

Old Santa Cruz

• • • By Ernest Otto

There is no question that the outstanding Chinese in Santa Cruz for many years was Pon Fang.

First he was the housekeeper and chef at the home of Mrs. P. B. Fagan. Then he had a store near where the Canton market is now located where he sold Chinese crockery, silks and many of the beautiful items that were produced in China, and also on one side of the store were dresses, aprons and the many lines that were sought by the ladies for dressing ware.

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At times he was the missionary of the Congregational Chinese mission. He taught, sang, preached and was everything but an ordained minister.

His wife was a little woman and when she walked down the aisles at the Congregational church on Sunday she had to use the ends of the pews for support.

They had several children, Samuel, born in China and a graduate of Santa Cruz high school; Ruth, Esther, Daniel and Joseph. All except Daniel who died here, were graduates of the high schools here and in San Francisco. Samuel also attended the University of California.

Fang was witty and always quick with an answer. One time a salesman of the Jewish faith was at his store, accompanied by his wife. The wife upon hearing the names of the children, Samuel, Ruth, Esther and Joseph, remarked "Oh, you have given your children American names."

Fang replied, "Don't you know Hebrew names when you hear them?"

Pon Fang was sought in the courts often as an interpreter.

The first missionary sent here in charge of the Chinese mission was Wong Ock, who became a member of the Salvation Army and was sent to the Salvation Army training school in London to be trained for duty in China. He was sent to Canton, his native dialect. He worked there for some time, but later returned to the church.

Another was Soo Hoo Dong. He went to the Mount Tamalpais military school at San Rafael and to the University of California. He later returned to China where he was on the faculty of the Nanking Imperial university.

One who helped at the mission was very musical and had a good tenor voice. He returned to Canton and opened a patent medicine store.

He subscribed to the Weekly Sentinel for years to keep in touch with Santa Cruz.

Chin Goly was in charge of the laundry at the Pacific Ocean House and Wong Sing, the first organist at the mission, went to Hartford, Conn., and both sent for their church letters and transferred their membership to the Congregational church there.

Lam Sing, the chef at the Sea Beach hotel, was the second organist and Chin Doon the third. Chin Doon became the chef at the Mansion House at Watsonville and was later associated in the apple business there.

Individual Chinese had certain characteristics and there were many of them.

One known only as "Louie" was known by all the children. When he smiled there was one protruding tooth which frightened the children. He went about the city and delivered clothes from a clothes basket which he carried on his back.

Another, known only as "Judge Ricci", owned property along Branciforte drive. He would appear daily in town and call down the main street with his "Strawbelly". It was that pronunciation of the letter "r" was almost impossible for the Chinese and was usually given so it sounded like an "l".

"Old Doc" was a vegetable peddler and finally only peddled strawberries from the Littlefield gardens on California street.

The name "Doc" was given as he would prescribe for those who were ill. His prescriptions were prepared from herbs and he would plaster them where needed. Many a customer was cured.

He also was a palmist and the girls would approach him to learn about the past, present and future. Out would go their hands and he would follow the lines. Many thought what he told them was true.

The two tallest Chinese were the Sue brothers and they were the most dressed up Chinese in the city, wearing the large silk blouses and velvet and silk slippers.

Ah Moon was one of the first Chinese here. His wife was the first Chinese woman to live in the city and their child, the first Chinese baby.

He first operated a laundry where they lived at the corner of River and Knight streets. When Chinatown moved from Pacific avenue he opened a Chinese grocery and also handled some Chinese clothes in his shop at the center of the Front street Chinatown.

He was acquainted with the merchants and knew the white citizens better than any other Chinese in the community.

The largest known opal, found