

## THE TART MCEVOY PAPERS

Mei Quong Tart was one of the most famous Chinese Australians at the turn of the twentieth century. Quong Tart was an entrepreneur, philanthropist and tea merchant. Quong Tart was born in Canton Province, China in 1850 and at age nine he came to Australia with an uncle to settle in the Braidwood district of New South Wales. After being taken into the home of Scottish settlers, Quong Tart went on to make his fortune on the goldfields.

In the 1880's Quong Tart established a network of tea shops and dining rooms, Quong Tart and Company, around Sydney. The most well-known tea rooms being situated in the Queen Victoria Market (now the Queen Victoria Building). It was during this time that Quong Tart built his home Gallop House in Ashfield.

Quong Tart utilised his wealth and influence to assist others within the community, many organisations and individuals benefited from his generosity. He also campaigned against certain causes he felt strongly about, including racism at the turn of the century. Following an attack from which he did not recover, Quong Tart died at Gallop House in 1903. His funeral brought almost unprecedented crowds of Chinese and Australian mourners (from 'Quong Tart', *Ashfield at Federation*, ed. Chris Pratten, Ashfield, NSW Ashfield and District Historical Society, October, 2001).



**Quong Tart Tea House**

SAG Manuscript and Image Collection 06/000026

In September 1964 Lois McEvoy donated to the Society of Australian Genealogists the papers and photographic collection of the Sydney based businessman and restaurateur Quong Tart (1850-1903). This collection documents Quong Tart's life from the 1880s onwards and features, in particular, his philanthropic activities in late nineteenth-century Sydney. Quong Tart's collection documents the life of a successful Sydney businessman, positioned between the Colonial Elite and the Colonial Working Class at that time. The collection includes a number of photographs, as well as four scrapbooks filled with press clippings, menus, programs and invitations, and assortment of letters and telegrams. After Quong Tart's death in 1903, his wife Margaret kept the memorabilia and used some of it in 1910 to write a brief biography of her husband's life, *The Life of Quong Tart or, How a Foreigner Succeeded in A British Community, the manuscript copy of which is also held by the Society.*

## Value as a Research Tool

The Tart McEvoy papers is a valuable eclectic collection which includes a number of photographs, as well as four scrapbooks filled with press clippings, menus, programs and invitations, and assortment of letters and telegrams. It highlights Quong Tart as a pioneer entrepreneur, his development of his business venture as a tea merchant and tea house proprietor in Sydney, his participation in society and his family history.

## Guide to the Collection

### **2/000040 - The newspaper cuttings book**

The newspaper cutting book consists mainly of pasted up newspaper cuttings collected by Quong Tart and his family. They range in date from 1884 to 1914 though they have not been arranged in strict chronological order. The articles mainly relate to Quong Tart and his varied activities. Although most of the cuttings are taken from Sydney newspapers and journals a number of them have been collected from country newspapers which have reported the visit of Quong Tart to that locality. Some articles relate to Quong Tart's concern for the Chinese community and his campaign against the importation of opium. There is a copy of Minutes of Proceedings of the Conference on the Chinese Question which highlights the problem. Other cuttings relate to the problem of gambling in the community and give graphic descriptions of the sleazier parts of town. There are a number of articles reporting on Quong Tart's trips to China in 1882, 1888 and 1894. At the end of the volume are menus and other advertising material from Quong Tart's Tea Rooms, and a charming print depicting Quong Tart's children.

### **2/000041-2/000043 - The invitation cards books**

These volumes were made up in 1964 to contain the mass of invitations received by Quong Tart. They have been arranged under various subjects which are listed in the front of each volume. The collection of invitations complements the newspaper cuttings book, having invitations to social events which were subsequently written up in the newspaper.

### **2/000041 - Book**

This volume has a table of contents at the front categorising the programs and dodgers, invitations to various recitals, dinners (including menus), exhibitions, bazaars, and picnics in Sydney and suburbs. They include invitations from the Coaching Branch of the NSW Railways to the Railway Traffic Annual Picnic to attend the opening of the line connecting the railway systems of NSW and Victoria. There are ten pages of invitations to Masonic functions and ten pages of invitations to events held in Quong Tart's tearooms.

### **2/000042 - Book**

This book is similar to the one above and its contents have also been sorted according to subject, such as the Boer War, the Highland Society of NSW and various cycling clubs.

### **2/000043 - Book**

This last volume contains a miscellaneous collection of invitations to various social functions (including a number of wedding invitations). They date between 1886 and 1919. There is an invitation to a banquet to be held at Robert Fowler's Pottery Works, an invitation to the opening of the cab shed at Ashfield in 1895, the Society of Artists Fancy Dress Ball, and the Grand Esquimaux Fair, [sic] and how ironic to see an invitation to the Smoke Concert hosted by the Medical Staff Corps at Quong Tart's Tea Rooms in 1895! There is an invitation to the Annual General Meeting of the Working and Factory Girls' Club, one to the Grand Spring Rose Show and another to the Juvenile Industrial Exhibition.

### **4/000331- 4/000338, 4/000361- 4/000362 and 4/000380 - The manuscript material**



This material is located in series four in the Manuscript and Image Collection and is described here in numerical order. At 4/000331 are two exercise books - one containing minutes of meetings of the friends of Quong Tart, the other testimonials sent to Quong Tart as a result of the meetings in 1902. Quong Tart's letter books for the years 1891 – 1893 are kept at 4/000332 and show Quong Tart as a prolific letter writer. Letters sent are listed by the name of the addressee, the suburb or town and usually the cost of the letter. Congratulatory telegrams sent to Quong Tart on the occasion of his marriage to Margaret Scarlett in 1886 are filed at 4/000333, while letters and telegrams of sympathy in response to Quong Tart's accident in January 1896 are filed at 4/000334. These have been sorted alphabetically. Letters, telegrams and cards of sympathy in response to the assault on Quong Tart in 1902 are kept at 4/000335. Letters, telegrams and cards of sympathy sent to Mrs. Tart after the death of Quong Tart in 1903 are located at 4/000336.

The correspondence also relates to the period after Quong Tart's death. Miscellaneous correspondence to Vine and Arthur Tart ranging in date from 1909 – 1920 is held at 4/000337. The material relating to Arthur Tart includes correspondence in regard to Arthur Tart's profession as a wool-classer 1911-12, together with his letter of acceptance to the Agricultural College, College station Texas. Material relating to Vine Tart includes references three school reports of Vine Tart from the Presbyterian Ladies' College, Croydon 1902.

There is a collection of miscellaneous papers dating 1885 – 1902, including correspondence, list of lodge members, testimonials, copy of a court case at Braidwood, and an unrelated alphabetical list of names. This is held at 4/000338.

Material held at 4/000340 contains duplicate visiting cards and condolence cards. The correspondence to Errol Lea Scarlett in 1964 in regard to the collection is held at 4/000341 together with a listing of Quong Tart material sent to the Mitchell Library.

Quong Tart's pamphlet collection is held at 4/000380 and includes the following: copy of Young Australia Vol 11 Dec 1899, the Young Man March 1895, The Conservatorium Magazine October 1916, The Australian Wheelman Vol 2 No 40 1897, Daily Telegraph miniature edition Jan 1901, Better Side of the Chines Character n.d., assorted newspaper cuttings. Reports include; 22nd Annual Report of the NSW Zoological Society 1901, The Highland Society 20th Annual Report 1898, St Joseph's Hospital 15th Annual Report 1900, The City Night Refuge Annual Report 1899, Freemasons Benevolent Institution 4th Annual Report 1895, Anti opium Demonstration Report 1894. Other items include: Program of the Morts Dock Employees Picnic 1892, Souvenir of the festivities relating to the Arrival of the American Fleet 1908, The Life Story of John McNeill, and Cycling Programs 1895 – 1897.

### **The photographic material**

The photographs are divided into two main groups according to size; photos A5 and smaller are in series five while the larger photos are held in series six.

#### **Small photographs (5/000187 – 5/000214)**

The small photographs are quite varied, some are family photos, other photos are of various public figures, and others are scenic. The varied nature of the collection implies a much bigger photographic collection originally. The small photos are as follows:

**5/000187 - 5/000195** postcard views of Wyalong, Brisbane, Sydney, Parramatta addressed to Quong Tart's children

**5/000196** Quong Tart's children

**5/000197** Quong Tart's grave



**5/000198** Quong Tart with unidentified cricket team  
**5/000199** Quong and Margaret Tart  
**5/000200** Aurora Parkes daughter of Henry Parkes  
**5/000203** Mr. Powell, Collector of Customs  
**5/000204** Daniel Holborrow ex-Mayor of Ashfield  
**5/000205** Inspector Hyams  
**5/000206** Rev Samuel Fox  
**5/000207** Smythe family of Wagga  
**5/000208** Aborigines Kurnell stereo photo  
**5/000209** Sydney harbour stereo photos  
**5/000210** Commonwealth Celebrations stereo photos  
**5/000211** Other stereo photos  
**5/000212** Arthur Tart  
**5/000214** Arthur Tart photos

### **Large photographs**

These photos are of the same nature as the smaller photos and include;

**6/000016** Family photos  
**6/000017** Quong Tart with King Tahuiao  
**6/000018** Pauline Churches photo sent to Margaret Tart  
**6/000019** Portrait of Margaret Tart  
**6/000020** Photo of T Clive Connick 1913  
**6/000021** Cyclist on penny farthing bicycle  
**6/000022** Gallop House, grave of Quong Tart & copies of illuminated address  
**6/000023** Unidentified passenger liner with autographs of passengers  
**6/000024** Coogee Beach  
**6/000025** Group Photos: Dr. On Lee & others, Una Spence's farewell garden party, picnic to Lees  
**6/000026** Views of premises of Quong Tart  
**6/000027** Chinese carnival

Based on Hawkins, Ralph and Murray, Lisa, 'Short guide to the Tart McEvoy Papers', *Descent* 2004

