

**L**oosely translated, Kam Wah Chung means “Golden Flower of Prosperity.”

The historic building was indeed a prosperous place—it was once a general store, an herbalist’s office, a place of worship, and a center of Chinese social life. Today, it is a heritage site that commemorates an important era in Oregon history and serves as a memorial to two prominent Chinese-American men.



## Visiting Kam Wah Chung



Kam Wah Chung State Heritage Site is open May 1 through October 31 from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. daily, and admission is free.

In order to protect the delicate artifacts, all visitors are required to join a ranger-led tour in order to enter the historic Kam Wah Chung building: visit the interpretive center at 125 NW Canton St. to pick up a ticket. Tours begin at the top of the hour; the last tour is at 4 p.m. Please keep in mind that the historic building is not ADA-accessible.

The interpretive center has historical displays, a documentary, and a store operated by the Friends of Kam Wah Chung. To contact staff at the interpretive center, call 541-575-2800.



Nature  
HISTORY  
Discovery

**Oregon Parks and Recreation Department**  
725 Summer St. NE, Suite C  
Salem, OR 97301  
[www.oregonstateparks.org](http://www.oregonstateparks.org)

This publication is available in alternative formats upon request. Write to OPRD, 725 Summer St. NE, Suite C, Salem, OR 97301 or call 1-800-551-6949 (Oregon Relay for the hearing impaired: dial 7-1-1).

Information and fees in this brochure subject to change without notice.



Nature  
HISTORY  
Discovery

## Kam Wah Chung State Heritage Site

金華昌



Historic Building and Interpretive Center

John Day



Ing Hay



Lung On

## Ing Hay and Lung On

Ing Hay and Lung On were part of a wave of Chinese immigrants who came to the western United States in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century to escape economic and political instability in China and find work overseas, primarily as gold prospectors or railroad workers. At its peak in the 1880s, the Chinese community in John Day was the largest in eastern Oregon, with at least one thousand residents. Ing Hay and Lung On, who were both from Guangdong Province, came to John Day and formed a partnership to buy the Kam Wah Chung & Co. building. They soon converted it into a successful dry goods store, herbalist shop, and import business that supported the local mining industry.

Ing Hay, a master in “pulse diagnosis,” established an herbal medical practice at Kam Wah Chung through which he saw both Chinese and non-Chinese patients. His skills were highly respected throughout eastern and central Oregon, where doctors were rare. Many residents of John Day still remember “Doc Hay” or have parents or grandparents who were treated—and often cured—by his remedies. Ing Hay’s partner Lung On,

well-educated and fluent in both English and Chinese, was a skilled merchant as well as a labor contractor and translator for the Chinese community. He helped to manage Ing Hay’s practice and started an early automobile dealership.

Although both men left family behind, they never returned to China, probably for fear that immigration laws such as the federal Chinese Exclusion Act would prevent them from reentering the United States. Lung On died in 1940, Ing Hay in 1952. While most Chinese immigrants left instructions to send their bones back to their ancestral lands when they died, Ing Hay and Lung On each chose to be buried in their adopted country. You can visit their gravesites at the city cemetery, which sits on a hill overlooking the John Day River.



## The Significance of Kam Wah Chung

Small and unassuming, the building that housed Kam Wah Chung & Co. is now a National Historic Landmark. That’s because Kam Wah Chung was more than just a business—it was also a gathering place and a haven from hostility for the Chinese residents of John Day, who often faced discrimination or even the threat of violence in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century. It served as an informal library and post office where Lung On would read and write letters on behalf of those who could not. And it was a home to Ing Hay and Lung On for nearly 60 years—a home they shared with relatives, friends, and boarders into the 1940s.

In many ways, Kam Wah Chung is frozen in time. Old tin containers and wooden boxes filled with foodstuffs, tobacco, and medicinal products line the shelves. For the most part, they have been left just as they were when Ing Hay was moved to a nursing home in Portland in 1948 and the building was sealed up; many of the items remain unopened. In Ing Hay’s apothecary alone, there were at least 500 herbs that he mixed into restorative infusions. Some of them are still unidentified. Together, they make up one of the largest collections of traditional Chinese medicines in the U.S.

The history of Kam Wah Chung is recorded in a wealth of personal letters, financial records, period artifacts, and antique Chinese furnishings. The effort to translate all of the documents from Cantonese into English is ongoing. The story

*A rattlesnake immersed in rice wine yielded a tonic used for medicinal purposes.*

they have revealed is not just the story of Ing Hay and Lung On’s determination to succeed in a challenging environment, but the determination of all of the Chinese in eastern Oregon to preserve their culture while helping to build the American west.



## Friends of Kam Wah Chung & Co.

The mission of the Friends of Kam Wah Chung & Co. Museum is to protect this heritage site for future generations and educate the public about the importance of Chinese immigrants to Oregon history. Please consider making a donation to support their work by sending your check to Friends of Kam Wah Chung, P.O. Box 663, John Day, OR 97845.