

Archive Package: 1885–1922 (Head Tax)

Story Sheet: The CD Hoy Family

CD Hoy (Chow Dong Hoy) was born in Guangdong Province in 1883. His family sent him to school until he was eleven, when he had to go to work to help support his family. He worked in an opium den for room and board, and then in a textiles factory, making \$2 a year, plus room and board.

After his father borrowed \$300 to send him, CD immigrated to BC in 1902. He arrived as a teenager who wished to earn a living and send money back home to China, to help alleviate the extreme poverty his family suffered. But he had no job prospects, and no relatives abroad. Fortunately, a shopkeeper in Vancouver from CD's home village let him stay with him, and helped him find his first job.

Starting out as a houseboy, CD used his wages to hire an English tutor. He then borrowed money to head to the Cariboo gold rush, which had slowed down, but still afforded some opportunities—CD worked as a hotel dishwasher, and was able to start saving money to send home to China. Then he moved from Quesnel to Fort St. James, where he worked as a HBC cook, then learned some Central Carrier dialect, and began his own trading company. He went on to work as an axe man, cook and surveyor for the Grand Trunk Pacific Railway. In 1907, CD learned that his father had died, never to know about his later success.

In 1909, CD moved to Barkerville, where he began his work as a photographer (and repairing watches and working as a barber!). His first photographs were of Chinese workers, taken as mementoes for them to send back to their families in China. As his fame grew, he began taking photographs of the local First Nations, Chinese and white people.

In 1910, CD had saved enough money to return to China to marry a bride chosen for him by his mother. (She would not be able to join him in Canada until 1917, when he was finally able to save enough money for her travel and head tax.) After he returned to Canada, he purchased buildings in Quesnel from a Chinese rancher who was returning to China, and started his life as a shopkeeper and professional

photographer. CD took more than 1,500 photographs between 1909 and 1920, leaving an invaluable record of Cariboo life at the time. CD and his wife had twelve children (nine girls), and made a good life for himself and his family, expanding his businesses and becoming a primary gold dealer. He never forgot his poor early beginnings, and offered credit at his store to anyone in need.

The Hoy family home in Quesnel still stands today, and can be identified by the Hoy name in the sidewalk, outlined in white marble stones.