

# Information Sheet No. 21



City of  
Greater Geraldton  
Regional Library



## Heritage Services

## Geraldton Regional Library

### FONG LANG – Wing on Woo Grocery Store

### SYDNEY FONG – Sydney Fong & Co Grocers

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#### Fong Lang

- 1858 - Born in Canton, China.
- 1888 - Arrived in Geraldton, WA.
- 1901 - Returned to China.

#### Sydney Fong

- 1878 - Born in Hong Kong
- 1896 - Arrived in Western Australia.
- 1901 - Established Sydney Fong & Co.
- 1955, Dec 9 - Died in Geraldton, WA.

There has been a strong Chinese presence in Western Australia from the earliest days of settlement; the Census of 1881 recorded 144 Chinese men and one Chinese woman living in Western Australia. Early amongst the Chinese immigrants were the Fongs.

Born in Canton in 1858, Mr Fong Lang spent ten years in America before he arrived in Geraldton in April 1888 and opened his business Wing on Woo & Co in 1895, a grocery store in Gregory Street. Fong Lang applied for naturalisation in August 1888, but was rejected on the grounds that he had not been in the colony long enough. In 1890 he reapplied, claiming that he owned freehold property in Geraldton and was a member of the Presbyterian Church. He was naturalised on 26 August 1890.

In July 1895 he requested permission to bring his wife, son and two daughters to Western Australia from Canton. Although his wife was rarely seen outside the family home, Mr Fong Lang and his children were regular churchgoers at the Presbyterian Church. Eventually Fong Lang also brought out several nephews to assist with the grocery business.

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Sydney Fong. Picture courtesy of Athol (Chum) Fong, P 234.

One of these nephews, Sydney, arrived in Western Australia in 1896 and worked for two years in Broome, then moved to Perth. In 1901, when Fong Lang took his large family of children home to China for a Chinese education, Sydney took over the Geraldton business, establishing Sydney Fong & Co. This business was comprised of shops, a warehouse and a farm, with the main shop in Marine Terrace.

Born in November 1878 in Hong Kong, Sydney immigrated to Australia in September 1896. After his first wife died in 1914, Sydney remarried to Ellen Louisa, a Tasmanian-born Chinese girl and they had seven children, four sons and three daughters. In 1944 Sydney married for a third time to Lucy Ann Chung Gon, a Tasmanian-born Chinese lady who he had met on one of his many business trips to Tasmania. He died at his home in Francis St, aged 75, on 9 December 1955, leaving a net estate of £47,954. Following this, his wife Ann took over the running of the grocery business.

The Minister officiating at his funeral described Sydney as "...a devoted husband and father, an outstanding citizen with great foresight and a devout elder of the Presbyterian Church".

## References

Text taken from **Geraldton: 150 Years, 150 Lives**, Local Studies Department, Geraldton Regional Library, 2001, p. 66.

Copies are available from the Library, 37 Marine Terrace, Geraldton (PO Box 101, Geraldton, WA, 6531) for \$27.50 (plus \$6.50 postage and handling).

