima Vidmar; Bernice Jorgensen; Ernie & Jeanne Tonda; Dorlene Bressan; Mario & Victor Tonda; Carrie & Greg Bergquist

Aaron Goodwin 

Lorraine Goodwin; Charles Goodwin; John & Joyce Peterson

Daisy Goodwin

Charles Goodwin; John & Joyce Peterson

Eva Goodwin 

Charles Goodwin; John & Joyce Peterson

Dorothy Grabner

Bert & Shirley Custer

Floren Grabner

Bert & Shirley Custer

E. Jane Lawrence

(our oldest member at 99 years)

Louise George; Florence Delaurenti; Katie Gilligan

Frank Mathewson 

Anonymous

William W. Niemi

Margaret Sebelist

Medora Nelson 

Bert & Evelyn Nord

Gertrude Petermeyer

Gloria Nichols

William Richards 

Martha Kingen

Reino V. Rosenstrom

Lillian Rosenstrom

Gorden Thompson

Mr. & Mrs. Al Armstrong

Alice Deacy Sticee

Katie Gilligan

Hugo Toschi

Martha Kingen

Ruby Veniani-Heitman

Louise George

John Vukov, M.D. 

Mike & Beth Potoshnik; Eileen Button; Robert & Gilda Youngquist

William A. White

Bill, Tom, & Michael White families

Thomas Williams

Harold Bruce; Renton High School Class of 1940; Florence Delaurenti; Louise George; Evelyn Johnson; Lorraine Goodwin; Beth & Mike Potoshnik; Margaret Loe & family; Betty Cuykendall; Martha Kingen; Bill & Anne White; Inez Peterson; Virginia (Minaglia)Lucke; Jack & Pat Williams; Hazelle DuBois; Katie Gilligan; Anonymous

Rentonians Remembered

Obituries

- James Ashley
- Kenneth Armitage
- Ida May Betz
- Gene Church
- Jerome Faull
- Aldo Favro
- Donald Figgins
- George Gilbert
- Rose Gigli
- Stoffer Glazenburg
- Violette Hilfer
- Wayne L. Miller
- E. Jane Lawrence
- Claudia Carli Nelson
- Minnie Perelli
- George Plute
- Todd Richardson
- DuWayne Spencer
- Gorden Thompson
- Rhoda Van Wyck
- Ruby Veniani-Heitman
- William A. White
- Thomas Williams

IN MEMORY OF ROSE GIGLI

Rose was one of our dependable and valuable volunteers and helped at the Museum as membership and memorials secretary every Tuesday 9 a.m. to noon for over 15 years. About five years ago, Rose elected to retire from the Museum because of health problems but she always kept in contact with the office.

Rose was brought into this world by Dr. Adolf Bronson who ran Renton Hospital on Main Street and lived to be 86 years old. She lived on the 300 Block, Renton Avenue South on Renton Hill and later moved to the 700 Block, just up the hill.

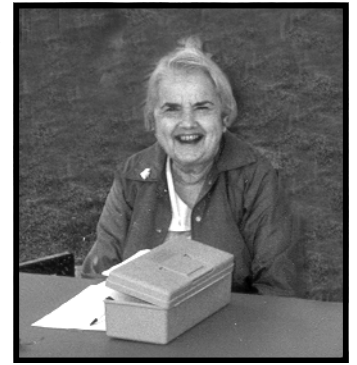
Andrew Gigli, her brother, will be 90 years old in September. Their father had given both Rose and Andrew half of a lot on the 700 and 800 Block. Rose lived in the old house and Andrew moved into the new house next door in 1954.

Rose graduated from Renton High School and later attended Wilson Business College in Seattle. She used her office training at the City Clerk's office in Renton, later at the Boeing Company and finally at the King County Assessor's office in Seattle.

She always had a new joke to tell us each Tuesday and kept us on our toes with her viewpoint on various subjects.

Andrew described Rose as intelligent, independent, and the boss. Rose was close to Andrew's two grandchildren.

Rose was a Life member of Renton Historical Society.



Join the Renton Historical Society Today!

Name: _____
 Membership Level: _____
 Business Name: _____
 Address: _____
 City:State: _____ Zip: _____ + 4 (_____)

Please make checks payable to the Renton Historical Society.

VISA/MASTERCARD # _____ Ex.Date: _____

Your Signature: _____

- Please share your e-mail address with us: _____
- Please send me a volunteer application form. (32/1)

Mail To: Membership Secretary, Renton Historical Society
 235 Mill Avenue South, Renton, Washington 98055-2133

Please Choose Membership Category & Any Donation You Wish to Make:

- Student Individual(\$8+) = _____
- Senior Individual (\$8+) = _____
- Individual (\$10+) = _____
- Senior Couple(\$12+) = _____
- Family (\$15+) = _____
- Benefactor (\$50+) = _____
- Business (\$40+) = _____
- Corporate (\$1000+) = _____
- Life (\$250+) _____
One Time Only
- General Fund Donation _____
- Endowment Fund Donation _____
 In Memory of: _____

Total enclosed: _____

Centennial Snapshot



***The James Evans Family Portrait, n.d.
Charles L. Custer Collection, Uncatalogued***

James “Jimmie” Evans (b. 1859 - d.?) was an Irishman and a coal miner - neither of those descriptors being mutually exclusive. He became a naturalized American in 1884 while in California and moved to Washington State in 1885. By 1900, he’d settled down in Renton and was a coal miner once again. We do not know his wife’s name, nor that of his two daughters, but we do know that he was registered to vote in the Renton’s election of 1902 and 1909, wherein his name was prominently written. Jimmie Evans was also involved in the development of Earlington’s Jones-Thompson Investment Company, who in June 1908 took a 20-year lease on four acres of Earlington Hill land, with the intention of mining coal in that location. However, the coal’s quality was soon found to be disappointingly poor and the company gave out after only three years in operation. James Evans’ name does not show up on the 1910 Federal Census Records, so he either was killed in a mining accident, or, more likely, moved his family elsewhere. The image shown to the left is just one of thousands of cabinet photographs, tin types and real picture post cards that we are currently working on within the Charles L. Custer Estate. If you know anything about ol’ “Jimmie Evans” please share it with us, as we’d love to know more about his life, family and whereabouts.