

## **Winnipeg Chinatown: Demographic, Ecological and Organizational Change, 1900-1980**

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Volume 10, numéro 3, february 1982

URI : <https://id.erudit.org/iderudit/1019077ar>

DOI : <https://doi.org/10.7202/1019077ar>

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Éditeur(s)

Urban History Review / Revue d'histoire urbaine

ISSN

0703-0428 (imprimé)

1918-5138 (numérique)

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Citer cet article

Baureiss, G. & Driedger, L. (1982). Winnipeg Chinatown: Demographic, Ecological and Organizational Change, 1900-1980. *Urban History Review / Revue d'histoire urbaine*, 10(3), 11-24. <https://doi.org/10.7202/1019077ar>

Résumé de l'article

Le présent article est consacré à la population chinoise de Winnipeg en tant que sous-groupe au sein de la communauté. Il présente les changements démographiques, spatiaux et organisationnels qui se sont produits au cours des huit dernières décennies. Ces changements ont été fort marqués : le groupe ethnique chinois, isolé et traditionnel, qui se confinait au quartier chinois est devenu une communauté moderne qui a pénétré d'autres secteurs de la ville. La loi canadienne sur l'immigration, qui tendait à exclure les familles, a grandement contribué à la formation de la communauté de « célibataires » des débuts. En 1923, le gouvernement adoptait une loi destinée à mettre un terme à l'immigration chinoise. L'abrogation de cette loi, en 1947, et diverses mesures de libéralisation subséquentes ouvrirent le pays à un autre type d'immigrants chinois. Les changements démographiques et écologiques ne manquent pas d'intérêt et le caractère particulier de l'expérience chinoise donna naissance à deux périodes distinctes d'évolution organisationnelle. La première fut caractérisée par la formation d'organisations traditionnelles, transplantées avec quelques modifications; la seconde vit l'émergence d'organisations fonctionnelles originales.

# Winnipeg Chinatown: Demographic, Ecological and Organizational Change, 1900-1980\*

Gunter Baureiss and Leo Driedger

## Résumé/Abstract

*Le présent article est consacré à la population chinoise de Winnipeg en tant que sous-groupe au sein de la communauté. Il présente les changements démographiques, spatiaux et organisationnels qui se sont produits au cours des huit dernières décennies. Ces changements ont été fort marqués: le groupe ethnique chinois, isolé et traditionnel, qui se confinait au quartier chinois est devenu une communauté moderne qui a pénétré d'autres secteurs de la ville. La loi canadienne sur l'immigration, qui tendait à exclure les familles, a grandement contribué à la formation de la communauté de «célibataires» des débuts. En 1923, le gouvernement adoptait une loi destinée à mettre un terme à l'immigration chinoise. L'abrogation de cette loi, en 1947, et diverses mesures de libéralisation subséquentes ouvrirent le pays à un autre type d'immigrants chinois. Les changements démographiques et écologiques ne manquent pas d'intérêt et le caractère particulier de l'expérience chinoise donna naissance à deux périodes distinctes d'évolution organisationnelle. La première fut caractérisée par la formation d'organisations traditionnelles, transplantées avec quelques modifications; la seconde vit l'émergence d'organisations fonctionnelles originales.*

*This article focuses on the Chinese of Winnipeg as a sub-community within the larger community. It traces the demographic, the spatial and the organizational changes which have taken place in the past eight decades. Substantial changes have occurred: from a segregated, traditional community centring around Chinatown to a modern community that has dispersed into other areas of the city. Canadian immigration legislation, which tended to exclude families, played a major role in forming the early 'bachelor' community. The Chinese Immigration Act of 1923 virtually stopped Chinese immigration, and the repeal of this Act in 1947 and subsequent relaxation of immigration laws permitted the entry of a different type of Chinese immigrant. While the demographic and ecological changes are interesting, the distinctiveness of the Chinese experience produced two separated periods of organizational development. The early period was characterized by the formation of transplanted, though modified, traditional organizations; the later period was characterized by the emergence of functional specific organizations.*

## Overview

Compared to many other ethnic groups that have settled in Canada, the Chinese are relatively few and are concentrated in large urban centres, including Winnipeg. Although Winnipeg's Chinatown is not large, it has persisted for almost a century.<sup>1</sup> The early Chinese community in Winnipeg was a special demographic, ecological and organizational ethnic sub-community designed primarily for survival. This initial group consisted mostly of males, a fact which resulted in the first period being frequently referred to as "the bachelor phase."<sup>2</sup> While the Chinese transplanted many of their institutions from home to help cope with the surrounding, alien Canadian society, unique historical events took place over a twenty-five year period which broke the continuity of growth of the bache-

lor phase. Early Chinese immigration was effectively stopped by the Chinese Immigration Act of 1923, and virtually no Chinese entered Canada legally until the act was repealed in 1947. The Chinese population in Winnipeg actually declined after the 1930s. Few new organizations were developed, but the existing ones were diffuse enough to cope with adverse conditions. Organizations located outside Chinatown were moved there for easy access. Chinatown continued to be the symbolic and activity centre for the Chinese in Winnipeg.

With the relaxation of restrictions on Chinese immigration in the 1950s and 1960s and the consequent influx of Chinese families into Winnipeg, Chinese demographic characteristics changed greatly. These changes also affected residential patterns and organizational needs. New immigrant families had needs and aspirations quite different from those of a beleaguered bachelor community oriented towards Chinatown for protection and fellowship. Chinese residences spread throughout the city. Old organizations were adapted less to survival and more towards adjustment of families in the larger community, and new ones emerged to meet changing needs.

\* This article is based on a study conducted by Gunter Baureiss and Julia Kwong. It was funded by a grant from the Secretary of State, Ottawa.

The pattern in Winnipeg appears similar to that of Calgary and Edmonton, which have been studied in detail and exhibit similar trends.<sup>3</sup> Winnipeg's Chinese community has changed from a segregated, traditional 'bachelor' community during the first fifty years, to a more modern 'family' type community, which in the last thirty years has dispersed into other areas of Metropolitan Winnipeg.

### A Demographic History of the Chinese in Winnipeg

The first Chinese arrived in Winnipeg by stage coach from the United States on November 18, 1877. Their arrival was a startling enough event to arouse newspaper attention.

Amongst the arrivals by yesterday's stage were three of the "Heathen Chinese" whom Bret Harte has immortalized in verse, and who are the first visitors from the Flowery Kingdom to put in an appearance in Winnipeg. The names of the males of the party are Charley Yam and Fung Quong, but the lady who accompanies them, with the becoming modesty of her sex, declines to have her cognomen flourishing [sic] in the newspapers. This trio of Celestials have been in America for some time – one of them six years – and they can speak the English language in a kind of fractured manner, although they discount any Winnipegger in talking Chinese. They come here to enter into the washee clothes business, for which there appears to be an excellent opening for "the honorable members for China." Hoop-la!<sup>4</sup>

In January, 1878 a newspaper report stated that "another batch of Chinese will arrive here in the spring,"<sup>5</sup> but shortly thereafter a note in the paper's section of city and provincial news warned that "a small consignment of Chinamen is expected to arrive shortly – probably to-night."<sup>6</sup>

The Canada Census lists only four Chinese in Manitoba in 1881. Two apparently had opened a laundry in Emerson, and two had taken up residence in Winnipeg. Given the fact that newspaper articles make reference to more Chinese present in Winnipeg prior to this census, the discrepancy may be accounted for by a high degree of mobility as well as possible evasion of the census by these early Chinese. Irrespective of the accuracy of these census figures, the Chinese population of Manitoba remained relatively insignificant in numbers prior to the completion of the Canadian Pacific Railway in 1886. With the completion of the railway and the connection to the Pacific, Chinese arrived by train in larger numbers, many passing through and some making Manitoba their residence (Table 1). Those who stayed in Manitoba opened laundries, restaurants and grocery stores or were employed in the service industry.

TABLE 1

Population of Chinese Origin in Canada,  
Manitoba and Winnipeg, 1881-1971

Year	Chinese Population				
	Canada	Manitoba	Winnipeg		
			Total	Male	Female
1881	4,383	4	2 <sup>a</sup>		
1891	9,120	31	16 <sup>a</sup>		
1901	17,312	209	119 <sup>a</sup>		
1911	27,774	885	574	563	11
1921	39,587	1,331	814	790	24
1931	46,519	1,732	1,033	991	42
1941	34,627	1,248	719	679	40
1951	32,528	1,175	738	636	102
1961	58,197	1,936	1,194	815	379
1971	118,815	3,430	2,535	1,425	1,110

NOTE: a) No sex distribution data available for 1881, 1891, 1901.

SOURCE: *Censuses of Canada, 1881-1971.*

The increase of the Chinese population in Manitoba and Winnipeg was very small during the period 1877-1900. Growth during the first quarter of the twentieth century was relatively large, considering the existence of discriminatory policies of governments. The Chinese Immigration Act of 1923 effectively terminated this influx and growth only recommenced with the repeal of the Chinese Immigration Act in 1947. As a result the Chinese population (in Canada and Winnipeg) has increased substantially since then. At present the Chinese population in Winnipeg is estimated at twelve thousand,<sup>7</sup> or about two per cent of the total urban population.

Until World War II, the few Chinese who lived in Winnipeg were largely males (Table 1). Some of these traditional bachelor Chinese lived right in, or within walking distance of, Chinatown. Others spread out along the three main arteries of the city, Main, Portage and Notre Dame, generally residing in the back of their businesses. After World War II, Chinese households began to spread into residential areas throughout the city. Decline in racial discrimination, the establishment of Chinese families in Canada, and a new type of Chinese immigrant (the professional), undoubtedly contributed to the new pattern. By 1971, Chinese households had spread throughout the city (Figure 1). There is still evidence, however, of a slight clustering of households in the central part of the city, vestiges of the earlier concentration.

### The Ecological Birth and Growth of Winnipeg's Chinatown<sup>8</sup>

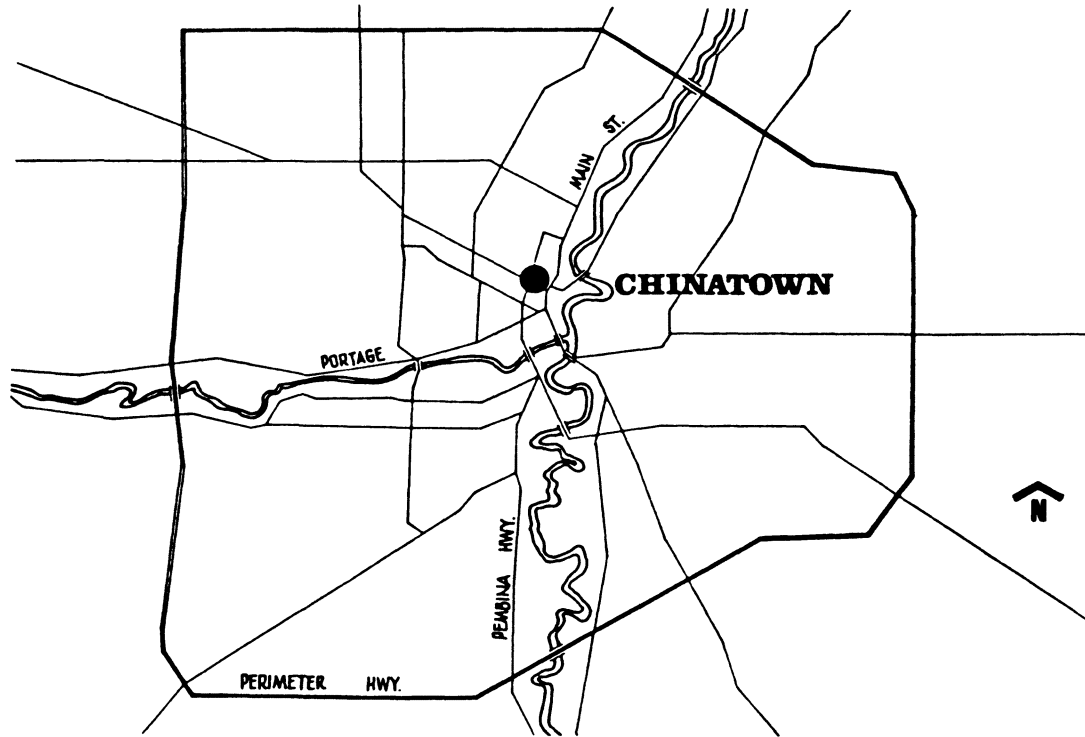
The area bordered by Main and Princess Streets to the

FIGURE 1

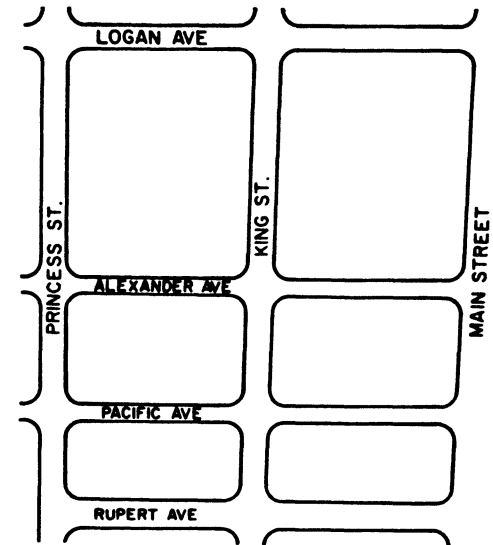
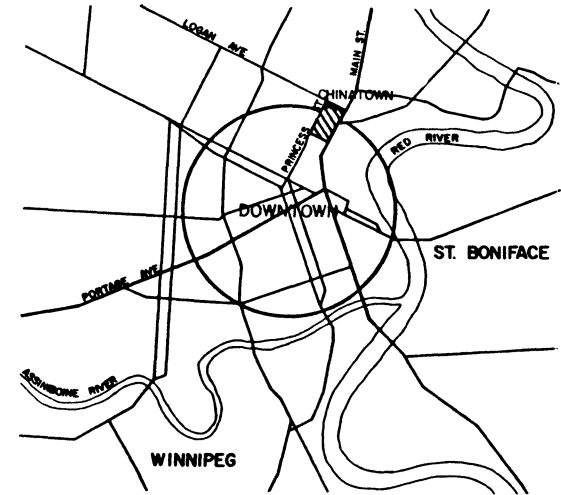
Distribution of Chinese Households in Winnipeg for 1971



FIGURE 2



**CHINATOWN LOCATION WINNIPEG**



SOURCE: C. Millien, E. Woo and P. Yeh  
da Roza, Gustavo, *Winnipeg Chinese Study* (1971).

east and west, and by Logan and Rupert Avenues to the north and south, was the area that later came to be known as Chinatown (Figure 2). The few rooming houses and apartments dispersed among factories and warehouses served transients, low income and minority groups. This was an area that included many vague occupancy listings. During the 1900s and 1910s the *Henderson Directory* reported some premises merely as “occupied,” others as “vacant,” and still others as “foreigners.” But frequently, occupancy listings were given as “Chinese” and early Chinese businesses are well documented in the directory. These listings, combined with other sources, can recapture Winnipeg’s Chinatown area.

The emergence of Chinatown coincided with the appearance of Chinese grocery stores. In 1905 the Quong Chong Tai Company opened its doors for business at 249 King Street and remained there until the 1920s. In 1906 Hong Wah & Company operated out of 223 Alexander Avenue. In 1906, a certain Wong You lived and/or transacted business at 258-260 King Street. By 1906 two Chinese merchant stores and four laundries were located in the Chinatown area.

By 1909 there was an expansion of Chinese business. The Wing Yuen & Company located its business at 225 Alexander Avenue, Shanghai Loo at 247 King Street, Tai Kong Chong Chin at 251 King Street, and a new laundry was located at 259 King. Man Sang Yuen Company was the first store on the west side of King Street at 232. The premises at 235, 257, and 262 King Street became individual Chinese residences. Wong Hong Cafe, the first of its kind, was opened at 273 Logan Avenue. In 1909 Tony Lee opened a laundry at 280 Logan Avenue, and in 1910 the Wing Wo Tai Company was established at 230 King Street. The Exchange Cafe at 610 Main seemed to have changed hands to Chinese proprietors the same year. The whole block between Alexander and Logan Avenue on King Street west was occupied by Chinese businesses and Chinese residences. King Street’s east side housed two merchant stores and possibly one cafe, as well as rooming facilities for Chinese. Alexander Avenue between Main and King Streets was the site of two Chinese companies. A beachhead was established on Main Street, but Pacific Avenue was not yet part of Chinatown proper.

Many Chinese establishments also rented space for accommodation for Chinese individuals. This practice of combining bunk-houses and general stores on relatively small premises came into conflict with the City Health Department, and representatives of four companies were brought to court because of the “congestion in their premise.” One newspaper reported that:

the main section of the places is devoted to trading business, but galleries and partitions secrete dozens of Celestials nightly, in quarters which are not conducive to health.<sup>9</sup>

While the Chinese were concentrated in Chinatown, it contained only about one-third of the community, an amount found in other Canadian cities.<sup>10</sup> It appears that the Chinese lived where their businesses took them. There was little separation of place of business and residence. The concentration of Chinese businesses in Chinatown thus accounts for the concentration of Chinese residents. But the nature of their businesses, such as laundries and restaurants catering to the general Winnipeg population, required many of them to establish themselves in other parts of the city, and long working hours made it convenient for single men to live behind their premises or close by their place of work. Chinatown was, however, a meeting place for all Chinese during their leisure time and as a shopping centre.

Although the first newspaper reference to “China town” appears in 1911, it may be said that the year 1909 marks the birth of Chinatown. It had taken on its distinct character, on the axis of King Street and Alexander Avenue. In the years following, Chinatown witnessed further expansion due to the increase of the Chinese population in Winnipeg. By 1923 several new businesses had opened, and Chinatown had spread further south on King Street, and some businesses had spilled over into Pacific Avenue. In the early 1920s, Chinatown was at the height of its development and remained there for the next few decades (Figure 3). As Chinatown developed, it served as a meeting place for informal gatherings for Winnipeg’s Chinese. Out of these informal activities grew the formal organizations primarily located in Chinatown, but used by the whole Chinese community in Winnipeg.

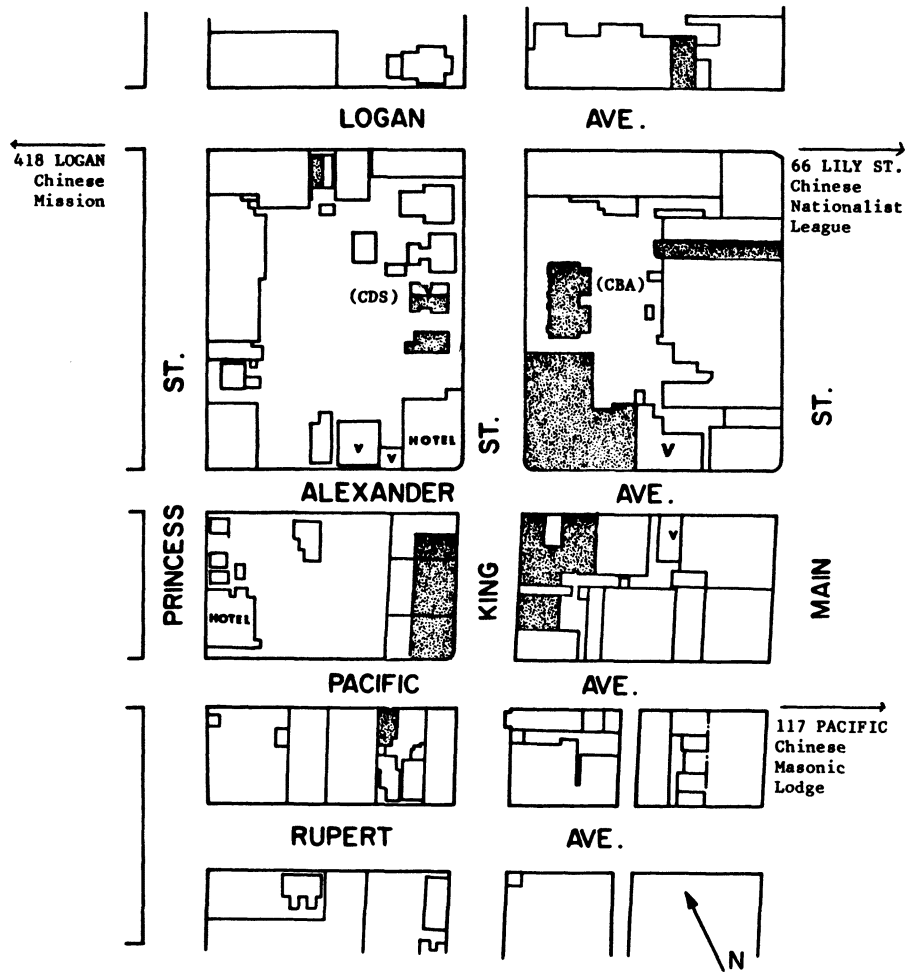
A comparison of businesses and organizations in Chinatown during 1923, 1947, and 1979 (Figures 3, 4, and 5) shows that the size of Chinatown, and even the spatial location of Chinese occupancy, has changed relatively little. Chinese occupancy covers roughly six small blocks. The number of businesses and organizations in Chinatown remained the same between 1923 and 1947, but declined slightly between 1947 and 1979. During a seventy-year period (1909 to 1979), the Chinese population in Winnipeg grew roughly twenty-fold. New arrivals after the 1940s moved to residential areas more suited to family life.

#### THE EMERGENCE OF CHINESE ORGANIZATIONS (1911-1947)

The formation of local organizations marked the beginning of a Chinese community structure that attempted to embrace all Chinese. Some of these organizations were open to all Chinese; others were open to members of homeland districts or by family ties only. Still others were philosophically exclusive. For those Chinese who had already belonged to secret societies in mainland China, it meant a continuation or renewal of such organizational bonds.

FIGURE 3

Winnipeg's Chinatown, 1923



ALEXANDER AVENUE

- 217 Wing Wo Tai Co.
- 219 Lee Man
- 221 Peking Cafe
- 223 Quong Wah Chong Co.
- 225 Wing Yuen & Co.
- 218 Kong Wah
- 220 Man Wo Tong Co.
- 224 Wah Sang Lung Co.

KING STREET

- 227 Chinese Residents
- 229 Mah Wah
- 231 Hop Hing (Tailor)
- 235 Kwong Wo Yuen & Co.
- 235½ LEE DUN DONG ASSOCIATION
- 237 Nam Chong & Co.
- 247 Chinese Residents
- 249 Quong Chong Tai Co.
- 251 Quong Yick Co.
- 253 Way Long (Barber)
- 257 Man Wo Chung Co.
- 259 Wo Hung
- 261 Lee Fat
- 263 CHINESE BENEVOLENT ASSOCIATION
- 228 Quong Lun Tai & Co.
- 230 Quong Yee Lung & Co.
- 232 Man Song Yuen Co.
- 234 Chong Shong Wing Kee
- 238 City Cafe
- 254 Lee Big
- 258 SAN WEI & HOK SAM CHARITABLE ASSOCIATION

PACIFIC AVENUE

- 117 CHINESE MASONIC LODGE
- 272 Woo Lee (Laundry)

LOGAN AVENUE

- 209 A.M. Cafe
- 418 CHINESE CHRISTIAN ASSOCIATION

MAIN STREET

- 610 Exchange Cafe

LILY STREET

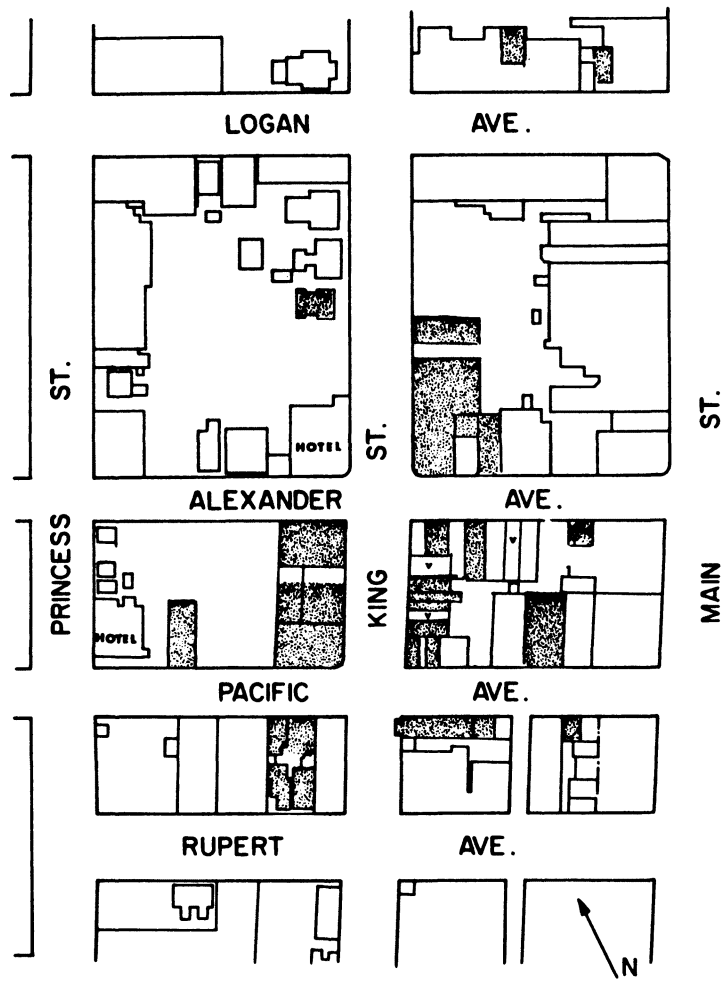
- 66 CHINESE NATIONAL LEAGUE

LEGEND: Chinese Businesses, Organizations and Residences

SOURCE: Henderson's Winnipeg Directory (1924).

FIGURE 4

Winnipeg's Chinatown, 1947



ALEXANDER AVENUE

- 219 Canton Chop Suey
- 223½ Chinese Residents
- 225 Chung Kung
- 208 Mandarin House
- 218 Yee Yuen Chop Suey House
- 222 Toy

KING STREET

- 227 Chinese Residents
- 231 Chinese Residents
- 233 San Fat Mang
- 235 Chinese Residents
- 239 Chinese Residents
- 249 George's Taxi
- 251 Kwong Sang Chong Co.
- 253 Man Wo Chong Co.
- 257 New Nanking Chop Suey
- 228 Chinese Residents
- 230 Chinese Residents
- 232 Wah Ping & Co.
- 234 CHINESE DRAMATIC SOCIETY
- 238 Shanghai Chop Suey
- 240 Wah Hing Co. Ltd.
- 260 Chinese Gift Shop
- 262 Lee

PACIFIC AVENUE

- 209 CHINESE NATIONALIST LEAGUE
- 211 Chinese Residents
- 223 Chinese Residents
- 227 Chicago Noodle Soup
- 281 CHINESE UNITED CHURCH
- 208 Chinese Residents
- 214½ Chinese Residents
- 220 Foo On Tong Drug
- 222 CHINESE MASONIC LODGE
- 268 Man Sang Yuen & Co.
- 270 Quong Wo Chong Kee
- 272 Quong Lee Lung Co.

LOGAN AVENUE

- 207 (Some Chinese Residents)
- 215½ (Some Chinese Residents)

MAIN STREET

- 610 Exchange Cafe

RUPERT AVENUE

- 271 Jim Wong Get
- 273 Woo Lee

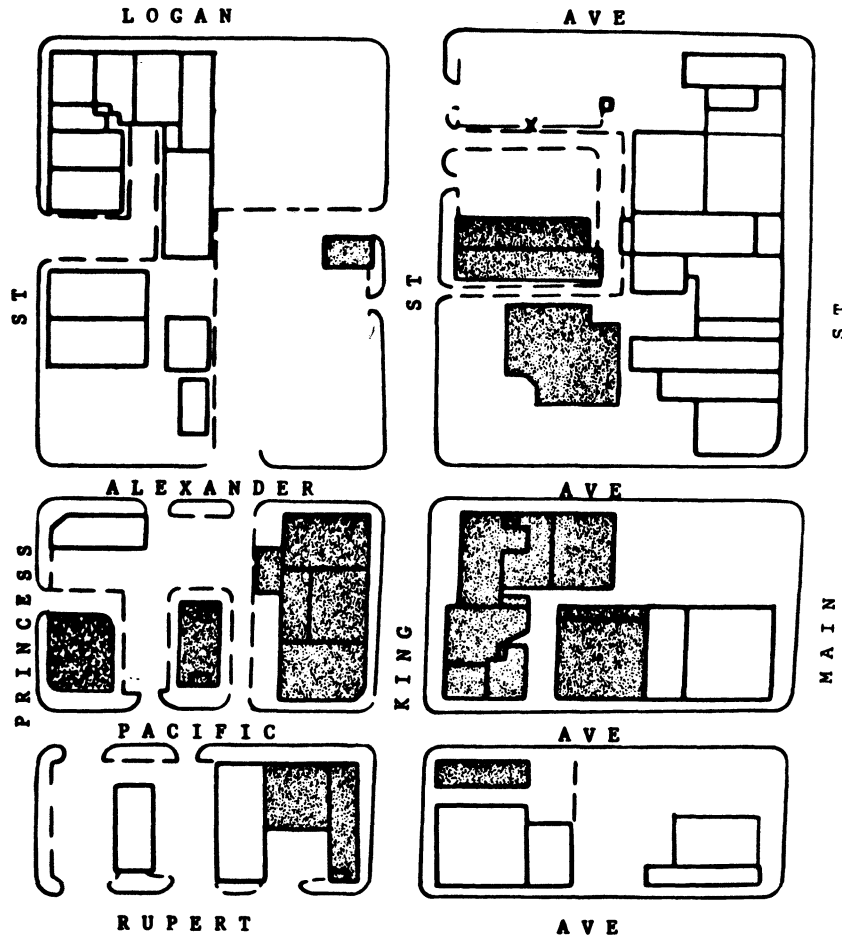
LEGEND: Chinese Businesses, Organizations and Residences

SOURCE: Henderson's Winnipeg Directory (1948).



FIGURE 5

Winnipeg's Chinatown, 1979



ALEXANDER AVENUE

- 214 Wong's Food Store
- 220 John Wong, Tailor
- 224 Alexander Steam Baths

KING STREET

- 229) Wah Hing Co. Ltd.
- 231) Louis Trading Co.
- 235 China Town Plaza
- 245 Nanking Chop Suey House
- 218 Unicorn Restaurant
- 228 Oriental Market & Co. Ltd.
- 232 Angie International Ltd. (Travel)
- 238) Shanghai Restaurant Ltd.
- 240) Kings Palace

PACIFIC AVENUE

- 209 Hop Wah Grocery
- 213 CHINESE NATIONALIST LEAGUE
- 213 CHINESE BENEVOLENT ASSOCIATION
- 281 CHINESE UNITED CHURCH
- 289 Sek On Toi

- 216 CHINESE MASONIC LODGE
- 222 CHINESE DRAMATIC SOCIETY
- 266 GEE HOW OAK TIN
- 268) Wah Hing Families
- 270)
- 272)

LEGEND: Chinese Businesses, Organizations and Residences

SOURCE: Gunter Baureiss

## Political Organizations

The two political organizations, Chee Kung Tong (Chinese Freemasons) and the Kuomintang (Chinese National League) attracted many members when they were formed locally. In February 1911, the Chee Kung Tong Lodge of Winnipeg was formed. This organization traces its origin to the beginning of the Manchu dynasty some three hundred years before. Its philosophy is based on the concept of freedom and brotherhood and the opposition to governments that interfere with the rights and freedom of the individual. The formation of the Winnipeg Chinese Masonic Lodge was reported by the *Free Press*, and vividly described from an occidental perspective.

At 8:30 on Saturday night the sound of heavy firing was heard from the vicinity of King Street and Alexander Avenue, and a heavy pungent smoke began to roll across the city toward the south. The noise resembled nothing so much as heavy rifle volleys, repeated again and again, and rising at times to a crashing roar, which made pedestrians on the neighboring street and for blocks around stop in their stride and turn in the direction of the sound, firmly convinced that a revolution or an invasion had commenced. But it was only the members of the Chee Kung Tong the new Chinese Masonic Lodge which has been formed in the city and which was formally opened on Saturday night, amid the rejoicing of 300 Celestials.<sup>11</sup>

From the outset, the Chinese Freemasons of Winnipeg favoured the teachings of Dr. Sun Yat-Sen. Dr. Sun visited North America several times to raise funds for the Chinese revolution. According to one oldtimer, he came to Winnipeg and was warmly received by a committee of the Chinese Masonic Lodge. Dr. Sun had a great influence on the local Chinese, who made generous financial contributions toward the revolutionary movement. The Chinese Masonic Lodge was said to have been located in Chinatown at the year of its formation. There is no record of its whereabouts in the first nine years of its existence, however, between 1920 and 1931 it was located two blocks east of Chinatown.<sup>12</sup>

The second patriotic fraternal society, the Kuomintang or Chinese Nationalist League (sometimes also referred to as the Chinese Patriotic League) was founded in Winnipeg August 2, 1915. It was a branch of the Kuomintang, a political party organized by Dr. Sun Yat-Sen in China. The Nationalist League also emphasized fraternity among its members. It proposed, for the local Chinese community of Winnipeg, betterment of their social conditions and the building of a sanitary and well-regulated Chinatown.<sup>13</sup> To achieve these objectives, it planned to protect its members and the Chinese generally "against the wiles of gambling, opium smoking and other vices."<sup>14</sup>

In November 1915, three months after its formation,

the Kuomintang's membership was reported at 150.<sup>15</sup> Its original location is not known. In 1917 the *Henderson Directory* listed its location at 263 King Street, where it remained until 1920. Thereafter the Chinese National League was relocated outside of Chinatown, but again moved to Chinatown in 1931 at its present location. In 1915 the *Free Press* reported the inception of a Chinese newspaper *The People's Outlook* in Winnipeg, in connection with the Chinese Nationalist League.

## Clan Association

The Chinese clan associations in Winnipeg, as elsewhere, stem from the traditional family structure in China. A patrilineal family with filial piety as the dominant element in the social structure of premodern China provided the context for most activities of an individual, and regulated and controlled much of the individual's behaviour. It defined the person's relationship with many of his associates and served as a model for other organizations.

The formation of Chinese clan associations in Winnipeg appears somewhat of a mystery. It is believed that they did not come into existence until the early 1920s. Not all Chinese in Winnipeg formed clan associations, although a relationship based on the clan played an important part in the lives of all Winnipeg's Chinese in the first half of this century. Chinese depended on these organizations for financial and other help, to settle internal disputes, and to provide a meeting place for socializing and for celebrations. However, since they were organized along kinship lines, many Chinese were not able to belong to any of them, and were thus excluded from their benefits. Oldtimers remember that by the 1920s clan associations already existed. Some of these were Gee How Oak Tin, and the family associations of the Lee's, the Ma's and the Wong's. The Gee How Oak Tin Association is the only association remaining.

## The Chinese Benevolent Association (CBA)

The Chinese Benevolent Association was originally founded in 1884 in Victoria, B.C., and welcomed all Chinese in need of assistance. The Chinese Benevolent Association's major objective was to establish goodwill among Chinese immigrants and to promote the social well-being of the Chinese community in general. The organization spread across Canada in the first two decades of this century, and its branches are independently governed bodies. No official record documenting its establishment in Winnipeg exists, but there is evidence of its location at 263 King Street between the years 1922 and 1927. It is believed that the local association ceased to operate for a number of years, but was reorganized. It resumed its activities in the 1960s and is now located at 209 Pacific Avenue.

## The Chinese Dramatic Society

The Chinese Dramatic Society was formed in 1921 and is one of the earliest Chinese cultural art organizations in Canada. Oldtimers say that it started as the San Wei & Hok Sam Charitable Association in the City Cafe in Chinatown. For its larger performances it rented the Columbia Theatre at 604 Main Street (now Fox Billards) and the since demolished Beacon Theatre. They showed Chinese movies and frequently staged performances, including Chinese operas. Most of these activities involved fund-raising. The Chinese Dramatic Society has attempted to present and maintain a small part of the tremendous repertoire of Chinese culture.

By the year 1923 all the major Chinese organizations in Winnipeg were formed and had set the tone of Chinese community activities for the decades to follow. Their involvement in Chinese community affairs was significant and worthwhile. They provided social activities that introduced a brighter side to the otherwise dull and mundane working life of the members. In recent decades some of the organizations became pressure groups and provided a common front to battle discrimination at different government levels. Others lacked the vitality to carry out their objectives in difficult times, such as the depression and war periods. In general, with the exception of the clan associations, all these organizations survive to the present day, still an essential part of the Chinese community of Winnipeg.

## Church Groups

The involvement of various Christian Churches with the Chinese in Canada can be viewed as a natural extension of their overseas missionary work. In Winnipeg this commitment has been traced back to the first Chinese arrivals here, with crystallization of a Chinese Christian Association led by a Chinese missionary, and continues to the present.

The Chinese Young Men's Christian Association was formed in 1913 by Wesley Lee and Frank C. Fun.<sup>16</sup> It made use of premises on Vaughan Street<sup>17</sup> (a good fifteen minutes walk from Chinatown) and according to oldtimers, Chinese continued to use these premises for physical exercise until the 1930s. Facilities used by the Chinese Y.M.C.A. for reading and community activities in the late 'teens and 1920s were located closer to Chinatown.

The oldtimers also used to attend Sunday School and Bible classes in various churches, usually at the invitation of church members, who would also teach them conversational English. According to one account, their number was well over one hundred in 1915. Some of the churches involved were the Young, Grace, Zion, Westminster and St. Andrews Churches.

Eventually, it became desirable to co-ordinate these informal English classes, for which purpose the Association of Chinese Teachers of Greater Winnipeg was organized in 1915.<sup>18</sup> Oldtimers report the existence of the Chinese Christian Association since 1917. By 1919 the Association was housed in a frame building at 418 Logan Avenue outside Chinatown.

The Chinese Christian Association under the direction of the Canadian Presbyterian Church marked the beginning of the Chinese Mission in Winnipeg. Financing was derived from small contributions by its Chinese members, from churches and from occasional fund-raising activities. For example, in 1923 the Wellington Dramatic Club of St. Jude's Church presented a play in aid of the Chinese Mission. In 1925, the Methodist, Presbyterian and Congregational Churches in Canada merged and became the United Church. Thus the Chinese Christian Association was the forerunner of the present Chinese United Church located at 281 Pacific Avenue.<sup>19</sup>

Two distinct features stand out in the history of Chinese involvement in church activities: first, the churches did not provide a focal point in their activities for the Chinese; second, the absence of a Chinese Mission in the heart of Chinatown until 1947. These two factors no doubt contributed significantly to the drastic drop in church involvement among Chinese in the 1920s and 1930s. Certainly, the immigration restrictions, preventing new Chinese immigrant arrivals, and the absence of Chinese families in Winnipeg, hampered church membership growth, but the location of the church outside of Chinatown at a time when Chinatown was an active community centre must have had an influence on the decline of church involvement in the period to follow.

Chinese organization in the early period focused on contact with their homeland through maintenance of fraternal and patriotic lodges and societies, formation of clan associations to maintain family ties, founding of benevolent associations to make life easier in Winnipeg, and the formation of social clubs and societies principally for lonely males. These organizations helped maintain a segregated sub-community with the focus on a geographical area. Contact with outside organizations was mainly through some Christian churches, which involved relatively few.

## THE MODERN PERIOD (1947-1979)

As times have changed for the Chinese community in Winnipeg, so have its organizations. The old organizations no longer need to focus, to any large extent, on catering to an isolated population suffering from discrimination. Rather, their efforts, along with the contributions of the new organizations, are aimed at maintaining Chinese tradition and culture within the framework of Canada's multicultural society.<sup>20</sup>

TABLE 2

Chinese Organizations in Winnipeg  
(Years of Formation)

1910-1919	Chee Kung Tong (Freemasons) (1911) Chinese Y.M.C.A. (1913) <sup>a</sup> Kuomintong (1915) Chinese Mission (1917) (Chinese United Church since 1925)
1920-1929	Chinese School <sup>c</sup> Chinese Benevolent Association (1922) Chinese Dramatic Society (1923) Lee Dun Dong Association (1923) <sup>a</sup> San Wei and Hok Sam Association (1923) <sup>a</sup> Gee How Oak Tin <sup>b</sup> Ma Association <sup>a,b</sup> Wong Association <sup>a,b</sup>
1930-1939	Anti-Japanese League (1939) <sup>a</sup>
1940-1949	
1950-1959	Chinese Student Association (1953) Chinese Canadian Citizen Association (1953) <sup>a</sup> Manitoba Chinese Fellowship (1959)
1960-1969	Chinese Christian Fellowship (1960) Chinese Alliance Church (1966)
1970-1979	Kung Fu Club (1972) Chinese Mandarin Church (1973) Manitoba Academy of Chinese Studies (1974) School of Chinese Alliance Church (1975) Chinese Institute of Language & Arts (1976) Chinese Ladies Club (1976)

NOTES: a) These organizations have ceased to exist.  
b) Exact formation date not known.  
c) The origin of the Chinese School in Winnipeg is unclear. Respondents have referred to its existence; it could have been embedded in another organization. Over the decades it shut its doors several times and closed around 1976.

SOURCE: Gunter Baureiss and Julia Kwong, *The History of the Chinese Community in Winnipeg* (Winnipeg, 1979), pp.35-48, 93-111.

Chinese organizations established in Winnipeg by the 1920s (except the clan associations) have survived. Some of them experienced radical reorganization; others continued to struggle for survival. New organizations emerged, prompted by the diversification of occupational interests or philosophical and cultural differences or both. The period from the end of World War II to the present thus features the formation of several new organizations with the major objective of maintaining and transmitting Chinese culture. Organizations date from either the pre-Depression era or from post-World War II period (Table

2). During the Depression and war no new organizations were formed.<sup>21</sup> The pre-World War II Chinese, who remained in Winnipeg, seemed to have had the resources, energy, and vision to maintain only the organizations established before 1930. With the influx of new Chinese immigrants after the war, changes and further growth occurred.

### Chinese Canadian Citizens Association of Manitoba

1953 marked the beginning of one such new organization, The Chinese Canadian Citizens Association of Manitoba under the presidency of Pat Low of Brandon. The purpose of the organization was:

to enable the several hundred members in Manitoba to become better citizens; to promote better understanding between Chinese and other Canadians, to enable new Chinese Canadians to become better acclimatized.<sup>22</sup>

The association is no longer in existence.

### Chinese Student Association

With the influx of Chinese students to Winnipeg in the 1950s, a Chinese student association was a natural outcome. The University of Manitoba Chinese Student Association was formed in 1953. Its initial membership of about one hundred has grown to over 250. In 1964 the Chinese Student Association started its own monthly publication, *The Chimes*. The association organizes various social and cultural activities, such as Chinese New Year banquets, summer outings, socials, a music group and sports. The association also supports the Chinese community with its varied talents at "Folklorama" and other celebrations.

### Manitoba Chinese Fellowship

The Manitoba Chinese Fellowship was formed in 1959, as the Manitoba Professional Club, by professors of the University of Manitoba. About ten families met in private homes. Later, its members felt their outreach was too narrow. They invited Chinese businessmen as guests, and realized, in order to reach out into the larger community, they would need to extend the club's boundaries by changing to a formal organization. To that end a new name was selected, the "Manitoba Chinese Fellowship," and a constitution was drawn up in 1970. Although membership is open to any family, of which at least one spouse is of Chinese ethnic origin, its 150 members are mainly professionals, business people and some students. The Fellowship's involvement is community-oriented, and it also organizes social activities, such as banquets, parties and picnics for its members.

## Winnipeg Chinese Christian Fellowship (W.C.C.F.)

The Winnipeg Chinese Christian Fellowship traces its beginning to 1960. With six members, the W.C.C.F. was officially formed in 1961. At that time the members decided to assist the Chinese United Church in its activities, such as with visitations, Sunday School and in its publication, *The Voice*. The membership has fluctuated between twenty to fifty ever since. In the summer of 1965, the Fellowship dissociated itself from the Chinese United Church due to differences in doctrinal beliefs.

## Winnipeg Chinese Alliance Church

The Winnipeg Chinese Alliance Church traces its origin to the Winnipeg Chinese Christian Fellowship, when Chinese Christians attending the University of Manitoba began outreach programmes among Chinese university students. Between the years 1959 to 1966, this group received occasional guidance from the Canadian Bible College and Regina's Alliance Church. It marked its formal inception in 1966 with Pastor A. Louis.

By 1970, membership had grown to about one hundred, and a church building at 300 Arlington Street was acquired. A range of activities, including Sunday services and Sunday School, were carried on. At present, the congregation consists of 180 members, with Sunday service attendance averaging 250. About half of the Church's members are permanent residents of Winnipeg; the other half represent a transient student population.

## Winnipeg Mandarin Church

The Winnipeg Mandarin Church has a relatively short history. It was an outgrowth of Bible classes in 1973. It has owned its own premises. Its services were at first held at the Lutheran Church, on the University of Manitoba campus, until 1978. At present it uses the Bethel Mennonite Church on Stafford every Sunday afternoon for services, Bible study, Sunday School and prayer meetings. The Winnipeg Mandarin Church is affiliated with the Mennonite Church and receives financial help from the latter.

Membership totals about one hundred, and around seventy-five are attending Sunday services. It attracts students primarily from Hong Kong, Taiwan, Singapore and Malaysia, as well as other immigrants and some Chinese Canadians. Despite the large student membership (approximately sixty per cent), membership is said to be fairly stable.

## Kung Fu Club

The Kung Fu Association is an outgrowth since 1972 of casual meetings by University of Manitoba students. At the invitation of the Chinese Benevolent Association, the

group moved to Chinatown, and in 1976 to the International Centre. It was then that the Chinese Canadian Kung Fu Association was formally formed.

## Chinese Schools

In order to preserve the Chinese language, the Chinese community of Winnipeg has maintained Chinese schools for at least five decades. The objectives of the Chinese schools have remained unchanged over that time: to impart the knowledge of the Chinese language and cultural heritage to Canadian-born Chinese.<sup>23</sup>

There are three major Chinese schools in Winnipeg, including the Chinese Alliance Church school, which started in 1975, the Manitoba Academy of Chinese Studies, begun in 1974, and the Chinese Institute of Language and Arts, which was formally registered in 1976.

Winnipeg's Chinese are no longer a homogenous group as was the case earlier. They speak different dialects, come from different regions of China, have various religious affiliations, and come from different socio-economic backgrounds. The schools are an outcome of each group's desire to perpetuate its special heritage within the framework of the "Canadian mosaic."

## Chinese Ladies Club

The Chinese Ladies Club was started in 1976 when several women responded to an invitation to participate in a fashion show at the International Centre of Winnipeg. Its objectives are to "provide mutual help among its members, foster friendship and to provide community service." The club operates from private homes and has approximately thirty members. It is a member of the Citizenship Council of Manitoba.

The Chinese Ladies Club offers a variety of community-oriented services, which have ranged from teaching Chinese classes to providing translation of various Chinese dialects. Its activities have included the co-hosting of festival celebrations, New Year's Eve dinner for senior citizens and socials.

## Summary of Organizational Development

In contrast to the early period of organizational development which concentrated more on Chinatown, the modern period since 1947 shows that Chinese organizations have proliferated in other parts of the city. This shift has occurred largely because the new Chinese immigrants, who came as families, were more educated, better trained and better off economically. They were thus integrated into various occupational groups and, with diminishing discrimination, moved into suburbs away from the centre of Winnipeg. Their organizations sought specific objec-

tives, reflecting the varied interests of a diverse Chinese population. This change is reflected in the emergence of various denominational churches, schools and social clubs. The geographical mobility made a central location for all organizations less essential, and several located in different parts of the city. While many of the businesses established in the early period remain in Chinatown, many Chinese businesses serving the Chinese and the general population have sprung up throughout the city.

This discussion of pre-World War II and post-war Chinese organizations shows that, while many of the organizations of the early period are still in existence, their functions have often been modified to fit the changing times. Since then new organizations have sprung up to fill modern needs as well. While the old modified organizations may still serve the needs of some Chinese, newly created organizations tend more to serve students, professionals and recent Chinese immigrants. In many ways the two groups represent very different backgrounds and needs. We have traced briefly the Chinese population's spatial and organizational changes that have taken place in Winnipeg during the past eighty years. Substantial changes have occurred, in both the segregated, traditional "bachelor" Chinatown community during the first fifty years, as well as in the more modern "family" type community dispersed throughout metropolitan Winnipeg, during the past thirty years.

### Conclusions

Originally, the Chinese came to Canada to make their fortune with the ultimate desire to return home. Chinese tradition, reinforced by discriminatory immigration policies, encouraged the Chinese to leave wives and children behind. Some went back to China to marry and produce offspring and then returned to this country.

As an ethnic group, the Chinese spoke a language incomprehensible to Canadians, followed cultural traditions different from those in Canada, and shared among themselves a similar standard of living. Based on their common ethnic background, and being denied full participation by the host society, close social bonds developed among the Chinese of Winnipeg in the downtown Chinatown area.

They transferred the loyalties and institutions of the Chinese villages to Winnipeg, setting up what came to be known as "Chinatown." In the process they transformed their indigenous customs and institutions to meet the special conditions under which they had to operate in the city of Winnipeg. These modifications in customs and institutions were essential not only to support the Chinese way of life, but also to protect the individual. The formation of the Chinese community produced integration among the Chinese, but, simultaneously, isolation from Canadians. The Chinese community slowed the process of

assimilation because it became the focal point of integration for its members.

Paradoxically, Canadian immigration laws, until 1947, stressed the ability to assimilate as a necessary prerequisite for immigrant groups. But the Chinese were given little chance to do so. In the early period, discrimination towards the Chinese by the Canadian government and the Winnipeg community, as well as Chinese traditional values, were factors contributing to the formation of the Chinese community. The Chinese had integrated into the Canadian society by a process of accommodation, making the necessary adjustments to conflicting situations between them and the larger community by maintaining social distance. Since 1947, however, the immigration laws have stressed unity in diversity or "the mosaic." Integration rather than assimilation became the focal point. In 1971 the Multicultural Policy was announced. Ethnic groups were encouraged to keep their traditions and customs as long as they did not interfere and directly violate those of the Canadian society. This philosophy has legitimized the existence of the Chinese community in recent years and the vital role it played in the integration of the Chinese into the larger community.

The breakdown of discriminatory barriers in immigration policies and the acceptance of the Chinese in occupations other than in the service industries, opened the doors of the larger community to the Chinese. Even though they keep some of their ethnic traditions, they have accepted Canada as their home and have assumed the Canadian way of life. More and more of the Chinese are living in suburbs. Even the less affluent have left Chinatown, though they have settled in fairly dense pockets in the older areas of the city.

In the past, Chinatown and the Chinese community were inseparable. At present, Chinatown remains the focus for some of the elderly and the poor. Several organizations have moved away from Chinatown, but there still exists a high concentration of Chinese businesses and organizations. But, Chinatown is not growing. Though the fate of Chinatown may be uncertain, the Chinese community of Winnipeg is flourishing.

Where once Chinese found refuge in their distinct ethnic community because of their own cultural characteristics on the one hand and the discrimination of the host society on the other, the pendulum has swung to the other side: acceptance of the Chinese by Canadians, resulting in new immigration. The favourable social climate presently enjoyed by the Chinese, and by other ethnic minorities as well, encourages the Chinese to take pride in their native heritage, and provides an incentive to perpetuate their traditions and ethnic community.

The Chinese population in Chinatown has decreased steadily. In 1971 about 130 to 135 Chinese lived there.<sup>24</sup>

By 1979 about fifty remained and more residents are being forced out as more buildings are declared by the authorities as unsafe for habitation. Today, most of the leaders of the Chinese community do not reside in Chinatown, though it is an integral part of the Chinese community. In particular, it is the location of many Chinese organizations which help to keep it alive.

Opinions about Chinatown vary. Some members of the younger generation have no desire to maintain the traditional, old Chinatown. A minority hold the view that the existing Chinatown should be destroyed altogether. Others would like to leave Chinatown as it is, and let individual businessmen remodel their premises as they wish. But some Chinese have not given up hope for a new Chinatown.

#### NOTES

1. M. Freeman, "Immigrants and Associations: Chinese in Nineteenth-Century Singapore," *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, Vol. 3 (October 1960), pp.25-48.
2. "Bachelor phase" refers to the period before World War II when Chinese males comprised ninety per cent of the Chinese population. The term reflects the life Chinese males led in Canada, but it is somewhat misleading in regard to their marital status because many were in fact married but had left their wives and children in China.
3. See G. Baureiss, "The Chinese Community of Calgary," *Canadian Ethnic Studies*, Vol. 2 (1971), pp.43-55; G. Baureiss, "The Formation of the Chinese Community in Calgary: A Historical Perspective," *Alberta Historical Review*, Vol. 22 (Spring 1974), pp.1-8; B. Hoe, *Structural Changes of Two Chinese Communities in Alberta* (Ottawa: National Museum of Man, Mercury Series, 1976); and E. Wickberg, "Some Problems in Chinese Organizational Development in Canada, 1923-1937," *Canadian Ethnic Studies*, Vol. 11 (November 1979), pp.88-98. Wickberg's comparative and highly misleading study of Chinese organizational development in five cities in Canada clearly shows the need for intensive longitudinal studies and their careful interpretation. For a response to Wickberg's article see G. Baureiss, "Chinese Organizational Development: A Comment," *Canadian Ethnic Studies*, Vol. 12 (November 1980), pp.124-130.
4. *Winnipeg Free Press*, November 19, 1877. The press, always on the lookout for sensationalism, reported the arrival of the first Chinese as a curiosity. Chinese activities, such as gambling, and police raids in Chinatown are also overrepresented in the newspapers. Stereotyping of the Chinese was a common practice.
5. *Ibid.*, January 16, 1878.
6. *Ibid.*, January 29, 1878.
7. The estimates vary depending on whether or not the more recent refugees from South East Asia are included.
8. Data in this section are based on an intensive community study and report presented to the Chinese Community Committee in Winnipeg, by Gunter Baureiss and Julia Kwong, *The History of the Chinese Community of Winnipeg* (Winnipeg, 1979), 138 pp.
9. *Winnipeg Free Press*, May 20, 1911, p.5.
10. Gunter Baureiss, "The Chinese Community in Calgary," *Alberta Historical Review*, Vol. 22 (Spring 1974), pp.1-8.
11. *Winnipeg Free Press*, February 20, 1911, p.20.
12. *Henderson's City Directory of Winnipeg* (1921-1932). The *Henderson Directory* was used extensively throughout the study. It is an annual listing of all residents of Winnipeg and their addresses.
13. *Winnipeg Free Press*, August 12, 1915, p.5.
14. *Ibid.*, November 15, 1915, p.5.
15. *Ibid.*, November 15, 1915, p.5.
16. *Ibid.*, March 7, 1925, p.2.
17. *Ibid.*, July 10, 1915, p.5.
18. *Ibid.*, March 30, 1915, p.5.
19. *Ibid.*, March 20, 1923, p.9.
20. Gunter Baureiss, "Chinese Organizational Development: A Comment," *Canadian Ethnic Studies*, Vol. 12 (November 1980).
21. The formation of the Anti-Japanese League in 1937 was an exception. It was formed for the specific purpose of soliciting moral and financial support for the war in China against Japan.
22. *Winnipeg Tribune*, July 20, 1953.
23. A good account of Chinese schools in 1975 is given in an essay entitled "Chinese Schools in Winnipeg," by Cynthia Cheung and Marlene Friesen, 1975.
24. B. Bullamore, R. Dubois and D. Leitch, *Chinatown Revitalization* (1971).