

## RESEARCH NOTE

### *In Search of the Lost Chinese Canadian Story: A Review and Research Note for The Diary of Dukesang Wong*

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WHEN *BC Studies* invited me to review *The Diary of Dukesang Wong*,<sup>1</sup> “the only known first-person account by a Chinese worker on the construction of the CPR,” I accepted with both high expectations and strong scepticism. As a participant in Stanford University’s “Chinese Railroad Workers in North America Project,” I had recently published two long articles on the Chinese builders of the Canadian Pacific Railway (CPR).<sup>2</sup> Fully aware of the incredible value of such first-hand historical accounts as *The Diary of Dukesang Wong*, I was eager to read it. However, after spending nearly a decade searching for relevant historical sources across both Canada and the United States from the west coast to the east coast, and from China’s northern cities to its southern villages from whence came the CPR’s Chinese builders, I was highly sceptical that such a rare historical treasure could exist with its contents intact.

When this highly anticipated book arrived, I read almost all of it in one evening, and this confirmed both my initial expectations and my scepticism. The book is indeed concerned with the extremely rare diary of an early Chinese immigrant, Dukesang Wong (Huang Dusheng 黄笃生

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\* I thank Professor Henry Yu for his generous offer of the original transcriptions of the “Register of Chinese Immigration to Canada, 1886–1949,” a project that he led along with W. Peter Ward in 2008. I would also like to express my gratitude to Mrs. Baoheng Jiao (for collecting Chinese newspaper reports about Dukesang Wong) and to the two anonymous reviewers for their inspiring and insightful comments on the earlier version of this article.

<sup>1</sup> David McIlwraith, ed., and Wanda Joy Hoe, trans., *The Diary of Dukesang Wong* (Vancouver: Talonbooks, 2020).

<sup>2</sup> Zhongping Chen, “The Construction of the Canadian Pacific Railway and the Transpacific Chinese Diaspora, 1880–1885,” in *The Chinese and the Iron Road: Building the Transcontinental Railroad*, ed. Gordon H. Chang and Shelley Fishkin with Hilton Obenzinger and Ronald Hsu (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2019), 294–313; and Zhongping Chen, “Chinese Labor Contractors and Laborers of the Canadian Pacific Railway, 1880–1885,” *Pacific Northwest Quarterly* 110, no. 1 (2019): 18–32.

in the pinyin spelling system, aka Huang Shizhe 黄世哲, ca. 1845–1931),<sup>3</sup> who came to Canada to work on the CPR in British Columbia in 1881 and later became a Chinese community leader in New Westminster. This book, however, is composed only of his granddaughter's translation of selected entries from Wong's original Chinese diary. With the help of two uncles, Wanda Joy Hoe translated extracts from the diary for an essay in an undergraduate sociology course at Simon Fraser University in 1966–67. The original diary, in seven hand-written notebooks, was later lost in a fire, but David McIlwraith, a writer and filmmaker, has rescued Hoe's translations from obscurity. McIlwraith arranged these into five major parts, which he supplemented with annotations and wove into a vivid life story of Dukesang Wong.<sup>4</sup>

What an incredibly valuable document Wong left us! Alas, how irretrievable the loss of this historical treasure! It is amazing that Hoe and McIlwraith managed to save parts of it; unfortunately, however, their work suffers from the limitations of the selected translations as well as from insufficient and sometimes incorrect commentaries. In reviewing *The Diary of Dukesang Wong*, I express my gratitude for what has been salvaged of this valuable book; in providing a research note, I offer corrections and additional historical context and sources. In doing so, I hope to enhance the book's scholarly value and thus draw attention to both its virtues and its problems.

Using the same textual analysis that I have employed to correct previous accounts of the CPR's four major Chinese labour contractors and the baseless claims about its fifteen or seventeen thousand Chinese railway labourers,<sup>5</sup> I rectify a few major factual errors in *The Diary of Dukesang Wong*. Although this book claims to be the "the only known first-person account by a Chinese worker on the construction of the CPR," a 1926 memoir by Wong Hau-hon (Huang Houhan 黄厚汉), a CPR builder from the Taishan county of Guangdong province, was published in Chinese in 1971 and in English in 2006.<sup>6</sup> While *The Diary of Dukesang*

<sup>3</sup> For the issues of Wong's two names in the Romanized system and Chinese characters as well as his lifespan, see my analysis below.

<sup>4</sup> McIlwraith and Hoe, *Diary of Dukesang Wong*, 9–12.

<sup>5</sup> Chen, "Chinese Labor Contractors and Laborers of the Canadian Pacific Railway."

<sup>6</sup> Wong Hau-hon, "Reminiscences of an Old Chinese Railroad Worker," in *Chinese American Voices: From the Gold Rush to the Present*, ed. Judy Yung, Gordon H. Chang, and Him Mark Lai (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2006), 39–42. This Chinese memoir was first published in *East/West* on 7 May 1971, p. 6, and it was then translated by Him Mark Lai into English and republished in 2006. I have not seen the Chinese version of this memoir in *East/West*, but there is a photocopy of it: "Lao Huagong de zishu" [A memoir of an old Chinese railway worker], in Yuk Ow collection, fol. 22, carton 26, Ethnic Studies Library of the University of California in Berkeley.

*Wong* has only six selected entries that generally describe Wong's life and work on the CPR from 1881 to 1886, Wong Hau-hon's memoir contains more concrete information relating to the working units of Chinese railway labourers, their suffering due to harsh and racist treatment, their death figures, and so on.

Nevertheless, *The Diary of Dukesang Wong* is an extraordinary addition to this previously published "first-person account" of a Chinese railway worker. More important, it is a comprehensive account of what Wong experienced, witnessed, and contemplated on both sides of the Pacific – in China and in North America – over nearly five decades. It starts with his account of how his family, which during the Qing dynasty (1644–1912) was part of the elite class, declined after the 1867 murder of his father, a county magistrate. The personal account then follows Wong's migration to Portland, Oregon, in 1880 and to British Columbia in 1881. It reveals how he and other Chinese labourers suffered from racial discrimination in both countries and from the hard and hazardous railway work. The story ends with the tale of Wong's struggle for personal fortune and family fame as he became a successful tailor, a proud family man with a wife and seven children, and a highly respectable community leader in New Westminster's Chinatown in the 1890s. The last diary entry in 1918 concludes with Wong's performance of both Buddhist and Christian rituals at the birth of his only daughter – this after he had struggled for decades to achieve a psychological balance between Chinese and Western cultures.<sup>7</sup>

Indeed, Wong was one of the very few Chinese labourers to have come from a formerly elite family, to have received a classical education, and to have kept a record of his personal experience. The accounts of his contacts with a French missionary in late Qing China, of Chinese migrants on a "Christian missionary vessel" crossing the Pacific, of their interactions with Indigenous people in Canada, and of their great torments due to the hazards of working on the CPR are all rare and valuable. In particular, the diary includes Wong's records of and reflections on his personal contacts with Sun Yat-sen (Sun Zhongshan 孙中山, 1866–1925), the future "father of republican China," during the latter's fundraising trip to New Westminster for the anti-Qing revolutionary cause.<sup>8</sup> Sun

<sup>7</sup> McIlwraith and Hoe, *passim*. esp. 15–20, 23–25, 57–63, 84–91, 99–106. On page 50, the photo of the tombstone of Wong's only daughter, Elsie Hoe Wong, shows that she was born in 1914. Thus, the entry might either be misdated as 1918 or be a record of Wong's reflection on her fourth birthday. Moreover, Wong's oldest son was from his first wife, and they did not come to Canada (David McIlwraith, email to author, 19 May 2021).

<sup>8</sup> McIlwraith and Hoe, 30–36, 58–62, 102.

launched a revolution against the Qing dynasty from Honolulu in 1894. His fundraising trip to Canada for his tenth anti-Qing uprising in early 1911 occurred just before the Republican Revolution broke out in China on 10 October and Sun became the provisional president of the new Republic of China effective 1 January 1912.<sup>9</sup> Thus, this book, including its record of Wong's meeting with Sun, is highly valuable not only for the history of modern China but also for Chinese Canadian history.

Yet the book has room for improvement. Hoe's translation of selected entries in *The Diary of Dukesang Wong* makes it hard to use chronological order of the original Chinese text to ascertain the locations of Wong's birthplace and some of his important activities. She and her uncles had to estimate the dates of some entries in the diary. Moreover, McIlwraith assumes that "nothing significant about Dukesang Wong's life in North America entered the official record. His name never appeared in a newspaper or a court filing."<sup>10</sup> Thus, McIlwraith does not appear to have checked such available sources as the Canadian census, immigration data, vital statistics, newspaper reports, and Chinese community documents from New Westminster. An exploration and examination of these sources could correct and corroborate both the English translations and the original diary.

For the study of Chinese Canadian history, one basic but difficult issue is the identification of a Cantonese migrant as she or he will have multiple names. A male migrant would have a personal name (*ming*) at birth, but he could also have a literary name (*zi*) after he enters a school and a social name (*hao*) once he enters adulthood.<sup>11</sup> English media often referred to Chinese Canadian merchants by the names of their business establishments.<sup>12</sup> A married female migrant from China could use both her original name and a name composed of her husband's surname, her maiden name, and the word "shi 氏" (for a lady). Both male and female

<sup>9</sup> For Sun's fundraising trip across Canada in early 1911, see Zhongping Chen, "Vancouver Island and the Chinese Diaspora in the Transpacific World," *BC Studies* 204 (2019–20): 62–64.

<sup>10</sup> McIlwraith and Hoe, 12.

<sup>11</sup> As an example of one Cantonese man with multiple names, the world-renowned Sun Yat-sen had at least five names, not to mention his use of nearly ten aliases for secret revolutionary activities. See Chen Xiqi, ed., *Sun Zhongshan nianpu changbian* [Long draft of the chronological life of Sun Yat-sen] (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1991), vol. 1, 3, 26, 36–37; Marie-Claire Bergère, *Sun Yat-sen*, trans. Janet Lloyd (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1998; originally published Paris: Fayard, 1994), vii–viii.

<sup>12</sup> I thank one anonymous reviewer of this article for making this point. For example, one well-known Chinese merchant in Vancouver, Chang Toy (Chen Cai 陈才, a.k.a. Chen Daozhi 陈道之, 1857–1921), often appeared in local English newspapers as "Sam Kee," the name of his company. See Paul Yee, "Sam Kee: A Chinese Business in Early Vancouver," *BC Studies* 69–70 (1986): 70–96.

migrants from Guangdong province could shorten their names from three characters to two characters in North America, and their names could be spelled in different ways. Thus, in *The Diary of Dukesang Wong*, Wong's wife is recorded as Lin Ying in the entry of "Spring 1892," but her original name appears as Zhen Lianying 甄莲英 on her tombstone, and another of her names is Wong Lin Ying,<sup>13</sup> or "Wong Gin She" ("Huang Zhen Shi" in pinyin spelling).<sup>14</sup> For Wong himself, his other name in Chinese, Huang Shizhe 黄世哲, can be seen in the photo of his tombstone.<sup>15</sup> However, the book's editor seems to have used neither of these names to search for Chinese records about his personal and political activities.

In fact, Dukesang Wong could be identified with the name of Huang Dusheng 黄笃生, a well-known early Chinese immigrant in New Westminster, because, in the Cantonese dialect, the former could be phonetically translated into the latter.<sup>16</sup> More important, in the available documents of New Westminster's Chinese Benevolent Society from the 1910s to the 1920s, Huang's (or Wong's) name in Chinese, 黄笃生, often appeared as that of a major leader.<sup>17</sup> This communitywide organization in New Westminster's Chinatown incorporated members of different local and surname groups, providing them with various kinds of help through its hospital and other facilities, and protecting them from racial discrimination.<sup>18</sup> From its beginning, Wong was one of the major leaders of this community organization.<sup>19</sup> The Vancouver-based *Da-Han gongbao* (Chinese Times) had reports about Huang's (or Wong's) active

<sup>13</sup> McIlwraith and Hoe, 50 (photo of Wong Lin Ying's gravestone), 84.

<sup>14</sup> Wong Jen She, Census of Canada, 1921, Library and Archives Canada (hereafter LAC), <https://www.bac-lac.gc.ca/eng/census/1921/Pages/results.aspx?k=cnsSurname%3a%22wong%22+AND+cnsGivenName%3a%22jen+she%22>. She is listed under "Wong Duck San" on the original page of the census, and "Gin" is the old spelling of her maiden name, "Zhen." But the census database incorrectly transcribes her maiden name as "Jen."

<sup>15</sup> McIlwraith and Hoe, 50.

<sup>16</sup> I thank Mr. Guo Ding, the producer of OMNI BC Mandarin News, for providing the information about this phonetic translation in a Chinese advertisement for the University of the Fraser Valley's book-reading on 7 May 2021, where McIlwraith discussed *The Diary of Dukesang Wong*. The translator for the advertisement, Chris Pereira (Peng Jiarong), used only the Cantonese dialect for the phonetic translation from "Wong Dukesang" into "Huang Dusheng" in the three same Chinese characters as appear in the historical documents cited below.

<sup>17</sup> Huang Dusheng, New Westminster Chinese Benevolent Society Fonds: Record Detail, New Westminster Archives, <http://archives.newwestcity.ca/search.aspx>; and minutes of meetings of the Chinese Benevolent Society, 1915–1929, box 1, file 1, archival no. IH 980.30, in New Westminster Chinese Benevolent Society Fonds, New Westminster Museum and Archives.

<sup>18</sup> Jim Wolf and Patricia Owen, *Yi Fao: A History of New Westminster's Chinese Community* (New Westminster: New Westminster Museum and Archives, 2008), 126–31.

<sup>19</sup> McIlwraith and Hoe, 100.

leadership in the Chinese Benevolent Society and his other community activities,<sup>20</sup> such as his donation to establish a middle school in Taishan county in 1920. An account of a Chinese community meeting on 27 May 1920 included both of Wong's two names, Huang Dusheng and Huang Shizhe, with the former being used by a reporter to refer to him as a prominent attendee and the latter probably being his signature on a list of donors.<sup>21</sup> Because it fails to recognize Wong's name in Chinese characters, the book misses important information about him.

Although kinship and local fellowship were extremely important among early Chinese in Canada with regard to their individual pursuits, mutual help, and social contacts,<sup>22</sup> *The Diary of Dukesang Wong* does not provide information about his personal relations with the overwhelming majority of early Chinese migrants from Guangdong province in southern China. Instead, it puzzles its readers with information about the cultural barrier between them and Wong, who grew up in northern China and seemed to have no connections with the southern emigrants from Guangdong. Both Hoe's translations and McIlwraith's commentaries suggest that Wong lived with his parents in the area north of the capital city of Qing China, Beijing, in the 1860s. He then left and became the tutor of a family in the area around Tianjin or Shanghai from 1873 to 1880 and secured the betrothal of the infant girl, Lin Ying, in 1879.<sup>23</sup> In the subsequent entry of "Spring 1880," Wong recorded his decision to migrate to "the land of the Golden Mountains," or North America. Living among the CPR labourers from Guangdong province in the early 1880s, he found it difficult to understand their "village language" and looked for opportunities to speak his "own language," a northern Chinese dialect, and to hear news from his homeland.<sup>24</sup>

If Wong had kept such a cultural chasm and had no close relations with the migrants from Guangdong province, it is hard to understand how he could have become not only the president of their Benevolent Association in New Westminster but also, around 1903, the head of the clan association of "all of the Wong name" from Guangdong in New Westminster.<sup>25</sup> In fact, an extant 1885 stub of a donation receipt from Victoria's Chinese Consolidated Benevolent Association to Huang Dusheng,

<sup>20</sup> *Da-Han gongbao* [Chinese Times], 13 October 1920.

<sup>21</sup> *Da-Han gongbao*, 27 May 1920.

<sup>22</sup> Li Quan'en (David Chuenyan Lai), Ding Guo, and Jia Baoheng, *Jianada Huaqiao yiminsi* [History of Chinese migration to Canada] (Beijing: Renmin chubanshe, 2013), 72–75, 80–81.

<sup>23</sup> McIlwraith and Hoe, 3, 25, 29–34, 38–39. For question about the birth year of Lin Ying, see my discussion below.

<sup>24</sup> McIlwraith and Hoe, 34, 58, 62.

<sup>25</sup> McIlwraith and Hoe, 100.



or Dukesang Wong, clearly indicates that his *jiguan* 籍貫, or “native place,” was Xinning,<sup>26</sup> the future Taishan county and the homeland of 22.9 percent of Chinese or Guangdong immigrants to Canada in the early 1880s.<sup>27</sup> His immigration record in 1891 confirmed that his “place of birth” was Shai Chun, Sun Ning, the old spellings for the village of Xichun, and the county of Xinning, or the future Taishan.<sup>28</sup> A Chinese newspaper in 1920 also reported him as an “overseas sojourner from Taishan county” (*Taiqiao*) who had made a donation for a newly built middle school in that county.<sup>29</sup>

These records strongly suggest that Wong was probably born in Taishan county and that he was at least a clansman of the Huang (or Wong) lineage in Guangdong province, which sent 8.2 percent of Chinese migrants to Canada, especially British Columbia, in the 1880s.<sup>30</sup> Even if born in northern China, he could still follow the Chinese custom of claiming his father’s birthplace, Xinning county in Guangdong province, as his own *jiguan*, or native place. It seems that Wong did live in northern China until his betrothal to Lin Ying in 1879 or the next year. Their photo on the book cover shows her putting on a pair of “boat shoes,” as Manchu women did in northern China at that time, rather than showing her with bound feet, as was usual for female Cantonese migrants who posed for nineteenth-century photos.<sup>31</sup> However, Wong evidently moved to Taishan country or at least maintained contacts with his clanspeople there before migrating to the United States in 1880. This is evident because in his diary that year he used the specific phrase “the Golden

<sup>26</sup> Chinese Consolidated Benevolent Association Fonds, box 2, fol. 13, acc. no. 1977-084, University of Victoria Archives. Victoria’s Chinese Consolidated Benevolent Association represented all Chinese in Canada in the 1880s, and Huang made his donation from New Westminster.

<sup>27</sup> Chuen-yan David Lai, “Home County and Clan Origins of Overseas Chinese in Canada in the Early 1880s,” *BC Studies* 27 (1975): 4, 6. The county of Xinning was renamed Taishan in 1914.

<sup>28</sup> Wong Duck Shang, General Register of Chinese Immigration, LAC, <https://www.bac-lac.gc.ca/eng/discover/immigration/immigration-records/immigrants-china-1885-1949/Pages/item.aspx?IdNumber=8626&>. This 1891 immigration record traces Wong’s immigration to Canada to 1881, which accords well with the entry of “Early Summer 1881” in McIlwraith and Hoe, 54–57. But it lists his birth year as different from that on his tombstone, an issue that I discuss below.

<sup>29</sup> *Da-Han gongbao*, 27 May 1920.

<sup>30</sup> Lai, “Home County and Clan Origins of Overseas Chinese,” 8.

<sup>31</sup> The book’s copyright page identifies the “cover photo [as] courtesy of Victor Calvin Hoe.” He is a brother of Wanda Joy Hoe, and the photo is a picture of their grandparents, Dukesang Wong and Lin Ying (David McIlwraith, email to author, 19 May 2021). Because the Qing dynasty banned intermarriage between the Manchu and Chinese, it seems unlikely that Lin Ying was of Manchu origin. Even if she was from the Hakka ethnic group (guest people) in southern China, whose women did not bind their feet in the late nineteenth century, it would be unlikely that she would follow this Manchu custom from northern China. This would also be true for southern Cantonese women with bound feet.

Mountains” (“Gum Shan” in Cantonese), a well-known local reference to North America or Australia used by people in Guangdong province. Thus, although Wong grew up in northern China and found it hard to understand the extremely diverse dialects spoken by the CPR workers from villages in Guangdong province, his kinship and local fellowship with those from Taishan county obviously enabled him to cross these linguistic barriers and, finally, to master their various dialects.

Another issue with *The Diary of Dukesang Wong* concerns the confusion arising from the assumed dates of its translated entries: even McIlwraith questions the age of Wong’s wife, Lin Ying, in the translations. Although her tombstone dates her birth as 1880, Hoe’s translations of two entries in Wong’s diary respectively date her birth to 1879 and her marriage to 1889, when she would have been only nine or ten years old.<sup>32</sup> Based on Hoe’s family history information, McIlwraith dates the marriage as 1891 or 1892, when Lin Ying would have been thirteen or fourteen years old, and states that, “except for the question arising around Lin’s age, no other inconsistencies with dates appear in the diary.”<sup>33</sup> In fact, a check of available sources shows little confusion over her age because her birth is dated as 1880 on both her gravestone and death certificate in 1980,<sup>34</sup> and just slightly different (at 1881) in the Canadian census of 1921.<sup>35</sup> There are, however, more serious inconsistencies between the translated diary entries and other records when it comes to Wong’s age, personal activities, and political involvements. Although his tombstone dates his birth as 1845,<sup>36</sup> his birth year appeared to be 1848 in his 1931 death certificate,<sup>37</sup> 1849 in his immigration record from 1891,<sup>38</sup> and 1850 in the Canadian census of 1921.<sup>39</sup>

More important, the translation of the 1903 entry in *The Diary of Dukesang Wong* dates both the formation of the Chinese “Benevolent Association” in New Westminster and Wong’s election as its president

<sup>32</sup> McIlwraith and Hoe, 33, 39, 50, 83.

<sup>33</sup> McIlwraith and Hoe, 95, 100.

<sup>34</sup> McIlwraith and Hoe, 50; death certificate of “Lin Ying Wong,” Genealogy, BC Archives (hereafter BCA), <http://search-collections.royalbcmuseum.bc.ca/Image/Genealogy/529f8373-d64f-4fb7-a454-105e9419c4ff>.

<sup>35</sup> Wong Jen She, Census of Canada, 1921, LAC.

<sup>36</sup> McIlwraith and Hoe, 50.

<sup>37</sup> Death certificate of Wong Duke Sang, Genealogy, BCA, <http://search-collections.royalbcmuseum.bc.ca/Genealogy/>.

<sup>38</sup> Wong Duck Shang, General Register of Chinese Immigration, LAC.

<sup>39</sup> Wong Duck San, Census of Canada, 1921, LAC, <https://www.bac-lac.gc.ca/eng/census/1921/Pages/results.aspx?k=cnsSurname%3a%22wong%22+AND+cnsGivenName%3a%22du ck+san%22>. It is possible that, later on, in public records Wong deliberately narrowed the gap between his age and that of his much younger wife.



to that year.<sup>40</sup> But this community association appeared in the 1880s and submitted a petition to the City Council for a Chinese cemetery in 1888. Wong probably became its major leader around 1904, when it erected a building to serve as both its hospital and office.<sup>41</sup> Indeed, the organization's records demonstrate that he frequently attended or presided over its meetings in the 1910s and 1920s and was its president when its premises were rebuilt in 1920.<sup>42</sup>

The most significant record in *The Diary of Dukesang Wong* is its account of Wong's personal meeting with Sun Yat-sen in New Westminster just before the latter became the first elected provisional president of the newly established Republic of China at the end of 1911. Unfortunately, the entry regarding this meeting is erroneously dated as "Spring 1908," and it includes a record of Sun's remark on the ruling "Dowager Empress" in the Qing court. The next entry, that of "Winter 1908," announces the "death of the Dowager Empress."<sup>43</sup> McIlwraith comments that the date of "Spring 1908" could be a mistake either in the original diary or in translation because "most historians of the time suggest that Sun made only three visits to Canada, the first in 1897, followed by two more in 1910 and 1911." McIlwraith presents another possible explanation: that "Sun did, indeed, visit the city that year" in secrecy because "he was in the United States in 1907–1908." He also presents a misdated description of Sun's trip to British Columbia in 1910.<sup>44</sup>

In fact, the most authoritative biography on Sun Yat-sen indicates that he visited Canada only twice: from 11 July to 2 August 1897, and from 4 February to 19 April 1911,<sup>45</sup> although previous publications in Chinese Canadian history often list Sun's Canadian tours as occurring in 1897, 1910, and 1911, respectively.<sup>46</sup> Recent publications have confirmed

<sup>40</sup> McIlwraith and Hoe, 100.

<sup>41</sup> Wolf and Owen, *Yi Fao*, 126.

<sup>42</sup> Minutes of meetings of the Chinese Benevolent Society, 1915–1929; *Da-Han gongbao*, 13 October 1920.

<sup>43</sup> McIlwraith and Hoe, 102–3.

<sup>44</sup> McIlwraith and Hoe, 110. McIlwraith's detailed description regarding the misdated Sun Yat-sen visit to British Columbia in 1910 does not indicate the source of his information. It is actually based on Barbara Roden's "Golden Country: Past, Present, and Beyond – Chinatown," *Ashcroft-Cache Creek Journal*, 23 August 2016, <https://www.ashcroftcachecreek-journal.com/our-town/golden-country-past-present-and-beyond-chinatown/> (McIlwraith, email to author, 19 May 2021).

<sup>45</sup> Chen Xiqi, *Sun Zhongshan nianpu changbian*, vol. 1, 139–44, 525–30.

<sup>46</sup> The claim about Sun's three visits to Canada in 1897, 1910, and 1911, respectively, first appeared in Li Donghai, *Jianada Huaqiaoshi* [A history of the Chinese in Canada] (Vancouver: Jianada ziyou chubanshe, 1967), 301–2, but Li did not provide any supportive evidence. Edgar Wickberg, Harry Con, Ronald J. Con, Graham Johnson, and William E. Willmott, *From China to Canada: A History of the Chinese Communities in Canada* (Toronto: McClelland and

Sun's trips in 1897 and 1911, including his visit to New Westminster in March 1911, but reject the claim that he visited Canada in 1910.<sup>47</sup> No hard evidence supports McIlwraith's assumption that Sun visited the United States in 1907–08 and then made a secret visit to New Westminster in spring 1908.<sup>48</sup>

Thus, the entry regarding Wong's meeting with Sun Yat-sen in New Westminster should be correctly dated to March 1911, when the latter visited the city.<sup>49</sup> The translator probably misdated it to "Spring 1908" by placing its record of Sun's remark about the ruling "Dowager Empress" in the Qing court before the account of the "death of the Dowager Empress" in the correctly dated entry of "Winter 1908."<sup>50</sup> The well-known Empress Dowager Cixi did indeed die on 15 November 1908, but her nephew, Emperor Guangxu, had died mysteriously just one day before. Thereafter, Emperor Guangxu's principal wife, a niece of Cixi, became the next empress dowager in the Qing court and remained so until its collapse in February 1912.<sup>51</sup> And it was she who was the subject of Sun's remark upon meeting Wong in New Westminster in March 1911. Because he did not check Hoe's translations in their historical context, McIlwraith's commentary and inference have caused additional confusion.

Further research of available sources could complement the existing diary extracts and compensate for the loss of Wong's original diary, especially those entries concerning his political activities on behalf of both modern China and Chinese Canadian communities. After Sun Yat-sen served for a short while as the provisional president of Republican China in early 1912, he had to concede the presidency to military strongman Yuan Shikai 袁世凯 (1859–1916). Yuan later became

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Stewart, 1982), 76, 88n10, cite Li's claim but fail to check its accuracy with primary sources. This claim has also been followed by other works in Chinese Canadian history, such as Huang Kunzhang and Wu Jinping, *Jianada Huaqiao Huaren shi* [A history of Chinese sojourners and settlers in Canada] (Guangzhou: Guangdong gaodeng jiaoyu chubanshe, 2001), 141–42.

<sup>47</sup> For recent studies of Sun's visits to Canada, see Chen Zhongping, "Weiduoliya, Wengehua yu haineiwai Huaren de gailiang he geming, 1899–1911" [Victoria, Vancouver, and Chinese reforms and revolutionary movements at home and abroad, 1899–1911], *Shehui kexue zhanxian* 11 (2017): 91–94; Liu Weiseng, ed., *Quan-Mei dangshi* [A history of the Chinese Nationalist Party in the US] (San Francisco: Zhongguo guomindang zhu Meiguo zongzhibu, 2009), vol. 1, 108–32; 54–55; Li, Ding, and Jia, *Jianada Huaqiao yiminshi*, 187, 190–95.

<sup>48</sup> Sun mainly acted in Japan and Southeast Asia during these two years. See Chen Xiqi, *Sun Zhongshan nianpu changbian*, vol. 1, 390–456.

<sup>49</sup> Chen, "Vancouver Island and the Chinese Diaspora in the Transpacific World," 63.

<sup>50</sup> McIlwraith and Hoe, 102–3. Another possibility is that the page for the 1911 entry was misplaced before the page for the 1908 entry in the original diary, and the misplacement of the two entries was followed by the translator.

<sup>51</sup> Li Chien-nung, *The Political History of China, 1840–1928*, trans. Ssu-yu Teng and Jeremy Ingalls (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1956), 227, 253, 266.

notorious because his Beijing regime accepted most of the “twenty-one demands” that Japan made on 18 January 1915 for special rights and even for political control over China, and he subsequently made a reactionary attempt to turn his military dictatorship into an emperorship. In response to the twenty-one demands, Chinese protested both at home and abroad.<sup>52</sup> In March 1915, Dukesang Wong led a large protest meeting at the Patriotic School building in New Westminster’s Chinatown. In his opening speech, he reported the fundraising activities that had taken place and the gains the movement had made against Japan’s twenty-one demands. A series of passionate speeches by nine male and three female students followed. Thereafter, Huang and another leader encouraged the students to develop their patriotic and martial spirit, and urged adult Chinese to take responsibility for the training of such young people.<sup>53</sup>

After Yuan died in mid-1916, having failed to establish his new dynasty, his military successors became so-called warlords, “the leaders of personalized armies who dominated civilian administration in a state of political disunity,” and who controlled both the Beijing government and some provinces, including Guangdong, treating them as their respective domains.<sup>54</sup> In New Westminster, Dukesang Wong won the election to be president (*zhengdong*) of the Chinese Benevolent Association at its plenary meeting on 11 April 1917, and in September he held a special meeting to discuss raising funds to fight against a warlord’s tyrannical rule in Guangdong, the home province of most Chinese immigrants living in Canada. At this meeting, Wong was elected chief of the “Fund-raising Bureau” (*Chouxianjia ju zhang*), which was composed of more than thirty local Chinese community activists. In February 1921, Wong heard that the warlord-controlled Beijing government had tried to get a loan from foreign banks for its war against the separate Canton government, which was under Sun Yat-sen’s leadership. He led New Westminster’s Chinese Benevolent Association in a discussion about this issue, the result being that the association sent two telegrams to the head of the banks’ consortium protesting the loan. As the new speaker (*yizhang*) of the association’s council beginning in March 1921, Wong presided over its 30 October discussion of a plan to protest Canada’s head tax and other discriminatory measures through the Canton government’s delegate to the imminent Washington Conference, which would

<sup>52</sup> Zhongping Chen, “The May Fourth Movement and Provincial Warlords: A Re-examination,” *Modern China* 37, no. 2 (2011): 137–42.

<sup>53</sup> *Da-Han ribao* [Chinese Times], 20 March 1915. This newspaper changed its Chinese title to *Da-Han gongbao* in November 1915.

<sup>54</sup> Chen, “May Fourth Movement and Provincial Warlords,” 137–41.

consist of nine nations with interests in the Pacific. Because the Canton government refused to send a representative to the conference, that plan had to be abandoned. Wong remained the speaker of the association's council until 1927.<sup>55</sup>

Even as a wealthy merchant and highly influential leader in New Westminster's Chinatown, Wong remained a member of the Chee Kong Tong (Active Justice Society), or the Chinese Freemasons, the major North American branch of the Hong Fraternal Society based in China.<sup>56</sup> This fraternal organization was originally a secret society and operated as a mutual assistance and self-protective organization for the mostly poor Chinese immigrants in North America. It had appeared in San Francisco by 1879 and then had spread to Canada along with the earliest Chinese labourers who came from the United States to work on the CPR. It founded lodges or chapters in Victoria and at Yale and other places along the railway line. Wong must have joined this fraternal organization as a poor labourer for the CPR in the 1880s rather than as the rich merchant and community leader that he later became. The Chinese Freemasons in Canada provided Sun Yat-sen with critical financial help for his tenth and last anti-Qing uprising before the 1911 revolution in China led to Sun's return to China as the provisional president of Republican China. Wong's relations with this fraternal organization help explain his intimate contact with Sun in New Westminster in March 1911.<sup>57</sup>

Both the foregoing corrections of the mistakes in the *The Diary of Dukesang Wong* and supplements of its contents from other sources shed new light on Wang's life, especially his anti-racism politics regarding Canadian society and his anti-warlord politics regarding Republican China. A further exploration of available documents in China – such as Taishan county gazetteers' records about local candidates in imperial examinations who became officials before 1867, possible newspaper

<sup>55</sup> Minutes of meetings of the Chinese Benevolent Society, 1915–1929, entries of 23 March 1915; 11 April and 19 September 1917; 10 October 1920; 20 February, 13 March, and 30 October 1921; 23 January 1927. There is no date for the entry of 10 October 1920, but its content is the same as that of the report about the association's meeting on that day from *Da-Han gongboa*, 13 October 1920. Wong's name appears as Huang Dusheng in all these records.

<sup>56</sup> *Da-Han gongboa*, 22 May 1925. Wong's name also appears as Huang Dusheng in this Chinese record.

<sup>57</sup> Chen, "Construction of the Canadian Pacific Railway," 303–4; and Chen, "Vancouver Island and the Chinese Diaspora in the Transpacific World," 58–59, 62–64. These two articles argue that the Chee Kong Tong, or the Chinese Freemasons, spread from San Francisco to Victoria and the CPR line from 1880 and further into the Cariboo region thereafter rather than appearing first in the Cariboo around 1863 or 1876, as previous studies have claimed. The second cited article, in particular, details the Canadian Chinese Freemasons' contribution to Sun Yat-sen's Republican Revolution around 1911.

reports about the murder of Wong's father in that year, and the Qing government's archives regarding its county officials in the 1860s – could also advance our understanding of Wang's family history.

In view of the irretrievable loss of Wong's original Chinese diary, an extremely rare and valuable historical treasure, I naturally conclude this review and research note with a heartfelt request for a community effort to advance Chinese Canadian history. When Edgar Wickberg, Graham Johnson, and their colleagues published their monumental book on Chinese Canadian history in 1982, they regretfully admitted that, because of the difficulty in gaining access to documents, their work had insufficient information on "the Chinese Benevolent Associations and ... Kuomintang [the Chinese Nationalist League] across the country." They hoped that these organizations would publish their documents, "making available the full story of their important contributions to Chinese-Canadian history."<sup>58</sup>

Nearly thirty years after Wickberg and his colleagues made their statement, I faced the same difficulty when I started my decade-long book project, "The Rise, Reform, and Revolution of the Transpacific Chinese Diaspora,"<sup>59</sup> with a focus on Chinatowns in Victoria and Vancouver. The heartbreaking loss of Dukesang Wong's original diary demonstrates how urgent it is for Chinese Canadian community organizations to open their documents to community researchers and experts in Chinese Canadian history as well as to preserve these historical treasures in public archives and museums. The recent plan of the BC government to assist in establishing a Chinese Canadian Museum will be a welcome opportunity for community organizations to preserve their historical documents for future generations and,<sup>60</sup> thus, bring both light and honour to "their important contributions to Chinese-Canadian history," as Wickberg and Johnson had hoped nearly forty years ago.

Finally, I hope this review and research note makes *The Diary of Dukesang Wong* a more reliable source for both scholars and the general public. It should be of use to anyone with an interest in the history of modern China and the Chinese diaspora, and should provide a foundation for future research pertaining to Chinese Canadian stories.

<sup>58</sup> Edgar Wickberg and Graham Johnson, "Preface," in Wickberg et al., *From China to Canada*, 3.

<sup>59</sup> The forthcoming book title has been changed to *From Reform to Revolution in the Transpacific Chinese Diaspora, 1898–1918*, due to the publisher's concern about the length of the original manuscript.

<sup>60</sup> "Chinese Canadian Museum," <https://www.chinesecanadianmuseum.ca/aboutus>.