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1889
Seattle Fire caused displaced Chinese-Americans to relocate to Olympia.

*Nettie James at Ida Smith's Studio, Olympia, Washington
photo courtesy of Carliss Fong and Lynne Chao*

1900
Locke Suey Kay, his wife Lam Shee and two children emigrated to Olympia



*Sam Fun Locke Family
photo circa 1905
photo courtesy of Hugh Locke*

1902
Sam Fun Locke returned with wife and started a family

1934
Sam Fun Locke passed away, celebrated by an elaborate procession through Olympia.

*Lam Shee Kay immigration
photo circa 1915
photo courtesy of the Kay Family*



1928
The Kay family opened Nankin Cafe on 4th Ave.

*Kay Family
photo circa 1902s
photo courtesy of the Kay Family*

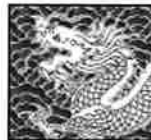


1941
Lam Shee Kay opened Kay's Cafe on Capitol Way

*Sam Fun Locke Family
photo circa 1930
photo courtesy of Hugh Locke*



1997
Gary Locke, the first Chinese-American inaugurated Governor, spoke of the Locke family's rich history in Olympia.



"The Olympia Dragon Mural commemorates the cultural, business and community contributions of early Chinese-American pioneers in the South Puget Sound region. The dragon represents power, strength, and good fortune in Chinese mythology and is representative of the many Chinese pioneers who endured hardship and adversity to build a better life in Olympia."

**"ALTHOUGH I MAY
BE STANDING LESS
THAN A MILE FROM
WHERE OUR FAMILY
STARTED ITS LIFE
IN AMERICA, WE'VE
COME A LONG WAY,"**

—Governor Gary Locke
in his Inaugural Address, 1997



OLYMPIA DRAGON MURAL PROJECT, 2019

DRAFT

OLYMPIA'S HISTORIC CHINESE COMMUNITY-THE LOCKE FAMILY



Jim Ah Toone And Nettie James Family, 1890s
photo courtesy of WSHS

Due to immigration restrictions it was prohibitively expensive and legally difficult for most Chinese men to bring a wife and family members to America. Nevertheless, a small but significant number of Chinese-American families established homes in Olympia from very early on. Census records show several families that came and went over the early decades of Olympia's existence. Intriguing clues and oblique references surface infrequently in local records and much detail may be lost to history.

After the Seattle fire of 1889, a number of displaced Chinese relocated to Olympia. Among them was the Jim Ah Toone family. Jim and his wife Nettie Chiang raised a family of five children in Olympia before moving on to Yakima and then Minneapolis where their Olympia-born son, Walter James, opened the successful Nankin Cafe in 1919. The family continued its operation through 1999.

Locke Suey Kay, emigrated around 1900, and brought his wife Lam Shee, and their first two children to Olympia in 1915. Locke Suey Kay, known locally as Charley Kay, worked as a cook in Olympia. He was employed for a time at Doane's Oyster House and, along with many other Olympia Chinese, at the Hotel Olympian.

In 1902, prominent local merchant Sam Fun Locke returned from Toisan with a wife. They lived in the space above the Hong Yek Kee and Company store. On the occasion of the birth of their first child, Loy Wing, the new family had a photo taken, a copy of which was presented to Sheriff Billings' family in gratitude for his intervention in the 1886 riots. Eventually the Lockes had nine children, all born at Hong Yek.



The James Family Children in Olympia
photo courtesy of Keysloch / Mastie

In 1928 the Kay family opened the Nankin Cafe on the north side of Fourth Avenue between Columbia and Capitol Way. During the depression Charley worked in Seattle. Lam Shee Kay, with the help of their children, opened Kay's Cafe on Capital Way in 1941, which continued operation through 1976.

In 1934 Sam Fun Locke, known locally as the "Mayor of Chinatown," passed away. The local press described his funeral as one of the most elaborate in Olympia history. Many surviving pioneers from the area and Chinese community leaders from around the region attended the event. The procession passed by the Water Street Chinatown before proceeding to the Masonic Cemetery at Tumwater. He was later reinterred at Calvary Cemetery, Seattle.

Also among the young Chinese men seeking work in Olympia in the early 1900s was Suey Gim Locke, grandfather of Washington State Governor [1996-2004] Gary Locke. Governor Locke acknowledged his family's early connection to Olympia in his 1997 Inaugural Address, excerpted here in a press release:

Locke, the first Chinese-American governor in the nation's history, traced his family's roots in Washington from his grandfather's arrival in the state nearly 100 years ago. His grandfather, Suey Gim Locke, worked as a "house boy" for a family in Olympia, where he learned English in return for his work.

CHINESE HISTORY
OF MURAL LOCATION



Future site of the Olympia Dragon Mural
Information from Olympia Design Month Poster

SHANGHAI CAFE BUILDING - 1904

The building was built by the Locke family. Sam Locke was known as the Mayor of Olympia's Chinatown and as a leader of the Chinese-American community here. His restaurant, the Shanghai, was located here. Olympia's Chinatown was adjacent to this building along Water Street, which was once the boundary of downtown before the shoreline was extended with landfill. A 1913 directory of Chinese Businesses reported that many of them were located in this building.

A special note that Brian Lock has taken a central role in developing and supporting the Olympia Dragon Mural. His involvement demonstrates the continuing lineage of the Locke family involvement in Chinese-Americans in Olympia.