

Yip Sang
Businessman, philanthropist and
“Unofficial Mayor” of
Vancouver’s Chinatown



THE CHUNG COLLECTION

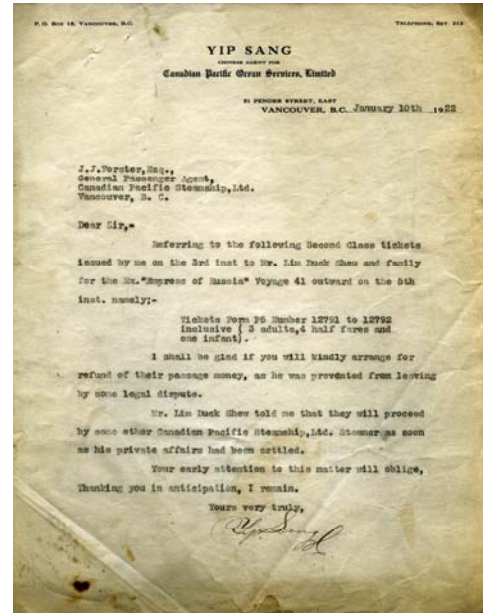
Rare Books and Special Collections
University of British Columbia Library

Archives Week: November 16-22, 2008
“Taking Care of Business: the Heritage of Trade
and Commerce”

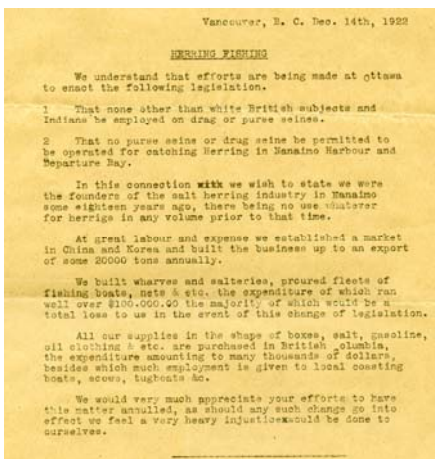
History of Yip Sang and the Wing Sang Company

Yip Sang was born in Guangdong, China in 1845, and arrived in Vancouver, B.C. in 1881 after living for several years in the United States. Fluent in both English and Chinese, he gained employment with the Canadian Pacific Railroad as a Chinese superintendent.

He founded the Wing Sang Company in 1888 (the name would later change to the Yip Sang Company), initially an importing and exporting business. His business interests expanded to fishing and canning; the Wing Sang Company was in part responsible for establishing the market for Canadian goods such as salt herring in China. Yip Sang's connections with the CPR led to his position as a Chinese passenger agent for CPR steamships, connecting the Yips to thousands of Chinese immigrants.

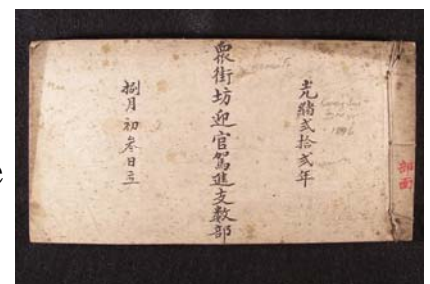


In this 1922 letter, Yip Sang acts as a passenger agent on behalf of the Lim family wishing to postpone their travels on the Empress of Russia. Chung Collection 103-12.



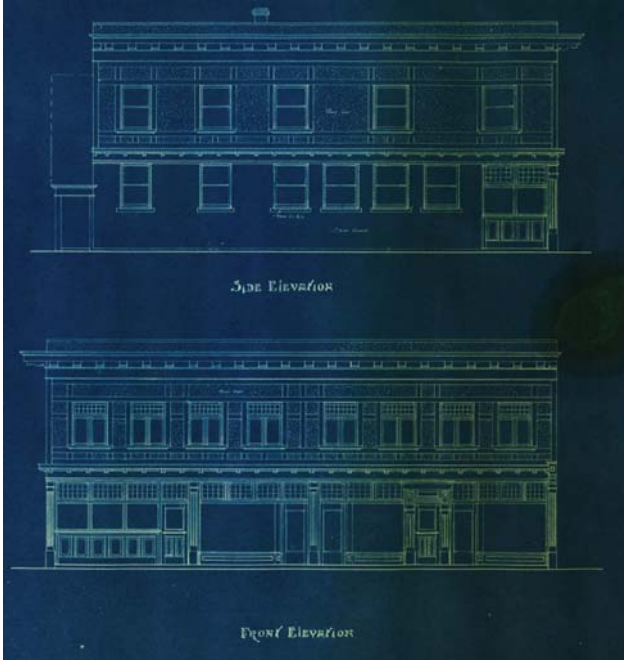
This 1922 unaddressed memo protests legislation preventing then Chinese from participating in the salt herring industry, explaining that the Yips “were the founders of the salt herring industry in Nanaimo some eighteen years ago.” (Chung Collection 105-8)

Yip Sang was not only known for being a successful businessman; he was also renowned in the Vancouver Chinese community for his philanthropic work. He was instrumental in the foundation of Vancouver's first Chinese school and first Chinese hospital, and the Chinese Benevolent Association. Overcoming prejudice and racist politics, by the end of his life in 1927 he was a highly respected Vancouver citizen and the “unofficial mayor” of Chinatown.



Account books such as the one shown above recorded both business and personal expenses of the Yip family. (Chung Collection 107-1)

Yip Sang records in the Chung Collection



Blueprint drawing prepared for the Wing Sang company, for a mixed residential and commercial building on Fraser St., Vancouver. (CC-OS-00026)

Within the Chung Collection are archival documents, photographs and artefacts originating from the Yip family and the Wing Sang/Yip Sang company, forming a portion of the Yip family and Yip Sang Ltd. fonds (another portion is held by the City of Vancouver Archives). The business records reflect the Yip family's importing and exporting activities, as well as their fishing and canning interests and their role as passenger agents for the Canadian Pacific Railway Company. These records are not only important in understanding Yip Sang; they reflect the experience of countless Chinese immigrants.

Adding to the richness of this collection are the personal records of the Yip family. Researchers will find family photographs, documents and memorabilia that tell the story of the achievements of Yip Sang and his family. Like their father, the Yip children were prominent in Vancouver's Chinese community in business and various other professions, and as advocates for the Chinese-Canadian community.



The Chung Collection holds many personal records of the Yip family, such as this portrait of Yip Quene. (CC-PH-00032)

記饒生永埠華高雲大拿加
WING SANG COMPANY
51 PENDER STREET EAST
VANCOUVER, B. C.

About the Chung Collection

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Donated in 1999 to Rare Books and Special Collections by Dr. Wallace B. Chung and Dr. Madeline H. Chung, the Chung Collection is a unique and valuable collection of books, archival material, photographs and artefacts. The Chung Collection is a rich source of research material on three broad topics: Voyages of Discovery; Immigration and Settlement; and the Canadian Pacific Railway Company.

Access to the Chung Collection is provided through the Rare Books and Special Collections division of the University of British Columbia Library. An exhibit of some of the collection's outstanding items is open to the public, free of charge. More information and an online inventory of the collection is available at www.library.ubc.ca/chung.

Yip Sang soon online

Rare Books and Special Collections is pleased to partner with the City of Vancouver Archives to provide digitized versions of Yip Sang material and other Chinese-Canadian archival documents. These are held both in the Chung Collection and by the City of Vancouver Archives, and constitute a special project called "The Chinese Experience in B.C.: 1850-1950." Expected to be online in the spring of 2009, this project will provide users from around the world access to archival documents, photographs and artefacts from an important chapter of British Columbia history.

This project is made possible in part through the Canadian Culture Online Program of Canadian Heritage, Library and Archives Canada and the Canadian Council of Archives.

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Cover: Portrait of Yip Sang (CC-PH-00218).
Above: Wing Sang Company stationary (Chung Collection 107-6).