

# Guide to the Tang Family Collection

*The History Center in Tompkins County*  
110 North Tioga Street, Suite 204A  
Tompkins Center for History and Culture  
Ithaca, NY 14850  
607-273-8284  
[www.thehistorycenter.net](http://www.thehistorycenter.net)  
[archives@thehistorycenter.net](mailto:archives@thehistorycenter.net)

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#### COLLECTION DESCRIPTION

Wing Quai Tang came to the US in 1914 from a small village in Southern China to work as a chef in the US Navy Yard in Maryville, WA. After successfully completing his service through World War I he and a small group of other young Chinese men were offered visas to stay in the US. Other Chinese residents recommended that he seek employment in New York, and they moved to Syracuse to find work in the Syracuse Hotel. Opportunities were limited due to language barriers and discrimination, and the men were able to find work only in the restaurant business, working in food preparation and butcher work throughout the 1920s. Hard work enabled them to prosper and eventually branch off into their own businesses.

Wing opened his own restaurant, the Asiatic Garden, in Auburn in 1931, and moved it to Ithaca shortly thereafter to 313 East State Street. In 1939 Wing married Susie, who had had a successful career as a midwife in China. She settled in Ithaca and embraced her role as restaurateur, cultivating close relationships with her customers over many years. Their customers thought of her as “the matriarch” and returned repeatedly not only because of the excellent food but because of the caring and familial atmosphere that Susie created. She and Wing raised two children while they were working long hours and grappling with the challenges of learning English as well as the vagaries of managing a business.

Wing and Susie’s son, Do King Tang, took over the restaurant with his wife Jean and ran it until 2001. Susie died in 1981.

This collection contains materials that honor the family’s history in the US, as well as memorabilia from the Asiatic Garden, their restaurant that was beloved in the community for so many years in the mid and late 20<sup>th</sup> century.

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