

Wong Kong Har Tong

黃江夏堂

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Mission:

To foster closer relationships among those with the surname Wong (*Huang* 黃), and to inculcate them with their Chinese heritage

History: In the year 1902, six men living in Hawaii with the common surname of Wong (*Huang* 黃) from Zhongshan County, who traced their common ancestral roots to Kong Har (*Jiang Xia* 江夏) in modern Hubei Province, got together and founded the Kong Har Gee Loo (*Jiang Xia Jilu* 江夏寄廬 “The Home-away-from-home for (Wongs) from Jiang Xia”). They were Wong Chow, Wong Leong, Wong How, Wong Min Hoong, Wong Bat Ting (Wong Lam) and Wong Wing.

In 1906 the Society moved into a two-story wooden building, located on North Vineyard Street, adjacent to and fronting the U-shaped Buckle Lane. On the first floor were rented storefronts, while the second floor was reserved for the Club's headquarters. The centrally-located main hall on the second floor was used for meetings and social gatherings. On either side of the main hall were three rooms rented to bachelor members. Behind this main structure was another two-story apartment building with eight two-bedroom apartments. Six of these were rented out at large to generate supplemental income, and two were reserved to provide rent-free temporary lodging to itinerant Wong clansmen passing through Hawaii.

Hung above the doorway of the headquarters was a carved wooden plaque which read, "Kong Har Gee Loo". A set of traditional Chinese vertical couplets on each side of the doorway read: (right side) “In Hubei, the magical bell tolls” (*lingzhong Ezhu* 靈鐘鄂渚); (left side) “In Hawaii, we gather as clansmen” (*puxu Tanzhou* 譜敘檀洲).

On June 19, 1914, the Charter of Incorporation was granted to the Society, renamed the Wong Kong Har Tong (*Huang Jiangxia Tang* “The Society of Wongs from Jiangxia”) by Governor Lucius Pinkham. Headquarters remained at the Vineyard Street address until 1956 when, by eminent domain, it was condemned to make room for the Vineyard Boulevard of today. The amount the Society was reimbursed, \$ 30,000, was invested. In 1960, the Society moved to its temporary second headquarters on the second floor of the Yat Sing Department Store (*Yuesheng Baihuo Gongsu* 悅生百貨公司). Mr. Wong Lum (*Huang Lin* 黃林), the owner, subleased the space to the Society for a token monthly rental fee of thirty dollars, and new set of couplets was composed: (right side) “Yangzi elms are elegant on their islands” (*Jiang yu qun dao xiu* 江榆群島秀); left side “Hawaiian catalpas are bonded in the Society” (*Xia zi yi tang qin* 夏梓壹堂親) [describing the closeness of the Hawaiian descendants of Chinese ancestors].

During this time, banker “CT” Wong learned that an apartment building of eight units located at 824 University Avenue, between King and Date Streets, was available for sale, and proposed that the Society purchase it as an investment. The transaction was completed in 1960.

Finally, in 1981, the Siu Building, now officially a historical landmark of old Honolulu located across from the Wo Fat Chinese Restaurant on the corner of Hotel and Maunakea Streets, became available for sale by part-owner Samuel F. Wong, son of Henry Awa Wong, the “Mayor of Chinatown.” Both were members of the Wong Kong Har Tong Society. The building was first offered to the sons of Wong Lum, owner of the Yat Sing Department Store. However, after noting that the building was badly in need of extensive repairs and therefore priced below-market, the sons instead suggested that the Society be given the chance to make an offer for it. The owners accepted an offer of \$140,000, made by Arthur K.Y. Wong, then chair of the investment committee for the Society, and the purchase was finalized in 1982, with a \$40,000 down payment and a \$100,000 agreement of sale, payable at \$1,500 per month. Only two years later, in 1984, the Society received an offer for the building, which would have yielded a profit of \$100,000. However, after much soul-searching on whether to accept the offer or to finance a renovation to meet the City’s buildings code, the general membership decided that the Society should keep the building and proceed with its renovation. At that time, Yuen Kong Wong and Yuk Moon Wong, then President and Vice-President, appointed Arthur Wong to chair the committee to finance the renovation. In 1985, the city of Honolulu Housing and Community Development department approved a loan of \$250,000 at the low interest rate of 3%.

Renovation of the Siu Building was completed in September 1985. The first two stories of the three-story building were used as rental units to generate income for the Society and the third floor served as its new headquarters. The couplets from the last headquarters were worn and faded, so they were rewritten and reframed, and then hung on both sides of the ancestral shrine, where they remain today. To celebrate the Society's centennial year (2002), a new set of framed couplets was composed by member Yui Kwong Wong (*Huang Ruiguang* 黃銳光). The couplet reads (right side) “(As) the magic dragon of the Yangzi prances like leaping dragons and rising phoenixes on this 100th year” (*Jiangzhen linglong baizai teng jiao qifeng* 江枕靈龍百載騰蛟起鳳), (left side) “(So may the) jade tree of the Hawaiian Chinese grow handsome and talented to reach for the stars” (*Xiaqiao yushu linfeng juncai xingchi* 夏僑玉樹臨風俊彩星馳).



Left: Portrait of the Grand Ancestor; above: the Siu Building in downtown Honolulu

Activities The Society holds quarterly General Meetings each year; the installation of officers and directors on the first Sunday after January 1st; an Spring Banquet and open house held at Chinese New Year; graveside traditional rites the first Sunday after Qing Ming at the Manoa Chinese Cemetery; a summer picnic gathering for the Dragon Boat Races; a “Chasing the Moon” gathering for the Mid-Autumn Festival; and an annual Christmas party .Participation in community activities includes sponsorship of contestants with the Wong surname in the Narcissus Festival and the Miss Chinatown Hawaii Pageant; fielding two teams for the Dragon Boat Races; and participating in parades and benefit runs and golf tournaments. Another major project is the granting of scholarships to worthy students at the local universities and to students attending the Chinese language schools, making it worthwhile to pursue Chinese studies.

Membership: Currently, membership stands at a little over 400. Any person with the surname of Wong/Huang, or any other romanization of 黃 is eligible for membership. A one-time initiation fee of \$10 is required, and thereafter an annual fee of \$5 is required to be kept on the Society's active list. Benefits of membership include educational award opportunities for full-time student members, and, for regular members, participation in Chinese cultural and charity-related events, with subsidized meals and entrance fees.

Association presidents

How Wong* 黃後	Dick Yin Wong* 黃德延
Chow Wong* 黃秋	1963-64 William Hin Wong 黃澤軒
Ngork Wong* 黃岳	Kin Ming Wong* 黃健明
W.W.Ahana Wong 黃綿鳳	Robert Bun Wong* 黃漢斌
W. Wong* 黃旺	1969-70 Chan Kong Wong 黃振光
Lum Wong* 黃林	1971-72 David Y.Y. Wong* 黃煜源
Dow Wong* 黃道	1972-73 Ronald H.L. Wong 黃漢糧
1920-22 Goon Sun Wong* 黃官信	1975-76 Chew Leong Wong* 黃兆梁
Chee Wong*	1977-78 William L.K. Wong 黃林教
Nin Wong* 黃暖	1979-80 Wilfred Y.P. Wong* 黃喬培
Tin Yan Wong* 黃天恩	1981-82 Yuen Kong Wong 黃遠光
Chock Tong Wong 黃卓棠	1984-85 Yuk Moon Wong* 黃玉滿
Henry Awa Wong* 黃華	1985-86 Ted H.B. Wong* 黃慶斌
Henry H. Wong* 黃愛邦	1987-88 William G.K. Wong 黃嗣光
Buck Hung Wong* 黃北洪	1989-90 Paul H.C. Wong* 黃漢忠
1952-53 Inn Wong* 黃燕	1991-92 Wallace W.Y. Wong 黃允殷
1954-55 Frank S.H. Wong* 黃壽康	1993-95 Wallace C.S. Wong 黃張成
1955-56 Wai Kong Wong 黃惠光	1995-97 Fred C.M. Wong 黃超民
Leonard D.Y. Wong* 黃棣榮	1997-99 William K.C. Wong 黃敬初
1959-60 Mun Charn Wong* 黃文燦	1999-00 Gilbert K.H. Wong 黃國興
Joseph C.H. Wong* 黃頌康	2001-02 Richard J.C. Wong 黃振昌
	2003-04 Joseph W.K. Wong 黃永裘

Sources: UCS publications; WKHT centennial publication (2002); correspondence with Joseph Wong