

Wong Chin Foo Chronology

- 1839–42 Britain provokes and wins the First Opium War with China; forces concessions in the Treaty of Nanjing, including the opening of five ports to foreign trade and missionary activity.
- 1847 Wong Chin Foo is born in Jimo, Shandong Province, China, to a well-to-do family.
- 1850–71 The Taiping Rebellion, led by a religious fanatic, is fought against the Qing dynasty. Rebels gain control of a large swath of southern China before being defeated.
- 1856–60 Britain and France win the Second Opium War and force additional concessions from China, including the opening of diplomatic missions and 11 additional ports.
- 1860 Wong arrives with his father in reduced circumstances in Zhifu (now Yantai), Shandong, which opens to foreign commerce in this year.
- 1861 Taken in by Southern Baptist missionary Rev. J. Landrum Holmes and wife Sallie. Rev. Holmes is murdered by bandits soon afterward.
- 1862 Sallie Holmes bears a son and moves her household to Dengzhou (now Penglai), Shandong, where she begins 20 years of missionary work.
- 1867 Baptized into the Baptist faith in Dengzhou. Accompanies Sallie Holmes to America.
- 1868 U.S. and China sign the Burlingame Treaty, which guarantees U.S. non-interference in China's internal affairs and effectively encourages Chinese immigration to America.

- Studies at Columbian College Preparatory School, Washington, DC. Begins lecturing on Chinese culture.
- 1869–70 Studies at Lewisburg Academy in Lewisburg, Pennsylvania.
- 1870 Returns to China.
- 1871 Marries Liu Yushan, former pupil in a Baptist school in Dengzhou.
- 1871–72 Appointed interpreter in the Imperial Chinese Maritime Customs Service in Shanghai and then in Zhenjiang, Jiangsu Province. Excommunicated from the Shanghai Baptist church.
- 1873 Son Wong Foo Sheng is born.
- Flees China after Qing government puts a price on his head for revolutionary activities. Escapes to Japan, and boards a U.S.-bound ship with help from the American consul in Yokohama.
- Arrives in San Francisco. Helps liberate Chinese girls sent to the U.S. to become prostitutes, earning the enmity of the triad organization responsible for importing them.
- Begins a multi-year, cross-country lecture tour.
- 1874 Admitted to U.S. citizenship at Grand Rapids, Michigan.
- Allegedly engages in a liaison with a prostitute in Rochester, New York.
- “The Chinese in Cuba,” his first published article in English, appears in the *New York Times*.
- Declares himself China’s first Confucian missionary to the United States.
- Prince Gong, China’s de facto foreign minister, demands his extradition to China, but is rebuffed by the American chargé d’affaires in Beijing.
- 1875 U.S. Congress passes the Page Act, an attempt to restrict the immigration of Chinese prostitutes that proves a barrier to further immigration of all Asian women.
- 1877 Meets Madame Helena Petrovna Blavatsky, founder of the mystical Theosophy movement, and addresses members of her society in New York.

- 1879 Settles temporarily in Chicago. Intervenes in a dispute between local Chinese laundrymen. Enemies seek to have him kidnapped and deported. Survives assassination attempt. Cuts off queue and permanently adopts Western dress.
- 1880 Briefly quits lecturing and opens a tea shop in Bay City, Michigan.
Registers to vote in Grand Rapids, Michigan.
- 1882 The Chinese Exclusion Act, which places a 10-year moratorium on the immigration of Chinese laborers into the United States and prohibits the naturalization of Chinese, is signed into law.
- 1883 Publishes the *Chinese American*, New York's first Chinese newspaper. Believed to be the first time the term is used.
Charges Chan Pond Tipp with attempting to assassinate him and causes latter's arrest. Chan, in turn, sues for criminal libel, seeking \$25,000 in damages.
Publicly challenges San Francisco anti-Chinese demagogue Denis Kearney to a duel.
- 1884 Introduces Americans to "chop suey" in an article in the *Brooklyn Daily Eagle*.
Convenes first meeting of "naturalized Chinamen" in New York City, probably America's first gathering of Chinese American voters.
- 1885 Found guilty of libeling Chan Pond Tipp and ordered to pay \$1,000.
Cracks the case of the murder of Sing Lee, principal witness in a legal dispute among Canadian Chinese laundrymen.
- 1887 Publishes essay, "Why Am I a Heathen?" in the *North American Review*, causing a firestorm of criticism and spurring a rebuttal.
Travels to Canada and is forced to pay a \$50 head tax.
Bests Denis Kearney in a face-to-face debate in New York.

- 1888 Sues, or threatens to sue, the Canadian government for \$25,000.
- Publishes the *New York Chinese Weekly News*, an illustrated weekly. Endorses Benjamin Harrison in the 1888 presidential election.
- Publishes “The Chinese in New York” in *Cosmopolitan* magazine.
- President Grover Cleveland signs the Scott Act, prohibiting Chinese laborers in America from returning if they depart.
- Establishes the Chinese Citizens’ Union in New York City.
- 1889 Publishes “The Chinese in the United States” in the *Chautauquan* and “Wu Chih Tien, the Celestial Empress,” a serialized work of fiction, in *Cosmopolitan*.
- Defends Chinese men accused of crimes in Chicago and Philadelphia.
- 1890 Assists in the rescue of Suen Yee, a young Chinese woman forced into prostitution.
- 1891 Refused a U.S. passport, despite his status as a citizen.
- Arrested in New York on trumped-up charges of illegal voter registration, but is acquitted.
- 1892 U.S. Congress passes the Geary Act, which extends the Chinese Exclusion Act for 10 years and requires Chinese to register under penalty of imprisonment and deportation.
- Treasury Department issues regulations for enforcement of the Geary Act, including requirement that Chinese registrants be photographed.
- Establishes the Chinese Equal Rights League to demand repeal of portions of the Geary Act.
- Probably authors the *Appeal of the Chinese Equal Rights League to the People of the United States for Equality of Manhood*.
- 1893 Testifies before the U.S. Congress Committee on Foreign Affairs in favor of a bill to repeal the citizenship portion of the Geary Act.

Chinese Theatre opens in Manhattan, fulfilling his decade-long dream.

Treasury Department announces modification of Geary Act registration regulations, dropping photograph requirement.

Returns to Chicago to assist the Wong family in a lawsuit against the Moy clan, earning the enmity of the latter.

Supreme Court affirms constitutionality of the Geary Act.

Publishes the *Illustrated Chinese Weekly News*, a.k.a. the *Chinese American*, in Chicago, with the goal of “Americanizing” local Chinese.

Appointed Chinese Inspector in New York.

1894 Sues Boston’s West End Street Railroad Company after being cursed by a conductor.

1895 Goes into the herbal medicine business in Atlanta, Georgia with Dr. Wang Gum Sing, but partnership dissolves within two weeks.

1896 Holds inaugural meeting of the American Liberty Party, whose principal platform plank seeks enfranchisement of Americanized Chinese.

Publishes first edition of the biweekly *Chinese News* in Chicago. Endorses William McKinley for president.

Demands cabinet or diplomatic position from McKinley administration.

Probably meets Dr. Sun Yat-sen in Chicago.

Dr. Sun, released from incarceration at the Chinese Embassy in London, releases letter from Wong confirming support for his movement in America.

Announces that Chicago is to become headquarters of a Chinese revolutionary junta.

Inaugurates short-lived Temple of Confucius in Chicago.

Receives letter from son in China asking for help for himself and his ailing mother.

- 1897 Secures articles of incorporation for the Chinese Equal Rights League of America.
 Awarded franchise to build a Chinese exhibit at the Trans-Mississippi International Exposition in Omaha, Nebraska.
 Organizes mass meeting in Chicago to push for citizenship rights for Americanized Chinese.
- 1898 Ousted by partners in syndicate underwriting Chinese exhibit at the Trans-Mississippi International Exposition.
 Departs the United States for Hong Kong.
 Applies to the U.S. Consulate-General in Hong Kong for a passport, which is issued and quickly revoked by order of the State Department.
 Returns to Shandong for a family reunion.
 Dies of heart failure in Weihai, Shandong.