

History and Significance of The Victoria Chinese Public School

Huaqiao Gongli Xuexiao

1899-1999

by

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A two part project submitted for the

requirement for the degree of

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Department of Communication & Social Foundations

We accept this project as conforming

to the required standard

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University of Victoria

April 6th, 1999

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Victoria Chinese Public School, Huaqiao Gongli Xuexiao,
636, Fisgard Street, Victoria B.C. V8W 1R6

Introduction

This paper will detail the history of the Victoria Chinese Public School, (Huaqiao Gongli Xuexiao) and demonstrate the impact and influence that the school has had on the Chinese children and Chinese community of Victoria. It will also bring to light the valuable cross-cultural exchange that has enriched and continues to enrich our Western community here on Vancouver Island.

The Huaqiao Gongli Xuexiao has enabled the young Chinese to learn and appreciate their heritage; at the same time our school has been a site where our heritage has been and continues to be shared with the larger community.

On June 18th, 19th, and 20th of 1999, the Victoria Chinese Public School will hold a three-day celebration to commemorate its centennial year. For over one hundred years, this school has educated many of the influential citizens of the Chinese community in Victoria. The Chinese community is proud of its accomplishments and continues an active participation in the school and in the development of future generations as they carry on the traditions and high standards set in the past.

Our School

The Traditional Chinese Pagoda style red brick building situated at 636 Fisgard has become a famous landmark in Victoria. Its unique facade is well known and a beautiful reminder of the richness of the cultural community.

Often people are heard to wonder, as they pass this impressive landmark, what is happening beyond the two large red doors. Traditionally, very



Principal Kileasa Wong with students, 1996.

important buildings such as temples, palaces and schools have these red doors. Red in Chinese culture is the symbol of good luck.

Every afternoon from four to six, as people walk by the school, they can hear children laughing, playing, reading, and singing in Chinese. There are music for Chinese folk dancing and drums and gongs for practicing Lion dancing. Many tours visit and photograph this microcosm of Chinese culture. It is a little paradise within the broader Victoria community. The younger Chinese children come to learn their traditional culture and members of the older community feel their soul is nurtured by the interest and devotion of their young to the traditional ways. The elders show great respect and appreciation to the teachers and the school for maintaining their heritage.

I am the Principal of the School. I was a teacher in the school for 10 years, and in September 1997, I was offered the position of principal. Over the years many people had inquired about the history of the school. I found that there was no complete record or written history. I became more and more interested and began to investigate our school's past. Eventually, I decided that I would be the one to complete the research and write a detailed history of the School. It has evolved into a two part project. This written history and a collection of historical photographs on exhibit at the University of Victoria's Visual Arts Department will be held on April 3rd to April 6th, 1999.

Let us now open the big red doors and go inside the history and living culture of the Victoria Chinese community and our school, the Huaqiao Gongli Xuexiao.



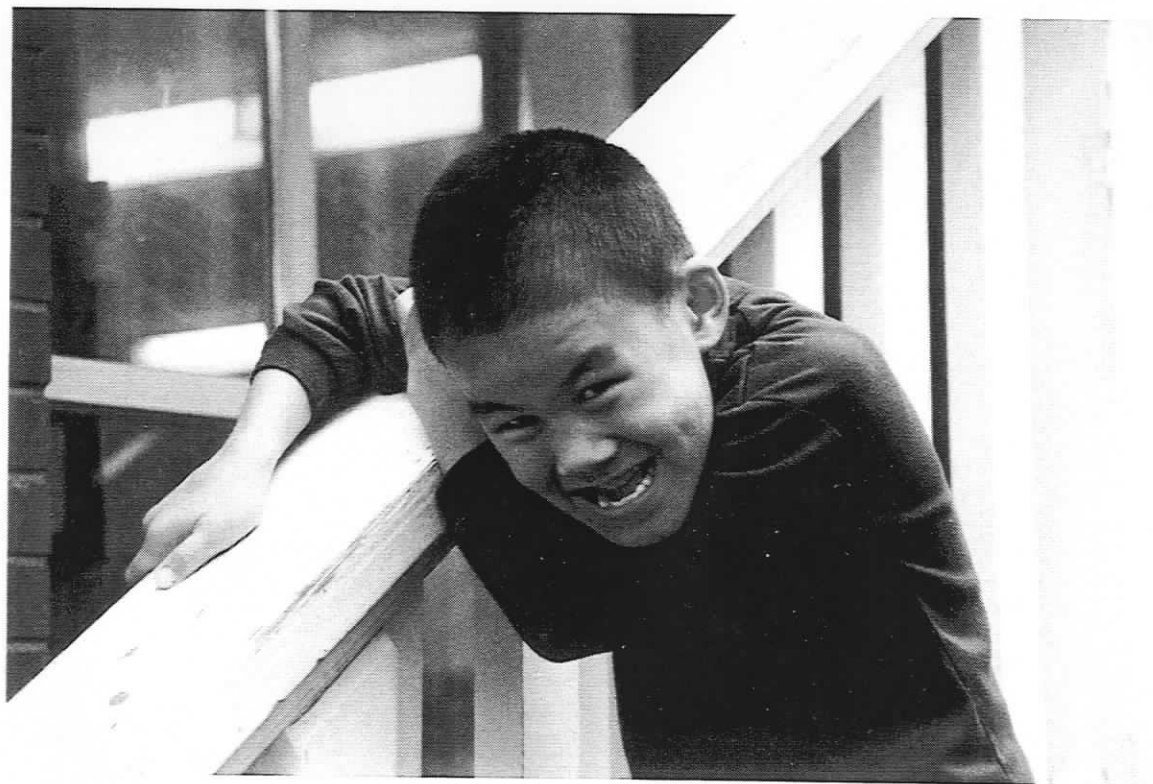
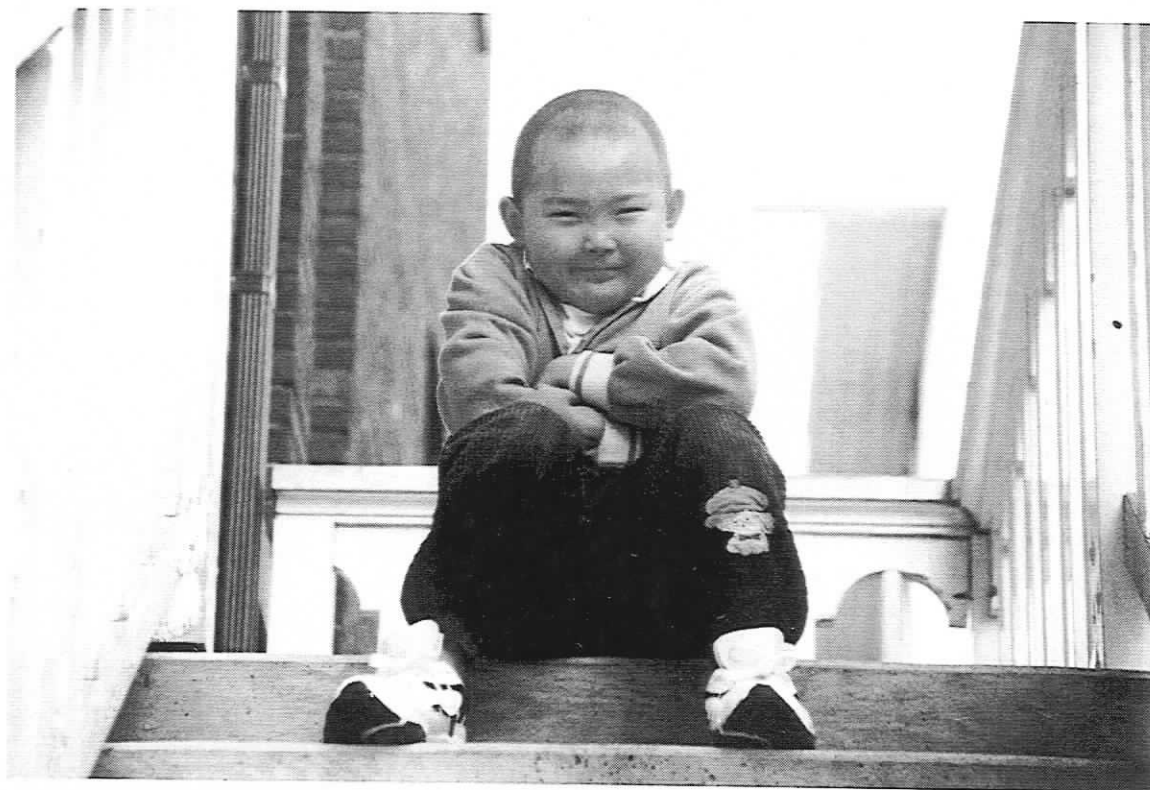
Principal Kileasa Wong with students, 1998.



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Student Liang Zhengwei, age 6, 1996.



Student Stephen Yeung, age 6, 1996.

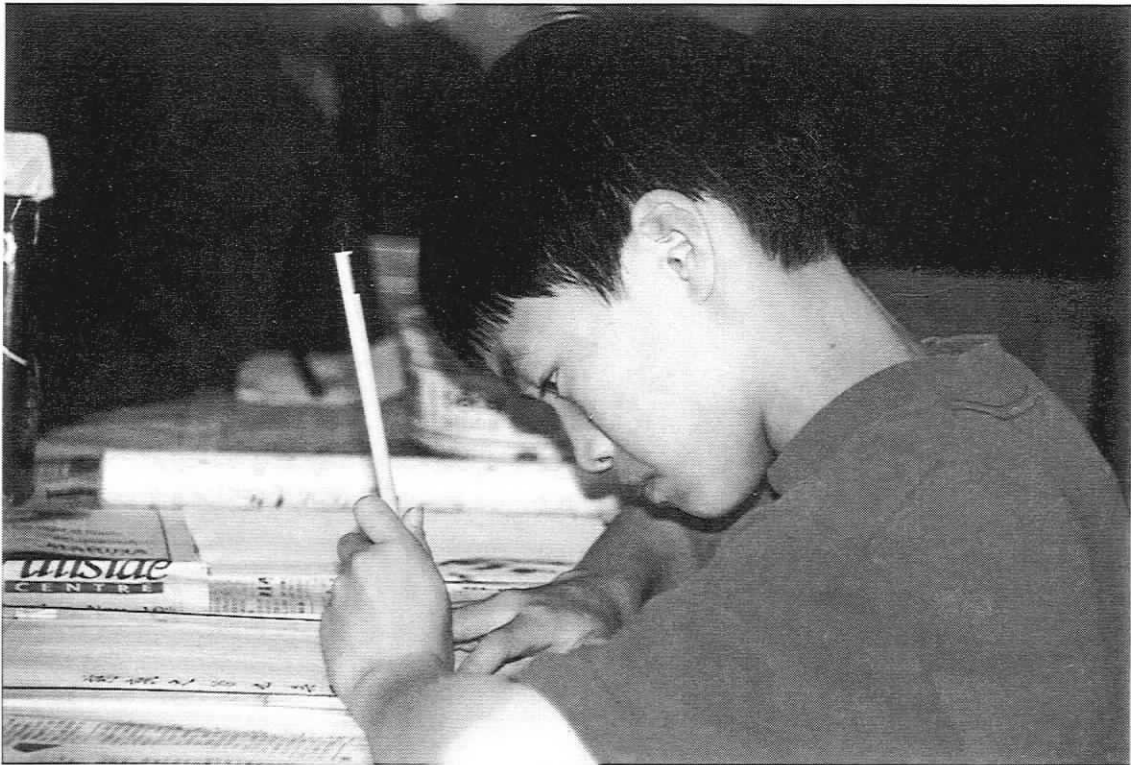
History of the Chinese Community

The Victoria Chinese Public School, or Huaqiao Gongli Xuexiao is funded and operated by the Chinese Consolidated Benevolent Association (C.C.B.A.). It was the first and is the oldest Chinese School in Canada, having first opened in 1899. The school offers Chinese language and cultural studies to Chinese and non-Chinese children.

The C.C.B.A. was established in 1884 by the various Chinese Associations of Victoria Chinatown. At present, the Victoria Chinese community has 28 associations, with the C.C.B.A. representing all 28 of them. The Hoy Sun Association is 110 years old. Another notable association, the Dart Coon Club, is turning 84 this year and Shon Yee Association is 81 years young. The associations are generally social clubs where mah-jong is played and gossip is shared. They also do a great deal of community work, helping those in need by providing money or other assistance. The associations are also a link between Victoria and China.

The C.C.B.A. is a very influential cultural organization; on a formal level, it makes connections between the Canadian government and the Chinese government and promotes cultural exchange of customs and ideas. Locally, the C.C.B.A. has had and continues to act as an active political voice for the Chinese community and solves problems between Chinese people and the associations. It also provides support to the Chinese community both here

Anna Tran, age 10, 1998.

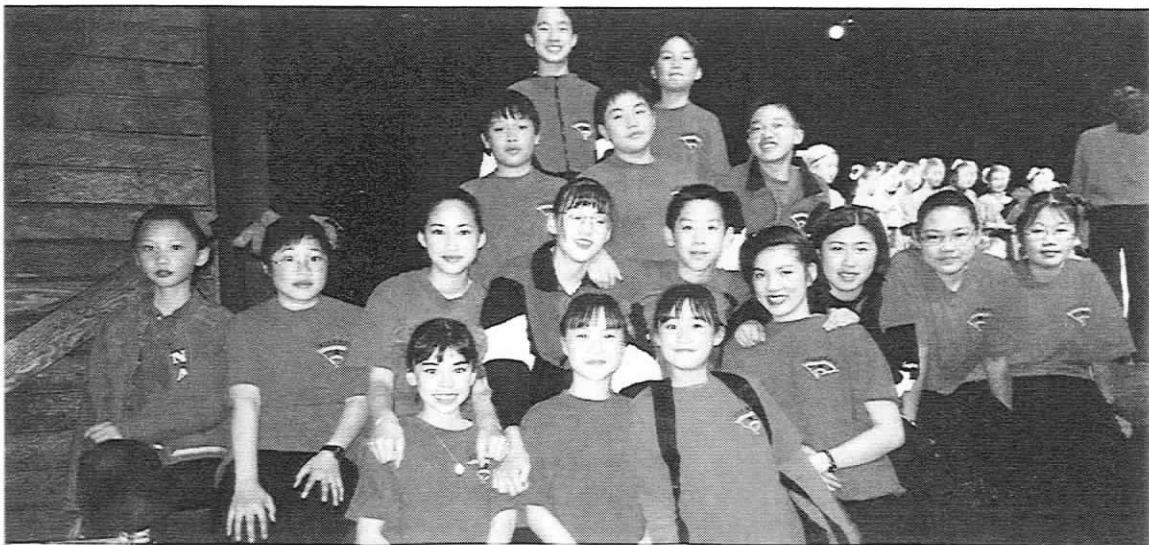


Eric Tran, age 12, 1998.

and abroad when needed. The school became the headquarters for the C.C.B.A. and the Chinese Community of Victoria and, with its traditional red doors, it continues to be the focal point of our community to the present day.

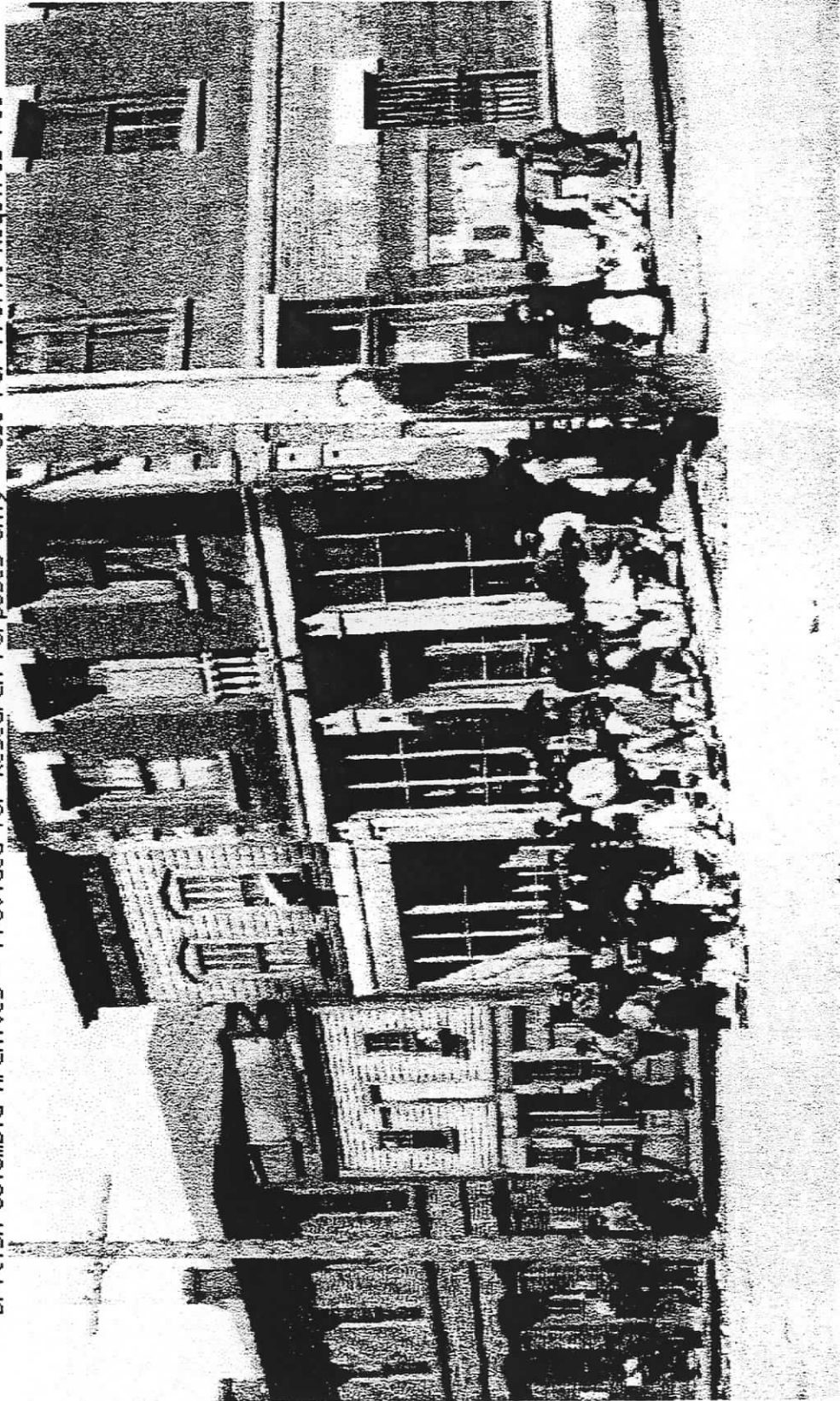
Chinese Culture and Traditions

During the nineteenth century, Victoria was the only port of entry for travel between China and North America. Victoria was the harbor of arrival when Chinese people came to Canada or were travelling on to the United States. It was also the only port of exit for return to China. Thus, Victoria's Chinatown was a bustling and busy community with a large population and a variety of businesses. In 1884, the one thousand, seven hundred and sixty-seven Chinese residents made up one third of the city's population of six thousand. As the population grew, the number of Chinese children grew also. The Chinese people of Victoria were concerned about the lack of Chinese language and culture in their children's education. It was very important to them that their children learn about and remember their ancestry. They wanted their children to learn the traditions of the Chinese culture.



The Victoria Chinese Public School Dancers, with their uniforms in Vancouver, 1998.

British Columbia Archives - Provided for Research Purposes Only - Use For Profit Requires Fee



access@www.bccrarchives.gov.bc.ca Call #: F-06763 Victoria. Chinese School Children Going To School

The School

The community was very proud of the high quality of humanity in their culture and wanted to protect their children from assimilation and westernization. In 1899, Li Mengjiu, one of the merchants and leaders of the Chinese community, organized a fund raising campaign and obtained funds for a Chinese School. Once the school was established, he became the first principal of the school and held the position for eleven years. Mr. Li was responsible for hiring teachers, and these he hired directly from China. He continued to be a strong and active supporter of the school until his death in 1925.

The school was first located on the third floor of the old building of the C.C.B.A. on 554-560 Fisgard Street. It was named Lequn Yishu. This translates as “enjoy the company of a free school”. Chinese families that were in the Victoria area sent their children to Lequn Yishu and to date it remains the oldest Chinese School in Canada. Up to the present day, it is still the only Chinese School in Victoria.



Mr. Li Mengjiu,
the first principal.

Directors of The Lequn Yishu

Mr. Li Mengjiu's family in 1900.



Segregation and Racism

The Chinese first arrived in Canada during the mid 1880's. They each paid fifty dollars to the Dominion of Canada as a head tax under the Chinese Immigration Act. This was increased to one hundred dollars in 1901 and to five hundred dollars in 1904. Even though they paid this tax, they still had no rights as citizens and no right to vote. As with most immigrants, they lived in their own district, which became known as China Town. People wore oriental clothes and continued their Chinese culture by maintaining their own shops and food choices. The children were afraid to play outside the community because of the threat of bullying and harassment. Chinese parents were afraid to send their children to school because they were not welcomed by the white community.

As early as 1901, the Victoria School Board began to consider withdrawing permission for Chinese children to attend Rock Bay School. Mr. Belyea, the superintendent stated at a meeting of the Victoria School Board on February 13, 1901:

“I would like to see all these Chinese children educated in a separate school but under the present school act we do not have the power to do this.” Ashworth(1979), p.58

Mary Ashworth's book, The Forces Which Shaped Them, continues to be a valuable account of this period and of the history of our school. She goes on to quote Mr. Kelly president of the Trade and Labour Council in Victoria. On March 12, 1902, Mr. Kelly presented a petition to the School Board. He stated,



George Jay (1860 - 1940)

“Separate buildings and playgrounds should be provided for these children. The unsanitary and other conditions of their home beings such as to afford quite sufficient reason for their being kept to themselves.”

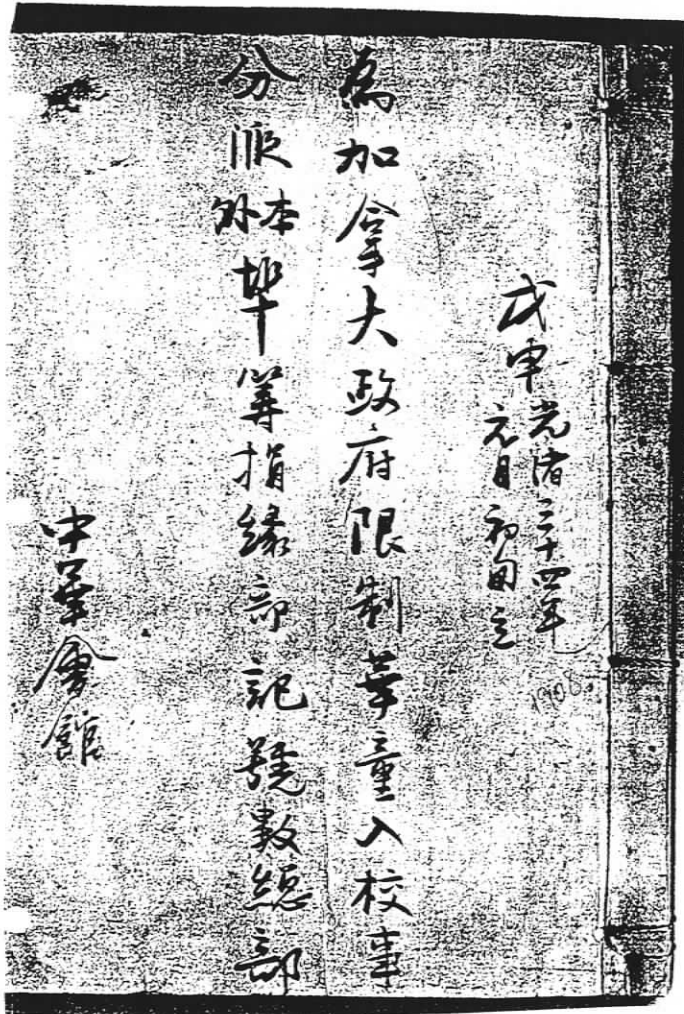
Trustee Drury said, “These children should be kept by themselves and the white children should not be obliged to associate with them.” Ashworth, p.58

These are examples of the extent of the discrimination that the Chinese community had to face. This discrimination fueled the need for the community to build a Chinese school. It is impossible to speak about the history without describing the discrimination the Chinese community experienced.

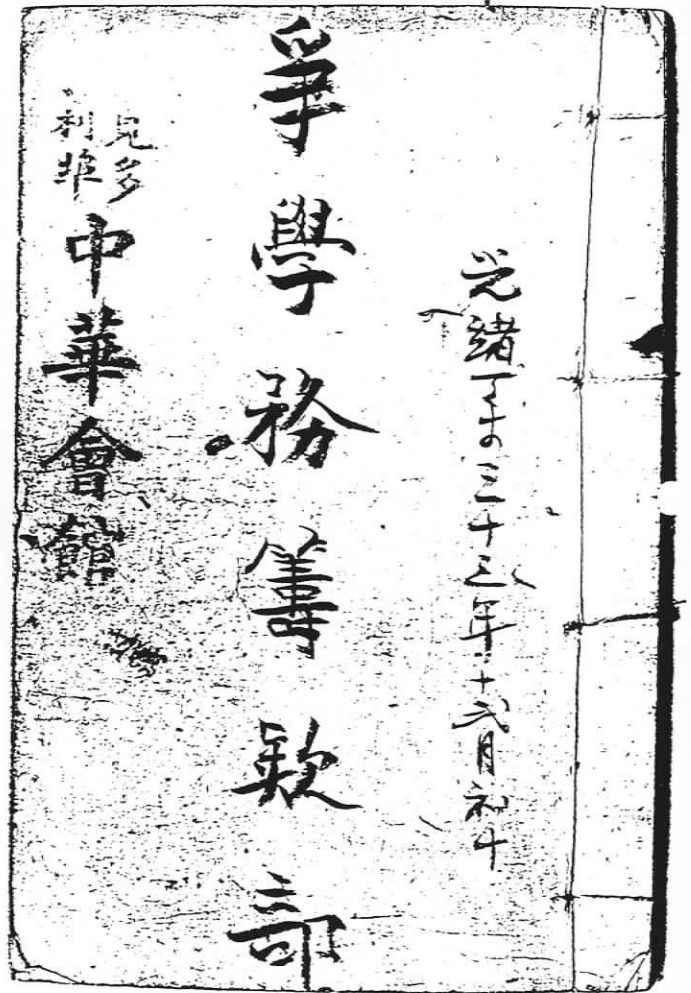
On August 23, 1907, George Jay, the chairman of the Victoria School Board called a special meeting of the board. He stated his belief that the only reason for older Chinese students to attend school was to get a refund of their five hundred-dollar head tax. If they attended school for a year they would start work and receive a refund. He had statistics to show that twenty-six young men had paid their tax from April to August, implying that this would be a drain on tax resources. He also stated, “If we are to admit these boys to ordinary grade school, and put them in ordinary classes, it will impede our own pupils.”

At the next meeting, August 29, 1907, the School Board passed a new regulation, which stated that the Chinese children were not allowed to attend public schools unless they passed an English examination. The Chinese were the only ones subjected to this rule. The other non-English speaking children were not included. This was at a time when the French, Dutch, and German children who could not speak English were allowed to enter the public school

Two accounting ledgers recorded the 1907 and 1908 fund-raising.



1908



1907

without the requirement of passing an English Competency examination. This was clearly a racist policy that discriminated against Chinese children.

At this time, white youths organized blockades to prevent the Chinese children from attending both Rock Bay and Central School. They positioned themselves at the corner of Herald Street and Douglas Street and also at the corner between China Town and Rock Bay School.

Both the Victoria and Vancouver Chinese communities, in reaction to this policy and overt racism, set up fund-raising committees and boldly named them "Against the Discrimination of the Board of School Trustees" in order to counteract the racist policy

The Victoria Chinese Public School Archives has the two traditional style accounting ledgers from these fund raising efforts, one dated December 10, 1907 and the other January 1908. The ledgers are written on rice paper and held together with string as was the custom. In each ledger donations are carefully recorded in brush and ink. The entire Canadian Chinese community responded to the fundraising, with donations from as far away as Montreal, Toronto, Calgary and Vancouver. The donations ranged from individuals to associations, from twenty-five cents to one hundred dollars. Lai Sheng Guan, a meat market, and Yu Lun Grocery each donated ten dollars. Both of these businesses are still in operation. Li Mengjiu, the first principal, donated thirty dollars. Li Linbin, another school founder, donated ten dollars. In total, Seven thousand eight hundred one dollars and eighty cents are raised.



School's new site grand opening, August 7, 1909.

At the same time, the C.C.B.A. hired a lawyer named Fred Peters to file a suit against the superintendent and the School Board, stating that the new regulation was illegal because B.C. School Law stated that all parents must send their children to school. Board minutes of September 23, 1907, state that they had received the legal action. (Ashworth p.70)

Unfortunately, C.C.B.A. lost the original case. However, in January 1908, the Board did issue permits to native-born Chinese to attend public School. Forty children were still unable to be schooled in the public system, so an alternative had to be provided. These children could not be considered Chinese Canadian because no Chinese were allowed to be Canadian citizens at this time.

Because Fred Peters was so committed to the anti-discrimination position, he only charged the C.C.B.A. one hundred dollars for all his work.

As a result of Mr. Peter's generous decision, Li Mengjiu and Lin Libin, along with other members of the Chinese community, were able to expand the original Lequn Yishu School. The forty extra students could not be accommodated at the first site. On August 24, 1908, the C.C.B.A. used the remaining seventy seven hundred dollars from the fund raising and purchased the land at 636 Fisgard Street to build a new school to house both the original students and the excluded students. The land was owned by Lin Libin's father. On March 8, 1909, the always generous Li Mengjiu donated half of his property to the school. This was used as the school play ground until 1985 when the Chung Wah Mansion, a subsidized housing development for the low income and the elderly, was built. Regardless of previous discrimination, the Chinese community chose not to discriminate against



Grand opening ceremony, August 7, 1909.

non-Chinese and have offered and continue to offer all races residence at the Chung Wah Mansion.

The Lequn Yishu moved to the new site and was renamed Daqing Qiaomin Gongli Xuetang, (Greater Qing Imperial Overseas Residence Public School). The grand opening ceremony was held on August 7, 1909. This was a very proud occasion for the community. A wide variety of gifts were received to assure that the school was well equipped.

These included lights, clocks, maps, globes, chairs, desks, and cash donations. There were even firecrackers and many fresh flowers. One of the clocks donated by Situ Jiaolun Tang is still working and is a daily reminder of our community's generous participation in our school's history. Again, all the gifts were carefully recorded in traditional ledger books.

The original curriculum of the school continued to be Chinese language instruction. However, English was added, to help students to pass the English examination for qualification to enter public schools. Gradually, the number of complaints about the discrimination of the School Board regulation was growing. Local newspapers contained arguments, and members of the Board were gradually changing their positions. Finally, a new chair was elected. Soon after, the board canceled the discriminatory regulation. The Chinese children were able to attend public schools without any examination.

However, this was not the last of the discrimination the Chinese community faced.

未呈備志函於維多利亞埠學校華童分校一案

前於坎京報紙登載後當即往晤外務次長

樸魯魯爵士交涉嗣復據九月五日

未呈洋志壹切復從前性交涉之聲明文化

事業不應故為限制區別等語樸魯魯爵士云

惟以君之呈徑約定由本館備志函聲敘事

實請其致函該埠市長取消前議俾華

童得受同等教育樸魯魯爵士云徑首肯除

駐坎拿大總領事館公用箋

繼續極力交涉特此先行函復此復

維多利亞華僑抗爭分校團體

會長馬先生 謹啟

僑領事周啟濂

中華民國二十一年九月十三日



駐坎拿大總領事館公用箋

Huangbai Fenxiao-Yellow and White in Separate Schools

In 1921, the Ministry of Education decided to separate the Chinese and the white students in different schools. With the Ministry's decision, George Jay was again elected Chairman of the Victoria School Board. He immediately banished over four hundred Chinese students from elementary schools and ordered them into old huts on Kings Road and Rock Bay for their schooling. The Chinese community called this Huangbai Fenxiao which translates in English as "Yellow and White in Separate Schools".

To add to the insult of segregation, the white residents of the area complained that the value of the property would be decreased because of the Chinese presence in the temporary buildings. Some elders alive today actually attended school in these huts. The Chinese people described the buildings as "chicken huts." The white community also complained that white children would feel uncomfortable when they played in Central Park if the Chinese children were there. It is worth noting that at this time Chinese were not even allowed to swim in the one Public Swimming Building called the Crystal Pool on Douglas Street.

As a result of the planned segregation, a decision was made by the C.C.B.A., the Tongyuan Association (The Chinese Canadian Club) and the Chinese Commerce Association, for all Chinese students to walk out of schools in protest. In early September 1922, the principals from the three schools, Rock Bay, Kings Road, and Railway, had the Chinese children line up outside the schools. They planned to have them march down to the proposed "new" school which was actually only temporary classrooms. When the children

2.2.6

BOARD OF SCHOOL TRUSTEES
OFFICE OF SECRETARY

□ □

VICTORIA, B. C.
September 5th,
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信

The Chinese Canadian Club,
The Chinese Chamber of Commerce,
and
The Chinese Consolidated Benevolent Ass'n.,

Gentlemen:-

In reply to petition signed by the Chinese Canadian Club, the Chinese Chamber of Commerce and the Chinese Consolidated Benevolent Association, protesting against the segregation of chinese children in the public schools, I beg to state that the Board of School Trustees of Victoria is convinced that the best educational interests of the chinese pupils demand that they be segregated up to the Senior Fourth grades.

A special staff of experienced teachers has been selected and the organization of classes under the principalship of Mr. Ernest Butterworth, formerly of the Boys' Central School, is well under way.

The intention is to operate two senior classes at Railway Street, three classes at King's Road School and the remainder at Rock Bay School.

Trusting that the above arrangement will prove satisfactory to yourselves and other parents concerned, I am

Yours truly,



Secretary of the Board.

WFCP:HC

were marched down the street, they merely dispersed and went home. Many parents continued to boycott the school.

The C.C.B.A., the Tongyuan Association and the Chinese Commerce Association again joined forces to challenge the decision of the Board to segregate the children. This group was called the Committee Against Segregation. The Vancouver subcommittee donated one thousand dollars on the 18th of December, 1921. This was a very large sum of money for that time and the attached letter gives the board's response to their initial challenge. They continued to state that the best interests of the Chinese children were met by segregation.

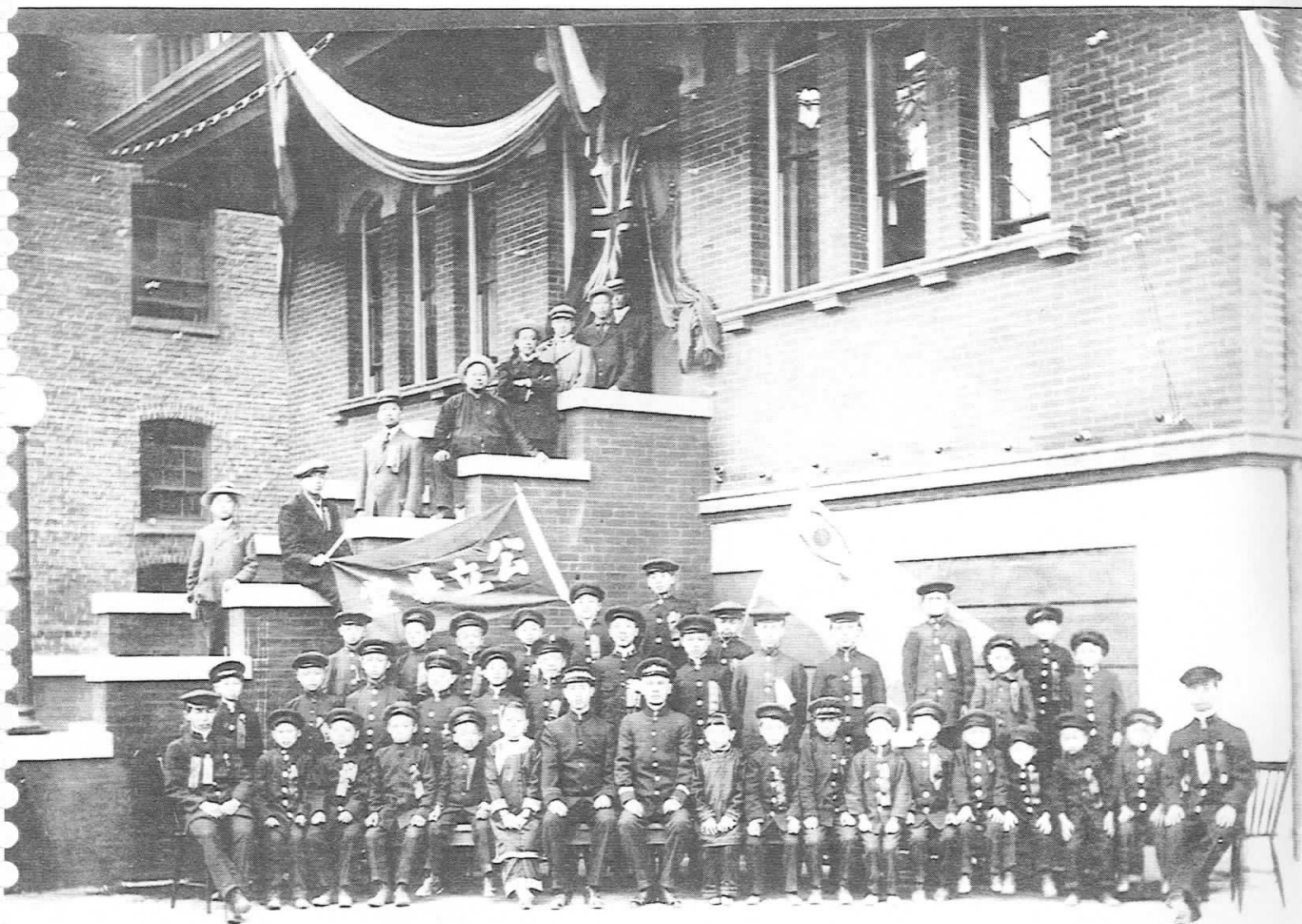
The Committee then appealed to the Chinese Consulate General, Zhou Qilian, in Ottawa, to help petition their case. The attached letter dated September 13, 1922, states that a visit to the Foreign Affairs Minister resulted in a letter to the Victoria mayor requesting the law be changed so that Chinese children would have the same right to an education that any other child living on Canadian soil had. It took three years and considerable further lobbying before the Board reconsidered and influenced the government to change the Law. Chinese children were then allowed to go back to public schools. The irony of this decision was that the new immigration laws in Canada stopped Chinese immigration from 1923 to 1947.

During that time, only nine Chinese were permitted to enter the country as immigrants. During the second world war, over five hundred young Chinese

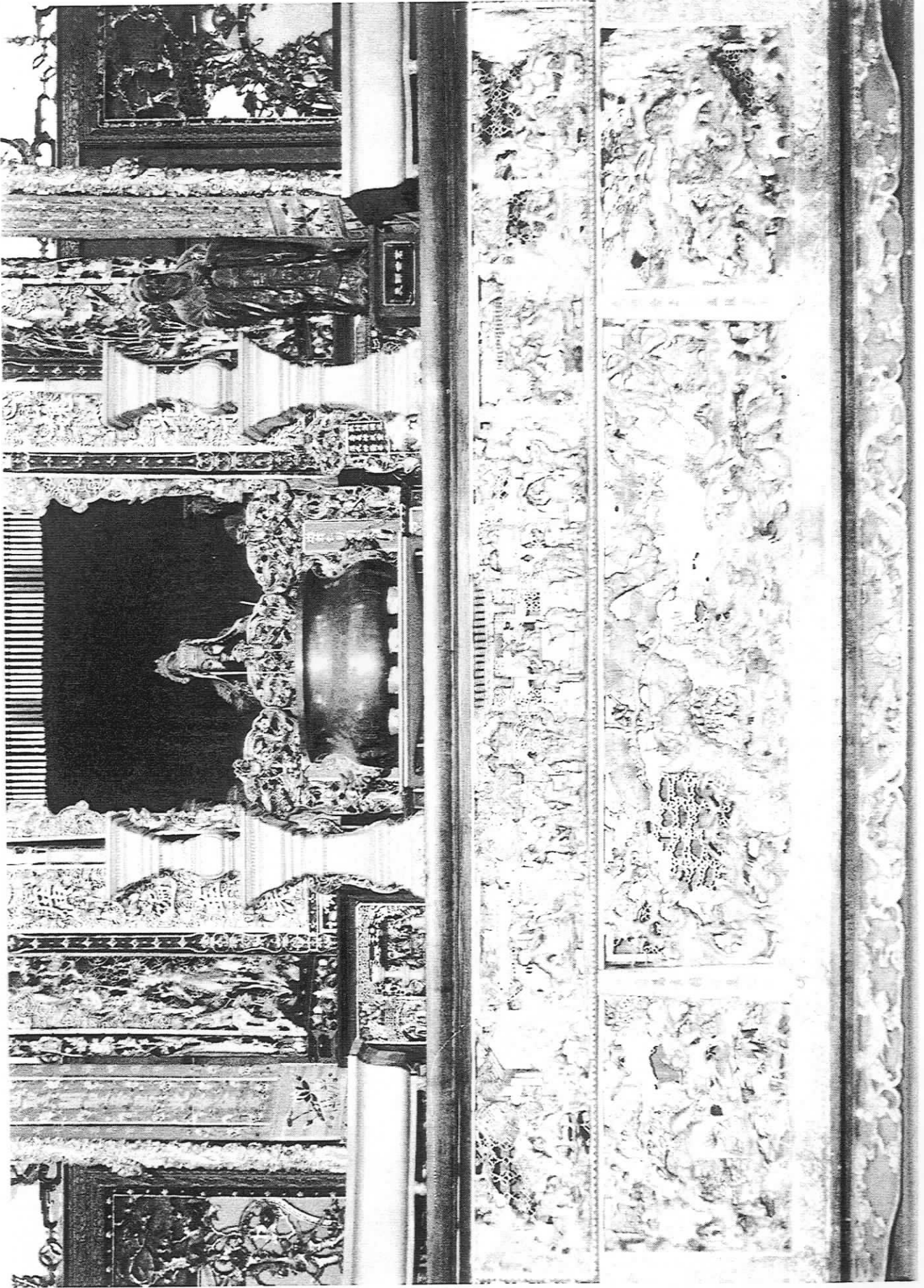


The mourning ceremony in memory Mr. Li Mengjiu, the founder and the first principal of the school.

men throughout Canada volunteered to join the armed forces, sixty-three of them from Victoria. Up to the present day, about ten of them are still alive and living in Victoria. Because of their contribution to the country, the Canadian government pass of a new law in May 1947, that the Chinese people should have the right to vote and to become Canadian citizens. Since then the Chinese people have received equal rights and freedom under the laws of Canada.



Students and teachers in 1911.



Lie Sheng Gong, the Palace of the Sages.

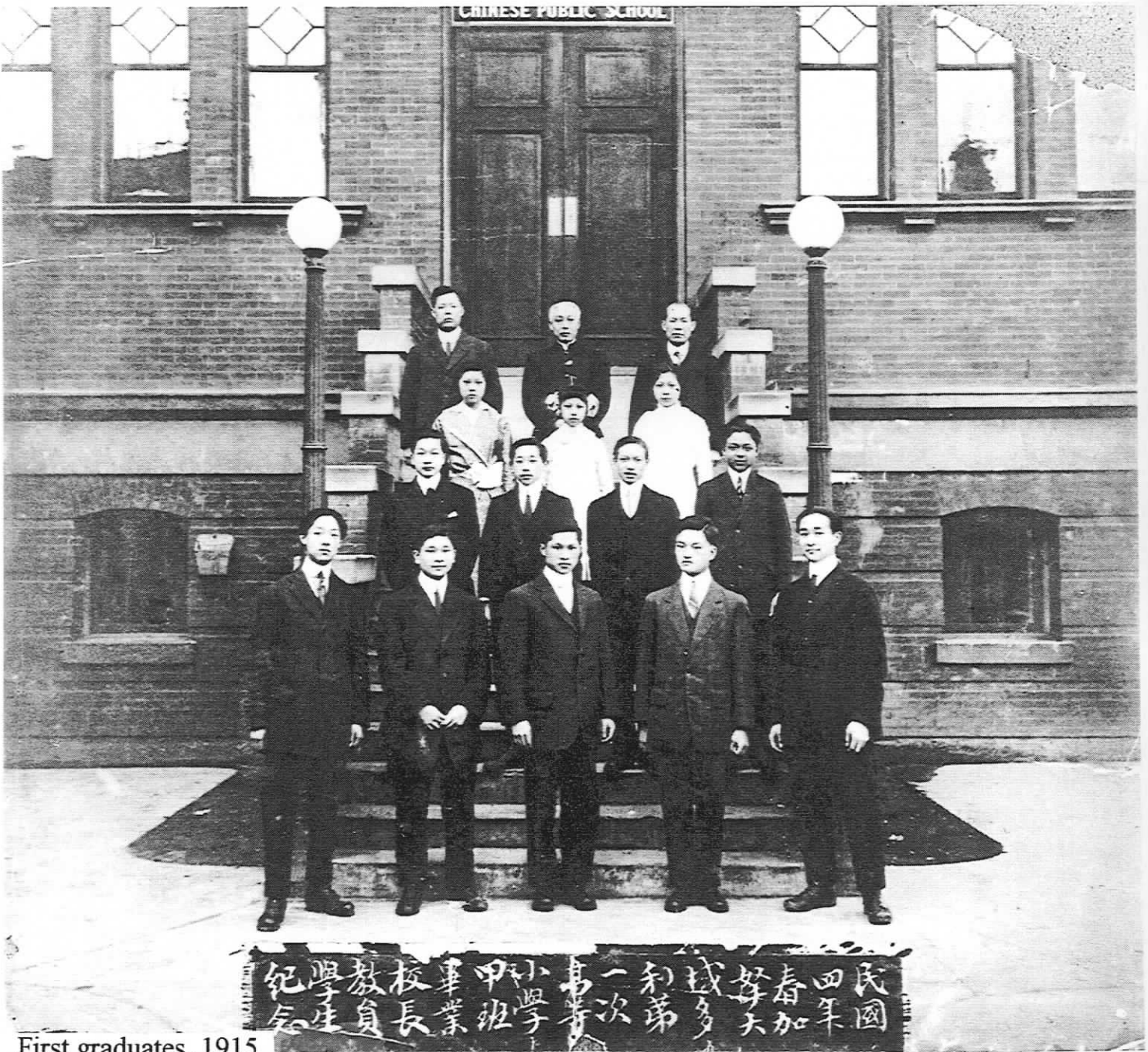
The Building

The Daqing Qiaomin Gongli Xuetang played a vital role in education during the transition through the horrors of discrimination that the community faced. With the reality of segregation forced upon them, the community responded with the building of the larger school. The building is a two story red brick building with the traditional pagoda style roof. Four classrooms and an office were on the main floor with a basement used as a garage. As enrollment increased, the basement was renovated to allow for three more classrooms.

On the second or top floor, there is a large assembly room that continues to be the major gathering place for the Chinese community. The main feature of the room, now being, Lie Sheng Gong, the Palace of the Sages. This large wooden gold-gilded altar honors the five Sages of antiquity: the God of war, Guan Yu; the Queen of Heaven, Tian Hou; the God of Medicine, Hua Tuo; the God of Wealth, Zhao Xuan Tan; and Confucius, the greatest and first teacher of China. It was moved from the old school to this new spot on May 22nd, 1966. The altar was given from China in 1884 when the C.C.B.A. first formed. It is a very cherished part of the Chinese heritage. Initially, children would bow to the Sages before they began class. After the fall of the Qing Dynasty, in 1911, the Republic of China was formed. The school needed to be renamed to match the new republic. In 1912, the Daqing Qiaomin Gongli Xuetang was officially renamed the Chinese Public School or Huaqiao Gongli Xuexiao. The first graduation ceremony of the Chinese School was held in February 1915 with twelve graduates. The School still



Graduation ceremony in 1995.



First graduates, 1915

has some examples of their original examination papers, and a picture of the class is displayed here. The largest number of students; 159 was recorded in 1939, and smallest number of students attending was recorded in 1912, only 43 students. In the 1997/98 school year, the school had 220 students, which broke the record of the past ninety-nine years. On June 19, 1998, the school held its fifty-first graduation ceremony with twenty graduates. On June 19th, 1999, there will be sixteen graduates. In its Centennial year, the red brick landmark is still standing at the heart of the Victoria Chinatown on Fisgard Street and remains the cultural heart of our Chinese community.

一、問學生何以要習國語習國語何以要分韻音聲
 答國語為我國之正語且本部各省多講國語然言
 語複雜則致交際不便風俗不齊行政不利而國家
 恐有分裂之患且今日五族共和國會合五族而成
 設言語不一致而辦事必不如言語一致之便故凡
 我國民皆須學國語以求統一之效然習國語要分
 韻音聲何也有韻音聲則口依韻音聲而講若無分

程三定軍
 馬飲流御
 懿書



The 1925 graduates.



The 1942 graduates.

The Commitment and Attitude of Parents

The commitment and attitude of parents and children to the Huaqiao Gongli Xuexiao is noteworthy. All the students attend regular public school until three o'clock and then go to the Chinese School. School is in session from 4-6 PM weekdays, and open on Saturdays from 9 AM to 4 PM for a different group of students who only attend on Saturdays. The weekend classes began in the fall of 1990.

The tradition of Chinese Schools is more formal than the Western tradition of schools. For example, at the beginning of a class, when the teacher enters the room, the students all stand up, bow, and give a formal greeting in unison. The process is repeated at the end of the day, except with a formal farewell. Another example is that whenever students see a teacher in the hall, they are expected to stop and greet the teacher, who in turn greets the student back. Because the students attend two schools during the week, they have plenty of homework and consequently very little free time. Many students also participate in extra-curricular activities such as sports or music lessons. Most of the students are well disciplined, hard working, and responsible. The parents have high expectations of their children. They hope that they will learn and become fluent in the Chinese language and learn about Chinese culture through attending the school. Parents believe that by learning these things, their children will have an advantage in life and hopefully will enjoy a higher standard of living than themselves. Chinese parents are typically strict and firm with their children, giving them little freedom compared to the average Western Canadian family. There is a cultural ethic that is



Parents are helping the dance troupe before performing, 1998



Lunch before performing, 1998.

engendered in the children that hard work and effort are accepted and expected, and as a result, problem students are rare in the Chinese school.

There are some notable alumni of the school. David Anderson, Victoria's Federal MP and Federal Minister of Fisheries and Oceans, attended the Chinese school in 1947. As well, Peter Wong and Jack Lee, were students of the Chinese school in the 1920's -1930's. They have both received the Order of Canada for Community Service, Mr.Wong received this honour in 1977 and Mr. Lee in 1989. As well, Peter Wong was also made an honorary citizen of Victoria. Both are currently still living in the Victoria area and are active members of our community.

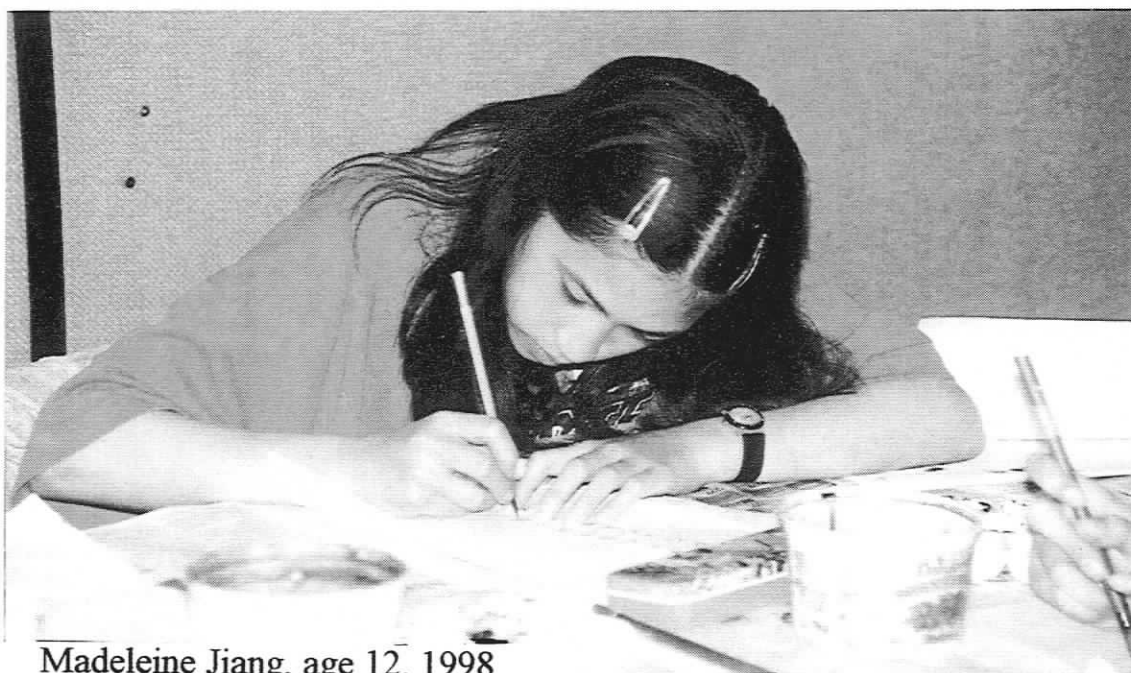


Jack Lee

Peter Wong



David Anderson with Chinese School Students. March 28, 1999.



Madeleine Jiang, age 12, 1998.



Chinese school students, 1993.

Curriculum

The curriculum of the Huaqiao Gongli Xuexiao School has been varied. About sixty percent of students' time is devoted to direct language instruction. The children attending the school today are Chinese Canadian, with a few non Chinese students in attendance. The children's first language is English, so they learn Chinese at the school as a second language. There is a range in their speaking ability from a few words to almost fluent Chinese. They learn to read and write the language and most are fluent by the time they graduate from grade six.

The School is organized as an Elementary School, with grades one through six. In grade one, students begin learning how to read and write simple characters. As the students progress through the grades, they accumulate a larger vocabulary, and by grade six they are able to write short essays and read the Chinese newspapers. As well as learning the language, the students learn a number of cultural aspects.

The majority of the Chinese people in Victoria are Cantonese, therefore, the Cantonese dialect is the official language in the community. Canton province is the province where most of the original immigrants came from, so that is why most people here speak Cantonese. Cantonese and Mandarin are written exactly the same way but the pronunciation is different. The school has taught Cantonese from the beginning.

In September 1997, the school added Mandarin dialect to grade five and six classes. It was felt by the teaching staff, and by the parents as well, that it is important for students to be able to speak fluent Cantonese before they learn



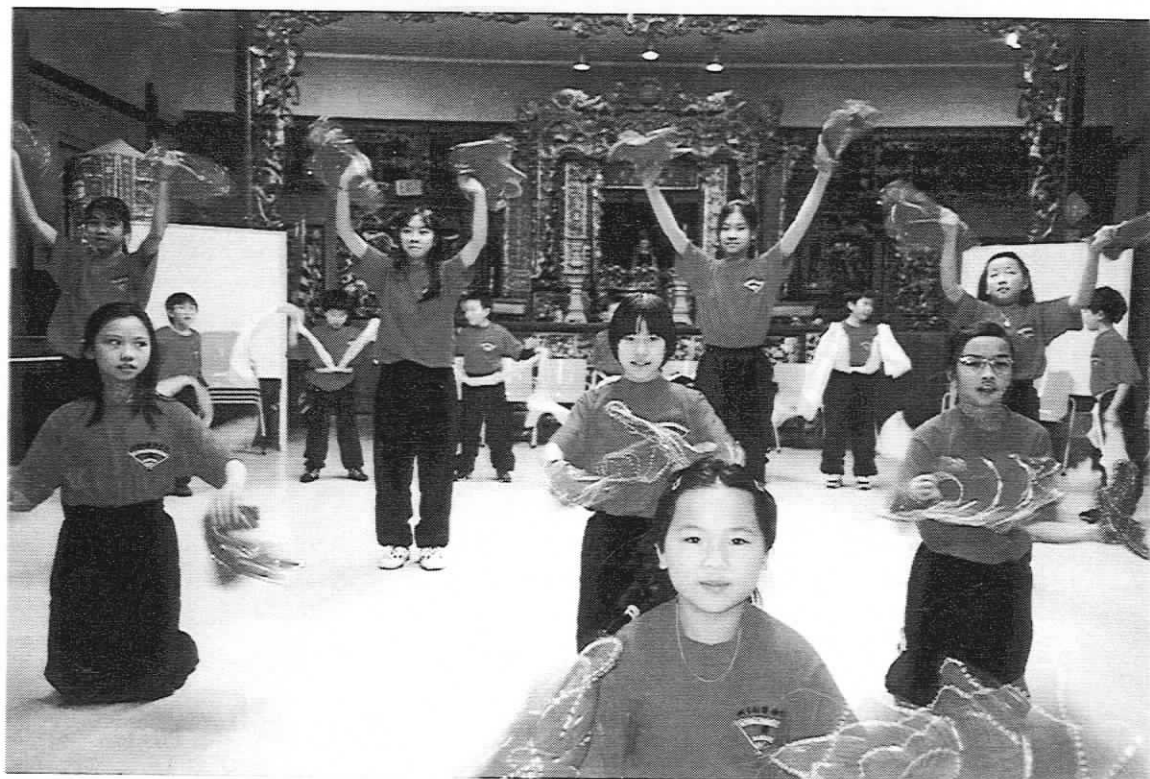
Students of the Chinese painting class, 1996.



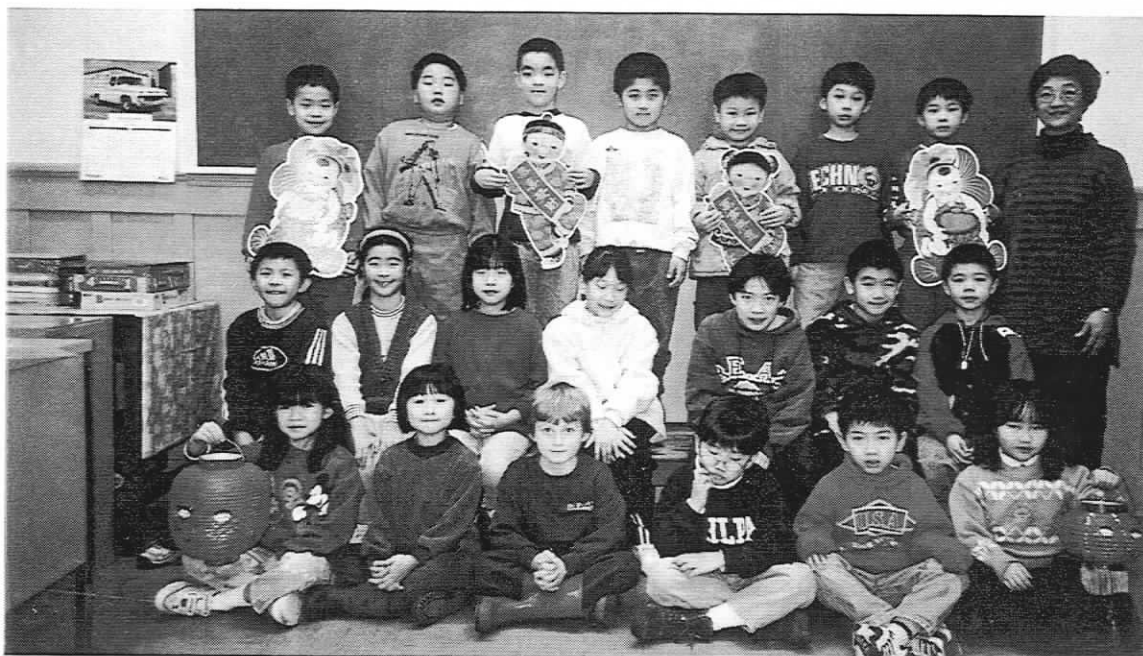
to speak Mandarin and learn Pinyin, which is a special form of phonetic spelling for the Mandarin dialect. On March 4, 1999, our first adult classes in Mandarin began.



Uvic students visited the Chinese school, February 1999.



Students performed for the visitors, February 1999.



Grade one teacher Mona Tao and students, February 1999.



Grade two teacher Ellen Chan and students, February 1999.



Grade three teacher Kileasa Wong and students, February 1999.

Textbooks

Originally, the text books used were the classical Chinese or Wenyan-wen and Guwen. Actually, they were too difficult for young children and adults whose second language was Chinese. They were not appropriate for daily use, as it would be similar to teaching a Shakespearean style language component instead of contemporary English. In March, 1924, a new teacher, Li Zhenxiong arrived from China. He suggested that the text books should be switched to modern Chinese, Baihua wen, to match the equivalent level of the school in China. Li Zhenxiong requested that the Yong Liwei Liquor Store in Hong Kong donate new textbooks. Li Zhenxiong became the school principal in 1937 and continued for sixteen years. The first modern textbooks were donated as a result of his request and the school has used the modern Chinese language since then.

In 1966, a new series was adopted. "Huawen Rumen," meaning "enter the door of Chinese language," is published by New Milestone Publishing of San Francisco, California. There are six books, one for each grade. The vocabularies of the Huawen Rumen begin simply and are repeated often from chapter to chapter, so students find the characters easier to remember. Traditionally the Chinese text did not have as much repetition, so there was some resistance among the teachers from Hong Kong to the different form, but the approach is pedagogically better for second language Chinese speakers and the children learn well from it. The books are written for Cantonese students, so Mandarin speaking students, who have a different vernacular, are not familiar with the form.



Grade four teacher John Mei and students, February 1999.



Grade five and six teacher Sau Fong Ho and students, February 1999.

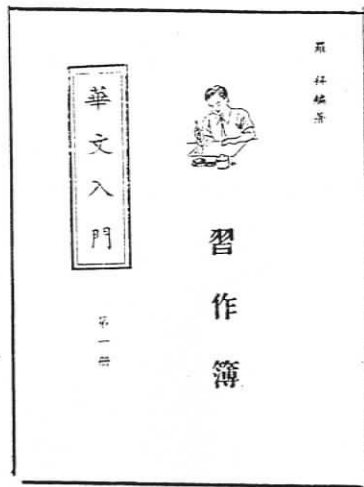


Montary Elementary school students visited the chinese school, February 17, 1999.

The second series, “Zhonqua Yuwen”, Chinese literature, published by the Ottawa Chinese Public School, uses the traditional approach. They, also, are graded one to six and are appropriate for both Cantonese and Mandarin speaking students. The strength of this series is that it is based on traditional Chinese literature and has strong Canadian content as well. The books include sections on the culture and geography of Canada. Beginning students may find these books more difficult because the books tend to begin teaching students at a more intermediate level. For this reason, the Victoria Chinese Public School uses both the “Huawen Rumen” and “Zhonqua Yuwen”.

The school uses “Zhongwen”, meaning Chinese Language in their Mandarin classes. It is written specifically for the North American students. The illustrations are beautiful and appealing. Unfortunately, some of the characters used are simplified, rather than using the traditional symbols. It is easy for the children to learn the simplified character but then they do not actually know the traditional form.

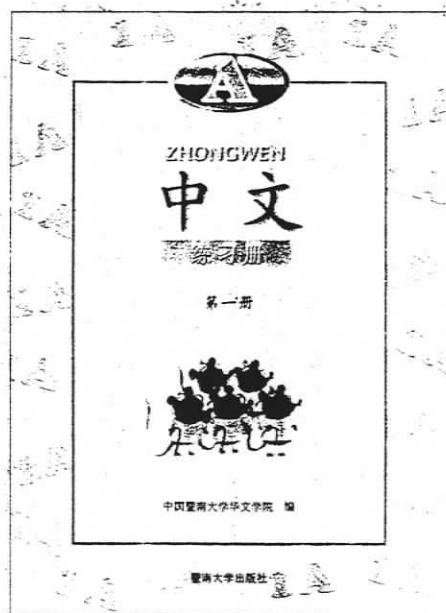
The use of the simplified characters has been the practice in China from the late fifties to early sixties, and a long standing philosophical debate continues about it. Many teachers outside of China are not familiar with the new characters, and the use of them makes it difficult for students who are not yet comfortable with the traditional characters to learn. However, the book teaches the Pinyin, which is the Chinese phonetic alphabet. It also allows the children to learn to read phonetically. In addition to the cultural teachings found in the texts used for language learning, the students are taught a variety of cultural activities.



Huawen Rumu, enter the door of Chinese language.



Zhongqua Yuwen, Chinese Language and Literature.



Zhongwen, Chinese language.

Monthly assemblies

Monthly assemblies are held where the core values of Chinese culture are introduced and reinforced. All Chinese people know these moral principles. Jiang Zhongzheng, the past President of Taiwan, Republic of China, made calligraphy characters of them. These have been carved in wood and are proudly displayed in the main hall on the wall above the picture of Dr. Sun Yet Sen, the founder of China.

禮
義
廉
恥

Li Propriety

Yi Justice

Lian Honesty

Chi Modesty



As well as reinforcing the moral values, each monthly assembly has a different theme that relates to Chinese customs and traditions and at the same time links to current life experiences of the children. For example, the western tradition of Mother's Day and Father's Day is linked to the historical significance of honouring the parents and ancestors. This speaks to the duties of filial piety and fraternal respect.

Conversation in the school is always in Chinese, so during the assemblies, students learn useful vocabulary to link with their current western experience.



Chinese students back to George Jay Elementary School. There are twelve Chinese students attending both George Jay and the Chinese school in 1999. Lion Dance was taught by Kileasa Wong to these students and performed at George Jay School, on February 16, 1999.



The George Jay School ESL class visited the Chinese school in February 1999.

Calligraphy

Students take two hours of calligraphy per week. Children are very engaged and proud of their work, often taking the samples to Public School for “Show and Tell”. This demonstrates the cross-cultural exchange that is a powerful component of any multicultural education.

They start learning calligraphy in grade three because children can't hold the brush properly at an earlier age. Younger children tire too quickly. The children use the traditional bamboo and goat hair brush. They must hold the brush perpendicular to make the correct strokes. As they learn the technique, the consistency and amount of ink to be used on the brush is discovered and mastered. If it is too wet it runs, so time is spent on simple characters at first and continue to more advanced levels. Rice paper is used because it has a very fine texture that absorbs the water very quickly, whereas, on regular paper the ink stays on top. The paper and other materials are imported from Hong Kong; however, all the materials are actually made in mainland China. There has been a long tradition of calligraphy at our school; here are some samples of the first graduates in 1915 and a sample of today's student work.



Olivia Keane, age 10, 1998.



Principal Li Donghai and student, 1960s.

懿



銘

光祥

堂翼兩廡莊像
鄰琅貝布互森
羅念骨無所蓮

Calligraphy by a grade six student, 1998.

論學生畢業後對於社會宜知自重以保名譽
學生者文明之製造家也。有學生而後有社會。有社會而後進化。速進化速。而後世界文明。是故學生為製造文明之人物也。夫學生者果從何而來。非來自學問乎。然則學生之對於社會。有無窮之關係。而不知社會之對於學生。亦有無窮之關係。蓋社會良則學生固之而良。社會惡則生學亦因之而惡也。

samples of calligraphy by two of the first graduates, 1915.

Chinese painting

Chinese painting was introduced in 1990. This class teaches students the basics of Chinese brush painting using the traditional forms of landscape, flowers and birds. Western holidays and special days are used as subjects as well so that the cross-cultural experience is enhanced. Christmas trees, Santa Claus, Easter Bunnies and Jack-o-lanterns are designed and painted using the traditional materials. Even bamboo brush and rice paper cartoons are made. When public school teachers have seen the artwork of our students, some have come to the school to speak with the art teacher and learn the techniques so as to teach the rest of their students.



Poster for art exhibition held by the Purple Cloud Studio and the Chinese school students, May 1999.



Justin Mui, age 10, 1998.

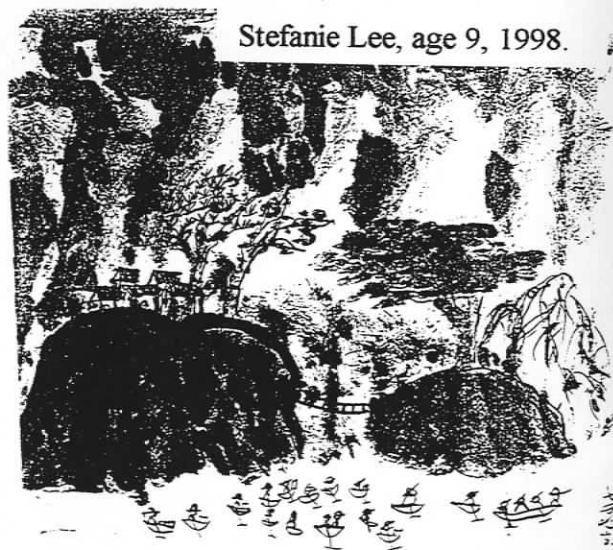


Jennika Louie, age 6, 1998.

Paintings by Chinese school students.



Chinese painting demonstration in a community activity. 1995



Stefanie Lee, age 9, 1998.

Artistic Expression

Chinese New Year is a major event for artistic expression. Activities begin with the children making large 2 by 3 paintings of traditional customs of Chinese New Year. For instance, the lion dancing commences with the Dragon and its beautiful long tail circling through the community to chase the bad spirits away and bring good luck for the New Year. This continues with the giving out of red envelopes, firecrackers, and red banners with calligraphy that signals good luck and good wishes for the year and the current Zodiac animal for the year. These paintings are displayed in the windows and around the school for the community. Many people from the Chinese and non-Chinese community borrow the paintings to decorate for their own festivities around New Year. During the week of Chinese New Year, over 500 students from the public schools visited the school to see the variety of activities that are taught. It is clear that cross-cultural education is facilitated by the making, posting, and sharing of the beautiful art pieces.

The quality of the Artwork is excellent. The students enter an annual Overseas Chinese Children Painting and Calligraphy Competition in Taiwan. They have traditionally won several awards each year. They won Silver, Bronze and Outstanding Awards last year.

In May 1998, the first art Exhibition of the students' work was held at the Silver Threads Senior citizens Center on Government Street. The four day exhibit was displayed for both the Chinese and the Western Communities. The reception for the event was excellent and many visitors were amazed at



Christmas party, 1998.



Montary Elementary school students visited the chinese school, February 17, 1999.



Braefoot elementary school students visited the Chinese school, February 17, 1999.

the level of expertise of the paintings. On May 14 to 16, 1999, we will hold our second Exhibition.



Graduation ceremony in June 1995.

Tony Yip, age 13, 1998.



Paintings by Chinese school students.

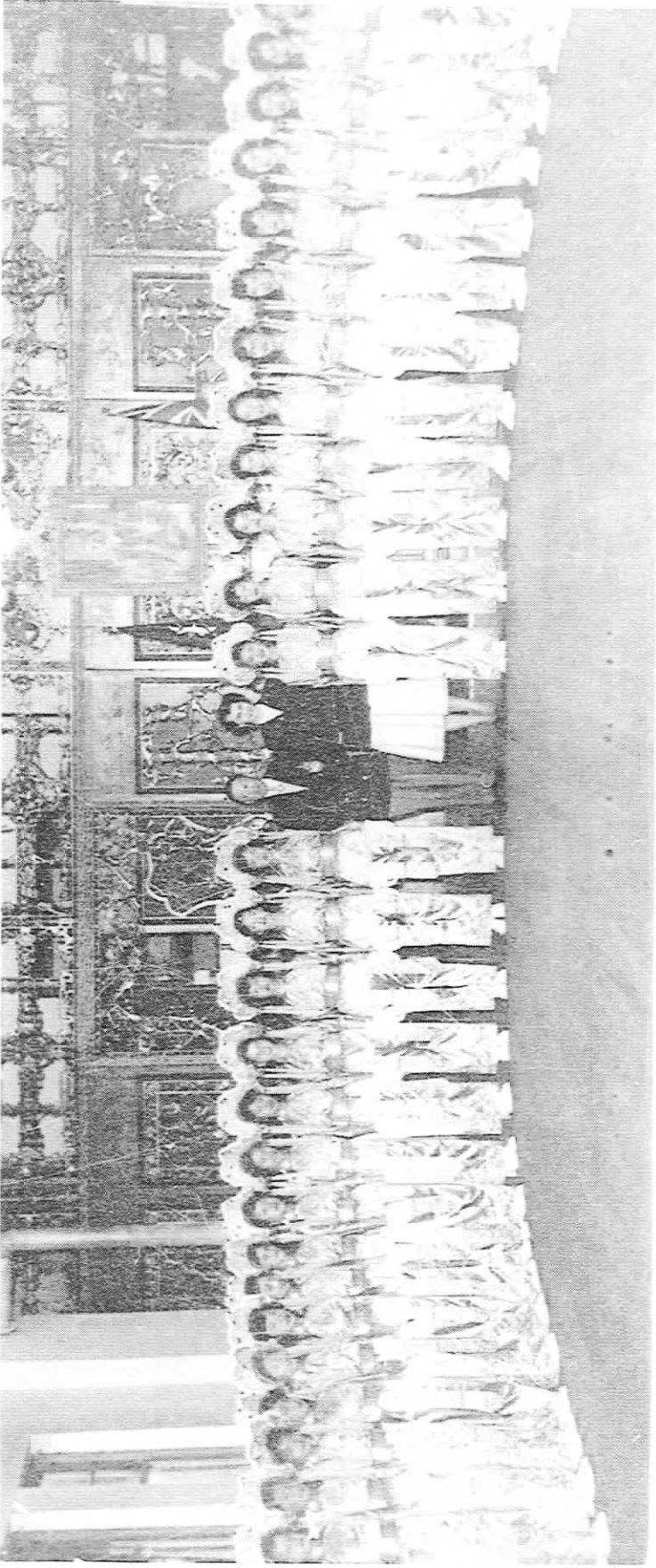


Celebrating Chinese New Year at the Royal B.C. Museum, 1995

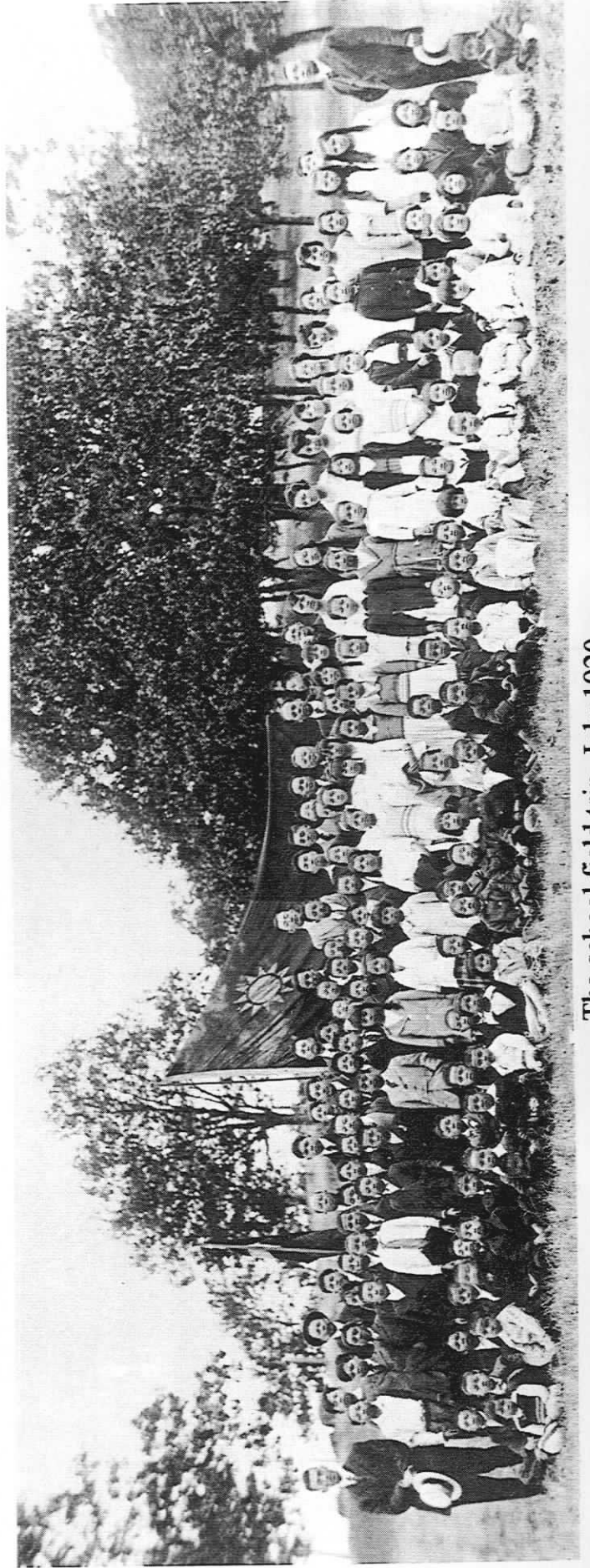


Olivia Keane, age 9, 1998.

澳
李
花



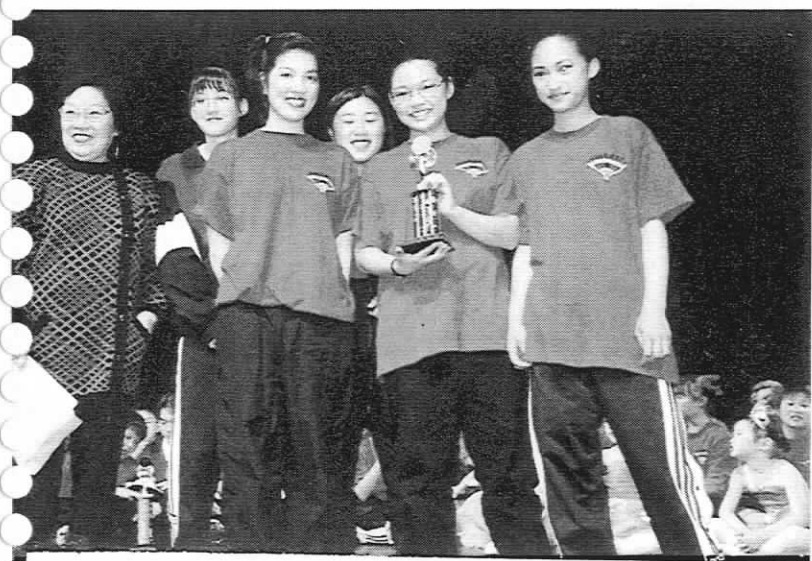
The Chinese School Dance Troupe and teachers, 1949.



The school field trip, July 1920.

The Chinese School Dance Troupe

The Chinese School Dance Troupe was formed in 1949. It was active in community events and annually participated in the Victoria Day parade until the early 1970's. Although the dance troupe continued, it was not as active again until 1992 when I began the process of rejuvenating the troupe. I began by taking classes in Vancouver, and in 1994, I traveled to Beijing to study at the Beijing Academy of Dance. Now, the troupe is acclaimed in Victoria and performs at many different functions, including hospitals, schools, rest homes, festivals, and celebrations. Chinese New Year is the busiest time for our community. There are often requests for children's dance lessons by Chinese and non-Chinese parents. The troupe, the Victoria Chinese Public School Dancers, annually enters into dance competitions including the North American Dance Competition in Vancouver and the Greater Victoria Performing Arts Festival.



The dance troupe received an award at the North American Chinese Folk Dance Competition, 1998



The dance troupe won an award from the Greater Victoria Performing Arts Festival, 1997



The Chinese New Year celebration , 1995.



Aaron Lam, a grade three student of Gordon Head Elementary, visited the Chinese school with his class in February 1998.



Margaret Jenkin Elementary School visited the Chinese School, 1998



Chinese School students at a Chinatown parade, 1998

Activities

The school continues the tradition of taking field trips at least once a year. Trips include government house, the Jewish school and synagogue, Tang Gong Temple and Hook Sin Tong Charity Association.

In school, we have a variety of contests to increase their motivation and interest in school events. These include story telling, calligraphy, talent shows, skipping and, in 1999, ping pong championships. Twenty-two children joined the event this year. The tournament took three weeks to complete and was the highlight of the year, with many requests to hold another tournament in June.



Teachers and staff participated in downtown scrub-up day, May 1998.



Teachers and students of the Chinese school visited the Government House, 1994.



Zhan Yi Elementary School in Beijing, June 1998.

Twining with Schools in China

In June 1998, I traveled to China and visited four schools; Zhan Yi Elementary in Beijing and Tong Li Central School, Suzhou Pingjiang Elementary and Suzhou Jinwen Central Primary School in Suzhou. As a result of the visit, the students of the four schools have become pen pals with our students.

Through the pen pal experience, the children have begun to share with each other the culture and traditions of east and west. Their fluency in English and Chinese is being enhanced as well as their understanding of the communities and culture. An example of the kind of exchange of thoughts and realities is the question that children here so frequently ask: "How many brothers and sisters do you have?" Of course, in China, there is a one child only policy. The responses from abroad will be very interesting and we expect will generate good discussions. This and many other questions, similarities and differences will be explored over time.

The School is exploring procedures to become an official Twin School. Bob Cross, the present mayor of Victoria, is interested in helping with the project.



Suzhou Jinwen Central Primary School, June 1998.



Tong Li Central School in Suzhou, June 1998.



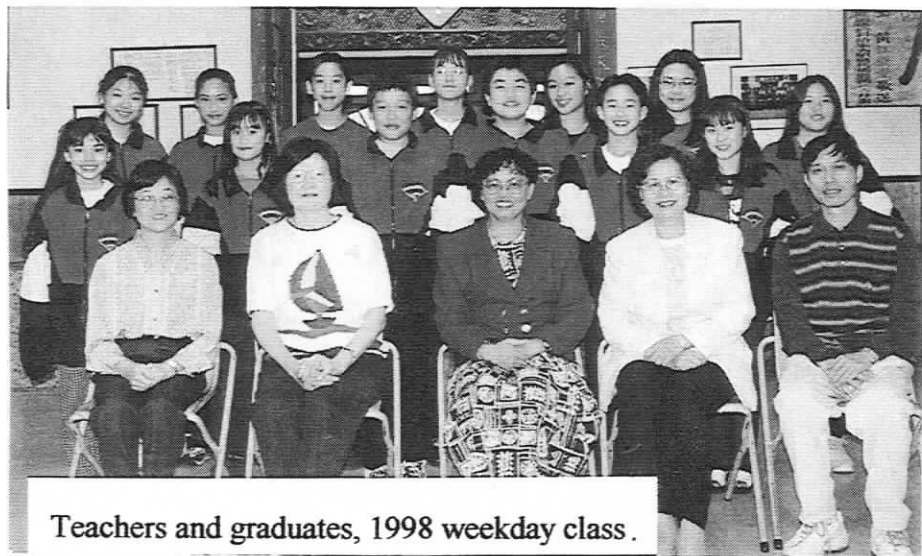
Pingjiang Elementary School in Suzhou, June 1998.

The Role of the Principal

Mr. Li Mengjiu was the first principal and held that position for eleven years. There were ten different principals until 1937. The principals were only administrators of the school and were not involved in teaching, and were appointed by the C.C.B.A. In 1937 Mr. Li Zhenxiong, a teacher at the school, was hired as educator principal. When he retired in 1953, another teacher principal, Li Donghai was hired directly from Hong Kong. He retired in 1966 and the C.C.B.A. decided not to hire a teacher but to have the current president of the association automatically do the job of principal of the school. In 1986, a decision was made to go back to an educator as principal, and Chen Chiqu Daniel was hired. Chen retired, in June 1996. The position was vacant for a year. I was hired in July 1997 as the twenty-fourth principal and the first woman to hold the position.

It has been a challenging and rewarding job. I respect and appreciate the determination of the community to keep our culture alive.

In the future, I intend to find ways to provide the teachers with opportunities for professional development for teaching a heritage language and as well as continuing the cross-cultural activities.



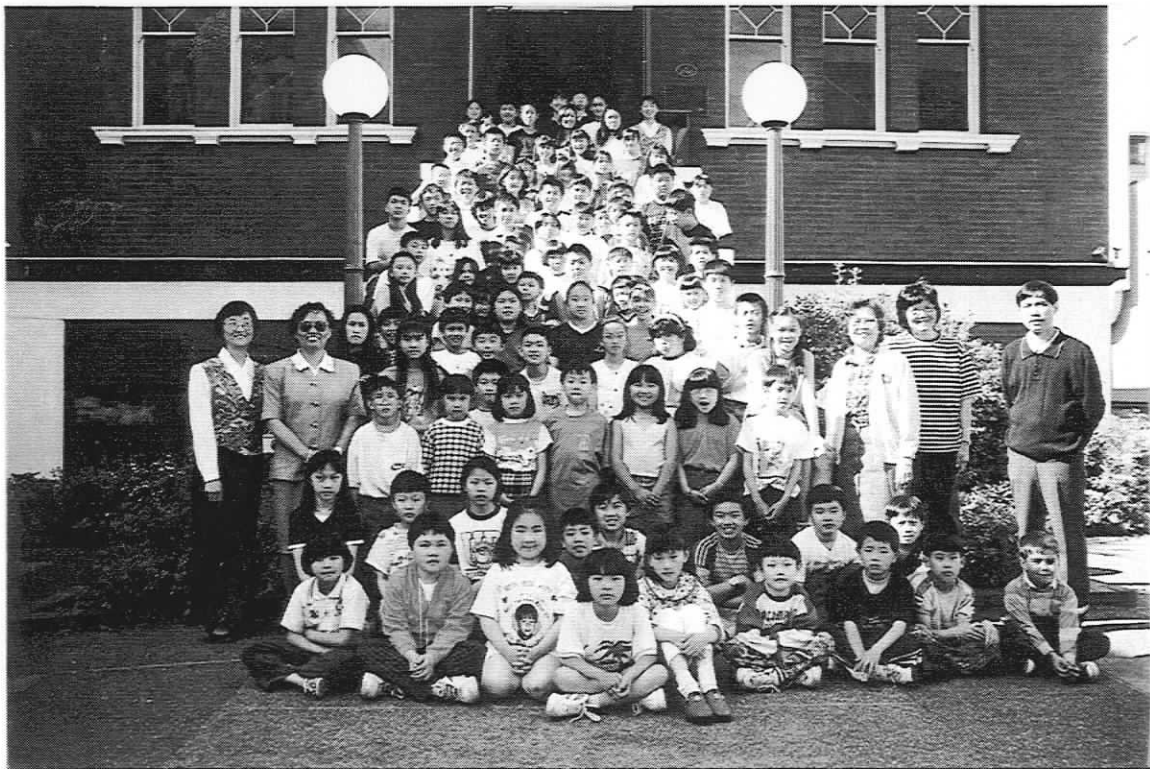
Teachers and graduates, 1998 weekday class.



Teacher, Mr. Mui and Saturday graduates.



Students playing during recess in the main hall, 1997



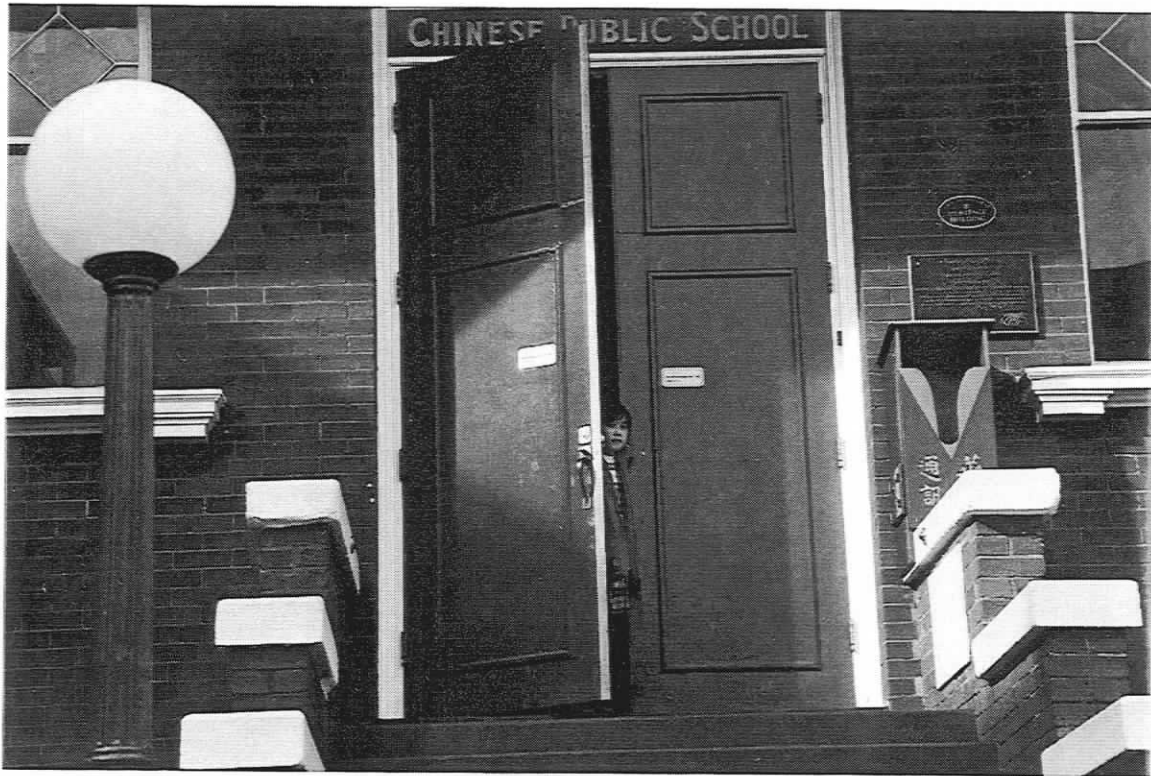
Teachers and students of the weekday classes, 1998

Conclusion

The C.C.B.A. is the direct sponsor of the Huaqiao Gongli Xuexiao. It is clear that the association expects that their children and grandchildren will join the associations as they did and continue Chinese traditions. All the associations support the Chinese School, so that the younger generation will grow up learning the Chinese language and traditions and will be able to carry on for future generations.

Whenever in need, the Chinese school can turn to the associations for help. For example, in 1995 when uniforms were needed for the Chinese school dancers, the associations each put up some money until enough was raised for a brand new set of uniforms. In turn, the students often visit the Chinatown Care Centre to perform for the residents and visit them. As well, The Chinese School Dancers do many performances for the whole community such as Folkfest or the Dragonboat Festival, enhancing cultural exchange and understanding in the larger community.

As mentioned earlier, during the Chinese New Year, there are many requests for tours of the school from the public Elementary Schools, so it is open for tours during the week of the New Year. The children particularly love the time they were given to examine and play with the lion head used for the lion dance. A staff specially arranged to host the tours has been established. The Huaqiao Gongli Xuexiao hopes that, through opening its Big Red Doors, it can help children from all backgrounds learn about the Chinese culture, thus contributing to multiculturalism and racial harmony.



Elaine Yan, age 8, opening the two big red doors. March 30, 1999.

The future looks bright for the Huaqiao Gongli Xuexiao. With China's population around one billion, it has vast economic potential. Consequently, there will be many people wanting their children to learn Chinese, and not just those of ethnic Chinese origin. Being the only Chinese school in Victoria, we will play an important role in teaching future generations.





Teacher Sau Fong Ho and students, 1998.

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Catalogue of Exhibition

History and Significance of The Victoria Chinese Public School

Huaqiao Gongli Xuexiao

1899-1999

by

Kileasa Che Wan Wong

B.F.A., University of Victoria, 1996

A two part project submitted for the

requirement for the degree of

Master of Education

in the area of Curriculum Studies,

Department of Communication & Social Foundations

We accept this project as conforming

to the required standard

Dr. Laurie R. Baxter, Supervisor

Dr. Daniel Bryant, Committee Member

Professor Fred Douglas, Committee Member

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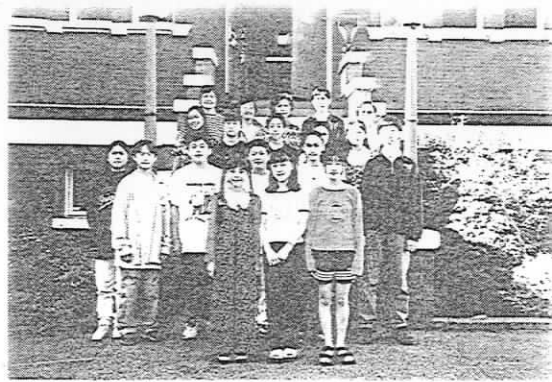
University of Victoria

April 6th, 1999

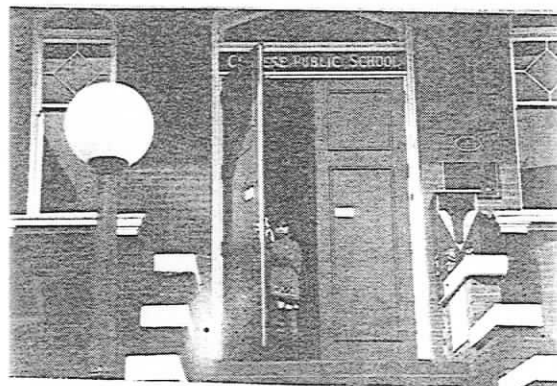
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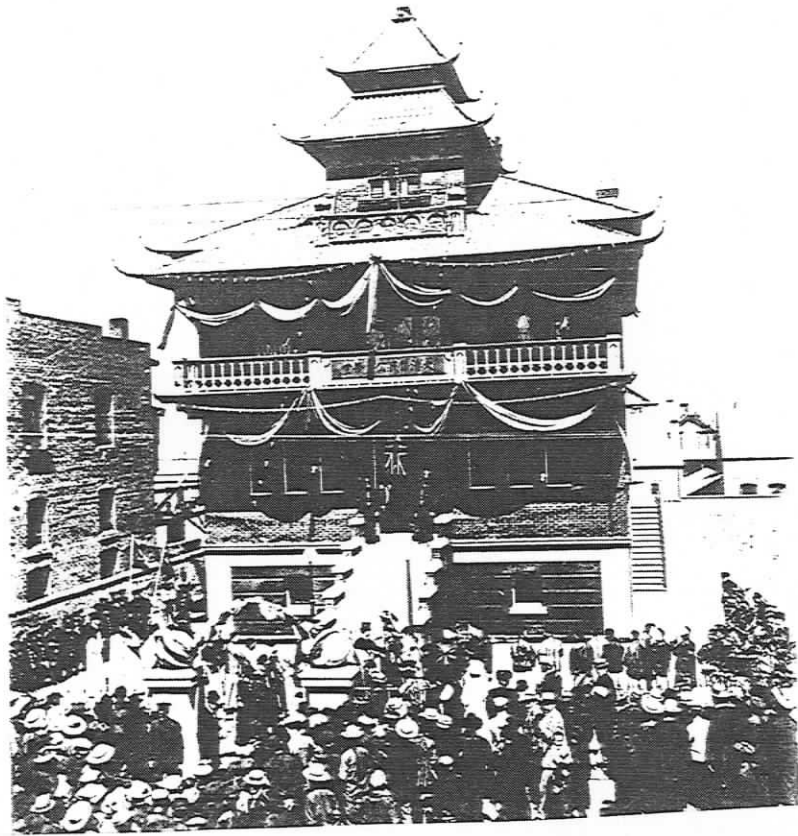
L: The Victoria Chinese Public School on 636 Fisgard Street.



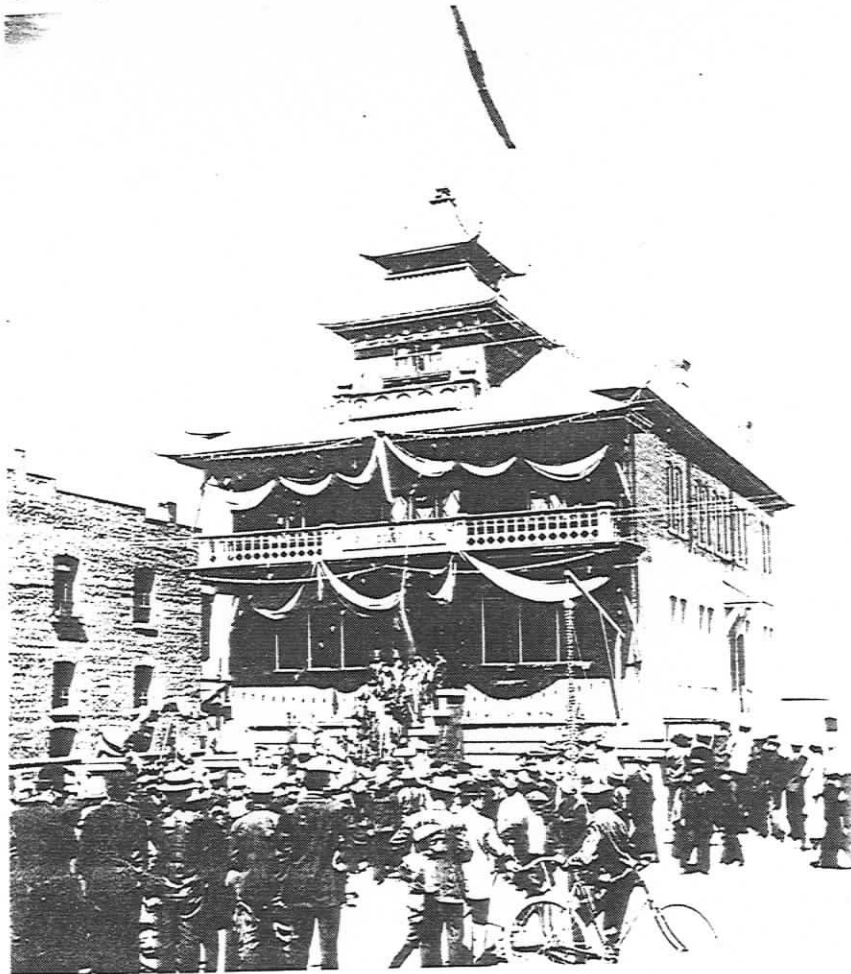
Centre: Teachers and the 51st graduates, June 18, 1998.



R: Often people are heard to wonder, as they pass this impressive landmark, what is happening beyond the two large red doors. Student Elaine Yan is now opening the doors and inviting you to go inside the history and living culture of the Victoria Chinese community and school.



Grand opening of the school at it's present site at 636 Fisgard street, August 7,1909.





R: Grand opening of the school at its present site at 636 Fisgard street, August 7, 1909. Only men were allowed to attend the official ceremonies during that time. In the front row 3rd from left is Mr. Li Mengjiu and 6th is Mr. Lin Libin.



L: School founder and first principal of the Victoria Chinese Public School Mr. Li Mengjiu (back row 4th from left, holding baby) and family.



R : Another school founder Mr. Lin Libin.



L : Mr. Li Mengjiu's family in 1900.



The mourning ceremony in memory of Mr. Li Mengjiu, the founder and the first principal of the Victoria Chinese Public School, 1925.





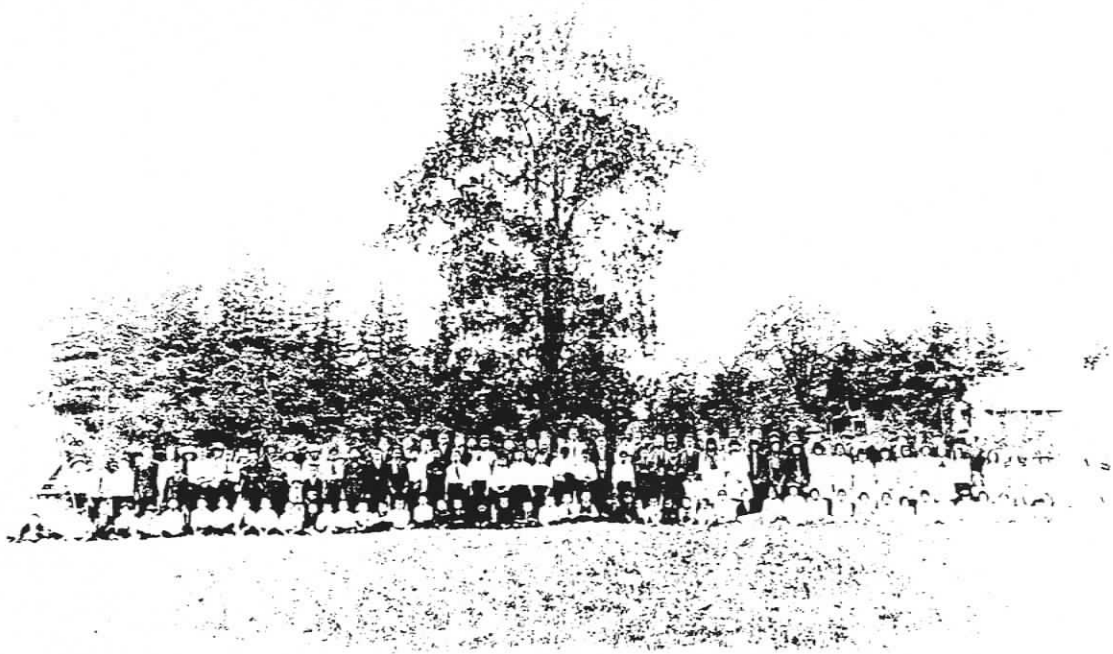
R: Mr. Huang Hunan, taken at the Tai Shan school in Guangdong, China shortly before his departure to a teaching position at the Victoria Chinese Public school in 1913. There are no female teachers or students in the photo.



L: Farewell photo for Mr. Huang Hunan when he was returning to China. The school was influenced by the western community and female students were eventually accepted.

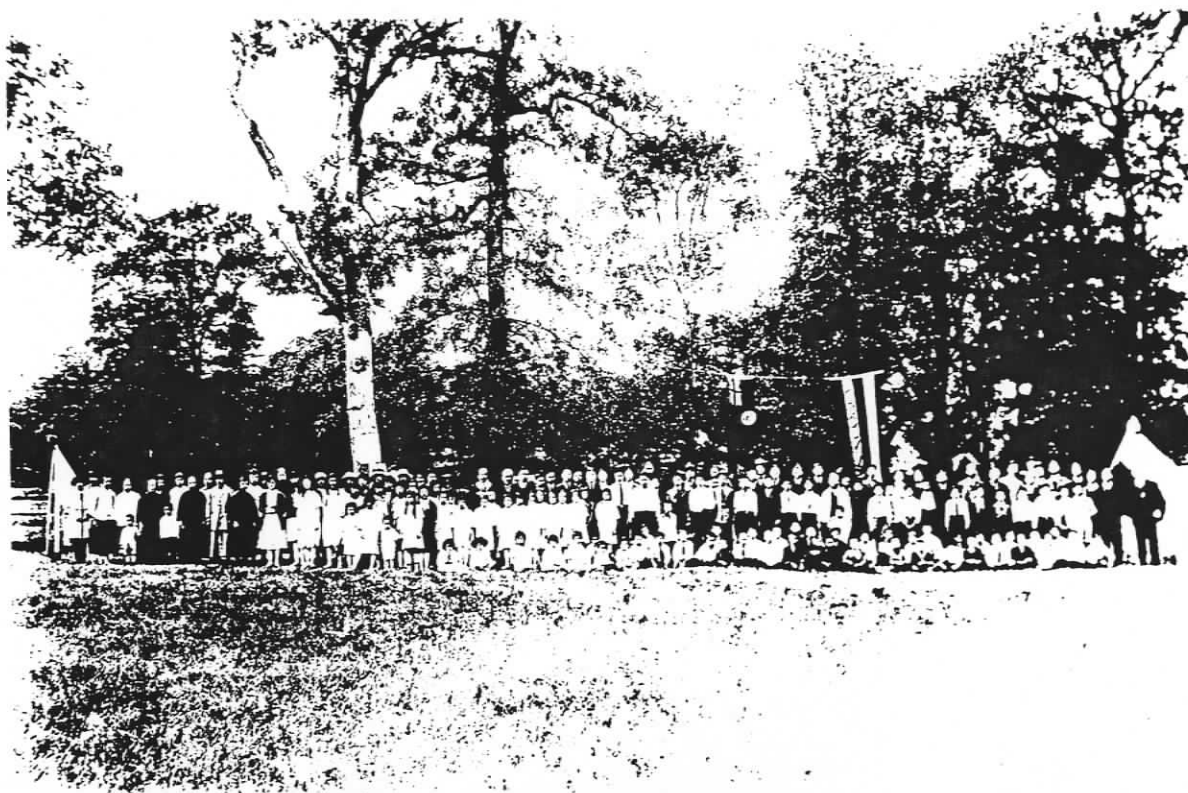


R: The school picnic in 1920.



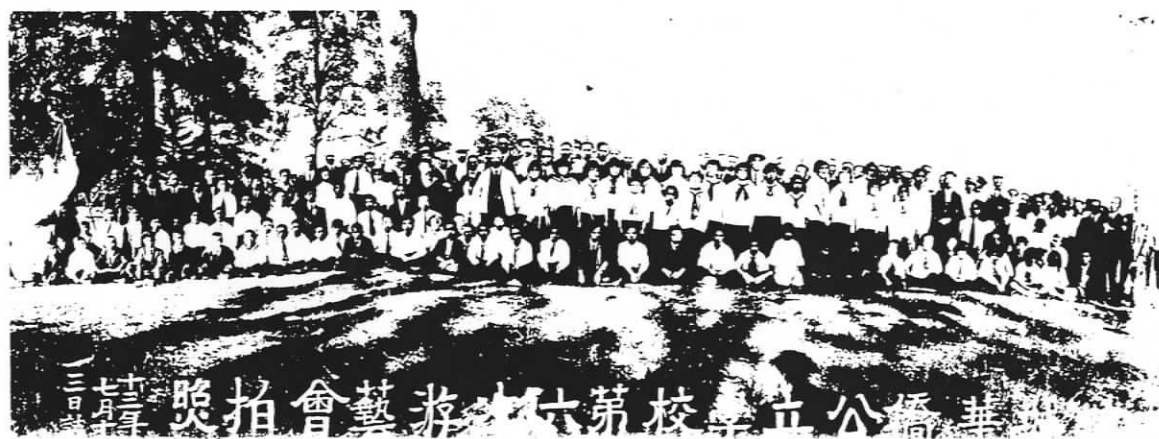
城華僑公立學校第四次清游會拍照

L: The school picnic in 1922.



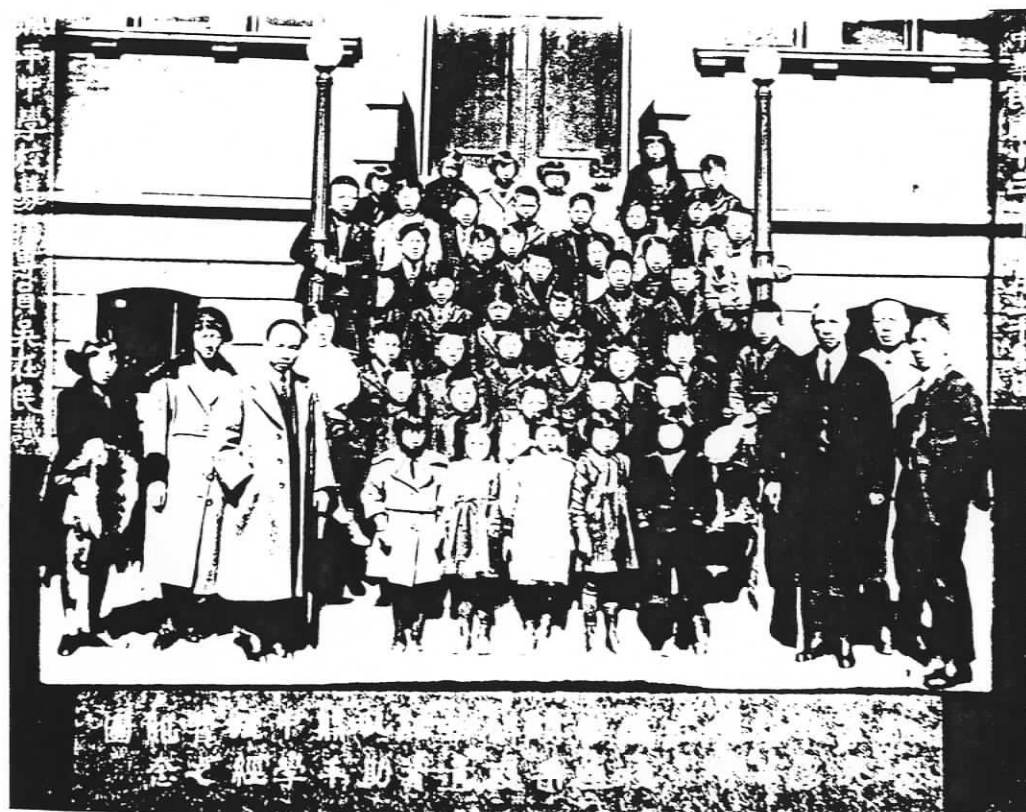
中華民國二十三年七月廿七日 照拍會藝游次五第校學立公僑華埠城黑

R: The school picnic in 1923.

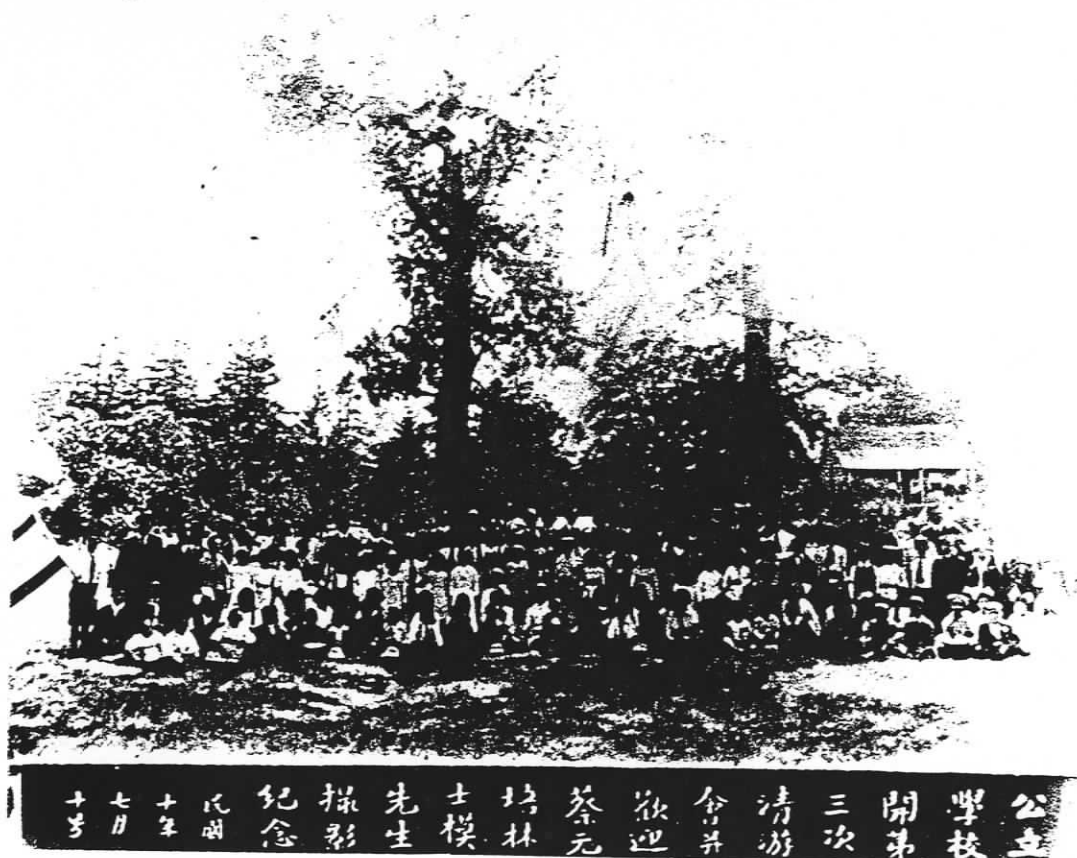


中華民國二十三年七月廿七日 照拍會藝游次六第校學立公僑華埠城黑

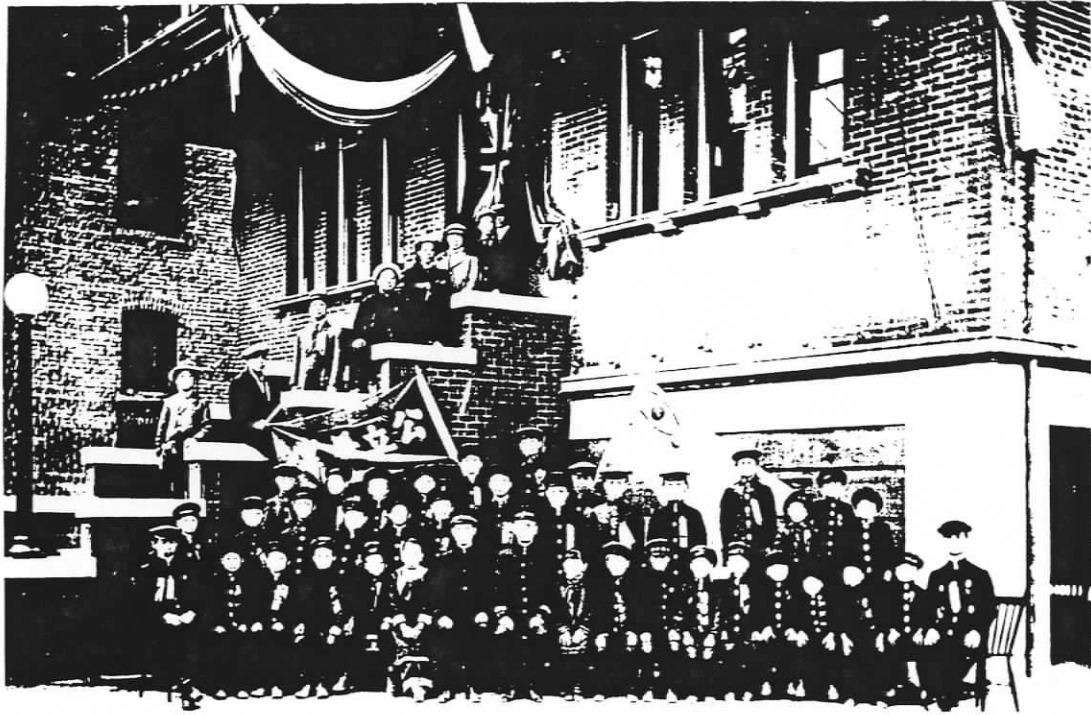
L: The school picnic in 1924.



R: The staff of the Kai Ping High School in Guangdong, China came to visit the Victoria Chinese Public School for the Kai Ping High School's fund raising in 1924.



L: The school picnic in 1921.



R: Teachers and students of the Victoria Chinese Public School, 1911.



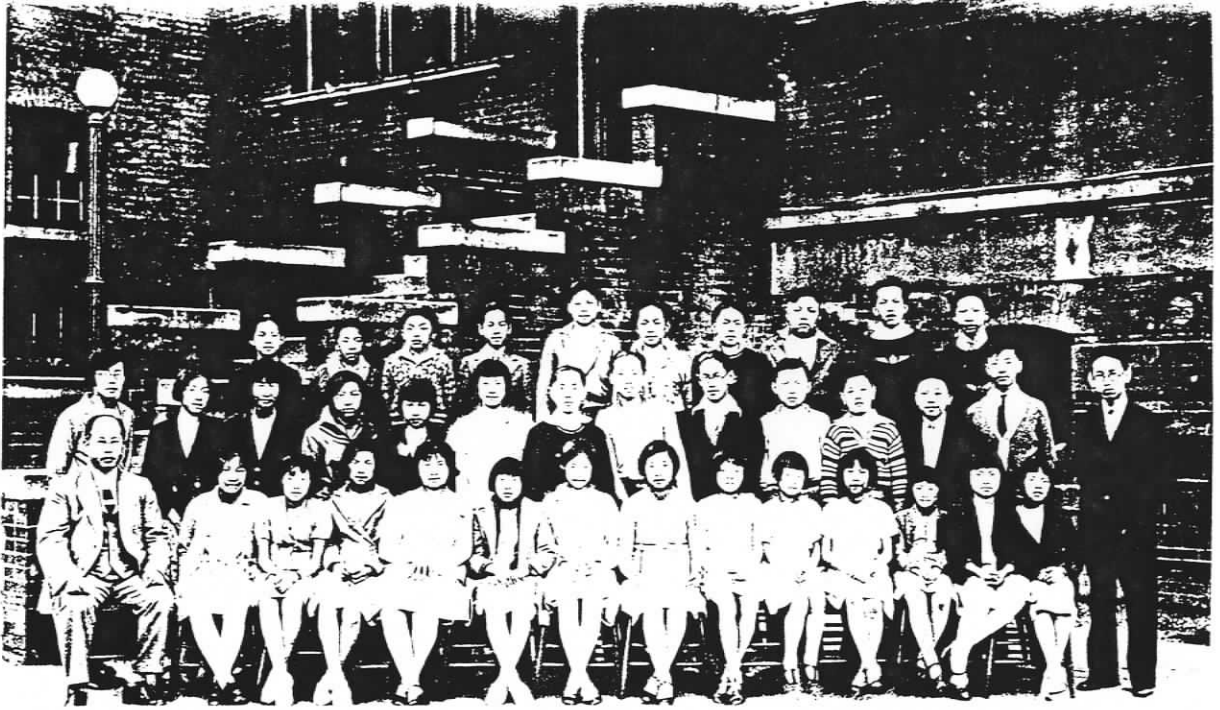
L: Members of the Victoria Chinese Public School drama group, 1924.



R: Teachers and students of the Victoria Chinese Public School, 1930. The back row centre is Jack Lee, president of the Chinese Consolidated Benevolent Association from 1964 to 1967. Lee also received the Order of Canada in 1989.

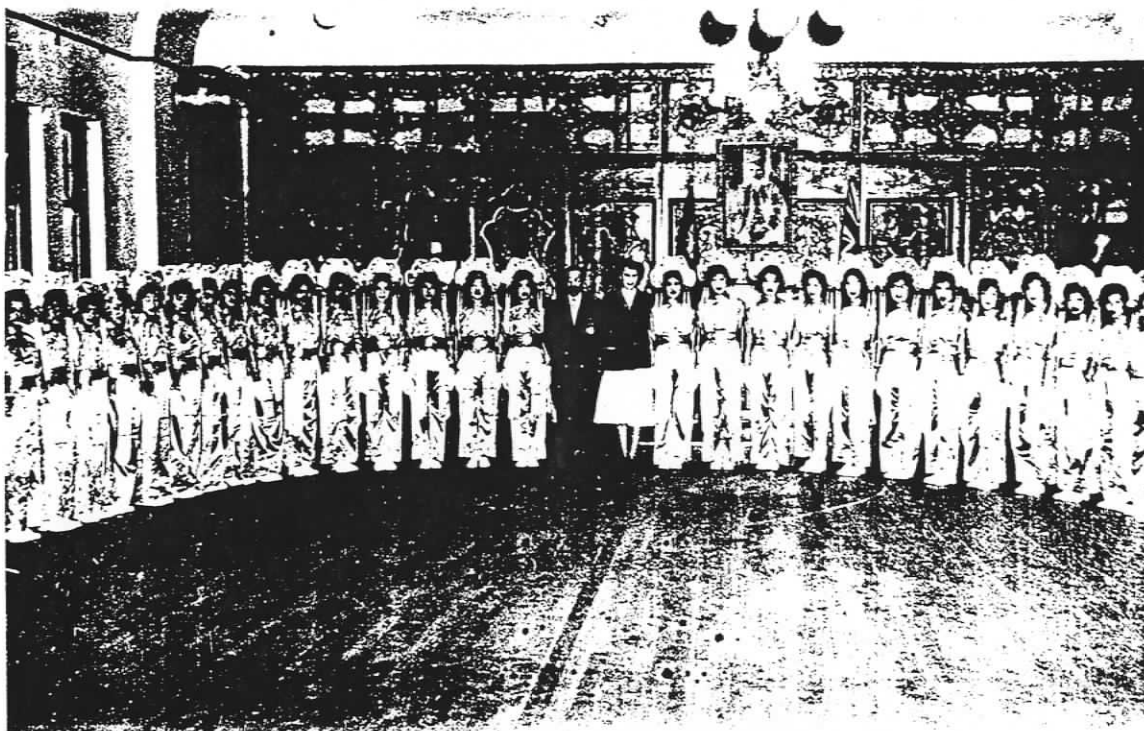


L: Teachers and students of the Victoria Chinese Public School, 1930. The second row third student from left is Peter Wong, a senior director of the Chinese Consolidated Benevolent Association. Mr. Wong received the Order of Canada in 1977. Both Mr. Lee and Mr. Wong are still living in Victoria.

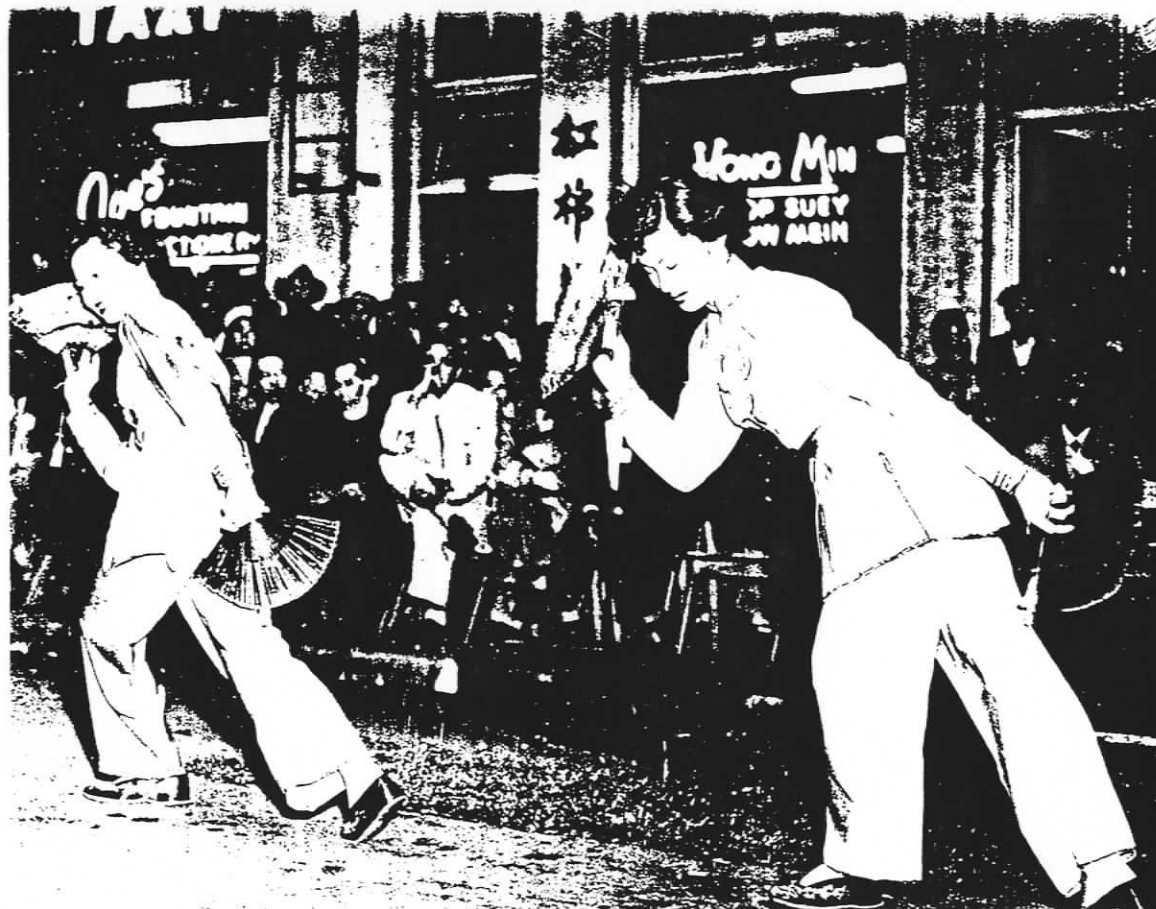


Teachers and students of the Victoria Chinese Public School, 1931.



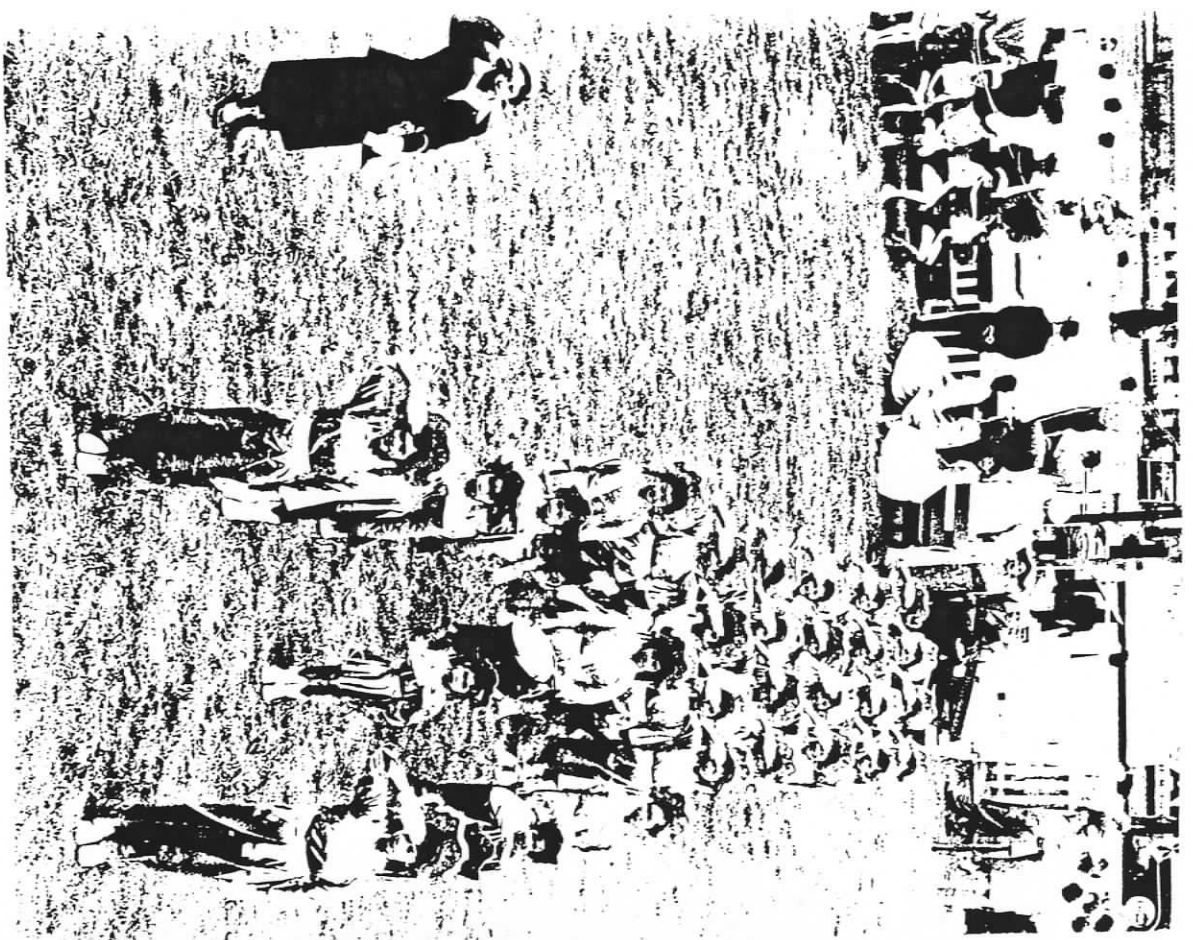


R: The Victoria Chinese Public School Dance group, formed in 1949. Photo was taken at the school assembly hall.



L: The Victoria Chinese Public School Dance group performing at Chinatown.

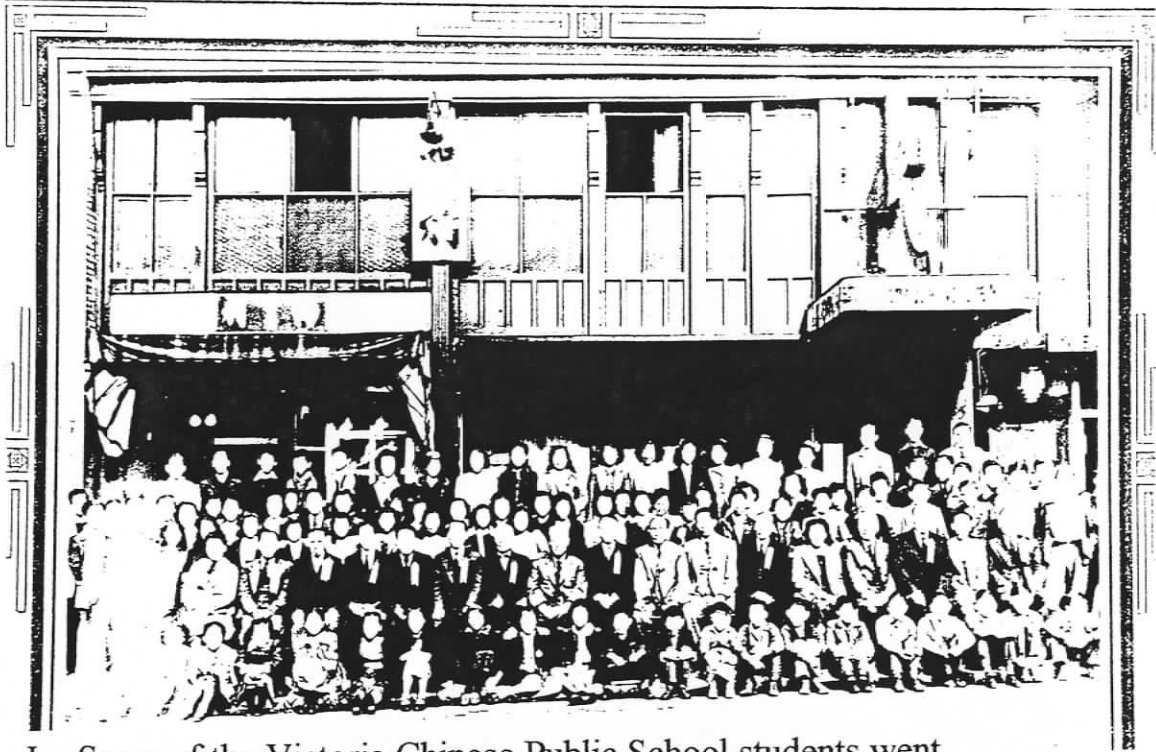
L: The Victoria Chinese Public School Dance group in a parade, 1949.



R: Two of the Victoria Chinese Public School Dancers at the school assembly hall, 1949.

會分大拿加會育教僑華

日十十一三民中 影留員職體全暨官長及者賽與賽比字寫字識生僑加全行舉
八月年十國華



L: Some of the Victoria Chinese Public School students went to Vancouver to participate in a Chinese calligraphy contest in 1942.

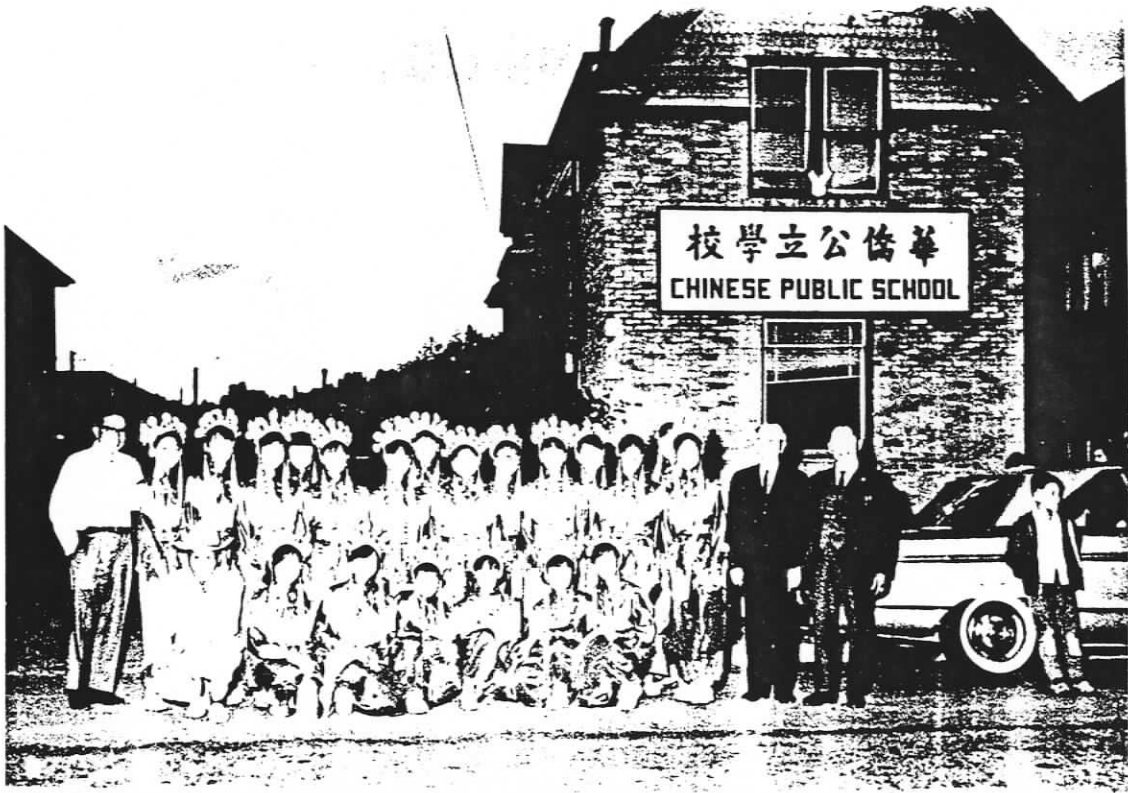


L: A Chinese community fund-raising campaign for China against the Japanese invasion, 1938.

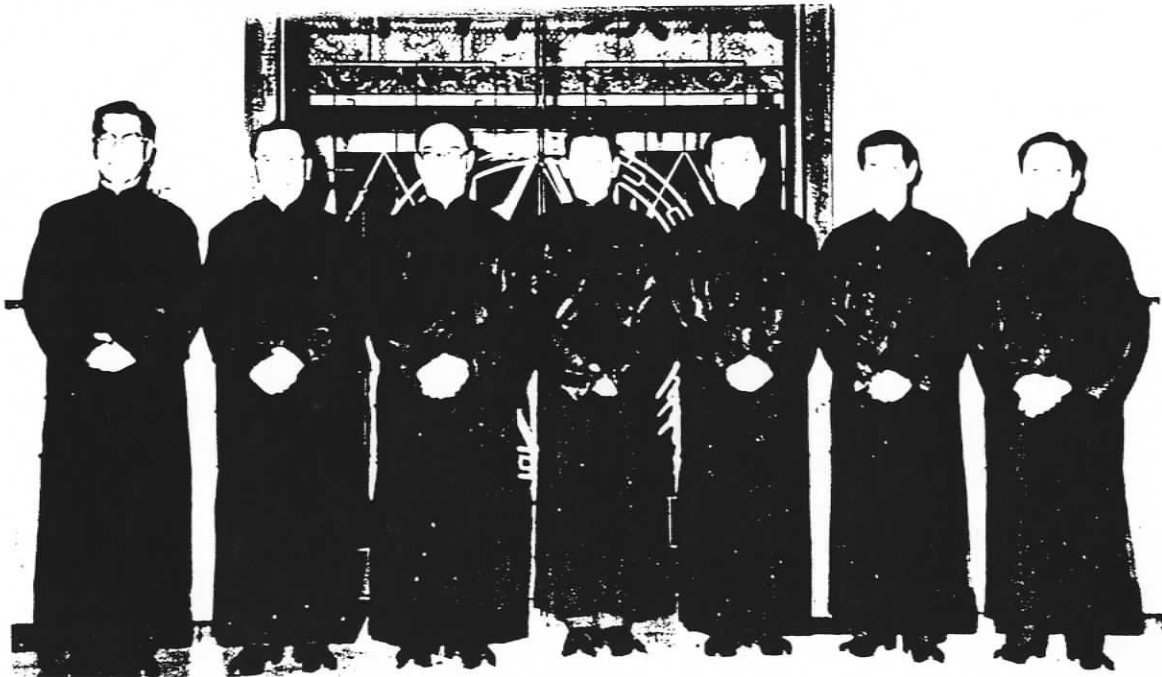


Students Performed for the school fund-raising, 1957.





R: Calgary Chinese Public School and the dance group.



L: Directors of the Chinese Consolidated Benevolent Association with traditional gowns for the ceremony of moving the Palace of Sages to the school assembly hall. On May, 22nd, 1966. The far left was the principal Mr. Li Donghai.



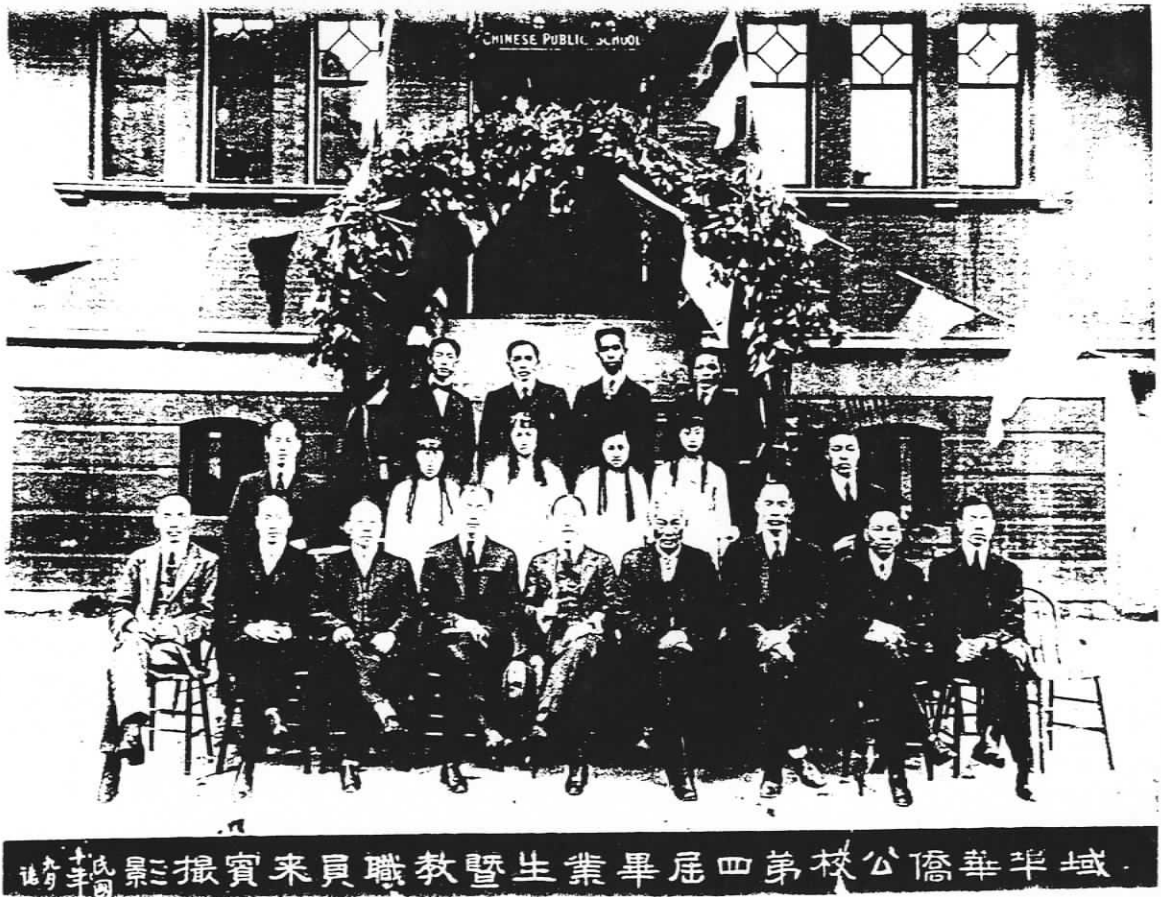
R: Principal Mr. LI Zhenxiong, he was the Principal of the Victoria Chinese Public School from 1937 to 1953.



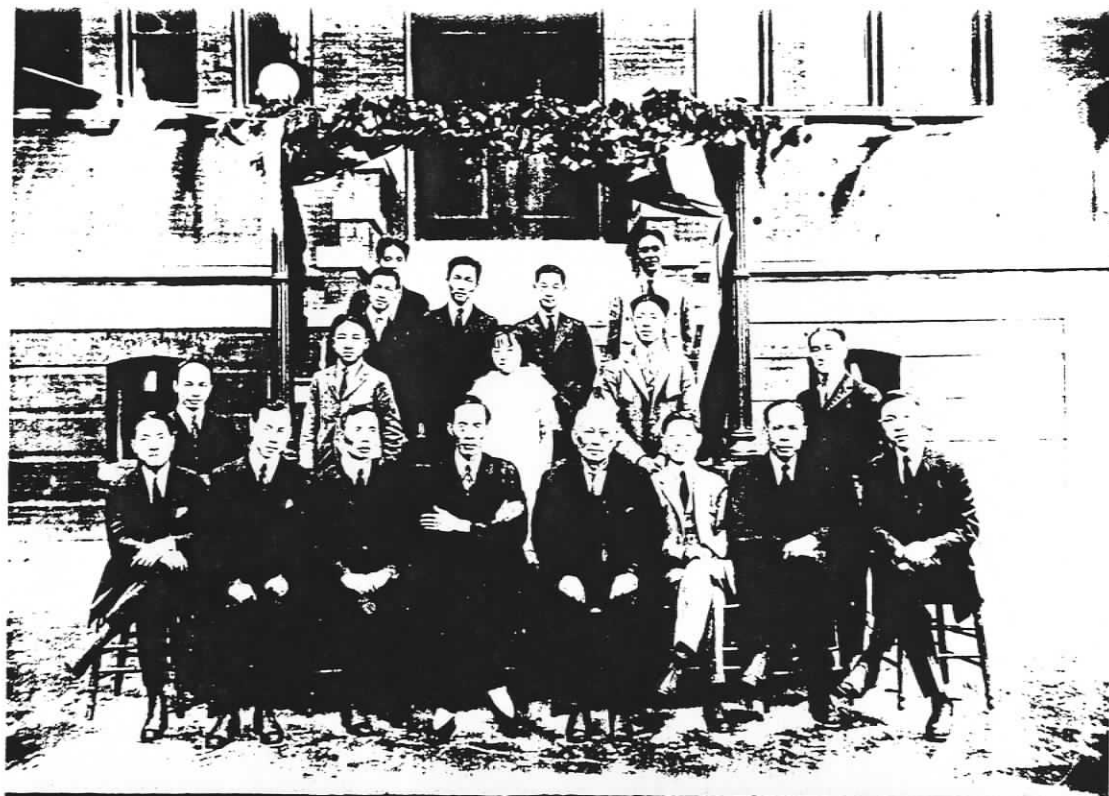
L: Principal Mr. Li Donghai and student. Mr. Li Donghai was the principal of the Victoria Chinese Public School from 1953 to 1966.



R: The first graduation ceremony of the Chinese School was held in February 1915 with twelve graduates. The back row centre was Mr. Li Mengjiu, the first principal of the school.



L: The 1921 graduates and teachers.

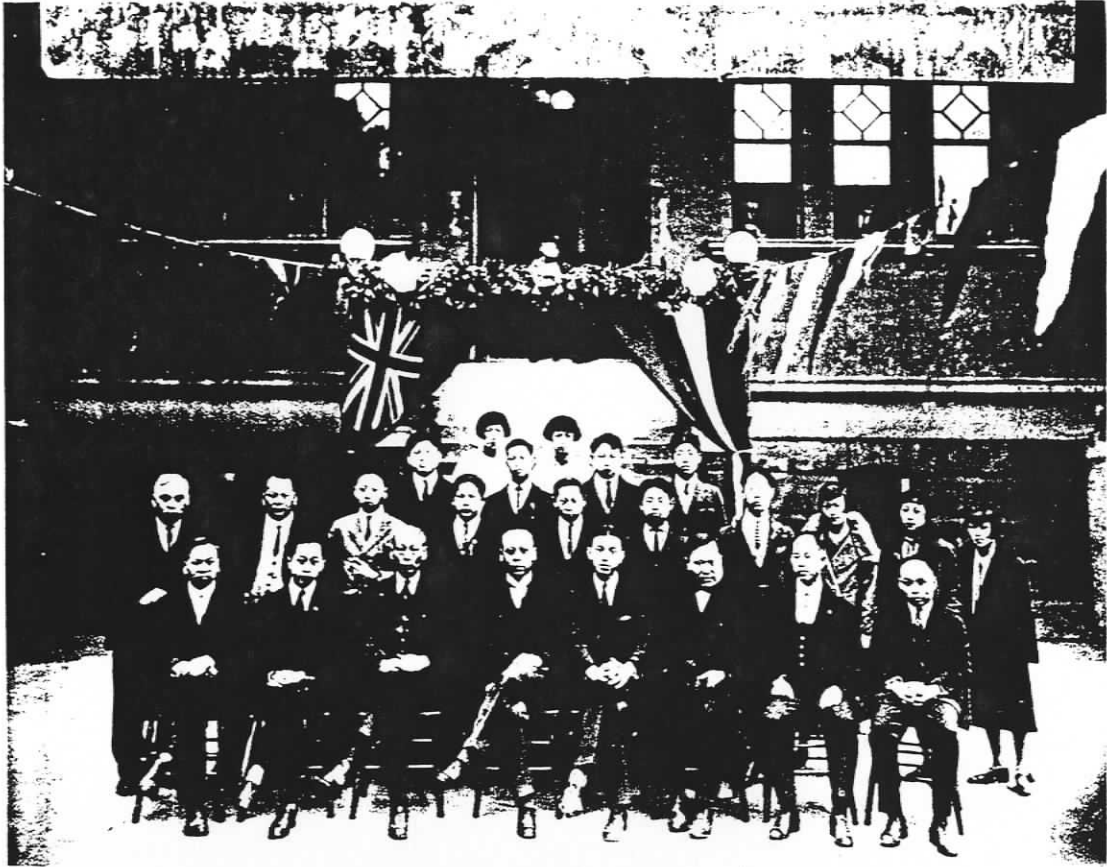


域多利華僑公立學校第五屆畢業生來賓攝影
中華民國十三年十月

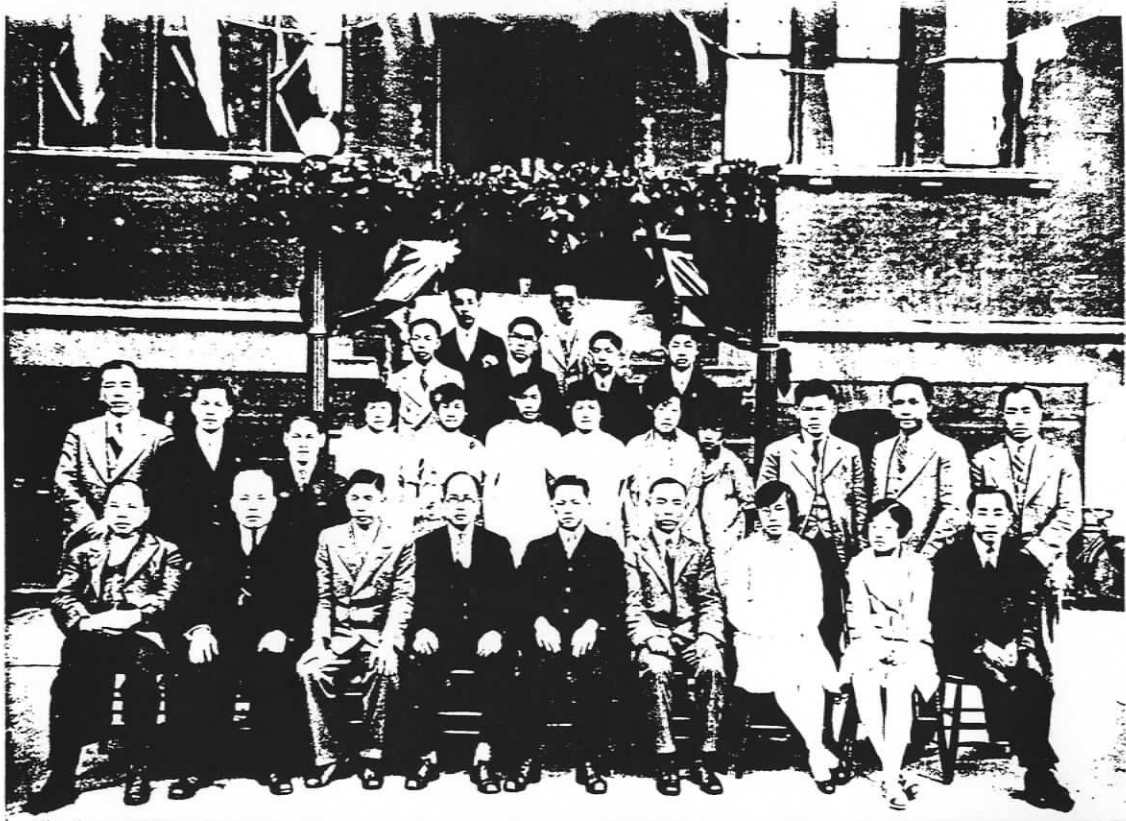
R: The 5th graduates, October 1923.



L: The 6th graduates, January 31st, 1925.

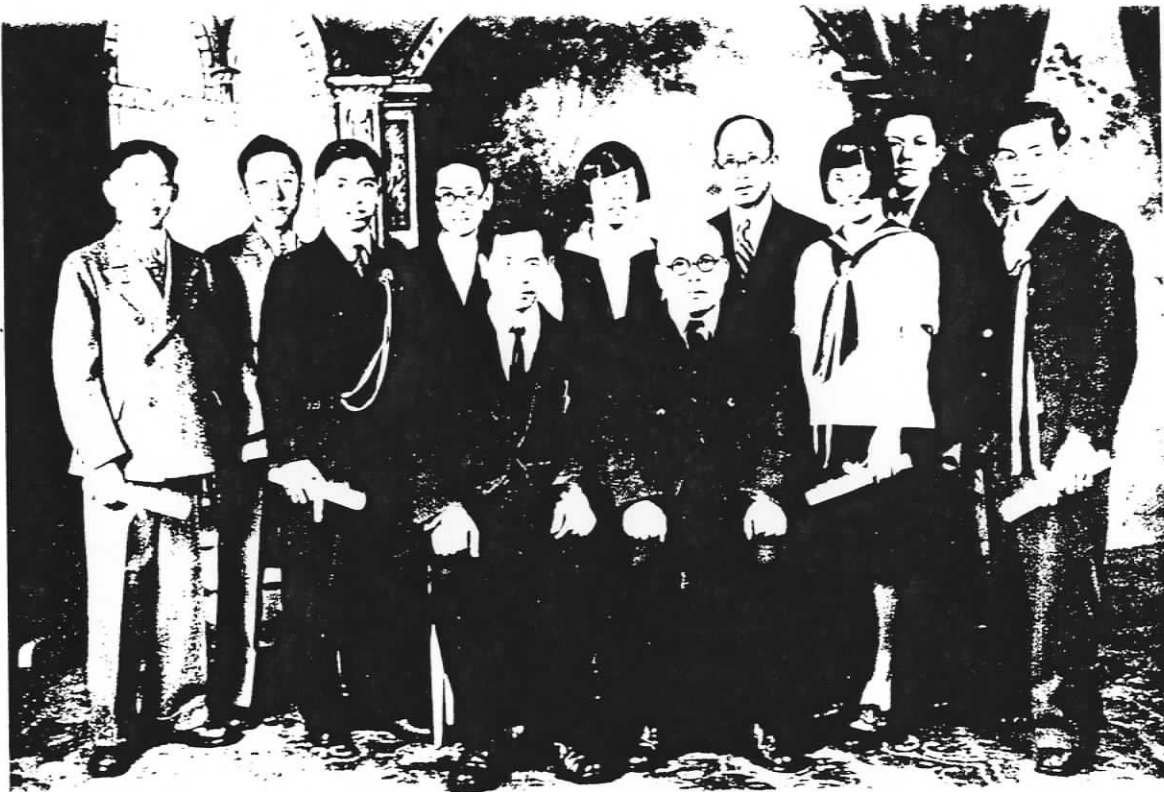


R: The 7th graduates, October 1925.



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L: The 8th and 9th graduates, October 10th, 1928.



R: The 10th graduates, October 10th, 1930.



L: The 14th graduates, May 1940.



R: The 15th graduates, November 28th, 1942.



L: The 16th Graduates, June 17th, 1944.



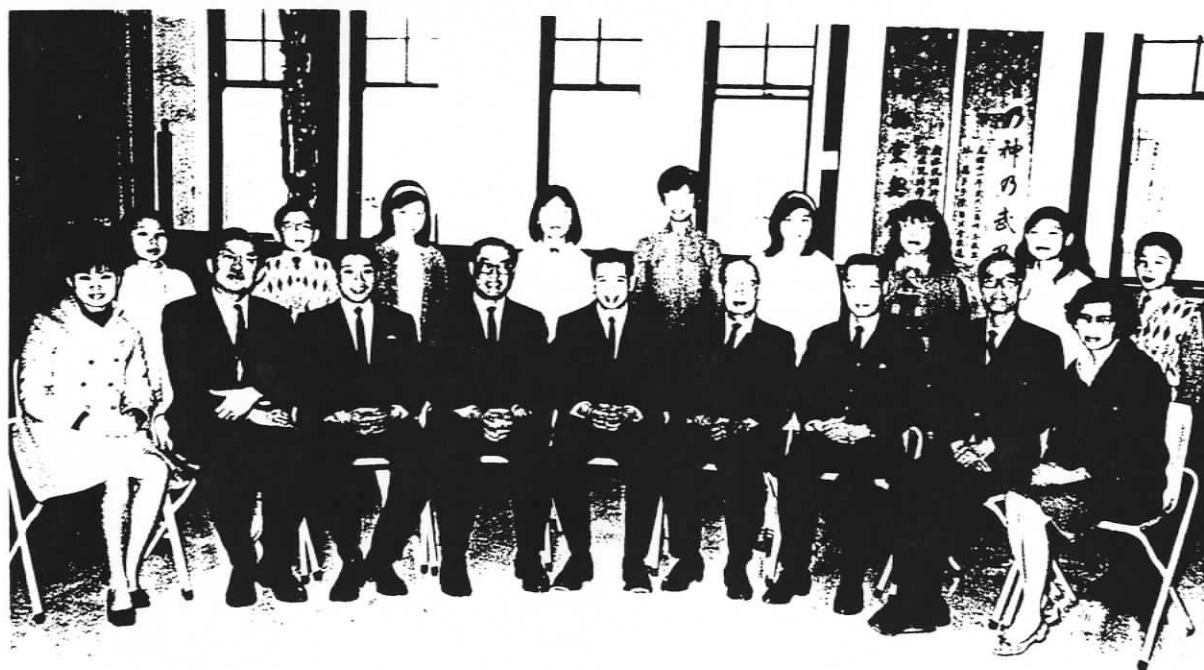
R: The 17th graduates, September 7th, 1946.



L: The 18th graduates, May 14th, 1949.



R: Teachers and staff, 1969.



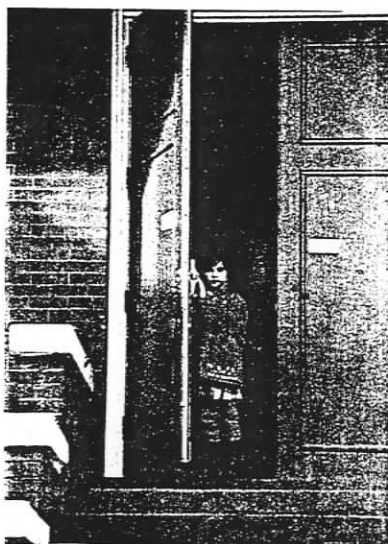
L: The 22nd graduates, June 1969.



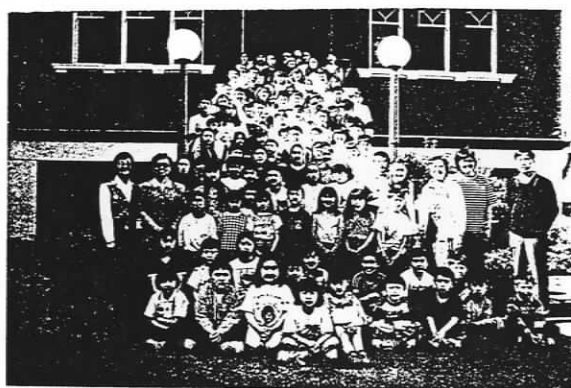
R: Teachers and students, 1992.



L: The school Dancers, 1971.



R: Student Elaine Yan is opening the two Big Red Doors. March 31, 1999.



Centre: Teachers and students, June 1998.



L: The two Big Red Doors of the Victoria Chinese Public School, Huaqiao Gongli Xuexiao, are now opened for the celebration of its centennial.