Chinese Disinterment Documents: Creating an Online Exhibit

Natalia M Fernández
Oregon Multicultural Archives

Northwest Archivists Conference
April 27, 2012
A Collaborative Effort

The Documents

Digitization and Preservation

Online Exhibit

Custodians of the Original Documents
Collection Contents
Exhibit Sections and Pages

Introduction

Pages:
- Introduction to the Collection
- The Story of the Documents: An
  Add a Page

A Brief History of the Chinese In

Pages:
- Immigration
- Employment
- Discrimination
- Culture
Add an Item

Dublin Core

The Dublin Core metadata element set. These elements are common to all Omeka resources, including items, files, collections, exhibits, and Katie. See http://dublincore.org/documents/dces/.

Title

Use HTML
A name given to the resource. Typically, a Title will be a name by which the resource is formally known.

Subject

Use HTML
The topic of the resource. Typically, the Subject will be represented using keywords, key phrases, or classification codes. Recommended best practice is to use a controlled vocabulary. To describe the spatial or temporal topic of the resource, use the Coverage elements.

Description

Use HTML

Public: [ ] Featured: [ ]
The Online Exhibit

The Oregon Chinese Disinterment Documents digital collection provides access to documents pertaining to the 1948-1949 disinterment of hundreds of Chinese immigrants’ remains from cemeteries throughout Oregon.
The Documents
Applications, Permits, and Notes

Map of Cemeteries

The disinterments took place at 17 cities and 23 cemeteries:

Northwest Oregon: Albany, Astoria, Corvallis
- Riverside Cemetery, Albany
- Greenwood Cemetery, Astoria
- Oceanview Cemetery, Astoria
- Riverview (Lewis and Clark) Cemetery, Astoria
- Crystal Lake Cemetery, Corvallis, OR

Northwest Oregon: Portland and Salem
- Lone Fir Cemetery, Portland*
- Riverview Cemetery, Portland
- I.O.O.F. Cemetery, Salem
- Private Property near Keizer School House, Salem

Southern Oregon:
- Mountain View Cemetery, Ashland
- Old Ashland Cemetery, Ashland
- I.O.O.F. Cemetery, Coos Bay
- Sunset Cemetery, Coos Bay
- Linkville Cemetery, Klamath Falls**
- I.O.O.F. Cemetery, Lakeview
- Sunset Park, Lakeview

Eastern Oregon:
- Chinese Cemetery, Baker City
- Canyon City Chinese Cemetery, Canyon City
- I.O.O.F. Cemetery, The Dalles
- John Day Chinese Cemetery, John Day
- I.O.O.F. Cemetery, La Grande
- Evergreen Cemetery, Ontario
The Documents
Applications, Permits, and Notes

Eastern Oregon
Chinese Cemetery, Baker City, Oregon

Canyon City Chinese Cemetery, Canyon City, Oregon
Application and Permit to disinter Joong Shew.

I.O.O.F. Cemetery, The Dales, Oregon
Application and Permit to disinter 14 men: Chuan Dai, Yuen Yuen, Jung Jung, Lui Lui, Chang Han, Chuong Quong Tai, Wong Cheong, Lee You, Lung Ling, China Jin, Lee Moon, Leo Gooner, Long Duck, Sid Juequock; notes regarding cemetery plots (includes some text in Chinese).

John Day Chinese Cemetery, John Day, Oregon
Application and Permit to disinter 10 men: Yee Shing, Go Fun, Eng Shin You, Joang Sin Noorn, Hoong Hin Shom, Yee Sing, Eng Yee Shim, Leong Torn, Ng Book Den, Na Jeung Get (documents include some text in Chinese).

I.O.O.F. Cemetery, La Grande, Oregon
Application and Permit to disinter 9 men: Wong Sing, Huey Toon, Wong Man Yee.
The Documents
Applications, Permits, and Notes

Chinese Cemetery Baker City, OR Application and Permit to Disinter 22 Men
The Documents
Shipping Related Documents

**Shipping Related**

**Hanset Sheet Metal Invoice**
Invoice for iron boxes purchased at Hanset Sheet Metal by the Chinese Consolidated Benevolent Association and shipped to Lone Fir Cemetery.

July - August, 1948

**United Sheet Metal Works Invoice**
Invoice for 35 "boxes as per sample" purchased at United Sheet Metal Works by the Chinese Consolidated Benevolent Association.

August 20, 1948

**Coastwise Line, Agents Shipment Booking Receipt**
Shipment of "570 boxes of human bones" from Portland to Hong Kong.

June 15, 1949

**EADS Transfer & Storage Co. Letter**
Description of boxes.

June 20, 1949

**EADS Transfer & Storage Co. Invoice**
Invoice for shipment of 93 boxes plus labor.

July 5, 1949

**Pacific Far East Line, Inc. Bill of Lading**
Bill of Lading for shipment of "93 BKS HUMAN BONES"
Shipper: China Tradeways, Co. for account of Chinese Consolidated Benevolent Association
From: Portland, Oregon to Tung Wah Hospital, Hong Kong, China

July 5, 1949

**Chinese Consolidated Benevolent Association Letter**
Letter written by W.L. Sun, Executive Secretary and Secretary on American Relations, CCBA to Fred Chinn, General Manager of China Tradeways Co.

September 9, 1949

**Tung Wah Hospital Letter**
Letter from the Chairman of the Tung Wah Hospitals in Hong Kong to the CCBA stating that the shipment has arrived.

September 20, 1949
Remembering the Past

Lone Fir Cemetery Bock 14 Memorial

Ivy Lin Documentary
A New Tradition and Further Resources

Bringing Ancestors to the United States

Many of the Chinese who first immigrated to the United States during the middle 19th and early 20th centuries expected their stay to be temporary. In the event that they did not return to their homeland alive, they made arrangements for their remains to be in the United States only temporarily. Although some chose to remain buried in their new home, for almost a century the practice to be disinterred and returned to China was most common.

However, in the 1930s and 1940s, the shipment of human remains was discouraged due to political instability within China after the Japanese invasion in 1937 and establishment of the People’s Republic in 1949. Then, just a few decades later, a new trend emerged. As the historic record proves, though diplomatic relations between China and the United States have been tumultuous, beginning in the 1970s a more stabilized political relationship encouraged Chinese immigration and permanent residence in the U.S. With each decade more and more immigrants achieved citizenship and established themselves and their families in the United States. Since the purpose of disinterment is to move remains into the care of a living descendant, the shipment of remains has reversed directions. In the 1970s there has been a steady increase in the number of remains shipped from China to the United States.

It is customary for the oldest living relative to decide to rebury the ancestors in the United States and, ideally, a family member travels to China to personally accompany the remains. If this is not possible,

The Old Tradition

Tung Wah Hospital Coffin Hall in Hong Kong
Photo Credit: Ivy Lin, 2009

Tung Wah Hospital, established in 1950, was the destination of the shipment of bones from Portland in 1949. This photograph is representative of how the Chinese remains were stored.

The Coffin Hall serves as temporary location to house the remains before being picked up by relatives or shipped to their final destinations within China.

List of Resources

Oregon State Parks curator Christina Sweet reviews records donated to public radio with reporter Tom Banse
Photo Credit: Northwest News Network

Museums and Archives

The State of Oregon

Located in John Day, Oregon, the Keen Wai Hing State Heritage Site serves as a time capsule of Oregon's early Chinese immigrants. In the late 1880's Chinese businessman Lung On and herbal doctor Ing Hay immigrated to Oregon and became business partners. The structure from which they worked and lived is preserved just as they left it and contains the tools, herbs, artifacts, and more that bring to light the legacy of the Chinese workforce in Oregon.

In 2010 Lung On's and Ing Hay’s stories were highlighted in an episode of Oregon Experience. Keen Wai Hing Oregon Experience Episodes

The Oregon Historical Society located in Portland, Oregon, and established in the early 20th century contains thousands of artifacts, photographs, maps, and documents. The research library’s photographic collection contains numerous images of Chinese immigrants from the late 19th and early 20th centuries.
Next Steps

Oregon Chinese Disinterment Documents

Acknowledgments: A Collaborative Effort

The Partnership

Oregon Public Broadcasting
Tom Banse, Regional Correspondent for the Northwest News Network, researched and reported on the documents for OPB, with assistance from Colin Fogarty.

Chinese Consolidated Benevolent Association
Marcus Lee and Rebecca Liu shared their knowledge of Oregon Chinese history and continue to be heavily involved and dedicated to the Block 14 Memorial project.

Portland State University Archives
Cristine Paschild, Head of Special Collections & University Archivist for the PSU, organized the digitization of the documents.

Oregon Multicultural Archives
Natalia Fernández, Oregon Multicultural Librarian, organized the creation of the digital collection, with assistance from the OSU Special Collections and University Archives Research Center staff, especially Trevor Sandgate and Chris Petersen, as well as various student workers including Laura Cray, Oliver Padilla, and Lauren Doege.