

**Preserving An Ethnic Heritage:
Reading the Landscape of Chicago's Chinatown**

by

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Abstract

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Chinese people began immigrating to the United States more than one-hundred fifty years ago. The cultural identity of the Chinese in the United States is tied to their unique history and landscape expressions. As is true of other immigrant groups, Chinese Americans display their own spatial and temporal variability. When considering the large number of Chinese in Chicago, the first immigrants arrived during the 1870s; and their initial community was built around Van Buren and Clark streets. Due to the hostile attitudes the Chinese encountered, along with conflicts among various Tong groups, about one-half of Chicago's entire Chinese population was forced to move south to Cermak Road and Wentworth Avenue around 1912; this then became the hub of Chicago's Chinatown.

This thesis proposes to examine the historical significance of the ethnic landscapes in Chicago's Chinatown that are worthy of preservation consideration. Field investigations, informal interviews, and historical and archival sources provided the data and background information for this study. Following the inventories of Chinatown's physical and social environment, generalized preservation guidelines were developed. A cultural landscape model was employed in the study, which builds on the work of Carl Sauer and subsequent cultural geographers. To understand the complexities of change in the cultural landscape, one must delineate and understand the variations in the specific human activities that have impacted the landscape. This study focuses on one ethnic landscape with multiple features, namely, the urban landscape most closely associated with the immigrants who have formed Chicago's Chinatown.

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Coming from an Asian country to the University of Wisconsin – Madison, I decided to choose a research topic related to my cultural background. Inspired and encouraged by Professor Arnold R. Alanen, the study of the historic landscape of Chicago's Chinatown ultimately became my research topic. During my tenure as a graduate student in the Department of Landscape Architecture at the University of Wisconsin – Madison, I received financial support as a departmental teaching assistant. I also wish to acknowledge the office space and other assistance that was provided by the department.

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CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

The United States contains the greatest diversity of ethnic groups and cultures found anywhere in the world. The near-constant immigration of people to this country originated in Europe and periodically from parts of Africa, Asian, and Latin America. The presence of these groups has served and continues to play a large role in the diversity and identity that is found in the contemporary cultural landscape. As relatively late immigrants, the first wave of Chinese immigrants were attracted by the California gold rush of 1849. Just one year later, the rudiments of a Chinatown had begun to form in San Francisco, which remains the oldest and largest Chinatown in United States today. With a history of more than one-hundred years, Chinatowns are no longer rare. Actually, they are visible in most of America's large cities.

As a Chinese immigrant communications center in the American Midwest, Chicago's Chinatown is a community that has both residential and commercial functions. A large part of Chinatown's residents are still Chinese, and it is also known as a popular place for Chinese-related restaurants and retail outlets. As such, the primary goal of this study is to develop a landscape-based inventory, analysis, and interpretation of the ethnic landscape in Chicago's Chinatown, which represents one of the most sophisticated examples of various landscape elements. By examining the historic and cultural resources of Chinatown, preservation guidelines built on an understanding of their significance are provided.

As landscape architect Michael Hough has observed, ethnic communities reflect the survival of rural and urban skills and adaptations to a new way of life. He looks at them as a form of vernacular culture that have adapted the gridiron of the city's fabric to fit their own

needs and cultural expressions.¹ Chinatown has special identities that are microcosms of China, but it also has identities that are labeled part of American culture. If, as geographer Carl Sauer said in 1925, "culture is the agent, the natural area is the medium (and) the cultural landscape is the result," then cultural landscapes are also differentiated by the impacts of people from diverse cultural backgrounds.² The cultural landscape of Chinatowns, for example, have been impacted by the cultures of both early Europeans and of later Chinese immigrants. Furthermore, since Chinatown is located in the larger context of American life, it is inevitably influenced by American culture as well. Thus, the cultural landscape of Chinatown actually is the result and product of multiple cultures that can be represented as either conflicted or harmonious.

The major concern of this study has been to gain an understanding of the physical and social significance of Chinatown, and subsequently to prepare guidelines and options for preserving Chinatown's significance and uniqueness. Unfortunately, any attention that is currently given to the historic and cultural resources of Chinatown only focuses on a few individual buildings that have significance; very little attention is devoted to the community as an entity that possesses unique historic and cultural resources. However, as the potential contribution of Chinatown to the city's diversity and tourist potential is recognized, preservation begins to assume greater significance.³ This study was conceived in such a context and tries to explore the significance of the Chinese community in Chicago, and offers general directions for preserving its uniqueness while also evoking a public awareness of preservation issues in Chinatown.

¹ Hough 1990.

² Sauer 1925, 343.

³ Hough 1990.

Definitions

Cultural Landscape

In North America, the academic study of cultural landscapes is linked to geographer Carl Sauer. His classic 1925 work, "The Morphology of Landscape," includes the following well-known statement: "The cultural landscape is fashioned from the natural landscape by a cultural group. Culture is the agent, the natural area is the medium, the cultural landscape the result."⁴ In this sense, a landscape is a particular area shaped by a cultural group and is strongly influenced by the limits of soil, climate, and plant life. In contrast with his contemporaries who viewed geography primarily from a spatial perspective, Sauer also saw the landscape as a temporal expression. He looked at the landscape as a dynamic, changing, interrelated unit that was shaped by human activities in a particular way.

Sauer's introduction to cultural landscape studies initiated a new way of thinking and seeing the landscape; his work served to develop, in others, an increased sensitivity both to large and small-scale landscape manifestations. J. B. Jackson, the writer, editor, and landscape philosopher, played a subsequent and seminal role in the maturation of the cultural landscape studies movement in America. He provided new insights to "un-aesthetic" landscapes such as strip highway developments and trailer parks, observing that landscape serves "as infrastructure or background for our collective existence."⁵ His greatest contribution undoubtedly was to introduce Americans to their vernacular landscape, to teach them to see, and in a new light, ordinary, everyday settings.

Similarly, D.W. Meinig encouraged a new view of landscape. He explored how people view the landscape subjectively and create their own meanings from what they see. In his

⁴ Sauer 1925, 343.

⁵ Jackson 1984, 8.

essay "The Beholding Eye: Ten Versions of the Same Scene," Meinig suggested that we can view landscape from the standpoint of nature, habitat, artifact, system, problem, wealth, ideology, history, place, or aesthetic.⁶ Yi-Fu Tuan has likewise explored how we perceive the landscape by emphasizing that human perception, as well as cultural and historical attitudes and biases, influence what we "see" in the world. He has illuminated how we subjectively view landscapes based on our aesthetic sensibilities and cultural influences, suggesting that people strive to view, with objectivity, those landscapes that seem foreign or strange to us.⁷

Thus, even these pioneer scholars exhibit the diversity of attitudes in cultural landscape studies. Given the variety of impulses that underlie its history and use, cultural landscape study is, of necessity, an endeavor with many voices.⁸ But the viewpoints of cultural landscape mentioned above contributed the foundation for the cultural landscape studies.

Landscape History

Peirce Lewis, another noted geographer, has stated the following: "The attempt to derive meaning from landscapes possesses overwhelming virtue. It keeps us constantly alert to the world around us, demanding that we pay attention... (to) the whole visible world in all of its rich, glorious, messy, confusing, ugly, and beautiful complexity."⁹ Landscape can be read at many levels, one of which is history. In this point of view, landscape is a historic document that tells stories about the people who created the landscape and the cultural context in which the landscape is embedded.¹⁰

⁶ Meinig 1979.

⁷ Tuan 1975.

⁸ Groth and Wilson 2003.

⁹ Lewis 1993, 138.

¹⁰ Lewis 2003.

When viewing landscape as history, the principle organizing system is chronology, which is not itself history but the scaffold upon which one constructs history. Thus every object must be dated as to its origin and significant subsequent change. Like a document, landscape can be read by those who possess the necessary skills and vocabulary. Based on materials, design, ornamentation, purpose, position, and age, the landscape can be visualized in terms of layers of history; the examples are sometimes rather distinctly separated in area, as with a new housing tract, but they are more often interwoven in a complex manner.¹¹

Like all physical artifacts, the landscape is a selectively incomplete document. The visible landscape is not a full record of history, but it will yield to diligence and inference a great deal more than meets the casual eye. The historian becomes a skilled detective who reconstructs from all sorts of bits and pieces that represent the patterns of the past.¹² This can be a view of landscape as process, whereby the historian sees the particular cumulative effects of processes that work upon the particular elements of the locality. The degree to which the historian relates the particular to the general depends upon his or her purpose, but any historical view clearly implies a belief that the past has fundamental significance. Every landscape is an accumulation and great exhibit of consequences, although the links between specific attitudes, decisions, actions, and specific results may be difficult to trace with assurance. In any case, the landscape provides infinite possibilities, whether the historical view is meant to serve curiosity, reflection, or instruction.¹³

Landscape history has been employed as one of the fundamentals of this study. By viewing the landscape as history, this study tries to visualize Chinatown in terms of history

¹¹ Meinig 1979.

¹² Ibid.

¹³ Ibid.

that is based on its physical and social inventories. The landscape of Chinatown, which represents a great accumulation and exhibition of consequences, indicates its historic significance by telling the stories of the ethnic community that created and changed it.

Sense of Place

In the 1950s, 1960s, and 1970s, J. B. Jackson edited the journal *Landscape*; he himself showed a strong interest in phenomenology and emphasized “sense of place” considerations as a way of putting individual experience back into the agency side of the agency-and-structure debate.¹⁴ With the view that landscape is distinct from the standpoint of perspective and purpose, every landscape is a place that embraces all we live amidst; thus it cultivates a sensitivity to detail, texture, color, and all of the nuances of visual relationships. Such a view attempts to penetrate common generalizations by appreciating the unique flavor of places. Those interested in particular localities share a belief that one of the greatest riches of the earth is its immense variety of places, which suggests that a well-cultivated sense of place is an important dimension of human well-being.¹⁵

I use the term, “sense of place,” to refer to the complex bundle of meaning, symbols, and qualities that a person or group associates with a particular locality or region.¹⁶ In *A Sense of Time, A Sense of Place*, Jackson states that a meaningful “sense of place” is best achieved by vernacular means – that is, by people simply using a space for a specific need, and shaping the space themselves. He emphasizes that “a sense of place is something that we ourselves create in the course of time,” and it is the result of habit or custom.¹⁷ Tuan has also written the following: “Sense of space is rarely acquired in passing. To know a place well

¹⁴ Groth and Wilson 2003.

¹⁵ Meinig 1979.

¹⁶ Datel and Dingemans 1984.

¹⁷ Jackson 1994, 152.

requires long residence and deep involvement... To know a place is also to know the past: one's own past preserved in a schoolhouse, corner drugstore, swimming pool, and first home; the city's past enshrined in its architectural landmarks."¹⁸

A sense of identity and place is unique and significant in shaping the human environment.¹⁹ Certain things that have happened in a specific place remind us that we belong – or used to belong – to a place. Therefore, a landscape should contain the kind of spatial organization that fosters experiences and relationships, such as bonds between people, and the bonds of language, of manners, and of the same kind of work and leisure; they also include spaces for coming together, spaces for celebration, spaces for solitude, and spaces that never change and are always as memory depicted them. These are some of the characteristics that give a landscape its uniqueness and style, and which also make us recall it with emotion.²⁰ From this viewpoint, the existing study explores the various forms of spatial organization and space that mark the community's history in Chinatown. Following this, guidelines are developed that emphasize the preservation of Chinatown's sense of place.

Chinatown as a Cultural Landscape

Obviously, an open and a scholarly approach must be followed when studying, documenting, and interpreting cultural landscapes. The American National Park Service (NPS) has given, to date, the most significant direction for such cultural landscape preservation activities. The agency first recognized cultural landscapes as a specific resource type in 1981. Three years later it published a report, *Cultural Landscape: Rural Historic Districts in the National Park System*, which spelled out the criteria for identifying and

¹⁸ Tuan 1975, 164.

¹⁹ Hough 1990, 2.

²⁰ Jackson 1980.

defining cultural landscapes.²¹ Since then, the NPS has continued to play a seminal role in cultural landscape preservation activities throughout America. The broadening of the purview of historic preservation also led the NPS to develop the systematic approach articulated in *Archeology and Historic Preservation: The Secretary of the Interior's Standards and Guidelines*, and *Guidelines for Local Surveys: A Basis for Preservation Planning*.²² Both sets of guidelines emphasize the importance of creating and using historic contexts to provide an intellectual framework of reference for identifying and evaluating properties.

The cultural landscape is defined by the NPS as “a geographic area, including both cultural and natural resources and the wildlife or domestic animals therein, associated with a historic event, activity, or person or exhibiting other cultural or aesthetic values.”²³ Furthermore, the agency defines four general types of cultural landscapes that it is responsible for managing:

- *Historic Site*: a landscape significant for its association with a historic event, activity, or person. Examples include battlefields and president's house properties.
- *Historic Designed Landscape*: a landscape that was consciously designed or laid out by a landscape architect, master gardener, architect, or horticulturist according to design principles, or an amateur gardener working in a recognized style or tradition. Aesthetic values play a significant role in designed landscapes. Examples include parks, campuses, and estates.

²¹ Alanen and Melnick 2000; Melnick 1984.

²² Carter and Fleischhauer 1988.

²³ Birnbaum 1994.

- *Historic Vernacular Landscape*: a landscape that evolved through use by the people whose activities or occupancy shaped the landscape. Through social or cultural attitudes of an individual, family or a community, the landscape reflects the physical, biological, and cultural character of those everyday lives. Function plays a significant role in vernacular landscapes. Examples include rural villages, industrial complexes, and agricultural landscapes.
- *Ethnographic Landscape*: a landscape containing a variety of natural and cultural resources that associated people define as heritage resources. Examples are contemporary settlements, religious sacred sites and massive geological structures.²⁴

It is difficult to categorize precisely a single landscape within these definitions, because their characteristics may overlap. Chinatown can be categorized as either a “historic vernacular landscape” or as an “ethnographic landscape.” As a historic vernacular landscape, Chinatown contains features that evolved through use by Chinese people whose activities and occupancy shaped the landscape. Impacted by the special social and cultural attitudes of the Chinese community, the landscape reflects the physical and cultural character of their everyday lives. Commercial and residential functions play a seminal role in the vernacular landscape of Chinatown. As an ethnographic landscape, Chinatown contains various cultural elements associated with Chinese immigrants that can be defined as heritage resources.

Problem Statement

Information about the beliefs, culture, and attitudes of Chinese Americans can be found in the landscapes of Chinatown. The style, placement, and configuration of community

²⁴ Ibid, 2.

buildings may not only express their history, but also reveal the conflicts or adaptation associated with different cultures and beliefs. Immigrants from China have played a significant role in the development of the American West, yet the vast array of cultural resources associated with this group has rarely been recognized. One reason is that as a relatively new and small immigrant group, the influence of the Chinese in the mainstream of America is very limited. Another factor contributing to the relative invisibility of Chinese-American cultural resources is that of cultural differences. Until recently, many preservation agencies lacked the knowledge base and guidance needed to identify these resources effectively, to evaluate their significance, and to work with community groups interested in planning their protection.²⁵ Often, in order to accommodate increased public use, changes must be made to provide for parking, new buildings, adequate circulation, and the adaptive reuse of a site. These changes can affect the integrity of the site and require informed preservation decisions.

In the case of Chicago's Chinatown the cultural landscapes have not been clearly defined. The first settlers of what later became Chinatown were European immigrants. As the original European residents began to vacate their houses, new immigrant groups seeking low-rent housing moved into the district. The Chinese were attracted to this district by a series of ten-year leases on buildings; soon the district became the hub of Chinatown.²⁶ As Gail Lee Dubrow has argued, "immigrants from Asia and the Pacific Islands left remarkably few obvious cultural imprints on the built environment and landscape; instead, they tended to occupy and make practical alterations to standard American building types and landscape."²⁷

²⁵ Dubrow 2000.

²⁶ Will 1990.

²⁷ Dubrow 2000, 143.

Therefore, the cultural landscapes of Chicago's Chinatown were actually shaped by a mix of Western and Chinese cultures instead of Chinese culture alone. But it is still unclear as to how these different cultures impacted the landscape of Chinatown.

Because of the increasing age of the historic ethnic landscapes of Chicago's Chinatown, there is a growing need for the development of sound preservation guidelines. Previous studies of Chinatowns have focused on the social and folkloristic aspects of such places, rather than on preservation and restoration of the sites as historic landscapes. This study links established historic landscape identification methods with landscape treatment methods, thereby helping to develop preservation guidelines for this unique site.

Chinatown is renowned as a popular place for restaurants and tourism. But basically, it is a residential area, a community. Several preservation plans have been completed for Chinatowns in the United States; but most of these studies have used professional opinions, and do not include the involvement of the community itself. What is considered a valuable landscape to the people who live there? What do they like or dislike? What do they think their community should be? All of these questions haven't been very well explored in previous studies of Chinatowns. The preservation recommendations in this thesis include some public-participation considerations; it seeks to incorporate the values of laypeople into the inventory, analysis, and interpretation process.

Methodology

The main objective of this study is to develop a survey of the historic and cultural resources of Chicago's Chinatown, as well as to develop preservation guidelines that evaluate the integrity and significance of the site, and to prepare a historic preservation approach and treatment plan. To gain an understanding of the significance of the Chinatown

landscape, it was essential to examine the cultural and historical context in which these communities developed, the factors that are included in Chinatown's geography, the impact of early Chinese immigrants in the development of the community, and the role of the community in preserving the historic ethnic landscape of Chinatown.

The historical data have been presented in a chronological sequence. At the foundation of this study is the premise, stated by Michael Hough, that "sense of place" may be interpreted as "regional identity."²⁸ But what gives a place its identity? Yi-Fu Tuan used an interesting term, "experience," to explain how people attach meaning to place.²⁹ Experience can include various modes of human activity. Culture, undoubtedly, is one of the most important experiences that influence human behavior and values. The cultural perspective is especially germane to the study of Chinatown, a place where the Chinese struggled with problems of adapting to the mainstream culture, of establishing economic relationships with the dominant society, and of building community from the previous infrastructure developed by people from different cultures. These problems presented formidable challenges to those Chinese immigrants who created communities built on previous places. Thus, some understanding of the physical and social environment of Chinatown -- features such as historic structures, building groupings, and human activities -- is essential to interpreting its history.

This thesis also developed preservation guidelines for Chicago's Chinatown that were based on multiple lines of evidence and observation, as well as on the adaptation and application of NPS guidelines. The process of the research followed NPS guidelines and involved historical research, the inventory and documentation of existing conditions, the

²⁸ Hough 1990.

²⁹ Tuan 1977.

evaluation of significance and integrity, and the development of a cultural landscape preservation approach and treatment plan. Consistent with a qualitative research approach, the study is primarily concerned with process and meaning, rather than outcomes. The interpretive process is inductive and strives to develop preservation guidelines at its conclusion.

Literature About Chinatowns

Although research and literature on the history of Chinatowns and Chinese immigrants is now becoming much more available, very few scholars have been attracted to preservation issues that are of concern to Chinatowns located in North America. The American record in this respect is especially poor. There are a number of reasons that scholars have been reluctant to undertake this type of research. The dearth of readily available written historical material is undoubtedly one of the major reasons. The existing material is unorganized and scattered, much of it is in private hands, and the records that rest in the care of official Chinese organizations are sketchy and lacking in continuity.³⁰

Language difficulties are, of course, an obvious problem. Although written material does exist, a vast amount of information survives only as part of an oral tradition. Most early Chinese immigrants spoke Cantonese, which is a dialect of people who come primarily from Guangdong Province, Hong Kong, and Macao. Those scholars who are apt to be interested in Chinese research usually speak Mandarin—if they speak any Chinese at all. Therefore, collecting data based on an oral traditions becomes an exceedingly tedious and time-consuming task.³¹

³⁰ Young 1976.

³¹ Ibid.

Although the difficulties of obtaining access to written materials and of dealing with language barriers are significant, they do not adequately explain the absence of such research in America. People tend to preserve those things that they think are beautiful, meaningful, or important. The absence of interest on research in the preservation of Chinatowns is not surprising when viewed in relation to the long-standing historical conflicts in American society that have occurred between dominant western European ethnic groups and minority cultures. As a minority community with very limited influence within the majority society, Chinatowns are often considered "slums." Only very few people have realized their historic value as a container that expresses more than one hundred years of Chinese immigrant history. Therefore, the lack of interest in and appreciation of the ethnic landscape of Chinatown is a major reason for the scarcity of preservation studies.³²

Currently, the specific concern of a researcher interested in the Chinatown planning and development of Chinatowns has been related to the issues of freeway development and urban renewal and rehabilitation. The result has been great pressure to remove the historic structures of such districts. The construction of a freeway usually leads to the tearing down of several historic buildings. And most master plans for Chinatowns have not considered many preservation issues. The research is limited to a few seminal historic buildings only, and no comprehensive cultural and historic inventories have been developed. As this trend continues, opportunities for preservation studies in Chinatowns diminish. Currently, five Chinatowns are listed in the National Register of Historic Places: the Honolulu Chinatown Historic District in Hawaii (1973); the Kennebec China Village Historic District in Maine (1977); Seattle's Chinatown Historic District in Washington (1986); the Portland New Chinatown –

³² Young 1976.

Japantown Historic District in Oregon (1989); and the Riverside Chinatown in California (1990). Unfortunately, with the exception of the Honolulu Chinatown, most of these Chinatowns don't have comprehensive preservation guidelines.

Although a wide variety of both secondary and primary source materials have been employed in the study, this research is far from exhaustive. For practical reasons, the bulk of the research was conducted in Madison and Chicago-area libraries and archives, including those of the University of Wisconsin-Madison, the Wisconsin Historical Society, and the Chicago Historical Society.

Primary Sources

The study uses data from a wide variety of primary sources, including newspapers, maps, personal interviews, field observations, unpublished documents on file at the Chicago Historical Society and Wisconsin Historical Society, and pamphlets prepared by the social organizations of Chinatown and the Commission on Chicago Landmarks.

Newspapers: The Chicago Historical Society has a folder of newspaper articles that contain Chinatown-related information since the early 1970s. These newspapers accounts provide not only precise dates for activities in Chinatown, but also give the names of the organizers and background information. Although it is a time-consuming process, newspaper scanning is invaluable for achieving an understanding of the context in which the Chinese community developed. Newspapers scanned for this study included the *Chicago Tribune*, the *Chicago Daily News*, the *American*, and the *Chicago Sunday Times*.

Maps: Sanborn Fire Insurance Maps from the collection of the Chicago Historical Society were invaluable in tracing the evolution of buildings in the city's Chinatown. The area of Chinatown was surveyed in 1911 and updated in 1950; both sets of maps indicate

building conditions in great detail. Also employed was a 1990 map of building footprints developed by Department of Planning in the City of Chicago. But some information on this map is outdated when considering existing conditions. Therefore, the maps used in this study have been revised and updated based on my field surveys.

Personal interviews: Among those persons interviewed for this study were three people from the Pui Tak Center (Winnie Eng, a Mr. Frank, and a woman whose name is unknown); Hai Wong from the Wong Family Association; Betty Gao, a resident in Chinatown; and Fr. Michael Davitti, the pastor of the St. Therese Chinese Mission. There also were two informal interviews with Larry Wong, an executive director of the Chicago Chinese Community Center, and Sylvia Wu, the principal of the Pui Tak Christian School. As long-time residents, they provided information about their perspectives to the Chinese community and unpublished documents from their organizations. (More detailed information is available in the Appendix.)

Field observations: The fieldwork was undertaken in an attempt to locate extant structures, to document building functions and architectural styles, and to evaluate the integrity of the structures. Results of the fieldwork are recorded in the community maps found in the text.

Unpublished documents: One valuable source of information about the social environment of Chinatown is *Chinese American Progress*, an unpublished journal of the Chinese American Civic Council. A collection of these journals for the years from 1971 to 1985 is housed in the library of the Wisconsin Historical Society. The journals are comprised of social events that occurred in the community, announcements made by each community organization, and social information about individuals in the community, including their

weddings, funerals, or births. The *Newsletter* of the Chinese American Service League, located in the Chicago Historical Society, is another informational source about the social world of Chinatown. Its contents include information about immigration consultants and job opportunities, as well as the various services provided by community organizations and city government. In addition, some unpublished documents from the Chinese Community Center, the Pui Tak Center, and St. Therese Chinese Mission were especially helpful in understanding the history and activities of these organizations.

Secondary Sources

Secondary sources provided background information that is tangential to the main theme of the study. The Chicago Fact Book Consortium edited the *Local Community Fact Book: Chicago Metropolitan Area – 1990*; it is an excellent source of contextual material, as is Adam McKeown's recent book, *Chinese Migrant Networks and Cultural Change: Peru, Chicago, Hawaii, 1900-1936*. Unpublished theses and dissertations at the University of Wisconsin-Madison's Memorial Library also provided valuable detail and analysis. Among those referenced most frequently in this study is Susan Lee Moy's 1978 master's thesis, *The Chinese in Chicago: The First One Hundred Years, 1870-1970*.

Works by historians and preservationists of other Chinatowns were helpful in providing general information about the settlement history of Chinese immigrants. These studies were also helpful in suggesting directions for more in-depth research. The preservation plan created by the Honolulu (Hawaii) Department of Housing and Community Development in 1974 proved extremely helpful in research concerning the preservation of Chicago's Chinatown. In addition, Vancouver's Chinatown study series on its history, social change, and physical planning are excellent sources of inspiration. Among these landmark

studies, David Chuenyan Lai's, *The Forbidden City within Victoria*, turned out to be most helpful in defining the physical environment of Chinatown.

CHAPTER TWO: BACKGROUND

No ethnic American experience can be fully understood outside its historical context. No community can be entirely documented without its historic setting. Given these points, this chapter provides the needed background to frame contemporary conditions.

Chinese Immigration to America

The United States is significant as a distinctive human-made landscape because of the near-constant immigration that has occurred from all areas of Europe and periodically from parts of Africa, Asia, and Latin America. The first settlers of America, other than the original native peoples who first arrived more than ten thousand years ago, were Spanish, French, English, Dutch and Swedish colonists. Each cultural group explored and settled North America in different ways, based on national experience and traditions, expectations of gain, attitudes toward native populations, and the geographical area over which they sought to extend their control.¹

The Chinese were relatively late immigrants, with the first wave of arrivals coming during the California gold rush of 1849. To achieve the greatest economic benefits, California gold mining companies needed a reliable supply of cheap labor. "Coolies" (*bitter labors* in Chinese) from southern China were brought to America as contract laborers.² By 1851 there were around 25,000 Chinese in California.³ Most Chinese immigrants to California went voluntarily, with many having to pay for passage across the Pacific by selling their limited property or by borrowing at exorbitant interest rates.

¹ Pregill and Volkman 1993.

² Chen 1980.

³ Kwong 1996.

The reasons for Chinese immigration during the early period do not differ greatly from those that brought rural European immigrants to America at the same time. There were mainly two causes: economic or political crises. Droughts in South China from 1847 to 1850 led to a great economic crisis among farmers from Guangdong Province, which drove many of them overseas. Meanwhile, the secret organizations opposed to the Qing Dynasty were treated badly by the government, and thousands of rebels sought refuge in America. But unlike other groups of immigrants, most of the Chinese were married men who had come to America only to earn enough money to support their families in China.⁴ They were considered sojourners who hoped to seek treasure in America that they would bring back to China where they could retire as wealthy landowners. As a result, the ratio of men to women in the immigrant population was grossly unbalanced. In both 1860 and 1900, for example, the ratio of men to women was about nineteen to one.⁵

Once gold mining began to decline in the late 1850s, the demand for cheap labor shifted to railroad construction. The second wave of Chinese immigrants arrived when the most difficult section of the transcontinental railroad was being developed in the Sierra Nevada Mountains. When one of the "Big Four," Charles Crocker (the other three were Collis P. Huntington, Leland Stanford, and Mark Hopkins), took on the assignment of building a railroad from the West Coast to the East, he was stuck with the almost impossible task of building a railroad across the Sierras where the problems of terrain and climate were insurmountable. After many failures to get qualified laborers, Crocker decided to use Chinese workers. The demand was so great that thousands of Chinese had to be imported directly from China. By 1875, the number of Chinese laborers in the American West had increased to

⁴ Lee 1965.

⁵ Lyman 1970.

105,000, which constituted almost one-quarter of all able-bodied male workers in the state of California.⁶

Toward the end of the 1870s the demand for Chinese labor declined. Meanwhile, the hardships faced by Chinese laborers seemed to increase with time. Growing resentment by the white population in America culminated in a series of exclusion laws. These laws changed the entire course of Chinese immigrant history in America. The Exclusion Act of 1882, when combined with return emigration to China and a high mortality rate, led to a decline in the Chinese-American population. This decline continued until the 1920s and added to a sense of instability and impermanence. The hostility directed toward the Chinese, such as their outrageous physical expulsion from Seattle in 1886, and the massacres of Chinese in Los Angeles and Rock Springs, Wyoming, made residence in the United States seem tenuous indeed.⁷ For sixty years the Chinese were prevented from buying or leasing property by terms of the 1913 Alien Land Law, and the quota of Chinese people permitted to immigrate into this country was set at zero by the Immigration Act of 1924.⁸

The nation's attitude toward the Chinese turned positive with the alliance of the United States and China during World War II. In 1943, the United States repealed the Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882, and the 1924 Immigration Act was amended to permit a quota of 105 Chinese per year to immigrate to the United States. In the 1940s restrictive covenants on real estate were lifted and anti-miscegenation laws were nullified. In 1959 the Alien Land Law was repealed, making it possible for Chinese to purchase land. Then, in 1965, the Immigration Act abolished the quota of 105 Chinese per year. Finally, the Chinese were

⁶ Kwong 1996.

⁷ Yip 1995.

⁸ Loo 1998.

freed of legal obstructions to the entry and reunification of families. The lifeblood of the Chinese communities was renewed.⁹

Chinatowns

In America, the immigrant groups that tended to group together in modern industrialized environments were those with strong rural or village backgrounds. Usually, they came from under-industrialized or non-industrialized societies. In Chicago, Italians and Greeks are examples of immigrants in the first category, while the Chinese typify the second group. It can be readily seen that these groups would have found difficulties in merging into urban life within their own societies. Internal ethnocentricity and external pressures were two major forces in forming these ethnic enclaves.¹⁰ As one example of such an ethnic enclave, Chinatowns tend to be located in low income residential districts of a city, usually on the fringes of the inner urban core. The Chinese immigrants' relative lack of verbal, literary communication abilities, the discrimination they faced from external sources, and their failure to be accepted socially, strongly constrained their activities, especially among first-generation Chinese immigrants.¹¹ They felt a certain security living among their own, speaking their native language, and having their own living facilities.

The early Chinatowns were formed in towns by businesses that catered to mines and miners. Chinese merchants established themselves at several locations in these towns. With increases in Chinese businesses, their restaurants, laundries, and shops began to cluster around the hotels that had grown up in what were then the centers of towns and cities. In the 1850s, 1860s, and 1870s many small Chinatowns had been established in the West Coast

⁹ Loo 1998.

¹⁰ Anderson 1991.

¹¹ Ibid.

states and in mining areas. But most of them disappeared quickly due to the anti-Chinese exclusion movement of 1882. Of the major California Chinatowns, only those in San Francisco and Los Angeles survived exclusion. In 1943, when the acts were repealed, there were nearly twenty-eight Chinatowns and 78,000 Chinese residing throughout the United States.¹² In fact, the anti-Chinese sentiment along the Pacific Coast was the most potent factor that spurred Chinese immigrants who advanced eastward.

Social Structure

The social structure in a Chinatown is predominately that of a village society. A village in most agricultural societies is a tightly knit social unit. Kay J. Anderson has stated that when one person or one family emigrates from the village to another place, strong ties are usually maintained for at least one generation. When emigration has become a desired means to an end, the village that has contacts can facilitate further emigration. Relatives tend to motivate and sponsor other relatives who, in turn, motivate and sponsor more relatives. The result of this "chain migration" has been that the early Chinese population of America was almost totally from Guangdong Province in southeastern China. This phenomenon reinforces the desire of the ethnic group to live together and facilitates contacts and ties with the homeland and in the new community.¹³ The largest old Chinatowns, such as those in New York and San Francisco particularly, are reminiscent of a China that hasn't existed even in China for several decades. The "Old World" heritage is reinforced by social organizations such as clan and family associations, district and village associations, and other China-oriented groups.¹⁴

¹² Chen 1980.

¹³ Anderson 1991.

¹⁴ Lee 1965.

The first organizations that formed, based on geographic origins, were called district or village associations. A majority of early immigrants came from eight of the ninety districts of Guangdong Province: Nam Hai, Toi Shan, Sun-Wui, Shun Tak, Hai Ping, Yan Ping, Pun Yui, and Chung Shan.¹⁵ Since these villagers were recruited from those districts in groups, it was natural for them to develop special relationships when they arrived at the shores of the United States.

Clan associations were formed for people with the same surname. Because they were so far away from home, all persons with the same surname were considered "relatives." This thought was rooted in the ancient belief that there were only one hundred surnames in China; therefore persons with the same surname may trace their ancestors back to the same person thousands of years ago. The sojourners attempted to transplant the traditional family social structure to America by means of family associations, whose activities included caring for the aged and children, settling disputes, and arranging social events like Chinese New Year's celebrations.¹⁶ Family association headquarters vary in size from small rooms above a mercantile store to entire buildings, where facilities such as kitchens for single men, meeting rooms, and dormitories were included.

In recent decades, however, district and clan associations have lost many of their original functions. During the economic depression of the early 1930s, these organizations provided relief for their members; therefore, only a small number of Chinese applied for such welfare at that time. Since then, governmental welfare legislation has taken away the role of the clan associations by caring for the elderly and children. Although the associations still boast of large memberships, their active paid membership represents only a fraction of the

¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶ Ibid.

total district or clan; this is due to the great number of Chinese who work outside of Chinatown today, and to the fact that American-born Chinese rarely join such organizations.¹⁷

Physical Environments

Due to the overwhelming number of males, early Chinatowns tended to be comprised of standard American commercial and tenement buildings that were altered to suit that community. The building stock of the central commercial district evolved into multistoried commercial blocks that often housed mixed uses, including residential hotels for single men, shops, restaurants, warehouses, and light manufacturing businesses. The commercial street frontages commonly had a large expanse of glass to light the interior that, also, created a visual connection between the shop and the street. In the early years these frontages often opened directly to the street in the manner of the Asian shop house; later shop fronts were built in the style of the typical North American glass front building with a recessed entry placed symmetrically in the facade.¹⁸ During most of the nineteenth century, little effort was undertaken to make the buildings look like structures in China because the sojourners did not seek long residence in America, and the urban patterns of the United States differed greatly from China.¹⁹

During the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, Chinese-American associations were important parts of the small, clustered Chinatowns of North America, and association buildings became a major element in identifying these urban enclaves. There are similar patterns found in many of the Chinatown association buildings. Typically the

¹⁷ Moy 1978.

¹⁸ Yip 1995.

¹⁹ Ibid.

buildings covered their lots to the allowable maximum, thereby adjoining the edge of the sidewalks, and rising to a height of two or more stories. The ground floor was commonly devoted to commercial spaces. The window and display area was maximized to attract customers. The middle floors commonly received little decorative treatment. The greatest intensity of decoration was concentrated at the upper level of the association rooms.²⁰

As a small minority that experienced discrimination, the Chinese and their immigrant institutions had no influence over building codes and practices during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Additionally, traditional Chinese institutional buildings were configured in a way that could not be literally replicated in North American urban settings.²¹ Since the associations usually chose to match Eastern and Western place images with the hybrid collection of uses that they required, they had to appropriate some American building type.

During the early twentieth century, Chinatowns turned toward tourism, leading to a more conscious effort to present an exotic image. After World War II Chinatowns became symbols of an ethnic heritage, and gateways and other structures modeled on Chinese prototypes were erected.²² During the late 1950s to the early 1990s, Chinese businessmen and developers significantly built up the stock of housing and condominiums, but a lack of recreational facilities, schools, and housing still remain the persistent major problems in Chinatowns.

²⁰ Ibid.

²¹ Ibid.

²² Yip 1986.

Chicago and the Chinese

When the last railroad tracks were laid in 1869 and construction work came to an end, the Chinese population began to disperse from the Pacific Coast to the Midwestern and Eastern states where they originally had concentrated.²³ Though the first official report of the Chinese in Chicago can be traced back to the 1870 federal census, little is known about these settlers except that they were then residing in Morgan County in southern Illinois. Dong Jue Moy, who arrived in Chicago during the mid-1870s, was always considered the first Chinese pioneer in the city, followed shortly afterwards by his brothers Moy Dong Hoy and Moy Dong Yee. When they found Chicagoans more agreeable to the Chinese than the people of the Pacific Coast, they wrote to their friends and relatives, urging them to move to Chicago. By 1928, about eight-hundred Moys lived in the city, making up a quarter of the Chinese population. Although the Chinese of Chicago suffered the same restrictive immigration laws and had the same high ratio between men and women as in other parts of America from 1870 to 1920, their population grew steadily.²⁴

After Dong Jue Moy settled in Chicago, he bought a dry goods store from a man known as Opium Dong; he called it Hip Lung Ying Kee, at Clark and Madison streets. In 1880 the store was moved to 323 South Clark, where the first Chinese community in Chicago began. By the late 1880s, Chicago's Chinatown included twelve grocery stores and three chop suey houses.²⁵ In 1905, due to the ill-treatment of the Chinese in California, there was a boycott of American trade in China. When the news came to Chicago, the Chinese presence aroused hostile feelings and suspicion. Landlords raised the rents of houses occupied by the

²³ Kwong 1996.

²⁴ Ibid.

²⁵ Moy 1978.

Chinese to such a significant rate that most occupants could not afford to pay. The raised rents, as well as the Tongs' contradictions at that time, forced a large number of the Chinese population in Chicago to move southward around 1912 to Cermak Road and West Wentworth Avenue, an area located in Amour Square.²⁶

The first settlers of Amour Square were Irish, German, and Swedish laborers. Their ethnic communities lasted from one to three generations, and started to break up as the younger generations advanced educationally and economically. They moved outward in a somewhat linear pattern to the outer, newer parts of the city and often eventually into the suburbs.²⁷ After they moved out, the newer and poorer ethnic groups seeking low-rent housing occupied the vacancies. Thus, as the early immigrants moved out during the 1900s, Italians and Yugoslavs began to settle in Amour Square. By the time the Chinese started to move in, the Italians were very well settled in the area. Therefore, the Chinese were restricted to the one-square-block area at 22nd Street and Princeton Avenue. When Italian residents began to move out, the Chinese influx into Amour Square was made possible by a series of ten-year building leases, which were contracted by members of the On Leong Businessmen's Association. Cermak Road and Wentworth Avenue soon became the hub of Chicago's Chinatown.²⁸

Population

In 1890 almost all of the Chinese in the Chicago metropolitan area were found in the central city. At that time, there were 567 Chinese, with 142 (25 percent) being concentrated

²⁶ Kiang 1992; Hogan 1995.

²⁷ Conzen 1995.

²⁸ Hogan 1995.

along South Clark from Van Buren to Harrison streets.²⁹ In 1920 the Chinese population of Chicago increased to 2,353, with around 26 percent being native-born; in 1930 the total population reached 2,757. During the Great Depression (1930 to 1940), the Chinese population of Chicago fell to 2,018; some 66 percent of the group lived in the Cermak and Wentworth Chinatown area. Until World War II, however, the Chinese population increased again. The largest influx of Chinese occurred in the 1950s and 1960s, following the Communist take-over of Mainland China in 1949, and the practice of more lenient immigration procedures in America. This was especially true after President John Kennedy signed the Migration and Refugee Assistance Act of 1962, which allowed many Chinese to immigrate to the United States. During these two decades the Chinese population in Chicago increased from 3,334 to 9,357 people. By 1970, Chicago had the nation's fourth highest population of Chinese. In 1990, there already were 22,295 Chinese in Chicago; this number increased to 24,499 in 2000, which included both China-born Chinese and American-born Chinese.³⁰

From 1870 to 1890 approximately all of the Chinese in Chicago were foreign born. But, in 1930, the proportion of foreign-born Chinese declined to just under 70 percent of their entire population. By 1960 the majority of Chinese in Chicago were America-born. But due to the large number of new immigrants since 1970, the China-born Chinese now outnumber the American-born.³¹

²⁹ Kiang 1992.

³⁰ Ibid; United States Census 2000.

³¹ Kiang 1992.

Occupations

With the growth of Chinese population in Chicago, the city's Chinatown was gradually transformed from a single-occupation community to a place with a highly diversified profile of services that catered to various ethnic needs. As an unpopular ethnic group, the Chinese in the United States were, in general, denied the rights to be employed by governmental, industrial, and corporate establishments.³² Therefore, the Chinese laundry emerged as one of the most typical occupations for the Chinese when they arrived in the United States. The first such laundry in Chicago was opened in 1872 at the rear of 167 West Madison Street.³³ A major expansion of the Chinese laundry business happened in 1880, so that by 1883, there were 165 laundries in Chicago.³⁴ After prominent growth during the 1893 Columbia Exposition in Chicago, Chinese laundries began to disperse to the southern side and other parts of the city. The number of Chinese laundries reached its peak in 1928 when 794 such places were found in Chicago. At that time, 28 percent of Chicago's Chinese workers were engaged in this occupation. But soon, especially after World War II, as the presence of automatic washers and dryers increased, the number of Chinese hand laundries dropped dramatically. The first Chinese machine wash laundry, the Wah Lee Laundry, opened in 1930 at 200 W. 22nd Place. After that, various machine wash businesses opened up, with around one hundred such Chinese laundries in Chicago by 1970.³⁵

Another popular occupation for the Chinese was and is the grocery store business, which formerly was considered a very profitable endeavor. Usually Chinese grocery stores provided not only groceries, but also stocked herbal medicines, clothing, housewares, and

³² Wang 1997.

³³ Moy, 1978.

³⁴ Siu 1987.

³⁵ Moy 1978.

laundry supplies. The stock was imported directly from China. In Chicago the Chinese grocery stores were concentrated in the Chinatown area. One of the first was the Hip Lung Ying Kee & Company on South Clark Street, which later moved to 233 W. Cermak Road.³⁶ During the 1930s there were forty-two grocery stores within that three square block area of Chinatown. They also served to accommodate the large number of Chinese laundries found in the area at the time. However, with the decline of Chinese laundries there was, quite naturally, a decrease in the number of small grocery stores.

Just as the laundry business was typical of the Chinese before World War II, the Chinese restaurant is symbolic of the Chinese even until today. The first Chinese restaurant in Chicago opened for business in the early 1900s on South Clark Street--the old Chinatown area. When the new Chinatown was established in 1911 on Cermak and Wentworth, a couple of Chinese restaurants were already in place. The oldest was the Guey Sam Restaurant, established in 1901 on 22nd Street, which later moved to 2205 South Wentworth Avenue. The number of Chinese restaurants in Chicago totaled one hundred well over by 1970. The number grew as more Chinese immigrants arrived and more Americans accepted Chinese food. With the expansion of the restaurant business, companies were formed to provide the supplies needed by the restaurants. Some Chinatown companies specialized in certain products such as noodles, wonton, and egg rolls.³⁷

Other occupations followed by the Chinese did not emerge until the 1940s. But discrimination made it very difficult to obtain the jobs for which they were trained in the business and professional world. After the repeal of the Exclusion Acts in 1943, the job

³⁶ Ibid.

³⁷ Ibid.

market began to open up for all Asians.³⁸ Recently within Chinatown, for example, numerous accounting companies, legal consulting firms, travel agencies, and clinics have emerged; all of these indicate the more diverse occupations that the Chinese now pursue.

Tong Organizations

There were two major Tongs in Chicago: On Leong Tong (安良堂) and Hip Sing Tong (协胜堂). The On Leong Tong first appeared in New York some time before 1903, while the Hip Sing Tong was established in San Francisco in the 1870s. Although the two tongs were similar in their goals and organizational form, a popular distinction arose between them which defined the Hip Sing as an organization made up of working men and the On Leong as an organization of merchants. Both tongs developed a dedicated military branch in the service of the central organization, which facilitated their expansion.³⁹

The Hip Sing Tong was organized in 1900 at 422 South Clark Street, while the On Leong Tong was formed in 1907 at Clark and Van Buren. Just as the Moy family was associated with the On Leong in Chicago, the Chin family was associated with the Hip Sing.⁴⁰ When a dispute arose with the Hip Sing Tong over territorial rights, the On Leong Tong decided to relocate in Chinatown. The other reasons that encouraged the On Leong move may have been the expansion of the central business district and the rising rents and threats of demolition that accompanied it. In February of 1912 it was announced that Chinatown would move two miles south of the Clark Street location to the intersection of 22nd Street (Cermak Road) and Archer broadly (Figure 2.1). Since many of the Clark Street leases were due to expire in the next three months, forty ten-year building leases on 22nd Street had been

³⁸ Ibid.

³⁹ McKeown 2001.

⁴⁰ Moy 1978.

arranged at a cost of over fifty thousand dollars. The Hip Sing Tong and a few shops allied around it remained on Clark Street. Nonetheless, by the first of May, the majority of the Chinese had followed the Moys to the new location.⁴¹

The move provided an opportunity for the new Chinatown and the On Leong to flourish and dominate the site in a way never achieved on Clark Street. The new Chinatown was in a much isolated location than Clark Street, with railroad lines and vacant lots demarcating clear boundaries on three sides. Most of the non-Chinese businesses moved out over the next twenty years, and the new Chinatown became completely dominated by Chinese businesses. It survived the widening of 22nd Street in 1922 when new buildings were erected and slowly pressed southward down Wentworth Street.⁴² Chinese families even began to move into the surrounding residential neighborhood. The first location of the On Leong was at 235 West Cermak Road (Figure 2.2), but in October 1928, it moved into a new building at 2216 South Wentworth Avenue.



Figure 2.1: View of West 22nd Street. c. 1916. Photograph by a *Chicago Daily News* photographer. Source: Chicago Historical Society.

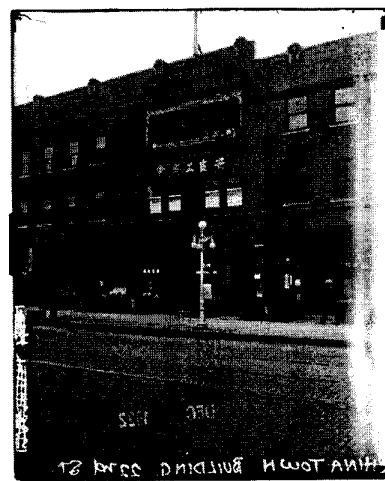


Figure 2.2: On Leong Association Building at 235 West 22nd Street. c. 1922. Photograph by a *Chicago Daily News* photographer. Source: Chicago Historical Society.

⁴¹ McKeown 2001.

⁴² Ibid.

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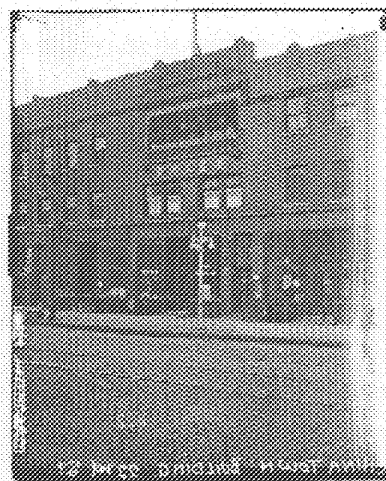


Figure 2.2: On Leong Association Building at 235 West 22nd Street. c. 1922. Photograph by a *Chicago Daily News* photographer. Source: Chicago Historical Society.

⁴¹ McKeown 2001.

⁴² *Ibid.*

In contrast, the Hip Sing territory on Clark Street appeared more and more abandoned. The Hip Sing attempted to rejuvenate its territory in the late 1920s by sponsoring a new Chinatown at 23rd and State Street, about a half mile east of the On Leong Chinatown, but it was unsuccessful. By the early 1940s, the Hip Sing and a few businesses associated with it had retreated back to South Clark Street.⁴³ Now the Hip Sing at Clark and Van Buren is located on Chicago's north side at Broadway and Argyle because of city renovations.

Chicago's Chinatown Today

Although Chinese live throughout Chicago, they focus their activities on, and in many cases live in or near, one of three areas: the older "(south) Chinatown" centered at Wentworth Avenue and Cermak Road; the newer Southeast Asian "North Chinatown" centered along Argyle Avenue between Broadway and Sheridan in the Uptown area; and the newer more dispersed communities of professionals in such surrounding suburbs as Westmont, Naperville, Schaumburg, and Evanston, many of which focus primarily on the Di Ho Supermarket complex in Westmont, or similar communities in and around Arlington Heights, Morton Grove, and Hoffman Estates.⁴⁴

The study area in this thesis is the older (South) Chinatown centered along South Wentworth Avenue and Cermak Road, previously mentioned as Chinatown or Chicago's Chinatown. The boundary of Chinatown is something ambiguous. Usually, it is thought to be located between Canal Street and Lake Shore Drive from the Stevenson Expressway north to the Santa Fe railroad yards. But the Chinatown that most people are familiar with is its main body, which consists of only eight blocks that are bounded on the north by Cermak Road, on

⁴³ Ibid.

⁴⁴ Rohsenow 2004.

the west by the railway embankment, on the east by Wentworth Avenue and on the south by 24th Place. The area is defined as the historic district of Chinatown in this study (Figure 2.3).

More than 48,000 people who identified themselves as “Chinese” in the federal census now live in Chinatown. For historical reasons, Chinatown continues to be a point of immigration, primarily for recent Cantonese-speaking arrivals from China, and other communities of “overseas Chinese” residents in Singapore, Malaysia, and different areas of Southeast Asia. In 1970, there were about 3,100 Chinese in Chinatown, most of who were

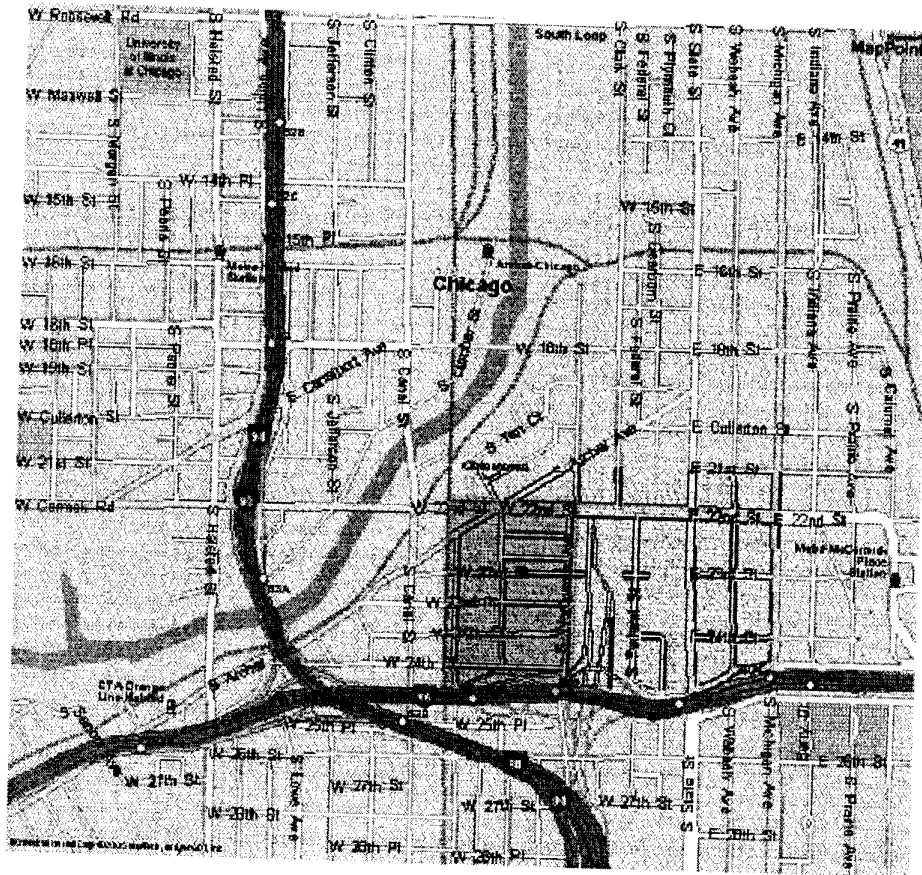


Figure 2.3: Location of Chinatown in Chicago. Source: adapted from a map created in 2004 by Microsoft Corp and in 2003 by NavTech, and/or GDT, Inc.

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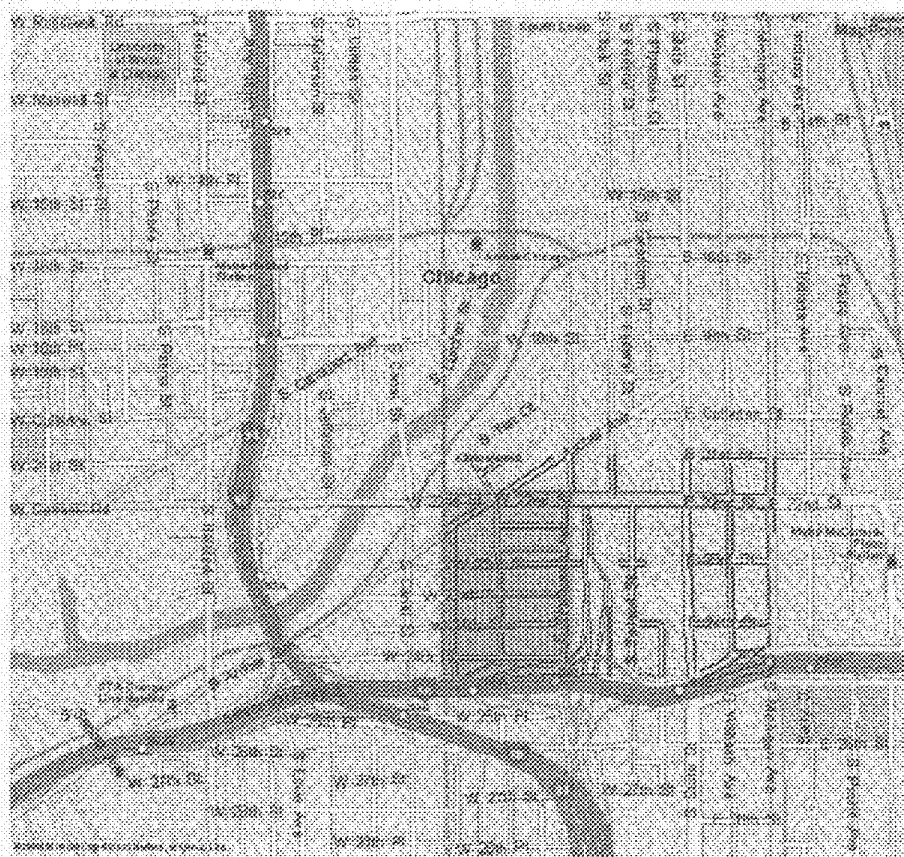


Figure 2.3: Location of Chinatown in Chicago. Source: adapted from a map created in 2004 by Microsoft Corp and in 2003 by NavTech, and/or GDT, Inc.

still concentrated in the core area, where they constituted about 71 percent of the total population in that area. By 1980, the Chinese population increased to 3,926 people, almost three-fourths of the area's population.⁴⁵ Until 1990, the total number of Chinese in the entire Amour Square census area was 5,546. In the core area of Chinatown, the Chinese constituted nearly one hundred percent of the population.⁴⁶

Racial discrimination and anti-Chinese exclusion laws effectively prevented any significant additional immigration of Chinese to the United States from 1882 through 1943. After the end of World War II (1945–1950), the new possibility of immigration to the United States and special provisions in the immigration law for family reunification allowed the existing Chinese community in Chicago to expand and stabilize. After the Communist “takeover” of the Chinese mainland in 1949, there was a major influx of new immigrants to the United States. These immigrants, who came from all over China, commonly spoke Mandarin. But this class of educated, Mandarin-speaking refugees from Communism tended to live throughout the city and surrounding suburbs. After 1950, when diplomatic relations between the People's Republic of China and the United States were severed, there was virtually no immigration from Mainland China. From the early 1950s through 1978, most immigrants came from Hong Kong and Taiwan.

In 1979, the United States established full diplomatic relations with the People's Republic of China. Since that time, the greatest number of arrivals of Chinese in the United States has been from Mainland China. With increasing number of immigrants, Chicago's Chinatown has expanded toward the south and west into the northeastern tip of Bridgeport. In the 1990s, land in the old Santa Fe railroad yards along the Chicago River, just north of

⁴⁵ Ibid.

⁴⁶ Hogan 1995.

Cermak and Archer Avenue, was developed into a new "Chinatown Square" shopping and restaurant complex and the new 14-acre Santa Fe Gardens residential area.

Though Chinese immigrants come from different areas, a majority of these who moved to Chicago's Chinatown have generally consisted largely of rural or urban working-class Cantonese speakers from southern China, Hong Kong, or Southeast Asia. Because of this, until recently the adult population of the Chinatown area was relatively undereducated. Correspondingly, there is a lack of English skills among Chinatown's residents, which furthers the problem of social isolation.

CHAPTER THREE: THE PHYSICAL FEATURES OF CHICAGO'S CHINATOWN

Most of the buildings standing in Chicago's Chinatown district follow standard American forms. The reason for this is that before the Chinese moved to Cermak Road and Archer Avenue, the district's houses were owned by earlier immigrants from Europe. However, after several decades of development, the application of decorative ornamentation to rooflines, windows, and doors intensified the Chinese appearance of this district. As a consequence, all of these efforts gave an intense ethnic stamp to the local urban landscape. The streetscape of Chinatown constitutes the most striking visual component of this place. Western architects or contractors built most of Chinatown's old buildings. When the Chinese moved into the district, they tried to create exotica by erecting buildings having Chinese traditional architectural features, or sometimes modifying or manipulating standard Western building facade. In Chicago's Chinatown, for example, the buildings erected by the Chinese exhibit both Chinese decorative details and Western facades, while some other buildings have been embed tiled roof and dragon patterns on their western facades that were constructed in the prevailing commercial Italiananate and Queen Anne fashions of the day.

Although a homogenous style of Chinatown architecture has never been developed, the structures usually contain several examples of architecture rarely found in the rest of the city. The most common elements are recessed or projecting balconies, upturned eaves and roof corners, extended eaves covering the main balconies, sloping tiled roofs, and smooth or carved columns topped with cantilevered clusters of beams, flagpoles, and parapet walls

bearing Chinese inscriptions.¹ Chinatown is also visibly different from other city neighborhoods because of certain unique structures such as a Chinese pavilion, Chinese arches, and the Chinese Nine-dragon Wall. During the early 20th century especially, Chinatown turned toward tourism, which led to a more conscious effort to present an exotic image. After World War II Chinatown became a symbol of ethnic heritage, and gateways and other structures modeled on Chinese prototypes were erected.²

Because the most significant aspect of Chinatown's physical environment is its streetscape, the general physical structure survey in this study concentrated on the street façade qualities of building groups, especially as they form contiguous surfaces along the street. Certain individual buildings with historical or architectural significance have been explored in the survey and received specific descriptions.

Streetscape Symbolism

Symbolism of the Building Façade

One of the most significant and visually dominant features of Chinatown's physical form is the large number of structures that have similar materials and architectural styles, and are of similar scale. Most structures share a common wall or have very small gap between them, which results in a contiguous building line for an entire block. Coupled with the continuous fronts, uniformity was achieved through the common use of brick, recessed balconies, roofs that curve inward, and similar detailing of parapets, cornices, and windows.³

Recessed balconies dominate the upper stories of many Chinatown buildings. This element may be a duplication of practices in southern China, where the façade of a building

¹ Lai 1988.

² Yip 1995.

³ Lai 1991.

is set back at the upper level and the façade plane is met by a wrought balcony. Recessed balconies are common in southern China because they help to keep building interiors cool and provide half-open spaces for users. For commercial buildings, especially restaurants, the loggia provides a space for the customer to watch the streetscape. For residential buildings, the balconies have additional functions such as places to dry recently washed clothes under the sun. Most Chinese-associated buildings in Chicago's Chinatown have recessed balconies, which are particularly useful whenever there is a street parade, or when the interior assembly hall of an association is too crowded during a festival celebration.⁴

A tiled roof with upturned eaves and corners is one of the most elegant features of Chinese architecture. Such roofs occupy a primary position in the buildings of Chinatown, which gives the ensemble an ethnic character and aesthetic depth. Functionally, a steep inwardly curved roof was built to withstand windstorm stresses in Southern China. During a heavy rainstorm, the steep incline of the roof provides efficient drainage for rainwater, while the gentle upward slope at the bottom throws the water some distance away from the wall of the house. Furthermore, an oncoming strong wind will be deflected upward by a steep, concave roof.⁵ But recently, the tiled sloping roof has been commonly used more for decorative than functional purposes in the structures of Chinatown. It also appears above the windows and doors so as to intensify the ethnic character of the buildings.

The façades of Chinatown's buildings are usually covered with Chinese decorative details. The major decorative elements include schemes of gold, red, green, yellow, and other brilliant colors; animal motifs, including dragons, phoenixes, or lions; plant motifs, including pine, bamboo, plum, and chrysanthemum; other motifs, including pagodas, lanterns, bowls,

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ Lai 1991.

and chopsticks; inscriptions of stylish Chinese characters such as Fu (福, happiness or blessing) and Shou (寿, longevity); doors, windows, or archways that are circular, moon-shaped, and overlaid with ornate lattice work; and decorative balustrades adorned with frets.⁶

In traditional Chinese architecture, the colors and animal motifs were always believed to influence the fortune and destiny of a building's occupants. Red signifies happiness, gold is linked with prosperity, yellow is the imperial color, blue is associated with heaven, and green is associated with fertility. Certain mystical animals such as dragons and phoenixes are believed to be auspicious and commonly carved or painted on walls, columns, and shop signs.⁷

Symbolism of Sidewalks

Up and down the streets, vivid Mandarin red, the traditional color of joy, and jade green which symbolizes affluence, are the predominant colors. The pagoda-style buildings, with their little details that have trimmed, black characters on yellow, and red on white, advertise food and merchandise both in English and Chinese; the bilingual street signs manifest a Chinese flavor (Figure 3.1).

Stylish Chinese characters and the floral or animal motifs are commonly used in Chinese architecture as decorative patterns. One material or several materials can be employed to contribute various patterns. On the sidewalks of Chinatown, a dragon symbol is delineated on the pavement at the corner of South Wentworth Avenue and 23rd Street (Figure 3.2). And the pavement that symbolizes "longevity" has been covered along the South

⁶ Lai 1997.

⁷ Ibid.

Wentworth Avenue. In ancient China, the carving of the pavement was designed to prevent slipping and gradually developed into a decoration.

In addition, the lighting fixtures standing along South Wentworth Avenue also contribute one of the most significant symbols of the Chinatown. Designed by artist Mary Ann Liu, the lighting fixtures use dragon and lantern forms to indicate their connection to Chinese traditional culture, which may be understood as a product that simply “borrows” the Chinese traditional styles and mingle them together. It represents a trend of design in Chinatown that tries to appeal to western ideas of what China is for the tourist market, instead of evoking a true Chinese tradition.

Symbolism of the Gate

Designed by Chicago architect Peter Fung, Chinatown’s Gateway symbolizes Chinese culture and provides a dramatic visual experience for visitors. The Gateway idea was conceived by George Cheung, who proposed the gateway as a symbol of Chinese culture, good will, and friendship; he hoped the gateway and other improvements in the area would attract more visitors to learn about Chinese culture.⁸ He was an affable Chinatown civic leader and led the campaign to raise \$70,000 in city and private funds and to obtain donations of labor, equipment, and materials to crate the structure. A Greek mason set the tiles when it became impossible to bring in a native craftsman from China to handle the tricky job. After two years of frustration and delay, the Gateway was finally completed on November 7th, 1975.⁹

The Chinese call a freestanding gateway *Paifang*, which can be translated as an arch, portal, or gate. In traditional China, an arch was built to serve as a symbolic entrance to a

⁸ Gapp 1973.

⁹ Ibid.

tomb, temple, palace, or sacred mountain. Later arches were built to venerate gods, saints, or persons of great virtue. Arches evolved over thousands of years; gradually more and more arches were built to commemorate special events, or they were simply used as decorative entrances to public spaces or grand buildings.¹⁰

Chicago Chinatown's Gateway is a tile-ornamented structure with a steel frame (Figure 3.3). It spans South Wentworth Avenue, Chinatown's main street. The entire structure, 60 feet in width and 35 feet in height, consists of three roofs.¹¹ The main central roof and the two smaller side roofs that slope downward gradually and then gracefully curve up at the corners are covered with bluish glazed tiles. In Chinese culture, blue is the color of heaven. It should be noted that the gateway in Chicago has been simplified significantly since it does not have the delicate construction elements employed in traditional Chinese architecture. Designer Fung said, "I was first going to take a contemporary approach, but I was talked out of that." Nevertheless, he finally did research leading to a design that is "an authentic derivative of old Chinese structures, but original."¹² Many details were stripped away from to reveal a simplified traditional outline of a Chinese gateway.

The blue roofs are visually supported by a row of cubes, which are believed to be simplified from *Dou Gong*, an important wooden structure that transferred the load from the roof above to the column below. Beneath the row of cubes of the central roof is a panel decorated with auspicious colorful images. Underneath the panel are the name plates of the

¹⁰ Lai and Madoff 1997

¹¹ Gapp 1973.

¹² Ibid.



Figure 3.1: The bilingual signboards along South Wentworth Avenue. Source: photograph by Chuo Li, 2004.



Figure 3.2: A dragon pattern delineated on the pavement at the corner of the intersection of West 23rd Street and South Wentworth Avenue. Source: photograph by Chuo Li, 2004.



Figure 3.3: The gateway to Chicago's Chinatown is a primary symbol of the district. Source: Chicago's Chinatown website – www.chicago-chinatown.com.



Figure 3.1: The bilingual signboards along South Wentworth Avenue. Source: photograph by Chuo Li, 2004.



Figure 3.2: A dragon pattern delineated on the pavement at the corner of the intersection of West 23rd Street and South Wentworth Avenue. Source: photograph by Chuo Li, 2004.



Figure 3.3: The gateway to Chicago's Chinatown is a primary symbol of the district. Source: Chicago's Chinatown website – www.chicago-chinatown.com.

gate, which bear four Chinese characters, *Tian Xia Wei Gong* ("The World is for All") from right to left. This proclamation of unselfishness was made by Sun Yat-Sen, who is sometimes called the George Washington of China. On the other side, "Propriety, Justice, Integrity and Conscientiousness" recites the virtues regarded by the later leader of the Nationalist Party, Chiang Kai-Shek. Under the name plates is an elongated panel, decorated with auspicious pictures of dragons. Usually there would be four columns to support the entire structure, but in the case of Chicago's Chinatown Gateway there are only two; this design might have occurred in an effort to accommodate vehicular traffic on South Wentworth Avenue. The base of the column is called *Zhu Chu*, which is used to protect the columns against possible vandalism or vehicular damage. It was planned to flank the gateway to Chicago's Chinatown with two stone figures of lions.¹³ But this schedule has been delayed until the present due to financial difficulties. The lion is a Buddhist symbol of the Guardian of the Law that watches over the entrance of a temple, tomb, palace, or other grand building; it has been popularly used in Chinese traditional architecture.

With regard to the numerous cases of gateways, no matter how simple or elaborate they might be, this particular architectural style has been recognized as a symbol of Chinatowns throughout North America.

Building Groupings and Façade Combinations

The identification of building groupings and facades is one of extreme importance because it is the dominant physical characteristic that provides a context for the placement of new structures. They can be used to determine the design criteria that assure the sympathetic placement of new structures among the older retained buildings, which will have a beneficial

¹³ *Chicago Tribune*, November 6, 1975.

effect on the total street scene. The significance of the building groupings becomes evident when both sides of a street have continuous facades or harmonious groupings.¹⁴

The entire Chinatown district can be roughly divided into three zones: commercial blocks, old residential blocks, and new residential blocks (Figure 3.4). One of the most significant and visually dominant features of each zone is the large number of structures that have similar materials and architectural styles with similar scale and similar functions. As we know, the Chinatown district was occupied by Italian immigrants until 1912 when the Chinese began to move there. Instead of reconstructing their own buildings, Chinese immigrants tended to keep the old structures, but they utilized the spaces in their own way. Therefore, and even though most of the buildings in Chinatown still reveal western styles, the intense Chinese ethnic flavor can easily be found in the physical environment of the community, which has been occupied and changed by immigrants from China for more than one hundred years.

Commercial Blocks

Chicago's Chinatown is located at the edge of the city's central business district, which explains the presence of a building stock composed of multistory commercial blocks. The existing commercial building stock of Chinatown permitted multiple uses, and the facades of these commercial structures allowed for this sort of re-composition. Most of the buildings in these commercial blocks are three to four stories high. The building facades tend to be composed of two distinctive zones separated by a horizontal division. Each zone receives its own treatment, often with little direct relation to the other.¹⁵ The one-story lower zone tends to contain more public spaces, which features large expanses of glass and large indoor spaces.

¹⁴ Honolulu Department of Housing and Community Development 1974.

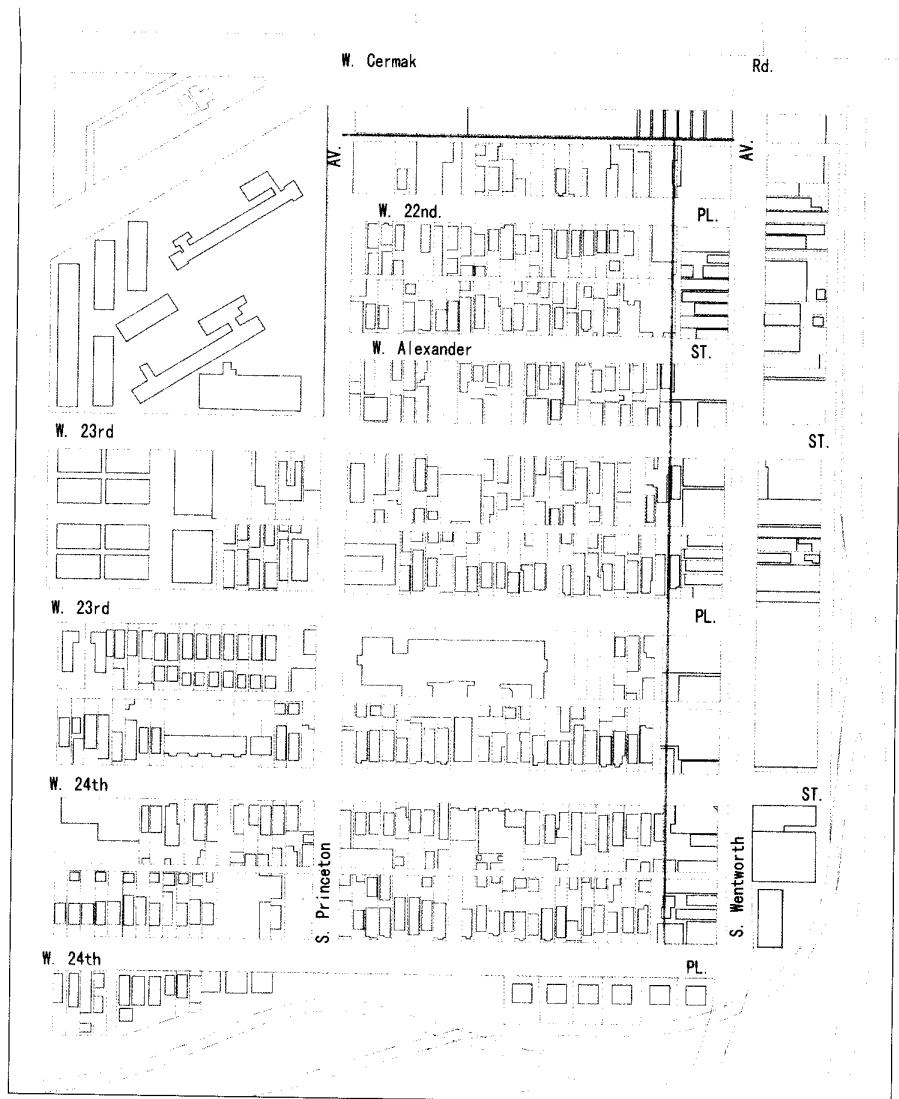
¹⁵ Longstreth 1986.

The upper zone was usually designed to accommodate more private spaces, such as offices and apartments that feature smaller windows on the façade and compact interior space. A one-panel door on one side or both sides of the central portal opens to a confined staircase that leads to the upper floors.

The appearance of most of the buildings was influenced by the Italianate or Victorian style, which prevailed in America at the end of nineteenth century.¹⁶ A wide variety of materials are employed in the buildings, often several in combination, which provides visual richness and enhances the dramatic effect. Typical of the juxtapositions are smooth and hard dark-red or dark-brown bricks with sensuously carved frosty-toned limestone. The upper-story windows may be topped by rounded arches with projecting keystones and richly profiled moldings or simple flat lintels. The tall proportional window treatment is characteristically Italianate or Victorian. The floor levels are expressed with elaborate horizontal coursing. The roofline is flat and may be emphatically crowned at the eaves by a projecting cornice with modillions or brackets. Alternatively, there may be an elaborately shaped pediment with a molding, finial, and inscription. The balustrade, cornice, and other Classical motifs have a florid Italianate character¹⁷ (Figure 3.5).

¹⁶ Rifkind 1980.

¹⁷ Ibid.



Commercial blocks
 Old Residential blocks
 New Residential blocks



Figure 3.4: Three Characteristic Building Zones in Chinatown

Source: Building footprints adapted from Map NE, 1/4 SEC. 28, 39, 14 (prepared by Sanborn Map Company, Inc. Pelham, N. Y., and revised by the Department of Planning, City of Chicago, 1988/91)

Some buildings that have been built by Chinese immigrants reveal a typical style that is influenced by traditional Chinese architectural styles and sometimes the existing Italianate style. The On Leong Merchants Association Building, located next to the Gateway on 2216 South Wentworth Avenue, is one of the buildings that has typical Chinese traditional characters (Figure 3.6). The building was designed by architects Christian S. Michaelsen and Sigurd A. Rognstad in 1926 and completed in 1928. Michaelsen was born in Chicago in 1888. In 1905, he began training as a draftsman in the office of Arthur Heun (1866-1946), a prominent society architect. From 1910 to 1913, Michaelsen worked for Chicago's most prolific society architect, Howard Van Doren Shaw, a master of historic styles in the Beaux-Arts tradition. Rognstad, Michaelsen's partner, was born in Chicago in 1892. From the age of 18, Rognstad worked as a free-lance draftsman, and in 1915 he joined the office of the architect Frederick W. Perkins (1866-1928) as a designer and draftsman. The partnership that Michaelsen and Rognstad formed in 1920 established a firm that remained in business through a number of transformations. Michaelsen provided expertise in structural engineering and oversaw the business operations of the office; Rognstad was responsible for the interior and exterior stylistic designs. Their association was to last seventeen years, ending with the death of Rognstad at the age of 46 in 1937. With the addition of Charles Rabig and Albert Ramp as partners in 1940, the firm continued under Michaelsen's direction until his death in 1960.¹⁸ Although Michaelsen and Rognstad had come from immigrant working-class backgrounds, both had been trained in the Beaux-Arts tradition and concentrated their efforts on large-scale projects intended for public use.

¹⁸ Commission on Chicago Landmarks 1988.

Although they followed the Beaux-Arts approach, Michaelsen and Rognstad also studied the literary and graphic materials available about the classical masterpieces of Chinese architecture to gain an understanding of the style and its underlying system of thought. While these materials were of primary importance as sources of inspiration for the design of the On Leong building and its ornamentation, the association's formal needs and the position of the community within the larger society demanded a novel architectural solution. The challenge was to produce a building whose functions had no precedent in traditional Chinese architecture, while retaining the essential elements of the style.¹⁹ It is a three-story building constructed on a steel and concrete frame and clad entirely in brick and terra cotta. The symmetrical form of the building reveals the influence of the Beaux-Arts, which prevailed in America from 1885 to 1930. Two pagoda towers frame the symmetrical elevation, with an elaborate portal at the center, which is given emphasis by a canopy with upturned corners. Stores flank the elaborate terra-cotta main portal at the center of the first floor. The portal opens to a large vaulted ceiling and a staircase that leads to a lobby and the upper floors.

The first floor of the On Leong Building is clad entirely in terra cotta and capped with a frieze of decorative panels. Terra cotta was also used for the brackets and railings of the loggia; this material frames the windows and forms the tops of the towers, and also is used for the cresting found at the rear stair tower. The designs of the terra cotta were based on Chinese prototypes, and the material is similar to the traditional form of glazed terra cotta known in China as *Liu Li*. Animals, figures, foliage, and geometric patterns that represent

¹⁹ Ibid.



Figure 3.5: A building at 2241 South Wentworth Avenue displaying a typical Italianate building style. Source: photograph by Chuo Li, 2004

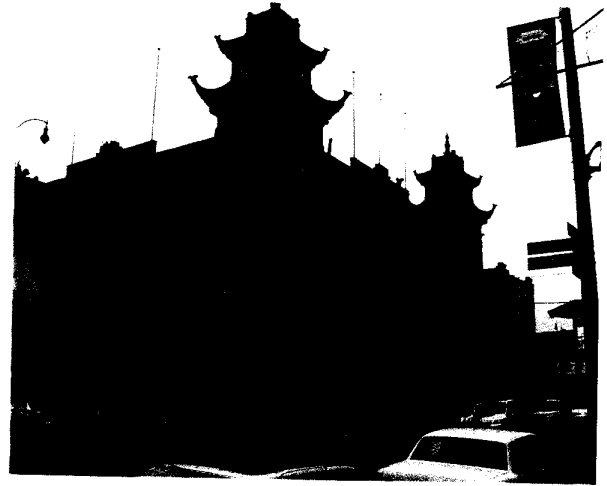


Figure 3.6: The symmetrical façade for the Onleong Association Building is framed by towers that were inspired by a profile of the pagoda. Source: photograph by Chuo Li, 2004.



Figure 3.7: A meeting room inside the On Leong Building displaying precious teakwood furniture and the finest of decoration, c. 1928. Photograph by a *Chicago Daily News* photographer. Source: Chicago Historical Society.



Figure 3.5: A building at 2241 South Wentworth Avenue displaying a typical Italianate building style. Source: photograph by Chuo Li, 2004

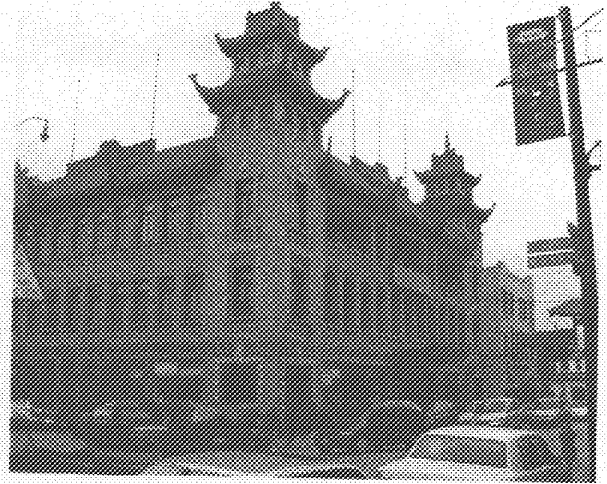


Figure 3.6: The symmetrical façade for the Onleong Association Building is framed by towers that were inspired by a profile of the pagoda. Source: photograph by Chuo Li, 2004.

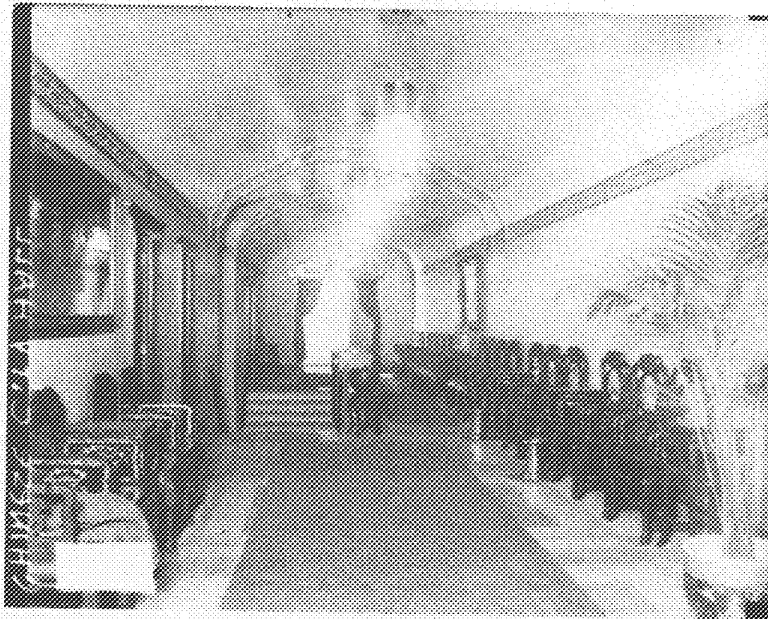


Figure 3.7: A meeting room inside the On Leong Building displaying precious teakwood furniture and the finest of decoration, c. 1928. Photograph by a *Chicago Daily News* photographer. Source: Chicago Historical Society.

good fortune and longevity can be seen all over the building. There are *Chiwen*²⁰ facing each other from the opposite end of the ridge of the main roof. The animal figures have their faces turned either toward the viewer or toward each other; this was done to avoid the symbol of bad luck, and they were never allowed to have their backs turned toward one another.²¹

The façade of the second and third floors is dominated by the rhythm of the piers and the shape of the roofline above. The second floor was originally designed to accommodate a residential hotel, a lounge, offices, and facilities for the after-hour Chinese language school. A kitchen, dining room, and three large meeting halls were built on the third floor (Figure 3.7). One of the third-floor halls was equipped as a shrine and trimmed in marble and precious woods that were inlaid with gold and mother-of-pearl. The altar held a painted image of *Guan Gong*, an ancient hero venerated as a general and philosopher; the altar was flanked by oil portraits of two later military and political “liberators,” George Washington and Dr. Sun Yat-sen.²² In 1992, the Chinese Christian Union Church decided to purchase the On Leong Building. After the two-year renovation project, conducted by the Jackson Gin, Ebel and Frazier Architectural firm, the On Leong Building was renamed the *Pui Tak Center*.²³ The first floor of the building has continued to accommodate stores, while the second floor has been renovated into offices, classrooms, and a library. The ancestor shrine on the third floor was changed into a space for Sunday worship (Figure 3.8). A partial reconstruction of the piers was undertaken to support the second- and third-floor loggia. With

²⁰ *Chiwen* is one of the dragon's nine sons who likes to ascend to high places and gaze open-mouthed over the landscape. Its nickname is “beam-eaters.” Chinese builders customarily place the gaping mouth of *Chiwen* at the end of the roof ridge, thus depicting him perching on high cliffs to court danger. Now it is also called *Longwen*.

²¹ Commission on Chicago Landmarks 1988.

²² *Ibid.*

²³ Chinese Christian Union Church 1995.

its original storefronts, windows, doors, and trim almost wholly intact, the building retains a high degree of integrity.²⁴

Summarily, this association building is a structure that has integrated characteristics of traditional Chinese and Beaux-Arts Italian Renaissance styles. Though the architects argued that the open loggia on an upper floor was an element common to multi-story commercial buildings in Hong Kong and the Guangdong Province in China, in terms of the symmetrical form of the On-Leong Association Building and the backgrounds of the two architects, it seems to be more like a Beaux-Arts inspiration, because both architects had been trained in this tradition. In addition, after taking the commission they also referenced a few books that introduced Chinese traditional architecture.²⁵ Though the books about Chinese architecture were very limited at that time, it is obvious that the architects were influenced by the pavilion style in Chinese traditional buildings.

With the completion of the On Leong Merchants Association Building, Michaelsen and Rognstad and their successor firm became the architects of choice in Chinatown for the next two decades. In addition to designing new storefronts and interiors for existing buildings, the firm went on to provide plans for a number of new structures in the traditional style for neighborhood businesses. Furthermore, the building style of the On-Leong Association Building has greatly influenced the design of other buildings in Chinatown. The Won Kow Restaurant at 2237 South Wentworth is such an example, which was started in 1927 and designed by Michaelsen & Rognstad (Figure 3.9). The building's elevation is very similar to the On Leong façade. It has a central portal with a vaulted ceiling, open loggias on the upper floors, a similar style of rooflines, and the framework pattern of windows, all of which reveal

²⁴ Commission on Chicago Landmarks 1988.

²⁵ Ibid.

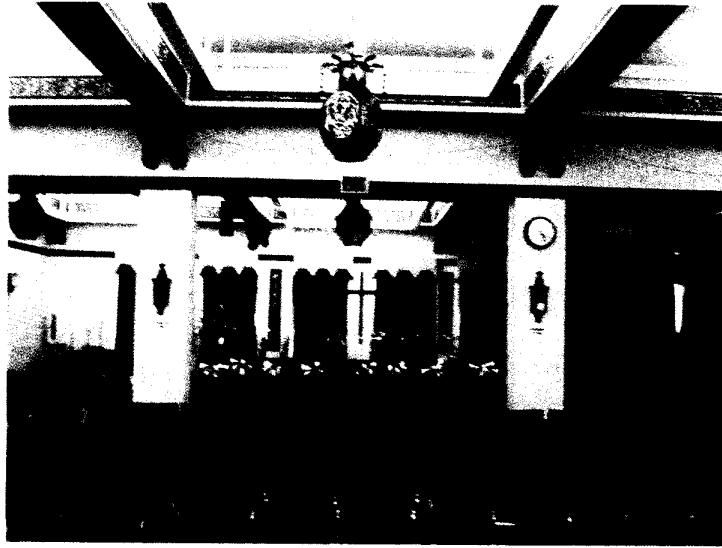


Figure 3.8: The shrine on the third floor of the On Leong Merchants Association Building has been renovated as a Sunday worship space. The tapestries, gilded screens, and figurative reliefs in bronze that were used to decorate the shrine room have been removed, Source: photograph by Chuo Li, 2004.



Figure 3.9: The Won Kow Restaurant appears with a similar symmetrical form and with building details that reflect the On Leong Merchants Association Building, c. 1928. Photograph by a *Chicago Daily News* photographer. Source: Chicago Historical Society.

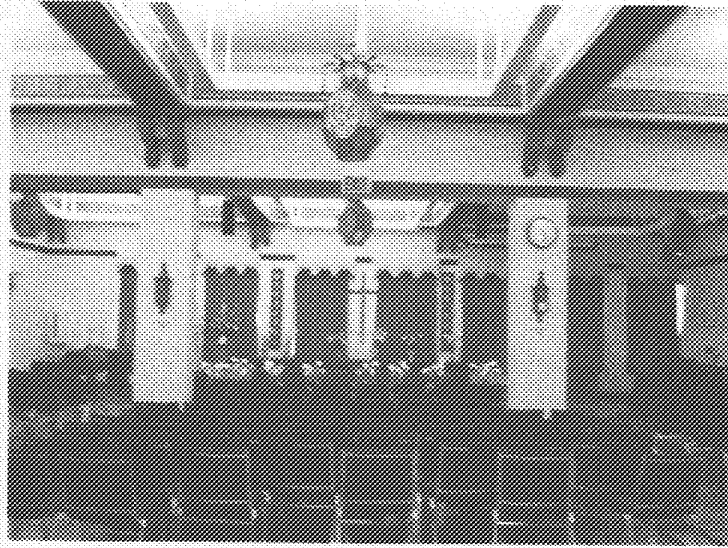


Figure 3.8: The shrine on the third floor of the On Leong Merchants Association Building has been renovated as a Sunday worship space. The tapestries, gilded screens, and figurative reliefs in bronze that were used to decorate the shrine room have been removed. Source: photograph by Chuo Li, 2004.



Figure 3.9: The Won Kow Restaurant appears with a similar symmetrical form and with building details that reflect the On Leong Merchants Association Building, c. 1928. Photograph by a *Chicago Daily News* photographer. Source: Chicago Historical Society.

a connection to the On Leong Building. It is estimated that the design of the Won Kow Restaurant referenced the style of the On Leong Merchants Association Building because of its successful style and general acceptance in the Chinese community.

The Moy Family Association Building at 2238 South Wentworth Avenue also reveals the integration of traditional Chinese details with an American architectural style (Figure 3.10). Designed by architect Henry Sierks, this three-story building was started in 1912 when the Chinese were just moving into Chinatown. It was constructed of brick and clad in ash-colored stone and light-colored brick on the street-front façade. The centrally placed main entrance was given emphasis by refined carvings that framed the doorway and two columns across the upper floors. Two one-panel doors flank the main portal at the center of the first floor, which opens to a staircase that leads to the upper floors. The second floor was designed to accommodate residential apartments, a kitchen, and facilities for the single tenants. The third-floor halls were used for the shrine and association meeting room. The open loggia on the third floor is an element common to institutional buildings in Chinatown. Dragons, foliage, and geometric patterns were elaborately engraved for the railings of the loggia to frame the windows and columns. Only two colors were used for all of the decoration – yellow and green – which means dignity and prosperity in ancient China. The roofline of the building is a wave-shaped pediment with thin moldings. The efforts of the Moy Family Association Building produced a structure that has a commanding presence and created a distinctive element within the streetscapes of Chinatown.

The end of World War II heightened the spirit of unity and the determination to build a new church building in the Chinese community, which initiated the construction of the Chinese Christian Union Church (CCUC). This three-story structure was constructed on a

steel and concrete frame and clad entirely in bricks (Figure 3.11). The completion of this building went through three periods, which resulted in its inconsistent façade that includes three buildings: the Old Sanctuary, the educational building, and the New Sanctuary. The Old Sanctuary had its ground-breaking ceremony on November 30, 1947, and was dedicated on October 28, 1951. The four years that it took to construct the building were mainly caused by financial obstacles and a number of change orders.²⁶ The Old Sanctuary building is the finest portion in the entire structure, which features a pagoda tower with a sloping tile roof tapering to a point. The two portals on the lower level of the tower are emphasized by a canopy over the entrances, and the moon-shaped lattice windows on the second floor. The windows under the tower roof are capped by a frieze of decorative panels. The lattice work that appears on the pediment reveals a flexible use of Chinese traditional details. In 1960, an educational building was added to the south of the Old Sanctuary. It has a very simple façade that mainly consists of three strip windows, which allow more sun into the interior classrooms, but loses its harmony with the older portion of the building. In addition, the color of the bricks used in the educational building is a little lighter than those employed on the Old Sanctuary building. After some thirteen years, a New Sanctuary began to be constructed. Designed by architect Jackson Gin, the building was finally dedicated in 1974.²⁷ The most significant feature of this building is a large archway with a large lattice decoration above the door.

²⁶ Chinese Christian Union Church 1995.

²⁷ *Ibid.*



Figure 3.10: The Moy Family Association Building at 2238 South Wentworth Avenue. Source: photograph by Chuo Li, 2004.



Figure 3.11: The Chinese Christian Union Church, located at the intersection of 23rd Street and South Wentworth Avenue. Source: photograph by Chuo Li, 2004.



Figure 3.10: The Moy Family Association Building at 2238 South Wentworth Avenue. Source: photograph by Chuo Li, 2004.



Figure 3.11: The Chinese Christian Union Church, located at the intersection of 23rd Street and South Wentworth Avenue. Source: photograph by Chuo Li, 2004.

Old Residential Blocks

Most of the buildings in these blocks were built by early Italian immigrants at the end of the nineteenth century and the beginning of the twentieth century, when the street fronts of row houses and closely spaced detached dwellings ringed the increasingly specialized commercial downtowns of larger cities.²⁸ Unlike the buildings in commercial blocks, only a few structures have been built by the Chinese in this block, and rare modifications to the building façades have been made. After the Chinese moved into this district, they simply reused the building without making many efforts to manipulate the buildings to reflect their ethnic features. Three primary architectural styles can be found in this zone: Italianate, Queen Ann, and Romanesque Revival.

For the Italianate-styled buildings, room heights diminish at the upper stories and floor divisions are articulated by horizontal coursing. Double doors are typical. Both the door and window openings are headed by flat lintels with shaped or slanted upper edges and floral carvings (Figure 3.12). The Queen Ann-style buildings feature their picturesque qualities, making bravura displays of original and historical motifs in arresting shapes, colors, and textures, with combining clapboard, shingle, masonry, and terra-cotta offering a vivid pictorial effect. On the major stories, the windows are tall, thin, and regularly spaced with rich moldings. The more capricious feature is the attic fenestration, with its wall and roof dormers that are headed by round, flattened, or Tudor arches. Stained glass windows have often been used as decoration at the entry door²⁹ (Figure 3.13). Generally, the Romanesque Revival style is characterized as brick or ashlar masonry laid with thin mortar joints. Single

²⁸ Rifkind 1980.

²⁹ Ibid.



Figure 3.12: A residential building at 241 West 23rd Street, which designed in a typical Italianate architectural style. Source: photograph by Chuo Li, 2004.



Figure 3.13: A residential building in the Queen Anne style at 327 West 24th Street. Source: photograph by Chuo Li, 2004.



Figure 3.14: A residential building in the Romanesque Revival Style at 266 West 24th Street. Source: photograph by Chuo Li, 2004.



Figure 3.15: St. Therese Church was used as *Sancta Maria Incoronata* Italian Catholic Church by Italian residents until 1963, when it was transformed into a Chinese Mission. Source: photograph by Chuo Li, 2003.



Figure 3.12: A residential building at 241 West 23rd Street, which designed in a typical Italianate architectural style. Source: photograph by Chuo Li, 2004.



Figure 3.13: A residential building in the Queen Anne style at 327 West 24th Street. Source: photograph by Chuo Li, 2004.

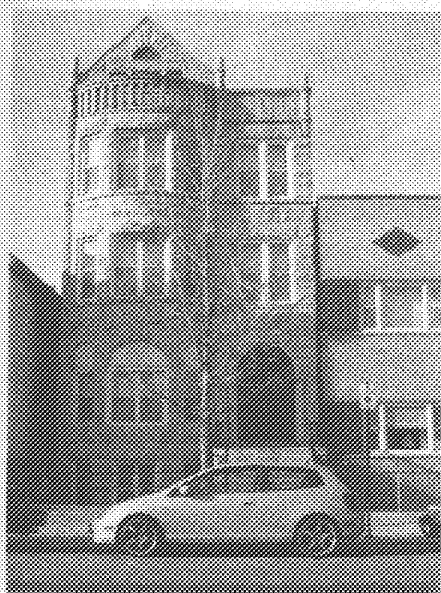


Figure 3.14: A residential building in the Romanesque Revival Style at 266 West 24th Street. Source: photograph by Chuo Li, 2004.



Figure 3.15: St. Therese Church was used as *Sancta Maria Incoronata* Italian Catholic Church by Italian residents until 1963, when it was transformed into a Chinese Mission. Source: photograph by Chuo Li, 2003.

or paired round-arch door and window openings are most common, although pointed-arch openings may also be observed³⁰ (Figure 3.14).

The St. Therese Mission at 210-218 West Alexander Street is a typical Romanesque Revival church (Figure 3.15). Built in 1904, this church is constructed of brick. The façade is severe and symmetrical, with brisk articulation and strong rhythms established by regular fenestration, projecting buttresses, and surface patterns. This building reveals signatures of the Romanesque Revival: elaborately pedimented door openings with rich moldings and round-arched windows. The tower is a decisive element with decorative arcading beneath the eaves. A two-story additional building connected to the main building of the church is used as the pastor's house and office on the western of the main building. To emphasize its Chinese character, a pitched tiled roof with an upturned eave has been added above the entry, which uses a green-red color scheme. An Oriental garden is in front of the building. Though it is hard to tell if it is a Chinese-style garden, the builders' efforts to add an Oriental flavor are obvious. The moon-shaped door to the garden is an especially typical element used in traditional Chinese gardens.

The building of the Chinese Community Center (CCC) at 250 West 22nd Place occurred in 1958 under the supervision of Michaelson Rabig and Ramp, Architects and Engineers (Figure 3.16). This two and one-half story structure uses a symmetrical façade to emphasize its institutional nature and Chinese traditional character. The central portion of the façade is the most elaborately decorated feature. A large expanse of glass on the first floor defines the main entrance and creates a visual connection between indoors and outdoors. Two stone figures of lions, a Buddhist symbol of the Guardian of the Law, watch over the

³⁰ Ibid.

building entrance on both sides. The portal opens into a large foyer and a staircase that leads to the large meeting room at the ground floor; offices and classrooms are located on the second floor, and a formal hall on the third floor. The recessed balcony on the second level and the green pitched roof intensify the emphasis of the central portal. At the end of the roof ridge are two fish-shaped decorations called *Chiwen* in Chinese. Two brick cubes imbedded with four hexagonal lattice windows flank the central entrance. A statue of Confucius was set next to the CCC building in 2004, which indicates the community's respect for Chinese traditional culture.

New Residential Blocks

In the New Residential zone, most buildings are used for residential purposes and have been constructed relatively recently. Many of them were built after 1980 by an agency, Chinese Redevelopment Assistance, Inc. For instance, the nine-story Chinese Elderly Apartments, with 139 units and built in 1979, provides housing for low-income seniors in the community. Its grided façade represents a relationship to modern architecture. In addition to the high-rise apartment buildings, most structures in this zone are two to four-story townhouses or apartment buildings.

New housing is intermingled with older buildings that remain from the time of the original Italian residents; they are very similar to the structures in the Old Residential zone. In contrast with the old buildings, the architectural styles of the new structures tend to be diverse and more colorful. The common features among these new buildings include their enlarged windows, compact profiles, and simpler façades. In addition, some buildings, especially those built by real estate development companies, seek to attract Chinese residents



Figure 3.16: The Chinese Community Center Building is a significant social gathering space for the community. Source: photograph by Chuo Li, 2003.



Figure 3.17: These new apartment buildings comprise a small community within Chinatown. The doorway has a rich Chinese traditional flavor. Source: photograph by Chuo Li, 2004.

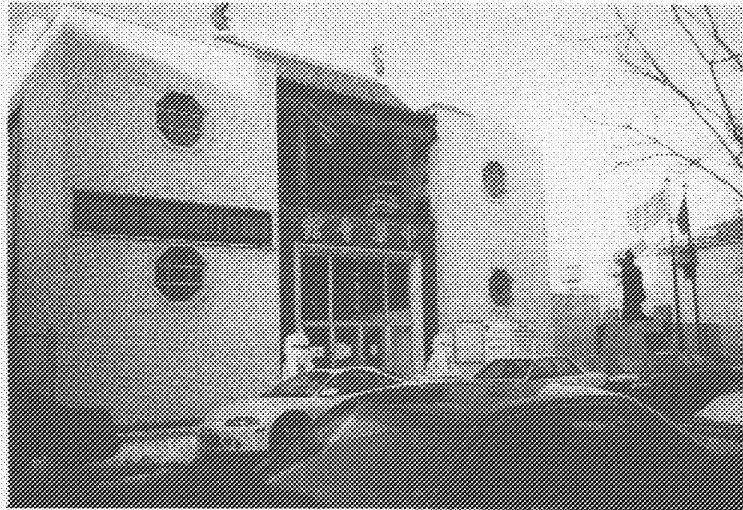


Figure 3.16: The Chinese Community Center Building is a significant social gathering space for the community. Source: photograph by Chuo Li, 2003.



Figure 3.17: These new apartment buildings comprise a small community within Chinatown. The doorway has a rich Chinese traditional flavor. Source: photograph by Chuo Li, 2004.



Figure 3.18: The entrance to Dr. Sun Yat-sen Memorial Park. Source: photograph by Chuo Li, 2004.



Figure 3.19: A statue of Dr. Sun Yat-sen is located at the center of a small pool. The stone foundation which is engraved in Chinese, has a general description of Dr. Sun's life. Source: photograph by Chuo Li, 2004.

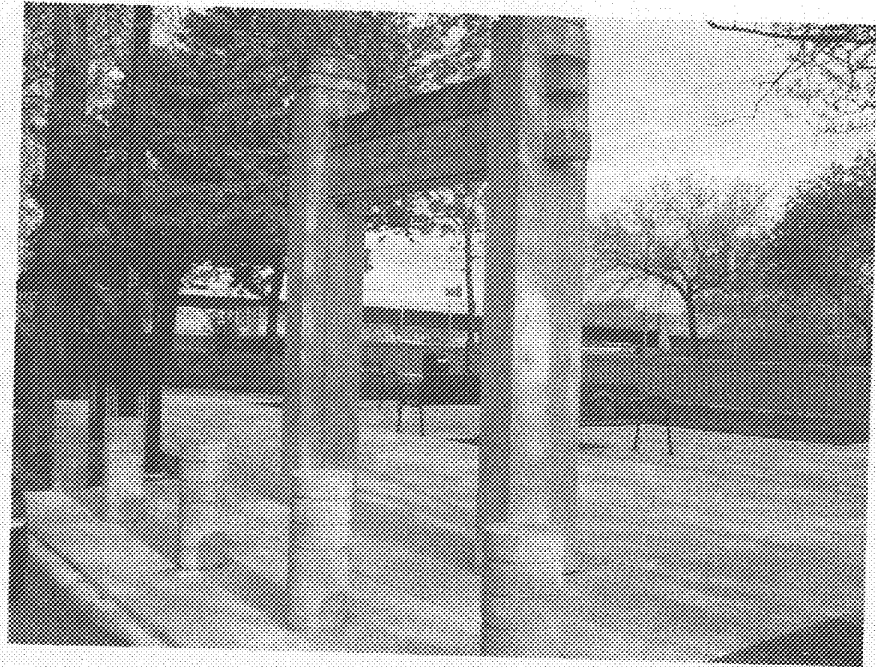


Figure 3.18: The entrance to Dr. Sun Yat-sen Memorial Park. Source: photograph by Chuo Li, 2004.



Figure 3.19: A statue of Dr. Sun Yat-sen is located at the center of a small pool. The stone foundation which is engraved in Chinese, has a general description of Dr. Sun's life. Source: photograph by Chuo Li, 2004.

by incorporating more traditional Chinese architectural features in the building façade (Figure 3.17).

Chinatown Redevelopment Assistance, Inc. donated a strip of land located on 24th Place to the city to develop a public park. Built by the City of Chicago and the Community Improvement & Development Program in 1977, Dr. Sun Yat-Sen Memorial Park was established to memorialize Dr. Sun Yat-Sen, an influential person in Chinese modern history who has been respectfully recognized as the “Chinese George Washington.”³¹ The entrance to the park is a structure that represents the style of a traditional Chinese *Paifang*, which has five piers sitting at the front (Figure 3.18). Right behind the entrance is a plaza with a few benches that provide seating for visitors. A statue of Dr. Sun has been placed above a rectangular pool that incorporates a brief introduction to his life (Figure 3.19). The settings, one stone table with four stools, are adapted from traditional Chinese garden design, and function as gathering spaces -- typically for people who play chess. A small pavilion, as well as a children’s playground, both located at the eastern side of the park, increase the harmony and intimacy of this community park.

³¹ *Chinese American Progress* 1976-77.

CHAPTER FOUR: THE SOCIAL WORLD OF CHINATOWN

In any given city, a Chinatown usually serves as the social and commercial center for surrounding Chinese communities. As Chicago is one of the central cities of communication in America, its Chinatown has become a communications center for Chinese people in the Midwest. Founded by a group of Chinese merchants in 1912, Chicago's Chinatown was the main supplier of Chinese people and goods for other areas. Access to fresh goods and mass media helped in the development of Chinatown, which in turn benefited other Chinatowns in nearby smaller cities.¹ Having endured for almost one-hundred years, Chicago's Chinatown is a living monument to the heritage of the Chinese in America. As one of the oldest sections of Chicago, its history also forms a major aspect of the city's heritage. When its history is combined with contemporary residency, Chicago's Chinatown stands as a symbol that has fused generations of immigrants and elderly residents.²

As is the case with other ethnic enclaves in Chicago, Chinatown is, to a certain degree, a self-supporting community. Many residents of the community live much of their lives in this one neighborhood. Workplaces, residences, recreational facilities, shopping opportunities, educational services, banking institutions, cultural associations, and social, health, and mental health services are contained within one defined area. Furthermore, its residents have characteristics that are often defined as a "community"; here live persons who are largely drawn together by a common ethnicity and, to some extent, by common interests, histories, experiences, and constraints.³ Chalsa M. Loo has indicated that Chinatown is proof that

¹ Moy 1978.

² Loo 1998.

³ Ibid.

“community,” as defined by closely knit ties, still exists, “although probably not with the close-knittedness found in some non-urban communities.”⁴

General Activity Structure

The importance of Chinatown is largely related to people whose presence and activities distinguish this area of downtown and give it a special character. The current activities in Chinatown were identified and classified into the following groups: commercial, residential, social, and manufacturing (Figure 4.1 and 4.2). The mapping indicates that the current activity types in Chinatown are generally located together in one section of the district, forming a sub-area or character area. Two character areas in Chinatown have the largest concentrations – commercial and residential – while other activity types tend to spread into these two sub-areas. The multi-storied commercial buildings along South Wentworth Avenue and Cermak Street usually contain commercial and institutional spaces as well as residential apartments. The reason for the multiple uses of these buildings is that Chinatown grew in the form of increasing density due to the restrictions posed by geographical boundaries. Often shops or restaurants occupy the ground floors, while the upper floors are used to house small companies, apartments, family benevolent associations, or temples. Compared to commercial areas, residential buildings tend to be used more simply.

Commercially Related Activities

The commercially related activities significant to Chinatown are not merely meaningful because of their relationship to an ethnic culture, but moreover because of their long-term identification with the district. Many of the activities are the result of or are symbolic of the acculturation process undergone by the Chinese. Thus, because of the

⁴ Ibid 13.

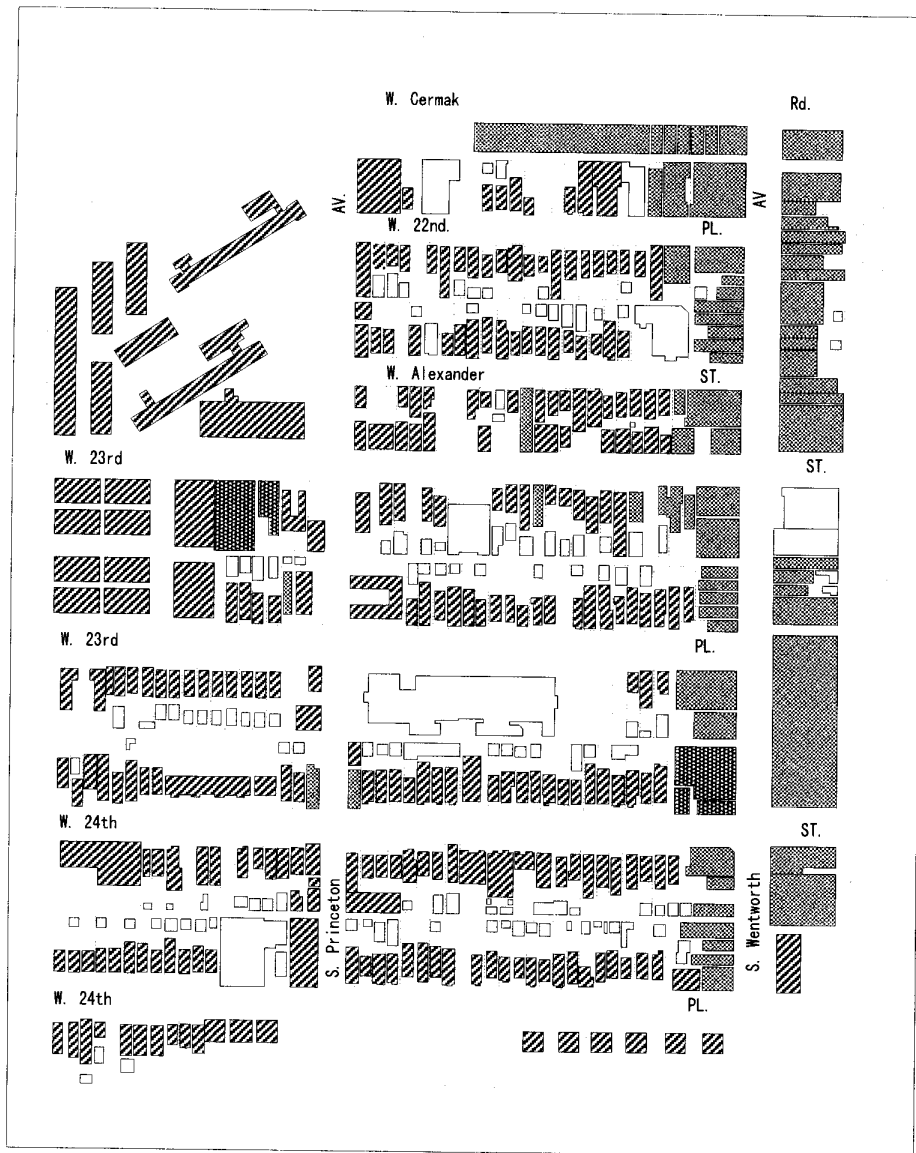


Figure 4.1: Building Activity Types in Chinatown — First Floor

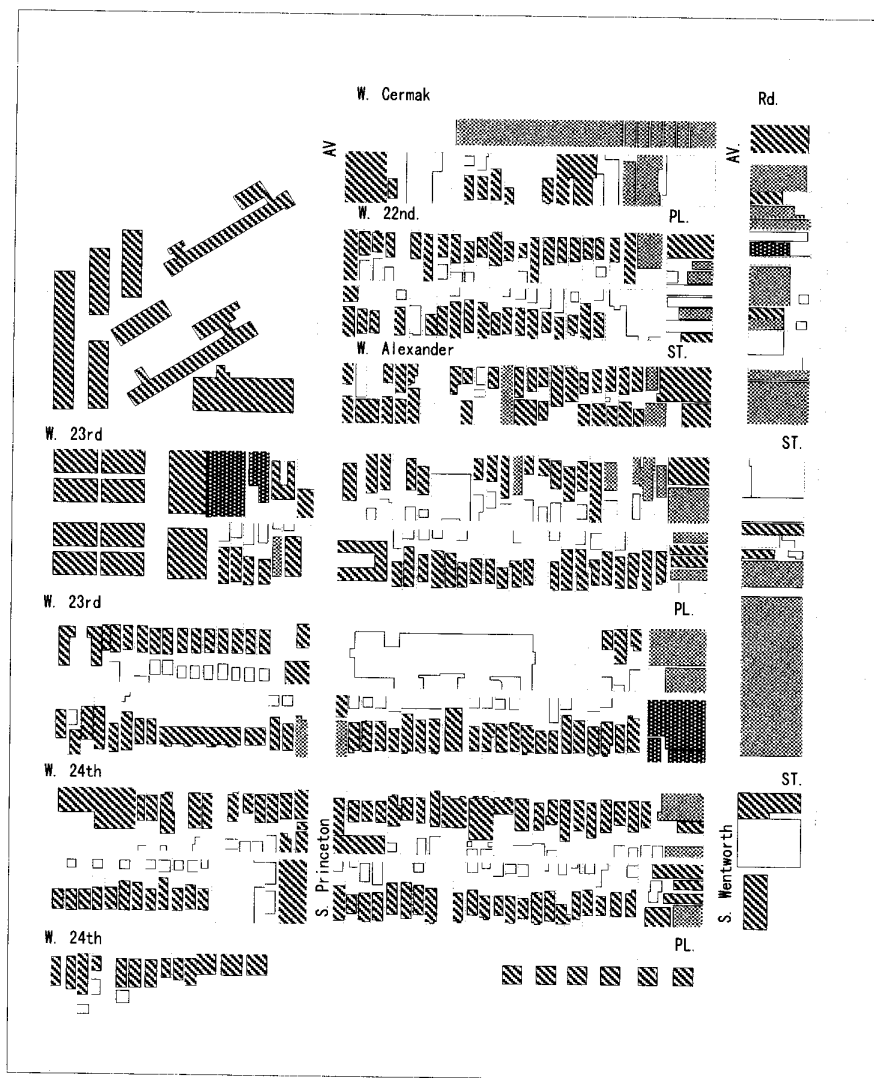
First Floor Activities

-  **Commercial**
-  **Cultural/Educational**
-  **Residential**
-  **Manufacturing**
-  **Garage**

This map shows the general activity types that characterize the first floor level of the buildings. Most of the commercial activities are concentrated at Wentworth and Cermak, while the residential sector includes the largest portion of the area.



Source: Building footprints adapted from Map NE, 1/4 SEC. 28, 39, 14 (Prepared by Sanborn Map Company, Inc. Pelham, N. Y., and revised by Department of Planning, City of Chicago, 1988/91)



Map 4.2: Building Activity Types in Chinatown -- Upper Floors

- Upper Floor Activities**
-  Commercial
 -  Cultural/Educational
 -  Residential
 -  Manufacturing
 -  Garage
 -  None

This map shows the general activity types that characterize the upper floor levels of the buildings. Most of the upper floors are used as offices or apartments. Since there was no access to the private spaces on the upper floors, some of the information in this map is based on estimates derived from the exteriors of the buildings.



Source: Building footprints adapted from Map NE. 1/4 SEC. 28. 39. 14 (Prepared by Sanborn Map Company, Inc. Pelham, N. Y., and revised by the Department of Planning, City of Chicago, 1988/91)

historical roots of these activities, many commercial functions are not commonly found in the city and are related to a life style of earlier days.⁷

The commercial activities in Chinatown are remnants or representative of the first Chinese influences in Chicago. Although the first Chinese arrived in Chicago as early as 1876, many were single men who came to open commercial establishments so as to make themselves economically independent. Chinese immigrants primarily opened laundries, grocery stores, chop suey restaurants, and import gift shops. Although many of the original shops are gone today, the similar activities that once dominated Chinatown still exist in the area today.

Generally, commercial activities in Chinatown can be divided into five groups: restaurants; shops (groceries, bakeries, specialty goods, import gift shops, jewelry stores, cell phone stores, clothing stores, herb stores, ginseng stores, and food stores); businesses (financial, business, and office services); personal services (clinics, barber and beauty shops). Though the commercial activities merely occupy a relatively small portion of Chinatown's historic district, they are the most dominant features in Chinatown.

Due to language barriers and cultural differences, early Chinese sojourners rarely participated in American pastimes. Usually they were required to work fourteen to sixteen hours a day in the restaurants and laundries.⁸ On their day off, shopping for food and necessities became important activities in their lives. In the early years the grocery store was socially significant because it not only was a place to purchase goods, but it also served as a place for friends and relatives to get together for conversation. Usually, the Chinese went to grocery stores owned by relatives or close friends. Sometimes they might play a game of

⁷ Honolulu Department of Housing and Community Development 1974.

⁸ Moy 1978.

Majiang before the day was over. The storekeeper was a banker, letter-writer and reader, and employment agent at the same time. Because they were skeptical of banking institutions, early Chinese immigrants depended on the services of storekeepers to send money back to their villages and to deposit their earnings.⁹

With a growing number of Oriental grocery stores offering supplies outside of Chinatown, and as the Chinese became more familiar with American food, the Chinese groceries of the older days were not similar to what they are today. Originally, the clerks gave each customer individual attention. As times changed, the business style of the Chinese grocery stores adapted to the self-service style of larger American supermarkets. As the original grocery stores have evolved into various specialty shops such as Ginseng, food, and herb stores, it is now hard to find a current grocery store that provides all kinds of products. Although many of these functions are gone, the grocery store is still a viable part of the Chinatown scene.

Gift shops have also contributed to the exotic scenes of the Chinatown district. But unlike the Chinese grocery stores that mainly serve members of their ethnic group, the customers in these gift shops are largely non-Chinese visitors. Most of the goods that are identified by intensely Oriental characters are imported from Hong Kong. But the Chinese seldom choose to shop in such places, partly because they believe that true "Chinese" artifacts are in China; therefore they can shop for such items when they are at home. On the other hand, the prices of these artifacts are generally much higher than those found in China.

Chinese restaurants like the gift shops, were more likely to adapt to American interests. The popularity of the Chinese restaurant business began with the preparation of chop suey,

⁹ Moy 1978; Siu 1987.

which was invented in New York city in 1896. It was concocted by the chef for the Chinese diplomat, Hongzhang Li, while he was traveling in the United States. The chef had to make a dish that appealed to the American palate, and he also had to use Chinese ingredients found in America. Thus, he gave the name "chop suey" to the dish, which literally means "hash." To great surprise, the American public soon demanded more chop suey, which was followed by the opening of more chop suey houses.¹⁰

To accommodate to American culture, some early Chinese restaurants were provided with an orchestra and a dance floor, which very rarely was found in China. The first restaurant in the Chinatown area was established in 1901 on 22nd Street. In the 1920s, it moved to Wentworth and shortly thereafter to a brand new building at 2205 South Wentworth Avenue. Since the majority of the Chinese in Chicago were Cantonese, all of the restaurants in the early period were Cantonese. When more and more people from all over China began immigrating to America, many other types of Chinese cuisine appeared, including Mandarin, Hunanese, Sichuanese, and Shanghai dishes. The majority of Chinese restaurants catered to American tastes, but given increases in the Chinese population and their financial abilities, a growing number of these outlets have catered exclusively to the Chinese palate. Most of the larger Chinese restaurants have two menus: one for Americans that has typical Chinese-American dishes, the other for Chinese with authentic home-style meals.¹¹

Meanwhile, the restaurants have gradually become important social gathering places for the Chinese. They are not only popular places for personal meetings, wedding receptions, and birthday parties, but they also serve large social events such as New Year's celebrations

¹⁰ Moy 1978.

¹¹ Ibid.

and Moon Festival parties.¹² Some community organizations like the Chinese American Civic Council (CACC) organized several Chinese New Year receptions in the Chiam Restaurant during the 1970s. The choice of the restaurants primarily depends on their connection to the organizations; for example, sometimes the owner of the restaurant is also the leader of the organization. As a commercially based community, Chinatown's organizations tend to be led by merchants who have good businesses and are widely respected by the people of the community.¹³

Residentially related Activities

Aside from the two major commercial streets, a large portion of Chinatown is zoned and used for residential housing, which is mainly composed by multi-storied houses and flats. Chinatown's permanence may suggest that Chinatown dwellers have had no desire to leave, but this has not been the case. Before World War II, racial discrimination against the Chinese in the United States largely forced the creation of homogeneous Chinese neighborhoods. The alliance of the United States and China during World War II changed this practice, and the nation's attitude toward the American Chinese turned positive. Along with post-World War II changes that allowed educated Chinese Americans to leave the community, changes in immigration laws increased the sign of immigrant population. Where discrimination had previously forced the development of a homogeneous neighborhood along ethnic lines, homogeneity along class lines emerged after World War II.¹⁴ The poorest people remained in the core area of Chinatown, where rents were cheaper. Those with better incomes moved into

¹² All of this information came from interviews conducted with people in the community in early 2004. They admitted that the restaurants have played an important role in their social life.

¹³ This information is concluded from the letters published in *Chinese American Progress*, which introduced the process of electing the leader of the Chinese Community Center.

¹⁴ Loo 1998.

adjoining, outlying neighborhoods or suburban areas. This process of geographic redistribution along socioeconomic lines was maintained by the expansion of Chinatown's population.

Convenience, ethnicity, language, and low rent are the primary motives for living in Chinatown. The enclave's residential-commercial mix provides convenient access to work, stores, public transportation, Chinese restaurants, and schools. One resident voiced her feeling in this way: "I want to live in Chinatown because it's close to shopping and restaurants. And I don't have language or cultural barriers here." Another said: "It is because I am Chinese and I feel comfortable to live where most of the Chinese live." Low-cost housing was the other most often mentioned reason given for living in Chinatown, as evidenced by this comment: "My family lives in a three-bedroom apartment. The rent is cheap here."¹⁵

Dissatisfaction with current housing conditions, or the desire for a better life, was the reason most often mentioned for wanting to move: "The buildings are too old and shabby. It is dirty inside. Some buildings have rats. I don't like the environment," said one respondent. "The buildings here are survivals for poor people," another replied. Other reasons for wanting to leave included the mobility of the residents, which contributes to a feeling of instability and lack of safety for the community. In the residential area it is hard to find children playing around the street or the public spaces except at the Haines Elementary School playground and at Sun Yat-Sen Park. And the residents seem more familiar with the restaurants and shops in Chinatown than in their neighborhood.¹⁶ This phenomenon in the

¹⁵ This information, including quotes, is from my interviews conducted with people in the community in early 2004.

¹⁶ This information is based on interviews with people in the community. I found that many of the interviewees had lived in Chinatown for fewer than ten years, and then moved to other parts of the city. And they seem to be very negative about their

Chinese community is partly due to the frequently changing residents, and also by the commercial activities on South Wentworth Avenue, which bring a large number of visitors and heavy traffic; all of this increases the sense that there is a lack of safety and privacy in the community.

Culturally Related Activities

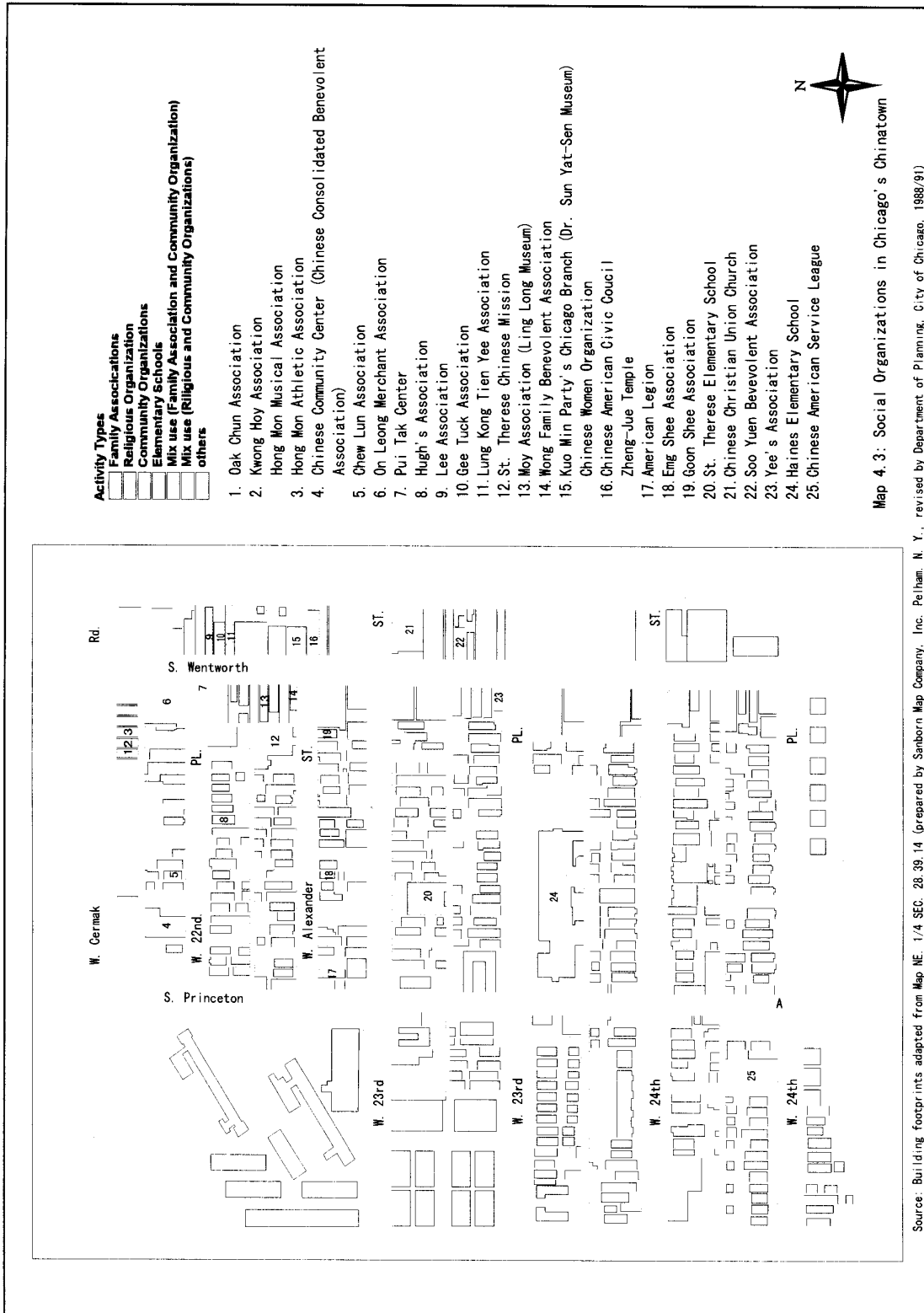
Cultural institutions are socially significant because they are gathering places for Chinese immigrants and provide a social center that offer users a sense of belonging. Cultural activities, which include religious, civic, and social activities, are spread throughout the Chinatown area (Figure 4.3).

Tong and Chinatown Organizations

The growth of Chinatown was partly due to the increasing domination of the On Leong Tong. Its success was manifested in 1927 when the massive tong headquarters – the On Leong Merchants Association Building -- was erected at 2216 South Wentworth Avenue. It was soon known as the “Chinatown City Hall,” a title usually reserved for the local Chinese Consolidated Benevolent Association (CCBA). A 1931 article in the *Chicago Tribune* quoted a prominent migrant as saying that the On Leong “pretty completely directs the economic, political, and social life of Chinatown.”¹⁷ This dominance marked a transformation in the activities and self-image of the tong. The On Leong went beyond merely asserting that it was an association of “respectable merchants,” and tried to fill the role of a charitable and representative Chinatown organization. In achieving this, the On Leong did more than just perform the usual mediation, benevolent acts, and legal functions of a CCBA. It also

neighborhood. One interviewee told me since he worked outside Chinatown, he rarely hung out in the neighborhood; most often he just “passed through” the area when he went to work and home.

¹⁷ *Chicago Tribune*, September 20, 1931.



Source: Building footprints adapted from Map ME, 1/4 SEC. 28, 39, 14 (prepared by Sanborn Map Company, Inc. Pelham, N. Y., revised by Department of Planning, City of Chicago, 1988/91)

presented a public face to non-Chinese people that emphasized the role of a group of businessmen who were actively marketing their specialization in Oriental delights.¹⁸ Due to the influential role of the On Leong Association in the Chinese community, the American press referred to the English secretary of the On Leong Association as the “Mayor” of Chinatown. Therefore, the English secretary of the On Leong became the spokesperson for the community, along with the president of the CCBA.

The reason that the tong prevailed over family, business, political, and other parties was that it offered more flexible alliances, superior resources, and an organizational structure easily put into serving the economic interests of its leaders. Tongs were open to people with any surname, and who came from any place in China. Thus, tongs were ideal tools through which a group like the Moys could institutionalize alliances with other families and individuals, while retaining control of the institutional structure of officers, elders, and common members.¹⁹ Family and native-place organizations were limited in their range of membership and consequently their ability to centralize power and represent the migrant community as a whole. By the early twentieth century, family and native place associations had become much more relevant as institutions for maintaining both small-scale mutual aid and links to villages in China.²⁰

The On Leong Building was raided by federal agents in the late 1980s because of gambling that was occurring on the premises; it was then closed for several years, but was recently occupied and renovated by the Chinese Christian Union Church. The On Leong Merchants Association then moved to a much more modest building at 218 West 22nd Place,

¹⁸ McKeown 2004.

¹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰ Ibid.

which was the first apartment building built and owned by On Leong in the Chinatown area.²¹

The first Consolidated Chinese Benevolent Association (CCBA) was formed in San Francisco as a centralized institution intended to promote harmony within the Chinese community and to present a unified front in dealings with non-Chinese people. The CCBA in Chicago, also known as the Chinese Community Center (CCC), had been established in 1904, which was merely a figurehead institution before the 1920s. It had a board of executives under the legislative supervision of the Chinese Nationalist Party.²² After the 1920s, the CCBA gradually became an important community organization that provided aid to residents in terms of employment opportunities, translation assistance, the completion of visa applications, the provision of medical aid, and the arbitration of disputes. It is usually considered the most important official organization in Chinatown. All official contacts that the Chinese community has with other communities are through the CCBA.²³ But they did not have any official contact with the government of the People's Republic of China because of the long-term political conflicts between the Communist Party and the Nationalist Party. The leaders of the CCBA are elected by the members of nearly thirty community organizations. Usually the presidents of the community organizations also serve as the directors of the CCBA. Because of its strong ties to community organizations, the CCBA can be looked at as representing most of the organizations in Chinatown.

²¹ Moy 1978.

²² The Nationalist Party was established in 1911 by Dr. Sun Yat-sen and his colleagues. The Nationalists served as the administrative party in the Republic of China. In 1949, when the Chinese Communist Party took over mainland China, the Nationalist Party was forced to retreat to Taiwan.

²³ Moy 1978.

As the English-language abilities and educational levels of the Chinese have improved, the CCBA has given more attention to community problems faced by members of the older generation. In 1974, the Chinese Community Center began to consider setting up a youth program and providing English classes on weekends. As the number of new immigrants increased and their needs became more complicated, the CCBA began offering social service programs, including a Longevity Senior Center and classes for training clerical workers. Additionally, it also assists Chinese people in solving their immigration problems and provides free consultation. To improve and maintain connections with Chinese traditional culture, the Community Center also holds several exhibitions, such as a display of Chinese calligraphy and landscape painting, and offers Chinese language classes. The Community Center building has a fairly large auditorium, which has been used for large parties.

The other predominant social organization in the community is the Chinese American Service League (CASL), established in 1978. It offers professional social services to people in Chinatown. To help new immigrants adapt to life in the United States, each year the CASL offers more than 4,000 people English training programs, job counseling and placement, immigration processing, and a day-care center for new immigrant parents. A youth program and a new youth center were established by CASL in 1990 on South Canal Street. After some in-house needs assessment, CASL designed programs to meet the complex needs of the elderly in the community. The Senior Adult Day Service at 306 24th Place provided recreational facilities for older citizens.²⁴ On March 18th, 2004, the headquarters of CASL was moved to 2141 South Tan Court. The existing building is for sale, and its future use is yet unknown.

²⁴ Chicago Chinatown website, <http://www.chicago-chinatown.com>.

Both the CCBA and CASL play seminal roles by helping new Chinese immigrants gain a foothold in the United States, by assisting local Chinese seniors and families that have English problems in contacting the outside world, and by helping the local community to become part of the American mainstream. "They (CCBA and CASL) are very helpful and have a very nice staff. They helped me in filling out the various immigrant application forms since I don't know English. Their services are all free," said one respondent. "It will be great if we can have more organizations like this, we need interpreters when we go to the doctors," replied another. And one reported, "They offered English classes. I took some of them, which are helpful." Language turned out to be a major obstacle for Chinese immigrants who wish to get involved in the mainstream of American life. Thus, community organizations such as CCBA and CASL prove to be especially crucial to those Chinese immigrants who have insufficient English-speaking abilities.²⁵

Family Associations

Family associations, also called clan associations, provide mutual aid to persons with the same surname. They offer newcomers lodging and information about places of employment, as well as providing financial aid. Over time, there have been around fifteen family associations in Chicago. The oldest and largest was the Moy Family Association, set up at 2238 South Wentworth Ave in 1911. Moy was the most common surname in Chicago, and was named after a location in southern China. One year later, the Lee Family Association was organized at 2225 South Wentworth Avenue.²⁶ Since some families are too small to form their own associations, they join together to form one large organization. In the 1920s, seven family associations were founded in Chicago; they were comprised of twelve different

²⁵ This information is based on interviews conducted with people in the community in early 2004.

²⁶ Moy 1978.

surnames with a membership of nearly 2,000 individuals, and represented eighty percent of the Chinese population in the city.²⁷ Of the current nearly fifteen family associations in Chicago, five have multiple surnames: Chee Tuck Association, Lung Kong Association, Soo Yuen Benevolent Association, Oak Chun Association, and Chew Lung Association. Nearly twenty families are included in these five associations.²⁸

Family associations exist today more simply as symbols of respective family units. As more and more people gain knowledge of the English language and American law, Chinese immigrants no longer seek protection within their structure. In practice, these “mutual benefit organizations” provided their members with space for recreation and socialization, offered sleeping quarters for destitute clansmen, and some other rooming assistance.²⁹ In addition, many family associations have turned their focus to the support of seniors and students within the clan. For example, during festivals the seniors in the clan receive gifts from the association. And some scholarships are rewarded to youths in the clan so as to encourage them go to college or to pursue higher education. The organizations of the large family associations are very much based on the company management system. Several clerks are employed to deal with the various issues of the association; the clerks have to be members of the association. The election of the association president usually happens once every two years, based on a vote of the association members.³⁰

Most of the family associations have certain properties, which are mostly used to support the running of the organization. The buildings housing the family associations are usually their most important properties, and generally are used effectively. Though different

²⁷ Wang 1997.

²⁸ Ibid.

²⁹ Wang 1997.

³⁰ This information come from the interview with Hai Wong, who works for the Wong Family Association.

associations may employ their buildings differently, most often the ground floor of the building is used for commercial activities such as stores or restaurants, the second floor is employed as the association's clubroom for the entertainment of members, the third floor consists of small rooms rented to single persons, and the fourth floor is a shrine that sanctifies ancestors.

Most of the family associations remaining in the Chinatown area are still active in community life. The influence of the family associations in the community often depends on the number of members and sometimes the social ability of the presidents, which, accordingly, can be estimated by the identity of the guests who are invited to association events such as the Spring Festival celebration parties. Also, if the members of the family associations are selected as the head of or are significant officers in community organizations such as the Chinese Community Center, it is regarded as an honor for the association.³¹ Usually an influential family association represents a stronger voice in the community's socioeconomic life. Beside the ties to the community, most of the family associations still have connections to their homeland. For example, a large number of members in the Wong Family Association came from Tai-shan in Guangdong Province. Therefore, this association gives much concern to the development of Tai-shan (Figure 4.4). They support a newspaper in their homeland, which provides an overview of the general situation there, including the investments made by immigrants from that area.³²

³¹ Ibid.

³² Ibid.

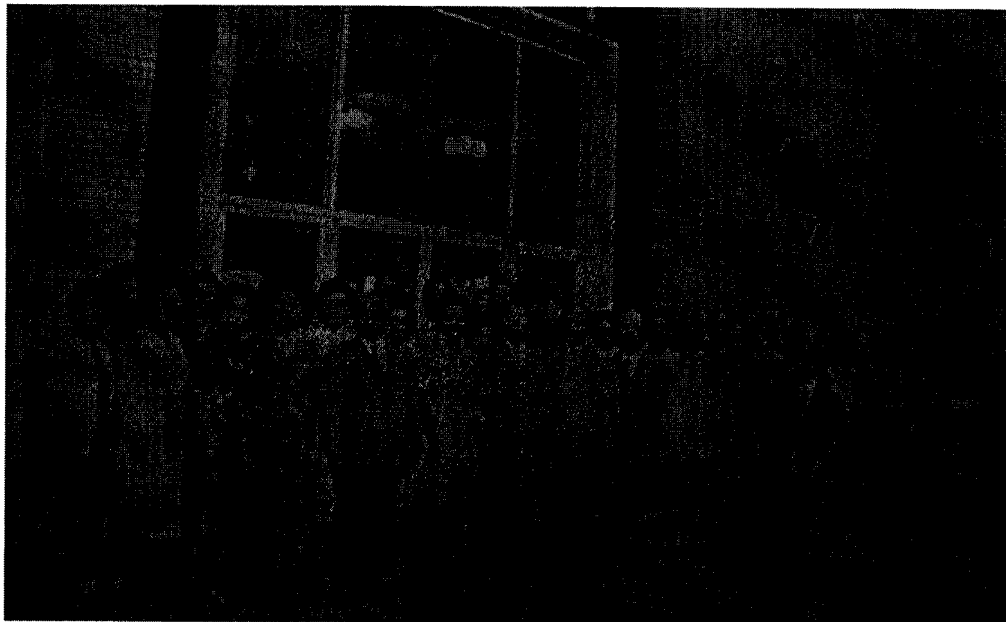


Figure 4.4: Delegates to the Wong Family Convention standing in front of the Chinese Community Center (Chinese Consolidated Benevolent Association) in 1976. Source: Chinese American Civic Center, Chicago.

Religious Organizations

The spread of the Christian gospel among the Chinese began even before they set foot in America. This occurred through the efforts of early missionaries who were sent to China. At first, Protestant rather than Catholic churches became predominant in Chinatowns throughout the United States. The first organized Christian work among the Chinese of Chicago began in June 1878, but by the 1890s only a few Chinese were converting to Christianity due to their long working hours and lack of proficiency in English. Given these problems, four Baptist churches (First Baptist, Second Baptist, Emmanuel Baptist, and Woodlawn Baptist) came together to organize a Chinese Sunday School that would accommodate their working hours.³³ The school was located in the downtown Y.M.C.A. (now the Harris Bank Building) at the corner of LaSalle and Monroe streets, and moved to 96

³³ Moy 1978.

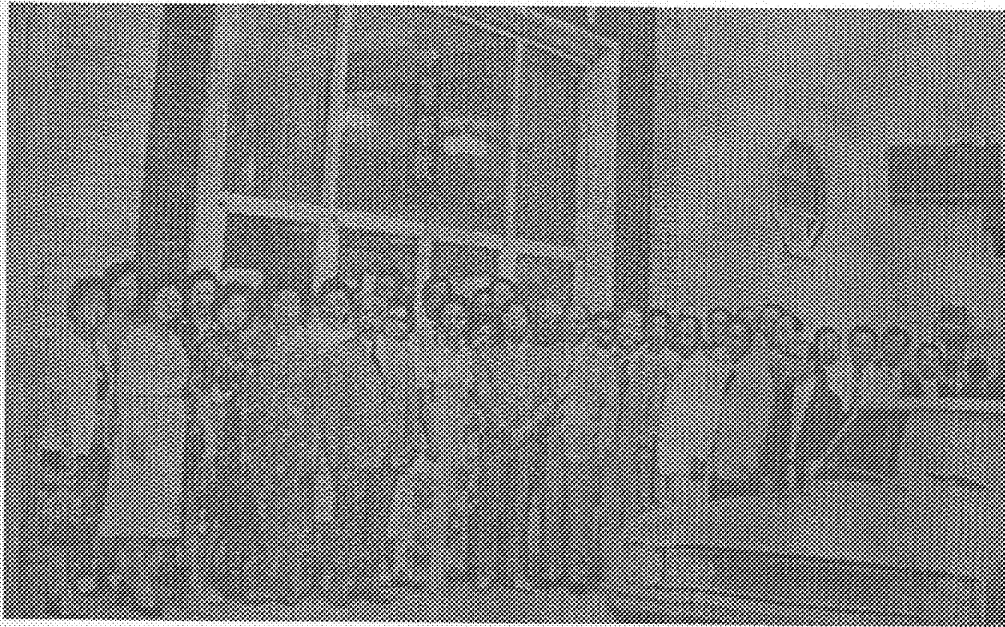


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The spread of the Christian gospel among the Chinese began even before they set foot in America. This occurred through the efforts of early missionaries who were sent to China. At first, Protestant rather than Catholic churches became predominant in Chinatowns throughout the United States. The first organized Christian work among the Chinese of Chicago began in June 1878, but by the 1890s only a few Chinese were converting to Christianity due to their long working hours and lack of proficiency in English. Given these problems, four Baptist churches (First Baptist, Second Baptist, Emmanuel Baptist, and Woodlawn Baptist) came together to organize a Chinese Sunday School that would accommodate their working hours.³³ The school was located in the downtown Y.M.C.A. (now the Harris Bank Building) at the corner of LaSalle and Monroe streets, and moved to 96

³³ Moy 1978.

E. Washington Boulevard at a later date due to the prohibition of women inside the Y.M.C.A. Because of increasing attendance, the "Chinese Sunday School" moved to larger quarters in 1896, located at 295 South Clark Street. In 1915 a new church was born – the Chinese Evangelical Church -- which was moved to 2131 South Archer Avenue in 1921, and renamed the Chinese Christian Union Church in 1932 to "reflect the support of five denominations and the Church Federation of Chicago."³⁴

The Chinese Christian Church has undertaken development at two sites. One site, located at 2301 Wentworth Avenue, is the Burr Mission, bought by the church in 1925. With the development of the church, the space became too crowded to house all of the people. Thus, the building at 2301 Wentworth Avenue now mainly serves Cantonese Chinese; and the Mandarin Chinese have moved to 2216 Wentworth Avenue, the Pui Tak Center, which initially was the On Leong Association Building that was bought by the church in 1992. Recently a new site at 2257 S. Wentworth Avenue has been developed as a future church space. The ground floor of the building may continue to be used for commercial purposes, while the upper floor will serve church activities.³⁵

In 1960 an educational building added to the Chinese Christian Church was named for Mrs. Rose James, the late wife of founder Walter C. James. This building provides young people with a place to hold religious meetings, to play basketball, and to conduct socials. The adults use the educational building for various religious functions and for recreation. Additionally, the Christian Union offers English and Bible lessons to the Chinese on Sunday mornings. Besides the Sunday school, the church carries out some programs, such as recognition parties and medical check-ups of senior citizen, etc. In 1974, a new sanctuary

³⁴ Chinese Christian Union Church 1995.

³⁵ This information was provided by one of the interviewees at the Pui Tak Center.

was dedicated at the adjoining St. Theresa Building site, which was bought by the church in 1970.³⁶

Compared to the Protestant churches in Chinatown, the Catholic church has a relatively shorter history. The St. Therese Chinese Mission administered its first baptism at old St. John's Church in 1940. The Mission was first located at 2302 South Wentworth Avenue, where, on September 1941, the Catholic Mission organized a parochial school for Chinese children in the community. A total of 57 pupils enrolled on the first day of school. In 1945, the Mission was moved to 2311 South Wentworth to accommodate the growing number of parishioners. Further expansion of the mission was possible through the kindness of the priest and parishioners of the Santa Maria Incornata Church at 210 West Alexander, which permitted the Chinese to use its church and rectory. The Santa Maria Incarnate was formerly the church for Italian residents in the community. But, with the decline of the Italian population in the area, church attendance also decreased. This church now serves as the St. Therese Chinese Catholic Church.³⁷

The scarcity of Buddhist temples in Chicago's Chinatown indicates an absence of strong Buddhist beliefs among the Chinese population in Chicago. The only temple found within Chinatown is the Zheng Jue Temple, formed at the beginning of 2004 and located on the second floor of 2249 Wentworth Avenue. The space is very limited, and simply has a shrine sitting at one side of the room. Most Buddhists are found among early and new immigrants. But their numbers have been too small to justify the building of a Buddhist temple. Since the practice of Buddhism is more like a private activity that reflects one's own family, images of different deities are present in the homes of some Chicago Chinese. Some

³⁶ Ibid.

³⁷ Moy 1978.

of these deities originate in Buddhism, while others are Chinese historical folk heroes who have been apotheosized.

Elementary Schools

There are two elementary schools in the Chinatown area: Haines and St. Therese. Haines, a public school located at 247 West 23rd Place, includes mostly Chinese and African-American students. This school was originally built in 1886. Its original name was the Harrison School, and from 1907 to 1913 it was called the Harrison Practice School.³⁸ When a new addition was built onto the western side of the building, the school was renamed the John Charles Haines School to honor the mayor of Chicago who served from 1858 to 1860.³⁹ The old building for the Haines Elementary School had over one hundred years of history, but was replaced by a new structure in 1990s. A playground, added at the eastern side of the new building, has become a popular place for the children from the elementary school as well as serving a gathering place for children in the community.

St. Therese is a private parochial school. Unlike the Haines Elementary School, the majority of the students and teachers at St. Therese are Chinese. The school opened in 1960 and began by holding classes in the On Leong Building. It later moved the classes to 2305 South Wentworth until the building at 253 West 23rd Street was completed.⁴⁰ The financial support of this school mainly comes from tuition and parish fund-raising sources, such as direct contributions and projects.⁴¹ This school has been very actively involved in the community's social events and maintains a strong tie to the community. For example, in addition to an Oriental play given on the occasion of the Chinese New Year, the students

³⁸ Moy 1978.

³⁹ Ibid.

⁴⁰ Ibid.

⁴¹ *Chinese American Progress* 1977.

have performed in the Christmas program at the Museum of Science and Industry, as well as performing at the Chinese Community Center on any given occasion. Since the majority of students come from Hong Kong or other areas of China, the school also tries to cultivate the student's connection to their own culture. It offers Chinese language and culture classes to the primary grades.⁴²

Manufacturing

Some manufacturing companies have social significance because of their long-time identification and association with Chinatown. Formed to provide the supplies needed by a number of Chinese restaurants, manufacturing companies are important supporters of commercial activities in the community. With the development of the core area of Chinatown, most manufacturing industries have been move to the outskirts of Chinatown. The only one remaining is the Hong Kong Noodle Company, which began operating in 1916 at 152 W. Cermak Road. In 1956, the company built its own factory at 2348 South Wentworth Avenue. This building has been used until now, where it does both wholesale and retail business.⁴³

Social Events

The cultural life of China is rich in festivals, but only a few have been completely transplanted to the Chinese community in the United States. Those which have been transplanted, moreover, are subject to modification due to American circumstances. The most important social event of the year was and is the celebration of the Chinese New Year (Spring Festival). For Chinese immigrants, the Spring Festival is a traditional annual social get-together that includes a banquet. It is usually planned to occur soon after the New Year. All members of the social circle are supposed to join in for a hearty dinner of the most

⁴² Ibid.

⁴³ Moy 1978.

elaborate art of Chinese cookery. Due to the peculiarity of its secular function, and the elasticity of its time limit, it is possible for every family, every clan, every store, and every chop suey house and laundry shop to have a Spring Festival social get together. Perhaps most characteristic is the Spring Festival of the clan. Each clan chooses a date that is convenient for everyone to celebrate. If it is a small clan, the banquet may be held in the clan house. Larger clans may have to make arrangements with a Chinatown restaurant. The banquet is usually followed by speeches and messages from senior men, as well as clan or community celebrities, on some occasions. For large organizations, various forms of entertainment are planned, as indicated by the Chinese American Civic Council's 1975 Spring Festival Committee's comment:

The entertainment portion of this great event will consist of Ted Sieber's orchestra with fifteen musicians and a vocal and musical duo by Bob and Rosie to provide us with good melodious music for our listening and dancing pleasures. We will have acrobatic acts by the Kral sisters to provide us with magnificent gymnastic feats for our seeing pleasures. As for our sensuous pleasures, we will have Alexandra, an exotic dancer of feminine gender with good measurements, who will give us our visual training exercises.⁴⁴

The annual New Year's Parade is always held on the Sunday after the Chinese New Year's Day in February. It is customary for the lion to accept gifts of food and money from the house as a way of fending off evil spirits in the coming year. The parade begins at the corner of 24th Place and Wentworth Avenue, and ends at Cermak Road and Princeton Avenue (Figure 4.5 and 4.6).

⁴⁴ *Chinese American Progress* 1973-74, 15.



Figure 4.5: Some leaders of community organizations in the New Year's Parade, c. 1977. Source: CACC.



Figure 4.6: The Golden Dragon demonstrated by members of the Midwestern Tai-Chi Academy in the New Year's Parade on S. Wentworth Ave, c. 1977. Source: CACC.

The Moon Festival is another important Chinese tradition. An annual celebration in Chinatown -- the Moon Festival Queen Pageant -- is hosted by the Chinese American Civic Council. The pageant is usually held at the restaurant and includes a Chinese banquet dinner and some other entertainment. The following is an example of the program list for the 1973 Moon Festival Queen Contest:

---- PROGRAM ----

- Welcome Message*----- *Ping Tom, President of CACC*
- History of Moon Festival*----- *Helen Wong JEAN, Executive Secretary of CACC*
- Introduction of Judges*----- *Quinn FUNG, Vice-President*
- Moon Festival Queen Contest*----- *Dr. Wallace ING, M. C.*
- Entertainment -- Special Talents: Dance Interpretations by Miss Lily LIU, Popular songs by Miss Frances FUNG and Miss Won LEE.*
- Crowning of Moon Festival Queen*----- *Ping TOM, President of CACC*
- Closing Remarks* ----- *Dr. John Y. ING, Moon Festival Committee Chairman*



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Entertainment – Special Talents: Dance Interpretations by Miss Lily LIU, Popular songs by Miss Frances FUNG and Miss Won LEE.

Crowning of Moon Festival Queen----- Ping TOM, President of CACC

Closing Remarks ----- Dr. John Y. ING, Moon Festival Committee Chairman

*DANCING to the music of the SATIN SOUNDS and the RELATIONS*⁴⁵

In addition to these traditional Chinese festivals, Christmas and Thanksgiving have become popular festivals in Chinatown, too. The annual "Christmas Around the World" Chinese Christmas program draws many visitors to the Museum of Science & Industry. Participants in the program are children from the Chinese Christmas and St. Therese Catholic School.⁴⁶ On some years a Lion Dance and special Chinese instrumental music have added an Oriental touch to the program. The Thanksgiving celebration is usually more concerned with Chinatown's senior citizens. Since 1977, annual Senior Citizen's Thanksgiving Dinners have been served at the Chinese Community Center; they are sponsored by various Chinese community organizations.⁴⁷

Besides the festival celebrations, parades celebrate and commemorate Independence Day for the Republic of China, which is usually called the Double Tenth Parade. Double Tenth means October 10, 1911, when the Chinese Revolution had its first major uprising in Wu Chang City. This event, historically called the Xin-hai Revolution, led to the abdication of the Qing Dynasty and the establishment of the Republic of China by Dr. Sun Yat-Sen. Therefore, the day of October 10 became the Independence Day for the Republic of China, which was governed by the Nationalist Party. Although the Nationalist Party was

⁴⁵ *Chinese American Progress*, 1973-74, p.12.

⁴⁶ *Chinese American Progress*, 1974-75.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*

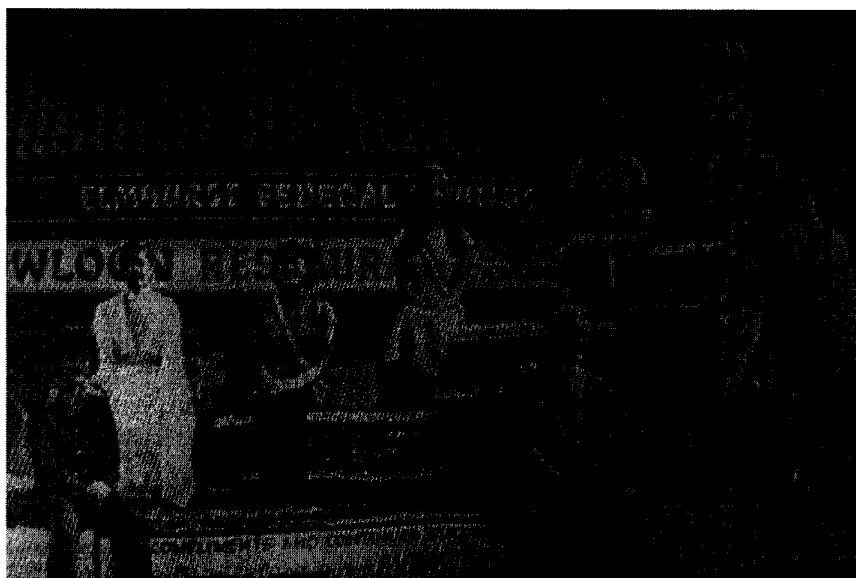


Figure 4.7: Moon Festival Queen's float in the "Ten-Ten" Parade, c.1976. Source: CACC.

defeated by the Communists and retreated to Taiwan in 1949, this day still remains as Independence Day for the Republic of China, and is especially respected by early immigrants in America. Therefore, the Double Ten Parade has become an annual celebration in Chinatown (Figure 4.7).

The Chinatown Summer Fair, held annually on Wentworth Avenue on the last Sunday in July, or on the first Sunday in August, is another important Chinatown social event. As a showcase of Asian food, art, and dance, it was originally conceived and developed by local restaurateur and noted long-distance runner, George J. Cheung. Now the program is jointly sponsored by the Chinese Chamber of Commerce, the Merchant's Association, and the American Legion Post. In this Summer Fair, the main stage between 24th Street and 24th Place features Chinese, Japanese, Korean, and Philippine dance troupes. Chinese artists display their paintings and etchings, while vendors hawk traditional items such as lanterns,

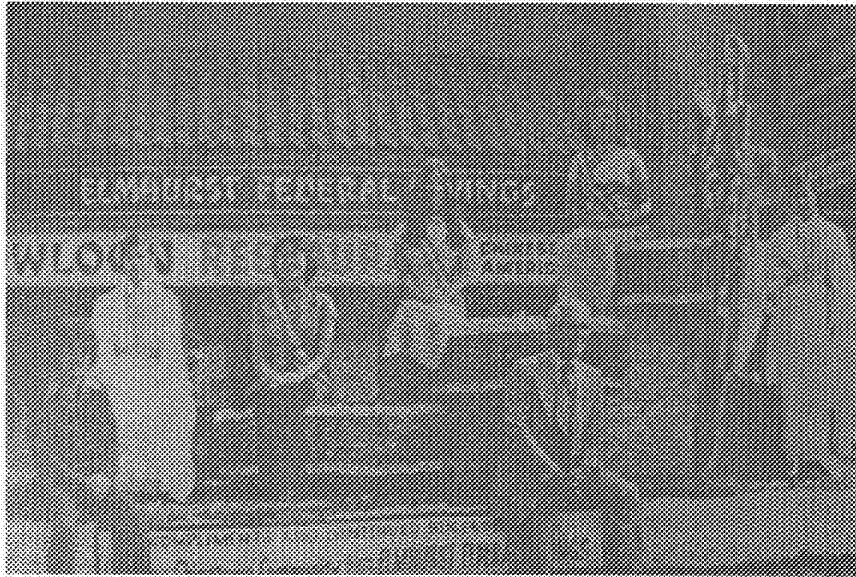


Figure 4.7: Moon Festival Queen's float in the "Ten-Ten" Parade, c.1976. Source: CACC.

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Indian silk scarves, and assorted Asian foods. There also is a farmer's market, along with children's activities such as a carnival in the main parking lot that has puppeteers, clowns, and animals from the Lincoln Park Mobile Petting Zoo.⁴⁸

⁴⁸ Chicago Chinatown Website.

CHAPTER FIVE: EVALUATION

Introduction

Evaluation is the process of determining the worth of an item. The process of identifying the preservation values of existing buildings is consequential because, for example, the qualities exhibited by high preservation value structures establish design guidelines for other structures in the area. While the historic preservation evaluation process is related to individual structures, the ultimate goal of the process is to define specific areas where the concentration and grouping of high value structures form a strong image.¹

Decisions concerning the significance, historic integrity, documentation, and treatment of properties can be made reliable only when the resource is evaluated within its historic context. The historic context serves as a framework where the criteria for evaluation are applied to specific properties or property types. Historic contexts are patterns that can be identified through consideration of the history of the property and its surrounding area.² In accordance with National Register criteria, the historic context may relate to one of the following: an event, a series of events or activities, or patterns of an area's development (Criterion A); association with the life of an important person (Criterion B); a building form, architectural style or other human-made expression of culture or technology (Criterion C); or a research topic (Criterion D).³ In the case of Chicago's Chinatown, its historic context relates to Criterion A, a series of events or activities undertaken by Chinese immigrants. "Events" can include specific moments in history, or a series of events that reflect a broad

¹ Honolulu Department of Housing and Community Development 1974.

² National Park Service 1991.

³ Ibid, 7.

pattern or theme.⁴ The ongoing participation of the Chinese in Chinatown's history, which is reflected in the neighborhood's buildings, streetscapes, and patterns of social activity, constitutes such a series of events. In this sense, the historic resources of Chinatown are evaluated by determining their relation to Chinese immigrants and their traditions, which constitutes the foundation for the following evaluation.

The evaluation process references National Register criteria and uses a logical grading process that involves the consideration of historic significance and integrity. Historic significance is the recognized importance a property displays after it has been evaluated. A landscape may have several areas of historical significance. A view of the landscape as a continuum through history is critical in assessing its cultural and historic value.⁵

Structure-Specific Evaluation

The inventory attempted to identify the flavor of Chinatown by its physical and social components. The evaluation process applied numerical values to the inventory elements as a means of assessing the relative historical significance of the buildings and the activities they currently house. The process involved a weighted scoring described as follows (Table 5.1). Initially, each element in an inventory category was assigned a preservation value on a scale of 1 to 5. Then, each category was assigned a weighting value to reflect the relative value in the evaluation scheme. The weighted scores of the structures were totaled and categorized into four value groups – very high, high, medium, and low value – and were used as a means to define treatment areas.⁶

⁴ Parker and King 1990.

⁵ Birnbaum 1994.

⁶ This method is derived from the Honolulu Department of Housing and Community Development 1974.

Table 5.1: Evaluation Scoring Elements

Evaluation Category/Elements		Preservation Value	Weighting Value	Weighting Scores
1. Representative of significant and distinguishable building groupings	Valuable	5	4	20
	Some value	3		12
	Little value	1		4
	No value	0		0
2. Embodiment of the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction	Valuable	5	2	10
	Some value	3		6
	Little value	1		2
	No value	0		0
3. Association with activities that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of Chinatown's history	Valuable	5	3	15
	Some value	3		9
	Little value	1		3
	No value	0		0
4. Integrity	Sound	5	1	5
	Moderate	3		3
	Substandard	1		1
	None	0		0

1. Representative of a significant and distinguishable building grouping

As the analysis demonstrated in previous chapters, the building groupings are considered one of the most dominant features of the physical form of Chinatown; thus, this category is highly important for the evaluation. A property may be regarded as representative

of a significant and distinguishable entity if it represents or is an integral part of a larger entity of traditional cultural importance.⁷ In Chinatown, certain buildings having a combined style with both early twentieth-century American styles and traditional Chinese architectural characteristic elements are highly valued by residents,⁸ and have been used as sources of building styles for the subsequent construction of other Chinatown buildings. These buildings are classified as valuable from the standpoint of this criterion. The Italianate buildings are most highly represented in Chinatown. Since they cannot represent the significance and distinguishing features of the building groupings within Chinatown's historic context, they are identified as having some value in this category. Those buildings with traditional features that are reflected merely in the building details, such as windows or doors, are also included as having some value. The remaining buildings that have few stylistic features that contribute to the building façades are regarded as having little value or no value (Figure 5.1).

2. Embodiment of the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction

This category applies to isolated examples of buildings having architectural significance, including even those that may not have traditional Chinese architectural characteristics. This category was assigned a medium weighting value because while it is an important factor in the evaluation, the values used in the analysis are based on the Chicago Landmarks Historic Resources Survey and subjective judgments. The Chicago Landmarks Historic Resources Survey began in February 1983, and was completed in August 1994 as a comprehensive survey of buildings, structures, and objects that have architectural and

⁷ Parker and King 1990.

⁸ This information comes from an interview with several residents in the community on March 19th, 2004, at the Pui Tak Center.

historical significance within the City of Chicago.⁹ There are about thirty buildings within Chinatown that have been identified as displaying architectural and historical significance (Appendix 1). Since most of the field work was undertaken in the 1980s, some of the buildings in this survey have been modified or even demolished since then. For example, according to the survey the John C. Haines Public School at 231 -257 West 23rd Place was designed in 1886 by architect August Fiedler in a Queen Anne style. The building, however, was torn down in the 1990s and a new structure was recently erected on the site. The façade is featured as a concrete rectangle with strips of glassy window on the surface.

Therefore, the buildings recorded in the Chicago Landmarks Historic Resources Survey, based on their architectural contributions and current conditions, are identified as valuable, of some value, or of little value. Most residential buildings that do not appear in the survey are identified as having little value.¹⁰ Institutional buildings, such as the Chinese Community Center, which were not included in the survey, are identified as valuable or of some value because they extend the architectural themes of Chinatown to areas where their uniqueness remains (Figure 5.2).

3. Association with activities that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of Chinatown's history

Chinatown's character is largely related to the actions of people in the district. Therefore, this category was assigned a high weighting value. Previous chapters revealed that certain features of the physical and social environment that are tied to these activities contribute to the uniqueness of Chinatown. In the framework of a historic preservation plan,

⁹ Chicago Department of Planning and Development 1994.

¹⁰ This judgment come from my interviews with community residents conducted on March 19, April 12, and April 23, 2004. Most of the interviewees believed that the old residential buildings in Chinatown are not worthy of preservation because they are "survivals" from a time when most people were poor.

the following elements were considered important and used in the valuation of existing activities: the activity type and/or the place has long-term identity; the activity is not commonly found elsewhere in the city; the activity is related to Chinese immigrant culture; and the activity provides special services and/or products.¹¹

Any activity type that meets all these criteria is identified as valuable. For example, certain commercial activities like grocery stores, restaurants, and gift shops, as well as manufacturing and family associations having a long-time association with Chinatown and the cultural traditions of the community, are regarded as valuable in contributing to the broad patterns of the community's history. If the activity type satisfies two or three criteria, it is identified as having some value. The Chinatown branch of the Chicago Public Library is such an example that is not commonly found elsewhere in the city, and is related to Chinese immigrant culture since it provides special services for the community. But because it doesn't have long-term identification with Chinatown, it is identified as having some value. Residential activities are also in this category since they have a long-term association with Chinatown's identity and are related to Chinese immigrant culture; however, such residences are not unique to Chinatown. The activity that meets one or none of the criterion is considered as having little value or no value. Some commercial activities like flower stores, mobile phone stores, and numerous small companies are grouped into this category (Figure 5.3).

¹¹ Parker and King 1990.

4. Integrity

In the case of traditional cultural properties like Chinatown, two fundamental elements should be considered when evaluating integrity: relationship and condition.¹² Assessing the integrity of the relationship between a property and the beliefs or practices that may give it significance requires some understanding of how the people of Chinatown are likely to view the property. If the property is known or likely to be regarded by the Chinese as important in the performance of their activities, then it can be assumed to have an integral relationship with their activities. When considering the integrity of a property's condition, the evaluation is related to its location, setting, design, or materials. A property that once had traditional cultural significance may lose such significance through physical alteration of these elements.¹³

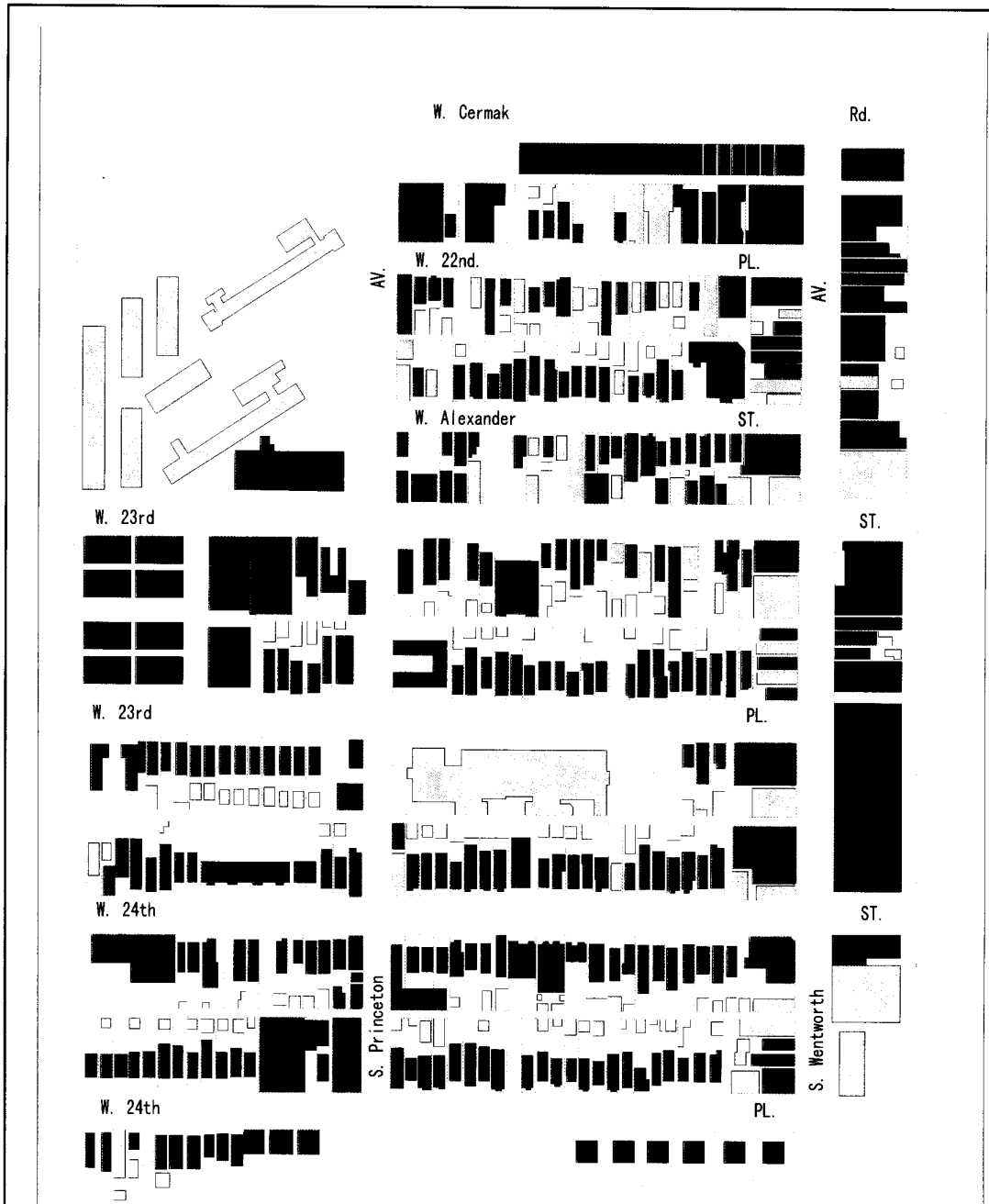
This category was assigned the lowest weighting value because the integrity of its relationship is based on the subjective judgment of the cultural group, and the integrity of its condition can be altered even at high economic costs. Even if a property has lost its integrity as a possible traditional cultural property, it may retain integrity with reference to some other aspect of significance. Therefore, this factor should not be a major drawback in assessing its preservation value (Figure 5.4)

Evaluation Results

The results of the separate evaluation scores were combined to obtain a Preservation Values Rating. The individual building preservation scores were reclassified into the following four groupings: High Value, Medium Value, Low Value, and Very Low Value (Figure 5.5).

¹² Ibid.

¹³ Ibid.



Criterion 1

- Valuable
- Some Value
- Little Value
- No Value

Figure 5.1: Significant and Distinguishable Building Groupings in Chinatown

Source: Building footprints adapted from Map NE. 1/4 SEC. 28.39.14 (prepared by Sanborn Map Company, Inc. Pelham, N. Y., and revised by Department of Planning, City of Chicago, 1988/91)



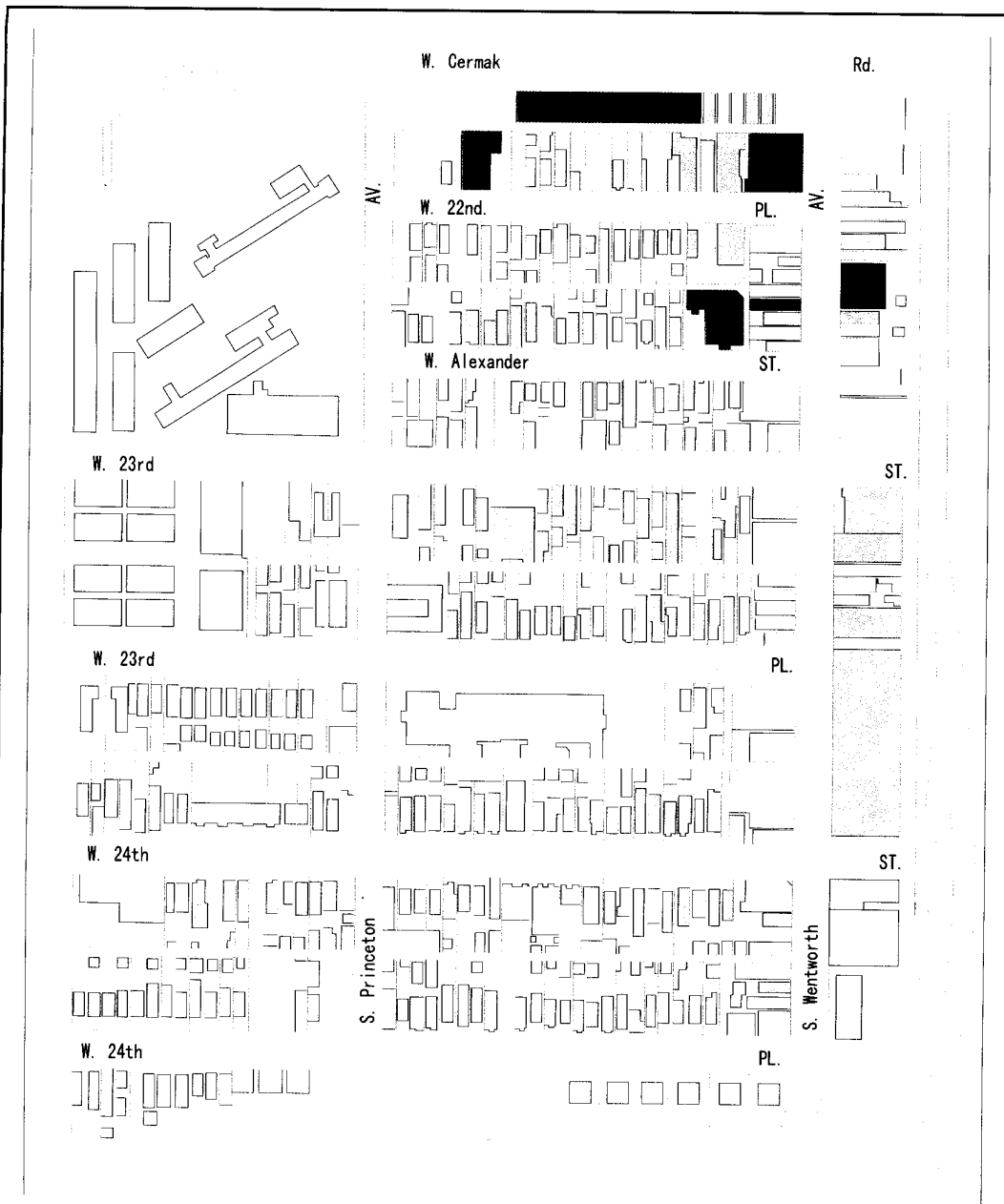
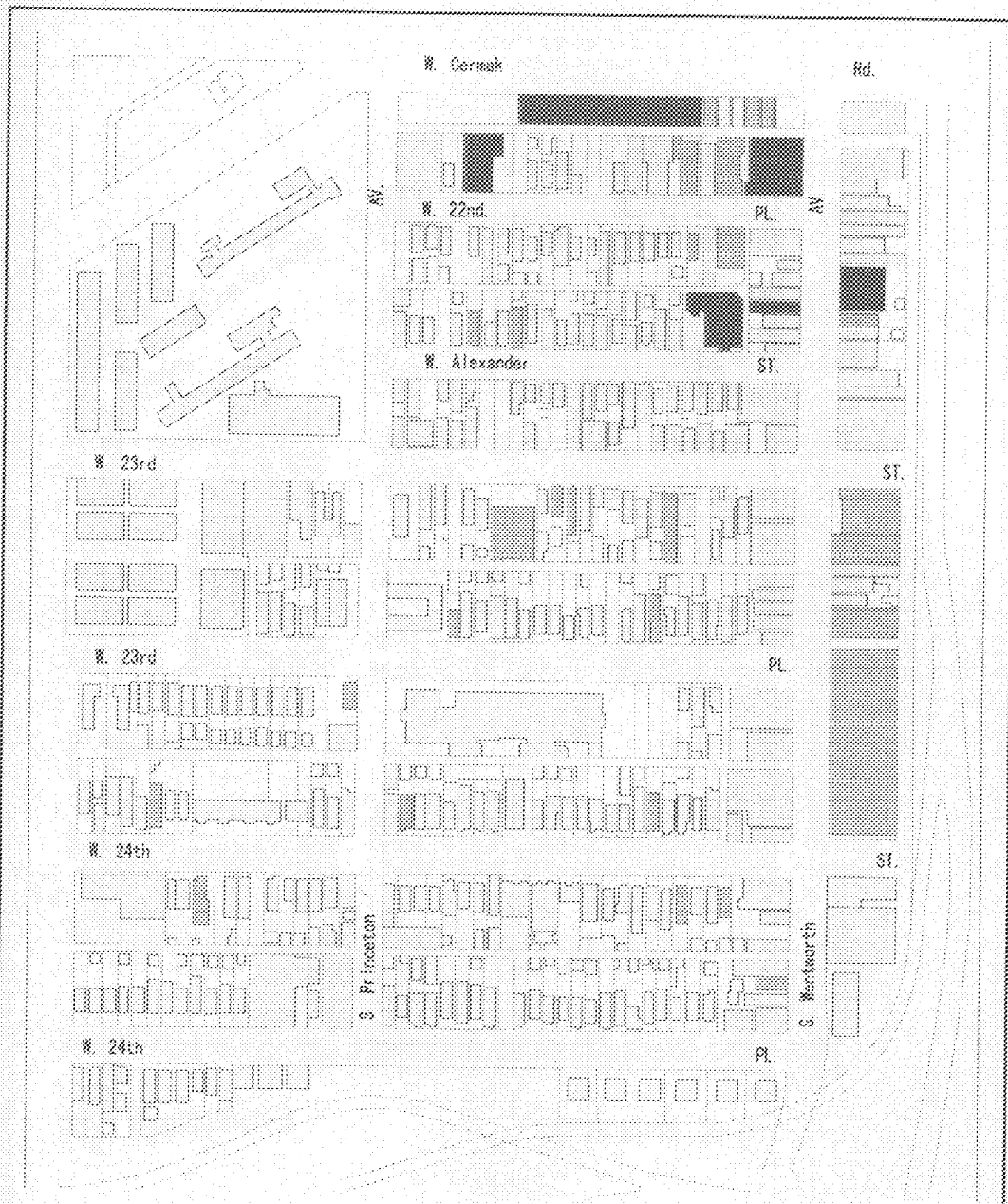


Figure 5.2: Buildings Representing a Distinctive Type, Period, or Method of Construction

Criterion 2
 ■ Valuable
 ■ Some Value
 ■ Little Value
 □ No Value

Source: Building footprints adapted from Map NE. 1/4 SEC. 28.39.14 (prepared by Sanborn Map Company, Inc. Pelham, N. Y., and revised by the Department of Planning, City of Chicago, 1988/91)





Criterion 2
Valuable
Some Value
Little Value
No Value

Figure 5.2: Buildings Representing a Distinctive Type, Period, or Method of Construction



Source: Building footprints adapted from Map NE, 1/4 SEC. 28 39, 14 (prepared by Sanborn Map Company, Inc. Palisades, N. Y., and revised by the Department of Planning, City of Chicago, 1988/91)

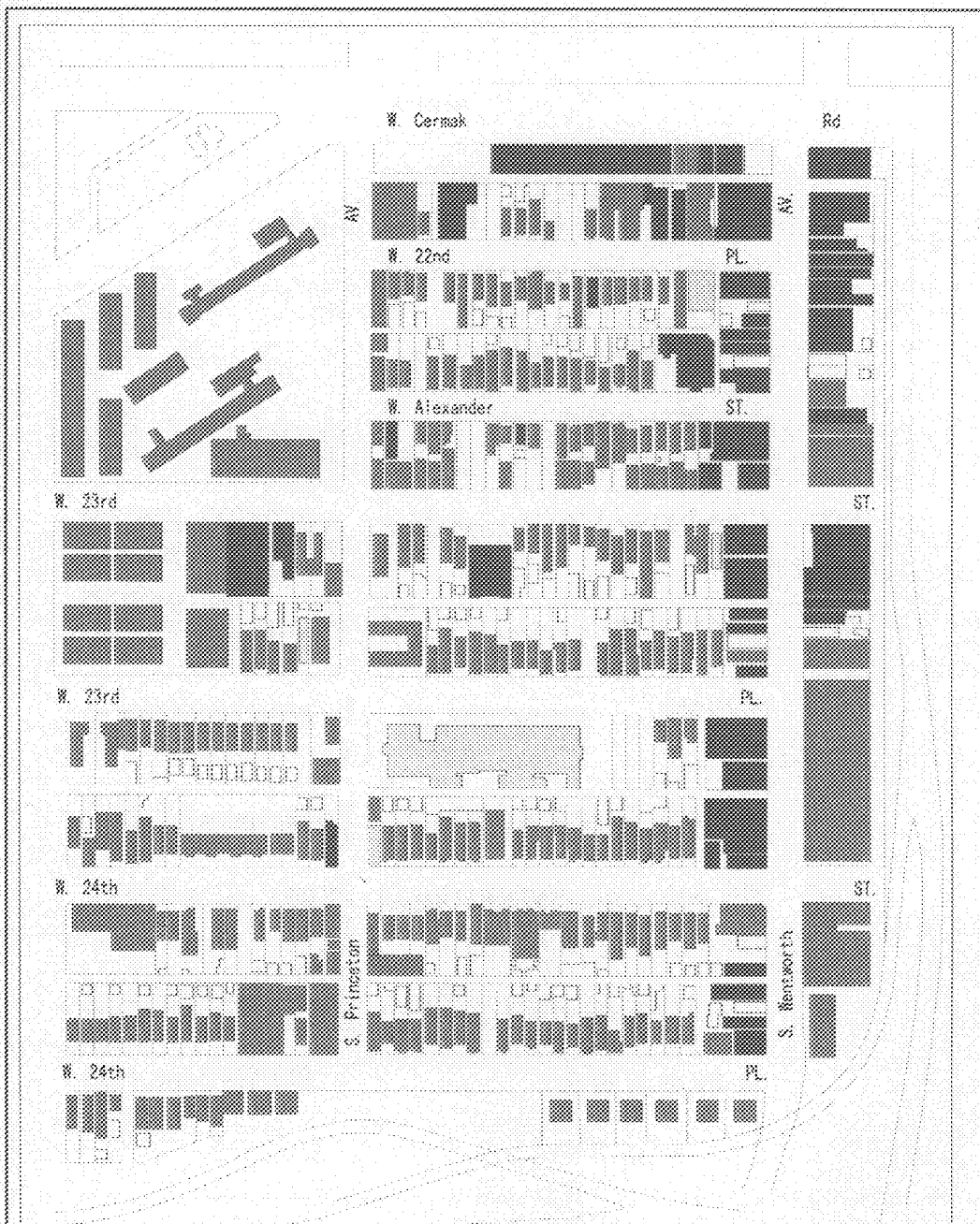


Figure 5.3. Buildings Associated with Activities that have made a Significant Contribution to the Broad Patterns of Chinatown's History

Criterion 3
 Valuable
 Some Value
 Little Value
 No Value



Source: Building footprints adapted from Map NE 1/4 SEC. 28 39 14 (prepared by Sanborn Map Company, Inc. Peiham, N. Y., and revised by Department of Planning, City of Chicago, 1988/91)

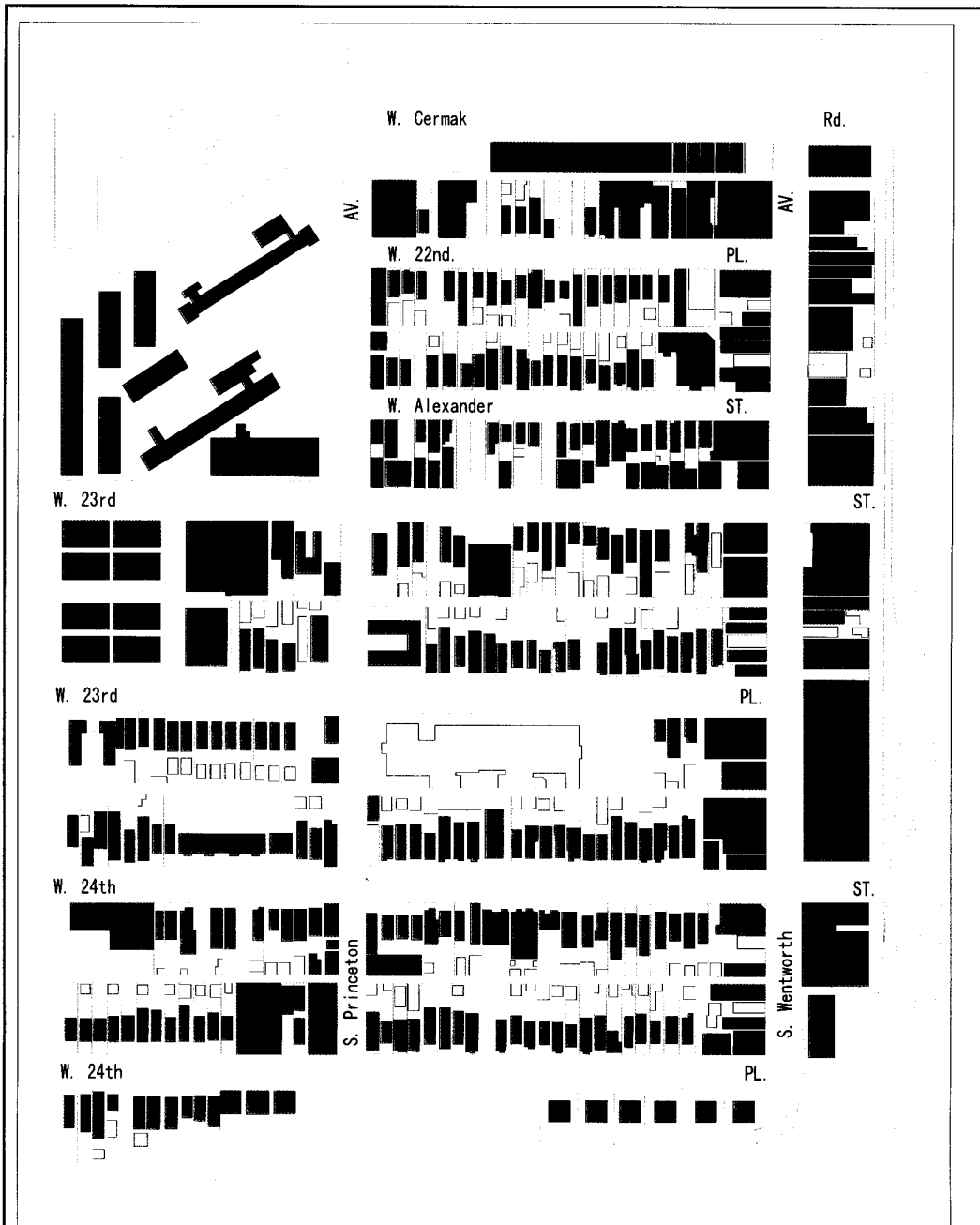


Figure 5.3: Buildings Associated with Activities that have made a Significant Contribution to the Broad Patterns of Chinatown's History

Criterion 3
 ■ Valuable
 ■ Some Value
 □ Little Value
 □ No Value



Source: Building footprints adapted from Map NE. 1/4 SEC. 28.39.14 (prepared by Sanborn Map Company, Inc. Pelham, N. Y., and revised by Department of Planning, City of Chicago, 1988/91)

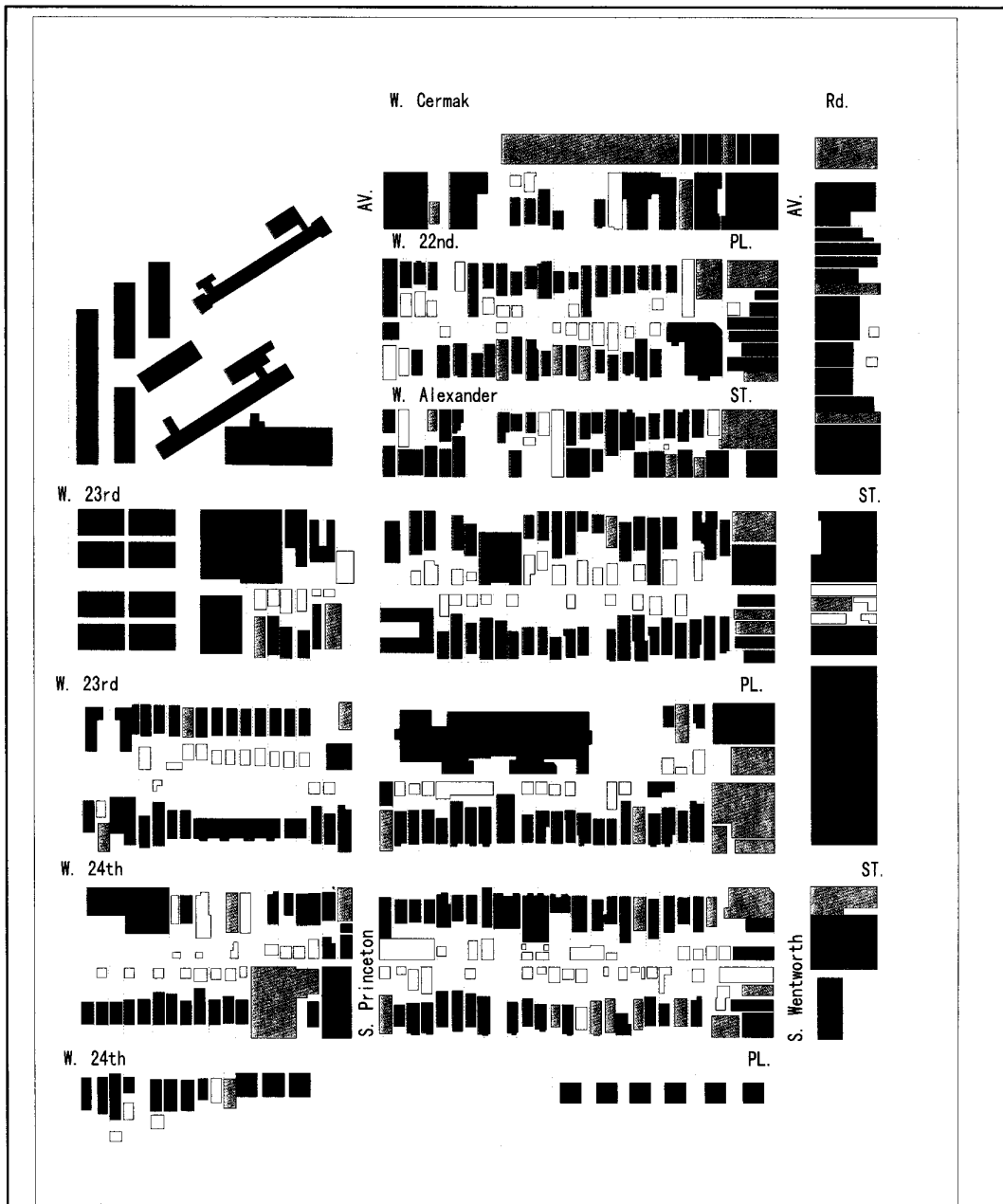


Figure 5.4: Historic Integrity of Buildings in Chinatown

Criterion 4
■ Sound
■ Moderate
□ Substandard
□ None

Source: Building footprints adapted from Map NE. 1/4 SEC. 28.39.14 (prepared by Sanborn Map Company, Inc. Pelham, N. Y., and revised by the Department of Planning, City of Chicago, 1988/91)



Realizing that Chinatown's value does not lie in individual buildings, but rather in building groupings and activities that act together to define Chinatown's unique character, the individual structures were grouped according to their ratings. The scoring process does not mean to designate individual buildings for removal or retention; instead it leads to a definition of broader areas that exhibit a total environment of high preservation values.¹⁴ The groupings are defined as treatment areas (Figure 5.6).

Treatment areas have been defined in three groups according to the preservation value levels that were identified in the evaluation process. Thus the areas have varying needs for compatibility and preservation treatment; they range from high sensitivity areas where compatibility between new and old structures is critical, and therefore require special preservation guidelines, to areas where general district guidelines would be necessary to establish themes for new development or renewal.

Treatment Area A

This category contains the building groupings along West Cermak Road and South Wentworth Avenue, 22nd Place, West Alexander Street, and Princeton Avenue. In general, this treatment area contains the majority of activities and structures having high preservation value ratings. This treatment area also includes some medium and low value structures that surround those having high values; such areas have continuity in scale, the façade treatment of buildings, and the activities that occur along street fronts and block lengths. Changes in this treatment area should be primarily oriented to infill projects occurring where existing buildings are of substandard condition and rehabilitation is not a feasible alternative. Alterations to existing facades should be guided by criteria that maintain consistency with the

¹⁴ Honolulu Department of Housing and Community Development 1974.

existing treatment and materials of buildings. For most of the Treatment A areas, development control guidelines would address the treatment of ground floor facades, particularly the dominance of small open front shops and sidewalk canopies.¹⁵

Treatment Area B

This group contains major medium and low preservation value ratings structures. Most of the buildings were built at the end of the nineteenth century and early twentieth century. Although many structures in this treatment group provide less-than-satisfactory living environments for residents, their retention is important in extending the visual character of Chinatown to blocks that primarily include newer buildings. If feasibility tests are favorable, the structures in this treatment group will require protective guidelines to insure congruence between the structures and adjacent newer developments that would form the dominant character of the block.

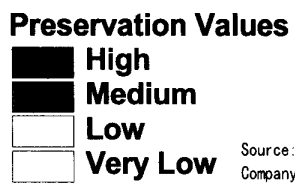
Treatment Area C

This group also contains structures with medium and low preservation value ratings, but they are not classified as Treatment Area B areas because they are generally newer and located on the fringes of the district, and not in the mainstream of Chinatown. As in Treatment Area B, the relatedness of new development is of concern, but the control would be over larger areas, and not in relation to particular structures. The guidelines for this Treatment area would include the general compatibility of exterior design, arrangement, texture, and materials. It should also be flexible so new development is encouraged and not overly restricted.

¹⁵ Honolulu Department of Housing and Community Development 1974.



Figure 5.5: Evaluation of Preservation Values for Buildings in Chinatown



Source: Building footprints adapted from Map NE, 1/4 SEC. 28. 39. 14 (prepared by Sanborn Map Company, Inc. Pelham, N. Y., and revised by Department of Planning, City of Chicago, 1988/91)

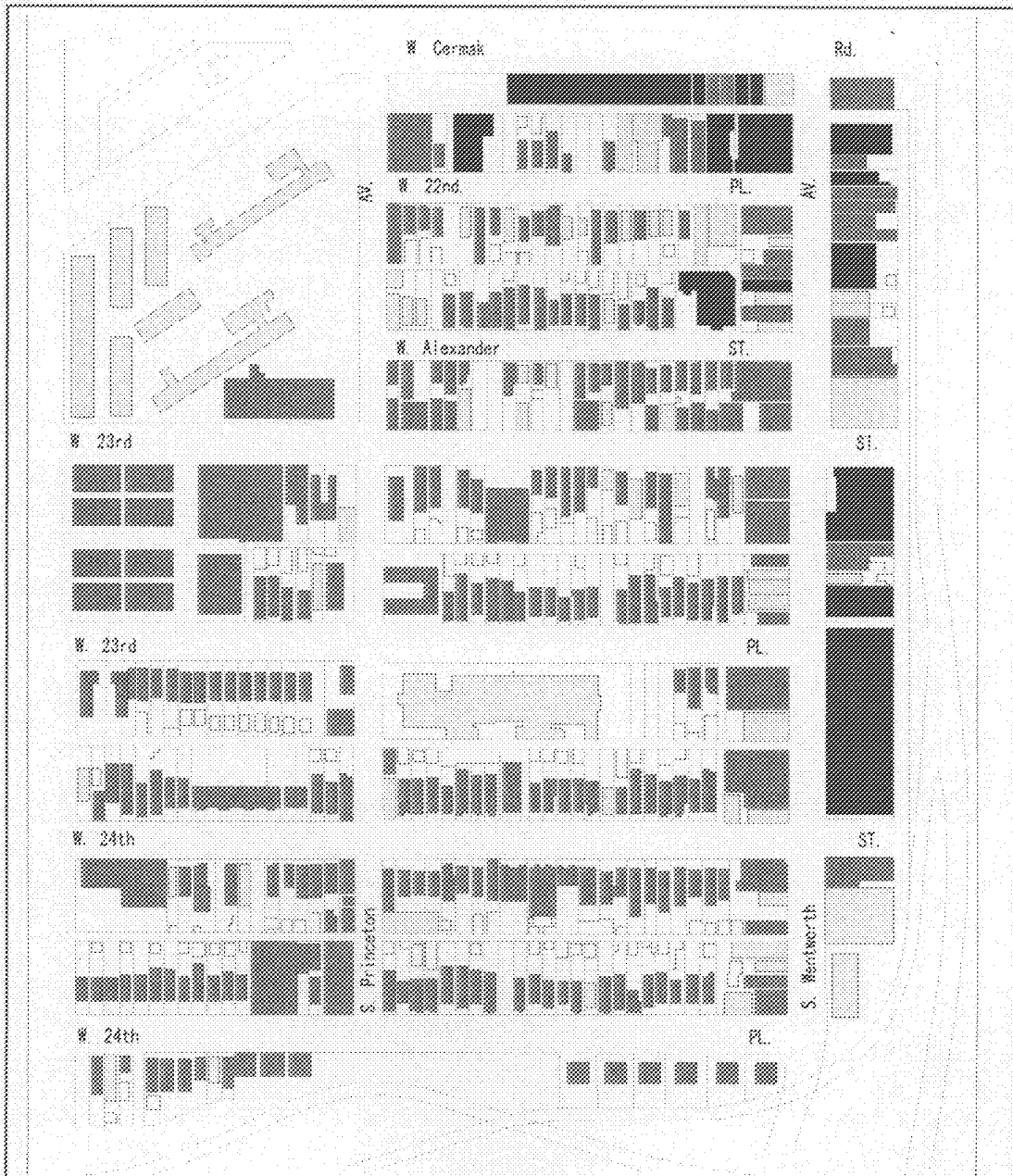






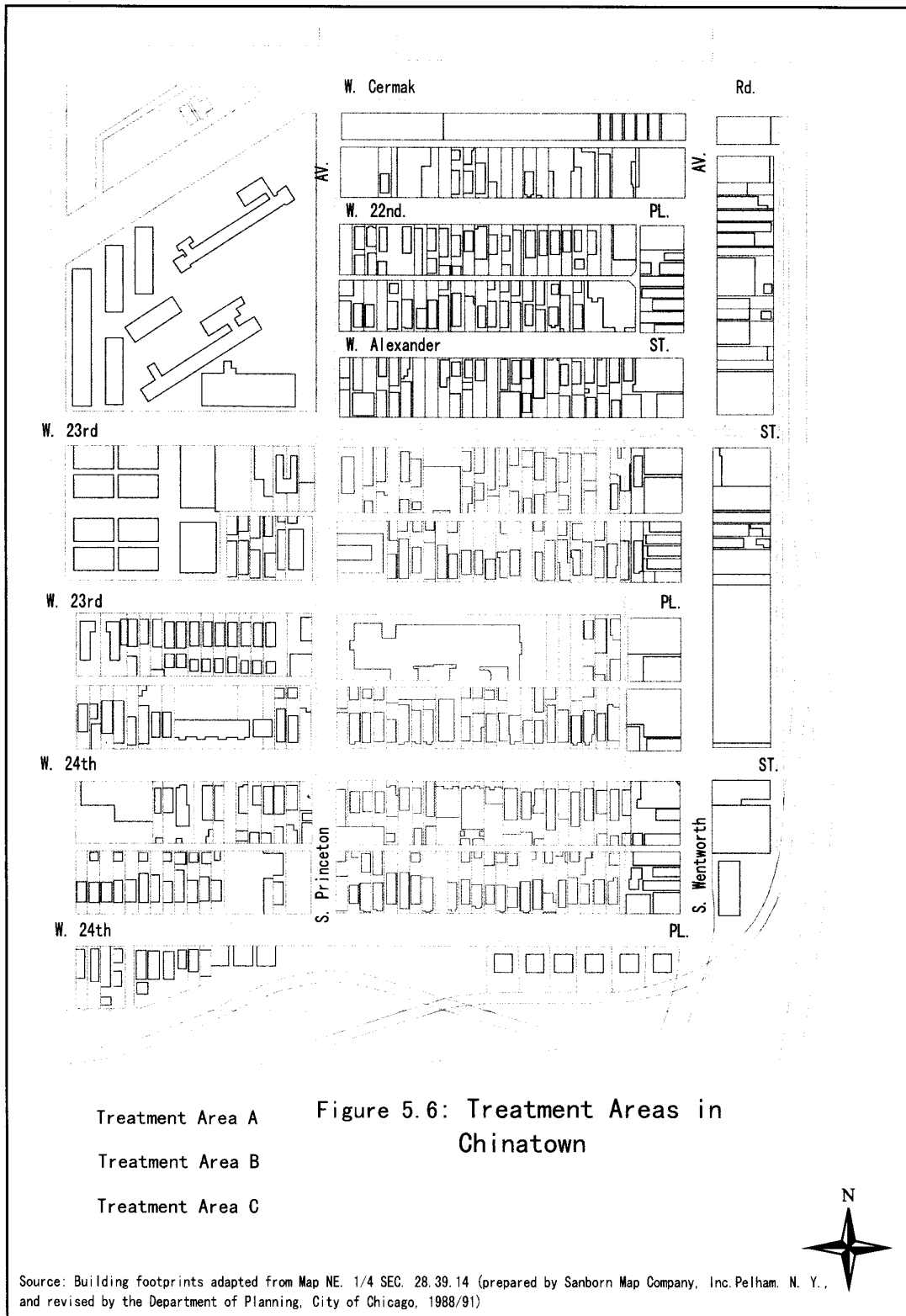
Figure 5.5: Evaluation of Preservation Values for Buildings in Chinatown

Preservation Values

-  High
-  Medium
-  Low
-  Very Low



Source: Building footprints adapted from Map NE 1/4 SEC 28, 29 14 (prepared by Sanborn Map Company, Inc. Peiham, N. Y., and revised by Department of Planning, City of Chicago, 1988/91)



CHAPTER SIX: PRESERVATION GUIDELINES

Introduction

The inventory and evaluation analyses employed in this thesis have identified the preservation values and significant elements within Chinatown's historic district. Based on the evaluation of the preservation value of the physical and social structure of the district, the area was divided into three treatment areas. These treatment areas were used to define guidelines for change in the area, as well as for new developments or for alterations to existing structures. They identify differing needs for preservation in the district, with Treatment Area A being most sensitive to change, and Area C being least sensitive. Since it is the grouping of buildings rather than an individual structure that produces a total effect which characterizes the Chinatown district, the preservation guidelines for the physical environment are focused on the maintenance of the characteristic Chinatown built environment rather than the improvement of specific buildings.¹

The essence of Chinatown is not purely related to its physical structures, but rather to the scale and character of the area as established by a combination of traditional and contemporary activities in architecturally significant buildings. Chinatown's activities today form three character areas – commercial, old residential, and new residential. Each of the areas is characterized by special activities and distinct building forms, all of which should be reflected in the criteria to guide changes in Chinatown.

¹ This chapter references the preservation guidelines for Honolulu's Chinatown as developed by the Honolulu Department of Housing and Community Development (1974), and the *San Francisco Chinatown Master Plan*, prepared by the San Francisco Department of City Planning (1987).

The most predominant element defining Chinatown's character is the overall low scale and compactness of the building forms. Physically, the streetscape is typified by adjacent walls that are built to the sidewalk, and which form a continuous façade, a uniform building height, and overhead canopies and signboards. These physical elements largely contribute to Chinatown's sense of intimacy and human scale. Large gaps, such as those that occur when buildings are demolished and replaced by parking lots or remain vacant, result in an interruption of the continuity and sense of intimacy; therefore, the design criteria should be formulated to preserve the human-scale quality of the area effectively.

The preservation guidelines, however, do not mean to designate areas that exhibit, in their total environment, high preservation values; or where rehabilitation should be given priority over replacement to the extent that it is economically feasible, and where perpetuation of character-giving activities should be emphasized. In essence the guidelines place high priority on the uses, people, activities, architecture, building fixtures, and street furniture to provide and define the unique character of the district. These guidelines represent only one set of general concerns for Chinatown's environment. As decisions are made, other factors must also enter the equation, such as economic feasibility or relocation housing needs.²

This chapter provides the preservation guidelines that were used to define growth criteria (design and activity) and to guide alterations in the treatment areas. In respect to each treatment area, design criteria will be developed as general guidelines to control physical change in Chinatown. The design criteria are more specific for Area A, where any change in physical form must be strictly controlled to respond to preservation values; and less specific

² Honolulu Department of Housing and Community Development 1974.

for Areas B and C, where a greater degree of change can be tolerated without seriously affecting preservation values. In addition to design criteria for physical change, activity criteria were established to direct the actions that are necessary for the preservation of the district's social environment. The guidelines also discuss the general design considerations for circulation and parking that should act as one of the determinants in guiding alterations in the historic district.

Treatment Area A

Design Criteria

Treatment Area A contains the majority of activities and structures that have high preservation value ratings. It is vital to the preservation of special identity of Chinatown, which is defined by the use of ornamental gateways that mark the entrance to the historic district, and other structures having historic significance. Any changes conducted in this area that do not assess preservation values will seriously impact the district's historic value. But some improvements to the physical environment are necessary to maintain a harmonious streetscape and to satisfy user needs. Thus, a building that has lost integrity, and a building façade that is incompatible with its surroundings, utilities, and interior conditions, requires improvement to preserve the character of the area. The guidelines for the change of the physical environment in Treatment Area A are outlined as follows:

- 1) Fifteen structures with high preservation value in this area are the most important to consider for retention.
- 2) New and remodeled structures that house activities having long-term association with the community and are environmentally compatible with their location are important to the district and worthy of retention.

- 3) The character of this area should be pedestrian-oriented. The street level front views of the façade are the most significant design consideration.
- 4) Building styles of the past should be preserved by promoting the essential elements of value. These elements include recessed balconies, a tiled roof with upturned eaves and corners, and intricate decorative details. When these elements are repeated in sufficient numbers, continuation of the existing character will be assured into the future.
- 5) New developments should respect the character of those structures that have significant preservation values. Extreme contrasts in color, shape, material, and height should be avoided.
- 6) Exterior architectural features should be harmonious with the characteristic areas of the district. In commercial blocks, continuous façades, large expanses of glass along the shop front, sidewalk canopies, and bilingual signboards should be maintained.
- 7) To achieve compatibility with the existing environment, new developments should be carefully designed with respect to the areas in which they are located.
- 8) Changes (new developments or alterations) should be intentional and sensitive instead of accidental and haphazard.
- 9) Street furniture should be encouraged and promoted throughout this area. As a major commercial street, the intimacy of South Wentworth Avenue will increase its intimacy by providing outdoor seating areas and improving the landscapes.

Activity Criteria

This area primarily consists of various Chinese specialty shops and Chinese restaurants. The special ethnic identity of the street could be enhanced by special events, such as festivals and parades. South Wentworth Avenue between Cermak Road and 24th Place is the scene of

many Chinese festival celebrations. Sponsoring organizations should be encouraged to have street celebrations, such as lion dances and lantern parades, as a means of vitalizing the area during a traditionally inactive time of the day and season, such as summer.

- 1) Commercial areas should have maximum exposure to pedestrian traffic.
- 2) Economic controls and/or incentives should be developed to protect traditional functions such as Chinese specialty shops, restaurants, and family associations in the district.
- 3) Offices should generally be located on upper levels, with as much contiguous ground floor commercial space as possible.
- 4) Manufacturing activities such as the Hong Kong Noodle Company should be removed from the streetfront spaces, since they interrupt the contiguous facades offered by the commercial buildings.
- 5) The On Leong Association Building could be considered for conversion into a museum that illustrates the history of Chinese immigrants to Chicago. This will improve public awareness of the historic significance of Chinatown, thereby increasing the community's pride and appreciation of its history.

Treatment Area B

Design Criteria

This treatment area primarily contains structures with medium and low preservation value ratings. Most of the buildings were built by the early Italian residents who lived in the district prior to the arrival of the Chinese. Renovation and new developments in this area should encourage the retention of the harmonious building groupings, even though the structures don't have a Chinese ethnic flavor. Meanwhile, it is necessary to improve the interior condition of the buildings so as to meet health and safety requirements.

- 1) The structures having medium preservation value ratings are important to this treatment area and are worthy of retention.
- 2) It is the building grouping rather than the individual structures that produce a total effect that characterizes the area that should be preserved.
- 3) New developments should respect the character of existing structures that display preservation values. Exterior architectural features should be harmoniously integrated with the character of the area by controlling building heights, colors, materials, and the form of windows and doors.
- 4) Landscape design should be strongly encouraged throughout this area, such as paving, lighting and open space design.

Activity Criteria

As a means of maintaining social viability, special efforts should be extended to bring and keep people-oriented activities in the area. Though mainly serving residential purposes, Treatment Area B can be promoted to incorporate more institutional functions, since many old buildings in this area can't be used for residential uses anymore because of such factors as narrow windows, compact arrangements, and unsanitary conditions. On the other hand, when abutting a commercial area, Treatment Area B cannot provide sufficient privacy for the residences in this area. Many cultural societies, such as family organizations, have located in this area after purchasing their own buildings. Those cultural groups that don't have enough capital to develop or purchase their own properties should be encouraged to develop facilities jointly in this area.

- 1) The district should provide enough recreational space and community facilities as a means of improving community vitality.

- 2) For the two elementary schools in this area, safety should be considered as an important element when developing the area.
- 3) Existing activities of cultural/educational significance should be assisted so they remain in the district.
- 4) The interior condition of the buildings needs to be improved to incorporate various uses.

Treatment Area C

Design Criteria

With its medium and low preservation value ratings, Treatment Area C generally has newer buildings compared with the other two treatment areas. The structures in this area include apartment buildings, townhouses, and individual houses, most of which were built after the 1970s. Recent interest in the residential buildings suggests the feasibility of designating an area where more Chinese families could be encouraged to move into Chinatown. New development in this area should encourage the flavor of Chinese culture in the built environment, and provide a safe and healthy environment for residents.

- 1) New and remodeled structures that house residential functions and are environmentally compatible in their location are important to the area and worthy of retention.
- 2) New development should respect the character of structures that have high preservation values in Treatment Area A. The essential elements that symbolize Chinese culture should be promoted and developed for the building styles in this area.
- 3) Landscape treatments for open space should be strongly encouraged and promoted throughout this treatment area.

- 4) Since this treatment area is at the fringe of Chinatown and is adjacent to expressways, residential areas should be buffered from heavy vehicular traffic, noise, and dust, but not detached from the streetfront.

Activity Criteria

Providing for residential life styles that are consistent with those of existing residents is an important aspect of planning for Treatment Area C. This area has been developed as a place that consists of apartment buildings, townhouses, and individual houses with similar styles that have resulted from the mass production of real estate developers.

- 1) The apartment buildings provided for singles and the elderly population, as well as for low income families, have to be designed for their needs, but must particularly provide rent levels that are affordable by these population groups.
- 2) The most important factor in the development of this area is to provide an option for existing residents to move back to Chinatown if they are displaced.
- 3) Facilities to meet the needs of residents such as medical care services, language schools, parking, and easy access to recreational spaces should be developed in conjunction with residential projects.

Traffic Circulation and Parking

Though a few areas adjacent to the historic district of Chinatown provide public parking facilities, parking is still a serious problem in this district. The street-side parking pattern in Chinatown is beneficial to commercial interests throughout the district because of the added convenience, but it produces dramatic interruptions to the street-level views of the façade. In addition, the pattern increases the possibilities for pedestrians traffic accidents because the cars parking along the street narrow the street width and block the visual field of

the pedestrians. Therefore, the street-side parking pattern in Chinatown, especially along South Wentworth Avenue, the busiest commercial street in the district, requires further specific studies. The evaluation on its impact on the pedestrians safety issues, the street-level front view, and the character of the area are necessary in accessing the historical values of the district. In perimeter parking areas, design guidelines should require treatment that will minimize their impact on the streetscape by controlling height and setback.

In addition, pedestrian movement may take priority over vehicular traffic in the historic district of Chinatown since its major commercial and residential functions. To improve the safety of the community for pedestrians, and create an intimate environment for the residents, more studies need to be devoted on the issues such as width of sidewalk, buffer from vehicle traffic, intersection design, and facilities for senior people and children.

CHAPTER SEVEN: CONCLUSIONS

Chicago's Chinatown is one of the longest-standing ethnic minority communities in the United States. As such, it provides a testing ground for the study of a Chinese community's historic landscape and preservation, and demonstrates how a group of Chinese Americans have impacted the landscape of their community's landscape over time. Several points gleaned from an analysis of the physical and social environment of Chinatown have demonstrated the community's historic significance.

Chinatown's one-hundred-year-old history is a reminder of how the United States excluded and discriminated against one group of Americans and how this group of people struggled to work and survive within a New World setting. This thesis began with a historical analysis of the saga of Chinese immigration to America. The Chinese were vital to the development of California. Their contributions to the state's labor history gave the state a very important role in the nation throughout the twentieth century. In the mid-1870s, after the first Chinese pioneer, Dong Jue Moy, arrived at Chicago, the Chinese began to move to the city, where they concentrated along Clark Street. Due to the raised rents and the Tongs' contradictions, a large number of Chicago's Chinese population moved southward to Cermak Road and West Wentworth Avenue around 1912; this is where Chicago's Chinatown emerged.

As an initial effort to understand the value of Chinatown as a historic place, the existing physical and social structures were inventoried and evaluated within a historic preservation framework so as to identify those elements that distinguish Chinatown as a unique area of Chicago. Though most of the buildings standing in Chicago's Chinatown

district follow standard American forms, an intense ethnic stamp can be found throughout the community's significant structures, especially the application of decorative ornamentation in the buildings. All of these effects consequently offer a unique scene that distinguishes the local urban landscape. The significance of Chinatown is largely related to its people, whose presence and activities in Chinatown distinguish this area and give it a special character. Certain activities, such as grocery stores and restaurants, have long-term associations with the community and reveal this ethnic group's unique culture and its adaptation to mainstream American culture.

Those elements contributing to the uniqueness of Chinatown were evaluated in terms of four criteria: representing a significant and distinguishable building grouping; embodying distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction; association with activities that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of Chinatown's history; and integrity. The results of the separate evaluation scores were combined to obtain a Preservation Values Rating, which was then used to formulate guidelines for change so that they are compatible and harmonious with historically significant elements.

Historic preservation has been defined as an activity designed to prevent the deterioration or destruction of important structures.¹ Old buildings and historic landscapes are our ties with the past, and they should not just be museum pieces to view and forget. They should give us a sense of place, of continuity and stability, and of integrity. In this sense, preservation should be considered as a viable element in an urban redevelopment program. The Chinatown district is a unique area in the city of Chicago that retains a culture and ethnic flavor and reflects a contiguous architectural and historic character that recalls a

¹ International City Management Association 1969.

sense of time and place. The preservation guidelines developed in this thesis are focused on the maintenance of the characteristic Chinatown built environment rather than on the improvement of specific buildings. Furthermore, the essence of Chinatown is also related to the scale and character of the area as established by a combination of traditional and contemporary activities. The preservation guidelines define growth criteria for both physical design and activity maintenance to guide alterations in their treatment areas. In respect to each treatment area, design and activity criteria were developed as general guidelines to control physical and social changes in Chinatown. The guidelines also discuss the general design considerations for circulation and parking that should act as one of the determinants in guiding alterations in the historic district.

To achieve the goals of preservation guidelines, specific actions for protecting the community's historic and cultural resources are required. For the physical world of Chinatown, existing structures with high or medium preservation value ratings should not be removed or significantly altered without an environmental assessment of the action. Chicago's City Planning Department should evaluate the plans for physical changes within the Chinatown historic district in terms of considerations that include design criteria for the respective treatment areas. In addition, new construction should be initially phased into areas of vacant lands, or incompatible land uses.²

For the social world of Chinatown, activities that support the definition of the character *areas identified in the inventory that are historically related or promote the unique character* of the district should be given priority for relocation assistance within the district. The impact of the change on the composition of activity types in the district and the impact of the change

² Honolulu Department of Housing and Community Development 1974.

in meeting the needs and required services of existing residents and tenants should be considered in the evaluation of social change in the community.³

The effectiveness of a comprehensive approach that fully integrates preservation with other plan elements will be necessary if Chinatown is going to be successful in preserving its historic resources. All plan elements should consider the preservation of the community's significant historic resources. A preservation focused plan encourages rehabilitation of the older community housing stock rather than simply planning new construction to meet shortages. In addition, the plan can also consider conversion of abandoned facilities into multi-unit housing facilities. Incorporation of the preservation plan into other community plans will ensure that future public policy decisions reflect the value of historic resources to the community.⁴

Furthermore, local government preservation programs must emphasize people over things to develop the consensus necessary to sustain public understanding and approval. Put another way, the constituency for preservation has to be broadened beyond the traditional core group of preservationists to encompass people of diverse backgrounds and interests. There always exists a need to form partnerships, which include individual citizens, businesses, schools, governmental officials, various interest groups, and preservation organizations. In addition, a shortage of awareness and appreciation of the community's history is a serious challenge for Chinatown's preservation. Thus, creating an educational program about cultural resource issues is necessary for assessing the community's historic value. There are three major opportunities for educational programs: school programs, adult programs, and community events. Educational programs can establish a strong community

³ Ibid.

⁴ Vogel 2000.

foundation for preservation efforts, which should be able to enhance dramatically the preservation activities for Chinatown's historic heritage.

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Appendix I

**Heritage Buildings in Chinatown Based on the
Chicago Historic Resources Survey**

Location Number	Name of Building	Address	Date of Construction	Name of Architect
1	On Leong Merchants Association	2212-2220 South Wentworth Avenue	1926	Michaelsen & Rognstad
2		2233-2239 S. Wentworth Ave.	1927	Michaelsen & Rognstad
3	Moy Association	2238 S. Wentworth Ave.	1912	Henry Sierks
4		2241-2243 S. Wentworth Ave.		
5		2414 S. Wentworth Ave.		
6		207 West Cermak Road	1927	Michaelsen & Rognstad
7		209 W. Cermak Rd	1944	Michelson, Rabig and Ramp
8		217 W Cermak Rd.	1927	Michaelsen & Rognstad
9		219-249 W. Cermak Rd.	1912	H.J.Swanson.
10		235 W. Cermak Rd.		
11		211-215 West 22 nd Place		
12		214 W. 22nd Pl.	1946	Michaelsen & Rognstad
13		218 W. 22 nd Pl.		
14		219 W. 22 nd Pl.		
15	Saint Terese Mission Church	210-214 West Alexander Street	1904	
16		248 W. Alexander St.		
17		256 W. Alexander St.		
18		221 West 23 rd Street		
19		239 W. 23 rd St.		
20		241 W. 23 rd St.		
21		224 West 23 rd Place		
22	John C. Haines Public School	231-257 W. 23 rd Pl..	1886	August Fiedler
23		258 W. 23 rd Pl.		
24		301 W. 23 rd Pl.		
25		211 West 24 th Street		
26		219 W. 24 th St.		
27		224 W. 24 th St.		
28		266 W. 24 th St.		
29		327 W. 24 th St.		
30		334 W. 24 th St.		

Appendix II**Field Report – March 7, 2004**

Contact: Three interviewees (Mr. Frank, Winnie Eng, an unidentified female)

Interviewer: Chuo Li

Address: 2020 University Ave. Apt. 305
Madison, WI 53726

Telephone: (608) 233-7322

Occasion:

Date: March 7, 2004

Place: Pui Tak Center, Chinatown, Chicago

Supportive Materials:

Question form (attached)

Aerial map

Photos taken by Winnie Eng and a photo survey form

Brief Biography:

Mr. Frank has lived in Chinatown for nearly eight years, but moved out a few years ago. Though he worked outside of Chinatown, he seems familiar with the changes in Chinatown. He provided me with information about developing programs and future projects that he thought may benefit the residents of Chinatown.

Winnie Eng grew up in Chinatown, and has lived there for more than twenty years. After this group interview, I wanted to set up another personal interview with her. But she did not show up for our appointment. She called me back and said she was sorry for her absence. But we did not find out another agreeable time for both of us.

The third female interviewee's name is unknown. She is about middle age and has lived in Chinatown for four years, but now has moved out. She told me what she liked in Chinatown are the structures with intensive Chinese flavor.

Circumstances of the Interview:

I have a friend (Jiangtao Ge) who was a graduate student at the UW-Madison, and now is working in Chicago. He is a Christian, so he introduced me to one of his Christian friends, Na Ni, who has her Bible study in the Pui Tak Center in Chinatown. Na Ni is the person who informed me about the time that they meet together. I asked her to find three or four persons who are familiar with Chinatown. And she said that she could only make certain that two persons were willing to take the interview.

When I was there on March 7th, a Sunday, I found out the situation was different than my expectations. There were too many people walking around, and it was hard to find a private space for the interview. And the interviewees seemed to have busy schedules on that day.

They were not ready for a long conversation. Nevertheless, two of them were very helpful, and provided me with much information based on my questions.

Originally, I expected that they would like to talk about their stories or personal experiences. However, due to the circumstances as well as the defensive psychology, most of them just tried to answer my questions formally. But the visual medium – a high resolution aerial photo – did help a lot in the conversations.

Interview Questions

The interview format will be a group discussion, and a high quality aerial photo or a map of building footprints in the core area of Chinatown will play a major media for the communication. The prepared questions are as below:

1. Use red color to show the buildings or structures you think are important in Chinatown, and explain why.
2. Use blue color to show the network of your everyday life, for example, where you have met with your friend, where you buy your food, where you have weddings, etc. Talk what are the most enjoyable things living in Chinatown.
3. Use green color to show the positive changes you think have been made in Chinatown, with orange color to show the negative change. And explain why.
4. Use yellow color to show the places you think need to be improved, for example vacated lots. What kind of improvements will you suggest and what's missing in this community.
5. Show the places where children usually play, explain the situation (safe or not).
6. Prepare three one-time cameras for the persons who are willing to take three pictures of whatever they think most meaningful or they are proud of in Chinatown.

Field Report – April 14, 2004

Telephone Interview

Contact: Hai Wong

Address: 2246 South Wentworth Avenue, Chicago

Telephone: 312-326-3804

Interviewer: Chuo Li

Address: 2020 University Ave. Apt. 305

Madison, WI 53726

Telephone: (608) 233-7322

Occasion:

Date: April 14, 2004

Brief Biography:

Hai Wong came from Guangdong Province, but he grew up in Beijing. He has been in America for ten years. Since he can speak both Mandarin and Cantonese, and perhaps because of these linguistic advantages, he works for the Wong Family Association as a part-time staff member. He also has a job in a restaurant.

Circumstances of the Interview:

I called the family associations in Chinatown as given in the community directory. First, I called the Moy Family Association because it has been regarded as the largest family association in Chinatown. Unfortunately, the person who received the phone call seemed to have no interest in my interview, but he asked me to call again on next Monday. But when I called at the arranged time, the person (I guess he was the same person) dropped off the line as soon as I said who I was. I was embarrassed and frustrated. So I gave up calling them again. I then tried to call the Wong Family Association, another large family association. The person who received my phone call Hai Wong, seemed very interested in our conversation. Originally I just planned to ask for an appointment, but he was very happy to answer my questions. So I decided to have a telephone interview with him. He spoke Mandarin with me, a comfortable language for both of us. The conversation was very relaxed, but did provide me with much information, especially the operation of the family associations. At the end of the talk, he gave me his home number in case I came up with more questions. He mentioned he would be home after 9 p.m., which is the time restaurant closed.

Field Report – April 23, 2004, Chinese Community Center

Contact: Betty Gao

Interviewer: Chuo Li

Address: 2020 University Ave. Apt. 305
Madison, WI 53726

Telephone: (608) 233-7322

Occasion:

Date: April 23, 2004

Place: Chinese Community Center, 250 West 22nd Place
Chicago, IL 60616

Supportive Materials:

Sound Recording

Brief Biography:

Betty is from Guangdong Province. She left her family and immigrated to America in 1983. During the early years of her life in America, she suffered a lot of pain because of leaving her husband and children. After a few years, her family came to the United States, at which time she just began to enjoy life in America. Now she has a son who was born in America, and is studying business in college. She lives with her family in the public apartments in Chinatown. Though Betty is not active in attending the social organizations of Chinatown, she realized that English language ability is very important for her social life in America. Therefore, she attended several English classes in either a college or in the community.

Circumstances of the Interview:

I met Betty in the Chinese Community Center (CCC) when I stood in the aisle looking at posters. She was there looking for help in filling out certain application forms. After greeting one another, she agreed to have an interview with me. We had a seat at the hall in front of the entrance. She is a native Cantonese speaker and she can speak Mandarin, although not very fluently. I had a little trouble in understanding her, but overall, the interview went very well. She was very patient in answering my questions, though sometimes she preferred to focus on those aspects that interested her.

Field Report – April 23, 2004, St. Therese Church

Contact: Fr. Michael Davitti, Pastor of St. Therese Church

Address: 218 W. Alexander Street

Chicago, IL 60616

Telephone: (312) 842-6777

Interviewer: Chuo Li

Address: 2020 University Ave. Apt. 305

Madison, WI 53726

Telephone: (608) 233-7322

Occasion:

Date: April 23, 2004

Place: St. Therese Church

Supportive Materials:

Sound recording

Brief Biography:

Pastor Davitti comes from Florence, Italy. He began to work in St. Therese Church in 1999.

Circumstances of the Interview:

I called the St. Therese Catholic Church and was received by the pastor, who was on the phone. He did not tell me that he was the pastor, but he provided me with some information over the phone. When I called again the other day, his secretary was on the phone and set up an appointment for me with the pastor. On April 23 (Friday) at 2:00 p.m., I arrived at his office, which is right beside the church. The interview lasted for nearly one hour. He was eloquent. It seems to me that I did not even have to ask questions, which he had already answered in his speech. After the interview, he showed me the decorations in the church, which he is so proud of and which demanded much effort to implement.

Appendix III**Sound Recording Log Form**

Contact: Fr. Michael Davitti, Pastor of St. Therese Church

Address: 218 W. Alexander Street

Chicago, IL 60616

Telephone: (312) 842-6777

Interviewer: Chuo Li

Address: 2020 University Ave. Apt. 305

Madison, WI 53726

Telephone: (608) 233-7322

Interview:

Date: April 23, 2004

Place: a small meeting room in St. Therese Catholic Church

Other people present: Pastor Davitti's secretary was in the next room. My friend, Feng Chen, who gave me a ride to Chinatown, sat right beside me, and participated in some of the conversations, too.

Background noise: The secretary for Pastor Davitti was working in the office next to the meeting room. The telephone rang from time to time. A few visitors arrived and the pastor's cat kept coming in to check us out.

Summary description of tape contents:

The Italians immigrated to the site of current Chinatown in 1880s, which was then known as "Little Italy." The Italian built this church (currently St. Therese Catholic Church). It was dedicated to a saint who was familiar to them. Because the immigrants continued the symbols and links with their own heritage, this is why they had different Catholic churches. But in the 1960s the government built a highway and razed many old Italian dwellings. This no longer was "Little Italy," as the Italians moved elsewhere to the western suburbs and other places. In the 1940s, there was the immigration of Chinese people to Chicago. But they had two places to reside: the south and the north. In the south, in Chinatown, there were Cantonese-speaking people, to the north mainly Mandarin-speaking residents. A Father John Mao, who came in 1940, started organizing Cantonese in a church known as St. John Church. Here the Chinese had their first baptism. Their situation is such that each partition has a certain number of activities if it is to be acknowledged as an institution. Otherwise, if you are not flexible, if you are small in number, and if you just beginning your efforts, it is called a

"mission." Hence St. John's was an ethnic mission, only for Chinese in 1947. In 1963, this physical church for the Italians was empty, because Italians were not attending. But the Chinese worship occurred in the Union Church at Wentworth Avenue. The Chinese used the basement, the first floor, and the second floor. The second floor was a chapel. The church had a little school. After Father Mao, there was Father Marino, who worked with the Chinese and helped the mission grow into a bigger one. Meanwhile, they started a school for Chinese immigrants, which was in the On Leong Merchants Association Building. The Marino Sisters ran the school. They then asked the help of the Illinois Obligation and the State of Illinois to start a school.

After the Marino sisters left, two Chinese priests arrived the next year. The first one was Antonio Chen, who was Mandarin speaker. After nine years, there was another Father, Christ Wong, a Cantonese speaker, who arrived in Chicago. And when he left, we moved in. I came here on December 14, 1999. I tried to bring these communities together. Italians have moved to nearby churches, but they came to this church for their own special feasts. So they were imposing themselves on the Chinese. There were clashes between the Italians and Chinese. So they looked for somebody from the outside, like me, agreeable to the Italians, and at the same time, to the Chinese. I tried to bring the Chinese and Italian groups together. The tensions were overcome indirectly, because tensions are always symbolic of immigrants. The Italians will laugh at the Chinese, and the Chinese will laugh at the Italians. They don't understand each other. So we tried to bring the two together, for example, by inviting people. Because we had typical Chinese celebrations here, such as the Lunar New Year, we invited the Italians. For the first time, the Italians had a proper Chinese meal, not the usual sweet salad, soup, or whatever. It is strange that we should use food. But food brings people together. The Italians said they discovered noodles; the Chinese said, no, we had the best noodles. So why don't we have a noodle time? Both the Chinese and Italians would cook noodles and then we shared and raised money for the church. It was a success. Meantime, the church had expanded. We had a Mandarin group that extended to the north, which did not have a church. I was contacted by them. They asked, "Father, what about us coming here?" I said, "of course, this is your church, this is the Chinese church. The language does not matter. You have the same characters, but read differently." So they came. And also a group of Indonesians came. Now the church is made up of Italian, Indonesian, Mandarin, and Cantonese-speaking groups. And we are acting in harmony. We invest ourselves now in the restoration of the church.

The church's style needed to become more Chinese-like. They installed red carpets in the church, but this seemed to contrast with the style of the church, which has to be harmonious. Also, the lighting of the church was wrong, because the bulbs were showing. And when you have bulbs, they blind you. It depends on where you put them: you see the bulbs first, and then the ceiling. I tried to arrange the church in a different way. I appreciated their efforts in the past. What the Chinese community did was to change the paintings to make them to become more Chinese. But this is not the way. When we renovated the church, I tried to blend these two styles together (Italian and Chinese). You cannot change the church into a temple, into a Chinese church. It was not meant to be a Chinese church. It was meant to be an Italian church with a specific style, Rococo, an Italian style of the late seventeenth-early

eighteenth centuries. I added details to make it Chinese, like the lions outside the church. Because I cannot impose on people, I have to do little by little to make my way. So I started from small lions that I ordered from China. Then I ordered a big lion for the front of the library, a big usual one. There also are several paintings from Indonesia and China in the church now. Then we have a Buddha, and the ancestors. I believe that the Buddha is the best of humankind. He is the best, the most open, the most reliant, and able human on earth. I appreciate Buddhism, but I am not a Buddhist. I believe that while other religions represent humans searching for God, Papistry is God searching and looking for man. So they are two different approaches, but it also makes me very appreciative. I have been in Burma and Thailand, and I am very appreciative of the people there. They are having their own biblical nature. Virtues like mercy, charity, and humanity are features cherished by Buddhism, as well as by Christians. So this is my attitude.

In the school we have has almost three hundred children. Only a handful of them are Catholics. We have, say, ten, twenty, Catholics at most. Also, the teachers are not Catholics. But my concern is that these children are taught to speak Cantonese and follow the traditional beliefs of Chinese religion. In our school, they speak English and pretend to be Catholics. But when they go to the high schools and universities, they likely will be likely completely confused. They will dump both their own traditions and Catholic traditions, because they are confused about their value. What I am trying to do is to bridge the two cultures and bring them together. That is why I am teaching Buddhism, Catholicism, and other religions in school. And I have them coming here to the church to tell them about reality.

We have the Chinese -- 400 Cantonese, and a similar number of Mandarin speakers -- plus 300 Indonesians and 200 Italians in this church. And we have two staff members, the secretary and me. We are engaged in a ministry that serve Chinese prisoners. Not because the community has much crime, but because they are illegal immigrants, waiting to be deported. So the church takes care of them. We visit them to provide a missionary for the priests we have here in the prison by someone who knows both Mandarin and Cantonese. And we supply them with magazines and newspapers, something they can read, because time is very long in prison. In addition, I am helping the museum across the city. We have lectures in the library. The last lecture was about foot binding in China as a sign of pressuring women. Now we want to have one more meeting in June, exactly like what we are talking about now: the history of this place. And we should have one partition that delivers the memory of China, because all of them have been here since the very beginning. So we are worthy in the cultural area at present. Mostly because of my sensitivity and background, together with the priests who are not on the site, we organized a group that we call the Buddhism-Catholic dialog. We have leaders -- Buddhists from Thailand, Korea, Japan, and America, as well as other priests and myself -- who discuss things together. I wish many ordinary people would join us. But probably they feel uncomfortable because there are only leaders in the group. But my attitude is that through the leaders, you will be able to chat with the people. We also take care of the black people, because we are surrounded by African Americans.

The original church was named St. Maria, which means the honorship. The church honors Mary, St Maria, the one who has been crowned, the queen. So when they moved the church,

they moved all the titles to another neighboring church. In order to assist the ownership of the Chinese, they gave it a Chinese name, St. Therese Chinese Catholic Church; this is done because St. Therese, to us, is an example of how to love people, especially people who are strangers. The Catholic language does not refuse to use symbols. Symbols are meaning pointers. I know these statues; they are made of plaster, plastic, or wood. I don't worship these statues. But as you say, you have a picture of your mother, of your parents. You don't worship the picture itself, the paper. You are attached to what it represents. So it is the same with us. And in this church there are many symbols because we have to be reminded that reality is not only what we see.

All of the buildings you see here once belonged to the Italians. They were then sold to the Chinese. Some Italians remained behind. This is the typical garbage of America, the survival style. That's what they had. We restored our church, but we cannot expand and get more rooms. So I am constrained. I don't have parking places, because there are lots of cars and they take a lot of parking space. We kept the exterior as it was. But I changed the doors. The doors are oak from Canada. And I put up the railings, black railings, with the symbols from China, and put two lions outside. Also for the repository here I added the red columns and the green roof. And I designed the garden according to Feng Shui. I did the moon gate, and I bought the chairs. But the color is wrong. I bought them in Los Angeles. I told them I don't want white, I wanted red. They said, "Yes, Father, we will send you the red one." But I've never seen them.

I found different opinions in different cultures, which is striking. In Italy, the first thing is, when you visit me, I welcome you and offer you something, probably coffee, or if it is right now, something to drink, wine or alcohol. Usually when you have a friend over after a couple of times, you would ask why won't you come over to my house to have supper especially, because during lunch people work. Here, I discovered that they rather prefer to take you to the restaurant instead of inviting you to their home, because the idea of order we have is different. Italians would say, look at the Chinese, how dirty they are. The idea of order is different. We cannot forget that these people came from Hong Kong mainly. The place is congested, they make errors, and they close hands on the road (i.e., rob people?) And I also see my Chinese ladies. They don't speak English. They keep all the plastic bags, and other things, and knit them nicely together. They keep all their old things together. When we offer them things, they put chocolate into their pocket, because they want to give things to their children. This is, in my tradition, unmannered. You don't do it. But these people come from traditional poverty. So I don't judge them. I just laugh, because from time to time, after I clean the house, they will come, and dig into the garbage, and ask, "Father, why did you throw this away?" You have a half-gallon of paint, but there is a time when you need it. If the color has changed, you spend a dollar and eight cents and get a fresh one. But this is not understood. So many of the houses the Chinese have are not adequate for five people; they don't build anything or keep them clean. They don't do this. Chinese, to me, is more than this, a different approach to living. I don't see Chinese buildings here, unless it is the community center. That is Chinese. I am very resentful about other Asians coming here. For example, they asked, "why don't you come and preach with your own traditional costumes." Or when I want to go to Chinatown I have a feeling of Asia. I turned them and asked: "Do you believe

that in one day, shopping from one junk shop to another, that you believe that you understood Asia? We are not monkeys who you come to see in the zoo. We have our own dignity. If you want to understand us, you come and stay with us, share our water, share our rice, share our tea, then you will have an understanding of us." But why are people here very poor spiritually? They are looking for meaning in life. And they believe Asians and Native Americans have the secrets of life they have lost. But the Native American and Chinese here have themselves lost the meaning of life. They don't know. Probably I know more about China than you do. Who knows? I don't want to say that. It sounds very presumptuous. I said it is very complicated place here. So they come here, they want us to perform. When we have a Chinese Lunar New Year celebration, people from Thailand and Japan come here for the performances. They come here. They are more in the church than the Chinese, because the Chinese are used to staying at home with friends. And inside, the other Asians come here to watch the lion dance. We are very happy that you enjoy it, but being Asian is more than this. So that is how it goes.

I am saying that you should knock down the buildings (in Chinatown); this would not be bad, because in plain English, this is garbage. You don't see the culture very well, these are the survivals. They were given this place, they were making money and they added garages and other stuff. But it does not represent Italian. The best Italian building is this church, and the best Chinese building is the community center, because both were done at the very beginning from scratch. Here they adjusted, the Italians leaving the place, and the Chinese coming in, who did very little polishing, because in many cases, only poor people reside in Chinatown.

Approved Susan Thernig
Title ASSISTANT PROFESSOR
Date 20 Aug 2004