



The CHINESE COMMUNITY in Toronto

Then and Now

Arlene Chan



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Then and Now

常州大学图书馆
藏书章

by Arlene Chan



DUNDURN
TORONTO

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Chinese Temple. Tam Kam Chiu.
Dragon boat race. Tam Kam Chiu.

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Chinatown's Gateway. William Greer.



Contents

Acknowledgements | 9

Introduction | 11

1 | Gold Mountain and the Canadian Pacific Railway, 1858–1885 | 13

2 | Early Settlement in Toronto, 1878–1922 | 33

3 | Living in Chinatown | 45

4 | A Child's Life | 63

5 | The War Years | 71

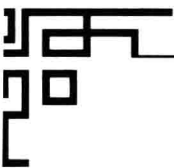
6 | Post-War Years | 85

7 | Toronto's Chinatowns | 103

8 | A Diverse Community | 123

9 | Noted Toronto Chinese | 139





Appendix A | 153

Chinese Canadians Appointed Member of the Order of Canada, 1976–2011
(Greater Toronto Area)

Appendix B | 155

Chinese Canadians Appointed to the Order of Ontario, 1991–2011
(Greater Toronto Area)

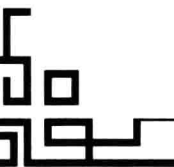
Chronology | 157

Notes | 161

Glossary | 167

Further Reading | 171

Index | 175



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Chinatown's Gateway. William Greer.

*Dedicated to my granddaughter, Audrey,
and all the other children whose lives have been enriched by our collective past.*



Contents

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1 | Gold Mountain and the Canadian Pacific Railway, 1858–1885 | 13

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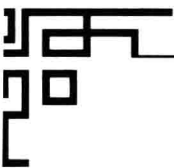
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9 | Noted Toronto Chinese | 139





Appendix A | 153
Chinese Canadians Appointed Member of the Order of Canada, 1976–2011
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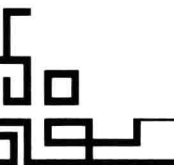
Chronology | 157

Notes | 161

Glossary | 167

Further Reading | 171

Index | 175





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Introduction

This book is about the Chinese in Toronto and their stories. It is about immigrants who have come not only from China, but from around the globe, and brought with them the determination and courage to start a new life despite all odds. For over one hundred years, their contribution has been a vital part of the cultural and social diversity that makes Toronto one of the most multicultural cities in the world.

Aside from the First Nations peoples, we are all immigrants or descendants of immigrants. All Torontonians, whatever their origin, have a story to tell of how someone in their family came to the city.

Some arrived only yesterday; others landed generations earlier. My grandfather arrived from Taishan, Guangdong province, in 1899, and brought over my grandmother a few years later — both had to pay the head

tax. They raised their twelve children — my mother, Jean, among them — in Nanaimo, then Vancouver, British Columbia. She moved to Toronto when she was sixteen years old to earn money to help her family through the Depression. My father, Doyle Lumb, came from Xinhui, Guangdong province, as a twelve-year-old in 1921. He met my mother through a matchmaker and they married in 1939. Their first business together was a grocery store; then they ran the Kwong Chow Restaurant in Chinatown. Both of them were very active in the Chinese community — so much so that my mother was the first Chinese-Canadian woman to receive the Order of Canada, our country's highest civilian honour.

My five brothers and sisters and I were born in Toronto. I grew up in Chinatown where I attended Ogden and Ryerson

schools, as well as Chinese school at the Chinese Presbyterian Church on Beverley Street. Because of my parents, I spent a lot of time in Chinatown: attending events organized by the Lem Family Association, working at my parents' restaurant, watching Chinese movies at the Casino on Queen Street, eating at Chinese banquets, and learning Chinese folk and classical dances. As I did my research on the Chinese in Toronto, so many happy memories flooded back — memories filled with faces and places from my childhood years.

Those memories are a personal treasure; similar ones are a common legacy shared by others in the Chinese community in Toronto. Some time ago, however, I came to the harsh realization that outside the Chinese community little was known about the story of the Chinese in Canada and Toronto. Stories about Chinese Canadians have not been told in books, on television, or in newspapers and magazines. Very few Canadians know about their important contribution because their stories have been kept within the family or silenced as too painful a secret to share. There's an old expression: A country that does not remember its past has no future. We need to look to the past to move forward.

Chinese Canadians have added to the rich fabric of Canadian life in so many ways. Each wave of Chinese immigrants has been unique. The early immigrants were the most homogeneous — most of them came from southern China, spoke the same language, and shared the same culture and traditions. Since World War Two, however, the makeup of the Chinese immigrants coming to Canada has changed significantly. Those arriving today come from many different places, and they bring with them a diversity of backgrounds in education, skills, financial well-being, and ethnicity. From artists and dancers to activists and military heroes, Chinese Canadians are proud to let everyone know about their contribution, then and now.