



The Maple Leaf and Dragon

A newsletter of the Chinese Canadian Military Museum Society

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Vancouver, B.C. Canada

Larry Wong, Editor

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Welcome to the First Issue of the Chinese Canadian Military Museum Society's newsletter

By Howe Lee
President

This newsletter has been created to inform all of our members and friends of our activities in the Chinese Canadian Military Museum Society and to encourage others to join us in our endeavours.

Inside you will find photographs from our collection, taped interviews, and interesting stories as well as news of upcoming events.

We hope to issue a newsletter three times a year and we certainly will welcome advertisements in future issues to help offset the cost of printing and postage.

The overall objective of the Chinese Canadian Military Museum Society is to raise public awareness of the history of the Chinese Canadian citizens and their contribution to Canada, particularly those who volunteered to serve in the First and Second World Wars.

One of the significant changes in Canadian history

continued on page 2

INSIDE THIS ISSUE

- 2 World Wide Web
- 2 China on the Western Front
- 3 Interview with Roy Mah
- 4 Young Bing Wong and friends
- 4 Member/Donation Form

1999-2000 EXECUTIVE

Howe Lee, President
Bing C. Wong, Vice-President
Larry Y. Wong, Secretary
Frank Wong, Treasurer
Quan Lim, Reporter



View of our first exhibit from November 1998

Did you know that our display case was modeled after the Museum of Anthropology at UBC? We had help from David Cunningham who works at the MOA as well as Doug Frankson and Joe Wai, architects for the design. John Ko did the assembly. For the exhibit display, Herb Lim, Willie Chong and Saintfield Wong, then curator of the Chinese Museum did considerable work. Donations of the exhibit came from members of Pacific Unit 280 and the veterans from Victoria, B.C. Do you have anything to give us?

continued on page 3

came about when the Second World War veterans returned home and through their actions, helped to repeal the 1923 Chinese Immigration Act (AKA the Exclusion Act) and won the right to vote and became Canadian citizens.

There are many stories to be told, and many artifacts to exhibit but funds are required to acquire, record and display them. Your membership and or donation are greatly welcomed. ♦



A Canadian doctor with the 45th-46th Battalion of the Chinese Labour Corps Courtesy of the John Sebert Collection

China on the Western Front

By Larry Wong

There are Chinese graves in the World War One cemeteries in Europe, raising the question, what are they doing there?

I researched the matter by reading academic papers from the universities of Vancouver and Toronto. I then widened my search to the archives in Vancouver, Victoria and Toronto as well as inquiring the museums and archives in England, France and China. It is not entirely a Canadian story but nonetheless, it is a fascinating tale.

It began in 1917, when the British Government asked the Canadian missionaries in China to recruit labourers to provide manual labour behind the front line in Europe. The result was a labour battalion called the Chinese Labour Corps.

With the help of the Canadian Government, Canadian Pacific steamers, specially modified trains, and military convoys shipped approximately 100,000 labourers to the Front.

Their journey within Canada was kept a secret and a press blackout was imposed on all newspapers. Armed Canadian soldiers were on each railway car to

ensure none of the Chinese would escape. Canadian doctors and missionaries were also on board the trains.

Working behind the frontlines, the labourers unloaded ships, built roads, repaired war vehicles and dug trenches. In more than one incident, the Chinese saved the lives of their British superiors from dangerous situations. Medals were awarded for their heroism.

The labourers remained after the war to clean the battlefields of corpses and debris. The most dangerous job was collecting live ammunition and bombs buried in the ground.

By 1920, the Chinese labourers were ready to be repatriated. Two thousand of their number died from various causes and it is their graves that dot the European war cemeteries.

On arrival in Halifax, they were greeted by a handful of women who welcomed them with fruits and chocolates. It was the only cheerful moment in Canada for the Chinese.

Under armed guard on the trains, the Chinese were returned to Victoria. There, at the William Head Quarantine Station, the labourers rioted against the authorities and tried to escape. They were quickly rounded up and within days, were on board ships going back to China. ♦

ABOUT US

We are a non-profit, registered charitable organization. Our Military Museum is located in the beautiful Ming Dynasty style building, right in the heart of Chinatown at the Chinese Cultural Centre complex, next to the Dr. Sun Yat-Sen Chinese Classical Gardens.

Our official opening was November 7, 1998.

Our visitors include out of town tourists, history buffs, veterans from Canada and elsewhere, military and museum personnel, students, cadets, and distinguished guests such as the Governor-General of Canada, Senator Vivienne Poy, and Countess Lady Mountbatten.

We plan a major exhibition for Veterans' Week and prepare travelling exhibits to other museums.

Your support is important to us. ♦

WOMEN IN WAR IS THE NEXT EXHIBIT THIS NOVEMBER.

Please pay us a visit and see the exhibit. Find out the stories of our Chinese Canadian women in war. See our Wall of Honour covered with photographs and medals and certificates. It is history not found in school textbooks. Discover for yourself what sacrifices were made by young Chinese Canadians in the Second World War. ♦

CALENDAR OF EVENTS

OUR NEW STOREFRONT EXHIBIT

STREET LEVEL AT 555 COLUMBIA STREET

This exhibit provides an introduction to our museum upstairs.

SPECIAL EVENT

B.C. REGIMENT'S ARMORY AT 620 BEATTY STREET

TIME: -WEEK OF NOVEMBER 11, 2000

Our participation with the Canadian Armed Forces for Remembrance Day.

We are on the World Wide Web

Our website was launched on the evening of June 10, 1999 at our first Recognition Dinner in Richmond. Albert Wong and Edwin Chung designed the original website. Now we have our very own webmaster, John Ko. He has updated and enhanced the website since last May. If you can't visit our museum in person, then visit our website at www.ccmuseum.bc.ca. Our e-mail address is ccms@ccmuseum.bc.ca. ♦

SPECIAL FEATURE

The following is an excerpt from a taped interview as part of a student project several years ago.



Roy Mah was born in 1918 in Edmonton. He volunteered and served as Sergeant with Force 136. In 1952, he became the publisher and editor of the first English language Chinese community newsmagazine called **CHINATOWN NEWS**. His publication became the voice of the community and led to the liberalization of the immigration laws.

Question: What was the response from Chinatown of going into the War?

Roy: When we received the call to serve, it stirred up quite a controversy in the Chinese-Canadian community. The community was divided. One faction said no, we are second class citizens and the government has no right to call us up and serve the country. Let the government give us full citizen status and we'll gladly go to war. The other faction, which I was the champion, said no, if you force the government its hand under duress, they won't give in. The best bet is to go and serve now and when we come back, we would have solid credentials to demand our full rights and privileges.

We had a public debate at the United Church and eventually our group won the debate, so we all decided that's the course to follow.

Question: What role did you play in the war?

Roy: We belonged to the intelligence unit, Force 136. Force 136 operated behind enemy lines. We would operate in units of 4 or 5 persons per unit. The unit is usually led by a British officer, he's either a Colonel or Captain, and then there would be one of his assistant, and three other Chinese-Canadians. Our front was the Malaysia-Singapore, which was occupied by Japan. The British would fly us in at night and drop us down and we would land by parachute and then there would be a reception party to settle us. I was on the list to go. Everything was ready and then what happened was that the Allies dropped the atomic bomb on Hiroshima and Nagasaki. The operation was cancelled.

Question: How did you get involved after the war?

Roy: Our efforts were to campaign for equal status, and full Canadian Citizenship rights. We drafted briefs to various Cabinet Ministers and the Prime Minister, requesting and urging the change of Canada's various legislation to recognize the full citizenship rights of the status of the Chinese-Canadians.

In 1947, Ottawa revoked the Act; the B.C. Government granted the vote to the Chinese-Canadians. ♦

DO YOU HAVE ANY PHOTOGRAPHS SUCH AS
THE ONE ON THE RIGHT? WE ARE ALWAYS
LOOKING FOR PHOTOGRAPHS AND
ARTIFACTS FOR OUR COLLECTION. YOU
CAN ALSO HELP US BY BEING A MEMBER.

MEMBERSHIP/DONATION FORM

Membership: \$100 per individual or corporation.

Donation: from \$10.00 and up will receive a tax-deductible receipt.

NAME _____

ADDRESS _____

CITY _____

HOME PHONE _____ OFFICE PHONE _____

PLEASE MAKE YOUR CHEQUE PAYABLE TO THE CHINESE
CANADIAN MILITARY MUSEUM SOCIETY AND MAIL TO:
CHINESE CANADIAN MILITARY MUSEUM, 555 COLUMBIA ST.
VANCOUVER, B.C. V6A 4H5



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ADDRESS CORRECTION REQUESTED

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