

Arthur and Daisy Yee and Kwong Sing, Bundarra

by Derrick Yee

My father, Arthur Cecil Yee (Ah Chok Yee also known as Miu Sui Yi) was born in Shekki, Chungshan, China, 1901. As a young man he migrated to Australia under the sponsorship of Mr Percy Young, who was then the owner of the general merchants store known as Kwong Sing and Company at Glen Innes. He worked at Kwong Sing and Company as its accountant for some years.

While in Glen Innes he met Mr Percy Young's daughter, Daisy Ethel Young (who was born in Glen Innes in 1907). After a short courtship, the couple were married in Hong Kong on 18th July 1928.

My parents returned to Australia in 1929, purchased an existing general store in Bundarra, and then carried on the business under the name of Kwong Sing and Company.

The original store was a weatherboard building which was demolished in 1904 and replaced by the brick building with residence attached which my parents purchased. They made an extension at the rear of the building in about 1938.



Front of the Kwong Sing store, Bundarra, about 1930.

From left to right: Arthur and Daisy Yee, Eileen Smith, Jean Smith, Lily Robinson, Ned Brown, Colin Smith, Peter Hoon.



Kwong Sing & Co store, Bundarra, about 1936

On the far left are my sister, Vena, and my mother, Daisy, who is holding Noelene (Jenny). On the far right is Peter Hoon. My parents sponsored Peter Hoon to come to Australia. He worked in the store for some time before purchasing a small mixed business in Oliver Street, Inverell, previously run by his uncle, George Kue.



The Kwong Sing building and residence in the late 1980s. By this time the store had become a small supermarket

My parents took over the business at the beginning of the 1930s Great Depression, but with hard work and taking advantage of every discount given by the warehouses the businesses survived.

They carried on this business through the years of the Second World War. There were difficult times with shortages of food, clothing, petrol and other necessities of life. They had to contend with the system of rationing food, clothing and petrol. Coupons were issued to the public to enable them to get their quotas of these items. This involved a great deal of time and effort. After the war the business prospered and carried on for many years. Eventually it was incorporated under the name of Kwong Sing and Company Pty Ltd. Mr Yee was the Governing Director and Mrs Yee the first Company Secretary.



My parents, Arthur and Daisy Yee, in about 1940.

My father was fondly referred to by his customers as 'The Boss'.

In 1972 the business was sold to Mr and Mrs Sid Hanna and Mr Ken Burling, all of Inverell.

In appreciation of their services to the community for forty three years, the citizens of Bundarra gave Mr and Mrs Yee a public farewell before they retired to Sydney in 1973.

During his time in Bundarra, Mr Yee brought out his brother who was known as Fred Rae from China. Mr Rae started another general store in Bundarra which traded under the name of Jang Hing and Company. It ceased after Mr Rae's death.

My parents had five children while in Bundarra: myself, Derrick, who practiced law as a solicitor in Inverell, Vena who became a secondary school teacher, Jenny who became a nursing sister, Marlene who became a medical doctor, and Aileen who became a solicitor.

After they sold the business in Bundarra, my parents moved to Sydney. My father died in 1981, my mother in 1997.