

CHINATOWN A CULTURAL DYNASTY IN McCAULEY

97 STREET BETWEEN 105 AND 110 AVENUES



Edmonton

WELCOME TO CHINA TOWN

BY GARY GARRISON

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This booklet is an introduction to the area north of downtown Edmonton known as Chinatown (唐人街) or, in some circles, North Chinatown. In it, you will find descriptions of what is in the various corners of the district, cultural and historical information, and profiles of people who have lived and worked here.

Those of us who love this place think of it as a little piece of our homeland, a place we can speak Asian languages, read Asian signs, buy Asian groceries, and eat familiar foods at Asian restaurants and bakeries.

But it's much more than that. Chinatown is a beautiful, iridescent pearl in the centre of Edmonton, an opportunity for people from anywhere on Earth to visit Asia for the price of a bus ride or a little gas. People can come here to consult a Chinese herbalist or buy Chinese jewelry, hand-made silk landscapes, and Chinese groceries.

Chinatown is a unique pearl among Edmonton's many attractions, and part of what makes it unique is the Italian, Korean, Laotian, Thai, Vietnamese, Arabic, Croatian, Ukrainian businesses, and churches in the midst of it. Chinatown includes over 250 businesses, too many to name them all in a booklet. For a complete listing, please visit the *Chinatown and Area Business Association* website.

www.chinatownlittleitaly.com

FORWARD

To know Chinatown is to experience it from different times of the day, week, and year and from different corners of 97 Street, on foot or in a vehicle. This booklet comes at an important juncture in the history of Edmonton's Chinatown, where there is hope and excitement within the Chinese community for a Chinatown that will attract more locals and tourists to appreciate this cultural pearl in the heart of downtown with its new Chinatown development plan. Such a booklet will add significantly to the heritage movement by producing more information on Chinatown to fill the many gaps that exist when it comes to the history of Edmonton's Chinatown. The Chinatown Conference, Chinatown Heritage Walk, and Chinatown Photo Exhibit in 2013 were the beginning of this heritage movement – to preserve and promote Chinatown.

Participants of these events were surprised that Edmonton's Chinatown and its history were more interesting than they thought. Similarly, this booklet about Chinatown North and the personal stories of people is a gem for those who want to know more about Chinatown.

LAN CHAN MARPLES

Cultural Consultant



A SHORT HISTORY

OF

EDMONTON'S CHINATOWN





Edmonton's Chinatown is not much different from other Chinatowns in North America or other countries where Chinatowns exist in the way it began. Early Chinese immigrants stayed together as a group and relied on each other for survival because of racial discrimination and enforced segregation. Emerging out of this way of life is what is known as Chinatown, a place with its own self-supporting, infrastructure made up of Chinese owned businesses that provided jobs to their own kind and associations that provided social services, economic aid and social and cultural activities. Many early Chinese immigrants only wanted to earn enough money to go back to China to live comfortably with the families they left behind. However, most ended up staying in Edmonton and called it home. This is the history of Edmonton's Chinatown.

Chinese immigration to Canada began in 1788 when a British fur trader brought smiths and carpenters from China to Vancouver Island to build a fortress and a schooner. During the Lower Fraser Valley gold rush in the 1850s, Chinese labourers came from San Francisco and then Hong Kong to build trails and roads and dig ditches in Canada. They sought to make a better life for themselves by working in Gum Shan, the "Gold Mountain." Despite anti-Chinese racism, thousands of labourers came to work on the Canadian Pacific Railway in the 1880s.



Edmonton's first Chinese immigrants came from Calgary in 1892. By 1899, Edmonton had 13 Chinese men. They operated a restaurant and two laundries. Despite a federal head tax that increased from \$50 in 1885 to \$500 in 1903, Chinese immigrants kept fleeing to Canada to escape poverty. Most early labourers were from southern China because of floods and wars.

By 1911, Edmonton's Chinese population had grown to 518. A small Chinatown formed near 97 Street and 101A Avenue, where rents were low. In 1923, new federal legislation stopped immigration from China. During the 30s and 40s, Chinatown lost many of its businesses and societies and much of its population. When World War II ended, most of the Chinese people who lived there were elderly, single men who couldn't afford better accommodation elsewhere. When the immigration law was repealed in 1947, Chinatown began a slow process of recovery.

In the 1960s and 1970s families were allowed to immigrate. At the same time, young people came from Hong Kong, Taiwan, Singapore, and Malaysia to study at the University of Alberta. Many stayed in Edmonton and worked to create a new Chinatown east of 97 Street, along 102 Avenue, since the original Chinatown was being demolished to make way for Canada Place.

In 1977, the Chinese Elders' Mansion was completed on 102 Avenue between 95 and 96 Streets; a second tower opened in 1991. The Chinatown Multicultural Centre opened nearby in 1985. In 1987, the Harbin Gate at 97 Street and 102 Avenue was officially dedicated. The area between Jasper and 103 Avenues, and 95 and 97 Streets is sometimes called Chinatown South.

In the late 1970s, Chinese businesses started locating north of the Canadian National Railway overpass. By 1986, 25 had opened on 97 Street between 105 and 107A Avenues, operated primarily by people from Hong Kong and Vietnam. Edmonton's Vietnamese and Chinese-Vietnamese population grew rapidly after Canada agreed, in 1979, to accept 50,000 refugees from Indochina. The area now known as North Chinatown includes residences, businesses, institutions, temples, and a church. It has spread west to 101 Street and north to 110 Avenue. Edmonton's Chinese population at present is now estimated at 70,000 with a large number of Mandarin-speaking Chinese from Mainland China.



MANY FACTS

ABOUT

EDMONTON'S CHINATOWN



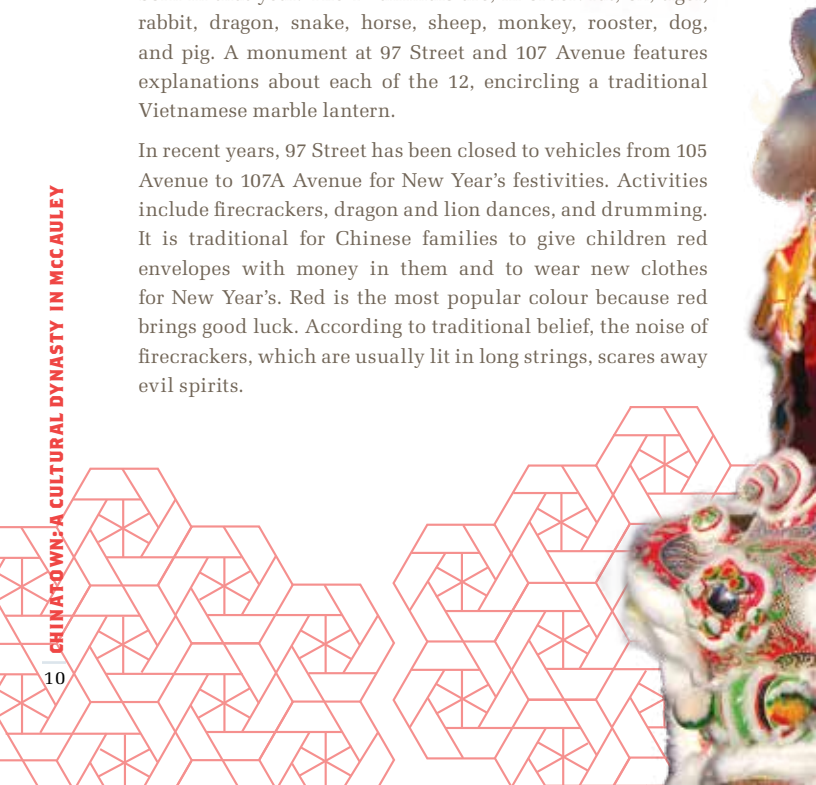
THE CHINESE NEW YEAR

The Chinese calendar began over 4,000 years ago. Although China and other Asian countries now use the Gregorian (western) calendar for official and business purposes, the traditional calendar is used to determine the dates of holidays and for horoscopes. The Chinese New Year is also known as the Spring Festival or the Lunar New Year. Other Asian countries also celebrate Lunar New Year which originated from China. The Vietnamese call it *Tet Nguyen Dan*.

The new year begins between January 20 and February 20. It is customary in eastern Asia for businesses to close for two weeks and for people to travel to visit relatives. The new year is also a good time to pay off debts.

Every year is associated with one of the 12 animals of the Chinese Zodiac. Chinese astrology is based on a person's birth year rather than on date of birth, as in the west. The birth animal is said to suggest the personality traits of the person born in that year. The 12 animals are, in order: rat, ox, tiger, rabbit, dragon, snake, horse, sheep, monkey, rooster, dog, and pig. A monument at 97 Street and 107 Avenue features explanations about each of the 12, encircling a traditional Vietnamese marble lantern.

In recent years, 97 Street has been closed to vehicles from 105 Avenue to 107A Avenue for New Year's festivities. Activities include firecrackers, dragon and lion dances, and drumming. It is traditional for Chinese families to give children red envelopes with money in them and to wear new clothes for New Year's. Red is the most popular colour because red brings good luck. According to traditional belief, the noise of firecrackers, which are usually lit in long strings, scares away evil spirits.





LIONS AND DRAGONS DANCING

The Lion Dance involves two dancers, one inside the head and one inside the body. The lion dances up and down the street spreading good will and good luck. Drums, cymbals, and gongs provide the rhythm. People feed the lion heads of lettuce (the Chinese word for lettuce sounds like the word for “wealth”), into which they’ve put money, in red envelopes. The lion ostentatiously bites the lettuce, chews it up, and spits it out, keeping the donations for the dancers and the organization they represent. Often a laughing Buddha, wearing a mask and a colourful robe, teases the lion with a fan to make it jump, roll over, and perform other tricks. The dance ends with a message of good luck in a scroll that comes out of the lion’s mouth, followed by an explosion of firecrackers.

Lions have symbolized majesty and power in China for 2,000 years. Lions are not native to China; the symbolism came from India with Buddhist missionaries. Statues of lions, like those at the Harbin Gate on 102 Avenue, often guard gates and entrances. Some have round stones in their mouths. It is considered good luck to touch the stones.

Dragon Dances involve 15 or even more dancers holding above their heads a serpentine dragon that can be as long as 100 meters. The dancers move the poles up and down to the accompaniment of gongs, horns, and drums. Like the lion dance, the dragon dances to bring good luck. This dance also ends with fireworks. The dragon symbolizes wisdom, power and wealth.



SHRINES, TEMPLES, AND CHURCHES

According to Statistics Canada data, 56% of Canadians of Chinese origin do not have a religious affiliation. Among those who indicated a religious affiliation, 14% were Buddhist, 14% Roman Catholic, and 9% belonged to a protestant Christian denomination. Approximately 300 million people today identify themselves as Buddhist. Most of them live in east Asia or have roots there.

Many Asian restaurants and stores have shrines prominently displayed in their windows or near the front of their public areas. A Buddhist shrine typically features one or more images of the Buddha or another *bodhisattva* (enlightened being) and often includes candles and offerings, such as flowers, food, water, and incense.

Some say Buddhism is not a religion but a philosophy or way of life, since Buddhism does not include belief in god. Siddhartha Guatama (the Buddha) lived on the Indian subcontinent about 2500 years ago. He was born of a royal family, realized wealth and power did not bring happiness, and found a “middle path” through meditation and detachment from the material world.

North Chinatown has a Buddhist temple (Mui Kwok Buddhist Temple, 11036 96 Street), a monastery (Potala Monastery, 10853 98 Street), and the Edmonton Chinese Pentecostal Church (10521 97 Street). Also nearby are the Truc Lam Monastery (11328 97 Street), the Edmonton Chinese Mennonite Church (10324 107 Avenue), St. Josaphat's Cathedral, and the many churches on 96 Street (Church Street).



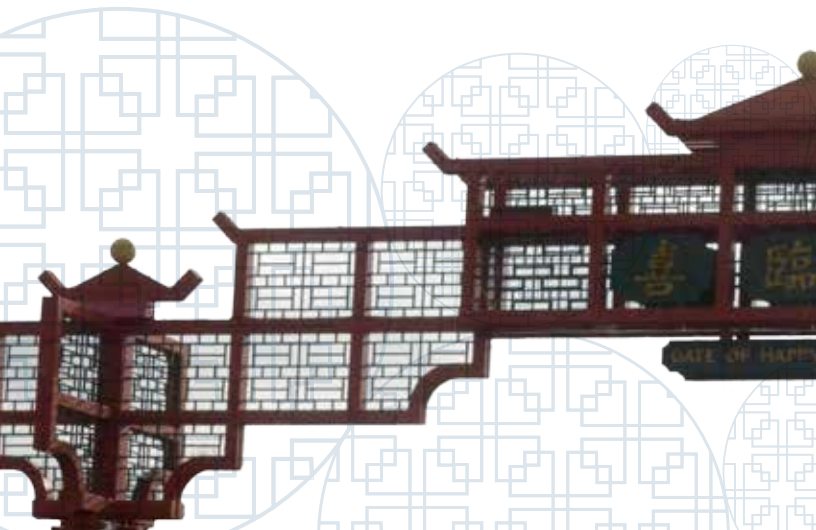
A TALE OF TWO GATES

In 1997, North Chinatown's property owners implemented a major beautification project for the area, which included the Gate of Happy Arrival, south of 107A Avenue on 97 Street, as well as Chinese light posts, poster kiosks, and other cultural features. The Gate marked the northern entrance to Chinatown. The project involved significant public consultation and collaboration with the City of Edmonton on its planning and design.

Ten years earlier, the city of Harbin, China had given Edmonton the Friendship Gate on 102 Avenue east of 97 Street. It was designed in the traditional classic style, built in China, and assembled on site, near Edmonton's original Chinatown by Harbin craftsmen.

At the beginning of 2015, the future of the Friendship Gate remains uncertain because of plans to build a new Light Rail Transit (LRT) line along 102 Avenue. Construction of that line is scheduled for 2016-20, which will require moving the gate. One proposal is to move it north of 103A Avenue on 97 Street, where it would become the southern entrance to North Chinatown. A new Chinatown development plan in 2015 will decide on a new location for the Friendship Gate along with transforming Chinatown into one of the largest in Canada.

Both gates, as well as the light posts and kiosks, are painted red, which in the Chinese culture represents joy and good fortune.

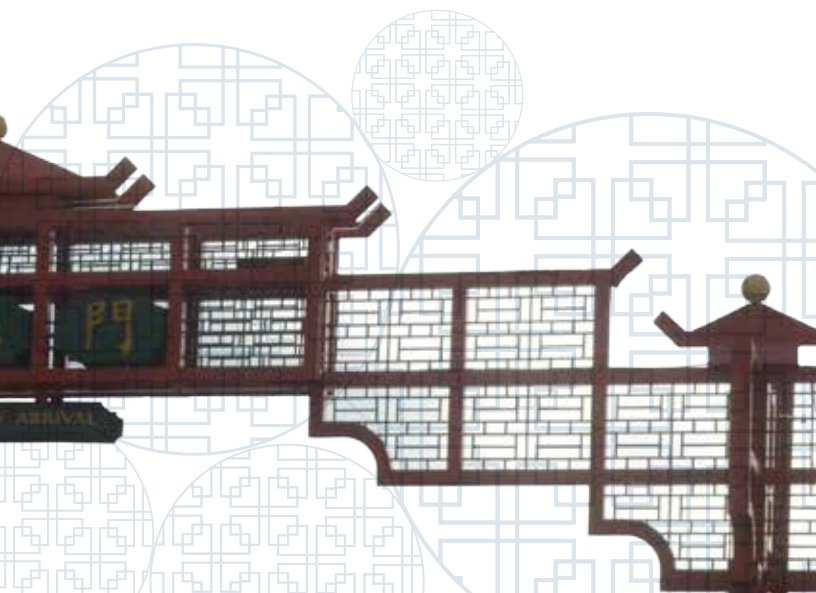


THE VIEW FROM THE NORTHERN GATE

A person standing on the north side of 107A Avenue at 97 Street, looking south at the Gate of Happy Arrival, would see an Asian presence all along the south side of the avenue. The Lucky 97 supermarket and its parking lot are the most prominent feature. The person would see a relatively recent strip mall of Asian businesses extending east almost to 96 Street. West of 97 Street, the person would see several Chinese or Vietnamese restaurants as well as a Chinese restaurant, a jewelry store, and an office building. Most of the signs would be bilingual, in English and Chinese or Vietnamese.

If that person were to turn around and look north, he or she would see a Chinese herbalist's sign but also bilingual English-Arabic signs on a convenience store and restaurant. Further north the person would see the tall domes of St. Josaphat's Ukrainian Catholic Cathedral and some African and Latin American business signs. The northern fringes of North Chinatown reflect the global character of central Edmonton, where all parts of the world are represented.

Two very short blocks to the west is 99 Supermarket, another large Chinese grocery store, with its pagoda-style roofline, its red tile roof, and its red sign and red brick exterior.



DIVISIONS OF EDMONTON'S CHINATOWN



97 STREET: MAINSTREET CHINATOWN

The new Royal Alberta Museum and Rogers Place Arena, both scheduled to open in 2016, are already having a significant impact on Chinatown. The southernmost Chinatown businesses are in Yorkton Pacific Mall (9700 105 Avenue), virtually across the street from the museum. Yorkton Group International Ltd. purchased the mall several years ago and plans to build two residential towers of 38 and 28 stories. In 2014, the City rezoned the land, a critical step forward for the proposal.

As of February 2015, the other main features of 105 Avenue and 97 Street are Mary Burle Park and the Chinese Pentecostal Church. From this point north to 110 Avenue, 97 Street is Chinatown's Main Street.

Four noteworthy historic buildings on this street house Chinese businesses and offices. The Perfection Tailoring and Clothing Company Building (9659 105A Avenue) was built in 1908 and originally housed a piano and organ company and a drug store. Cameron Block (10543 97 Street) was built in 1910, the site of another drug store. A Safeway store was built at 10569 97 Street in 1929. The Hull Block (10601-10607 97 Street) was built in 1914 and was the site of the first Chinese grocery store north of the Canadian National Railways underpass. North Chinatown's first Chinese restaurant was where Pagolac is now situated (10566 97 Street).

Most of Chinatown's businesses are on this strip, from 105 Avenue to 110 Avenue.



98 STREET: OFF THE MAIN TRACK

People who drive or walk through Chinatown on 97 Street are missing almost half of it. On 98 Street, between 107 and 106 Avenues, a strip of businesses includes Asia Square and several restaurants, an optician, a beauty salon, a furniture store, a bakery, electronics shops, and an autobody shop. North of 107 Avenue, there are more restaurants, food stores, a kung fu studio, a video store, another beauty salon, and a massage centre.

Further north and a little to the west is 99 Supermarket, which, like Lucky 97, carries a wide variety of foods and household goods predominantly from China and Vietnam, and hosts Chinese New Year celebrations.

Not everything here is Chinese or Asian, though; 98 Street is multicultural. It has the Roman Catholic Marian Centre (10528), the Ukrainian National Home of Education (10629), and the Nativity of Mary Croatian Catholic Church (10560), with Hope Mission (9908 106 Avenue) a short block away. In this part of Edmonton, a quirk of geography shortens the east-west distance between streets; it's about the same distance from 96 Street to 97 Street as it is from 97 Street to 101 Street.



CHINATOWN'S WEST SIDE

Farther west, two large businesses, Kim Fat Market (9905-107 Avenue) and Emperor's Palace (10638-100 Street) have some smaller restaurants beside them, and to the south, a long strip of Asian businesses along 106 Avenue and 100 Street. These include the Mai King Market Place, Garden Bakery, a book and gift shop, a massage clinic, two hair studios, a bubble-tea shop, and several restaurants.

This area also includes Immigration Hall (10534-100 Street), an historic brick building constructed in 1930 to provide services to immigrants from all over the world. It now provides affordable housing for single men. Not far away are the Herb Jamieson Centre, which offers short-term room and board for men, and the George Spady Centre, which provides shelter and support for people struggling with addictions.

The western border of Chinatown is 101 Street, where several other Chinese restaurants and businesses are located, from 105 Avenue north to 110 Avenue. This area also has a vegetarian Indonesian restaurant, a Salvadoran restaurant, several fast food chain outlets, a 24-hour family restaurant, as well as the Victoria School of the Arts (formerly Victoria High School), the Royal Alexandra Hospital, and many other businesses.

FOOD AND CULTURE

OF

EDMONTON'S CHINATOWN



TRADITIONAL CHINESE MEDICINE: TRUSTED FOR 2500 YEARS

Chinese herbs. Massage. Acupuncture. Tai chi. Qi gong. Traditional Chinese Medicine (TCM) is rooted in the ancient philosophy of Taoism and dates back some 2500 years.

Dr. Qi Ming Chen (Ming Town Chinese Herbal 10852 97 Street) came from China's Canton province 12 years ago and works with his two daughters, Cindy and Wendy, who are both trained in TCM. Dr. Qi has written a weekly column about TCM in Chinese Times for 10 years and offers a free class for the public the last Saturday of every month.

Cindy says establishing a diagnosis includes three components: taking the pulse, asking questions, and observing the patient's complexion, body shape, smell, and other physical or emotional features.

After the diagnosis, a doctor may prescribe teas custom made from plant and animal materials as well as massage, acupuncture, or the mind/body practices of tai chi, qi gong, or some other form of exercise.

Dr. Qi has an exhibit in the shop and on his website (www.mtrhc.com) illustrating a variety of TCM success stories. He says people from the many cultures represented in Edmonton have benefitted from TCM, including nurses and pharmacists.

Chinatown offers many ways to access TCM. On its website, the Chinatown and Area Business Association lists 23 locations in its directory under "Herbalist, Health Food, Massage, and Acupuncture." (www.chinatownlittleitaly.com/business-directory.php)

CHINESE DINING: A FEW BASICS

“Food is heaven for the people,” is an ancient Chinese saying. Food is central to Chinese culture. Restaurants and laundries were the first Chinese businesses in Edmonton. In fact, Westerners who know nothing else about China will almost certainly have eaten Chinese food. Indeed, if you know how to use chopsticks, you will never go hungry in Chinatown.

Here are some essential facts about Chinese cuisine: China is a large country with many different climates and growing regions. Before modern transportation, people’s diets included only what could be grown nearby. Chinese cuisine has developed out of 10 distinct regional schools: Canton, Shandong, Sichuan, Yangzhou, Hunan, Fujian, Anhui, Zhejiang, Beijing, and Shanghai. Chinese cuisine has over 5,000 named dishes in total, each with its own taste, texture, appearance, and aroma.

◆ Rice is central to most Chinese dishes, but in the arid regions of northern China, wheat and millet are the staple grains, and they’re mostly made into noodles.

◆ Tea is the national drink and is routinely offered in restaurants to accompany a meal. Green and jasmine teas are the most commonly served.

◆ Dim sum is a style of dining where small servings are brought around to tables in a restaurant and patrons are able to choose what they want when they see and smell it instead of ordering from a menu.

◆ Barbecue meat like chicken, pork, and duck, where customers pick the amount they want and it is chopped into manageable pieces to take away.

◆ Pastries that can be sweet (filled with coconut or almond paste, for example) or savoury (filled with meat) and are typically eaten cold.

◆ Hot pots are the latest trend in Chinese dining, with customers cooking their own choices of proteins and vegetables in simmering broth at their tables.



VIETNAMESE DINING: AN INTRODUCTION

Pho is a common dish in Vietnam, which is usually eaten early in the morning. As a general rule, pho includes linguini-shaped rice noodles, clear broth, herbs, spices, either beef or chicken, and sometimes vegetables. Since chefs are creative people who sometimes break the rules, some pho dishes can be vegetarian, have meat on the side, or include some other type of meat, such as pork, shrimp, goat, or fish. The word “pho” simply means “noodle,” but not all Vietnamese noodle soups are pho.

Pho originated in northern Vietnam in the early 20th century. Roaming vendors would carry a cauldron and all their supplies on a pole. They would cook and serve their hot pho on the street. Since the end of the Vietnam War in 1975 and the immigration of people to various parts of the world, pho has become a popular dish in many places, including Edmonton's Chinatown.

The proper way to eat a bowl of pho is with chopsticks in one hand and a spoon in the other. People usually start with the broth and then alternate. Some people say it's best to hold



your face right above the steaming hot soup because the spoon has less distance to travel and that way you can better savour the delicious aroma. It's quite all right too, when all the solid parts of the soup are gone, to pick the bowl up and sip the last of the broth directly out of the bowl.

A few other Vietnamese foods common in Chinatown restaurants include:

- ◆ Banh mi, or Vietnamese submarine sandwiches. These are a result of the influence of French colonization in Vietnam and feature fresh buns filled with a choice of different meats, with vegetables like pickled carrots and cilantro, and finished with a unique mayonnaise-like spread.
- ◆ Bun, also known as vermicelli bowls. These feature the thin rice noodles found in pho, but without the broth. Instead, the noodles are on top of or alongside a bed of salad and topped with any combination of grilled beef, chicken, pork, or shrimp. Fish sauce is used to add moisture and flavour to the noodles.
- ◆ In addition to pho, there are several different kinds of soups such as a sour soup with assorted meats and herbs, and a beef stew with well done meat and cooked carrots that is served with either bread or noodles.
- ◆ Salad rolls are thin, almost translucent rice wrappings filled with shredded lettuce and other vegetables, as well as chicken, shrimp, or tofu. They are usually served with peanut sauce for dipping.
- ◆ Rice dishes are common and served with meats and vegetables. Vietnamese pastries can be sweet or salty, and have usually been steamed or boiled in leaves.



STORIES OF CHINATOWN

PERSONAL INTERVIEWS



Like the McCauley neighbourhood in general, the demographics of Chinatown are very diverse. There are residents and business owners from many different parts of Asia, as well as those of European background. Here are profiles of just a few people and families involved in the area (as well as the businesses they own and operate, where applicable.)

FROM VIETNAM TO LUCKY 97 **{DUONG PHUONG ORIENTAL MARKET}**

Sang Nguyen

Ban Tan Nguyen came to Edmonton in 1979 with his whole family, including six children, grandparents, aunts, and uncles. They were among the over one million refugees who fled Communist Vietnam in boats in the late 70s. In 1981, he opened a small corner store called the Dong Phuong Oriental Market, which his son Sang says was the first Vietnamese grocery store in Edmonton. It sold vegetables and pho spices that were unavailable elsewhere.

A few years later, he opened Lucky 97 in what used to be a Safeway. The family now owns and operates a second store in Edmonton, as well as stores in Calgary and Winnipeg. This store carries a wide variety of Oriental, western, Filipino, and African goods.

Lucky 97 is a focal point for Chinatown's Lunar New Year celebrations every January-February. Sang Nguyen, manager of Lucky 97, says these celebrations are very big in Vietnam, that the New Year is "when everything shuts down for two weeks and people travel."

The Nguyen family has lived in McCauley for many years. All six children attended Sacred Heart School.

CHINATOWN “KEEPS US TOGETHER”

Thang Ly

Thang Ly was born in Vietnam of a Chinese mother and Vietnamese father. His family came to Edmonton in 1980. His mother worked in the nearby GWG (Great Western Garment) factory making Levis, and his father was a deliveryman for a Chinese company. Thang went to Alex Taylor school and lived on 96 Street next door to churches for 10 years. His wife immigrated from Laos in the early 1980s.

He now owns the Dynasty Century Palace restaurant (9700 105 Avenue) and the Garden Bakery (10019 106 Avenue). “Chinatown, he says, is important because it brings back our history. We get to meet our culture, learn about it, and enjoy our foods.” Since Chinese people are a small minority, about seven percent of Edmonton’s population, Chinatown “keeps us together.”

Thang says some of the dishes Chinatown’s restaurants serve are traditional, but most are mixed with western-style cooking. “If you’re in Asia, there’s no such thing as sweet-and-sour or ginger beef. There’s no lemon chicken in China.”

The more traditional meals would include shark-fin soup or crab and lobster, he says. He adds that Ontario and some countries have banned shark fins. “The market for it here, he says, is primarily for special celebrations like weddings where they want exotic and expensive food.

Chinese baking, he says, is generally softer and sweeter than western baking. “We serve sweet buns and ones with meat in them. It’s like a Chinese sandwich.”



A CHINATOWN PIONEER

Raymond Ng

Raymond Ng is a Chinatown North pioneer, responsible for a number of Chinatown firsts: first movie business, first print shop, first travel agency, first bookstore, and first newspaper.

He came from Hong Kong in 1971 to study business at the University of Alberta, where he met his wife, also from Hong Kong. After graduating, he rented the Plaza Theatre on 118 Avenue and showed Chinese movies. Back then, Chinese restaurants had to send their menus to Hong Kong or Vancouver for printing, so he started a print shop, High Speed Printing, to print menus and other Chinese and English material.

“After that,” he says, “we started a travel agency, because there wasn’t one.” He continues, “We started the bookstore (Asia Book & Gift Shop, 10655 97 Street) in May ’83 and the newspaper in November ’83.” The newspaper is Edmonton Chinese News.

He remembers having to publicize movies using handwritten posters in restaurants. “The weekly paper’s purpose, he says, is to provide communication to the Chinese community, including inexpensive advertising and a clear focus on the Chinese market: the newspaper is entirely in Chinese, except for some English ads.”

He hopes Edmonton’s Chinatown will become a tourist attraction, like Chinatowns in Los Angeles, New York, and Richmond, BC, but limited parking is a major obstacle. “To bring more people to Chinatown in the near future, he says, the Chinatown and Downtown business associations are working on a plan involving free lunchtime shuttle buses from downtown to Chinatown restaurants.”



CHINATOWN “JUST LIKE HOME”

Ed Lam

What does Ed Lam like about Chinatown? “First of all, when you walk on 97 Street, it’s just like home, even though it’s a little different. You see your language on the signs. And you can buy Chinese groceries.”

Ed was born in China, raised in Hong Kong, and studied at the University of Hawaii, where he earned his bachelor’s degree and met his future wife. His accounting office has been across 97 Street from Lucky 97 since he moved to Edmonton from Vancouver in 1982. His in-laws came here from Hong Kong for the same reason many others did then: Britain’s lease was about to expire and Hong Kong would revert to mainland China.

“Back then, there were mostly houses on 97 Street, not businesses. The Pacific Rim Mall hadn’t been built yet,” he says. “From 1983 onwards the economy was pretty good, so more and more people were moving in.”

Ed has been active in many associations, including the Chinese Basketball Association, which he helped create. “I used to play soccer when I was young. Then I went to the States and started playing basketball.” He organized league play and tournaments for 10 years, with age groups ranging from youngsters to seniors.



LIVING IN CHINESE IN AN ENGLISH CITY

Suzanna Wong

Suzanna Wong was 11 years old when her family came to Edmonton from Hong Kong in 1965. Her grandparents had come here at the beginning of the 20th century because of a famine in China.

Back then, she says, there were no government programs to help immigrants learn English. Many people, like her mother, had to work and had no time or money to study English. They lived in Chinese, worked for Chinese businesses, and their children translated for them. Chinatown provided a small community in the heart of the city where these could communicate with people in their own language, but without English, they were cut off from mainstream society. Her father picked up English because he traveled to different parts of the city where nobody spoke Chinese. He wasn't fluent, but he got by.

Her family lived in the Gibson Block (9608 Jasper Avenue), and Suzanna went to McCauley School (9538 107 Avenue) for junior high. She remembers First Nations students, students from Germany, Ukraine, and at least 14 from China. French and Italian students went to Catholic schools. "Six or seven languages were spoken when I was there in '68 and '69," she says. She and the other Chinese children went to Norwood school every other day for English classes and became fluently bilingual.

A SLICE OF ITALY IN THE HEART OF CHINATOWN

The Frattin Family

The Italian Bakery is a rarity: a non-Asian business in the heart of Chinatown. Antonio and Aurora Frattin immigrated from Italy in 1956 and opened the first Italian Bakery in 1960. They moved it here in 1962, and Chinatown North basically formed around them afterwards. They say this is where they made Edmonton's first pizza.

In the 1960s, the Frattins helped many Italian immigrants find jobs and housing and offered family members and others work at the bakery.

In the early days, Antonio and Aurora made bread in the middle of the night while their young children slept on flour sacks. Later, the children worked in the bakery every day after school. Their son Romeo says, "The basement was a playground," where he and especially his brother Renato, "made forts out of bags of flour."

Renato remembers that when he was growing up, 97 Street was more residential and kids played hockey in the alley behind the bakery.

The second generation of Frattins now manages the business. Romeo says four of the grandchildren are likely to carry on the family tradition.



THE
FUTURE
— OF —
CHINATOWN



Chinatown businesses are working with the Downtown Business Association to bring more people to Chinatown. Leaders in the community are keenly aware of the parking shortage in the area and how that limits the potential of Chinatown shops, restaurants, and other enterprises and keeps visitors away. They are exploring creative ways to address the issue.

Like the rest of Alberta, Chinatown faces economic opportunities and challenges. At the start of 2015, the sky to the south of Chinatown is crowded with tower cranes as the new Royal Alberta Museum and the Rogers Arena complex take shape. Yorkton Group International Ltd. plans to build two condominium towers on land behind the Yorkton Pacific Mall at 97 Street and 105 Avenue. These developments will change the skyline of the area and put renewed pressure on rental rates. But the price of oil is half what it was a year ago, and the Alberta economy faces a downturn. When will those towers be built, and how long will it be before the economy picks up again?

The recent Chinatown Conference, the Chinatown Heritage Walk, the 2013 Chinatown Photo Exhibit, and the strength and vibrancy of Chinese cultural associations all bode well for the future of Chinatown and the continued celebration of Chinese culture in the heart of Edmonton. Edmonton's Chinese community is full of dedicated, intelligent people, young and old, who are determined to strengthen and grow the place we all call Chinatown.

POINTS OF INTEREST IN CHINATOWN

- 1** *Mui Kwok Buddhist Temple*
11036-96 STREET
- 2** *Potala Monastery*
10853-98 STREET
- 3** *Ming Town Chinese Herbal*
10852-97 STREET
- 4** *St. Josaphats Cathedral*
10825-97 STREET
- 5** *99 Supermarket Ltd*
10768-99 STREET
- 6** *Lucky 97*
10725-97 STREET
- 7** *McCauley School*
9538-107 AVENUE
- 8** *Kim Fat Market Ltd*
9905-107 AVENUE
- 9** *Italian Bakery Co Ltd*
10646-97 STREET
- 10** *Asia Book & Gift Shop*
10655-97 STREET
- 11** *Emperor's Palace
Chinese Cuisine*
10638-100 STREET
- 12** *Ukrainian National
Home of Education*
10629-98 STREET
- 13** *Hope Mission*
9908-106 AVENUE
- 14** *Hull Block*
10601-97 STREET
- 15** *Garden Bakery Restaurant*
10019-106 AVENUE
- 16** *Nativity of Mary Croatian
Catholic Church*
10560-98 STREET
- 17** *Pagolac Restaurant Ltd*
10566-97 STREET
- 18** *Marian Centre*
10528-98 STREET
- 19** *Cameron Block*
10543-97 STREET
- 20** *Perfection Tailoring and
Clothing Company Building*
9659-105A AVENUE
- 21** *Dynasty Century Palace*
9700-105 AVENUE
- 22** *Edmonton Chinese
Pentecostal Church*
10521-97 STREET
- 23** *Yorkton Pacific Mall*
9700-105 AVENUE
- 24** *Immigration Hall*
10534-100 STREET
- 25** *Gate of Happy Arrival*
South of 107A AVE. on 97 STREET
- 26** *Mary Burlie Park*
105 AVE. and 97 STREET



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