

The Two Chinese Laundries of Windsor Locks by Mel Montemerlo

In 2003, when he was 88 years old, Leo Montemerlo sat down on his couch and made a list of 77 businesses in downtown Windsor Locks. This list, which was handwritten on eight pieces of paper, came to my attention in March of 2016. After studying the list, it was clear that these businesses did not all exist at the same time. The list was not in chronological order. Rather, it was in the order that you would see the businesses if you walked a certain route through downtown Windsor Locks.

One of the most interesting things about the list was that it included two Chinese Laundries. One was on “lower” Grove Street, and one was on Main Street. Unfortunately he didn’t write down their names or any other information about them.

A video entitled “Old Windsor Locks” shows a sign for a Chinese Laundry called “Wong’s”. You can view this video by going to my website:

windsorlockshistory.com

and going on the page named “Videos”.

This video was made from a film of the June 10, 1891 parade for the dedication of the Memorial Hall. Look at the first photo. You can see the railroad station is to the left, indicating that the photo was taken from the second floor of a building near the corner of Oak and Main Street. It was then known as the Pease Building. No information about Wong’s Chinese Laundry could be found.



Wong’s Chinese Laundry.(Pease Bldg.)

The second Chinese Laundry was more difficult to find. Library searches and internet searches provided nothing. Posting questions on relevant websites provided nothing. Questioning history buffs from Windsor Locks provided nothing. They had ever heard of the second Chinese Laundry.

The next approach was to ask current (2016) Windsor Locks residents who had lived on or near the lower Grove Street block, or who had ancestors who did. That provided the answer. One person said: "Sure, there was a Chinese laundry there. My mother told me about it." The person who provided that information was Noreen (Baron) Tait. Her mother, Angie Ferrari, lived near the laundry. Look at the photo of her mother, Angeline Rose (Ferrari) Baron.



**Angie (Ferrari) Baron,
in front of bowling alley**

She is standing in the driveway of the Midtown Garage on Grove Street, just across from Blanche's Bowling Alley. The parking lot for the Midtown Garage was to the left, and Shonty's Bar and Restaurant was to the right, on the corner of Grove and Main Streets.

Look at the photo of Shonty's and notice the upper level and the walkway, which is on the right side of the photo. That is where the Chinese Laundry was located.

Noreen said that her mother never told her the name of the laundry, or of the man who ran it.



From left to right: Shonty's Restaurant, Bianchi's Restaurant, Coly's Hotel. Chinese Laundry was over Shonty's. Entrance was from Grove St, and was on the second floor, where the balcony is.

That is the story of the two Chinese Laundries of downtown Windsor Locks. We know that Wong's existed in 1891, and that the laundry on Grove Street existed in the 1920s or early 1930s.

If you would like to read any of my other articles on Windsor Locks history, you can download them from my website:
windsorlockshistory.com