

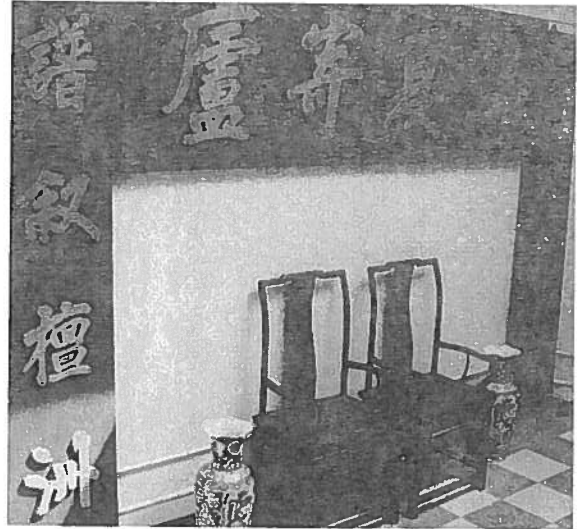
# A BRIEF HISTORY OF WONG KONG HAR TONG OF HAWAII

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## The Humble Origin of Wong Kong Har Tong of Hawaii

Time flies like a fleeting arrow. The Twentieth Century simply rocketed into the heavens. Encapsulated in a quick-paced hundred years that saw global wars and peace the world has never known heretofore, revolutions that produced new forms of governments, new nations emerging, depression and prosperity, human rights, advanced technology that changed the world forever. Such was a world that Wong Kong Har Tong of Hawaii was a part of.

In the year 1902, six men with the common surname of Wong (Huang), with roots in Zhongshan, China, and making their home in Hawaii, got together and founded the Wong Society, tracing their Wong common ancestral roots to the Jiang Xia Wong Kingdom in what is today's Hubei Province, China, located on the banks of the Yangze River. Etched forever in the Hawaii annals of the Wong Clan, they were Wong Chow, Wong Leong, Wong How, Wong Min Hoong, Wong Bat Ting (Wong Lum) and Wong Wing. They named the society Kong Har Gee Loo [江夏寄廬]: Kong Har Home Away from Home, (loosely, a clubhouse for the Wongs of Kong Har). The main purposes for organizing the society were for fellowship among the Wong clansmen in Hawaii, provide service to Chinese community, Hawaii's community at large, and our country, including doing charitable works.



## Background History of Our Society's Chronological Three Headquarters

It was not until 1906 that we moved into our first headquarters building, located on North Vineyard Street, adjacent, and fronting the u-shaped Buckle Lane. The headquarters consists of a main front wood structure building of two stories, the first floor of which consisted of rental units for storefronts; upstairs, centrally located was the main hall, used as club headquarters, meetings, and social gatherings. On each side of the main hall were three rooms rented to bachelor members. Behind this main structure was another two-story apartment building used for income, consisting of eight two-bedroom apartments. At least two of these apartments were left unrented, reserved for itinerant Wong clansmen who passed by Hawaii for a few days as temporary lodgings, rent-free hostels, as a courtesy gesture. The front entrance of the second floor where our headquarters was located, was a carved horizontal plaque made of wood hung above the doorway, which read, "Kong Har Gee Loo" (江夏寄廬) and a set of traditional Chinese vertical couplets on each side of the doorway that read (靈鐘鄂渚), right side, "From Hubei the great bell originally tolled;" left, side, (譜敘檀洲) "In Hawaii, we gather as a fellow clansmen."

On June 19, 1914 the Charter of Incorporation was granted by then governor Lucius Pinkham (1913-1918) and signed by the treasurer of the City and County of Honolulu, Territory of Hawaii. The name of our organization officially changed from *Kong Har Gee Loo* (江夏寄廬) to *Wong Kong Har Tong* (黃江夏堂).

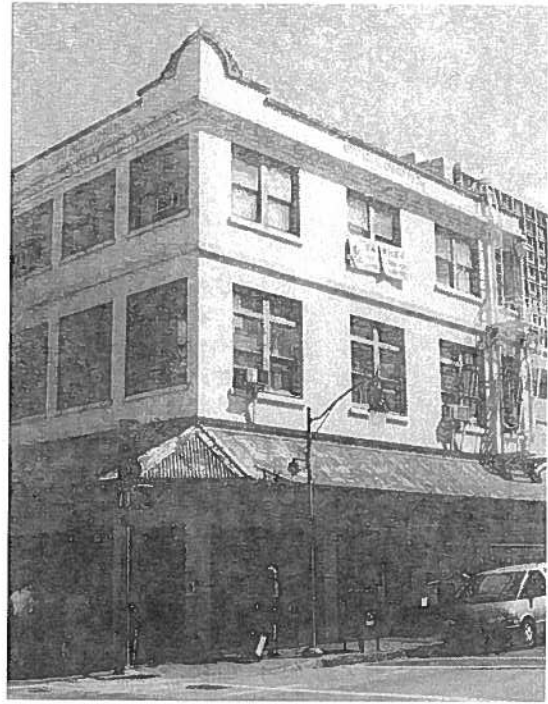
Our original headquarters remained at the Vineyard Street address until 1956 when by eminent domain, it was condemned to make room for the Vineyard Boulevard of today, the beginnings of a network of highways and freeways to accommodate an evergrowing number of vehicles and the need for vehicular time-saving passageways in an ever-growing community. In exchange for the land, the government reimbursed our organization the sum to the extent of \$30,000, a paltry sum by today's real estate standards! Meanwhile, the amount was invested and our second headquarters, a temporary one, was housed in 1960 on the second floor of Yat Sing Department Store (mainly clothing and shoes) (悅生百貨公司), which also rented the second floor of the building. Yat Sing Department Store was owned by Wong Lum (黃林), and for a monthly token rental of thirty dollars. Wong Lum subleased the second floor to our society till a new location for a new headquarters could be found. A new set of couplets was composed for the new temporary quarters. Dated 1960, it was presented by former presidents Henry H. Wong (黃愛邦), and Wai Kong Wong (黃惠光) and then president, Joseph C.H. Wong (黃頌康), and vice president Kwock Hung Wong (黃國興): The couplet read, right side (江榆群島秀) "Like sturdy elms waving on these beautiful isles;" left side, (夏梓壹堂親) "Here we closely bond with our common ancestral ties."

Meanwhile, banker "CT" Chock Tong Wong learned that some apartments were available for sale and presented a proposal to the members that our society purchase them as an income investment. This was in 1960. The eight-apartment building is located at 824 University Avenue, between King and Date Streets.

Finally, in 1981, it was learned that the Siu Building (now officially a designated historical landmark of old Honolulu), located across from Wo Fat Chinese Restaurant and the corner of Hotel and Maunakea Streets, was available for sale by part-owner, Samuel F. Wong, son of Henry Awa Wong, the Mayor of Chinatown, both were Wong Kong Har Tong members. It was first offered to the sons of Wong Lum (mentioned above), who decided that perhaps, since it was at a special bargain price, that Wong Kong Har Tong be given the choice to purchase it instead, for its third "new" headquarters, the present permanent one. The owners accepted an offer of \$140,000 for the building, which was in the dire need of renovation and repairs to meet the requirements of the city building department's buildings code. The purchase was consummated in 1982, with a \$40,000 down payment and a \$100,000 agreement of sale, payable at \$1,500 per month. Chairman of the investment committee of our society was Arthur K.Y. Wong, who followed through on its purchase. Shortly, in 1984, our society received an offer for the building which would have yielded a profit of \$100,000, a tempting offer, indeed. After soul-searching as to whether to accept the offer or to finance a renovation to meet the city's buildings code, it was decided by the general membership that the society keep the building and proceed with its renovation. Yuen Kong Wong was president of the society and Yuk Moon Wong was vice president at that time, and Arthur K.Y. Wong was appointed to chair the committee to finance a renovation. A loan of \$250,000 was approved at the low interest rate of 3% from the branch loan officer of the Housing and Community Development of the city of Honolulu, in 1985.

Renovation of the Siu Building was completed in September, 1985. The first two of three stories were to be rental income units, and the third floor serving as society headquarters. Because the paper on which the second set of couplets was worn and faded, the second set of couplets was rewritten and reframed, and hung along both sides of the ancestral shrine, where it still stands today.

To celebrate our centennial year, a new set of framed couplet was composed by member Yui Kwong Wong (黃銳光), and presented by the fourteen living former and present presidents, (see listing of presidents of Wong Kong Har Tong) current vice president, and Yui Kwong Wong, former assistant treasurer, and Harry C.Y. Wong, former secretary. The right side (江枕靈龍百載騰蛟起鳳), in a gist, translated "As the emerging centennial dragon prances up the sky;" the left side, (夏僑玉樹臨風俊彩星馳), "May our handsome, young, and talented new generation rise fast and high."



Siu Building

During the last quarter of the 20th century, in 1979, the Women's Auxiliary was formed to assist the men in facilitating some of their activities (see Women's Auxiliary section).

In 1977, a bilingual quarterly news bulletin was published for its members that included news bits about the society's members, activities, calendar schedules, meeting notices and culture talks.

### Activities and Programs of Wong Kong Har Tong of Hawaii

- Meetings: Four quarterly General Meetings are held each year.
- Installation of officers and directors is held on the first Sunday after January 1st.
- Annual Spring Banquet is held in March.
- Ching Ming graveside traditional rites are held the first Sunday after Ching Ming at Manoa Chinese Cemetery.
- Summer picnic gathering at the Dragon Boat Races
- Annual Christmas party

The society also participates in Chinese community and community at large events such as the Dragon Boat Races (two teams), parades, charity and benefit runs and golf tournaments, and Lunar New Year Open House and Mid-Autumn Festival's "Chasing the Moon" gatherings. It also assists with donations to disasters at home and abroad, Red Cross Relief funds donations, educational assistance to its members. Lastly, many of its members do volunteer work on behalf of Wong Kong Har Tong of Hawaii.