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THE CHINESE RESTAURANTS
IN NEW YORK CITY /

By
LOUIS H. CHU

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P R E F A C E

There is some truth to the saying that we usually overlook the commonplace to study that which is out of the ordinary. Things that we do everyday— things that we see—places that we go to everyday—escape our fancy. We walk into a street corner to board a bus, little do we realize the organization that is behind such a system of transportation. We walk into an automat and our hunger is subsequently satisfied, little do we think of the striking workers parading back and forth in front of the store. Still less do we think of why these workers are on strike. We walk into a Chinese restaurant to eat, little do we know of its dynamic character.

The average American knows very little about the Chinese restaurant. The average Chinese knows equally little, perhaps just a little more. If an American were asked, "How many Chinese restaurants are there in New York City ? ", he would venture a guess. If a Chinese, whether he be a restaurant owner, a waiter, or a priest were asked the same question, he would likewise venture a guess.

For, indeed, how are they to know ? The Chinese restaurant is a commonplace institution, and as such, does not strike us as being particularly interesting. Consequently, we do not bother to think much about it. Is not the Chinese

restaurant accessible to the public ? Many of us eat there. Some of us work there. Yet none of us know much about it. There are times when we feel ambitious and inquisitive and proceed to make a feeble attempt to find out a little more about the Chinese restaurant. But there is no place in which to find out, no book from which to gather information. While the Chinese restaurant industry has grown as have many other industries, there is up to this point no writing on such a topic.

It is hoped that this report will be of some service to those who are interested in the Chinese restaurant.

The report is based on: (a) a study of the restaurant files of the New York Department of Health; (b) personal interviews with individuals connected with the restaurant industry; (c) personal observation.

I am indebted to the Department of Health, without whose cooperation this report could not have been possible. I am equally grateful to those whom I had interviewed in preparation for this writing.

The reader will find much narration. Such narration is essential, in the opinion of the author, in order to give the reader a significant picture of, for example, the "rush hour" in a Chinese restaurant. Some personal characteristics of various individuals in the restaurant business are brought out in order to give the reader some idea just what sort of people are helping to make the Chinese restaurants what they are.

In addition to giving such information as mentioned above the author feels that it is his duty, even in such a brief paper, to attempt to bring about a better understanding of the Chinese by the American people. In so doing, however, the writer has tried not to sacrifice truth for partiality. Through a better understanding of the Chinese restaurants a similar better understanding of the Chinese people is very possible. If the author succeeds in explaining only partially some phases of the Chinese restaurants he will be very happy. He believes that the slightest improvement in the understanding of a racial group is a step forward in human society.

The author is indebted to Joseph Mon, Kenneth Wing, and Chong Lee, for their help in preparing some of the illustrations contained in this text. Similar acknowledgement is due Luther Lee, Y.S. Lee, and Lee Foo, for their respective interviews.

Chapter I

INTRODUCTION

In primitive human society man subsisted chiefly by hunting and fishing. Little did the primitive man dream of an eating place such as the modern restaurant, the cafeteria, the cabaret. Still less did he dream of these eating places becoming a great industry in present society. That the restaurant business has become an industry no one can deny. With the restaurants man has solved the problem of feeding his fellow-men. Instead of going into the open with his bow and arrow the modern man needs only to go into an automat in his search for food.

Americans would often ask a Chinese waiter, "They don't serve Chop suey in China, do they ? ". And the usual answer they would get is, "No". The average American would stop here and inquire no more and dispose of the matter by turning to his dining companion and say with a triumphal air, "I told you so!". The more inquisitive ones would, however, go on to ask the waiter why they have been told that chop suey is a Chinese dish when people in China had never heard of it. Most of the waiters do not know and consequently are not in a position to answer the question.

One version as to how chop suey was originated in

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the United States is the following one. Li Hung Chang , famous Viceroy of China, visited the United States in 1895 after having visited Germany, France, and England. While Li was visiting these European countries he had acquired a dislike for foreign foods. His voyage from England to the United States unfortunately deepened his dislike for any other food except Chinese. He was seasick. He blamed the foods for his stomach troubles. When he arrived in New York he told his friends that the Chinese meals were the best because they alone agreed with his stomach. The Viceroy was invited to many dinners but he declined all invitations. Instead, the Chinese statesman invited his American friends to dinner. After dinner the guests asked Li what they had been eating. The statesman, for want of a better name, answered, "chop suey". Hence the beginning of chop suey.

In Chinese chop suey means a mixture, a little of this and a little of that. This explanation of the words chop suey may be readily agreed upon when one realizes that the ingredients that go to make chop suey are a mixture after all. It is a mixture of bean sprouts, onions, celery, Chinese vegetables, and some meat. If the meat used is chicken, it is chicken chop suey. If the meat used is pork, it is pork chop suey.

The words chow mein means fried noddles. Practically

I. Viceroy of Chihli Province, Grand Secretary of State,
Memoirs of Li Hung Chang, W.F. Mann & x.

the same ingredients that ~~are~~ used in preparing chop suey are used in the preparation of chow mein. In chop suey the meat is sliced. In chow mein the meat is chopped up or ground. Fried noodles are served with the chow mein, but not with the chop suey. Usually rice is served with the chop suey instead. Without the fried noodles chow mein cannot be called chow mein any more than a piece of ham can be called a ham sandwich without the bread.

It is not my intention to tell the reader precisely how each Chinese dish is prepared. That is a job for the chef. What I am trying to do in the following pages is to present as clear a picture as possible of the Chinese restaurants in New York City. The restaurants are necessarily limited to New York because the Chinese restaurants elsewhere² may be totally different from those found in New York, and therefore cannot be discussed intelligently without first having made both intensive and extensive research.

In order to avoid repetition of the words "Chinese restaurant", henceforth the word "restaurant" alone will mean a Chinese restaurant unless otherwise specified. The words "opened" and "closed", as applied to the discussion of restaurants, should not be taken literally. A restaurant may be termed "opened" or "closed" when there is a change of

2. China, Europe, etc.

ownership, though the restaurant may be open for business continuously without any interruption.

Chapter II

THE RESTAURANTS

From the old restaurant files of the Department of Health I was able to determine the number of Chinese restaurants that had been in existence since 1928. The restaurants prior to that date were not recorded, or if they were, the records were not available to me. Mr. Sigoda³ told me that it was not until Feb. 9, 1927 that the Department of Health placed restaurant permits under a fee, although permits were required for the operation of restaurants as early as Jan. 30, 1917⁴. The restaurants that I shall deal with, then, are necessarily limited to the ones whose records were available to me.

There are two sets of restaurant files in the Division of Permits in the Department of Health. The inactive or old files and the active files. The old files are kept in an inner room while the active files are kept in an outer room, within easy reach of employees in the Division of Permits.

In order to facilitate presentation of the material I have at hand I shall first deal with the restaurants that

3. Assistant to the Secretary, Department of Health.

4. Sanitary Code, Section 149.

are no longer in existence and then later I shall take up the ones that are in existence today. The Department of Health does not segregate the restaurants into different types or different nationalities. All of them come under the general heading of restaurants. I was able to discern the Chinese restaurants from the others because of their Chinese names on the restaurant files. Of course there are names that can be either Chinese or American, such as Lee, King, etc. I came across to names of this nature several times. In each instance the name was preceded by initials only, which made it doubly hard to tell whether the name was Chinese or not. On each occasion I resorted to discretion in determining the nationality of the name. I do not think that such a guess work in three or four instances will make a great deal of difference in our general conclusions.

Out of a total of 69,500 cards ⁵ in the old restaurant files I counted 447 Chinese restaurants, less than one per cent of the total. Each of these cards contains the following information:

1. Name or names of owners.
2. Type of ownership.
3. Date permit was issued.
4. Dates of permit renewals.
5. Date permit was invalidated, terminated, or cancelled.
6. Permit number.
7. Address of the restaurant.

5. The total was obtained by measuring the cards tightly placed together. 83 cards to an inch.

The restaurants are catalogued according to the streets of each of the five boroughs. Each time a restaurant changes hand, a new card is filed. A restaurant filed under the old restaurant list does not necessarily mean that the restaurant is closed. It may be doing business under a new owner or new management. Of the 447 Chinese restaurants found in the old files, 68 of them, or approximately fifteen per cent, are still in business today.⁶ The restaurants, not unlike many other social institutions, are dynamic in character. There is constant change that escapes the public eye. With a few exceptions, the restaurant patrons hardly ever notice the new workers in the restaurant, or its new management.

In Manhattan, out of 249 restaurants from the old files, one closed after only thirteen days in business. Fourteen closed in less than six months. Twenty had to close after less than a year in business. Only a few of them remained in business for any considerable period of time.

Figure from the following page shows the number of Chinese restaurants opened and closed since 1928. The 1938 figure, of course, is incomplete because the restaurant files were studied several months before the year 1938 ended.

6. By comparing the addresses of the restaurants found in both the old and active files.

Year	Manhattan		Brooklyn		Queens		Bronx		Richmond	
	Opened	Closed	Opened	Closed	Opened	Closed	Opened	Closed	Opened	Closed
1928	54	--	33	--	8	--	3	--	0	--
1929	28	14	11	10	3	1	1	0	0	0
1930	28	25	13	10	5	6	2	1	0	0
1931	22	21	5	9	3	5	8	2	0	0
1932	19	13	8	2	3	2	4	2	0	0
1933	34	26	12	14	3	2	7	3	0	0
1934	21	23	17	4	3	4	4	5	0	0
1935	18	31	13	18	5	2	3	11	0	0
1936	15	46	8	33	1	9	5	5	0	0
1937	11	31	1	14	5	2	1	5	0	0
1938	1	20	3	9	0	6	1	5	0	0

Fig. 1

The number of Chinese restaurants opened and closed as shown on the old files of the Department of Health. The word "opened" does not necessarily mean a new restaurant. It may indicate merely a change of ownership. Likewise, the word "closed" may also indicate a change of ownership.

Please note that Figure 1 shows no Chinese restaurant in the borough of Richmond at all. There is one, however, at 2040 Richmond Terrace. It is not listed here because it has not changed hand since it first opened. Incidentally, restaurants showing records as having been in business since 1923 might have been in business before that. It is unfortunate that we cannot trace their history further back. As has been stated on a previous page the restaurant files showed only the records after 1927. However, we need not be concerned over this point, for the number of restaurants with such exceptionally long existence is negligible. Figure 2 on the following page shows us the number of restaurants with their respective years in business. We note that out of the 447 restaurants, 140 lasted one year while less than five remained in business for a period of ten or more years. About forty of them went out of business in less than a year. Of the total number of restaurants termed "closed" approximately twenty-one per cent showed a change of ownership. (See Fig. 3, page 10) About thirty per cent had failed to renew their permits. Approximately forty per cent had gone out of business while about twelve per cent were sold before the issuance of the restaurant permit.

7. A restaurant may be opened for business after having filed application for a restaurant permit. The permit is issued after inspections by the Health Department.

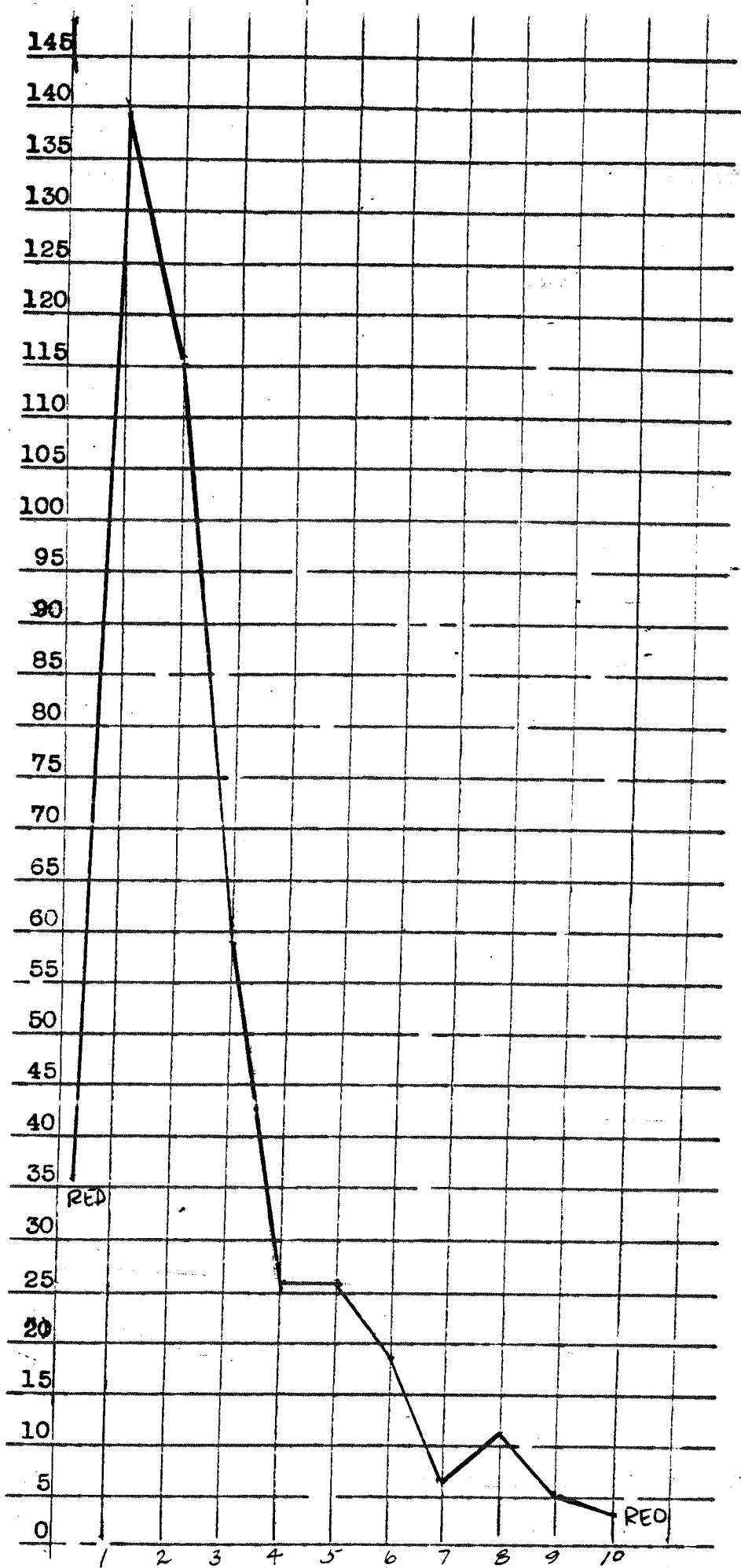


Fig. 2

The vertical line represents the number of restaurants that had been closed since 1928. The horizontal line represents the number of years that the restaurants had been in business.

	No. of restaurants	Per cent of total
Terminated	83	.388
Expired	61	.285
Invalidated	45	.210
Cancelled	25	.117
TOTAL	214	1.000

Fig. 3

Of the 214 restaurants studied the above shows what percentage were terminated, expired, invalidated, or cancelled. The word "terminated" means that the restaurant permit is filed but that the restaurant goes out of business. "Expired" means that the permit is not renewed. "Invalidated" means a change of ownership takes place before the permit is expired. "Cancelled" means that the restaurant is sold before the issuance of the restaurant permit.
 (Only 214 of the 447 restaurants were studied for this tabulation)

Figure 4 on the following page will help us in getting an idea just how frequent the change of ownership or turn-over occurs in the Chinese restaurants. Of the 249 restaurants in Manhattan, as shown from the old restaurant files, fifty have had at least one change of ownership. The number of restaurants with their respective number of turn-overs and the average existence of them are shown on Fig. 4.

The average duration of each turn-over is obtained by first determining the average existence of the restaurants. This average is then divided by the number of turn-overs plus one. The one is added to the number of turn-overs because in a single turn-over two owners had been involved. For example: If B sells his restaurant to A, we record that as one turn-over. But in order to obtain the average of the time each of them had been in business, we have to divide the total number of years both had been in business by two.

Figure 4 shows us that in the borough of Brooklyn there were six restaurants that had two turn-overs, and that the average duration for each turnover was 2.11. The 2.11 was arrived at as follows:

The length of existence for each of the six restaurants were:

9 years
8 years
4 years
4 years
8 years
5 years

The 9, 8, 4, etc. were obtained from the date the permit was first issued to the latest date the permit was invalidated.

	No. of turn-overs	No. of restaurants	Average duration of each turn-over in years
MANHATTAN	1	33	2.61
	2	7	2.00
	3	8	1.56
	4	1	1.60
	5	0	
	6	1	1.30
BROOKLYN	1	17	2.13
	2	6	2.11
	3	3	2.32
QUEENS	1	12	2.63
	2	5	1.67
	3	1	2.25
	4	1	0.80
BRONX	1	62	2.46
	2	18	1.93
	3	12	2.04
	4	2	1.20
	5	0	
	6	1	1.30

Fig. 4

The total number of years all the six restaurants had been in existence was 38. To get the average for each of the six restaurants we divide the 38 by 6, which gives us 6.33. But each of the six restaurants had had two turn-overs, which means three different owners, including the original owner. To get the average for each turn-over, therefore, we divide the 6.33 by 3, which gives us 2.11.

Of course we have not taken into consideration the time that had elapsed between the old and new owners. Please note that out of the total number of restaurants closed 32.7 per cent changed hands before the expiration of permits, which meant that no time had been lost during the change of ownership. (See Fig. 3, page 11.)⁸ However, it is interesting to note the time that had elapsed in a few cases:

1 month	9 months
1 month	2 months
1 year	1 year
5 months	None
1 month	2 months
2 months	None
1 year	2 months

I have tried to make a tabulation on the time elapsed between old and new owners but some of the dates on the files over-lap one another. That is, a card shows a restaurant permit issued in August, 1933 and invalidated in June, 1935. On another card, for the same address, shows the permit issued in Feb., 1934 and invalidated in June 1936.

8. Fig. 3 shows .210 invalidated, .117 cancelled.
 .210 + .117 equals .327 or 32.7 per cent.

It is my belief that in such a case of over-lapping of dates the change of ownership might have taken place before the Department of Health was notified, or that the Department of Health might not have stamped the card "invalidated" when the change of ownership took place. In the above case it was possible that the original restaurant opened in August, 1933 and changed hand in Feb., 1934. Subsequently a new card was filed but the Department of Health might have neglected to invalidate the original card until June, 1935.

On the following page Figure 5 shows us that during the year 1928, the alleged height of prosperity, a total of 98 restaurants were opened or were under new managements. In 1933, following general business recovery in 1932, the number of restaurants opened jumped from 33 in 1932 to 61. The year 1936 shows a marked increase in the number of restaurants closed while the number of restaurants opened dropped considerably. Please note that the black line, representing the number of restaurants opened, and the red line, indicating the number of restaurants closed, almost run parallel to one another from 1929 to 1934. The position of the black line, being above that of the red line from 1929 to 1934, indicates that the number of restaurants opened during those years was greater than the number closed. This means that new restaurants were being opened constantly.

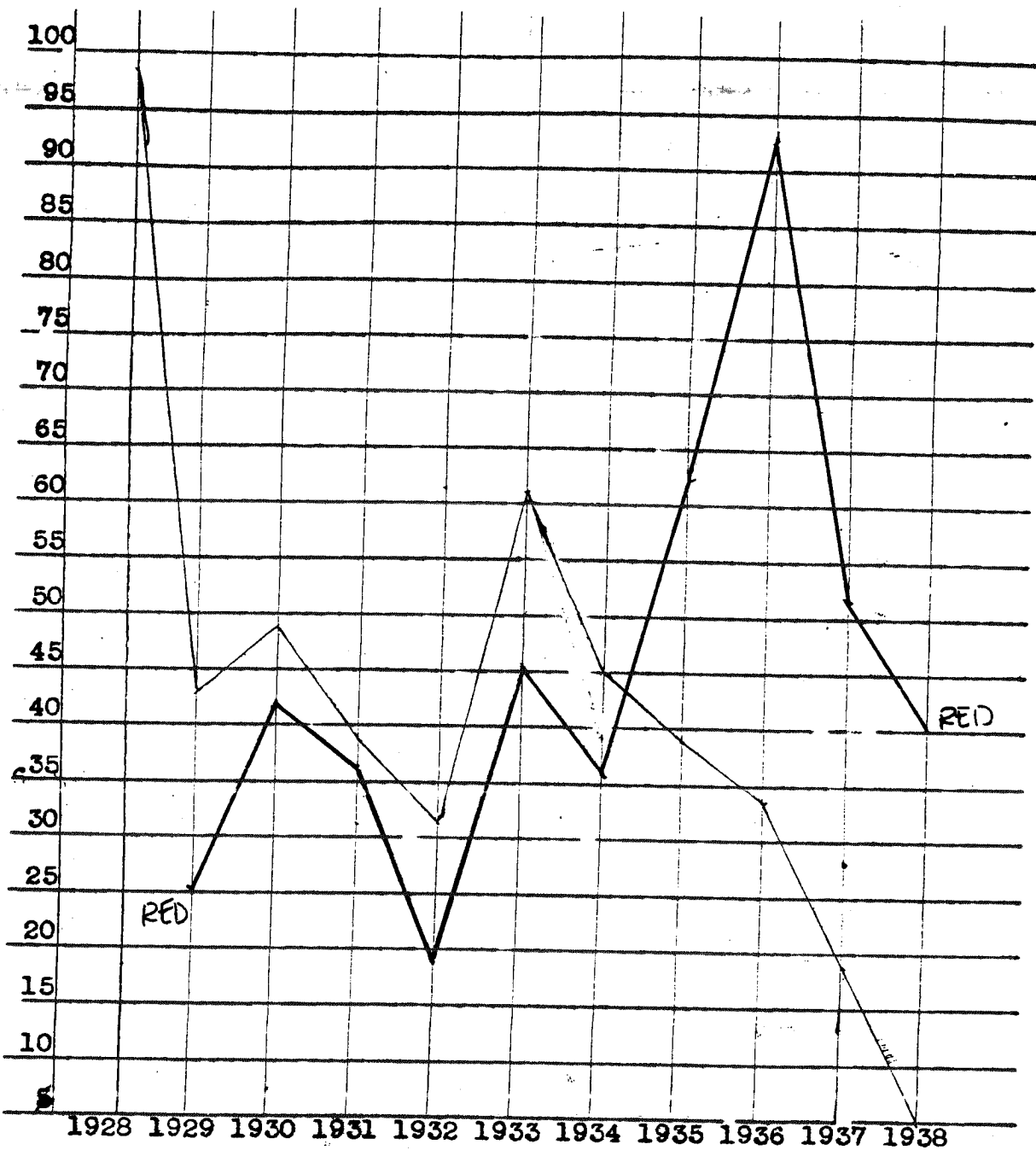


Fig. 5

The vertical column at the left represents the number of restaurants. The red and black lines represent the number of restaurants closed and opened, respectively.

Note that immediately following 1934 the red line takes a position above that of the black line, which indicates that after 1934, the number of restaurants closed has been greater than the number opened. Note, also, that following 1936, the red and black lines seem to run parallel to one another again, only this time the red line is above that of the black. This parallelism of the two lines shows that there is a relationship between the number of restaurants opened and the number of restaurants closed. Whether the number of restaurants opened is the cause of the number of restaurants closed we do not know. Nevertheless, we may state, rather conclusively, that the number of restaurants opened has a closely corresponding number of restaurants closed, or vice versa. We may reasonably assume, therefore, that the number of restaurants opened varies directly with the number of restaurants closed, or vice versa, under comparatively normal business conditions.

The relationship between the number of restaurants opened and the number closed is further confirmed by a study of the months in which the restaurants were opened or closed. Figure 6, on the following page, shows that the highest number of restaurants opened and closed occurred in the month of June. Out of the 447 restaurants studied, 155 ~~restaurants~~ were opened in June, almost 35 per cent of the total. Out of the same number studied, 207, or almost

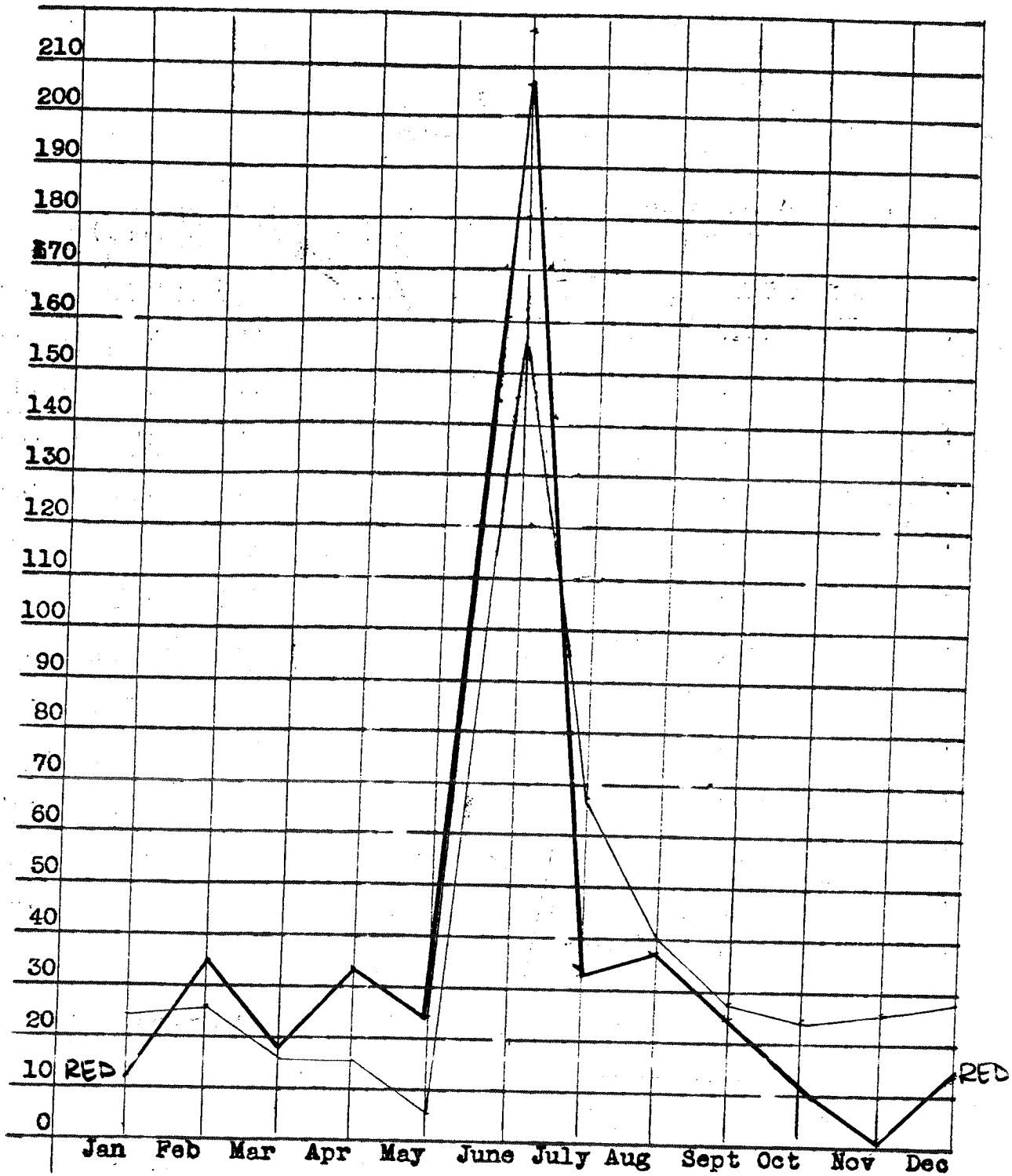


Fig. 6

Out of the 447 restaurants between 1928 and Sept., 1938, the above shows the number of restaurants opened and closed in each of the twelve months. The black line represents the number of restaurants opened while the red line represents the number closed. The column at the left represents the number of restaurants.

Month	No. of rest. (from old files)		No. of rest. (now existing)	Total no. of rest. studied			
	Opened	Closed	Opened	Opened	Percent	Closed	Percent
Jan.	24	11	6	30	.043	11	.024
Feb.	25	35	7	32	.046	35	.078
March	13	19	5	18	.026	19	.043
April	13	32	11	24	.035	32	.072
May	5	23	10	15	.022	15	.051
June	155	207	73	228	.328	207	.463
July	68	32	54	122	.176	32	.072
Aug.	40	37	22	62	.089	37	.083
Sept.	28	24	12	40	.058	24	.054
Oct.	23	11	29	52	.075	11	.024
Nov.	25	1	11	36	.051	1	.002
Dec.	28	15	8	36	.051	15	.034
TOTAL	447	447	248	695	1.000	447	1.000

Fig. 7

Borough	No. of rest.	Total no. of years rest. existed	Average Existence of each
Manhattan	249	650.1	2.61
Brooklyn	120	317.0	2.64
Queens	39	78.0	2.00
Bronx	39	90.5	2.32
TOTAL	447	1135.6	2.39

Fig. 8

The average number of years each of the 447 restaurants that had been in business for the past ten years is 2.39, as shown above.

50 per cent were closed in June. Please note here that the two lines also have a tendency to run parallel to one another. It is interesting to note that during the first half of the year the number of restaurants closed is greater than the number opened and that during the second half of the year the number of restaurants opened is greater than the number closed. From this, then, may we not assume that the restaurant business is more prosperous during the later part of the year ?

Before we go on to discuss the 248 restaurants now in existence let us take up the types of ownership of the 447 restaurants that are no longer in existence. Figure 9 on the next page shows that over 57 per cent of the restaurants were owned by partners, about 33 per cent by single owners, and less than one per cent by corporations. Note that only in the borough of Manhattan was the partnership form of ownership dominating. In Brooklyn, Queens, and Bronx, the single owners outnumbered the others. One obvious explanation as to the types of ownership is the size of the restaurant. It was possible that there were more single owners in Brooklyn, Queens, and Bronx because the restaurants there were smaller compared to the ones in Manhattan, and consequently could be financially owned by a single person.

**TYPES OF OWNERSHIP OF 447
CHINESE RESTAURANTS**

Ownership	Manhattan	Brooklyn	Queens	Bronx	Richmond	Total	Per Cent
Corporation	33	5	2	3	0	43	.096
Single Ownership	40	60	28	19	0	147	.329
Partner- ship	176	55	9	17	0	257	.575

Fig. 9

These 447 Chinese restaurants are on the inactive restaurant files of the Department of Health. The restaurants in existence now are not included.

**TYPES OF OWNERSHIP OF 248 CHINESE
RESTAURANTS NOW IN EXISTENCE**

<u>Ownership</u>	<u>Manhattan</u>	<u>Brooklyn</u>	<u>Queens</u>	<u>Bronx</u>	<u>Richmond</u>	<u>Total</u>	<u>Per Cent</u>
Corporation	13	8	0	4	0	25	.101
Single Ownership	32	36	22	10	1	101	.407
Partner- ship	65	38	7	12	0	122	.492

Fig. 10

While we are on the subject of ownership let us look at the types of ownership of the 248 restaurants now in existence. Figure 10, on the preceding page, shows that almost 50 per cent of the restaurants are owned through partnerships. If we compare the percentages of each of the three types of ownership of the non-existent 447 restaurants (page 22) and the 248 now in existence, we will note that the percentages of the single ownership and of the corporation have gone up while that of the partnership has fallen 8.3 per cent. Such slight differences, however, are not significant enough for us to draw a general conclusion as to which type of ownership the restaurants are now developing into. However, on the basis of these 695 (447 + 248) restaurants studied, we may say conclusively that a greater number of the restaurants is owned through partnerships.

Incidentally, out of the 695 restaurants studied, only two were owned by women, both of whom were married. The 248 restaurants in business now are all owned by men, however.

Offhand one may think that 248 Chinese restaurants are a great deal. It is true that we do not speak of hundreds of Swedish restaurants, French restaurants, or Russian restaurants in New York City. The number of these restaurants in New York is small compared to the number of Chinese restaurants. Yet of a total of 18,946 restaurants

All The Restaurants in New York City
Chinese and non-Chinese

Boroughs	Total no. of rest. (Chinese included)	No. of Chinese restaurants
<u>Manhattan</u>	9,545	111
<u>Brooklyn</u>	3,154	82
<u>Queens</u>	2,719	29
<u>Bronx</u>	2,034	25
<u>Richmond</u>	498	1
<u>Chain restaurants</u>	996	0
TOTAL	18,946	248

Fig. 11

The total number of restaurants is determined by measuring the restaurant cards tightly placed together. 83 cards to an inch.

the 248 Chinese restaurants represent but 1.3 per cent.

The geographical distribution of some of these Chinese restaurants is found on the following pages, Figures 12 and 13. Note that out of 111 restaurants in Manhattan 41⁹ are located in Chinatown. The others are scattered through out some thirty different streets.

Figure 14, on page 29, shows us how many of these restaurants are occupying locations that had been vacated by previous restaurants.

9. Streets Mott, Pell, Doyers, and Bowery.

Geographical Distribution of Chinese Restaurants

Manhattan

<u>Streets</u>	<u>No. of rest.</u>	<u>Streets</u>	<u>No. of rest.</u>
Ave. B	1	8th Ave.	3
Bowery	2	University Pl.	1
Broadway	11	W. 3rd St.	1
Broome	1	W. 8th	1
Canal	1	E. 10th	1
Columbus Circle	1	W. 34th	2
Doyers	9	W. 44th	1
Dyckman	1	W. 45th	2
Greenwich Ave.	1	W. 46th	2
St. John	1	W. 47th	5
Lenox Ave.	7	W. 49th	3
Lexington Ave.	3	W. 50th	1
Maiden Lane	1	W. 55th	1
Mott	20	W. 57th	1
Pell	10	E. 59th	1
3rd Ave.	4	E. 77th	1
6th Ave.	2	E. 86th	2
7th Ave.	4	W. 116th	2

Fig. 12

Geographical Distribution of Chinese Restaurants

Brooklyn

<u>Streets</u>	<u>No. of rest.</u>	<u>Streets</u>	<u>No. of rest.</u>
Ave. J	1	Graham	3
Ave. P	1	Kings Highway	2
Ave. U	1	Kingston Ave.	1
Bay Parkway	2	Knickerbocker Ave.	1
Brighton Beach Ave.	1	Lexington Ave.	1
Broadway	7	Manhattan Ave.	1
Church Ave.	2	Mermaid Ave.	2
Coney Island Ave.	1	New Lots Ave.	1
Court	1	New Utrecht Ave.	2
Eastern Parkway	3	Nostrand Ave.	1
N.Y. Ave.	1	Pitkin Ave.	5
Emmons Ave.	1	Rutland Road	1
Flatbush Ave.	7	St. John Pl.	1
Fulton	7	Saratoga Ave.	1
4th Ave.	1	Sheepshead Bay Road	1
5th Ave.	2	Surf Ave.	1
8th Ave.	1	Sutton Ave.	3
9th Ave.	1	Utica Ave.	1
18th Ave.	2	Van Dyke	1
86th St.	7	Wilson Ave.	1
Gates Ave.	1		

Fig. 13

Borough	No. of rest. at new locations	No. of rest. at old locations	No. of rest. occupying same locations since 1928
Manhattan	60	40	11
Brooklyn	63	15	4
Queens	24	4	1
Bronx	20	5	0

Fig. 14

The above tabulation is obtained by comparing the addresses of the restaurants from both the active and inactive files.

Chapter III

Some of the Men Behind The Restaurants

From the conclusion that there exists a relationship between the number of restaurants opened and the number closed, as shown on the preceding chapter, we gather that the number of existing restaurants in New York City is relatively constant. The more restaurants opened, the more closed, or vice versa. This indicates that numerically, the restaurant public is also more or less constant. If more restaurants are to be opened without having to close some of them, the demand for Chinese food must be increased. How to increase this demand is a question for the restaurant owners to answer.

It has been my pleasure to talk to some of them. It is true that they did not answer all of my questions. Frankly, I did not expect them to. For each of them is chiefly concerned with his own particular restaurant.

I had hoped to obtain some information from the Chinese Restauranters Association of Greater New York, whose headquarters are at the Far Eastern Restaurant, 10 Columbus Circle. Actually, however, I got very little information out of my interview with Mr. Lee Fo, President of the Association.

Mr. Lee Fo is a very pleasant man to talk to. He is over fifty, tall, and has grayish hair. As the proprietor of the Far Eastern Restaurant, he has been a leader in the organization of the Association. As active as he and others have been in the Association they have failed to enlist the general support of the restaurant owners. At present only one hundred and five restaurants are represented in the Association, and out of this number, only a few are present at the meetings, which are very irregular. This apparent lack of interest and the feeling of indifference towards organization are traditionally Chinese, unfortunately. Presently, outside of fund-raising activities for the relief of Chinese refugees, the Association is comparatively inactive.

In view of the looseness of the organization I asked Mr. Lee Fo for the purpose of the Association. I was told that the Association was formed in 1932 for the sole purpose of raising funds for the Chinese 19th Route Army, which was then resisting Japan's invasion of Shanghai. After the 1932 war with Japan had ended the Association as a fund-raising organ was to have its last meeting, at which meeting some one suggested that the Association become a permanent organization of the restaurant owners of New York. That, in brief, was the beginning of the Chinese Restaurateurs

Association of Greater New York.

Had there been no Shanghai "incident" in 1932 I doubt that the Chinese Restauranters Association would have come into existence through some other motive than the motive for the salvation of China. Although irrelevant to the discussion of restaurants, it is interesting to note that a Chinese student club came into existence in 1932 as a result of the Japanese invasion. In 1937 the Chinese Students Patriotic League of Greater New York was formed to denounce Japanese imperialism. In 1938 the New York Council of Chinese Youth was organized. It seems that Japan's actions in China have forced the Chinese, both in China and abroad, to organize and to unite. It is apparent that the Chinese, heretofore inactive in organization, have at last come to the realization that organization is essential for unity, whether that unity be social, political, or otherwise. Although the Restauranters Association has failed to offer a constructive program deemed beneficial to the restaurant industry, nevertheless, the fact that there is such an Association points to an attempt to organize. Constructive organization may follow the attempt.

Dr. Alfred Sze, former Ambassador to the United States, greeting the delegates to the first Restauranters Convention in a letter in 1934, said in part:

Organization seems to be the order of the day. In union there is strength. Our people have a natural aptitude for the restaurant business. As masters of the culinary art, the Chinese are second to none in the world. This reputation restaurant owners should endeavor to maintain under all circumstances as well as the well-earned reputation for spotlessly clean kitchens and dining-rooms and for courteous and attentive service....

My conversation with Mr. Lee Fo turned to the trend towards which the Chinese restaurants were heading. He pointed out that the small restaurants are replacing the large ones of former years. The depression and the scarcity of Chinese capital have made this shift from large restaurant operation to small restaurant operation popular and convenient. While many small restaurants have been opened during the past few years no Chinese restaurant of considerable size has been opened since the depression.

Also holding such an opinion is Mr. Kenneth Wing, treasurer of Canton Village, 163 W. 49th Street. Patrons of this restaurant occasionally see a young man walk in and out of the restaurant. He usually carries a brief case. When he walks into the restaurant he looks as if he is anxious to have something done, perhaps just as anxious as would a salesman who wishes to sell his products. When he walks out of the restaurant he seems also to have something on his mind. He looks at the time and walks hurriedly out.

10. Chinese Restaurateurs Association Bulletin, June 1934.

To those who know him, and most of the regular patrons of Canton Village do, he is Kenneth Wing, a graduate of Pratt Institute and now a student at New York University. He goes to school four days a week and works the other three days. In addition to going to school and working, he manages to sell insurance, and take up lessons in dancing and in Mandarin, China's official dialect.

Mr. Wing is a young man of twenty-five, who is anxious to help China with his knowledge of chemistry after he is finished with school. He likes to play tennis and to swim. He is almost always seen at all sorts of social gatherings.

Most of us would have abandoned Mr. Wing's course and followed one that is less strenuous. Ever since he was of working-age he has been working and attending school. While he was attending high school he was operating a laundry with another student, who later returned to China after his graduation. The young chemistry student was forced to give up the laundry because he could not be at his laundry and at school at the same time. With the other student he had alternately worked in the laundry. Mr. Wing went to high school during the day and his partner went to an evening school.

Today with years of experience behind him this

young man knows just as much about the Chinese restaurants as any of the "old-timers". Asked to comment on the general development of the Chinese restaurants in recent years he said that there has been a trend for the smaller restaurants since Repeal as contrasted with the larger ones during Prohibition. The large restaurants are getting much competition from night clubs and cabarets, which did not and could not exist before Repeal. Repeal put many Chinese restaurants out of business, claimed Mr. Wing. The present site of the Cotton Club was once Young's, one of the largest Chinese restaurants in New York. The Knickerbocker was at or near the site of the Hollywood night club.

In order to avoid competing with the night clubs and cabarets, continued the student restaurateur, the Chinese have, to some extent, abandoned the large restaurants to operate the smaller ones. The depression, of course, was a contributing factor in such a development. The small restaurant costs from \$10,000 to \$15,000 to open while the big restaurant costs upward of \$50,000.

Speaking of the larger restaurants, the New Fulton Royal is at present the largest Chinese restaurant in New York. The normal seating capacity is seven hundred, which may be increased to a thousand for special occasions, such as New Year's Eve.

Its manager, Mr. Luther Lee, is in his late thirties but just as ambitious as a young man getting out of college, if not more. In addition to managing the New Fulton Royal, he helps his wife run a candy store and attends a vocational school to study Diesel engines. Asked why he is studying Diesel engines the manager replied that he wants to be able to step from one position to another. He thought a mechanic has an excellent chance of obtaining a job in China when China will be in a stage of reconstruction after the present conflict.

The present New Fulton Royal began some ten years ago on Flatbush Avenue Extension and Fulton Street, Brooklyn. It was then called the Fulton Royal, whose original owners had invested some \$80,000 in it. On the day of the grand opening the first Fulton Royal did upward of \$10,000 of business. It was in an era of prosperity. The restaurant's show alone costed from \$3,000 to \$4,000 per week. The rent was high. Wages were high. The waiters were making from \$300 to \$400 a month. The people had that kind of money to spend. Business seemed good everywhere.

Looking back at those years the mechanically inclined manager sighed. For the first Fulton Royal was poorly managed. In spite of the boom of prosperity and the tremendous volume of business it was doing, it had to close its doors after seven successful years in business

because of dissension among the stockholders.

The doors were not closed for long, however. Another restaurant emerged in the name of the Jumbo Nest. The Jumbo Nest soon, too, closed its doors because of poor management, or rather the lack of proper management.

The third restaurant to occupy the original Fulton Royal was Harold Stern's Merry-Go-Round, which was co-owned by Chinese and the orchestra leader. If one wonders on the advisability of such a partnership, the Merry-Go-Round offered us a negative answer. The Waiters' Union demanded that the restaurant hire union waiters at the wage of one dollar a day. The demand was complied with and thirty union waiters were hired on week days and an additional thirty over the week-ends. The Chefs' Union made a similar demand that the restaurant hire only union cooks. The restaurant complied with this demand also, with the exception that Chinese chefs were employed for the preparation of Chinese foods.

The Chinese associates of Mr. Stern predicted that the restaurant could not survive for more than a month. The overhead was too high. Union wages were too high to have enabled a restaurant of this type to be operated on a profitable basis. In an attempt to increase the volume of business the Chinese suggested to Mr. Stern that the

words chop suey or chow mein be added to the sign Harold Stern's Merry-Go-Round . The words Chop Suey were to be added, but when Mrs. Stern heard about what was to happen the whole scheme was discarded. So was the Merry-Go-Round.

Now we have come to the present New Fulton Royal. Nothing but a capable and experienced man can save it from the fate of its predecessors. First of all, confided Mr. Lee, the New Fulton Royal has the depression to fight.

When the New Fulton Royal opened its doors for business on September 24, 1927, the opening was unofficial. The liquor license had not been issued. The manager wanted a real opening, with liquor to celebrate the occasion. But the New York State Liquor Authority on June 3, 1937 had passed a resolution which reads, in part: "Ordered, pursuant to the powers vested by Section 17 of the Alcoholic Beverage Control Law, that no restaurant liquor, restaurant wine or eating place beer restaurant licenses be issued after July 15, 1937....." ¹¹

The manager contended that a restaurant of the New Fulton Royal's seating capacity needs liquor in order to retain the customers. He pointed out that many would-be diners left when told that the restaurant had no license to serve liquor.

11. N.Y. State Supreme Court, Appellate Division, Second Dept., Clerk's Index No. 17325, 1937, p. 16.

After much legal efforts the restaurant's application for a liquor license was referred to the New York State Supreme Court, which ruled in favor of the New Fulton Royal. Subsequently the license was issued a day before New Year's Eve, 1937. Asked if the liquor license had helped business Mr. Lee replied that last New Year's Eve business was boosted up considerably. He added, "If the license had not been issued we would have closed long ago."

Our conversation turned to the luncheon business. When told that the rush during the lunch period was slow I remarked that since the New Fulton Royal is located in the business section of Brooklyn it should do more business during the lunch hour. The manager leaned back on his chair and sighed once more, "We would do a lot more business if the street (Flatbush Ave. Extension) were not so wide. With all the traffic people will not cross such a wide street for lunch. After all, there are lots of other restaurants on the other side."

As the psychologist contends that environmental factors condition the individual, so does this restaurant manager contend that environment conditions the restaurant public. The location of the restaurant, the size of the street, the amount of traffic, and many other such physical factors are in the minds of alert business men.

As business-minded and experienced as any restaurant manager could be Mr. Lee admitted that he did not have the slightest idea how many Chinese restaurants there are in New York. It seems that none of those with whom I have spoken knew. Some suggested five hundred. One mentioned as many as eight hundred. Actually, there are two hundred and forty-eight restaurants.

My next interview was with Mr. Lee Sue, proprietor¹² of Chinese Village, West 34th Street. Incidentally, this was the only restaurant at which I dined during my course of interviews. It must have been Mr. Sue's salesmanship. When I questioned him about the quality of his foods he suggested that I try a steak, which he guaranteed to be good. We may say that such is the business technique of the man. He knows that the best advertisement for the restaurant is satisfied customers .

Mr. Sue is a man of forty, small in stature. He speaks English well. He is a scholar of the Chinese language. Judging from my conversation with him, he seems to be always self-confident. When asked if he had any trouble in handling his workers the manager smiled at my question, "Most managers do have troubles with the waiters and chefs, but I am different. Everything I say, goes. I know how to handle them."

12. The family name is Lee but is called Mr. Sue so that he may not be confused with the Mr. Lee mentioned previously.

Mr. Sue was not boasting. He was very sincere. He said that people who refused to take his orders could not work in his restaurant. I was bold enough to tell the manager that his method of getting things done was comparable to that employed by the dictators. To this remark Mr. Sue answered that that was the only way to get things done correctly. Instead of taking orders from the chefs, the manager gives them orders. He even tells them how a dish should be prepared. Ordinarily a chef would feel insulted if the manager of the restaurant advises him in the preparation of foods. But it seems that Mr. Sue is of the dominating type, always self-confident.

Recently he hired a new chef. The first chow mein that this chef cooked was returned to the kitchen because the customer complained. At first the bewildered manager did not know whether something was wrong with his new chef or with his customer. When the waiter brought the chow mein back to the kitchen the manager tasted it. Immediately he became enraged and spat out the chow mein. He took the dish of chow mein over to the chef and shouted at him, "Eat it and I'll pay for it!"

The newly acquired chef changed his working clothes and left. Mr. Sue was on the market for a new chef.

My informer then spoke of his Negro dishwasher. He would pat the dishwasher on the back and otherwise praise him when the latter does something worthy of such

attention. When the Negro first came into his employment the manager had to show him how to wash the dishes. When Mr. Sue saw how clumsily the dishwasher was handling the dishes, he removed his coat, rolled up his sleeves, put on an apron, and proceeded to wash half of the dishes in the sink, with the Negro watching with great interest.

"It's like a person walking on a straight line," continued the manager, "if you teach him to walk a little to the right and a little to the left while he is walking on the straight line, you can have a lot more things done. It requires very little effort for a person to sway a little to either side when he is walking on such a straight line."

To emphasize his point Mr. Sue made use of the following example. When the Negro dishwasher goes around to brush the tables he can at the same time replace the empty boxes of matches. If no one had told him to do that he would just brush the tables and do nothing more. When the manager has occasion to walk through the dining room he usually glances at the table tops to see if they need changing. When he finds one that needs changing he just turns one corner of it over, and the waiter assigned to that table will change the top.

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13. Usually a table is covered with two pieces of linen; the bottom and larger one is referred to as table cloth; the other, smaller, is table top.

We may wonder if Mr. Sue has to make any concession to his workers for such good discipline and efficiency. He said he does. He raises the chef's wage every few months. He pats the dishwasher on the back ever so often and hands him a cigar occasionally. The manager did not mention, however, what he does with his waiters.

At the Waiters Union, Local No. 1, at 242 W. 36th Street, I interviewed Mr. S. Gentili, young organizer for the Union. One of my first questions was the Union's attitude towards Chinese waiters. Mr. Gentili replied that the Union and the American workers, in view of the "terrible" conditions under which the Chinese have to toil, are very sympathetic towards them. Asked if there were any Chinese members in the Union the organizer said, "It's a shame the A.F. of L. does not take in Chinese and Negro workers."

Several years ago Local No. 1 was an independent union but since then had joined the A.F. of L. In the then independent union there were several Chinese members but when the Union came under the A.F. of L. they were transferred to the Cooks Union at 711 8th Avenue. At the latter, however, I found no trace of Chinese members.

"The Chinese workers are highly exploited," resumed Mr. Gentili. "The wages are low. The employers are a little better off than the workers. Nobody benefits from such working conditions but the public. It is the public that

benefits from the low wages paid to Chinese workers. The employers barely make a living. The prices are too low."

When asked how he had come to such conclusions the Union organizer said he knew. He had spoken to Chinese workers as well as employers. My personal belief is that Mr. Gentili was more than fifty per cent correct in his remarks about these restaurant working conditions. However, I think he was prejudiced and his statements were a little exaggerated.

From the National Restaurant Association (Chicago) I tried to learn the American restaurant owners attitude towards the Chinese restaurants. The Association would not, however, commit itself to such a question. The only information I received from it was "out of a membership of more than 2,500, representing approximately 7,000 restaurants, not more than half a dozen are Chinese."

Chapter IV

The Waiters

Preparatory to making this report I obtained a job as a waiter in a restaurant on 34th Street.

It was 5p.m., Friday, when I arrived at the restaurant, where I was hired to "work" the dinner hour, from 5 to 9 p.m.
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My station was number 9, with eight tables. Hardly had ten minutes passed I was waiting on five tables. The diners had all come in rapid succession. I became confused. I was literally running around in circles. Olive and celery—shrimp cocktail—soup—tea—chow mein—steak—coffee—pie—ice cream—water. I had only one pair of hands.

I felt exploited because I thought the headwaiters had directed the diners to my tables in rapid succession just to find out how well I could work. The kitchen was unfamiliar to me. I did not have time to look for the things I needed. I asked one of the kitchen helpers where the coffee cups were kept. The man looked displeased and said that I should have been there an hour earlier to find out where the different things were kept.

Tomato juice—soup—chow mein—coffee. "The table at the corner wants beer," said the headwaiter to me.

14. The tables are divided into stations. The number of tables allotted to each station depends on the number of waiters and on the volume of business.

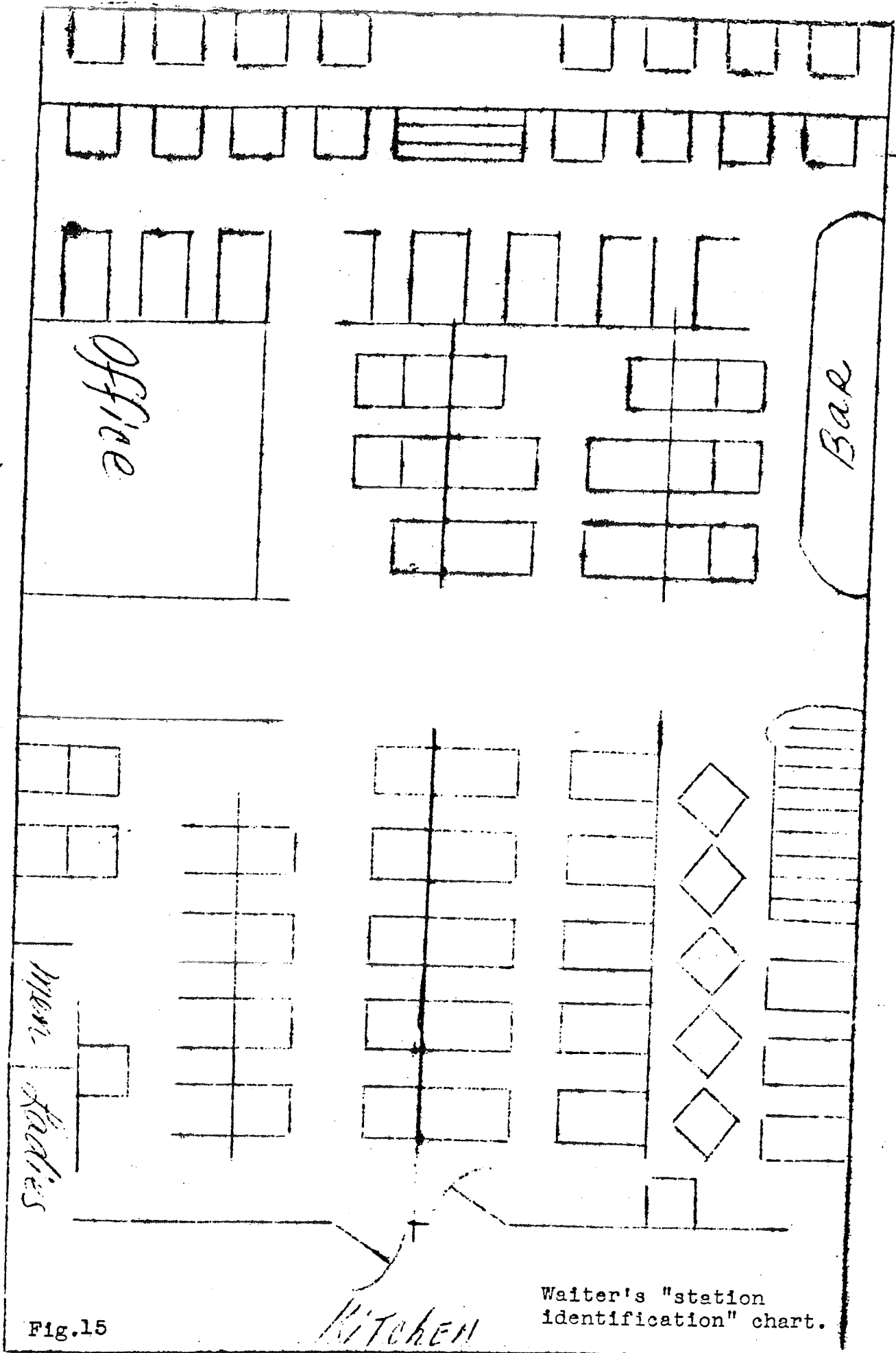


Fig.15

Waiter's "station identification" chart.

New Hankow Restaurant

Saturday From 10:30 a.m. to 5 p.m. Saturday
 Mar. 19, 38. SPECIAL CHINESE LUNCHEON Mar. 19, 38
 35¢ Soups 35¢

Chicken With Egg, Chicken a la Anglaise, Tomato Juice
SELECTIONS

- Chicken Chow Mein
- Fresh Shrimps Chow Mein
- Fresh Shrimps Chop Suey
- Pepper Steak
- Pork Chop Suey
- Fresh Shrimps With Tomato
- Roast Pork Fried Rice
- Roast Pork Egg Foo Young
- Beef With Beansprouts
- Fried Egg Rolls-2

Boiled Rice Tea or Coffee

Desserts Choice of One:

Almond Cake, Pineapple, Peanut Candy, Lychee Nuts, Gumsots
 45¢ SPECIAL CHINESE LUNCHEON 45¢

Soups

Chicken With Egg, Chicken A la Anglaise, Tomato Juice
SELECTIONS

- Chicken Chow Mein With Mushroom
- Fresh Shrimps Chow Mein With Mushroom
- Chicken Chop Suey With Mushroom
- Fresh Shrimps & Tomato With Pepper
- Roast Pork Chop Suey
- New Hankow Chop Suey
- Roast Pork Egg Foo Young, Mushroom Gravy
- Beef With Chinese Vegetable
- Chicken Fried Rice
- (Subgum) Chop Suey With Water Chestnut

Boiled Rice Tea or Coffee

Desserts See Below

 45¢ SPECIAL AMERICAN LUNCHEON 45¢

Soups

Chicken a la Anglaise, Chicken With Egg, Tomato Juice
SELECTIONS

- Roast Milk Fed Chicken With Dressing
- Roast Long Island Duckling, Currant Jelly
- Broiled Virginia Ham, Candied Sweet Potatoes
- Broiled Pork Chops, Candied Sweet Potatoes
- Roast Prime Ribs of Beef, Au Jus

40¢ ----- SPECIAL AMERICAN LUNCHEON ----- 40¢

- Broiled Halibut Steak, Anchovy Butter
- Fresh Shrimps Salad Mayonnaise Dressing
- Fried Deep Sea Scallops, Tartar Sauce
- Breaded Veal Cutlet, Tomato Sauce
- Spanish Omelette

Mashed Potatoes, String Beans, Tea or Coffee

DESSERTS CHOICE OF ONE:

Ice Cream, Stewed Prunes, Bartlett Pear, Preserved Mixed
 Fruit, Almond Cake, Lychee Nuts, Pineapple, Peanut Candy

Fig. 16

"Some more water," said the man at a near-by table. And as I turned around, "Some more tea," said the lady in blue. I was on my way to the kitchen when another diner waved to me to bring him the desserts.

Inside the kitchen my orders were ready. "They're getting cold!" shouted the chef. I counted the orders. Chow mein—vegetable chop suey—breaded veal outlet—chicken salad—fried rice.

Out in the dining room the headwaiter accosted me, "Put down three beers on the check for that table on the corner. I just gave them to them."

It was now 9 p.m. Hardly anyone was coming in. The diners began to leave, party by party. Just outside the kitchen one could hear the dishes being washed, the clattering of silverware. In a little while the waiters were drying forks, spoons, and tea cups.

Now it was 9:30. The waiters were eating at the tables nearest to the kitchen. The manager and the headwaiters were eating at a table near the entrance to the restaurant. The chef, cooks, diswashers, and other kitchen helpers were eating in the kitchen.

I another fifteen minutes I was riding home on the subway. The amount of tips I received that evening totaled exactly \$1.00. The wage was 35¢. Before I left the

restaurant the manager had asked me to return the next day to work from 11 a.m. to 3p.m., but I politely refused. I did not care to "run around in circles" for more than four hours for \$1.35. Nevertheless it was a very interesting experience.

Now let us turn to the Chinese students who are waiters over the week-ends. Out of 264¹⁵ Chinese college students in New York, 100 were mailed a questionnaire relative to their employment. Unfortunately only fourteen of them returned the questionnaire. Out of the fourteen, five have or need no employment. One is a salesman who earns about \$20.00 per week and who likes his job. The other eight work in restaurants as waiters over the week-ends. None of them like their jobs. The reasons given for the dislike were: (a) long hours; (b) low wage or no wage at all; and (c) no advancement.

While we do not wish to generalize from so meager a number of replies, it is interesting to note that these student waiters, at least to some degree, substantiated what Mr. Gentili, union organizer, had said about the working conditions in the Chinese restaurants. My working in the restaurant on 34th Street and the amount of money I received helped to convince me that there is plenty of room for improvement in working conditions. This is particularly true of waiters who are not students and who have to

15. Directory of Chinese students in America, 1937-1938.

steadily. These waiters work hard and rest little. Their monthly wage, between \$10.00 to \$20.00, can hardly be considered standard wage. The rest of their expenses have to come from tips, which are not at all dependable.

In the larger restaurants where there is dancing and floor show, and where tipping is the expected and conventional practice, the waiters receive about \$2.00 in tips daily. In the smaller restaurants where there is no dancing and floor show the amount of tips is negligible. Waiters working in these smaller restaurants usually receive a monthly wage double that of waiters working in the larger restaurants in compensation for the small amount of tips they receive.

	Small Restaurant	Large Restaurant
SATURDAY	Wage \$3.00	\$1.00
	Average tips 3.00	5.50
SUNDAY	Wage 3.00	1.00
	Average tips 2.00	3.50
Total	\$11.00	\$11.00

Fig. 17

The week-end waiter's earnings

Whom should we blame for this low wage that is paid the waiters ? Should we blame the employers or should we blame those do not tip the waiters ? Mrs. Franklin D. Roosevelt recently stated that she hoped to see the tipping system eliminated throughout the nation and that a definite percentage service charge be pooled for equal distribution among the waiters. The First Lady said that tipping was the employers' excuse for low wages and that all employes should know what wages they are getting when they go to work. ¹⁶ Grover Whalen, preseedent of the New York World's Fair, 1939, thought likewise. Said he: ¹⁶

"Tipping is now regarded generally as unsound economically and socially, and in Europe, particularly in France and Italy, the custom has been ~~already~~ supplanted by adding a service to a patron's bill. Adoption of the service charge has been very favorably received not only by tourists but by the native population. We of the Fair incline to believe that gratuities shall have no place in the World of Tomorrow, which the Fair will portray. It is our present conviction that the public is entitled to protection against the petty practice of tipping."

Thomas F. Collison, in his article, Tips or Else 1, ¹⁶ enumerates the three following generalizations:

1. A tip can no longer be considered as a gratuity: it is absolutely and definitely part of the net wage and is recognized as such by most employers and employees.
2. No matter how sweetly attentive the servant may be, he or she is attentive not because of the great love for you but for the high hope of receiving a good tip. This is important for many people believe their own personal charm renders a tip non-essential.

¹⁶, T. F. Collison, Journal American, Magazine Section, p. 6&7, March, 19, 1938.

3. Fraught with inequalities and uncertainties as the system is, the practice in principle is considered an evil practice, by both employers and employees— but an evil that appears to be inescapable. Tipping persists today even in a classless (theoretically) society such as that of Soviet Russia. And for 61 years the New York Athletic Club tried to stamp out the practice among its members, with expulsion as a threat to nonconformities. Ten years ago the ruling was dropped in desperation. The bootleg tip could not be stopped.

In the next paragraph Mr. Collison related that the term tip is of obscure origin. It appeared in English literature in the early 17th Century with its present meaning. It was adopted from what was then called Rogue's Slang. The word is related to the verb meaning to touch lightly and it seems reasonable to believe that tipping of the hand to release the coins into the awaiting palm describes the origin of the word.

If tipping is economically essential to the waiter, and I believe it is, the diners should by all means tip the waiter. There are patrons who never leave a tip. They believe that tipping is a gratuity, and while they themselves do not tip the waiter, they are almost certain that some one else will leave a handsome tip. Thus they reason, "Let the 'sucker' tip the waiter."

If every diner tips the waiter, the waiter will not be getting more than his share. His job is a tough one, physically and mentally speaking. Physically because he has

to walk back and forth the dining room. He has to carry the tray, sometimes as heavy as thirty pounds. Mentally because the waiter has to please the customer, who, by the way, is always right. The waiter has to take orders from the boss, the manager, and the headwaiter. That is not all, he has to be diplomatic with all those with whom he makes contact. Some diners eat their lychee nuts with the shells on and the waiter has to refrain himself from laughing at such incidents. All this goes to make a mental strain on the "poor" waiter. When a customer calls him "Charlie" the latter smiles faintly, although at heart he has the greatest contempt for such a diner. Not that the name Charlie is sinful or disgraceful, but it is a matter of disrespect for the waiter.

If a friend should inquire what another friend's occupation is, and if this second friend happens to be a waiter, you would answer the first, "Why, he's a Charlie." That means he is a waiter. Not so long ago I was admiring a five-year old son of a friend of mine and fondly asked the youngster if he was going to be an engineer like his father. The child did not answer me, but the father said jokingly, "I'll bet he's going to be a Charlie."

Chapter V

The Patrons

The principle that "the customer is always right" is pretty well respected in the restaurants. Not that the principle is sound that we respect it but that it is good business policy. People in business simply cannot afford to uphold ideas at the expense of displeased customers. Some Chinese restaurants, I am ashamed to say, do not serve colored people because the rest of the customers would just walk out on them if they do. And since the number of colored patrons of the Chinese restaurants is negligible the restaurant owners have to choose between serving and keeping the majority of the patrons or serving a very small minority at the displeasure of the majority. For reasons economic the restaurant owners always choose to serve the majority.

I have witnessed instances in which white couples would walk out of the restaurant because Negroes are dining in the restaurant. Some of them would walk out after buying a pack of cigarettes. Others, at the sight of Negroes in the restaurant, would say, "Oh, we've walked into the wrong place," and walk out. Those who have been in the restaurant before the Negroes come in would leave as soon as their meals are finished.

What is there for the restaurateurs to do but to exclude colored patronage ? But how ? The colored people are just as human as anybody else. No one would envy the waiter or headwaiter who has to walk up to would-be colored diners and inform them in a diplomatic way that they are not wanted in the restaurant. It is a very ticklish job. Some restaurants do not serve them at all. Others serve them at an inconspicuous corner of the restaurant, with little or no service at all. It is difficult for the headwaiter to direct them to a table other than the one they desire. They are sensitive and would walk out if not allowed to sit where they want to.

There is no need to state at this point that the Chinese restaurant patrons are discriminative. No matter what may be said of them they are only human. You will not only find them in Chinese restaurants but in all phases of human activity. Some of them are kind and generous. Others are indifferent and hard to please. Still others are of different temperaments. Some are good. Some are bad. All these we find in restaurants, in schools, in offices, in stores, and out on the streets. A restaurant is an excellent place for such an examination of human beings. Even the restaurant workers themselves are excellent subjects for such a study.

When a party of diners gets up to leave the restaurant and the waiter walks over to the table, the latter does so not to say "good-bye" to the customers, or to smile at them

or to wait for a tip, but to check the table so that nothing is stolen. Theoretically the waiter is responsible for the loss of tea pots, cups, silverware, and other restaurant properties. Some of the restaurants, however, are very lenient towards such a ruling. When waiters are very busy, and they sometimes are, we can hardly expect them to watch every one of his tables for possible theft. What makes it more difficult for the waiter to watch his diners is that customers who make a habit of pocketing useful articles home with them possess the cunning and ingenuity of professional criminals. And like professional criminals they execute their theft with precision. Let me give one example:

A party of four is dining. At the end of the meal, one of them, usually a girl, gets up to go to the washroom. From the washroom the girl walks right out of the restaurant. A few minutes later the remaining three are ready to leave. In the meantime the girl is waiting for them outside with some stolen property. When the waiter checks the table and finds that a tea pot is missing he tells the three remaining that the teapot is not on the table. Whereupon the three become indignant and feel insulted and invite themselves to be searched.

The less ingenious diners who get caught red-handed just laugh the whole thing off and add, "We're only kidding." Then they put whatever they had taken back on the table.

The ironic aspect of it is, of course, the charming personality with which these people can impress the waiter. They have the dual personality, the bad and the appearance of good.

Other customers, although not especially inclined to steal, are equally productive of headaches to the restaurant people. I remember a man who ordered a yokimein and a side dish of Chinese roast pork. After he had finished his meal he nonchalantly got up and started to walk out without paying. The waiter who had served him stopped him and asked him to pay the check, which was 50¢. The man seemed startled at the waiter's request for the money and said he did not want to pay. After a lengthy argument the man consented to pay for the yokimein but not for the roast pork. He claimed that he did not have any roast pork and pointed to the empty dish on the table. The manager and the waiter reminded the man that he had already eaten the roast pork. A cop arrived and told the diner to pay the bill, whereupon the man accused the officer of having been "in league" with the Chinese to rob him. The officer resented this and roughed him up a bit. Finally the man paid the 50¢ and was allowed to leave.

What if the man had walked out of the restaurant without having been noticed? The check would have been charged against the waiter.

Once a diner asked for a glass of milk. The waiter either did not hear what the customer had said or had misunderstood him and brought out a glass of water. The customer was so enraged at this that he invited the waiter to step outside with him. Only the timely intervention of the manager prevented a rather unpleasant situation.

On the other hand, of course, there are the good diners, so honest that they will tell the waiter that they are not charged enough for this or for that. If the waiter forgets to put the cigarette money on the check they will remind him. If they see that the waiter is lousy they will tell him to take his time. I must admit, unfortunately, that the number of such thoughtful customers are greatly outnumbered by the others. However, the restaurant public as a whole are decent people. In spite of their faults they are sympathetic, understanding, and at times generous.

Chapter VI

The Restaurants in Chinatown

When the Chinese migrated to the United States their chief purpose was to seek better economic opportunities. If the restaurant offered them a means of livelihood they were quick to seize this opportunity of making a living. If by associating themselves with their fellow countrymen they could better promote peace and understanding in a foreign land, they were anxious to live and work together for that purpose.

Today the Chinese community has become an integral part of the larger cities in the United States. It is itself an entity different from other communities. It has to be different. What group of people, with a fixed set of ideas, with a totally different social and cultural background, can and does exist upon American soil purely as an American community? The restaurants, the grocery stores, the barber shops, the Chinese School, the Chinese people and their organizations all go to make Chinatown what it is. The restaurants are but a part of Chinatown. The Americans who patronize these restaurants have also become part of Chinatown because their patronage had made these restaurants possible.

There was a time when Chinatown was a place dreaded

and feared by the American public.No one would dare walk on the few blocks that are Chinatown.No one would think of dining in a restaurant in Chinatown.Certainly the motion pictures depicting the sinister Chinese with his moustache and a knife in his hand,ready to strike some one in the back,do not help in bringing enlightenment to those who hold such a notion of the Chinese and of the Chinese community.Such a distorted picture of Chinatown, any Chinatown,regardless of time and place,is nothing but an illusion,created by writers who have very little regard for truth and whose primary interest is sensationalism.

In his "Restaurants of New York," Mr. George Chappell contends that the Chinese restaurants in Chinatown do chiefly American business and that,to quote the author,"The Chinaman lives in the district.He eats at home and spends his evenings gambling,smoking opium,¹⁷ or talking philosophy,depending on his tastes."

It is needless to say that such a statement is untrue and has no justification for it.If the Chinese were merely to eat,gamble,smoke opium and talk philosophy,they could have done all these very well in China without having come to the United States.The Chinese are a hard working people who have come to this country to make a

17. G. Chappell,Restaurants of New York,p.160.

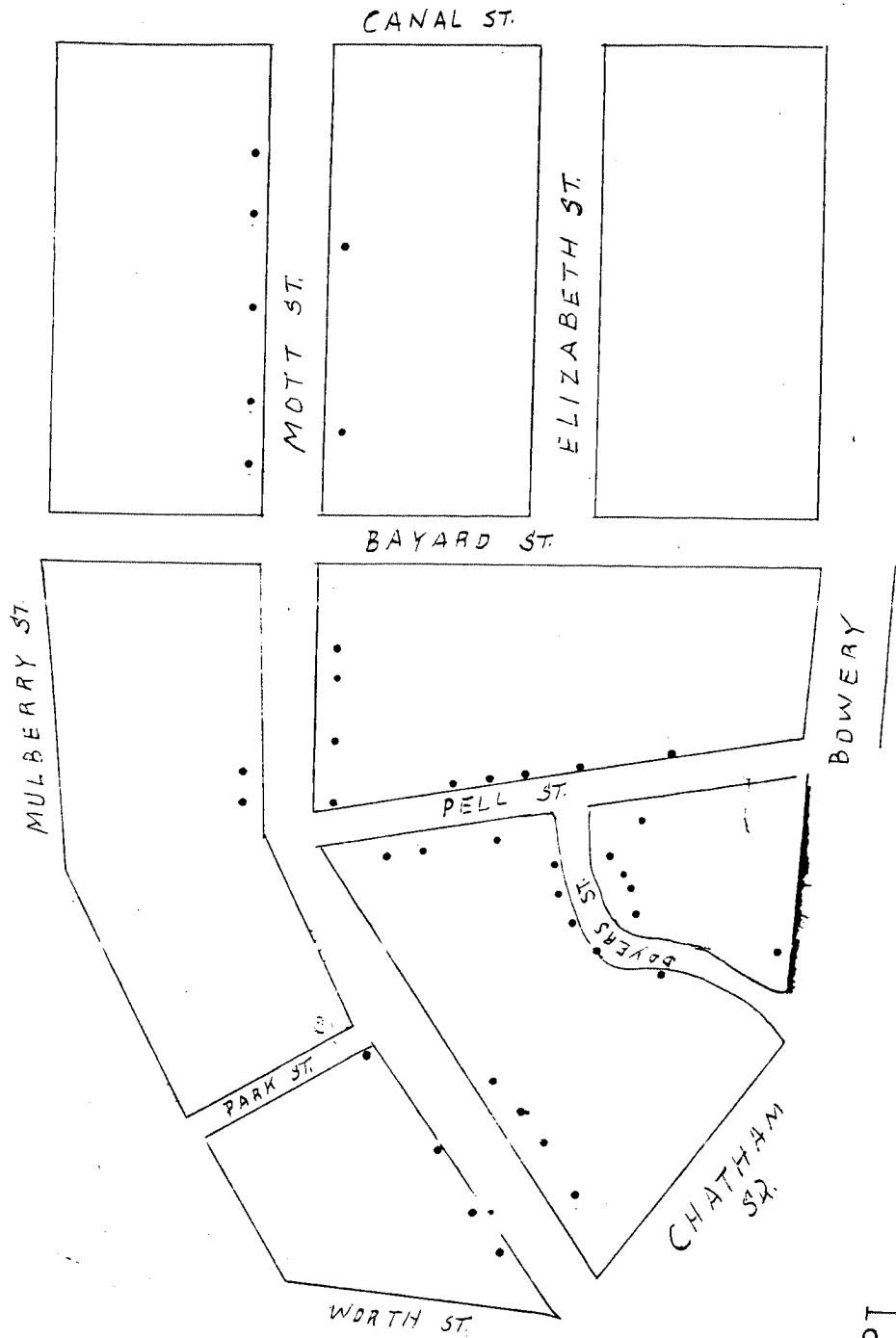
living. Mr. Chappell's statement to the contrary is too ridiculous for a rebuttal. One only has to visit Chinatown to find out whether the Chinese are hard at work or are indulging in the activities mentioned by Mr. Chappell.

The ever increasing number of American patrons in the Chinatown restaurants is sufficient proof that no knife is stabbed in their backs, that no poison is mixed in their foods. At present there are forty Chinese restaurants in the community, within a radius of less than three hundred yards. (see Fig. 18, page 62). Each of these restaurants is different from another.

A school has its own administration, its own curriculum, its own requirements for admission and for graduation. A newspaper has its own particular style sheet, its own writers, its own policy. Likewise a restaurant has its own individuality. There are just as many variations in the preparation of a chow mein as there are in the presentation of a news item. Chicken chow mein made in one restaurant may not be identical to a chicken chow mein made in another. Each restaurant has its own particular appeal to its own set of customers. Most of the customers have to come from a distance to eat in these restaurants. They forsake the restaurants elsewhere for the ones in Chinatown. The reason: the better chefs are in Chinatown.

The restaurants in Chinatown not only cater to

GEOGRAPHICAL DISTRIBUTION OF
CHINESE RESTAURANTS IN CHINATOWN



Blocks copied
from Manhattan
Land Book, City
of New York, 1934.

Plates No. 8 & 12.

Fig. 18

Scale 16 ft. to the inch.

the American public but also to the Chinese, whose acute analysis of food value makes it almost imperative for the restaurants to hire the best of chefs. A person who knows how to prepare a dish of chow mein or chop suey or any other Americanized version of a Chinese delicacy is not considered a chef by the Chinese. A chef must know how to cook as the chefs do in China. He must be able to prepare a banquet or a feast as it is prepared in the native land. Generally, a chef of "chop suey" calibre is incapable of preparing a feast or banquet for occasions such as birthdays, New Year's, etc. Sometimes the banquets are as much as \$100 a table (usually ten persons to a table).

Not all the restaurants in Chinatown, however, need hire chefs of such distinguished ability. Some restaurants are coffee shops specializing in cookies and light meals. Only those restaurants which cater chiefly to the Chinese need hire a good chef. I do not mean to infer that chefs in restaurants whose patrons are mostly Americans are no good. On the contrary, these chefs are equally good in their own field of preparing chow mein or chop suey.

Some of the restaurants which cater chiefly to American diners are Lee's, Port Arthur, Yat Bun Sing, and the Chinese Rathskeller, Lee's, recently remodeled, is one of the oldest restaurants in Chinatown. It is one of five restaurants serving tea and Chinese pastries during the lunch hour. While the other four, Nom Wah, Kim Lung, Ting Yat Sak,

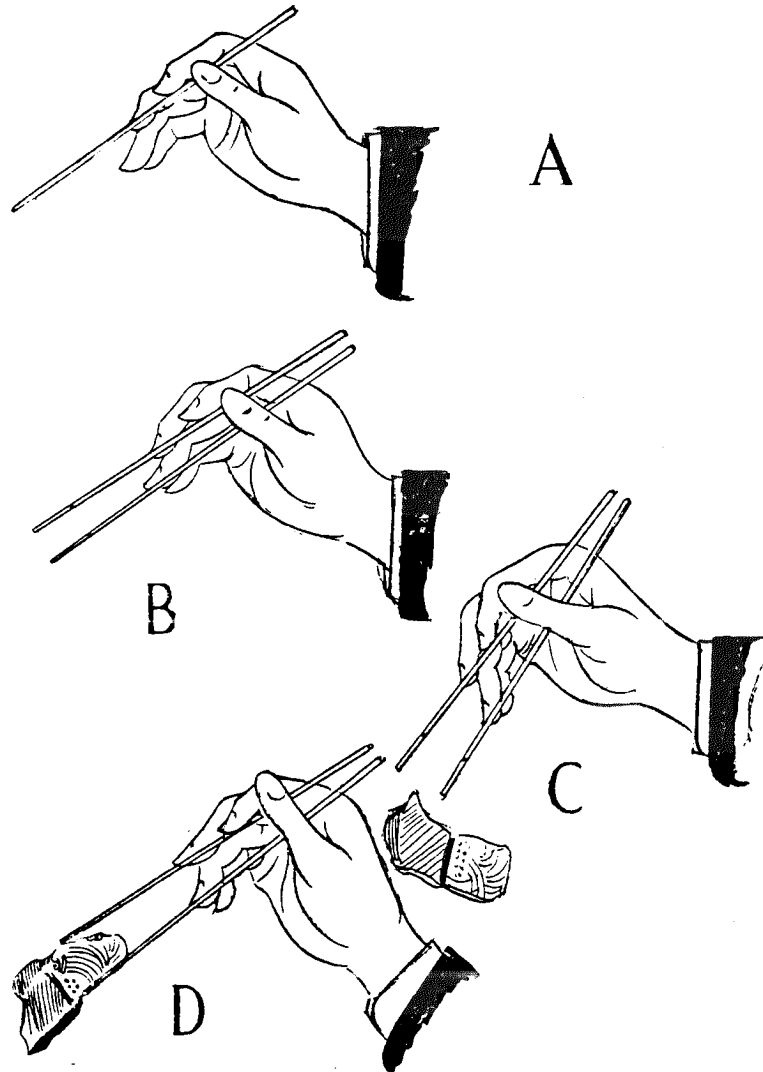
and China Clipper serve tea chiefly to Chinese patrons, Lee's customers are mostly Chinatown visitors.

Port Arthur is perhaps the most spacious of the restaurants in Chinatown. With two dining rooms and private booths it affords excellent accommodations for parties and banquets. Yat Bun Sing, once a coffee shop, has been remodeled and has added another dining room. Now it is one of the leading restaurants in Chinatown, patronized by Chinese as well as by Americans. The Chinese Rathskeller is one of the new restaurants. Other restaurants that have been opened recently are Chinalane, Lichee Wan, and China Clipper.

Among the restaurants catering chiefly to Chinese patrons are Loyus Inn, Joy Garden, and Paradise. These restaurants are less attractively decorated than the restaurants doing chiefly American business. Restaurants catering to American diners are modernistically equipped—indirect lighting, air-conditioning and so forth. The Americans want atmosphere and comfort as well as good food. The Chinese, on the other hand, place good food and good rice before personal comfort.

The Lotus Inn has added another dining room in order to accommodate Chinese diners on Sundays and holidays. Restaurants catering to Chinese patrons are crowded on Sundays and holidays because most of their customers are laundrymen who get off on these days. For these restaurants week-day business is slow. Chinese who live in Chinatown cannot afford

While our chefs are preparing your dishes, how about a lesson in the art of CHOP STICK USING. Just follow the following illustrations . . .



Simple, isn't it? Still a bit awkward? As you know that the Chinese food is healthful and if prepared the LICHEE WAN WAY, it's too delicious for words. Well, eat more Chinese food . . . thus giving yourself more opportunity to practise the art of using CHOP STICKS.

Fig.19

SPECIAL CHINESE DISHES

(Served at All Hours)

75c Dinner (for 1 person only)

Soup

Chicken Egg Soup or Wonton Soup

Subgum Chicken Chow Mein or Roast Pork with Chinese Vegetable

\$1.50 Dinner (for 2)

Soup

Chinese Vegetable with Mushroom or Wonton Soup

Fresh Shrimp with Lobster Sauce and Beef with Chinese Vegetable

\$2.00 Dinner (for 3)

Soup

Wonton Soup with Vegetable or Chicken Egg Soup with Mushroom

Fried Lobster, Canton Style Roast Pork with Chinese Vegetable

Chicken Chow Mein

\$2.50 Dinner (for 4)

Soup (Choice as above)

Subgum Chicken Chow Mein

Fried Lobster, Canton Style

Egg Foo Young, Chinese Style

\$3.00 Dinner (for 5)

Soup (Choice as above)

Almond Chicken Fried Lobster, Canton Style

Roast Pork with Chinese Vegetable Egg Rolls (5)

\$4.00 Dinner (for 6)

Soup (Choice as above)

Fresh Shrimp with Lobster Sauce Beef with Chinese Vegetable

Subgum Chicken Chow Mein Roast Duck with Gravy

Egg Rolls (6) Almond Roast Pork Dice Cut

Tea and Rice Served with Above Dinners

to dine in restaurants everyday. Those who have families eat at home. The grocery stores and various clubs or associations cook their own meals.

Restaurants which cater mostly to American diners, however, find week-day business better than restaurants that cater to Chinese. The Americans cannot cook their own Chinese meals home. There is no club or meeting at which Chinese meals are served. If they want to eat Chinese food they have to go to a Chinese restaurant.

Many restaurants in Chinatown, and elsewhere too, use the word "Cantonese" to describe their specialty. Sometimes you will find on the menu "Fried lobster Cantonese style", et cetera. Perhaps the following lines will explain the use of the word "Cantonese". Mr. Koliang Yih, Chinese Consul General in New York, speaks of the three essentials of a
18
good meal :

It is perhaps the most pleasant thing in this life to be able to enjoy a good meal, well balanced and nutritious. To the Chinese a good meal must have three essentials—it must be attractive to the eye, aromatic to the nostrils, and tasty to the tongue.

Next to the city of Peiping, Canton is a famous place for cooking. The Chinese are wont to say "Go to Kwangsi if you must die, but come to Canton if you must eat."

Almost all the restaurants are owned by Cantonese. The workers are Cantonese. It is little wonder that some of the dishes are termed "Cantonese style."

18. Chinese Restaurateurs Association Bulletin, June, 1934.
Kwangsi is said to have the best timber for caskets.

Sunday in Chinatown is just like a Roman holiday.

On that day it becomes a busy market place. Farm trucks carry Chinese vegetables to restaurants and to grocery stores for distribution. The laundrymen have come to buy the week's provision. The restaurants are filled with visitors, both Chinese and American. The streets are filled with men, women, and children.

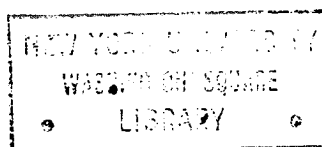
Towards 11 p.m., however, the laundry folks prepare to leave for home. No longer does one see the coming and going of men. The day had been filled with activities. Now at night the place seems deserted. Most of the American visitors have gone home. The grocery stores are beginning to close for the night. The restaurants, however, will remain open until 3 a. m. Some of them remain open all night.

The restaurant public must be served !

BIBLIOGRAPHICAL NOTE: Because of the absence of literature on the subject of Chinese restaurants, almost all of the materials presented in this report are first hand information. The references mentioned below are writings which I used indirectly in connection with the discussion of these restaurants. None of these writings deal directly with the topic of Chinese restaurants.

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