

Go Long built a new life for his family in America

By Kristin Delaplane

Sunday, September 12, 1999

Nira Fong Wong's grandfather, Go Leong (also known as Go Long), was born an only child in 1846 in the village Dai Do Province of Canton, China.

He migrated to America about 1860. He first found work in Marysville on the railroad. After a short time, he moved to Suisun Valley, where he took up farming, and became an established fruit farmer during the next 30 years.

In the 1890s, Go Long met and married Lee Shee, who was born in 1877. Seven sons and nine daughters survived infancy.

The third in line, Ivy Long, was Nira's mother. Nira recalled her family's roots in an oral history, which is now part of the Vacaville Museum's collection.

Go Long was highly successful, well respected and liked by the neighboring farmers as well as the owners of the properties on which he was a tenant farmer. A 60- to 100-acre fruit ranch south of what is now Interstate 80 was farmed by Go Long and is still referred to as the Long Ranch.

Go Long's growing family lived in a huge house on the ranch. The children attended Rockville School, a two-room schoolhouse where the first eight grades were taught.

The Nesei Club is today using the old school building located on Suisun Valley Road.

Driving a horse-drawn buggy, Go Long took his children to school every day, along with their teacher, Mrs. Bauman. For a period of five years, the Long children were also taught by a live-in teacher, who tutored them in the Chinese language.

Ivy Long often reminisced about her childhood in the Suisun Valley. She recalled seeing local Indians in their native dress. She would talk about the family trips in the horse-drawn surrey to Sacramento where Chinese goods could be purchased.

The highlight of Ivy's memories was a visit to the Chinese community in Suisun Valley.

Go Long had a deep desire to own land, but the laws at the time prohibited Chinese immigrants from purchasing property.

However, by the late '20s, early '30s, the laws were changing in some areas. One such area was Yolo County, and in the late '20s Go Long was able to buy two adjoining parcels of land in Winters, and the family moved there.

The total purchase consisted of 30 acres of apricot and peach orchards and a 10-acre parcel on which a house and other farm buildings were located.

That house burned to the ground shortly after the family's move and a five-bedroom replacement house was built. It was a large two-story house with a kitchen, cellar, two sunrooms, a bathroom, a huge attic, three bedrooms in the upper story and two bedrooms in the lower story. The grounds around the house had orange and grapefruit trees, a vegetable garden, a barn and a chicken coop.

Go Long was typical of many of the early immigrants. He wanted to save a grand sum of money for his eventual return to China, where he could then afford to become a landowner there.

To that end, Go Long had a large 17-room house constructed in his native village. His son, Willie Ko Long traveled to China to supervise construction of the house.

Go Long died in 1937, without ever returning to China. In the years that followed, the house was taken over by the Communists.

"There is no one living in the house," said Nira. "They say it would be a beautiful house if it were repaired, as beautiful as Sun Yat-sen's house.

Nira recalled the "bachelor society" in the old days on her family's farm: those Chinese farmhands, who loved to talk about their lives in China and repeat Chinese folk stories. "Many, if not most, of these men died without seeing their families again because they were not able to save enough money to return or because the war in China prevented them from returning to China."

More on Nira Fong Wong's memories next week.

Downloaded from the Solano History Database

<http://www.solanohistory.org/708>

<http://articles.solanohistory.net/708/>