



## Celebrating 150 years of the Chinese in Jamaica 1854-2004

As we celebrate the first arrival of the Chinese to the Jamaican shores, we can reflect on the great journey we have been a part of and we can be proud of where we are today. As descendants of strong and courageous people, we salute the men and women who sailed to Jamaica one hundred and fifty years ago.

Most of the Chinese who migrated to Jamaica were Hakka, who, on the fourth Hakka migration in China had settled in the adjoining counties of Fui Young, Dung Guan and Bao On, which are now a part of Shenzhen, China's Special Economic zone. Today, we have new Chinese Jamaicans from other parts of China among us who join in the continuing sojourn.

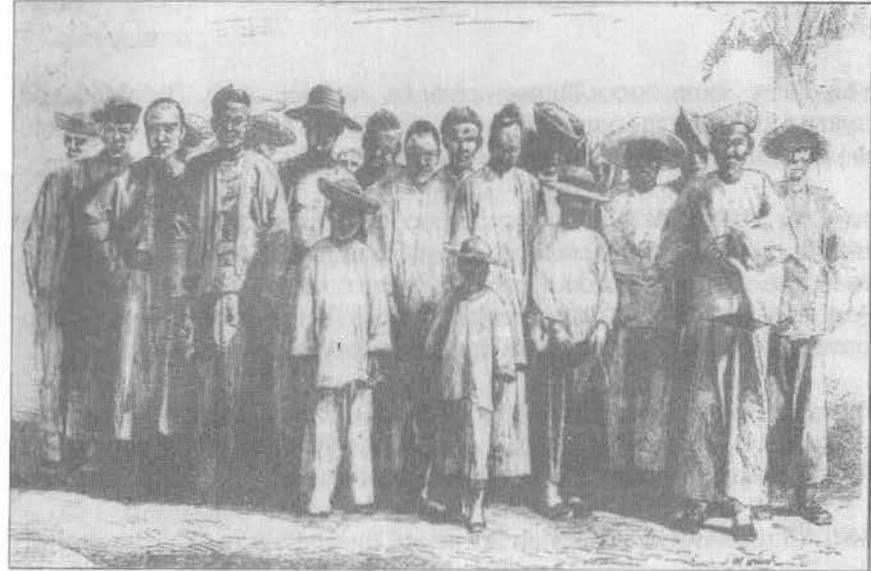
In one hundred and fifty years the Jamaican Chinese community has grown and prospered. The community is now scattered worldwide, many have maintained their Jamaican roots, which are firmly planted, and thriving today.

The Inauguration of the Jamaica Chinese Historical Museum with its Opening Exhibition celebrating the 150 Years of the Chinese presence and their outstanding contributions to Jamaica is a tribute honouring the past and the hope and promise for the future.

The Jamaica Chinese Historical Museum is a lasting gift and legacy to Jamaica. Its purpose is to honour, preserve, educate, uphold and retain the cultural and historical ties that bind us with our Chinese heritage, as well as, to continue to foster the wonderful integration and inheritance that bind us with our Jamaican heritage.

**Cynthia Yao, B.A., M.M.P.**  
Museum Consultant

## Arrival of the First Chinese in Jamaica



**On July 30, 1854** the first group of Chinese arrive in Jamaica. The Epsom lands 267 Chinese males who arrived from China, via Hong Kong. They came as indentured workers with 3 year contracts to help with the plantations.

**November 1, 1854** 195 Chinese males arrive in Jamaica from Panama. They are the survivors of a group of 705 Chinese who were sent to Panama. On November 18, the Theresa Jane brings 10 more men from Panama. The majority of the original 475 who arrived died from the harsh conditions in Jamaica.

At the end of their contracts, the Chinese begin to leave the plantations. Many of the individuals in this first group returned to China. Some migrated to other countries. Those remaining began to open small grocery shops which laid the foundation for the community that would later flourish.

Among the original 30 survivors were Chin Pah-Kung (Robert Jackson Chin), Chong Shin-Pah, Lyn Sam and Ho Shue. These survivors laid the foundations for the Chinese Community in Jamaica. They established some of the first businesses on Pechon Street, Beckford Street and Orange Street.

**1864-1873** Some 200 Chinese arrive in Jamaica from Trinidad and Guyana following the completion of their contracts and serious damage to the plantations there by hurricanes and insects.

**July 12, 1884** A third group of 696 indentured Chinese arrive in Jamaica on the Prinz Alexander. Apart from about 20 who came from See-ip, the rest were Hakka from the three counties of Dung Guan, Fui Yung, and Bao On in Guangdong Province. There were 508 men, 109 women, 59 boys, and 17 girls, with 3 babies born during the trip.

From the Distribution Roll of the Estates, most of the labourers were assigned to work in St. Thomas, St. Mary, Portland, St. Andrew and Westmoreland, with the majority going to Duckenfield in St. Thomas.

**1886** Chinese workers went on strike at Duckenfield in St. Thomas for relief from brutal working conditions. They defend themselves against violent attacks, and gain concessions from the plantation owners.

**1887** Chee Kung Tong (China Hongmen Minzhidang) is established in Jamaica, to solidify the local Chinese and for political reasons relating to China.

In 1891 the census board reported 481 Chinese on the island. At this time, the Chinese were coming as free migrants and most were aided by relatives who were already in business in Jamaica

**1891** Chinese Benevolent Society is formed to help newcomers and businessmen and to settle disputes among the members. \*Chin Tung-Kao (Chin Tung-Keow) became its first chairman/General Manager,

\*\*Chin Lenn-Kao (Chin Lenn Keow), his brother was another leader who helped the CBA take charge of the Chinese cemetery, sanatorium and home for the aged.

*N.B.: \*Chin Tung-Kao (Chin Tung-Keow) and his brother\*\*Chin Lenn-Kao (Chin Lenn Keow) are two brothers among the founding fathers of the Chinese Community. Chin Lenn-Kao (Chin Lenn Keow) is Sister Grace Yap's great grandfather.*

**1904** Chin Lien-Kao (Chin Lenn Keow), Chang-Sheng and a few others bought twelve acres of land at 19 Waltham Park Road as a burial ground for the Chinese Community. It was named the Chinese Cemetery.

**1905** Laws are passed in Jamaica that have the effect of restricting Chinese immigration.

**1907** Earthquake in Jamaica Chinese merchants suffered heavy damage.

**1911** Sun Yat Sen succeeds in overthrowing the Manchu dynasty and proclaims the Republic of China on October 10.

Local and China-born Chinese number 2,111 in Jamaica.

**In 1911**, further laws are passed requiring immigrants to deposit thirty pounds sterling and pass an oral test in English.

**1918** Anti-Chinese riots result in burning of Chinese shops in Ewarton.

**1920 and 1933** were the years of great influx. The migrants who arrived on the Georgistan in 1921 gave the names of other Chinese living across the island as references. In 1921, 674 migrants, the largest recorded number, arrived. In 1922, 497 people arrived and in 1933, another large group, with a count of 559, arrived in Jamaica. (Lind: Adjustment Patterns).

**March 9, 1924** Establishment of the Sin Min School, the forerunner of the Chinese Public School. The Sin Min School is started mainly to teach the Chinese language and culture. It becomes the Chinese Public School in 1928, and operates at North Street in Kingston until 1965.

**1930** The Chinese Commercial News was started by Albert Chang. It later becomes the Chinese Public News. The Min Chee Weekly and The Chung San News follow.

**1931** Jamaica asks Hong Kong not to issue passports to Chinese coming to Jamaica.

**1937** The second Sino-Japanese War broke out.

**1938** Barry Street becomes the east-west spine of Chinatown.

**Nov 15, 1938** Jamaica Wholesalers Association is started.

**1939** World War II begins.

**1940** All Chinese barred from Jamaica except diplomats, tourists and students with permits.

**1940** The Pagoda magazine is published in English, and continues until the 1970s.

Local Chinese establish the Chinese Athletic Club, scout troop, church organizations, etc.

**June 7, 1942** The Chinese Retailers' Association formed. The meeting was attended by 95 members. Stephen Yap as the Chairman and Chang Hon-Gin as the secretary.

**1943** Local and China-born Chinese number 12,394 (6,879 Chinese & 5,515 Chinese coloureds i.e. one Chinese parent in Jamaica).

**1947** Annual quota of 20 Chinese is allowed for wives and children.

**1948** New Wholesaler Association formed, later 1957 amalgamated to the Wholesalers Association.

**1949** In China, the Communists defeat the Nationalists, and Mao Tse Tung proclaims the People's Republic of China.

**1950's** Began a period of rapid growth of the Chinese businesses - The first self-serve supermarkets, island wide distribution of sliced bread, factories created to bottled soft drinks, ice cream, manufactured clothes, restaurants.

**1953** Soda Fountain and Restaurants Association established.

**1957** Inauguration of internal self-government in Jamaica.

**1962** Jamaica gains Independence. The Jamaica Labour Party (JLP) led by Alexander Bustamante wins the General Election. Rupert Chin See is appointed to the Senate.

**1965** Riots against Chinese in Kingston. A number of Chinese emigrate.

**1970** Local and China-born Chinese number 11,781 - 6,324 males and 5,457 females. During the seventies, a large proportion of the Jamaican population migrate to Canada and the USA, paralleling the migration to the UK during the fifties. The Chinese are a highly visible part of the emigration of the seventies.

Between 1970 to 1980 where the amount decreased to 5,320. Economic and societal instability pushed many to migrate to the USA and Canada.

**1972** Jamaica recognizes the People's Republic of China, which finally gained a seat in the United Nations.

**1988** The Chinese Cultural Association is formed, and the Blue Mountain Journal is published in both Chinese and English. These developments build on the arrival of new immigrants who speak Cantonese and Mandarin instead of Hakka.

**1994** A new home for The Chinese Benevolent Association is built on Old Hope Road uptown. This is the site of the Jamaica Chinese Historical Museum. The Temple which remains at the old site on Barry Street needs major preservation.

**2000** Jamaican Chinese in Toronto spearhead the first North American conference of Hakka people.

**2004** Chinese celebrate 150 years in Jamaica with a yearlong programme of celebration.

**July 25, 2004** Jamaica Chinese Historical Museum is inaugurated with a tribute Exhibition "Celebrating 150 years of the Chinese in Jamaica 1854-2004" which celebrates and acknowledges the history, culture and significant contributions of the Chinese in Jamaica for the past 150 years.

#### **Acknowledgement and Thanks**

We wish to thank Patrick and Lorraine Lee and Dr. Keith Lowe who graciously granted permission to use their Time Line and Arrival History from "Jamaican Chinese - Worldwide, 2004" and acknowledge the work of Lee Tom Yin, Patrick's father, who chronicled the story of our early history through his "Chinese in Jamaica, 1957 and 1963".

The drawing which appears on the cover was done by Clarence Kong.

## The Chinese Benevolent Association

The Chinese Benevolent Society began in 1891 as the first group formed by good leaders in the Chinese Community. The Chinese Benevolent Society was formed to help newcomers and businessmen and to settle disputes among the members; also to take charge of the Chinese cemetery, sanatorium and home for the aged. There were 500 persons who initially joined.



Mr. Chin Tung Kao (a.k.a. Chin Tung Keow) was the first President of the Chinese Benevolent Society which later became the Chinese Benevolent Association. He was the brother of Chin Lenn Kao (a.k.a. Chin Lenn Keow) who was the great grandfather of Sister Grace Yap, OSS, Franciscan Sisters of Allegheny.



立總年七九八一子益善館會華中的加奧古是這  
觀舊此館已在現備三建收年四四九一



設出於館會華中的後建收年四四九一

The Chinese Benevolent Society  
(L) 129 Barry Street Constructed in 1897; (R) rebuilt in 1944

In 1897 the Society bought 129 Barry Street and placed a temple in it honouring Kuan-Kung. The magnificent Kuan-Kung Temple is still located in the Barry Street location. It is the most treasured and beautiful historic monument that symbolises our ancestry and is in urgent need of preservation and restoration.

The Chinese Benevolent Association has undertaken and fostered most of the important needs of the Chinese Community over the years. The Chinese Cemetery, the Chinese Public School, the Chinese Old Folks Home, Chinese Sanitarium and Chinese Public Clinic are among its many projects to benefit the Chinese Community that CBA has undertaken. The Jamaican Chinese Historical Museum is its newest project.

In 1994, the Chinese Benevolent Association moved to its wonderful new site on 176 Old Hope Road. It is filled with activities every day of the week. It is the site of the new Jamaica Chinese Historical Museum located on the Lower Level. CBA should be commended that its members celebrate 150 years in Jamaica with a Museum for the Community.



The Chinese Benevolent Association's new site at 176 Old Hope Road.



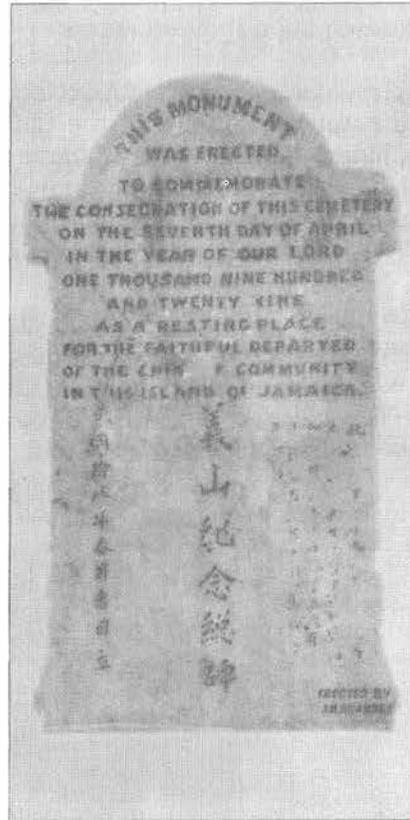
The Chinese Old Folks Home

## Gah San 2004 (Sunday, April 11, 2004)

"CHIN-MIN" (Eternal Brightness) or Gah San is the traditional Hakka custom of honouring the ancestors and the cleaning of the graves. The official ceremony always includes the head of the group or organisation ceremonially bowing three times in front of the Monument and making a pledge to the ancestors in audible words that state:

*"We are here gathered today to pay homage to our beloved ancestors, to assure them that we, their descendants, in continuance of our custom and tradition, have not forgotten them and wish to reaffirm our commitment to respect and maintain the society and the institutions that past generations have provided. We today ask for your guidance and blessings for the future. May the souls of the ancestors find peace and the generations today be blessed with good fortune."*

The ceremonial "offering" of food - symbolized by the roasted pig in Jamaica - and a variety of fruits, is accompanied by the burning of incense and fire-clappers.



*Inscription on the Cenotaph*



## Past Presidents of the Chinese Benevolent Association

1967	-	Rupert Chin See
1968	-	Rupert Chin See
1969	-	Rupert Chin See
1970	-	Rupert Chin See
1971	-	Kung Yee Chen
1972	-	Charles Moo
1973	-	Charles Moo
1974	-	Dennis Yap
1975	-	Dennis Yap
1976	-	Dennis Yap
1977	-	Fun Nam Chin
1978	-	Fun Nam Chin
1979	-	Fun Nam Chin
1980	-	Fun Nam Chin
1981	-	Archong Lee
1982	-	Archong Lee
1983	-	Archong Lee
1984	-	Archong Lee
1985	-	Archong Lee
1986	-	Archong Lee
1987	-	Archong Lee
1988	-	Archong Lee
1989	-	Archong Lee
1990	-	Balford Wong
1991	-	Balford Wong
1992	-	Balford Wong
1993	-	Richard Tenn
1994	-	Richard Tenn
1995	-	Richard Tenn
1996	-	David Chang
1997	-	David Chang
1998	-	Richard Tenn
1999	-	David Chang
2000	-	Cecil Chuck
2001	-	Vincent J. Chang
2002	-	Vincent J. Chang
2003	-	Vincent J. Chang
2004	-	Dalton Yap