



**Name in English:** Ing Hay  
**Name in Chinese:** [伍于念]  
**Name in Pinyin:** Wu Yunian  
**Gender:** Male  
**Birth Year:** 1862-1952  
**Birth Place:** Xiaping Village, Taishan County, China  
**Philanthropy:** Yes

**Profession (s):** Doctor, Herbalist

**Education:** No known education

**Contribution (s):** Ing "Doc" Hay immigrated to the United States in 1882 or 1883 with his father, around the time that the Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882 that barred all Chinese immigration was passed by Congress. He left behind a wife, son, and daughter in China that he never saw again. Five uncles had previously immigrated to the United States. In 1885, father and son moved to Walla Walla, Washington. In 1887, his father returned to China and Ing Hay moved to the small eastern Oregon town of John Day. Gold had been discovered in the region creating a boom town there and many Chinese had moved to the area to mine.

In September 1888, he and his business partner, Long On, bought a building in John Day and opened up a general store named Kam Wah Chung after the previous owner. The store sold imported and canned goods and sundries to local Chinese and whites. In the back they sold opium, which was seen as medicinal by medical authorities around the world until its addictive properties were recognized and it was banned as an over the counter medication in the United States in 1909. The building also served as a social center and hiring hall for the Chinese population of eastern Oregon. Ing Hay also created a Buddhist shrine in the building for the local Chinese. The building, being a former trading post and temporary fort build in the late 1860s, was solidly built of stone with strong shutters over the windows and a reinforced metal door.

That such protection was needed was evidenced by the experience of the neighboring town of Canyon City, Oregon, just a mile north of John Day. In 1885, this community, then the largest Chinatown in the region, was burned to the ground, probably by arsonists motivated by the strong racial hatred of Chinese prevalent in America at the time. The city government refused to allow the community to be rebuilt and the Chinese residents moved to John Day, making it the largest Chinese community in eastern Oregon. Nevertheless the community only numbered between 500 to 600 Chinese and perhaps up to 1000 at its peak in the 1880s before dwindling to less than 100 after the gold ran out around 1890. Eastern Oregon remained sparsely populated throughout the 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> Centuries and Chinese labor soon became cherished in the region even while it was violently attacked in other areas of the country and in western Oregon. Workers were just too rare to let racism stand in the way of the work that needed to be done and local officials made it clear that they would not tolerate Chinese persecution

because of that. Nevertheless the stoutness of the walls of the Kam Wah Chung building must have been appreciated as the remnants of a bullet hole in the door and local lore indicates drunken cowboys or "buckaroos" as they were known locally weren't adverse to trying to "hurrah" or scare the Chinese.

Ing Hay gained respect for being a pulse doctor and herbalist. As a traditional Chinese pulse doctor he always wore a glove on his right hand and never picked anything up with it to protect his sensitivity. He would diagnose a patient's condition by laying his bare right hand on the patient's wrist and diagnose their condition from their pulse. Then he would proscribe Chinese herbs bought from San Francisco and imported from Hong Kong. Over 500 different herbal ingredients were found in the building after his death.

Practicing medicine without a license and without any formal Western medical training got him into three court cases when white doctors and individuals took it upon themselves to try to put him out of business. Each time the local populace of whites rallied in support and found him not guilty. Getting rid of one of the very rare doctors in the region didn't seem sensible to these settlers and pioneers, especially when his strange herbal cures actually worked. "Ing Hay diagnosed and treated a wide variety of maladies, including blood poisoning, frostbite, Rocky Mountain spotted fever, infertility, venereal diseases, typhoid fever, gangrene, appendicitis, polio, and influenza. His herbal concoctions were steeped in broth or water, pulverized, or coated with oil or honey in a wok in the Kam Wah Chung's kitchen."

People would come from several different states to visit Ing Hay for treatment and orders for herbal medications came by mail from such far flung places as Alaska and Canada. Many children, both white and Chinese, remembered their visits to the Kam Wah Chung building and the inevitable candy with which Ing Hay greeted them. The widespread respect that Ing Hay and Long On earned provided a safe haven in John Day for many Chinese during a very dangerous era in American history even as their population dwindled as Chinese exclusion laws grew more harsh, the gold ran out, and persecution increased.

Ing Hay never learned to speak or read English fluently. He relied on his business partner and lifelong friend, Long On, for translations, correspondence, and business dealings. Long On died in 1940, leaving a large fortune of about \$90,000 behind for Ing Hay (nearly \$6 million in 2013 dollars.) Ing Hay continued his medical practice and continued to live frugally with the help of relatives, despite being completely blind by that time. He finally retired in 1948 at the age of 86 after he fell and broke his hip. Upon his death in 1952 he was buried next to Long On. The residents of John Day, as a mark of their great respect for the two men, built them the grandest gravestones in the local cemetery in their honor. Both men had been members of the otherwise all-white local Masonic lodge, an extraordinary achievement and mark of respect for Chinese men at the time.

Ing Hay's nephew deeded the Kam Wah Chung Company Building to the town of John Day in 1955 and sealed it up, leaving it as it had been left by Ing Hay. It was only in 1967 though that John Day discovered this fact and decided to restore the building to how it

looked in the 1940s. The Kam Wah Chung Company Building was enrolled in the National Register of Historic Places in 1973 and designated a National Historic Landmark by the Secretary of the Interior in 2005. It is regarded as one of the finest surviving examples of a Chinese apothecary shop of the 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> Century still in existence and is the only building left of the once thriving Chinatown in John Day.

**Philanthropy:** After his death in 1952, over \$23,000 in uncashed checks were found beneath Doc Hay's bed in the Kah Wah Chung building. The checks dated all the way back to the Great Depression, nearly twenty five years before. Ing Hay would only cash a check when he actually needed money, which was rarely. The total sum of this in 2013 dollars would have totaled somewhere around \$500,000.

### External Links:

<http://www.prx.org/pieces/4747-the-story-of-ing-doc-hay-frontier-herbalist>  
[http://www.ohs.org/education/oregonhistory/historical\\_records/dspDocument.cfm?doc\\_ID=1C352AF0-B701-CoCA-950FDF45064459C1](http://www.ohs.org/education/oregonhistory/historical_records/dspDocument.cfm?doc_ID=1C352AF0-B701-CoCA-950FDF45064459C1)  
[http://www.ohs.org/education/oregonhistory/historical\\_records/dspDocument.cfm?doc\\_ID=1C23D5FF-E9E1-D5F1-484DACDF311E5FA7](http://www.ohs.org/education/oregonhistory/historical_records/dspDocument.cfm?doc_ID=1C23D5FF-E9E1-D5F1-484DACDF311E5FA7)  
[http://www.oregonencyclopedia.org/entry/view/ing\\_doc\\_hay\\_1862\\_1952/](http://www.oregonencyclopedia.org/entry/view/ing_doc_hay_1862_1952/)  
[http://www.oregonstateparks.org/index.cfm?do=parkPage.dsp\\_parkPage&parkId=5](http://www.oregonstateparks.org/index.cfm?do=parkPage.dsp_parkPage&parkId=5)  
<http://www.nps.gov/history/nr/feature/asia/2005/kam.htm>  
<http://watch.opb.org/video/1207317935>



Long On (left) and Ing Hay in John Day