

## NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES INVENTORY - NOMINATION FORM

(Type all entries - complete applicable sections)

STATE: <b>California</b>
COUNTY: <b>Yuba</b>
FOR NPS USE ONLY
ENTRY DATE: <b>MAY 21 1975</b>

### 1. NAME

COMMON: <b>Bok Kai Temple</b>
AND/OR HISTORIC:

### 2. LOCATION

STREET AND NUMBER: <b>Yuba River Levee at "D" Street</b>			
CITY OR TOWN: <b>Marysville</b>		CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT: <b>4</b>	
STATE: <b>California</b>	CODE: <b>06</b>	COUNTY: <b>Yuba</b>	CODE: <b>115</b>

### 3. CLASSIFICATION

CATEGORY (Check One)	OWNERSHIP	STATUS	ACCESSIBLE TO THE PUBLIC
<input type="checkbox"/> District <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Building <input type="checkbox"/> Site <input type="checkbox"/> Structure <input type="checkbox"/> Object	<input type="checkbox"/> Public <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Private <input type="checkbox"/> Both	Public Acquisition: <input type="checkbox"/> In Process <input type="checkbox"/> Being Considered	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Occupied <input type="checkbox"/> Unoccupied <input type="checkbox"/> Preservation work in progress
PRESENT USE (Check One or More as Appropriate)			
<input type="checkbox"/> Agricultural <input type="checkbox"/> Commercial <input type="checkbox"/> Educational <input type="checkbox"/> Entertainment	<input type="checkbox"/> Government <input type="checkbox"/> Industrial <input type="checkbox"/> Military <input type="checkbox"/> Museum	<input type="checkbox"/> Park <input type="checkbox"/> Private Residence <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Religious <input type="checkbox"/> Scientific	<input type="checkbox"/> Transportation <input type="checkbox"/> Other (Specify) _____ <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Comments _____

### 4. OWNER OF PROPERTY

OWNER'S NAME: <b>Chinese Community % Bing Ong</b>			
STREET AND NUMBER: <b>P. O. Box 503</b>			
CITY OR TOWN: <b>Marysville</b>		STATE: <b>California</b>	CODE: <b>06</b>

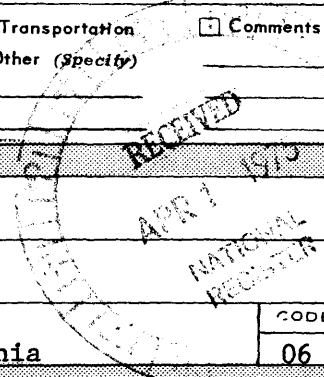
### 5. LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION

COURTHOUSE, REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC.: <b>County Recorder - Official Records</b>			
STREET AND NUMBER: <b>251 - 5th Street</b>			
CITY OR TOWN: <b>Marysville</b>		STATE: <b>California</b>	CODE: <b>06</b>

### 6. REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS

TITLE OF SURVEY: <b>Official Map - City of Marysville 1856</b>			
DATE OF SURVEY: <input type="checkbox"/> Federal <input type="checkbox"/> State <input type="checkbox"/> County <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Local city			
DEPOSITORY FOR SURVEY RECORDS: <b>County Recorder</b>			
STREET AND NUMBER: <b>251 - 5th Street</b>			
CITY OR TOWN: <b>Marysville</b>		STATE: <b>California</b>	CODE: <b>06</b>

SEE INSTRUCTIONS



STATE: <b>California</b>
COUNTY: <b>Yuba</b>
ENTRY NUMBER: <b>MAY 21 1975</b>
DATE

FOR NPS USE ONLY

7. DESCRIPTION

CONDITION

(Check One)					
<input type="checkbox"/> Excellent	<input type="checkbox"/> Good	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Fair	<input type="checkbox"/> Deteriorated	<input type="checkbox"/> Ruins	<input type="checkbox"/> Unexposed
(Check One)			(Check One)		
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Altered	<input type="checkbox"/> Unaltered	<input type="checkbox"/> Moved	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Original Site		

DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (if known) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

The main structure is brick with the central altar portion of the roof being covered with red tile. The balance of the roof is built-up composition which has been repaired recently. The brick is of a soft texture which has been stabilized to some extent by painting.



SEE INSTRUCTIONS

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORM**

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RECEIVED APR 21 1975

DATE ENTERED

MAY 21 1975

CONTINUATION SHEET

ITEM NUMBER 7 PAGE 1

The following description of the Bok Kai Temple has been prepared by Mr. James L. Wadley of Wadley, Martin and Mackensen, Architects, A.I.A., 520 Olive Street, Marysville, California 95901:

"The Sanctuary section of the Temple is original in exterior finish of plaster over brick walls and mission tile roof. The porch roof is also covered with mission tile and is supported with turned wood columns (appear to be original). Above the porch is an original carved wood decorative trim and below, above the entry doors, is an original hand-painted scene on the plaster.

"The sections built on the east side and west side of the sanctuary each have a lower roof surfaced with composition roofing but the walls are plastered brick. These two rooms could have been added later to the sanctuary but appear original (same finish and style as original). The two rooms have a porch in front (south) covered with mission tile. The composition roofing does not show to the passerby since it is hidden by a parapet wall.

"There is a kitchen and dwelling room added to the northeast corner of the sanctuary and is wood frame with corrugated metal roof and siding. The brick and clay oven remains as does the wood plank floor. I can't be sure just when this addition was built but it has been there a long time."

J-2/3

**3. SIGNIFICANCE**

PERIOD (Check One or More as Appropriate)

- |  |                                       |  |  |
|--|---------------------------------------|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Pre-Columbian | <input type="checkbox"/> 16th Century | <input type="checkbox"/> 18th Century            | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 20th Century |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 15th Century  | <input type="checkbox"/> 17th Century | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 19th Century |  |

SPECIFIC DATE(S) (If Applicable and Known) **Temple dedicated 1880**

AREAS OF SIGNIFICANCE (Check One or More as Appropriate)

- |  |   |   |  |
|--|---|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Aboriginal              | <input type="checkbox"/> Education              | <input type="checkbox"/> Political                      | <input type="checkbox"/> Urban Planning  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Prehistoric             | <input type="checkbox"/> Engineering            | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Religion/Philosophy | <input type="checkbox"/> Other (Specify) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Historic                | <input type="checkbox"/> Industry               | <input type="checkbox"/> Science                        | _____                                    |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Agriculture             | <input type="checkbox"/> Invention              | <input type="checkbox"/> Sculpture                      | _____                                    |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Architecture | <input type="checkbox"/> Landscape Architecture | <input type="checkbox"/> Social/Humanitarian            | _____                                    |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Art                     | <input type="checkbox"/> Literature             | <input type="checkbox"/> Theater                        | _____                                    |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Commerce                | <input type="checkbox"/> Military               | <input type="checkbox"/> Transportation                 | _____                                    |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Communications          | <input type="checkbox"/> Music                  |   |  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Conservation            |   |   |  |

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

This is the only temple in the United States honoring Bok Eye the Chinese Water God or God of the Dark North.

Located on the north bank of the Yuba River, the temple houses Bok Eye as the central deity, who is believed to possess powers controlling floods, rains and irrigation waters. Bok Eye is flanked on the right by Quan Ying and Quan Gung and on the left by Yuk Fung and Sing Moo.

The temple is in regular use by the Chinese of the local community, and is opened for other interested visitors on request. During the annual celebration of the Chinese New Year and Bomb Day, Chinese visitors from all over the nation attending this unique festival, take the opportunity to worship in this beautiful shrine.

**OLD MARYSVILLE CHINATOWN**

The discovery of gold in California in 1848 was the cause for a large contingent of Chinese to leave their native land in search of fortune. In the 1880's they numbered around 110,000, but this figure dwindled to less than 60,000 throughout the country by 1925. The largest group remained here on the West Coast.

There were many Chinatowns in the West, especially in mining areas and on railroad routes. But after the completion of the transcontinental railroads in 1869 and reduction of mining, these communities diminished as their inhabitants left for employment opportunities elsewhere.

When the railroad construction and mining activities diminished, many of the Chinese moved to Marysville and the surrounding areas, working at various occupations. They worked as gardeners, toiled in clearing some of the present-day irrigation canals, labored on hop and other farms, cooked and laundered clothes.

Marysville had a fairly large Chinese population between 1850 and 1900 in comparison to other towns in the Northern Sacramento Valley. In businesses, it was ranked among the busiest and largest in the Northern Sacramento Valley and, at times, ranked second only to San Francisco.

Marysville's Chinatown, which is one of the oldest in the United States still in existence, was ideally located, offering merchandising services to mining camps to the north and east. It was regularly supplied with goods and materials by river boats via the Sacramento and Feather Rivers and stage coaches.

(see continuation sheet attached)

SEE INSTRUCTIONS

**9 MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES**

Historical Bok Kai Temple in Old Marysville, California, published by Marysville Chinese Community, February 1967.

**10 GEOGRAPHICAL DATA**

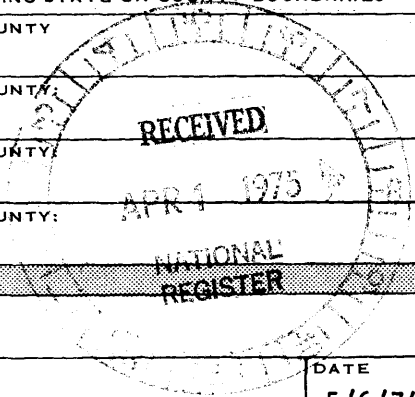
LATITUDE AND LONGITUDE COORDINATES DEFINING A RECTANGLE LOCATING THE PROPERTY				O R	LATITUDE AND LONGITUDE COORDINATES DEFINING THE CENTER POINT OF A PROPERTY OF LESS THAN TEN ACRES				
CORNER	LATITUDE		LONGITUDE		LATITUDE		LONGITUDE		
	Degrees	Minutes	Seconds	Degrees	Minutes	Seconds	Degrees	Minutes	Seconds
NW	°	'	"	°	'	"	39	08	06
NE	°	'	"	°	'	"	121	35	13
SE	°	'	"	°	'	"			
SW	°	'	"	°	'	"			

NO UTM  
HL

APPROXIMATE ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY: 40' x 80' (.07 acre)

LIST ALL STATES AND COUNTIES FOR PROPERTIES OVERLAPPING STATE OR COUNTY BOUNDARIES

STATE:	CODE	COUNTY	CODE



SEE INSTRUCTIONS

**11 FORM PREPARED BY**

NAME AND TITLE: **Frances McDougal, Chairman**

ORGANIZATION: **Yuba County Historical Commission** DATE: **5/6/74**

STREET AND NUMBER: **203 Johnson Avenue**

CITY OR TOWN: **Marysville** STATE: **California 95901** CODE: **06**

**12 STATE LIAISON OFFICER CERTIFICATION NATIONAL REGISTER VERIFICATION**

As the designated State Liaison Officer for the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 (Public Law 89-665), I hereby nominate this property for inclusion in the National Register and certify that it has been evaluated according to the criteria and procedures set forth by the National Park Service. The recommended level of significance of this nomination is:

National  State  Local

Name: [Signature]

Title: State Historic Preservation Officer

Date: MAR 17 1975

I hereby certify that this property is included in the National Register.

[Signature]  
Director, Office of Archeology and Historic Preservation

Date: MAY 21 1975

ATTEST: [Signature]  
Keeper of The National Register

Date: 5/20/75

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORM**

FOR NPS USE ONLY	
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PAGE

Statement of Significance, Page 2

Marysville's Chinatown was a place for rest and entertainment to thousands of Chinese miners and laborers. It was a bustling and lively community on weekends and during holidays, drawing between 500 and 2,000 Chinese at times.

In addition to serving as a shopping center for those Chinese coming from the mines and other outlying labor camps, it provided varied entertainment and a place for worship, the Bok Kai Temple. Marysville's Chinatown also included the Suey Sing and Hop Sing Lodges, which are still in existence; a Masonic Lodge, Gee Kong Tong (a Chinese school), and two opera houses.

THE BOK KAI TEMPLE STORY

Marysville, for a city its size, has a fairly large and stable Chinatown, and certainly one studded with rich Chinese history. Its original "Joss House," or Bok Kai Temple, was built in 1854 within five years after the arrival of the first Chinese fortune hunters in California.

Wherever the early Chinese settled in California in any numbers, a temple was generally erected to provide for the spiritual needs of its members.

When the Chinese came to Marysville during the Gold Rush Days, they brought their myths, idols, customs and religion with them. By 1854, about five years after the first contingent of Chinese arrived in California from the Orient to work the mines, they erected here a Temple, the Bok Kai Mui, where they could house their Gods and go to worship.

The first Bok Kai Temple was built nearly two blocks upstream on the Yuba River from the present structure. It was appropriately named the Bok Kai Mui, which means Temple (Mui) of the North (Bok) side of the stream (Kai). (This particular site is now part of the area where the Marysville Levee Commission building and the Yuba River Sand Company are located, near the corner of First and B Streets.)

After falling into a state of disrepair, the Marysville temple was relocated on former public bathhouse property, purchased by the Chinese Community, at the corner of Front and D Streets. Built by a handful of faithful members, the new Bok Kai Temple was completed and dedicated in March, 1880.

There are several Gods placed in the Temple. This is the reason one of the Temple's standards bears in Chinese writing: "Palace of Several Saints."

Bok I (or Eye) is the central Deity in this place of worship. Of the five Gods in the main altar, Bok Eye is situated in the center, flanked by the others.

Bok Eye is believed to possess powers controlling floods, waters of irrigation and the rains. He is also called Hsuan-Tien Shang-Ti, Lord of the Black (Pavilions of) Heaven Chen Wu, and Peischi Yusheng Chen-chun. Bok Eye, according to the Chinese, means Northern or Dark North (Bok) and God (I or Eye).

(continued)

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
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CONTINUATION SHEET

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Statement of Significance, page 3

The present structure, a charming edifice filled with treasured items, has been the focal point of a restoration project initiated in 1947 by the entire Marysville community. The Temple's restoration project since then has involved thousands of dollars and yet there is more work to be done to complete the task.

BOK EYE AND THE OTHER GODS

The early settlers of Marysville Chinatown were proud and industrious people, coming from the Canton Province of the Kwang Tung state of China. Reverently, they placed in the Temple images of Gods and sacred tablets, from whom they came to seek guidance and salvation. Because they spoke in the Chinese dialects of "Say Yup" and "Som Yup", their names of the Gods may vary from the ones found in Chinese Mythology books written in Mandarin.

There are several notable Gods worshiped by the Chinese in the Temple (Palace of Several Saints).

"The choice of Gods in the Temple," Joe L. Kim, an oldtimer and a regular worshiper at the Temple, points out, "seems to represent the spiritual wishes and the gratitude of the people who started the church."

Bok Eye, the water God who is also capable of banishing evil, is prominently spotlighted in the altar. His position in the Temple of Many Saints is appropriate due to the fact that Bok Eye is the Water God and the building is situated alongside a river which periodically brings threats of flood during the rainy seasons.

There's a Chinese female Deity, Sing Moo, who is generally worshipped by seamen or ocean travellers for safe journeys. It is believed her placement in the Temple is in gratitude of the thousands of Chinese arriving safely in the United States after the long voyages across the Pacific Ocean.

For the healing of illness and injury, there is Wa-Ho, the God of Health or Surgery General. Another female Deity is Gone Yim (Quan Ying, Kuan Yin or Kuan Shih Yin Tzu Tsai), the Goddess of Mercy.

A top military advisor and warrior in the group is Gon Gung (Quan Gung), who exercises bravery and fairplay and also carries the title of God of Literature. Yuk Fung or Tai Sing is a God who holds the position of Secretary of State. God of Earth is Hoo Gee and God of Wealth is Ts'ai Shen or Choy Bok Sing Quan.

Written on tablets are the names of two Gods: Gum Far (Gold Flower Lady), who works as a midwife and of whom expectant mothers seek advice and comfort, and Tai Sui, whose powers control time and the process of construction and destruction.

BOMB DAY

Bomb Day, or in Chinese, Yee Yeut Yee, takes its name from the colorful firing of the bombs highlighting the celebration, which is in tribute to the Chinese Water God, Bok Eye.

(continued)

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
INVENTORY - NOMINATION FORM**

(Continuation Sheet)

STATE California	
COUNTY Yuba	
FOR NPS USE ONLY	
ENTRY NUMBER	DATE
	MAY 21 1975

(Number all entries)

Statement of Significance, Page 4

Each year on the second day of the second month of the Chinese lunar year, the Chinese community of Marysville and the Marysville-Yuba County Chamber of Commerce join in putting on the Bomb Day celebration, which marks Bok Eye's birthday. When the day falls on a weekday, the festivities usually are held for two days during the weekend.

The annual two-day event draws thousands from Marysville and surrounding communities. It also attracts thousands of Chinese from all parts of the United States, Canada and Mexico, who come to worship at the Bok Kai Temple and join in the festivities.

Although the celebration includes the colorful parade, a fashion show, dance, exhibitions by Lion Dancers, banquets and other entertainment, the highlight of the event is the firing of the bombs.

In addition to the fun and excitement of the celebration, Bomb Day has another aspect--it enables the Chinese to worship at the temple, which honors Bok Eye, worshipped by the Chinese for banishing evil spirits and for controlling rains and floods of spring in time for planting.

There are no records pinpointing exactly what year Bomb Day was initiated in Marysville, but it is assumed by most Chinese here the event must have been observed as far back as the 1860's when the first Bok Tai Temple was built. People who have done research on the Temple, though, look to the year 1880, when the present Temple was dedicated, as the start of Bomb Day celebrations in Marysville. They establish this fact from an article describing the dedication of the Temple in the April 2, 1880 issue of the Marysville Weekly Appeal, of which excerpts follow:

"The Boc-ky Church, or Chinese Temple, recently erected on D and Front Streets, in this city, was dedicated on Saturday with much pomp, noise and enthusiasm. The management under the committee composed of Yee Wood Gung, Wong Ting Oy, Chow You and Lung Sing, was successful in all points though the attendance was not as large as anticipated. At no time during Sunday were there present over fifteen hundred Chinese, male residents included. But they made noise enough for twice the number. At an early hour on the morning of the 21st instant a regular bombardment of the Yuba commenced with bombs and firecrackers, and by daylight the Temple was in order for formal dedication."

The Chinese here observed Bomb Day jointly with the City of Marysville for the first time in 1930. Prior to that time, the Chinese community commemorated Bomb Day by itself.

Chinese who have been here since before the turn of the century recall Bomb Days that followed from year to year. They explained that there were lapses during the First World War, in the early 1930's when China was involved in a revolutionary war and during the Second World War. After World War II, Bomb Day in Marysville was renewed in 1947 and has been an annual event since.

Except for Chinese New Year's celebrations, it is believed Marysville's Bomb Day is one of the oldest, if not the oldest, Chinese festivities in America.



**United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service**

# **National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet**

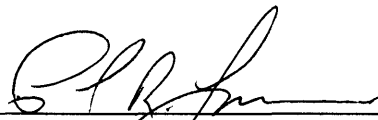
Section number \_\_\_\_\_ Page \_\_\_\_\_

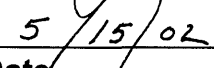
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**Bok Kai Temple (Additional Documentation)  
Marysville, Yuba County  
75000498**

**CALIFORNIA**

## **ADDITIONAL DOCUMENTATION APPROVAL**

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of the Keeper of the National Register

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

USDI/NPS NRHP Registration Form  
Bok Kai Temple  
Yuba County, California

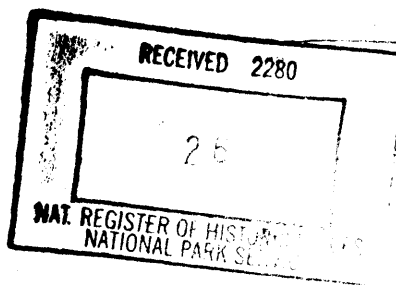
75000498

1

NPS Form 10-900  
(Rev. 10-90)

OMB No. 1024-0018

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service



NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
REGISTRATION FORM

1. Name of Property

historic name Bok Kai Temple

other names/site number Daoist (also spelled Taoist) Temple; Chinese Joss House

2. Location

street & number D and 1<sup>st</sup> Street not for publication N/A  
city or town Marysville vicinity N/A  
state California code CA county Yuba code 115  
zip code 95901

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, as amended, I hereby certify that this  nomination  request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60. In my opinion, the property  meets  does not meet the National Register Criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant  nationally  statewide  locally. (  See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

Signature of certifying official

Date

California Office of Historic Preservation  
State or Federal agency and bureau



Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register 1

Name of related multiple property listing (Enter "N/A" if property is not part of a multiple property listing.)  
\_\_\_\_\_

=====

6. Function or Use

=====

Historic Functions (Enter categories from instructions)

Cat: <u>Religion</u>	Sub: <u>religious facility (temple)</u>
<u>Social</u>	<u>meeting hall</u>
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____

Current Functions (Enter categories from instructions)

Cat: <u>Religion</u>	Sub: <u>religious facility (temple)</u>
<u>Social</u>	<u>meeting hall</u>
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____

=====

7. Description

=====

Architectural Classification (Enter categories from instructions)

Category: Other: Chinese temple, mixed with elements of late 19<sup>th</sup> century mission revival

Materials (Enter categories from instructions)

foundation Concrete  
roof terra cotta tile, wood  
walls brick, stucco

other Porch: Tile, wood, stucco, plaster  
Gate: Wrought iron (later addition)

Narrative Description (Describe the historic and current condition of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

=====  
8. Statement of Significance  
=====

Applicable National Register Criteria (Mark "x" in one or more boxes for the criteria qualifying the property for National Register listing)

- A Property is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history.
- B Property is associated with the lives of persons significant in our past.
- C Property embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction or represents the work of a master, or possesses high artistic values, or represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components lack individual distinction.
- D Property has yielded, or is likely to yield information important in prehistory or history.

Criteria Considerations (Mark "X" in all the boxes that apply.)

- A owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes.
- B removed from its original location.
- C a birthplace or a grave.
- D a cemetery.
- E a reconstructed building, object, or structure.
- F a commemorative property.
- G less than 50 years of age or achieved significance within the past 50 years.

Areas of Significance (Enter categories from instructions)

Ethnic Heritage: Asian  
Religion  
Architecture  
Art

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Period of Significance 1880-1930

\_\_\_\_\_

Significant Dates 1880

Significant Person (Complete if Criterion B is marked above)

\_\_\_\_\_

Cultural Affiliation \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Architect/Builder Swain and Hudson  
\_\_\_\_\_

Narrative Statement of Significance (Explain the significance of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

=====

9. Major Bibliographical References

=====

(Cite the books, articles, and other sources used in preparing this form on one or more continuation sheets.)

Previous documentation on file (NPS)

preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested.

previously listed in the National Register

previously determined eligible by the National Register

designated a National Historic Landmark

recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey # \_\_\_\_\_

recorded by Historic American Engineering Record # \_\_\_\_\_

Primary Location of Additional Data

State Historic Preservation Office

Other State agency

Federal agency

Local government

University

Other

Name of repository: \_\_\_\_\_

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10. Geographical Data

=====

Acreage of Property .07 acres

UTM References (Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet)

	Zone	Easting	Northing	Zone	Easting	Northing
1	10	6222148	4332575	3	_____	_____
2	_____	_____	_____	4	_____	_____
	See continuation sheet.					

Verbal Boundary Description (Describe the boundaries of the property on a continuation sheet.)

Boundary Justification (Explain why the boundaries were selected on a continuation sheet.)

=====  
11. Form Prepared By  
=====

name/title Dr. Sue Fawn Chung, Ross Nelson

organization University of Nevada, Las Vegas date December 10, 2001  
street & number 4505 Maryland Parkway telephone (702) 895-3351

city or town Las Vegas state NV zip code 89154-5020

=====  
Additional Documentation  
=====

Submit the following items with the completed form:  
Continuation Sheets

Maps

A USGS map (7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the property's location.  
A sketch map for historic districts and properties having large acreage  
or numerous resources.

Photographs

Representative black and white photographs of the property.

Additional items (Check with the SHPO or FPO for any additional items)

=====  
Property Owner  
=====

(Complete this item at the request of the SHPO or FPO.)

name Marysville Chinese Community, Inc.; Lim S. Hall, President

street & number 1961 17<sup>th</sup> Street telephone (530) 743-9856

city or town Gridley state CA zip code 95961

=====  
Paperwork Reduction Act Statement: This information is being collected for applications to the National Register of Historic Places to nominate properties for listing or determine eligibility for listing, to list properties, and to amend existing listings. Response to this request is required to obtain a benefit in accordance with the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended (16 U.S.C. 470 et seq.).

Estimated Burden Statement: Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 18.1 hours per response including the time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining data, and completing and reviewing the form. Direct comments regarding this burden estimate or any aspect of this form to the Chief, Administrative Services Division, National Park Service, P.O. Box 37127, Washington, DC 20013-7127; and the Office of Management and Budget, Paperwork Reductions Project (1024-0018), Washington, DC 20503.

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
CONTINUATION SHEET

Section 7 Page 7

Bok Kai Temple  
name of property  
Yuba, California  
county and State

=====

Describe Present and Historic Physical Appearance

The *Bok Kai* Daoist (Taoist) temple (miao), built in 1880 on the site of the original temple of 1869, is located on the southeast corner of D and 1<sup>st</sup> Streets at the entrance to the historic placer mining town of Marysville, California, about 35 miles north of Sacramento. The temple replaced another one located two blocks away that was built in 1854, five years after the arrival of Chinese miners and other immigrants. Even with a few attempts over the years to reinforce the structure, the building has retained its historical integrity.

Originally the levee was level with the entrance of the temple but as the levee was built higher, the levee is now twenty feet above the main entrance. Railroad tracks dating from about the 1890s also are higher than the entrance door. The levee continues to be built higher and the bridge that once was the major entrance to the town has been torn down. As a result, the present entrance is from the town through a gate and pavilion at the back of the temple. In recognition of the importance of this structure, the Republic of China donated the entrance gateway and pavilion and commemorative plaques from local and regional organizations decorate the rear pathway to the front of the building.

Architecture

The Bok Kai Temple originally measured 66 x 40 feet (2640 square feet) and its area had been expanded to 77 x 40 ft. (3080 square feet) by 1945. The one-story building is divided into three parts: a central block and two wings on the east and west sides of it. The central block (the altar room), which measures 18 x 30 feet or 540 square feet, is parallel gabled. The gable facing the north side of the property is approximately a foot higher than the gable on the south side, near the main entrance.

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1 Various spelled *Bok Eye*, *Boe Ky*. The romanization of words in Cantonese is italicized. The romanization of other Chinese words, underlined, is in the pinyin system, adopted for use in American publications in 1979. Daoism is the pinyin romanization for Taoism in the Wade-Giles system and will be used here without underlining. Although most Americans are more familiar with the rendition with the "T," the recently accepted practice will be used here. Much of the information about the temple comes from the writings of Dr. Paul Chace, a leading anthropologist in the field.



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The masonry of the entire building is fired red brick with a light colored mortar, most likely lime and sand. There is a thick plaster (also light colored) over the brick wall approximately .5mm thick, which appears to be also a lime and sand mixture similar to the mortar. The ceiling is a wood rafter and beam construction, in which the ends of the beams are tied into the masonry of the east and west walls. The roof on the central block features parapets on both the left and right sides of both gables and is covered with red terra cotta mission-style tiles. The eave on the south end of the central block is supported on both sides by two wood columns with cushioned capitals. The surrounding fascia is painted red, along with the two wooden columns. An open veranda (5 x 12 ft.) with a concrete slab floor faces south from the central block.

A cement stoop with four red painted steps leads up to the main doors. The two paneled doors, both painted red, open into the altar room. (To the Chinese, red is the color of happiness and is frequently used in Chinese temples.) Currently there is an added protection of a wrought iron gate on both doors. There are also no windows in the central block of the Temple.

Eight wooden plaques, four on each side, flank the doors. The red and gold sign over the front door to the main altar room reads Peiqi miao (*Bok Kai Temple*). (An older version of the same sign is in the storage room.) Two modern red and gold lanterns are suspended from the eave of the central block. Above the door and sign, on three sides of the veranda, are exquisite murals of Chinese figures, Chinese calligraphy, and the four seasons. The wall paintings are executed on a fine layer of finish plaster similar in aspect to the mortar of the joints in the brick masonry. It appears that the painted scenes and calligraphy are painted over a white ground layer. The palette is primarily blue, yellow, green, red and black. The pigments, colorants, and binder are yet to be positively identified. There is possibly a surface coating in some areas.

The style is a combination of narrative scenes with figures, calligraphy, and decorative scenes with birds and flowers, each in discrete geometric frames, which follow the layout of the porch and sloping roof sections. The paintings are laid out as one register of three main panels on the north wall, and panels on the west and east walls, that are composed to follow the porch and roof construction. The plaster has cracked in places but most of the colors in the murals remain vibrant.

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Bok Kai Temple Interior

There are three exterior doors. The central double doors lead to the altar room and are painted red (color of happiness). The central hall measures 18' x 30' feet. The main altar is along the north (rear) interior wall of the central hall. The west wing has two small windows and the east wing has one, each protected by wrought iron.

By the doors of the central hall, there is a bronze bell and ancient drum, both of which are still in use. Located nearby are the names of the donors for the 1880 construction of the temple. There are two altar tables in the front part of the main altar room. The altar table closest to the door is intricately carved and gilded. Like the carved wooden frame at the back of the room, it is an excellent example of 19<sup>th</sup> century Chinese craftsmanship. The next table is plainer. These two altar tables contain the offerings of incense, tea, alcoholic beverages, fruit, and flowers. The traditional altar decorations of a large, dragon-handled pewter incense burner, flanked by two pewter candlestick holders, and vases are standard in all Chinese temples. Fortune-telling bamboo sticks in bamboo containers and fortune-telling blocks (one flat side, one curved side) also decorate the altar tables. The fortunes are related to the *Yijing* [Classic of Changes], used for predicting the future. Flowers, round fruits, and other decorations complete the requirements. Framed tablets also might be placed on these tables. There is two pairs of pewter candlesticks set off a bronze engraved plaque, one set probably dating from the late 1870s. Both sides of the room have traditional Chinese weapons in wooden holders and silk banners, all very typical of Chinese temples. There are several tall wooden plaques. One pair, dated 1868, came from the earlier temple and talks about the need to tame the waters and understand the Dao (the Way). Traditional Chinese sayings are carved or painted onto the wooden steles. The deities are on the third altar table at the rear (see below). The clothing of each reflects the rich textures of Chinese silk garments and some have actual silk garments, such as scarves.

*Bok Kai* is in the center of the altar at the back wall. Six other deities, also in polychrome wood or ceramic, flank *Bok Kai*. Guandi, originally Guan Yu and also known as Guangong (*Kuan Gong*), was a military hero of the Three Kingdoms period in the 3<sup>rd</sup> century A.D. and in the Song Dynasty (960-1278) he became a celestial guardian who protected the Daoist faith and embodied martial virtue.

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In the Ming Dynasty (1368-1644) he was elevated to Emperor Guan and is popularly known as the God of War and Justice, who also carried the title of the God of Literature. Yufeng (*Tai Sing*, representing civil and military activities, including protection of policemen and officials) is next.

Guanyin (*Kwan Yin*) is the Goddess of Mercy who was incorporated into the Buddhist pantheon as the Buddhist Bodhisattva of Compassion or Mercy. She represents women, fertility, and mercy. She hears the cries of men and assists them in their time of need. The other female deity is Tianhou (Empress of Heaven), also known as Mazu<sup>2</sup> (*Sing Mo*), who protects fisherman, overseas travelers, and coastal communities, such as Taiwan. Huado (*Wa Ho*, God of Medicine or Health)<sup>3</sup> and Tudi (*Hou To*, protective God of Earth) are on separate altars nearby. Six religious tablets are in front of the central altar. An elaborate jade tablet with a carved gilt frame is located directly in front of Bok Kai. Two other tablets have written in Chinese the names of Jinfa (*Gum Far*, Gold Flower Lady, who works as a midwife and of whom expectant mothers seek advice and comfort) and Tai Sui (whose powers control time and the process of construction and destruction). The figures and tablets probably were imported from China and are representative of late 19<sup>th</sup> century Daoist art. Some have silk clothing or decorations. There are a few modern additions to the main altar section but these are very minor in nature. An intricately carved wooden frame sets off the central deities from the other two altars in the main room.

To the right (east) side of the main temple is a wing that consists of six rooms. An interior door leads to a wooden staircase from the main room. A fortune telling board with slips of paper is on display near the staircase. Two modern bathrooms have been added in one of the rooms. In one of the small rooms on the northern section, many carved wooden sayings presented by the members to the temple are stored. One dates from 1868 from a Mr. Tan.

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<sup>2</sup> Nyitray, Vivian-Lee. "Becoming the Empress of Heaven: The Life and Bureaucratic Career of Mazu," in Goddesses Who Rule, edited by Elisabeth Benard and Beverly Moon. New York: Oxford University Press, 2000. There is specific mention of the Mazu enshrined at Marysville, and the role the temple plays in contemporary pilgrimage. See also, Joseph Bosco and Puay-peng Ho, Temples of the Empress of Heaven, Hong Kong: Oxford University Press, 1999.

<sup>3</sup> Probably also known as Baosheng Dadi. See Kenneth Dean, Taoist Ritual and Popular Cults of Southeast China, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1993, 90-91.

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Historically the rooms housed the caretaker and, perhaps, travelers, which was a traditional practice for Chinese temples. The fourth small room, which has an upstairs section, has a three-wok burner brick stove, chairs, tables, and a bed or two. Visitors could eat and sleep in this area. Currently this is a storage area. On the upper level is the bamboo dragon frame. This dragon originally was 150 feet long and required 100 men to carry it.

The account books for 1890 indicated that it cost \$575 and the costumes worn to support it were \$480.4 It was exhibited at the World's Fair in New York and was "retired" in 1937, yielding to the modern, shorter, wire dragon frame stored in another part of the east wing. Since roasted pigs were a major part of the celebrations, a unique brick pig oven, which has not been used since the 1920s, is inside. There is a stove for burning "spirit money and artifacts" to the deities or in memory of the deceased.

To the left (west) side of the main temple is one large room divided into two sections. This room only has an exterior door. It was the community meeting room and, perhaps, an office. Teak or rosewood chairs are in the room. Currently it houses old accounting books from the late 19<sup>th</sup> to early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries in Chinese, the sedan chairs (both elaborately carved and gilded) for the deities in the main altar room, wood plaques with good wishes or admonitions, and other miscellaneous objects. Some of these steles are approximately twelve feet tall. One pair is dated 1880. The sayings written on paper are from a more recent (mid-20<sup>th</sup> century and later) dating.

The complex of three sections differs from its predecessors in Asia. The few remaining Daoist temples in China, Taiwan, and Southeast Asia have multiple rooftops and upturned eaves at the corners with decorations. Paintings of traditional Daoist temples showed the same highly decorated roofs. Often several buildings made up the temple complex and the more elaborate ones were modeled after imperial palaces with an enclosed compound of several temple buildings and residences.<sup>5</sup> In temples built in the United States, particularly the one in Marysville, the temples were of simpler designs and consisted of one main structure.

<sup>4</sup> Wolfram, Eberhard. "Economic Activities of a Chinese Temple in California," in his collected papers, Settlement and Social Change in Asia, vol. 1, Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 1967, 268.

<sup>5</sup> See, for example, Nancy Shatzman Steinhardt, "Taoist Architecture, in Stephen Little with Shawn Eichman, Taoism and the Arts of China, Chicago: The Art Institute of Chicago, 2000, 57-75.

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The original brick surface has been painted white, and ceramic tiles have been added to the visors on the two wings, otherwise the building retains its basic integrity from its date of construction. It was restored in 1947 and various other minor restorations have taken place since then.

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**STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE**

Bok Kai Temple  
Yuba County, California  
National Significance  
Criterion: 1 and 4  
NHL Exception 1  
Theme: Expressing Cultural Values  
Subthemes: visual art, architecture, Asian-American ethnic heritage  
Period of National Significance: 1880-1930

The *Bok Kai Temple* is significant at the national level under National Register Criterion A and NHL Criterion 1 as a property that has made a contribution to the understanding of immigration and ethnic heritage as its role as a Daoist temple in the Mother Lode country (primarily placer mining sites) since its construction in 1880. Although there are a few extant Chinese temples in the western United States, most have been destroyed. Moreover, there are few extant Daoist temples that remain in the United States and China. The temple represents popular and traditional Chinese American culture, a belief system that probably no longer exists in China. These settlers, as individuals, were not famous historically but they helped in the development of the American west by working on the mines, building railroads, farming, doing laundry, working in restaurants and boarding houses, and providing herbal medical care in rural areas. Since its construction, Chinese Americans from all over North America and Chinese tourists from all parts of the world have visited this building, including Sun Yat-Sen, founder and first President of the Republic of China, and Kang Youwei, leader of the Constitutional Monarchy movement in China from 1898 to 1911. This particular Chinese temple recognized the importance of water, which was crucial for placer mining and farming. The temple continues to be a focus of community activities, which are not limited to Chinese Americans.

The temple also is significant under National Register Criterion C and National Historic Landmark Criterion 4 for its architectural design and mural paintings. The Marysville Daily Appeal (March 9, 1880) commented, "The Chinese employed at fitting up the inside of the new Temple at the foot of D and First streets, are first-class hands in the line of painting, carving, and ornamental work.." Because it was the focus of so many Chinese immigrants' lives, they willingly donated enough funds to build and maintain a substantial brick building based on a typically southern Chinese architectural style that has been modified to adapt to local building materials and design.

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The highly decorated and curved eaves of many Daoist temples in China such as seen in, for example, the Chen family temple in Foshan, near Guangzhou (Canton) had not been recreated. The Bok Kai Temple is one of the earliest, if not the earliest, extant examples of Chinese American temple architecture and design. The interior and exterior of the temple have retained their integrity for the last 120 years, and although there are similar temple structures, there is no other architectural structure like it in the United States or in Asia. The following are the major existing Chinese American temples in California. The Tin How Temple, originally built in 1852 and reconstructed in 1911, in San Francisco is dedicated to the Goddess of the Heaven and Sea to protect the Chinese overseas and is on the third floor of a building in Chinatown. The Kong Chow Temple in San Francisco and the Mo Dai Miu (Temple of Guan Gong) in Mendocino are dedicated to the God of War who protects its followers. The Mo Dai Miu is two rooms and smaller than the Bok Kai Temple while the Kong Chow Temple is really a district association meeting hall. Oroville's Chinese temples consist of three different buildings, one each devoted to Buddhism, Daoism, and Confucianism. Weaverville's Temple Amongst the Forest Beneath the Clouds is really the only other truly Daoist temple that rivals the Bok Kai Temple. It was completed in 1874 and is now a state historic park.

The murals on the exterior of the main building are unique. No other extant Asian American temple or community center has this feature. The idea stems from the Daoist Hall of Three Purities (Sanqing Hall) in Ruicheng, Shanxi, built in the 13<sup>th</sup> century and representing the earliest surviving example of Daoist religious architecture.<sup>6</sup> Executed in the Li Gonglin (c. 1049-1106)'s *Illustrated Classic of Filial Piety* style of fine line narrative drawings, the artist created a Daoist moralistic narrative in a horizontal (handscroll) fashion.

According to the Marysville Daily Appeal (March 20, 1880), the artist who painted the mural paintings was "an expert at his business." A close examination of the technique used and execution of the paintings confirms this.<sup>7</sup> In February 2001 Leslie Rainer of the Getty Conservation Institute and Jun Zheng of the China National Institute of Cultural Property, both wall painting conservators, examined the wall paintings on the exterior of the temple.

<sup>6</sup> Thorp and Vinograd, Op. cit., 293 for illustration and text.

<sup>7</sup> This is the opinion of Dr. Sue Fawn Chung, who has taught Chinese art history at the University of Nevada, Las Vegas and was trained at Harvard University and the University of California, Berkeley.

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Like the Mogao Buddhist Temple wall paintings in Dunhuang, Xinjiang Province, China, the paintings are executed on a fine layer of white finished plaster. The palette is primarily blue, yellow, green, red and black. The pigments, colorants (probably mineral-based), and binder are yet to be positively identified. There is possibly a surface coating in some areas. Zheng commented that having the paintings on the exterior is unique since most temple paintings are in the interior in China.

The mural scenes, painted by a single artist at the time of the temple's construction, are rare and unique in all of North America. There are narrative scenes with figures, calligraphy, and decorative scenes with birds and flowers, each in discrete geometric frames, which follow the layout of the porch and sloping roof sections. The paintings are laid out as one register of three main panels on the north wall, and panels on the west and east walls, that are composed to follow the porch and roof construction. The figures depicted worthies or historical figures that are not necessarily deified engaged in conversation, eating, and other activities. One inscription refers to the need for protection against the raging waters. The figures also include two young men dressed in non-Asian costumes. The skill of the artist is of high quality and because of war and the destruction of religious property in China during the 20<sup>th</sup> century; this type of mural figure painting is rare both in the United States and China. Many Daoist paintings have been destroyed over the centuries in China so the *Bok Kai* murals are important in an international context.<sup>8</sup>

The Bok Kai Temple was nominated for inclusion in the National Register of Historic Places in 1975, and in 1976 it was designated a California Historic Landmark (No. 889). Secretary of State March Fong Eu, the first Chinese-American woman to hold a position of this caliber, officiated at the dedication. A bronze plaque was placed near the entrance of the temple to commemorate its status as a California Historic Landmark.

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<sup>8</sup> See Wolfram Eberhard, "Topics and Moral Values in Chinese Temple Decorations," Journal of the American Oriental Society 87:1 (1967), 22-32.



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**Historic Background**

The origins and influence of Daoism

Daoism is a philosophy and religion that originated in China and has a history spanning more than two millennia. Its influence is reflected in many areas of Chinese culture: political theory, medicine, acupuncture, pharmacology, science, astronomy, cosmology, geomancy (fengshui), architecture, painting, and calligraphy. Laozi (6<sup>th</sup> century B.C.) is credited with founding Daoism. Zhuangzi (late 4<sup>th</sup> century B.C.) and later philosophers further developed Daoist ideas. Daoist beliefs are older than Confucianism, its main rival. The two main texts are the Daodejing (Tao Te Ching) and the writings of Zhuangzi. Dao means "road" or "way"; a way of thought and an everlasting principle at the origin of the universe, transcending all beings and being the origin of all transformations.

By the Han Dynasty (202 B.C.-220 A.D.), Daoism had become a religion and a philosophy. Daoists were responsible for many of the scientific and medicinal discoveries in China because of their interest in the relationship between man and Nature and the search for the principle underlying all things. In order to win more believers, Daoism incorporated many local folk deities, Confucius and his main disciples, Mencius and Xunzi, and Indian Buddhist deities. Chan (Zen) Buddhism entered China as a "sect" of Daoism some time after the 1<sup>st</sup> century A.D. In order to compete with Buddhism, the Daoists ordained priests and built temples. Daoists do not believe in the exclusion of other beliefs and therefore one could be a Christian and a philosophical Daoist. There is a saying in China that a person is privately a Daoist and publicly a Confucianist because Daoism expresses individuality and Confucianism is oriented towards the community. Therefore there usually is a pantheon of saints, deities, or lords on the central altar. The supreme figure is the Jade Emperor, who is assisted by others, including *Bok Kai*.

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Marysville's Chinatown

The discovery of gold in California in 1848 spurred many Chinese immigrants to move to the American west. The Chinese in the Four Districts (Siyi), and later the Three Districts (Sanyi) of the Guangdong province, (on the southeastern coast of China) were attracted to the dream of instant wealth.<sup>9</sup> Economic dislocations due to China's loss to Britain in the Opium War, anti-Manchu (the ruling ethnic group) sentiment, flooding of the rivers and the resulting famine, and peasant unrest and uprisings, had forced many to seek other sources of income and freedom from oppressive home conditions.

The Chinese settled in Marysville in 1850 and built a Chinatown that offered merchandising services to the mining camps in the Mother Lode area. Goods and materials traveled by river boats via the Sacramento and Feather Rivers and stage coaches, which eventually linked up to railroad lines.

By 1854 the Chinese in Marysville saved enough money to construct a temple to the God of Water nearly two blocks upstream on the Yuba River from the present temple.<sup>10</sup> After falling into a state of disrepair in an area subject to frequent flooding, the *Bok Kai Temple* was relocated on a former public bathhouse property at the corner of Front and D Streets. The new Bok Kai temple was to be a 19<sup>th</sup> Chinese American designed temple modified by local materials and cost factors. In 1880 Swain and Hudson, a major construction firm in Marysville, built the temple based upon "plans drawn by Chinese draftsmen" for the sum of \$2,200.<sup>11</sup> The contractor estimated that the total cost would be over \$5,000 "when furnished and ready for service."<sup>12</sup> The new temple was completed in March 1880. When the temple was dedicated that same month, several Daoist priests from San Francisco officiated at the three-day dedication ceremony. The local newspapers, as well as the Yuba City (Weekly) Sutter Banner (March 26, 1880), estimated that there were 3,000 participants, visitors, and spectators. The temple served the Chinese American population in and around the Sacramento delta area.

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9 Madeline Hsu, Dreaming of Gold, Dreaming of Home: Transnationalism and Migration Between the United States and South China, 1882-1943, Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2000 and Liping Zhu, A Chinaman's Chance: The Chinese on the Rocky Mountain Mining Frontier, Niwot, CO: University Press of Colorado, 1997.

10 This site is now part of the area where the Marysville Levee Commission building and the Yuba River Sand Company are located, near the corner of 1<sup>st</sup> and B Streets.

11 Paul Chace, "A History of Marysville's Bok Kai Temple," typed manuscript, September 1999, p. 3 quoting the Marysville Weekly Appeal, February 6, 1880.

12 Marysville Daily Appeal, January 30 and March 3, 1880, repeated in Marysville Weekly Appeal, February 6 and March 5, 1880. Chinese workers earned an average of \$1 per day at this time.

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Originally Chinese places of worship were called joss houses. According to the latest edition of the American Heritage Dictionary, the term derived from Pidgin English from the Javanese deyos, Portuguese deos, and Latin deus, all referring to "gods" in the building. Joss sticks refer to the incense sticks that were burned at the altar. The term first appeared in 1659 and by 1711 English writers had connected the Chinese gods or god with the term joss. There are several types of joss houses, but Americans in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century did not distinguish one from another. The organizational meeting hall, often with an altar, of various Chinese mutual aid societies, secret societies, fraternal brotherhoods, family and clan associations, and other groups, were called "joss houses." However, the translation for the term miao "temple" and the structure in Marysville is correctly called a Daoist temple.

Between 1850 and 1900 Marysville had a large Chinese population in comparison to the other towns in the Northern Sacramento Valley and occasionally ranked second only to San Francisco's Chinese population. The United States census of 1870 listed over 2,000 Chinese in Marysville. The actual count was probably much higher. The numbers grew as a result of railroad construction, beginning with the Central Pacific Railroad in 1869. Then other railroad lines, such as the California Central Railroad (between Marysville and Sacramento) further expanded new mining opportunities and other occupations, especially laundry and restaurant work. The prosperity of the Chinese community is evident from the amount of money spent on the construction and maintenance of the temple in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century.

Marysville's Chinatown was a place for shopping, rest, and recreation to thousands of Chinese miners and laborers in the surrounding region. During weekends and holidays in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, some 500 to 2,000 Chinese would congregate in Chinatown. Chinese businesses increased over the years: 24 in 1878, 42 in 1882, 35 in 1892, 45 in 1913, and 40 in 1952.<sup>13</sup> The wealth of many Chinese businessmen, miners, restaurant owners, and laundrymen attracted Chinese political leaders like Sun Yat-sen and Kang Youwei, who raised a large percentage of their funds from overseas Chinese. In addition to boarding houses, restaurants, and shops, there were the Suey Sing and Hop Sing Lodges, which are still in existence, a Chinese Masonic Lodge, several Chinese Christian churches, a Chinese school, a Chinese children's playground, and two opera houses.

<sup>13</sup> Paul Chace, Returning Thanks, 36.

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The population began to decrease as a result of the 1882 Chinese Exclusion Act, which essentially prohibited Chinese laborers from entering the United States. According to the U.S. census of the population manuscript for Marysville, Yuba County from 1880-1920, Yee Chow Chung (b. 1842 in China), who immigrated in 1871, served as the priest well into the 1920s. As a scholar, Chung probably directed the painting of the murals in 1880. His presence also accounts for the detailed records in Chinese that have been preserved. He was able to attract Chinese not only from Marysville but the larger region because he was one of the few priests in northern California. The 1892 extension of the Immigration Act excluded Chinese priests and doctors (now regarded as "laborers") and required "certificates of identity" and "certificates of residence." Chung was not able to be replaced by a trained priest and had to rely upon laymen to transmit the complicated knowledge of Daoism to the Chinese in and around Marysville. According to the census records, he was married, but there was no indication of where his wife lived or whether he had any children.

The Chinese Exclusion Acts were repealed in 1943 but it was not until 1970 that a marked increase in the Chinese population in the United States could be seen. Between the 1890s and 1910s the number of Chinese in Marysville was just under 500 (representing roughly 10% of the city's total population), dropped between the 1920s-1980s while the city's total population increased, and then expanded to about 500-1,000 in recent decades. However, according to anthropologist-historian Paul Chace, most of the present Chinese American population are senior citizens and in their retirement, they do not have the funds to refurbish and restore the temple. In recognition of this, five organizations have been established to help raise the needed money for this Daoist temple.

At the time of the Temple's construction in 1880, representatives from different mutual aid organizations jointly owned the property. The 1913 California Alien Land Law prohibited aliens (primarily Asians) from owning land, so the property was transferred into the auspices of the local branch of the Chinese Benevolent Association (often called the Chinese Six Companies). Subsequently, the ownership of the property is currently under the direction of the Marysville Chinese Community, Inc., whose president in 2001 was Liem Hall.

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The god of water

*Bok Kai* is the central deity inside the temple. In front of him is a jade tablet with Chinese writing. He is flanked by six deities and two tablets that represent two minor deities, as described above. "The choice of the deities in the temple," Joe L. Kim, a long-time resident and a regular worshipper at the temple, points out, "seems to represent the spiritual wishes and the gratitude of the people who founded the temple." Because Marysville experienced frequent flooding prior to the construction of the levee and since many of the Chinese from Guangdong also knew the power of water, *Bok Kai* became the central figure.

According to Vivian-Lee Nyitray,<sup>14</sup> *Bok Kai* may be another reference to Xuanming, a god associated with the north and water, in which case a temple dedicated to this deity is rare. On the other hand it may be a reference to Zhenwu, whose origins can be traced to the late Warring States period (3<sup>rd</sup> century B.C.) and Han Dynasty (206 B.C.-220 A.D.), often called Xuanwu (Dark Warrior), the ancient symbol of the north.

By the mid-15<sup>th</sup> century he had become the most important god in the Daoist pantheon and a temple was erected in his honor at the Imperial Palace in Beijing.<sup>15</sup> He continued to be worshipped in the Qing Dynasty (1644-1911) and is still worshipped in China today. He is included in the Daoist spiritual guardians known as the Four Saints (Sisheng) and paintings of him can be found in Daoist temples in China and Taiwan. There also are paintings of him at the Art Institute of Chicago, Museum of Fine Arts in Boston, and Nelson-Atkins Museum of Art in Kansas City, as well as other American locations.

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<sup>14</sup> Vivian-Lee Nyitray is an Associate Professor of Religion at the University of California, Riverside who specializes in Chinese popular religions. She has assisted in reviewing and augmenting this report.

<sup>15</sup> Stephen Little with Shawn Eichman, Taoism and the Arts of China, Chicago: The Art Institute of Chicago, 2000, Chapter 111.3 is devoted to Zhenwu. Susan Huang of Yale University has studied Daoist paintings in great detail, especially the work at the Boston Museum of Fine Arts.

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*Bok Kai's* importance to Chinese immigrants living close to the confluence of rivers is seen in the construction of another temple dedicated to him in Lewiston, Idaho.<sup>16</sup> In 1875, ten years after they arrived in Lewiston, the Chinese built the *Beuk Aie* (=Bok Kai) Temple at the confluence of the Clearwater and Snake rivers on A and B Streets. Because A Street was eroded away by the Clearwater River, in 1888 the Chinese decided to build a new temple to "Buck Eye" at 513 C Street, where it remained until 1959 when it was destroyed to facilitate the expansion of the local newspaper. Some of the interior artifacts eventually were housed at the Lewis-Clark Center for Arts and History in Lewiston. *Bok Kai* can be found in one or two extant Chinese temples located near water. He is represented in Weaverville's *Won Lim* Temple, but there, Guan Gong (*Kwan Kung*, God of War) is the central figure.

*Bok Kai* also played a role in other Chinese temples of the late 19<sup>th</sup> century in the United States, but the temple in Marysville, California is the only extant temple dedicated primarily to him. According to fengshui (literally, "wind and water" or geomancy) principles, an aspect of Daoism, the temple is situated on the north bank of the Yuba River with the main entrance facing south onto the river. In recent times a levee has been built between the temple and the river so that the main approach to the temple is down a flight of steps from the top of the levee instead of being level or above the riverbank. The vista from the temple also includes the Feather River to the west and the major bridge into and out of Marysville. The temple serves to protect the city and its earthly inhabitants. In fact, residents have credited the temple with saving Marysville from floods. While floods have inundated parts of Yuba City (its neighbor across the Feather River), Marysville has been spared from disastrous water damage.

<sup>16</sup> Priscilla Wegars, Chinese at the Confluence: Lewiston's Beuk Aie Temple, Lewiston, ID: Confluence Press, 2000.

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A place for celebration

The temple has been in continuous use by Chinese Americans. It has brought together Asian Americans and non-Asian Americans in its celebrations of New Year's (a two week festival beginning the last day of the twelfth month on the lunar calendar)<sup>17</sup> and Bok Kai's birthday (the second day of the second month on the lunar calendar).<sup>18</sup> Bok Kai's birthday celebration (usually in February) was an opportunity for the Chinese to banish evil spirits and to control the rains and floods of spring in time for the planting of new crops. Then, as now, incense was lit and prayers said. The local media called it the Lucky Bomb Day celebration because of the fireworks and special rites.<sup>19</sup> In Hong Kong, this type of ritual is called fapau ("flowery cannons"), which involves a competition to get the coins in the specially designed papier-mâché "bombs."<sup>20</sup> In Marysville, the bombs are made of bamboo-framed cylinders, wrapped tightly with newspaper, and stuffed with gunpowder. When they are blown up, they release lucky rings instead of coins. The rings can reach a height of 50 feet.<sup>21</sup> The first Lucky Bomb Day noted by the Marysville Weekly Appeal (April 2, 1880) had over 1500 Chinese participants. During the anti-Chinese movements of the late 1870s-early 1880s, Chinese in the region celebrated this festival and New Year's quietly. As racial tensions eased between 1890-1911, the celebration (Lucky Bomb Day) included the entire Marysville community and by the end of World War II attracted people of many ethnic backgrounds from all over the United States and abroad.

17 For more on Chinese festivals, see Carol Stepanchuk and Charles Wong, Mooncakes and Hungry Ghosts: Festivals of China, San Francisco: China Books and Periodicals, 1991.

18 The most authoritative work on the temple, the festival, and Marysville is Paul G. Chace, Returning Thanks: Chinese Rites in an American Community, dissertation, University of California, Riverside, 1992, Ann Arbor, MI: University Microfilms, 1993. For Daoist rituals in general as performed in Taiwan, see John Lagerwey, Taoist Ritual in Chinese Society and History, New York: Macmillan Publishing Company, 1987.

19 Stephan Feuchtwang, The Imperial Metaphor: Popular Religion in China, New York and London: Routledge, 1992, 105-125, details the celebration in Taiwan. Although not identical, some of the same practices are evident.

20 Joseph Bosco and Puay-peng Ho, Temples of the Empress of Heaven, Hong Kong: Oxford University Press, 1999, 66.

21 A description of the ceremony can be found in "Marysville Honors Bok Kai with Peaceful Celebration," East-West (San Francisco), March 18, 1981.

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In 1930 the City of Marysville officially joined into the celebration. In recent years the Marysville-Yuba County Chamber of Commerce co-sponsor the event with the temple officials. In 1985 architect Philip Choy of San Francisco believed that the recent influx of immigrants from Asia created a "renaissance" of Chinese folk religion in California.<sup>22</sup> According to Dr. Paul Chace, on February 23-25, 2001 the Lucky Bomb Day celebration attracted 7-9,000 participants.

The men, women, and children lit incense, had their fortunes told, dined on 100-200 roasted pigs and other banquet delicacies, watched a parade lasting over two hours despite the rain, exploded the traditional lucky bombs, and then viewed martial arts and other performances.<sup>23</sup> Participants came from all parts of the United States, Mexico, and Canada. Except for Chinese New Year's celebrations, Marysville's Lucky Bomb Day is among the oldest, if not the oldest, publicly celebrated Chinese festivals in North America.<sup>24</sup> This is the only location for the public celebration in the United States since the 1930s.

A visit to the *Bok Kai* temple expands one's understanding of the religious beliefs and cultural values of many Chinese Americans. The Cultural Revolution (1966-1976) in China saw the destruction of many Daoist temples in China. This temple preserves Chinese American beliefs and traditions from the late 19<sup>th</sup> century and is celebrated by many ethnic groups.

<sup>22</sup> San Francisco Examiner, March 24, 1985, B7. Choy wrote the nomination for Historic Register.

<sup>23</sup> Paul Chace, "Ethnographic Notes: The 2001 Bok Kai Festival, Marysville, February 23-25, 2001," typed manuscript, 3 pp.

<sup>24</sup> It had been celebrated in Evanston, Wyoming, but by the turn of the twentieth century, it was discontinued there and in many other locations in the American west.



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Bok Kai Temple  
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Verbal Boundary Description:

The National Landmark nomination includes the Bok Kai Temple Building, situated in Marysville, Yuba County, California, being in the southwest corner of block 668, as recorded in the Sanborn Fire Insurance Company Map of February 1945 (with corrections made in May 1948). The property's boundaries have not changed since the publication of the map.

The Bok Kai Temple includes sector/building numbers 325, 327, 329, and 331, and these numbers include not only the building's area but also its surroundings (e.g. porches). Building 325 corresponds with the storage area on far east side of the building (15 x 40 ft.), building 327 with the east wing of the temple (18 X 40 ft.), building 329 with the central block and its porch area (18 X 40 ft.), and building 331 with the west wing of the temple (16 x 40 ft.). All told, the property's space adds up to 40 x 77 feet. A steel fence, displaying the boundaries explicitly, surrounds the porch area.

Historically, the west end of the property bordered D Street and the south end bordered Front Street. But because of the levee's buildups, these portions of the streets are now gone.

Boundary Justification:

The property includes the building only, not the adjacent pavilion or anything beyond the building's gated fence. The pavilion belongs to the City of Marysville.

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There are 2 street maps (Bok Kai shaded in yellow), 6 Sanborn fire insurance maps (1945 revision of 1921, 1921, 1909, 1895, 1890, 1885), 1 drawing by Paul Chace of the Bok Kai Temple to scale, 1 page of the U.S. census of the population manuscript (1920 California, Yuba County, Marysville Chinatown), 4 published articles (*Appeal-Democrat*, June 26, 2001; National Trust Announcement, June 26, 2001, *Shijie jibao*, July 8, 2001 - a western regional Chinese newspaper, *Sacramento Bee*, June 30, 2001).

There are seven black and white photographs, nine color photographs, and eight slides included with this nomination.

All photographs and slides are of the Bok Kai Temple, Marysville, Yuba County, California.

Black and white:

1. Photographer: Ross Nelson

Date Taken: November 17, 2001

Original negative in custody of photographer

Posterior of building, facing southeast

2. Photographer: Ross Nelson

Date Taken: November 17, 2001

Original negative in custody of photographer

West wing of building, taken from central porch area, facing west;

Community meeting room (as stated in Chinese over door)

3. Photographer: Ross Nelson

Date Taken: November 18, 2001

Original negative in custody of photographer

Front of building, facing north, taken from top of Yuba River levee

4. Photographer: Ross Nelson

Date Taken: November 18, 2001

Original negative in custody of photographer

Main entrance into the central room (altar room)

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5. Photographer: Ross Nelson  
Date Taken: November 18, 2001  
Original negative in custody of photographer  
West end of building, facing southeast, showing stairs to  
Railroad tracks and levee

6. Photographer: Ross Nelson  
Date Taken: November 18, 2001  
Original negative in custody of photographer  
Bok Kai Temple and its spatial relationship to the levee, facing northeast

7. Photographer: Ross Nelson  
Date Taken: November 18, 2001  
Original negative in custody of photographer  
Exterior mural underneath eave on the east side of the central block's  
south wall

Color photographs

8. Photographer: Paul Chace, 1823 Kenora Dr., Escondido, CA  
Date Taken: March 4, 1995  
Original negative in custody of photographer  
Front of building, facing north, taken from railroad tracks, showing  
central altar and parts of both wings, with worshippers in foreground

9. Photographer: Al Shnayer, Chico, CA  
Date Taken: July 10, 2001  
Original negative in custody of photographer  
Exterior mural over central door depicting Laozi (founder of Daoism) and  
other figures with a poem in Chinese about the pine trees and prevention of  
flooding

10. Photographer: Al Shnayer, Chico, CA  
Date Taken: July 10, 2001  
Original negative in custody of photographer  
Exterior mural (detail) on west side of central (altar) section of the  
building depicting a man and three young boys in a landscape setting

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11. Photographer: Al Shnayer, Chico, CA  
Date Taken: July 10, 2001  
Original negative in custody of photographer  
Exterior mural (detail) in central (altar) section of front of building on the east side of underside of porch depicting man and two servants and animal
12. Photographer: Al Shnayer, Chico, CA  
Date Taken: July 10, 2001  
Original negative in custody of photographer  
Detail of central altar room facing north from entry showing gilt hardwood table, bronze incense burner with dragon handles, gilt hardwood overhang, traditional lanterns, and gilt altar at north end, all dating from 1880 or earlier.
13. Photographer: Al Shnayer, Chico, CA  
Date Taken: July 10, 2001  
Original negative in custody of photographer  
Altar with the five officials (Bok Kai in center) under red silk canopy, north wall of central altar room, surrounded by gilt carved hardwood frame from wall to ceiling; tablet in center with incense in front of tablet; wine cup offerings to Bok Kai and others; Guanyin seated in front left.
14. Photographer: Al Shnayer, Chico, CA  
Date Taken: July 10, 2001  
Original negative in custody of photographer  
Example of some of the many Chinese signs with words of felicity; pre-1880 sign with the words Bok Kai Temple written in Chinese turned on side, located in west wing of building.
15. Photographer: Anthony Veerkamp  
Date Taken: March 5, 2001  
Original negative in custody of photographer  
One of two gilt carved sedan chairs for the Bok Kai and another official or deity to ride in during parades, located in west wing. An example of the many beautiful and unique artifacts found inside of the Bok Kai Temple.

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16. Photographer: Al Shnayer, Chico, CA  
Date Taken: July 10, 2001  
Original negative in custody of photographer  
Caretaker's room in east wing of building. Corner view showing one of several stoves in this wing of the building. Water kettle for making tea. Wooden drawers may have contained herbal medicines (part of Daoist belief in good health and balancing nature in the body) from late 19<sup>th</sup> century.

Three interior 4x6 color photographs and one exterior 4x6 color photograph have been included:

17. Photographer: Anthony Veerkamp, National Trust Western Office  
Date Taken: March 5, 2001  
Original negative in custody of photographer  
West wing community room (gongso) with hardwood partitions, wooden signs in several calligraphic styles, carved frames with paintings on carved hardwood table, all typical of late 19<sup>th</sup>-early 20<sup>th</sup> century décor. There are hand carved teak tables and chairs in this meeting room as well as account books (see Eberhard article in bibliography) and other works in Chinese.

18. Photographer: Anthony Veerkamp, National Trust Western Office  
Date Taken: March 5, 2001  
Original negative in custody of photographer  
Second sedan chair stored in west wing room. Gold leafed and hand carved, this one is more elaborate than the previous one photographed.

19. Photographer: Paul Chace  
Date Taken: June 26, 2001  
Original negative in custody of photographer  
One of three temple stoves in the east wing. This one was used to make the roast pig for the different celebrations. The third stove in another room of this wing can heat three woks (Chinese frying pans).

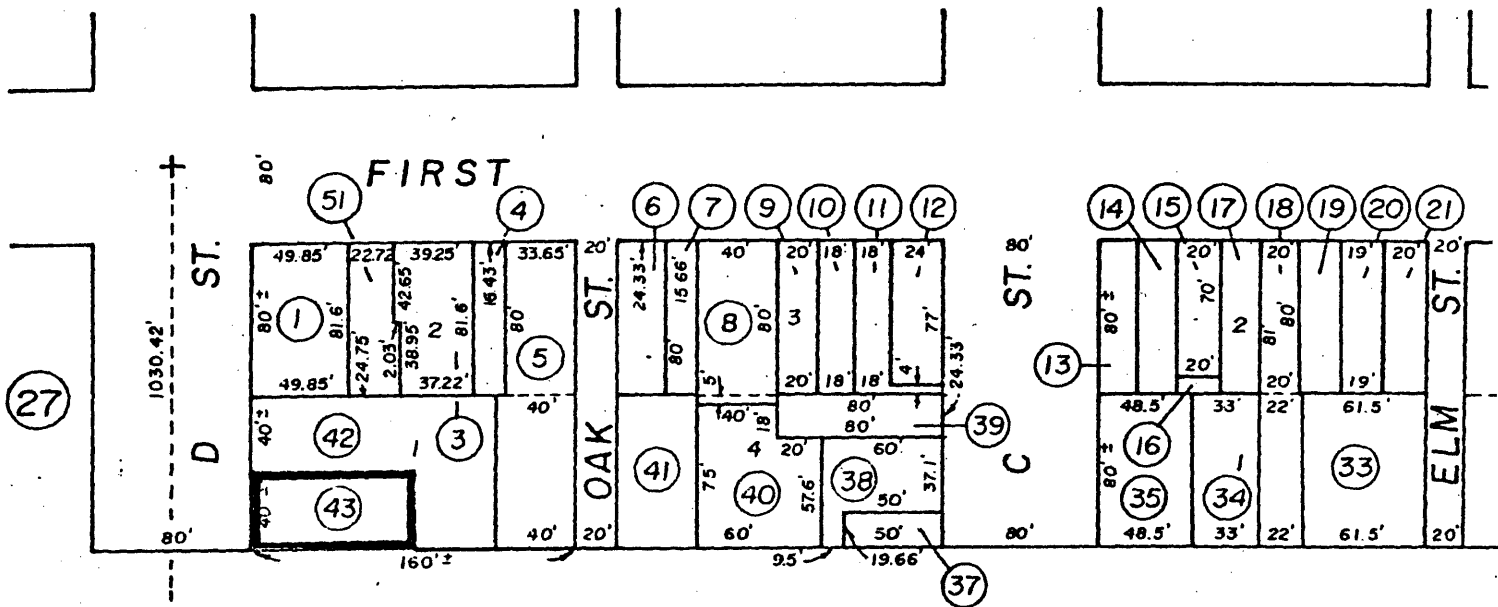
20. Photographer: Ross Nelson  
Date Taken: November 18, 2001  
Original negative in custody of photographer  
Front view of temple from railroad tracks facing northwest.





Building 43: Bok Kai Temple

(28)



Levee

LEVEE

Marysville City Limits

(32)



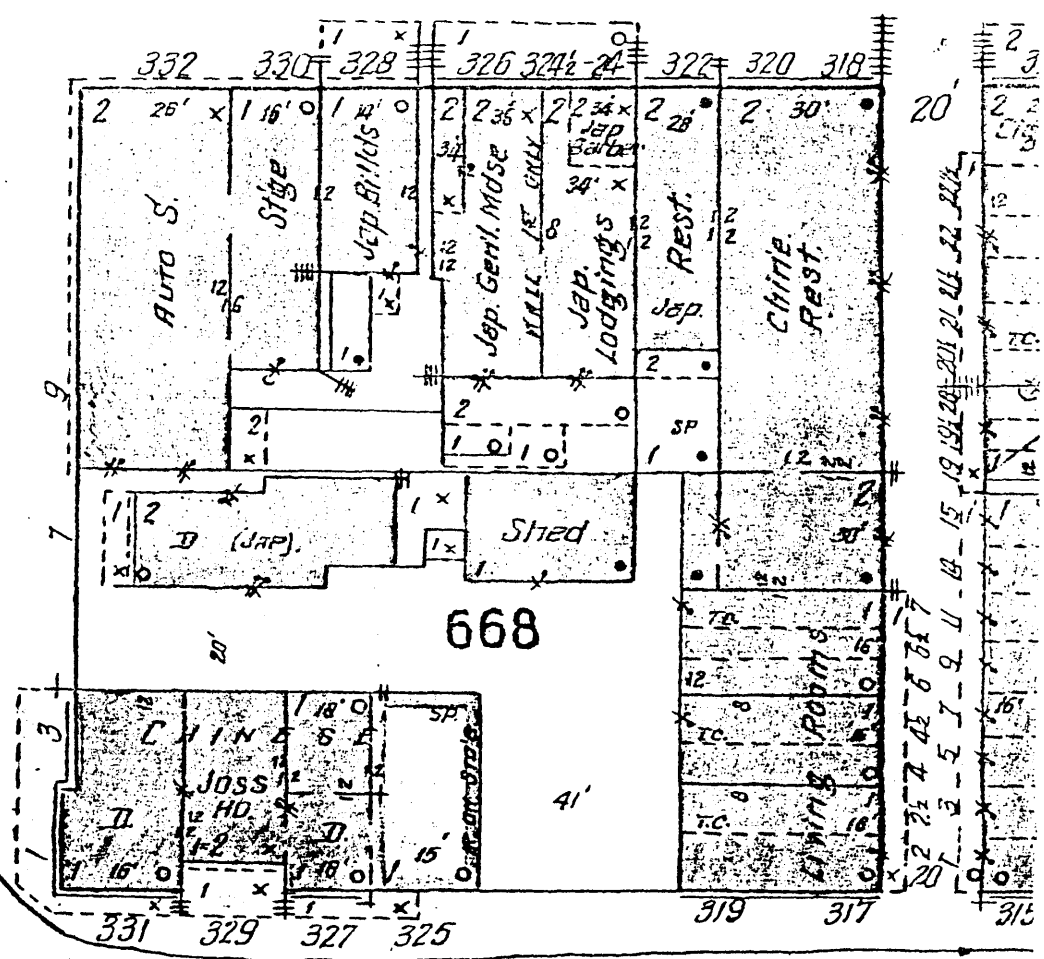
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**Marysville Bok Kai Temple**  
 SANBORN FIRE INSURANCE COMPANY  
 Map edition of September 1921

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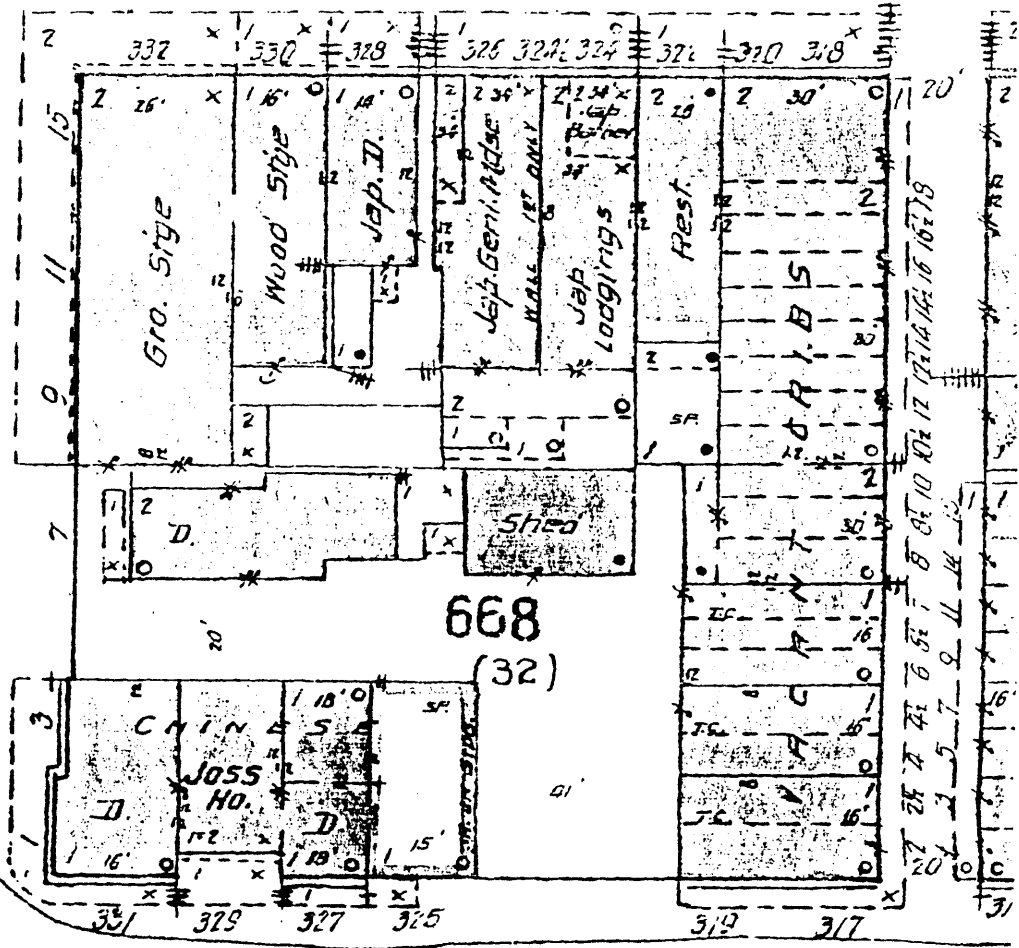
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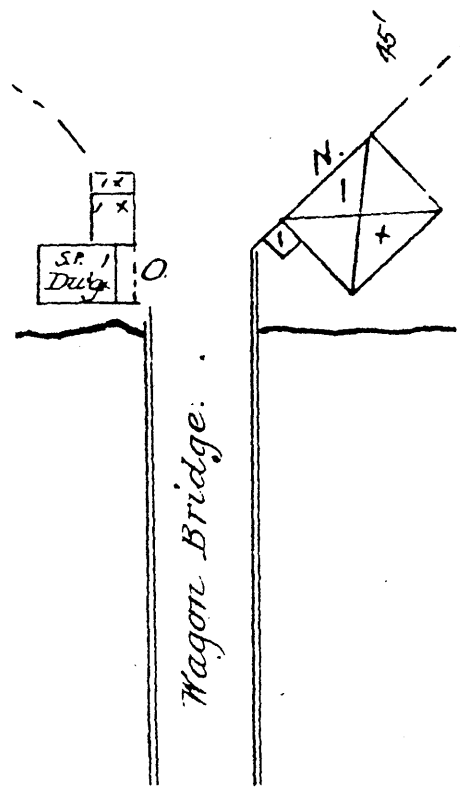
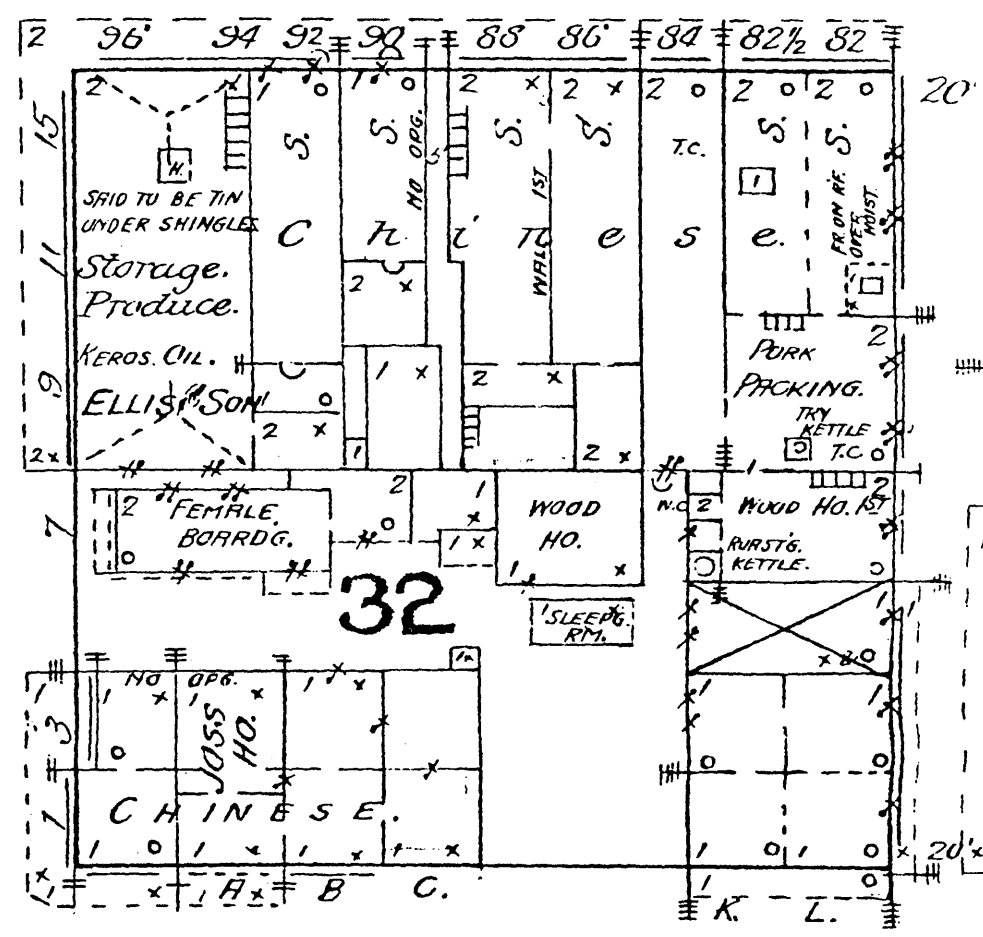
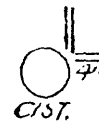
**Marysville Bok Kai Temple**  
 SANBORN FIRE INSURANCE COMPANY  
 Map edition of November 1909

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 Paul G. Chace & Associates, Escondido

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HOURS 7 AM. TO 5 P.M. SHAVINGS 2 1/2" HYD.  
 COLL. ON PLANERS. NO NIGHT & HOSE.  
 WATCHMAN. 200' 2 1/2" HOSE ON CART.



CHINATOWN HAS A CON

**Marysville Bok Kai Temple**  
 SANBORN FIRE INSURANCE COMPANY  
 Map edition of January 1890

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Scale of Feet.



