

Chapter 7

SOCIAL AND COMMUNITY LIFE

Migration is never easy. It means uprooting and trading the familiar for the unfamiliar. It means believing that life and opportunities are better somewhere else. It usually means travelling in small groups or even alone, and leaving behind people (loved and unloved), places and routines that have inhabited and helped shape the rhythms, tone and meaning of life. It means reestablishing or inventing a lifestyle which has a flavour of familiarity but which also looks outwards and accommodates a new and often alien social, cultural and physical environment.¹ Work provides an anchor but, beyond work, is the rest of life - leisure, pleasure, relationships.

Like all migrants, the Chinese who came to the district in and around Glen Innes, Inverell and Tenterfield during the first half of the twentieth century, had to negotiate different worlds: those in which they had grown up and those they encountered on arrival in northern New South Wales. For the overseas-born Chinese, the worlds of their childhood and adolescence were in Chungshan villages or in Hong Kong, and had been communicated in Cantonese dialects and generations of deep cultural practices. For the Australian-born Chinese they were the worlds of extended families in Chinese communities in Sydney, Brisbane or north Queensland where they had started learning how to negotiate - or at least survive - the chasms between the old worlds of China brought by parents and the new worlds encountered in Australia. Both the overseas-born and Australian-born Chinese, on migrating to northern New South Wales, moved into an environment shaped largely by the Chinese stores in which they laboured, the networks which emanated from those stores, and the physical and social isolation imbedded in living in rural Australia at this time. It was a physical and social isolation heightened by being among a small number of Chinese in towns where the tolerance of outsiders encountered, to say the least, some difficulties. Individuals reacted and adapted differently. Circumstances dictated some responses. Ingenuity and community networks assured the evolution of mechanisms for survival and, for some Chinese, these mechanisms provided the route to lifestyles which accommodated living within and between different worlds.

This chapter examines the ways in which some of the Chinese-Australians in the district coped with the stresses of migration and of moving into an alien and isolated environment. It explores the extent to which the strategies they adopted assisted in accommodating the demands of migration and moving between different social and cultural worlds. The chapter begins with the isolation which greeted new arrivals in the district. It then turns to the strategies used to combat that isolation. In particular, it looks at the reliance on other Chinese, and on the steps taken to build bridges between Chinese and non-

¹ For explorations of what it means to be a migrant, see Janis Wilton and Richard Bosworth, *Old Worlds and New Australia*, Penguin, Ringwood, 1984, Chapter 4.

Chinese and to gain acceptance as members of local non-Chinese communities. The chapter ends with an examination of the marriage patterns evident within the community. These patterns exemplify the mixing and matching of the strategies which characterised the lives of these Chinese-Australians as the twentieth century moved towards the half way mark.

- **Isolation and Loneliness**

Joe Mah arrived in Australia in late 1923. He was eighteen years old. He had already spent two years as a general assistant in the wholesale section of Sincere and Company in Hong Kong.² He was sponsored to come to Australia by his uncle, Harry Fay, and was brought straight from Sydney to Inverell where he began work in the Hong Yuen store. With a wry smile, he remembered the drive from Sydney to Inverell:

*They picked me up in Sydney, Uncle Harry and the driver, named Bill Morton. He's Australian... He try to talk to me. I just laugh with him, smile at him. He doesn't know whether I understand ... I just shook my head laughing at him.*³

His memories of the first six months in Inverell were of loneliness and alien conditions. He recalled:

*...when I come to work, I never get asked to be so early. I never feel weather so cold, different weather. First six months I was crying. I can't speak the language.*⁴

The utter loneliness of the experience was summed up by his cherished memory of a dog that kept him company for the first few months:

*I got a big dog in the yard, come up every night to keep me company. And after three months somebody poisoned big dog. He was called Tony. Somebody poisoned him. When he got poisoned he come and ask me to help him but ... I couldn't help the dog.*⁵

Joe Mah's recollections capture the shock of encountering a different climate, different conditions, and a different language. It was a shock which highlights the isolation which can be at the core of the migrant experience especially when, as with the majority of the Chinese men who arrived during the early part of this period, they came alone. At best they came to join relatives, near or distant, or countrymen, already working in the stores. Like their compatriots who came earlier, they followed the traditional path of the Chinese male leaving behind village, home, family and friends in order to seek work overseas.⁶ However, unlike

² Persons exempt presently employed at Hong Yuen, Form D. Attached to Harry Fay to Commonwealth Migration Officer, 30 December 1947. Mar Papers; and Interview with Joe Mah, Inverell, 27 February 1990.

³ Interview with Joe Mah.

⁴ *ibid.*

⁵ *ibid.* Strong evocations of this loneliness, and of the doubts about the benefits of emigration which underpin it, are expressed through some of the Cantonese folksongs recorded and discussed by Marlon Kau Hom, 'Some Cantonese folksongs on the American experience', *Western Folklore*, 42/2, 1983, especially pp.133-135.

⁶ On the tradition of Chinese men emigrating alone see the discussion in Chapter 4, pp.76-82 previously.

their earlier compatriots, these Chinese were not moving into localities where there were thriving and growing Chinese communities.

- **Looking Inwards: Chinese Communities**

By the turn of the century, the size and diversity of the Chinese presence in the district had diminished. The evocative (and often negative) descriptions of the 'Chinatown' of late nineteenth century Tingha, for example, with its three joss houses, busy gambling dens, well attended New Year and Ching Ming (Festival of the Dead) celebrations, shanty dwellings, and multiplicity of Chinese market gardens, goods and services were receding.⁷ For an Australian country town, the remnants of those earlier communities were still significant. They provided a clear reminder that the history and development of the district had been aided by the influx of Chinese immigrants. In Tingha, for example, by the turn of the century the majority of general stores were Chinese owned, there were still two joss houses (one was to close in about 1910, the second in about 1938), at least one gambling den, the occasional herbalist, market gardeners and a few remaining miners, cooks and farm labourers. There was also a small number of Chinese families, and an increasing number of Australian-born descendants.⁸ In neighbouring Inverell, at the turn of the century, there were around fifty (all male) Chinese residents, and there was a small group of Chinese stores and boarding houses clustered at the northern end of Byron Street.⁹ Glen Innes and Tenterfield claimed a Chinese population of nineteen and sixteen respectively, with only one female.¹⁰ In Emmaville, originally called Vegetable Creek because of the number of Chinese market gardens stretching along the riverbed, Bessie Chiu (born in 1912 in Emmaville) could remember one remaining Chinese market garden during her childhood.¹¹ By the time the Gett family moved to Emmaville from Glen Innes in the early 1930s, their store, Yow Sing and Company, and the soon to be closed Sue Fong and Sons were the only remaining Chinese stores. Ken Gett also recalled 'one or two Chinese who worked at the grazing properties' and Fong Garr who had an orchard on the outskirts of the town.¹²

The survival of a Chinese presence was significant in influencing the nature of the Australian country towns concerned, and provided the anchor which drew Chinese to the

⁷ For contemporary descriptions of the Chinese communities in Tingha at the height of the mining booms in the 1880s see, for example, Elizabeth Wiedemann, *World of its Own*, Devill Publicity, Inverell, 1981, pp.83-84; Helen Brown, *Tin at Tingha*, The author, Armidale, 1982, pp.34-37; and Elizabeth Campbell, *A history of tin mining in the Inverell district 1871-1914 and its effects on the development of the town and district*, BA Honours thesis, University of New England, 1968, pp.47-51.

⁸ Wiedemann, *World of its Own*, pp.83-4; List of Chinese in Tingha, 1922 compiled by Robert Duck Chong. Correspondence from Robert Duck Chong, 26 April 1991. Duck Chong Papers.

⁹ *Census of New South Wales, 1901*; Wiedemann, *World of its Own*, p.187.

¹⁰ *Census of New South Wales, 1901*. See also Appendix B, Tables 5 and 6 at the end of this thesis.

¹¹ Interview with Bessie Chiu, Gold Coast, 24 September 1991. Compare Ian Lobsey, *The Creek: A history of Emmaville and district, 1872-1972*, Regional Printers, Glen Innes, 1972, pp.33-35 for descriptions of the Chinese presence at the height of the mining booms.

¹² Interview with Ken Gett, Brisbane, 23 February 1990.

area. However, by comparison to the earlier communities, the services and support available to new Chinese arrivals had diminished and altered.¹³ The end of mining and the imposition of the White Australia legislation coupled with the urbanisation of the Chinese in Australia meant that, during the first half of the twentieth century, Chinese seeking the comfort and company of a reasonably sized and serviced Chinese community had to turn to the Chinatowns in Sydney and Brisbane.¹⁴

With the small numbers of Chinese in the district, one possibility for seeking and enjoying the company of other Chinese was to move between the towns, visiting and sharing goods, services and leisure, and to visit the communities in Sydney. An obstacle, however, was that the towns were physically isolated from each other and especially from the heart of Chinese activity in Sydney. In the early part of the century, travel between towns was lengthy and, as Robert Duck Chong recalled of his trip from Tingha to Ashford in about 1911, could be frightening:

*I travelled from Tingha to Inverell by horse and coach in the morning, and then went by mail coach drawn by four horses late in the afternoon and did not reach Ashford till early morning. This was because the driver had a long stop midway. To me, who was about nine years of age at the time, it was frightening as I had to sit alone in the coach with darkness surrounding and the attendant noises ... On reaching Ashford I had to make my way alone to my father's hut which was a few miles away...*¹⁵

Even as distances were reduced through the availability of motor cars, it was not always easy to move between towns. A car had to be borrowed or shared, and trips that in the 1990s take one hour could take anything up to four hours. The distances to the capital cities of Sydney and Brisbane where burgeoning Chinatowns offered a wider community of fellow Chinese and Chinese goods, services, company and support were even greater. Even

¹³ Cathie May, *Topsawyers: The Chinese in Cairns*, James Cook University, Townsville, 1984, pp.105-108 details the rise and fall of Chinatowns in Cairns and district between 1870 and 1920 due to a similar influx and then loss of Chinese. She also argues that the Australian-born Chinese did not have the same needs and tastes as their immigrant predecessors, and this also aided in the demise of the Chinatowns.

¹⁴ On the urbanisation of the Chinese in Australia, see C.Y. Choi, *Chinese Migration and Settlement in Australia*, Sydney University Press, Sydney, 1975, pp.28 and 52. For accounts of the services available in the various metropolitan Chinatowns see, for example, Lawrence Crissman, George Beattie and James Selby, 'The segmentation and integration of the Chinese in Brisbane, Australia', *Journal of Comparative Family Studies*, 16/2, 1985, p.185; Anne Atkinson, 'Some socio-economic aspects of the Chinese community in Perth, 1900-1920', *Early Days*, 9/2, 1984, pp.98-101; V.S. Burrage, *The Chinese community, Sydney, 1870-1901*, MA thesis, Macquarie University, 1975, especially pp.85-90 for a list of some of the businesses; Chris McConville, 'Chinatown' in Graeme Davison, David Dunstan and Chris McConville (eds), *The Outcasts of Melbourne*. Allen and Unwin, Sydney, 1985, pp.58-68; and Janice Wood, *Sydney's second Chinatown - Chinese residency in the Haymarket and Surry Hills, 1880-1902*. Unpublished paper to the 1995 Conference of the Chinese Studies Association of Australia, Macquarie University, July 1995, pp.1-16. See also Roger Daniels, 'Chinese and Japanese in North America: the Canadian and American experiences compared', *Canadian Review of American Studies*, 17/2, 1986, p.178 for an evaluation of the positive side of what a Chinatown had to offer newly arrived immigrants; and Ronald Takaki, *Strangers from a Different Shore: A history of Asian Americans*, Little, Brown and Company, Boston, 1989, pp.253-254.

¹⁵ Interview with Robert Duck Chong, Sydney, 26 April 1991. The distance, today, between Tingha and Ashford is approximately 70 kilometres. Refer to map on p. 4 previously.

once motor cars became the means of transport, a trip to these centres could mean one and a half to two days in each direction.¹⁶

Historically and physically remote from the large centres of Chinese activity and numbers, new arrivals, at least initially, had to depend on Chinese already in the district. Among them, were those who had arrived during the nineteenth century mining booms, had stayed and had settled into a social life shaped by what has been termed a 'bachelor' society evident in comparable overseas Chinese communities.¹⁷ This was a largely all male community whose members spent their leisure time alone or in each other's company. Their leisure activities provided one means of fulfilling some social needs. They also ultimately offered routes to wider social circles and interests.

'Bachelor' Society

The 'bachelor' society had its origins in the communities which had developed in the mining towns. These were communities of men whose lives focused on long hours of hard labour and whose hopes were largely set on returning to China. As in comparable Chinese communities elsewhere in Australia and overseas, leisure time was limited and, what was available, became marked by opium smoking, gambling and prostitution.¹⁸ These pastimes were certainly identified as some of the characteristics of the mining towns of Tingha and Emmaville in the late nineteenth century.¹⁹ The decrease in population and the slow change in the occupational profile of these communities did not witness an abrupt end to these activities.

Robert Duck Chong was born in Tingha in 1900. He has childhood memories of opium smoking and gambling in the town. He also willingly talked about his own wild youth devoted to 'gambling, smoking, sexual activity and stealing' in Tingha and Sydney.²⁰ His willingness to talk about these things was prompted by his conversion in 1922 by the Salvation Army, and his subsequent career in the Army. He spoke of his youth with remorse.²¹ Fortunately, that willingness to talk meant that some insight was given into the

¹⁶ Interview with Derrick Yee, Inverell, 28 February 1990.

¹⁷ See, for example, Anthony B. Chan, *Gold Mountain: The Chinese in the new world*, New Star Books, Vancouver, 1983, pp.74-97.

¹⁸ Burrage, *The Chinese community*, pp.26-27 and 35-48 emphasises these aspects of life in the Chinese community in Sydney, 1870-1901; C.F. Yong, *The New Gold Mountain: The Chinese in Australia*, Raphael Arts, Adelaide, 1977, pp.174-188 examines gambling and opium smoking and action taken against these activities; and Cathie May, *Topsawyers: The Chinese in Cairns*, James Cook University, Townsville, 1984, pp.90-91 and 93-97 provides an analysis of these characteristics and activities as they applied to the Chinese community in Cairns 1870-1920. Chan, *Gold Mountain*, pp.74-85 and Laurence K.L. Siaw, *Chinese Society in Rural Malaysia: A local history of the Chinese in Titi, Jelebu*, Oxford University Press, Kuala Lumpur, 1983, p.31 similarly identify gambling, opium smoking and prostitution as characteristics of Chinese 'bachelor' societies in Canada and Malaysia. Hom, 'Some Cantonese folksongs', pp.136-139 quotes some of the Cantonese folksongs singing the attractions and pitfalls of prostitutes for Chinese men alone in America.

¹⁹ See, for example, Brown, *Tin at Tingha*, p.121 and Wiedemann, *World of its Own*, p.84.

²⁰ Interview with Robert Duck Chong.

²¹ *ibid.*

survival and adaptation of activities which had their Australian origins in the male dominated Chinese communities of the nineteenth century. No other participants in the oral history project on which this history is based talked about prostitutes - a reflection perhaps of the gender differences between interviewees and interviewer. Others did, however, add insights into the place and role of opium smoking and gambling.

Robert Duck Chong could remember visiting the opium dens in Tingha during his childhood,²² and Ernest Sue Fong, born in 1916 could see the figure of Ah Sin, a 'big Mongolian' at Emmaville who 'liked smoking opium. He went black-yellow from it.'²³ Trevor Jack recalled that his father, Fred Jack, who died in 1931,

*...used to act as an interpreter in the early days in Inverell because a lot of the Chinese up there ... used to smoke opium. It was something they had been used to all their lives. Just a pipe at night. They'd have 'sweet dreams' sort of thing and, of course, the police would come down and raid them occasionally. He used to go up and interpret what they were saying ... And probably Harry Fay would have bailed them out.*²⁴

Local newspaper reports and Council Minute Books confirm that opium remained a pastime for some Chinese. In 1902, for example, the *Glen Innes Guardian* reported a dispute over the receipt of a cheque which arose after a bout of opium smoking.²⁵ In 1904 the *Glen Innes Examiner* observed that a local Chinese, Ah Sin, had been transported to the Tamworth hospital with a fractured skull following an assault. Although, the real interest in the story seemed to be the subsequent remark, made with some exclamation, that after a fortnight Ah Sin had left the hospital and was found the next day at his home, smoking his opium pipe. The report concluded:

*The Celestial voluntary [sic] returned to the institution. He stated that his reason for leaving the hospital was that he wanted a smoke.*²⁶

The emphasis was on the addiction to opium so often associated with Chinese. It was an image which was often connected to suspect and possibly immoral behaviour.²⁷ This concern, probably heightened by the then campaign by country storekeepers against their Chinese competitors,²⁸ lay behind a 1904 Inverell Municipal Council directive

22 *ibid.* Eric Fong also recalled opium dens in Tingha. Interviews with Eric Fong, 22 November 1983 and 28 February 1990.

23 Interview with Ernest Sue Fong, Inverell, 27 March 1990.

24 Interview with Trevor Jack, Coonabarabran, 25 June 1990.

25 *Glen Innes Guardian*, 21 January 1902.

26 *Glen Innes Examiner*, 10 June 1904.

27 Yong, *The New Gold Mountain*, pp.179-181 provides an overview of the impact of opium on the Chinese and on attitudes towards them. See also Jan Ryan, *Ancestors: Chinese in Colonial Australia*, Fremantle Arts Centre Press, Fremantle, 1995, pp.86-87 for an account using examples from Perth; and John O'Hara, *A Mug's Game: A history of gaming and betting in Australia*, New South Wales University Press, Sydney, 1988, pp.76-77 and 114 where he argues that the association of opium smoking and gambling in the Chinese communities were used as evidence of the 'disgusting habits and unacceptable values' of the Chinese.

28 See previous Chapter 5, pp 98-101 for an account of this campaign.

*...that the attention of the police be directed to the evils that would arise from the practice of young girls being permitted to smoke opium and to the prevalence of the practice in certain quarters in Oliver Street.*²⁹

In 1911 Ah Choy and Lem Bew were fined £5 for smoking opium, and Charlie Hordern was fined for being the keeper of an opium house.³⁰ Similarly, in 1914, a group of Chinese were fined £40 for running an opium den.³¹ Even as the number of single miners and market gardeners dwindled and after the anti-opium campaigns resulted in some legislative restrictions on the importation and sale of opium,³² there was still evidence that opium smoking provided pleasure for some Chinese. In 1940, for example, Harry Fay appealed on behalf of two Chinese who had been convicted of possessing opium. Harry Fay's references and guarantee and his support from the Labor politician and soon to be premier of New South Wales, W.J. McKell, caused their penalties to be reduced from £40 to £10 and from £10 to £5 respectively.³³

Gambling has also been identified as characteristic of largely male overseas Chinese communities.³⁴ It was a habit which continued among some of the Chinese who settled in and around Glen Innes, Inverell and Tenterfield during the first half of the twentieth century. It was also a habit which had resonances in pastimes pursued by non-Chinese in Australian country towns - horse racing, cards, two up and, eventually, poker machines.³⁵

Certainly, gambling was a remembered activity which occupied parents and grandparents in Australia, and a tradition passed down within families. Harry Fay's children have stories of their maternal grandfather, Lo Lum's, love of gambling. Marina Mar recalled a story often recounted by her uncle, William Liu:

*Grandfather Liu had a hair salon in Wexford Street in Sydney. Upstairs was a residential for country people to stay. ... Uncle Willie maintains that in between haircuts, grandfather would have a game of fan tan. Uncle Willie used to have to entertain the stranded clients by talking and playing the gramophone.*³⁶

Connie Fay (born 1929) remembered from her childhood in South Johnstone and Innisfail in Queensland:

All the Chinese there used to play mah jong all weekend. And wherever they'd go,

29 Inverell Municipal Council Minute Book, 15 August 1904.

30 *Glen Innes Examiner*, 6 April 1911.

31 *Inverell Times*, 30 January 1914.

32 Yong, *The New Gold Mountain*, pp.133-188 provides accounts of the campaigns against the importing and smoking of opium. For a local perspective see Brown, *Tin at Tingha*, p. 123

33 W.J. McKell to Harry Fay, 2 October 1940. Mar Papers.

34 See, for example, Ryan, *Ancestors*, pp. 83-86; Chan, *Gold Mountain*, pp.77-80, and Yong, *The New Gold Mountain*, pp.174-178.

35 For histories of gambling in Australia, particularly its evolution from an illegal pastime to one supported by and benefiting governments see, for example, Charlie Fox, 'In search of a fair bet' in Verity Burgmann and Jenny Lee (eds), *Constructing a Culture*, McPhee Gribble/Penguin, Ringwood, 1988, pp.77-95; and O'Hara, *A Mug's Game*.

36 Interviews with Marina Mar, Sydney, 18 January and 22 March 1984. Also Interview with Eileen Cum, Warialda, 14 February 1984.

*they'd have the cook cooking all the meals and they'd just sit down and play mah jong from morning till night and then get up the next morning and play again ... I can remember the rattle of the ivories all the time. You know, clang, clang, clang, and when they'd get off the table, all us kids would get on the table and play. That's probably why we know how to play mah jong.*³⁷

The 'clang' of mah jong tiles and the flip of playing cards also sounded in northern New South Wales. Robert Duck Chong remembered the 'fan tan joint' in Tingha. In particular he recalled how Tommy Gunn, who 'had a peanut shop selling odds and ends but mostly peanuts' regularly visited the 'fan tan joint'. He also recalled when the building was demolished and how '...we'd be amongst the dirt underneath [the floorboards] - we found lots of coins, sometimes sovereigns even. Chinese were noted gamblers, you know, so they were always gambling.'³⁸ Importantly, he also remembered that the gambling house served a social function as '...a community meeting place for the local Chinese where they could have a light meal and talk.'³⁹ In Inverell, Trevor Jack remembered that, as well as the opium smoking, 'there was a lot of gambling in the early days. Nothing much else to do.'⁴⁰ Eric Fong maintained that Inverell had its own gambling den.⁴¹ A little later, during the 1920s and 1930s, as the Chinese stores became staffed with a new wave of single Chinese men, Albert Yum recollected that mah jong and horse racing were among the men's main leisure pursuits.⁴² Indeed, Arthur Duck Chong had been the owner of the race horse, Golden Girdle, which won the first Inverell Cup.⁴³ Harry Fay shared this love of horse (and dog) racing. As early as 1909 and 1913 there were receipts showing him purchasing ponies from local owners.⁴⁴ By the 1930s he was running dogs at Harold Park in Sydney,⁴⁵ and visits to Sydney, also meant visits to the races. As Sam Woo, who accompanied Harry Fay on some of his Sydney visits, recalled:

*On buying trips to Sydney, Harry Fay used to take me to the races. .. and to the dogs. I learnt some bad habits from him! When I went to Coonabarabran I did have an interest with a couple of horses.*⁴⁶

Harry Fay's interest in horse racing also brought him into contact with members of the local non-Chinese community. In 1945 he became President of the local Inverell Jockey Club and remained in that office until 1961.⁴⁷ In 1977 at the 51st Annual Cup meeting the local newspaper printed an article which commended Harry Fay's long involvement with the Jockey

37 Interview with Connie Fay, Inverell, 27 February 1990.

38 Interview with Robert Duck Chong.

39 Robert Duck Chong to Janis Wilton, 27 April 1991. Duck Chong Papers.

40 Interview with Trevor Jack.

41 Interviews with Eric Fong.

42 Interview with Albert Yum, Sydney, 5 June 1989.

43 *Inverell Times*, 15 October 1976.

44 Handwritten receipts, 1909 and 1913. Mar Papers.

45 (Harry Fay) to Charlie See, C/- C.M. Ping, Haymarket, 2 March 1934. Mar Papers.

46 Interview with Sam Woo, Wyoming NSW, 24 July 1990.

47 *Inverell Times*, 15 October 1976. Also Interview with Eileen Cum.

Club. In particular, it noted his help through becoming a horse owner, buying stables, providing accommodation for visiting jockeys, giving pocket money to out of luck trainees, and during the Second World War organising extra alcohol rations for the Christmas races.⁴⁸

Other Chinese from the period also continued with gambling as a pleasure and pastime. Joe Mah, for example, continued to play mah jong until his death in 1991. For some time he used to commute weekly to Armidale to play with the owner of one of the Chinese restaurants there.⁴⁹ He was also a poker player, an interest he shared with a number of other Chinese still living in Inverell, and a game which was also played with non-Chinese neighbours and friends.⁵⁰

Gambling had been a pursuit identified originally with solitary Chinese men filling their nights and weekends. It remained a pleasure for a number of the Chinese in the district. As it was also a pastime shared by members of the wider non-Chinese local community, it provided a route to contact and respect as local citizens.

Chinese Community Networks

The leisure pursuits established as the mainstays of social life for the Chinese men who had migrated during the mining booms, offered one avenue for filling free time and seeking social interaction. Another avenue was provided through the networks and activities which developed around the stores. It was largely through these networks that the Chinese in the district during the first part of the century found the company and locations for spending their leisure time. Focusing first on other Chinese within the immediate neighbourhood, time was also spent with Chinese in neighbouring towns and, eventually, with Chinese in Sydney and, to a lesser extent, in Brisbane. These networks and activities were shaped by the restricted opportunities offered in rural Australian towns, by the limited time allowed by long and hard working conditions, and by reservations and expectations emerging from Chinese cultural practices.

When asked about leisure time and social life during the first part of the century, a common initial response was to emphasise that there were not the opportunities and facilities of the present. As Thelma Loy explained: 'While we were young there wasn't that much in the way of a social life'.⁵¹ Adults worked long hours and tended to go to bed early. May Lun recalled:

*You didn't have time to socialise ... We used to close the shop [in Texas] and the kids [would] go for a swim at the river and go fishing.*⁵²

48 *Inverell Times*, 23 December 1977. See also *Inverell Times*, 10 September 1962.

49 Interview with Joe Mah.

50 *ibid.* See also Interview with Pat Yee, Inverell, 4 June 1990.

51 Interview with Thelma Loy, Inverell, 14 February 1984.

52 Interview with May Lun, Surfers Paradise, 23 February 1990.

Picture theatres offered an occasional outing.⁵³ There were also some reservations on the part of parents and older Chinese about the appropriateness of the younger family members and employees going out too often, especially unsupervised. Betty Young, who grew up in Granville, Sydney, explained:

*Well, you know how the Chinese don't like you going out to the pictures and all this, or going out with other people - I wasn't allowed to do that ... Although, in the end we did. With friends we could go to the pictures but not on our own unless we had somebody with us.*⁵⁴

Not surprisingly, visits were mainly between friends and family. It was made easier within the towns because the Chinese clustered in particular streets. In Inverell, the men who had accommodation at the store were within easy reach of the increasing number of Chinese couples and families who had houses along Oliver Street which ran along the back of the Hong Yuen store. May Lun recalled living in Oliver Street during the 1930s:

*We had good neighbours, a lot of Chinese neighbours. The Fays and Mahs and the Fongs, they all lived there. Nearly like a Chinatown.*⁵⁵

In Glen Innes, Kwan clan members initially had houses at the back of Kwong Sing. Cousins grew up with each other as playmates. As Barry Young recalled, this still applied in the late 1940s and early 1950s:

*...at that stage we used to all live behind Kwong Sings. There were about six families there, semi-communal living. There were the Chinese cooks at the back of the shop and they used to prepare lunch and tea, and we'd all go up with a container and get this food and take it home to our own houses and eat that. That was probably the first memories ... playing around the back of the shop, mainly with cousins.*⁵⁶

In Tenterfield, both Hop Sing and Company and Sun Sun and Company were situated in the northern end of the main thoroughfare, Rouse Street. The Hong family lived behind their store. In Tingha, the stores and homes concentrated in the area around the Wing Hing Long and Sam Kee stores.⁵⁷

There are memories of visits between homes and between neighbouring towns, as Chinese sought out other Chinese with whom to spend their leisure time. The remembered activities echo with images of Australian rural and leisure pursuits contained within specifically Chinese friendships and networks. Robert Duck Chong recalled that, in the Tingha of his childhood and adolescence, there were evenings spent around a piano:

...there were six Chinese homes where pianos could be located and these were a real

53 Interviews with Pat Yee, and with Elaine Jang, Brisbane, 21 September 1991.

54 Interview with Betty Young, Glen Innes, 25 June 1991.

55 Interview with May Lun. See also Interviews with Eric Fong. Wiedemann, *World of its Own*, pp.106 and 183 identified this northern end of Byron Street and Oliver Street as the centre of the Chinese residential and business area in late nineteenth century Inverell.

56 Interview with Barry Young, Inverell, 1 February 1990.

57 Interview with Robert Duck Chong.

*source of pleasure... sing songs aplenty.*⁵⁸

Sam Woo, who worked and lived at Hong Yuen in Inverell during the 1930s, recalled visiting friends in Tingha and spending evenings there:

I was the only one that had a car at the time. We'd pack into the car and go out there. We had friends [the Kays, Tet Fongs] out at Tingha. There were old dams out there they had for mining. They used to be full of water. We'd put these cork floats on and go and swim in the dam with the geese and the ducks.

*Mrs Tet Fong, ... was a great old cook. She'd always have a big tea there and invited us boys over with the whole of her family ... There were quite a few families used to do that. Have tea out there and have a sing-song around the piano and that sort of thing ... and go home at night.*⁵⁹



Swimming, c1930.⁶⁰

Pat Yee, who moved to Tingha in the mid 1940s, remembered her social life there as 'some of the best years' of her life. Her memories were of the gatherings of friends:

We had to make our own fun... There were the Fongs, who had Sam Kees. There were about six or eight of them and there were three of us. Then there were ... the Quays... We used to have a ball. ... A couple of us girls used to play the piano, there'd be one on the treble, one on the bass. One of the boys had a set of drums, another one had a sax, trombone, and we used to go down to the Fongs because they had a big living area down there... and Mrs Fong was very tolerant. ... And we'd get down there on Saturday nights and anybody who played an instrument played it.. ...The ones who didn't have an instrument sang, and this went on most Saturday nights. And then sometimes we'd go over to the hall because the Fongs owned the dance hall down there.

58 *ibid.*

59 Interview with Sam Woo

60 Yum Photographs.

*We'd go over and wind up the old gramophone and learn to dance ... and sometimes some of them would roller skate. Weekends we'd play tennis or go bike riding or something like that.*⁶¹

For the young men employed in the Hong Yuen network, it was particularly enticing to visit those stores whose owners had daughters. The Hon family in Tenterfield fell into this category. There were seven daughters. Photographs taken in the Hon backyard depict gatherings of Chinese from the district.



Gathering at the Hons' home, Tenterfield, 1930s.⁶²



Gathering at the Hons' home, Tenterfield. 1930s.⁶³

61 Interview with Pat Yee.
 62 Yum Photographs.
 63 *ibid.*

There were also visits further afield. There are photographs and memories of friends and relatives in Gunnedah, Young and Braidwood. Albert Yum, for example, recalled a weekend trip he made with Ruby Fay and her daughters in the mid 1930s:

...we all crammed into this lovely big car. And we went down to Walcha where we met the Tangars there. I found out later that he was originally working for Hong Yuens ... So we went down there and stayed overnight, then off to Gunnedah, stayed overnight there with the O Youngs. They had a general store over there. And then - where did we go? Boggabri, some old friends of Mrs Fay. We were away about three or four nights.⁶⁴



Gladys, Ruth and Marjorie O Young, Gunnedah, mid 1930s.⁶⁵

There were also trips to Sydney. These were usually buying trips and visits to the warehouses for ordering and purchasing goods for the stores. They invariably also meant visits to friends and family. Choy Mon Ping's general store at 12 Campbell Street in the Haymarket which supplied the country stores with many of their Chinese goods⁶⁶, was one destination. The store offered accommodation. As Choy Mon Ping's daughter, Constance Choy, recalled, there were regular visits by members of the Fay and Lun families, by Harry, Percy and Selena Yee from Glen Innes, by Doris, Reg and Ernest Yum, and, after their marriage, Eileen and Charles Cum.⁶⁷ Sam Woo accompanied Harry Fay on a number of his buying trips to Sydney and he remembered that they regularly stayed at C.M.Ping's. Sam Woo reflected:

I don't know whether he [Harry Fay] had an interest in it [C.M.Ping's]. It was like the old Chinese tradition. You had the shop underneath where he sold Chinese goods and above the shop was the living quarters and we always stayed there. Even Harry

⁶⁴ Interview with Albert Yum. This would have been a round trip of between 600 and 700 kilometres.

⁶⁵ Yum Photographs. The O Youngs owned a general store in Gunnedah.

⁶⁶ See Chapter 6, pp.133-134 previously for an account of these supplies.

⁶⁷ Interviews with Constance Choy, Sydney, 23 May 1990 and 22 April 1991.

*Fay's family when they arrived, there was always accommodation there for his family.*⁶⁸

Sam Woo remembered that one of the highlights of these trips was dining out at the Nankin restaurant. Harry Fay was a partner in the business and, on visits to Sydney, would dine at the restaurant: 'they'd have these thirteen course meals there. They'd put them on for Mr Fay.'⁶⁹

Harvey Young recalled visits to Sydney with his father: 'We'd go on buying trips. Socially we'd go down because some of the family were down there.' Sometimes they stayed with family; at other times, they stayed in the Metropole Hotel.⁷⁰ Similarly, Derrick Yee accompanied his father, Arthur Yee, to Sydney and, through those visits, became familiar with members and services within the Sydney Chinese community:

The way we got to Sydney ... Dad would never travel in a sedan car and so our trips to Sydney, we usually went when one of our carriers went to trade-in one of his old fashioned white trucks and bring back another truck. It was always a two day drive each way, you'd drive on these rough old trucks from Bundarra right through to Sydney and bring the new one back.

*This is where I got to know Dixon and Campbell Street in those days. Because the Chinese are a very closely knit community and ... we knew some Chinese folk in Campbell Street who had a green grocers store and I had to stay upstairs over the store while Dad was in the city. ... That was where I got to know where all the Chinese cafes were in Sydney...*⁷¹

By the time of these visits in the 1930s and 1940s, the business and community networks along which the Chinese moved were well established. They were essentially Chungshan networks which wove in and around the country stores and included some of the merchants in Sydney.⁷² They were networks which also included some of the formal Chinese organisations. Of the Chinese from the area around Glen Innes, Inverell and Tenterfield, Harry Fay from Hong Yuen in Inverell, was quite active in these circles.⁷³ From surviving correspondence, it is evident that Harry Fay was a regular contributor to Chinese organisations like the Chinese Citizens Association of New South Wales, the Chinese Nationalist League (the Kuomintang), and the Chinese Comforts Fund.⁷⁴ He was a member

68 Interview with Sam Woo.

69 *ibid.*

70 Interview with Harvey Young, Glen Innes, 16 February 1990.

71 Interview with Derrick Yee.

72 Burrage, *The Chinese community*, p.141, emphasises that the Chungshan societies and merchants were among the most powerful groups in the Sydney Chinese community at the turn of the century.

73 It is possible that other Chinese from the district were as active. The available evidence, however, has mainly come from Fay family archives and, hence, the focus on Harry Fay.

74 Receipt for donation of £100 from Mew Fay, Chinese Citizens Association of NSW, no date; Receipt for donation of £200 from Louie Mew Fay, NSW Chinese Special National Contribution Fund, 14 January 1943; Receipt for donation towards building renovation, Kuo Min Tang, 28 February 1943. Mar Letters, 185, 255, 338. Also Requests for donations, Chinese Comforts Fund, undated and 1944. Mar Letters, 35, 86, 267 and 268. In 1944, £78 was sent from Inverell via the Bank of China to the Chinese Comforts Fund. Handwritten Note. Mar Letters, 268.

of the New South Wales Chinese Chamber of Commerce⁷⁵ and, in the early 1950s, his standing within the merchant elite was such that he was elected as an executive director of the Chinese Merchants Association (Sydney).⁷⁶ His support for Chinese affairs extended to fund raising campaigns. During the 1930s and 1940s, for example, he was actively involved in collecting funds and support for the campaign to defeat the Japanese invasion of China. In 1937, he wrote to the Chinese Consul-General describing a successful fundraising tour:

*Dear Dr Pao ... During the last three days we covered more than a thousand miles soliciting China War Chest funds - covering Goondiwindi, Moree, Walgett and other intermediate towns returning to Inverell after mid-night and I can assure you I am a very tired man today - still the good response from our struggling countrymen wherever we visited adequately compensate us for our efforts in doing our bit for our brave fighters in China. I have now reached over the two thousand pounds figure.*⁷⁷

In the same year, Harry Fay was involved in a concert organised by the Chinese Masonic group in Sydney to raise funds for the China War Relief Fund. In a photograph of the event, Harry Fay can be seen sixth from the left in the front row.



Chinese Masonic fundraising event for the China War Relief Fund, 1937.⁷⁸

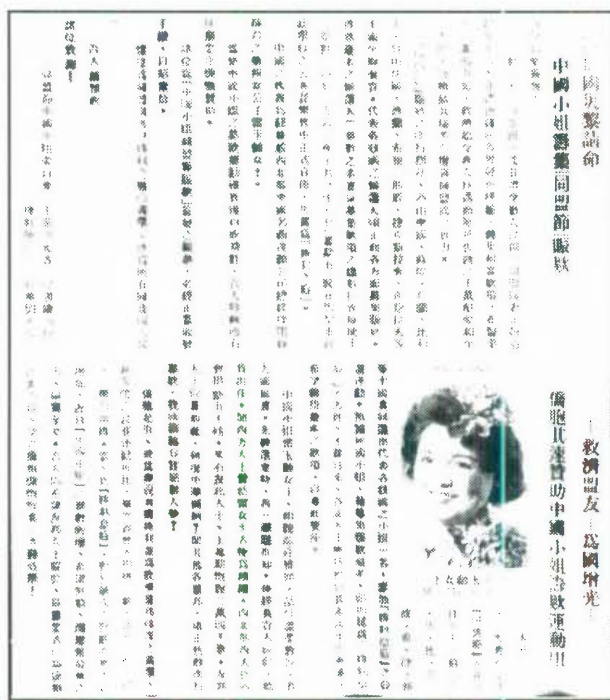
- ⁷⁵ Printed circulars, Chinese Chamber of Commerce, 22 June 1947, 29 November 1943, April/May 1943; and undated. *Mar Letters*, 140, 280, 333, and 341. Also *Inverell Times*, 18 July 1973.
- ⁷⁶ Chinese Merchants Association of NSW to Louie Mew Fay, 9 April 1952. *Mar Letters*, 518. The correspondence enclosed a list of committee members.
- ⁷⁷ Harry Fay to Dr Pao, 22 September 1937. Fay Papers. For an account of the campaign waged by the Chinese-Australian community to win public support for the Chinese cause see E.M. Andrews, *Australia and China: The ambiguous relationship*, Melbourne University Press, Melbourne, 1985, Chapter 3. William Liu, Harry Fay's brother-in-law, was active in this campaign and the *Inverell Times*, 27 October 1937, included an article by Liu on the Sino-Japanese conflict.
- ⁷⁸ *Mar Photographs*.

By 1942 Japan was a common enemy of China and Australia, and the Fay family along with other Chinese-Australians joined with members of the local non-Chinese community to support the common cause.⁷⁹ In that year, for example, Harry Fay's daughter, Marjorie, was elected by the Chinese community as their representative in the Miss Allies' Queen Quest. The idea was to collect as many penny votes as possible and the candidate with the greatest number of votes would be crowned Queen. The money raised was to provide comforts and medical needs for allied soldiers. Support came from within the Chinese community in Sydney and beyond, and from throughout the local non-Chinese communities in the north west. Local newspapers reported:

One of the most successful dances and euchre parties ever held at Texas, was on Saturday night in aid of the Miss China Appeal.⁸⁰

Miss Fay is a northern girl, and the only country competitor ... it is anticipated that good support will come to her from the country centres.⁸¹

At the reception held in the Wentworth Hotel, Sydney, Miss China was announced the winner.



Publicity for Marjorie Fay as Miss China in the fundraising Miss Allies' Queen Quest, 1942.⁸²

79 Some of the young Australian-born Chinese men who were employed in the stores during the 1930s, had already joined other Chinese-Australians in the defence forces. Among those who joined were Trevor Jack, Frank Sue Fong, and Albert Yunn. Interviews with Connie Fay, Trevor Jack, Ernest Sue Fong and Albert Yum. For background on Chinese-Australians in the defence forces see Morag Loh and Judith Winternitz (eds), *Dinky-Di: The contributions of Chinese immigrants and Australians of Chinese descent to Australia's defence forces and war efforts 1899-1988*, AGPS, Canberra, 1989.

80 *Inverell Times*, 20 July 1942.

81 *Inverell Times*, 24 July 1942.

82 Cum Photographs.

The contacts and networks which made it possible for Harry Fay to raise funds successfully within the Chinese community, also produced Chinese dignitaries who visited Inverell and who attended Fay family functions. Harry Fay's eldest daughter, Eileen Cum, for example, recalled:

*I got married in 1938 ... Dad was good friends with the Consul-General, and as we were having our wedding in Sydney, Dr Pao offered his home for the reception.*⁸³

In 1941, when Harry and Ruby Fay celebrated their silver wedding anniversary, the local newspaper reported that, among the guests, were the Chinese dignitaries Dr Pao, Hung, and Narm.⁸⁴ Later in the same year it was reported that the new Chinese Consul-General, M.L. Tuan, would attend the wedding of Thelma Fay to Thomas Loy in Inverell.⁸⁵



Visiting dignitaries and members of the Chinese community in Inverell for Harry and Ruby Fay's 25th wedding anniversary, 1941.⁸⁶

Correspondence files further confirm the extent of the business and community networks which included the stores and their owners. There was correspondence between storekeepers within the district and beyond sending greetings, providing invitations to weddings, requesting help, offering thanks for assistance given, and detailing the arrival of visitors.⁸⁷ There were also reciprocal visits, not just by Chinese dignitaries. During the

83 Interview with Eileen Cum.

84 *Inverell Times*, 19 March 1941.

85 *Inverell Times*, 27 December 1941.

86 Mar Photographs.

87 The Mar Letters have many examples. See, for example, Ma Hong Leung to Mew Fay, 3 January 1945 requesting assistance to go into the poultry business; Sing Sing and Company, Quirindi, to Mew Fay, 18 May 1945 requesting 'As you are a good friend of the Agricultural Minister, Scully, please as a favour from him on my behalf.'; Yeung Man Shong (Stanley), Yong Gee Fruit Store, Richmond, Queensland, to Mew Fay, 29 August 1945, condolences on the death of your wife and thanks for assistance; Kwan

Second World War, for example, C.M.Ping sent three of his children to Inverell to remove them from the seemingly close threat imposed when the Japanese submarines made their way in to Sydney harbour.⁸⁸ His son, Ron Ping, recalled that members of other Sydney Chinese families had also been sent to Inverell:

The Mah Chutts, I can remember them. They were in our same street, King Street.

*And then there were the Lowes, and the Mars, Climie Mar was up there.*⁸⁹

Relatives and friends of employees at the store also paid visits. Albert Yum's mother, Mary Yum, for example, occasionally visited one or other of her sons who were working in the stores. The photograph below shows her with Albert Yum in Texas when he was working at the Hong Yuen store there. It was a visit to his sister, May Lun, which originally brought Charles Cum to Inverell. He eventually married Harry Fay's eldest daughter, Eileen.⁹⁰



Albert Yum with his mother, Mary Yum, in Texas, 1930s.⁹¹

These same networks also produced occasions for gatherings of family and the extended Chinese community. As Ken Gett recalled:

In the old days, they used to have their birthdays and their weddings and we'd all

Kwong Hoon, Kwong Sing, Glen Innes to Mew Fay, 31 October 19? re intention to visit soon; Louie Mun Hing, A.W. Johnson and Company, Walgett to Mew Fay, undated, letter of greeting; Suen Bing Fay, S.K. Hing and Company, Muswellbrook to Mew Fay, 24 August 1943, letter of greetings; Wong Yuk Kuen, Ah Chee Brothers, Boggabilla to Uncle Mew Fay, 12 January 1951 requesting a loan. Mar Letters, 69a, 70, 80, 82, 171, 192, 479.

88 Interviews with Constance Choy; and Interview with Ron Ping, Sydney, 22 April 1991.

89 Interview with Ron Ping

90 Interview with Eileen Cum.

91 Yum Photographs.

*congregate at Casino or in Glen Innes with these parties.*⁹²

Many of these occasions were reported in the local newspapers, and they became fixed in the images captured in family photograph albums and through individual's memories. They symbolised the extent to which the community networks which had evolved around the stores, provided a means for Chinese in the district to mix socially with each other and to extend their activities beyond the district.

The networks ensured that social life had a strong anchor within Chinese communities. Sometimes, interests coincided with those of members of the non-Chinese communities. This happened in relation to gambling, the leisure pursuits available to rural residents, and the desire to defeat the common enemy of Japan during the Second World War. These common pursuits assisted in building bridges between Chinese and non-Chinese.

Building Bridges

From early on there was a recognition among the Chinese storekeepers that successful business and settlement in Australia entailed gaining acceptance and becoming involved in local non-Chinese communities. This required adopting strategies which emphasised that the Chinese provided a positive contribution and presence in the district. It was not enough to pursue overt marketing and business strategies.⁹³ Efforts also had to be made to demonstrate that there was a commitment to the wider concerns and lifestyles of the non-Chinese communities.

In Sydney, Chinese merchants like Quong Tart had already shown how building bridges between Chinese and non-Chinese could be profitable, socially and financially.⁹⁴ Whether they intended to settle permanently or not, the storekeepers could not enclose themselves solely within the Chinese community. They had to take steps towards being citizens of their Australian rural towns. To this end, these Chinese could be found as regular and generous contributors to local charities and causes, and their contributions were praised in this light. For example, on his departure from Glen Innes in 1912, one alderman praised Wong Chee, manager of Kwong Sing, as '... a most charitable and exemplary citizen ... [whose] hands had always been in his pocket for the benefit of the entire community.'⁹⁵ Another alderman '...personally regarded Mr Chee as one of the best citizens they ever had.'⁹⁶ This same man also offered his highest accolade which, today, doubles as a clear indication of the racism of

92 Interview with Ken Gett.

93 These were discussed in Chapter 6, pp.109-113 previously.

94 Robert Travers, *Australian Mandarin: The life and times of Quong Tart*, Kangaroo Press, Sydney, 1981. Although note the review of the book by Jennifer Cushman, 'A "Colonial Casualty": the Chinese in Australian historiography', *ASAA Review*, 7/3, April 1984, pp.104-105. For further examples of Chinese merchants successfully working towards establishing reputable reputations within the non-Chinese community see Yong, *The New Gold Mountain*, pp.45 and 80-96.

95 *Glen Innes Examiner*, 28 November 1911.

96 *ibid.*

the times, when he went on to praise Wong Chee as '...moreover ... a white man in every shape and form.'⁹⁷ Certainly, newspaper reports indicate that, at least as far as Wong Chee's generosity towards local charities was concerned, the praise was well founded. The reports show that, from as early as 1880 through to his departure in 1912, Wong Chee was a regular donor to local charities and welfare organisations, to individuals in need, and to local sports groups and associations.⁹⁸

Wong Chee was not alone. Other Chinese in the district were similarly recorded as giving donations and recognised for their community service. In the Tingha Hospital Report of 1912, for example, of the 72 donors listed, at least 42 were Chinese.⁹⁹ In the 1912 and 1915 subscription lists for the same hospital, again the Chinese were well represented. In particular, the stores of Wing Hing Long and Sam Kee were among those paying the highest subscription rates.¹⁰⁰ In the 1939 obituary for Fong Quain Lowe, wife of Jack Joe Lowe of the Wing Hing Long store in Tingha, her activities for the local Red Cross, the Country Women's Association and the district hospital were particularly mentioned and praised.¹⁰¹ Dulcie Hon similarly recalled that her mother, Cecilia Hon, wife of Harry Hon of the Sun Sun store in Tenterfield, became involved in the local Red Cross and the family gained a reputation for assisting local charities.¹⁰² Dulcie Hon's reflections were confirmed by long time Tenterfield resident, Dulcie Rose, who remembered the Hon family as being 'marvellous to the community. They were always willing to help with the underprivileged.'¹⁰³ Harry Fay elected to furnish the local ambulance station as a memorial to his first wife, Ruby, who died in 1945. He was also noted for his support for the local youth hostel, his contributions to Rotary, and for the goods he sent to the Far West home in Sydney.¹⁰⁴ On his death, Percy Young was commended in the local newspaper for his generosity towards the 'welfare of the town and district'.¹⁰⁵ Ken Gett reflected that it was his oldest brother, Albert, who became involved with the local community in Emmaville raising money for the war effort during the Second World War, acting as treasurer for the local church. On being asked whether his father, Walter, was similarly involved, Ken Gett replied:

*... he used to donate money and goods ... to the church, the war effort, the school, that type of thing.*¹⁰⁶

97 *ibid.*

98 See, for example, *Glen Innes Examiner*, 31 August 1880, 23 October 1900, 1 November 1901, 3 and 24 February 1903, and 9 December 1912.

99 Tingha Hospital Report, 1912. Griffey Papers.

100 List of subscribers, Tingha Hospital Reports, 1912 and 1915. Griffey Papers.

101 *Inverell Times*, 20 October 1939.

102 Interview with Dulcie Hon, 23 May 1990. Although the image was tarnished a little when Dulcie Hon observed that her mother became a bit disenchanted with the Country Women's Association when, on applying for membership, she was rejected.

103 Interview with Dulcie Rose, Tenterfield, 5 May 1990.

104 Interviews with Eileen Cum, 14 February 1984 and 18 August 1987; and *Inverell Times*, 15 October 1976.

105 *Glen Innes Examiner*, 2 June 1942.

106 Interview with Ken Gett.

The pattern is familiar. Chinese in other localities were similarly generous in giving to charities and, when they could, in becoming involved in community service.¹⁰⁷ The *Glen Innes Examiner* in 1903 thought the generosity of the Chinese in Sydney of sufficient merit to report it in the newspaper.¹⁰⁸ The significance for the Chinese in and around Glen Innes, Inverell and Tenterfield, however, was not just that they repeated a pattern evident elsewhere. It was also that their generosity and community service linked them into the specific needs and culture of rural towns. More so than in metropolitan centres, local charities and service organisations were (and are) one route to business success and acceptability in small rural communities. They provided forums in which local business people became known to each other, in which they could trade contacts and concerns, and in which they could offer support. As Derrick Yee, by then a practising solicitor, explained of his later (1950s) involvement with service clubs in Inverell:

*It was a very important part of living in a country town. ... it gets you out to meet people. That's what happens in the beginning and whether you like it or not, it helps your practice because people meet you, they know who you are, and they come to you for their work. Not all of them, but you get a lot of contacts that way .. Not ..that I've ever joined a service club for those reasons... it just happens that way.'*¹⁰⁹

Ted Lumbewe's father had advised him to join the Freemasons for similar reasons:

*I remember my Dad saying, 'you know, when you grow up you want to consider going into Freemasonry because of the association with friends and people.'*¹¹⁰

This concern on the part particularly of Chinese storekeepers to establish standing within the local non-Chinese community reached beyond giving to charity and involvement in community service. It also entailed employing non-Chinese staff as shop assistants, establishing rapport and relations with fellow business people in town, and presenting a public face of respectability. It was a concern which evolved as the century progressed and as business ventures became both more prosperous and more dependent on local community support. The evolution is illustrated through photographs of store picnics. The early photographs portray the dominant number of Chinese men. They tended to be dressed in suits, posed fairly formally, and presented an image of respectability. By the 1920s, the formally posed photographs reveal an increasing number of women, both Chinese and non-Chinese, and of non-Chinese men. The tone had echoes of an adaptation to family and community picnics, a coming together of people from different areas. Jessie Higgins recalled:

Moree and Inverell would meet. And we'd have races and competitions and things like

¹⁰⁷ See, for example, Morag Loh, *Sojourners and Settlers: Chinese in Victoria 1848-1985*, Victorian Government China Advisory Committee Sesquicentenary Publication, Melbourne, 1985, p.10; May, *Topsawyers*, pp.202-204; and Atkinson, *Chinese capital and labour in Western Australia*, pp.232-233.

¹⁰⁸ *Glen Innes Examiner*, 30 October 1903.

¹⁰⁹ Interviews with Derrick Yee, Inverell, 28 February 1990 and 5 June 1990.

¹¹⁰ Interview with Ted Lumbewe, Inverell, 7 June 1990. For an account which highlights membership of these clubs as a sign of the local acceptance of Chinese residents, see Chapter 10, pp.242-244 following.

*that. Also, we would meet up with people from Kwong Sing. The Fays would supply all the food, and the travellers would often give something towards the picnic.*¹¹¹

Snapshots evoke the more relaxed atmosphere with picnic rugs and baskets, games, people mixing and mingling. The storekeepers were providing a day of pleasure for employees while also reaching out to embrace, at least for business purposes, images of Australian small country town leisure, respectability and acceptance.



Kwong Sing, Glen Innes, picnic, 1907.¹¹²



Hong Yuen, Inverell and Moree, picnic, early 1920s.¹¹³

¹¹¹ Interview with Jessie Higgins, Inverell, 7 February 1984.

¹¹² Cum Photographs. The girl in the front row with the wide brimmed hat is Ruby Fay (nee Wong Chee); the man sitting in the second row just to the left of Ruby Fay and wearing a bowler hat is her adopted father, Wong Chee.

¹¹³ Cum Photographs.



Hong Yuen, Inverell, picnic, early 1920s.¹¹⁴

Sport provided a similar route, especially team and group sports. Football, cricket, tennis and hockey were high on the list of leisure time activities identified by the younger Chinese, especially the Australian-born Chinese, who worked and lived in the district from the 1920s to the late 1940s. Many had been introduced to the sports while at school, and had found, for example, that ability on the football field could ease acceptance into the wider community. Some of the local Chinese became well known for their football prowess. Robert Duck Chong remembered that the Hay boys in Tingha were 'champion footballers'.¹¹⁵ Derrick Yee, who attended the state high school in Inverell, got into the school's first thirteen and became captain the following year.¹¹⁶ The rough and tumble competitive sport also appealed to Harry Fay Senior. He became a sponsor of local footballers. As Thomas Loy recalled:

At one stage there were about seven or eight of us footballers all working here at Hong Yuen [Inverell]. Harry Fay gave us jobs. He even backed the football team. He'd go to every game. ... We'd have time off to play football and to go to practice. I played for the Inverell team and then for the Tingha team for a couple of years. Those were the days when you'd have the Spicer Cup, the Fay Cup, the Cansdells Cup. You'd have a local competition and then the best were picked out to go and play in the city. We'd go to Sydney or Newcastle.¹¹⁷

Albert Yum similarly recalled that some of the men on the Hong Yuen staff, Chinese and non-Chinese, were employed at least partly because they were footballers.¹¹⁸ Tommy Young, then owner/manager of the Sam Kee store in Tingha, was also a football sponsor. There is a photograph of him with the football team he sponsored. Trevor Jack identified many

114 Fay Photographs.

115 Interview with Robert Duck Chong.

116 Interviews with Derrick Yee.

117 Interview with Thomas Loy, Inverell, 15 February 1984.

118 Interview with Albert Yum

members of the team, and described it as the Northern New South Wales Chinese Rugby Team.



Hong Yuen football team, early 1930s.¹¹⁹



Northern New South Wales Chinese rugby team, early 1930s.¹²⁰

119 Cum Photographs.

120 Yum Photographs. *Back row, left to right:* Trevor Jack, Albert Yum, Harry Tet Fong, Tommy Young (sponsor of the football team), Colin Bing On, ?, ?, ?; *Front row, left to right:* Sam Tet Fong, Bill Manwar, Ray Tong, Bill Tet Fong, Gordon Bing On, Cecil (?Jack). Identified by Trevor Jack. Field notes, 25 June 1990.

Cricket was another sport which found team members from among staff at Hong Yuen. As Trevor Jack explained:

*Hong Yuen had their own cricket team. Complete team which Harry Fay outfitted. All their blazers and clothes. Paid for the lot.*¹²¹

Albert Yum remembered that they used to 'ring in' commercial travellers to play with them.¹²² Sam Woo's recollections provided further detail:

*We used to get up and play cricket on Sundays. That was one thing we used to do. Go out and play cricket. We had a cricket team and we used to go out and play all these little places like Elsmore and Bundarra and so forth. And we'd go out there on Sundays and play cricket. Not that we'd play much but ... it was good public relations.*¹²³

Tennis also became a preferred and enjoyed leisure time pursuit, another way of spending the small amount of time free from labouring in the stores. Trevor Jack described the tennis routine:

*We used to play tennis every Sunday. After working Sunday morning, then at 1 o'clock you'd go out and play tennis. ... You played all the little areas around - Gum Flat, Elsmore ... you'd go and play there and then we'd be fed grandma pie. I don't think I've eaten grandma pie since!*¹²⁴

As with football and cricket, tennis not only filled leisure hours it also caused the Chinese employees to mingle, at least a little, with members of the local community and to further the move towards building bridges between Chinese and non-Chinese.

For some, there are memories of what appeared a genuine lowering of the barriers. Ken Gett, for example, recalled that 1930s and 1940s Emmaville was very accepting of his family who, by then, owned the store, Yow Sing and Company. He reflected:

*Really, we had more people showing us good will than ill will. We were fortunate really. I think that one of the reasons is - I'd say we were an atypical Chinese family. People used to think Chinese were dirty, untidy or even immoral. The usual stereotype of Chinese in those days - we were completely different really. ... We were fairly well off. In Emmaville, we lived in probably one of the best houses in the town. ... and we owned a prestige sort of car. In the town our status was slightly above what they normally expected from Chinese people. Also, being in business and being employers had a certain amount of prestige or power, I suppose, because you are employing people. ...and my mother was very religious too and that's not very Chinese.*¹²⁵

Respectability, discrediting stereotypes of Chinese, being in business and contributing through commerce and offering jobs, being generous to local causes - Ken Gett implicitly

121 Interview with Trevor Jack.

122 Interview with Albert Yum.

123 Interview with Sam Woo

124 Interview with Trevor Jack.

125 Interview with Ken Gett. These sentiments of acceptance by the local community were echoed by a number of interviewees. It is a point taken up again in Chapter 10, pp.242-244 following.

recognised all these as factors which shaped the behaviour of his father, his family and other Chinese in stores in the district. It was into this aura of respectability or, at least striving for it, that newly arrived Chinese were inducted. They too, as assistants in the business enterprises, needed to learn how to interact with the local non-Chinese community. If they were overseas-born, they needed to learn the language, to dress appropriately, and to behave in a fitting manner. For most, learning what was needed was a task they had to accomplish on their own: studying at night, listening in the shop, teaching each other. Oscar Fatt recalled his father, Frank Fatt, explaining how, when he came to Australia early in the century, 'he couldn't speak English but he taught himself. He used to write it down and study it.'¹²⁶ Ivy Fay recounted a similar story told by her husband, Harry Fay, about how he acquired sufficient English to work in the store and, eventually, to manage and own a store:

*He tried to learn English by candlelight. He used to ask the staff 'Tell me some more will you?' They said, 'No, we can't teach you. You learn yourself.' He said, 'I'll clean your shoes for you. I'll do your washing. I'll do all your work for you. But teach me some more.' So he used to polish their shoes, do their washing and they'd teach him a bit more. Right 'Sugar, sugar, sugar, tea, tea, tea, flour, flour, flour.' He'd write all these things - he was in the groceries see. He'd write hundreds and hundreds so he learnt how to write and how to read.'*¹²⁷

Lawrence Ping Kee expressed the need, and the solution, quite simply:

*No English on arrival in Australia. Well, that's the idea, in the shop you meet so many people, if you don't learn English you can't talk!*¹²⁸

Stories like these also become symbols for the self-made man: showing resourcefulness to learn the skills necessary to survive and prosper in an alien environment.¹²⁹ Others recalled that there was some assistance available to learn the needed skills. Ken Gett remembered that tutors were brought to Kwong Sing in Glen Innes to help his father, Walter Gett, to learn English.¹³⁰ For the Australian-born the tasks should have been easier. Already familiar with English, they had also grown up negotiating the different worlds imbedded in being Chinese in Australia. Many, like Ernest Sue Fong and Thomas Loy, had attended school in Australia, and some had already worked in family stores or in stores owned by other Chinese. Sam Woo, for example, had spent time working in Chinese stores in Edmonton and Ingham in Queensland.¹³¹

¹²⁶ Interview with Oscar Fatt, Edna and David Pang, and Daisy Yee, Sydney, 19 July 1990.

¹²⁷ Interview with Ivy Fay, Sydney, 2 June 1989.

¹²⁸ Interview with Lawrence Ping Kee, Moree, 26 March 1990.

¹²⁹ Similar stories were also recalled by Daisy Yee about her father, Percy Young; and by Sam Woo about his father. They are stories which are echoed through migrant recollections more generally. See, for example, Wilton and Bosworth, *Old Worlds and New Australia*, pp. 86-87. For a discussion of 'the migrant success story' as a narrative structure in the oral histories, refer to Chapter 3, pp.58-59 previously.

¹³⁰ Interview with Ken Gett.

¹³¹ Interview with Sam Woo.

Some barriers came down. Prospering and expanding businesses attested to this.¹³² However, the long history of Australian racism had left a legacy which was not easy to overcome. The Chinese, for the most part, remained outsiders in the social life of these rural towns. Harry Fay's son, Harry Fay II, explained it this way:

*I remember what Pop [Harry Fay Senior] used to say: 'They'll kiss your feet in the store but ignore you on Central Railway.'*¹³³

For the increasing number of single young men who congregated around the stores during the 1920s and 1930s, the situation was particularly frustrating. Albert Yum, who worked in the Hong Yuen store in Inverell during the 1930s, recalled:

Albert Yum : *...One of the sad points of all this I reckon was, here we were 20 or 30 boys, most of us bachelors and no girls, no courting. No social life at all. Well, ... at Inverell they had a dance every Friday night.. and later, at Tingha, when Tommy Young converted a place there for a dance paladium. We went there once or twice but that was a bit too far to go - there were no buses or anything.*

Janis Wilton : *And would you go to the Friday night dance in Inverell?*

Albert Yum : *No. We had no girlfriends to take.*

Janis Wilton : *And so you couldn't meet girls there?*

Albert Yum : *It wouldn't be acceptable. Cruel in a way but that's the only thing I had against the country...*¹³⁴

Barriers were overcome but only to an extent. Mixing on the sportsfield, at the gambling table, for business purposes, charity and service organisations, and occasional public social functions provided face-saving and essential means of accommodating Chinese businessmen, their staff and families. Social interaction at a more personal level was more difficult. There were, of course, friendships formed between Chinese and non-Chinese and there were marriages but, by and large, the tenor of the times dictated that social interaction occurred primarily in public spheres. It was a social environment which assisted in reinforcing the dictum that secure, comfortable and culturally appropriate social interaction occurred most easily within the network of Chinese communities.

- **Weddings and Marriage Patterns**

Weddings and marriage patterns provide fitting examples of the uneasy mixing and matching which characterised the social and community life of the Chinese in the district. They can be seen as multi-faceted milestones marking a route from the loneliness of Chinese men emigrating and leaving behind family, wives and future wives to the family life and settlement which became characteristic of many of the Chinese who came to work in the

¹³² The expansion of the stores was analysed in Chapter 6, pp.113-120 previously.

¹³³ Interview with Harry Fay, Inverell, 6 October 1983.

¹³⁴ Interview with Albert Yum.

stores. They are milestones which emphasise that social life throughout the period, while offering some contact with non-Chinese in local communities and in business circles, still remained largely bound within the Chinese community. They are also milestones which indicate that, although the social circles remained narrow, they did slowly start to expand.

In traditional China, marriage was not a romantic love match. It was an affair of the parents. The concern was to organise a propitious alliance in which family lineage and fortune were examined, and one which would produce male heirs to continue the family line. There was also the expectation that children and grandchildren would respect and take care of their elders. In her study of the Chinese in Victoria, Kathryn Cronin quoted a 1915 Chinese source which encapsulated many of these sentiments:

*Our ephemeral self is nothing; it is for the good of our ancestors, our immediate parents and our descendants that we work, we drudge, and even we die.*¹³⁵

This emphasis on the importance of the family over the individual, and the consequent practice of arranged marriages was imported into Australia and influenced the experiences of the first generation of Chinese associated with the stores in northern New South Wales. This tradition, however, was also balanced by the need to ensure that marriages and wives could accommodate to circumstances in Australia.

For the older generations - the generations of Percy Young and Harry Fay - the choice of marriage partner was still largely made by parents and through arranged marriages. The difficulty was the shortage of Chinese women in Australia. Only a small number had settled before the turn of the century, and immigration restrictions which allowed only limited visits by wives meant that importing brides was difficult.¹³⁶ Different strategies were adopted. Harry Fay's business mentor, Wong Chee, had returned to China in 1912. Contact had obviously been maintained because, in 1916, Harry Fay travelled to China in order to marry Wong Chee's adopted daughter, Ruby Wong Chee. Harry Fay's second wife, Ivy Fay, stated quite directly that Wong Chee had arranged the marriage.¹³⁷ It was possible for Ruby Wong Chee to reenter Australia as she had been born in Sydney in 1897 (to an English mother and a Chinese father). Marriages were also arranged to Australian-born Chinese women for Harry Fay's brother, Ernest Lun, and his nephew, Joe Mah. When asked how she met her

135 Kathryn Cronin, *Colonial Casualties: Chinese in early Victoria*, Melbourne University Press, Melbourne, 1982, p.18. These sentiments and beliefs are stated and examined in a number of studies. See, for example, Weiyan Farmer, 'Attitudes towards marriage and divorce among women in modern China' in Daniel Bertaux and Paul Thompson (eds), *Between Generations*, Oxford University Press, Oxford, 1993, pp.81-82.

136 Yong, *The New Gold Mountain*, Table 1, p.261 shows that of the 11,263 Chinese (including part-Chinese) counted in the 1901 NSW census, only 673 (6.3%) were females. By 1921 the figures were, respectively, a total of 8,081 with only 1,062 females (15%). For a summary of the immigration legislation as it affected women see Choi, *Chinese Migration and Settlement in Australia*, pp.39-41. The experiences of Chinese women are taken up in Chapter 8 following.

137 Interview with Ivy Fay.

husband, May Lun explained quite simply:

*I didn't meet him. My mother selected him. She just said you get married and that's it.*¹³⁸

Joe Mah also shruggingly asserted that his first marriage was 'matchmade'.¹³⁹

Percy Young at Kwong Sing in Glen Innes had three marriages arranged for him in China. His first two wives died. His third wife, Ethel Mu See, joined him in Glen Innes. Their ten children, born between 1903 and 1920, were brought up within traditional Chinese expectations and rules. Among philosophical sayings and proverbs inscribed by Percy Young and passed down within the family, were messages about appropriate guidelines for behaviour within the family:

*When men and women grow up they must marry. You must hurry to marry.
As your parents get old, spend time and money to look after them.*¹⁴⁰

Within this framework, there was the expectation that, at least the eldest children, would have suitably arranged marriages.¹⁴¹ Prospective partners were found among the Chinese network in Australia. His eldest son, Henry, married Ruby Kee, daughter of Harry Kee who had early on had shares in Hong Yuen and Company.¹⁴² The second son, Stanley Young married Grace Mew Long who had been born in Little Bourke Street, Melbourne, where her father had a furniture factory.¹⁴³ Like Ruby Wong Chee, Grace Mew Long, was living in China when her marriage to Stanley Young was organised. Their wedding was celebrated in traditional and lavish style in Shekki and Hong Kong.¹⁴⁴ The marriage partner for Percy Young's eldest daughter, Daisy Young, was found among the men who were working at Kwong Sing. Arthur Yee (born 1900) had been brought out by Percy Young in about 1913. As Daisy Yee recalled:

*...he came out, then more or less we grew up together and married. But my father really treated my husband as his own son.*¹⁴⁵

Even when marriages were not formally arranged, it was evident that, for the older generation of overseas-born and Australian-born Chinese, preferred marriage partners were to be found within the Chinese community, and often from among Chinese who visited or even worked in the family businesses. Harry and Ruby Fay's three eldest daughters, for example, all married Australian-born Chinese men - Charles Cum, Thomas Loy and Ernest Sue Fong - who had originally moved to Inverell to work in the Hong Yuen store. In Tenterfield, Harry and Cecilia Hon's eldest married children, found their partners through

138 Interview with May Lun.

139 Interview with Joe Mah.

140 Old Chinese philosophy and quotes, Kwong Sing. Included in Kwan family history and genealogy, Kwong Sing Papers.

141 Interview with Oscar Fatt et. al.

142 *Glen Innes Examiner*, 18 February 1926 reported their wedding.

143 Interview with Leona Tong, Brisbane, 22 February 1990.

144 Stanley Young, The engagement and wedding of Stanley and Grace Young. Unpublished manuscript, Kwong Sing Papers.

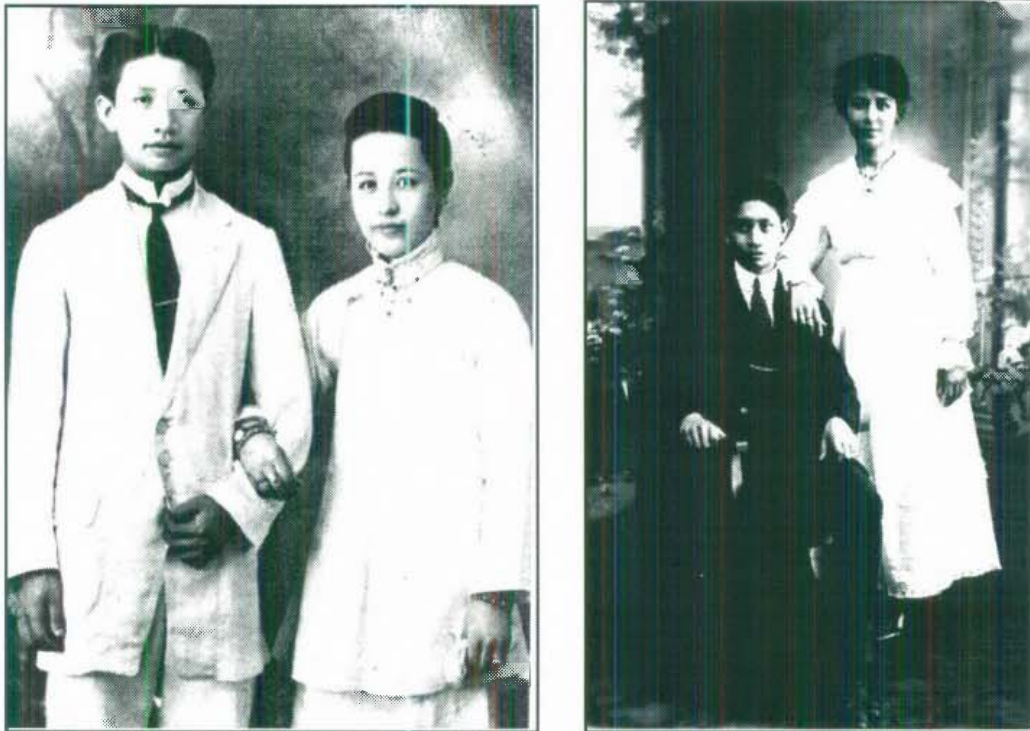
145 Interview with Oscar Fatt et. al.

the store and through the Chinese network. Eric Hon married Hazel Young, daughter of Tommy Young, at one stage an owner of the Sam Kee store in Tingha. Ted Hon married Audrey Quay whose father had a store in Torrington, near Emmaville. Ora Hon married Alfred Mee Lee. According to Dulcie Hon, they met when Alfred was passing through Tenterfield:

*Alfie and a friend were staying at the Commercial Hotel across the street and saw the Chinese girls in the store. So they came over and introduced themselves. Dad then asked them to stay...*¹⁴⁶

The Yum family provides a final example. Of the nine Yum children who married in Australia, seven married Chinese either born in the Glen Innes, Inverell, Tenterfield area or met through contacts made in that area.¹⁴⁷

The emphasis on marrying Chinese was tempered by the need also to accommodate to an Australian environment, where traditions and customs were quite different. This accommodation is evident in wedding photographs and ceremonies. In the Fay family album, for example, there are two portrait photographs of Harry and Ruby Fay at the time of their marriage. In one they are dressed as a 'modern' Chinese couple; in the other they are wearing the western clothes of a non-Chinese Australian middle class couple. Alice Wong



Portrait photographs of Harry and Ruby Fay at the time of their wedding, c1916.¹⁴⁸

146 Interview with Dulcie Hon.

147 Interview with Albert Yum.

148 Cum Photographs.

recalled of the ceremonies celebrating her marriage to Ernest Wong in 1930 in Quirindi:

*we had two receptions - they wanted a reception that had all the Chinese and then they had one Australian style.*¹⁴⁹

In 1947 Betty Gai married Cecil Young. Their wedding was held in St Stephens Church, Macquarie Street, in Sydney. The reception was held at the Nankin Restaurant with 'Chinese food and all those different dishes'.¹⁵⁰

Weddings were moments for celebration and for the gathering of the community. They were also moments to socialise and, for some, to be introduced to prospective life partners. Increasingly, they were also moments when the contacts established outside the community network were represented. In 1926, following the marriage of his eldest son, Henry, to Ruby Kee, Percy Young held a reception at his home in Glen Innes. The toasts and speeches reported in the local newspaper were largely made by local dignitaries. The Mayor, for example, commended Percy Young for having 'built up a very important business, and ... won an honourable place in the community'.¹⁵¹ At Eileen and Charles Cum's 1938 wedding, celebrated at the home of the Chinese Consul-General in Point Piper, invited guests included Frank Packer, Eric Baume and Colonel Travers.¹⁵² At Constance and Alec Choy's wedding in Sydney, there were not only many of the 'country cousins' who had at different times visited Constance Choy's father's shop in Sydney but also many of her father's business contacts in the non-Chinese community.¹⁵³



Keith and Beryl Matthews of the wholesale suppliers, Matthew Thompson, and their sons, Lewis and John, with Constance and Alex Choy at their wedding reception in the Dungowan, Martin Place, Sydney, 1947.¹⁵⁴

149 Interview with Alice Wong, Inverell, 24 June 1991.

150 Interview with Betty Young. See Jade Snow Wong, *Fifth Chinese Daughter*, Scholastic, New York, 1967, Chapter 16 for comparable descriptions of two ceremonies and celebrations.

151 *Glen Innes Examiner*, 1926 Kwong Sing Papers.

152 Interviews with Eileen Cum.

153 Interview with Constance Choy.

154 Choy Photographs.



Hazel and Eric Hon with Constance and Alec Choy, 1947.¹⁵⁵

A further indication of this broadening of contacts and possibilities was the increase in the number of marriages between Chinese and non-Chinese. Within the families whose histories lie at the core of this thesis, there were early examples of such marriages. Ruby Fay's natural mother was English, Sam Woo's aunt had married an Italian in Queensland, Minnie Sue Fong's mother was an Irish-Australian, and Robert Duck Chong and Trevor Jack both married non-Chinese women.¹⁵⁶ These marriages, however, were exceptions among the older generations. By contrast, among the younger members of the Australian-born generations who were growing into adulthood in the 1940s and 1950s, there was an increasing, though uneven, tendency to marry outside the Chinese community.¹⁵⁷ The long term significance of this pattern belongs later in this story.¹⁵⁸ Here marriage patterns act as an end symbol in the slowly changing patterns of leisure, pleasure and relationships which marked the experiences of the Chinese whose lives focused on the Chinese stores during the first half of the twentieth century in and around Glen Innes, Inverell and Tenterfield. In particular, they mark the move from single men working and living in a largely all male community to family life and settlement. They indicate as well the reality of living in Australia and the need to build bridges between Chinese and non-Chinese. Weddings were celebrated with both Chinese and non-Chinese traditions and guests, and marriages between

¹⁵⁵ *ibid.* Hazel Hon was the daughter of Tommy Young from the Sam Kee store in Tingha; Eric Hon was the son of Harry and Cecilia Hon of the Sun Sun store in Tenterfield.

¹⁵⁶ Interviews with Marina Mar, Sam Woo, Ernest Sue Fong, Robert Duck Chong, and Trevor Jack.

¹⁵⁷ An overview of these patterns is provided in the family trees in Appendix D at the end of this thesis. More details and discussion about these patterns are provided in Chapter 10 following.

¹⁵⁸ See Chapter 10 following.

Chinese and non-Chinese occurred despite resistance from family members and from the wider non-Chinese community.

- **Conclusion**

Loneliness underpinned the initial experiences of Chinese men when they arrived in the district. They were physically isolated from the larger centres of Chinese community life in Sydney and Brisbane, and they were socially isolated from close interaction with the local non-Chinese community. The community and social life which evolved from this base was shaped by a variety of factors. It was guided by the peculiarities of distance and facilities in rural areas, by pastimes established and remaining from earlier Chinese communities, by the concerns and contacts of the Chinese storeowners and the networks which emanated from their stores, by the social and cultural barriers between Chinese and non-Chinese, and by the inclinations and commitments of individuals. Within this framework emerged a variety of social interactions whose core remained largely within Chinese communities. At the local level, this entailed Chinese spending free time with other Chinese, sometimes travelling from town to town for visits. At the wider level, it meant visits to friends, family and associates in Sydney's Chinatown, and it meant involvement in formal Chinese community organisations. Parallel to these activities, were social activities which sought to establish acceptance in non-Chinese communities and to circumvent the racism and discrimination which remained an undercurrent of those communities. To this end, Chinese from early on could be found offering donations and assistance to local non-Chinese causes and organisations. Through sporting and leisure activities sponsored by the stores they invited social interaction between Chinese and non-Chinese, at least in the public arena. There was a meeting of the different worlds through shared interests in leisure pursuits like gambling and horse racing. The social barriers were lowered a little but only a little. Marriage patterns and wedding celebrations indicated both the building of such bridges and the extent to which Chinese-Australian lives were still contained and structured within Chinese communities. For the first generation and for older members of the second generation in Australia, the most common pattern was for Chinese to marry Chinese but for the celebrations to encompass both Chinese and non-Chinese traditions.

So far this thesis has focused largely on the Chinese who came to live in the district during the first half of the twentieth century, their work environment and their social life. Much of the discussion has concentrated on the male members of the community. After all, they formed the core of these earlier arrivals. The discussion of the important social and public role of marriage patterns and wedding celebrations provides a reminder of the role of the female members of the community. Whilst not in the limelight, the contribution of women as grandmothers, mothers, wives and daughters was fundamental.