

## Answers for Q&A Session of October 18, 2021, Ming Quong Webinar (Elena Wong Viscovich, with help from other Ming Quong sisters)

1. The voice-over said that it was a beautiful blue Victorian but the photo shown was of a white California mission-style building.  
**Answer:** The video and voice-over used to open the webinar was from Annabelle Peterson of Cross Currents. This video was not produced by the webinar participants. The Ming Quong Home featured in the video was at 51 9th Street, Oakland. It was not a blue Victorian, but a white mission-style building.
2. Was the King's Daughter Home in El Cerritos tied to Ming Quong? **Answer:** No
3. How did you receive your education? Was it provided at the Ming Quong Home or did you go out to neighbor schools?  
**Answer:** Ming Quong residents attended public schools in Los Gatos and in Oakland.
4. Later, when the Los Gatos Ming Quong became a treatment center, two of the residents had private tutors come to the home. The Ming Quong Home in Oakland provided limited Chinese lessons through Mrs. Lee. Also, there was an attempt to send us to the Oakland Chinese School after a day long of attending public school.
5. Does anyone of you have the urge to find out who your real family is doing?  
**Answer:** Response from Elena: Yes After I discovered the misinformation about Ming Quong residents in google, I successful researched my family's history.
6. For Elena - did you become a doctor?  
**Answer:** I did not pursue being a doctor of medicine due to the lack of finances and physical stamina. I did earn a B.A., two Master degrees. Much later, I earned a doctorate of education degree instead.
7. Were you required to practice the Presbyterian religion at the Home? **Answer:** Yes Janet: Personally, I never felt pressured to attend or participate in the local Presbyterian church. I felt welcomed and comfortable. I was baptized and joined the church. As an adult in Saratoga, I attended the local Presbyterian Church.
8. Why were the Ming Quong facilities so far away from each other?  
**Answer:** The first Ming Quong Home in Oakland was on the Mills estate (1925). The second Ming Quong Home was in Los Gatos (1934), about 50 miles away, because of the number girls having respiratory problems needed a warmer and milder climate. The Los Gatos Ming Quong was the former Spreckles' Hospital Sanitarium. \* The Los Gatos Ming Quong was later designated to house the younger Chinese girls from pre-school to 6th grade.  
\* New Museum Los Gatos Historical Homes Tour, April 2018, page 5.  
Later, when the Ming Quong Home on the Mills estate in Oakland was sold, the 3rd Ming Quong campus on 51 9th St. (near Oakland Chinatown in 1935) was built to house Chinese girls from 7th to 12th grade.
9. How did the Presbyterian Church finance everything? When girls graduated from high school, were you given any funds to go off to college and living expenses?  
**Answer:** With regard to room and board, "Ming Quong charged fifty dollars a month with a sliding scale for what a relative could afford. Any unpaid balance was subsidized by the Presbyterian Board of National Missions. Some girls came in with no means of support from any relative, and they were paid for by the city, county or state, depending on each girl's situation." (Nona Mock Wyman, Bamboo Women, pg. 19.)

Generally, Ming Quong girls were often placed in private homes as nannies or housekeepers at the age of sixteen, so that they could earn room and board while finishing high schools supporting themselves. In some unusual cases, a few girls stayed at Ming Quong until they graduated from high school.

When the girls graduated from high school, there were no funds available nor provided for college nor living expenses.

Some Ming Quong alumni were able to obtain scholarships for a university or college.

Janet: My parents paid \$50.00/month which was a substantial amount in the 50's. I returned to my family in San Francisco while in middle school. I attended a prestigious public high school, then San Francisco City College, which was tuition free, then, worked for the Post Office so I could achieve my dream and go away for college. I attended San Jose State University and graduated with a BS in Nursing.

**10.** Did most of the girls speak Chinese when they arrived? I noticed a photo of a Chinese language lesson?

**Answer:** Some did and some did not. For those who did speak Chinese, there were a variety of dialects and so it may not have been understandable among the staff and/or girls. The purpose of the Chinese language lessons in Cantonese was to about imparting Chinese culture and to religious practices in a Chinese speaking situation.

**11.** How were you punished if you didn't follow the rules?

**Answer:** Depending of the seriousness of the infraction, punishment ranged from expressing regret to extra chores or removal from Ming Quong Home.

(Nona: "Caged-girl in photo had stolen a barrette. As punishment, her head was covered w/as many barrettes as Miss Hayes could find and she was caged for all to see.")

Janet: On my first day arriving at the MQ home in Los Gatos, the Admin. was showing my family the cottage that I would be staying in. She directed to go outside and meet the other girls. As I was a bullied child without social skills, I got into a physical fight. I returned to the cottage and my family was gone without a goodbye. I turned to go into my room as an extremely unattractive women started to walk towards me with something behind her back. As she raised the hairbrush, I held her arm and said, if you hit me, I will hit you back twice as hard and you will be on the ground. I will go to my room without dinner and come out tomorrow morning. After many years, when I met my MQ sisters again, they all told me that I was the only one that was not spanked or hit.

**12.** Does anyone remember Hung Mui Chew as staff?

**Answer:** For the older Ming Quong girls - 1925 to 1953, there are memories of Miss. Chew helping and supervising prayers, chores and other activities at both Oakland and Los Gatos Ming Quong Homes. Nona said she was almost a mother substitute and wrote this poem about her, as follows:

## A White Rose for Miss Chew

Over 50 years have gone by  
But on each August 28th  
I always think of Miss Chew  
a It was her birthday  
I can still see her hard at work  
Washing our clothes  
Ironing our overalls  
Cutting our hair  
o I was the youngest of her  
nursery group  
Some girls called me the  
teacher's pet  
But that didn't mean a thing  
Miss Chew was always strict  
and fair  
No favoritism did she show  
Only conscientious dedicated work  
Of teaching us to grow up to be  
t Good and capable women  
This she did well  
; And for this  
r I've always been grateful  
There are many thoughts of her  
And when it is August 28th again  
I will pause  
Close my eyes  
And remember Miss Chew  
A very special person in my life  
For she was like the mother  
I never knew or had

1/7/92

13. How do you obtain a copy of Miss. Cameron's book? My God grandmother lived in the Cameron House?

**Answer:** There are several books that talk about the life of Miss. Cameron and refer to her correspondence about life at 920 Sacramento Street (later named Cameron House) Here are some books listed from the most recent to older publications:

- Julia Flynn Siler, *The White Devil's Daughters: The Women Who Fought Slavery in*

*San Francisco's Chinatown*, Alfred A. Knoph, New York, 2019.

• Kristin and Kathryn Wong, *Fierce Compassion: The life of Abolitionist Donaldina Cameron*, New Earth Enterprises, 2012

• Mildred Crowl Martin, *Chinatown's Angry Angel: The Story of Donaldina Cameron*, Pacific Books, Publishers, 1977.

• Lorna E. Logan, *Ventures in Misson: The Cameron House Story*, Crawford Hobby Print Shop, 1976.

• Carol Green Wilson, *Chinatown Quest: The Life Adventures of Donaldina Cameron*, Stanford University Press, Revised Edition 1950.

14. Who may we contact to determine if a family member lived at Ming Quong?

**Answer:** You may find a Ming Quong Home resident by looking through the ledger of residents scanned by the Los Gatos

Library: <http://www.historylosgatos.org/digital/collection/p16010coll12/search>

In addition, you may find some of them mentioned in Nona Mock Wyman's books, *Chopstick Childhood: In a Town of Silver Spoons*, MQ Press and Distributed by China Books and Periodicals, Inc., 1997 - 1999, and *Bamboo Women: Stories from Ming Quong, A Chinese Orphanage in California*, China Books, 2012.

15. Who would a girl in Ming Quong list as "guardian"?

**Answer:** Ming Quong Home, (Miss. Higgins, Miss Musgrave, Miss. Hayes or Mr. O'Neil - administrators would sign as legal guardians)

16. Where did you go after they could no longer live at Ming Quong?

**Answer:** Depends on each case and the age of the Ming Quong resident - sometimes a resident was released back to a parent(s), a relative, or placed into a foster family, adopted, sent another institution or declared an emancipated minor.

17. Did any of you feel any anger towards your family or whoever placed you at Ming Quong? How did the staff at Ming Quong help you manage your anger or did other Ming Quong sisters support each other?

**Answer:** Most of us were grateful for the shelter and security offered by Ming Quong. If there was anger, it was not openly discussed with or by the missionaries (teachers). Surrounded by Ming Quong sisters itself offered a support system. Sometimes the immense challenges the Ming Quong sisters faced before they were placed at Ming Quong meant it was the only safe haven we knew. Sometimes, the emotional damage inflicted by parents and/or relatives were so great that the emotions were deep and were not treated nor will they ever be addressed professional by mental health experts.

Janet: I had no anger towards my family, my Mother did the best she could. She was exhausted by my behavior and turned to the social worker at Cameron House and they referred me the MQ in Los Gatos. No one asked me why I fought. I fought because I was being bullied, called names, pushed and had things thrown at me. When I fought, I made it dramatic, I hit them squarely in the nose to have a nose bleed and stunned them. Soon, I teamed up with another tom boy and no one challenged us. I was lucky that I was not sent to juvenile home. Arriving in Los Gatos, the environment was dramatically different. If someone stepped on my foot, an apology was quickly provided. I was grateful for the care and learned how to behave civilly, instead of fighting, if anyone crossed me.

18. Do you know if any Ming Quong girls that were adopted/fostered together by a single family? **Answer:** Yes.

19. Is there a ledger that tells who might have lived at Cameron House?

**Answer:** According to Siler, there are case files and other forms of documentation at Cameron House. The estimate of the total number of residents is between 2,100 to 3000. (See pg. 360, xi in Siler's book, *The White Devil's Daughters*).

20. Who again was Lynne who wrote the simple formula for living?

**Answer:** Lynette Choy Narm, Ming Quong sister (See Wyman, *Bamboo Women*, p. 79)

21. Dale (Lee) Wong's foster parents were Chinese?

**Answer:** No, they were Caucasian.

22. After Janet Chang's fighting incident, did the house mothers talk about racism?

Janet: My fighting incident on my first day was never discussed. No one at the home asked me why I fought. The housemothers and the staff never discussed racism in any context. Los Gatos was quaint, small town USA. The town was white and middle to upper socio- economic, the only non whites were the children from the MQ home. I never experienced racism during my stay.

23. The Presbyterian Church funded the 3 homes?

**Answer:** Yes.

24. Was the home strict when it came to boyfriends?

**Answer:** From 1955 to 1958, the Ming Quong staff didn't often interfere except in cases when a MQ girl dated a boy of a different race or they thought the relationship was too serious. (Nona, for her generation: "guys' or 'boys' had to be approved by the teacher (Head-of-the Home) no smoking allowed. In my case, he abstained, we sipped a soda; and he became my 1st real boyfriend!

25. **Answers to other ("Chat") Questions:**

- Over 400 girls have lived at the Ming Quong Homes.
- Chung Mei Home was a Baptist sponsored home for Chinese boys needing help.
- The Ming Quong Homes was a Presbyterian sponsored home for Chinese, Chinese American and Chinese bi-racial girls needing help.
- The difference between the Los Gatos Ming Quong and the Oakland Ming Quong:
- Los Gatos MQ housed girls with respiratory problems and then girls preschool to six grade residents.
- Oakland MQ beginning in 1935 housed girls 7th through 12th grade residents.