

## **The Chinese Collection at the Braidwood Museum, Braidwood New South Wales**

The Braidwood and District Historical Society Inc., a volunteer organisation that operates the Braidwood Museum, began its Chinese collection in 1994. At that time, three sisters from a prominent Braidwood Chinese family—Bessie and Eileen Nomchong and Madeline Howe—donated to the Museum over eighty items that had belonged to their family, including photographs, personal items, and memorabilia. These are housed in a special upstairs room devoted to the Nomchong family. The highlight of the collection is part of a wedding outfit worn by their mother Mary for her marriage in China in 1887. A recently completed Significance Assessment of this collection states that it is nationally significant because: “It includes rare Chinese-Australian material that is not replicated in any comparable public collection, including the Nomchong collection of costumes, games and personal objects”. A recent addition to the Nomchong collection is the craft work of Helen Nomchong, the China-born wife of Robert Nomchong. The paper work is important because it signifies the ongoing contribution made to the town by the Nomchong family.

The Braidwood Museum also holds two items—a bowl and spoon dated c.1880—from the personal dinner service of the famous nineteenth-century Chinese immigrant Mei Quong Tart. Quong Tart came to the Braidwood area as a child and was adopted by a locally-influential family. He later went with them to Sydney where he became a leading nineteenth-century businessmen and importer from China. He opened a tea and silk store in Sydney, followed by a chain of popular tea-rooms. Despite his prominence and wealth, however, few relics of Quong Tart’s personal property have survived.

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