

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

# National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations for individual properties and districts. See instructions in National Register Bulletin, *How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form*. If any item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, architectural classification, materials, and areas of significance, enter only categories and subcategories from the instructions.

### 1. Name of Property

Historic name: Wong Sing Warehouse

Other names/site number: \_\_\_\_\_

Name of related multiple property listing:

N/A

(Enter "N/A" if property is not part of a multiple property listing)

### 2. Location

Street & number: 7267 E US-40/191

City or town: Fort Duchesne State: UT County: Uintah

Not For Publication:  Vicinity:

### 3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended,

I hereby certify that this X nomination     request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60.

In my opinion, the property X meets     does not meet the National Register Criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant at the following level(s) of significance:

    national     statewide X local

Applicable National Register Criteria:

X A X B     C     D

/SHPO						
<table style="width: 100%; border: none;"> <tr> <td style="width: 70%;"><b>Signature of certifying official/Title:</b></td> <td style="width: 30%;"><b>Date</b></td> </tr> <tr> <td><u>Utah State Historic Preservation Office</u></td> <td></td> </tr> <tr> <td colspan="2"><b>State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government</b></td> </tr> </table>	<b>Signature of certifying official/Title:</b>	<b>Date</b>	<u>Utah State Historic Preservation Office</u>		<b>State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government</b>	
<b>Signature of certifying official/Title:</b>	<b>Date</b>					
<u>Utah State Historic Preservation Office</u>						
<b>State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government</b>						

In my opinion, the property <u>   </u> meets <u>   </u> does not meet the National Register criteria.								
<table style="width: 100%; border: none;"> <tr> <td style="width: 70%;"><b>Signature of commenting official:</b></td> <td style="width: 30%;"><b>Date</b></td> </tr> <tr> <td>_____</td> <td></td> </tr> <tr> <td colspan="2"><b>Title :</b></td> </tr> <tr> <td colspan="2" style="text-align: right;"><b>State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government</b></td> </tr> </table>	<b>Signature of commenting official:</b>	<b>Date</b>	_____		<b>Title :</b>		<b>State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government</b>	
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_____								
<b>Title :</b>								
<b>State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government</b>								

Wong Sing Warehouse  
Name of Property

Uintah County, UT  
County and State

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#### 4. National Park Service Certification

I hereby certify that this property is:

- entered in the National Register
- determined eligible for the National Register
- determined not eligible for the National Register
- removed from the National Register
- other (explain:) \_\_\_\_\_

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Signature of the Keeper

Date of Action

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#### 5. Classification

##### Ownership of Property

(Check as many boxes as apply.)

- Private:
- Public – Local
- Public – State
- Public – Federal

##### Category of Property

(Check only **one** box.)

- Building(s)
- District
- Site
- Structure
- Object

Wong Sing Warehouse  
Name of Property

Uintah County, UT  
County and State

**Number of Resources within Property**

(Do not include previously listed resources in the count)

Contributing	Noncontributing	
<u>1</u>	<u>2</u>	buildings
<u>          </u>	<u>          </u>	sites
<u>          </u>	<u>          </u>	structures
<u>          </u>	<u>          </u>	objects
<u>1</u>	<u>2</u>	Total

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register 0

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**6. Function or Use**

**Historic Functions**

(Enter categories from instructions.)

COMMERCE/TRADE/warehouse

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Current Functions**

(Enter categories from instructions.)

VACANT/NOT IN USE

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Wong Sing Warehouse  
Name of Property

Uintah County, UT  
County and State

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## 7. Description

### Architectural Classification

(Enter categories from instructions.)

OTHER/Rustic

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**Materials:** (enter categories from instructions.)

Principal exterior materials of the property: Foundation: CONCRETE, Walls: LOG, Roof: Metal/Steel

### Narrative Description

(Describe the historic and current physical appearance and condition of the property. Describe contributing and noncontributing resources if applicable. Begin with a **summary paragraph** that briefly describes the general characteristics of the property, such as its location, type, style, method of construction, setting, size, and significant features. Indicate whether the property has historic integrity.)

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### Summary Paragraph

Constructed circa 1890, the Wong Sing Warehouse is located in Fort Duchesne, on the Uinta and Ouray Ute Reservation, Uintah County, on the north side of US Highway 40/191—about 26 miles southwest of Vernal. It is a simple vernacular log building, partially sitting on a concrete pad and was moved to the current site in 1940. It is the only remaining building of a former complex of buildings, which included the original Wong Sing General Merchandise Store. Several of the buildings were moved here from the original site at nearby Gusher. The other buildings are now gone but aerial photographs show that they were on the property until at least 2004. The subject building is at the rear of the site and is currently used for storage. It has no definitive architectural style as it was a utilitarian building.<sup>1</sup> The property includes two other non-contributing buildings that date to the historic era: a 1939 store, and a 1940 house. Both have received major out-of-period alterations. The log building is toward the northwest (rear)

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<sup>1</sup> Although not as common as in areas with an abundance of trees, log buildings are still one of the iconic examples of early vernacular architecture in Utah and could be built with minimal amount of local materials, labor, skill and knowledge.

Wong Sing Warehouse

Name of Property

Uintah County, UT

County and State

portion of a 1.22-acre lot. The two non-contributing buildings are located at the front of the lot. The property is surrounded by trees lining the property and flat spaces cleared with gravel and asphalt for parking. The warehouse retains integrity in its design, materials, workmanship, feeling, and association with Wong Sing. Although it was moved in 1940 and is no longer a part of the original complex in Gusher, the Wong Sing Warehouse is significant because it is the only known historic building directly associated with Wong Sing, the “merchant prince of the Uintah Basin.”<sup>2</sup>

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## **Narrative Description**

The Wong Sing Warehouse is a one-story stacked log building (Photo 1) measuring approximately 23 x 46 feet. The building has a gable roof with the ridgeline running from north to south. This building along with other structures of Wong Sing’s General Merchandise Store were moved to its current location after the Victory Highway (US-40) was built and the new store building was constructed in 1940. As it has been moved, it has no visible foundation, but it is sitting partially on a concrete pad. The walls consist of rough round logs with square lap joint notching (Photo 2). The simple gable roof is clad with corrugated metal on the west-facing roof and seamed metal sheets on the east-facing roof (date of materials unknown). The old wood shingles are still visible under the edges of the metal roofing. There is a short brick chimney located slightly north of the center of the roof near the ridgeline. There are square-butt shingles in the gable ends of the north and south elevations. These two elevations appear to have been whitewashed or painted previously, but much of the paint has worn off. The only openings in the exterior walls are located on the north and south elevations. The south elevation is assumed to be the original main façade due to it having the only entrance and a more finished appearance than the other elevations. The exact construction date of the warehouse is unknown, but several factors, such as the log construction, lack of fenestration, and its early use as part of a store complex suggest that it was most likely built in the late nineteenth century. It may have been an older existing building which Wong Sing was said to have acquired for use in his mercantile business.

## **Exterior**

### South Elevation

The south gable end elevation is the primary façade (Photo 10) and has the only entrance, with a pair of five-panel wood doors located slightly off-center on the left side and a 2/2 double hung wood window on the right side. The wood window has a wood sill and a flat wood surround. There is no glazing in the window, and it has metal security bars installed over the opening. There are square-butt shingles in the gable end and the elevation was whitewashed or painted previously, although much of the paint has been worn off. There are remnants of previous plaster chinking around the wood logs but there are large patches missing.

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<sup>2</sup> “Wong Sing Dies in Truck Crash Monday,” *Vernal Express* (Vernal, UT), March 22, 1934.

Wong Sing Warehouse

Name of Property

Uintah County, UT

County and State

### West Elevation

The west elevation (Photo 3) is all log construction with no fenestration or other openings. Because of the long width of the elevation, three and sometimes four logs are connected lengthwise by lap joints. There are remnants of previous chinking around the wood logs but there are large patches missing. Although all log-end notching is cut flush on all corners of the building, the lower three courses of logs on this elevation have been left uncut on the left side, with about 8 inches extending to the rear of the building. A section of chain link fencing with privacy slats abuts the building here (Photo 4) and extends to the north approximately eight feet.

### North Elevation

The north gable end elevation (Photo 5) has a pair of 2/2 double hung wood sash windows centrally located. They have wood sills and flat wood surrounds. There is no glazing left and the sash in both windows is collapsing. Metal security bars are installed over both openings, with wire mesh installed in the interior. There are square-butt singles in the gable end and the elevation was whitewashed or painted previously, although much of the paint has been worn off. There are ghost outlines revealing that brackets were previously located under the eaves. There are remnants of previous plaster chinking around the wood logs but there are large patches missing.

### East Elevation

This elevation also has no fenestration (Photo 7). However, located slightly off center to the left is a section of logs that has filled in a previous opening (Photo 8) in the elevation (date unknown), which appears to have been a doorway. The opening is framed in dimensioned lumber, with stacked round logs filling in the void and somewhat matching up with the log walls. Like the west elevation, log lengths are connected end-on-end with lap joints. There are remnants of previous plaster chinking in the spaces of the logs but there are large patches missing. Also, similar to the west elevation, an eight-foot section of chain link fencing with privacy slats (Photo 6) abuts the building and extends to the north. A 30-foot-tall vertical wooden post with security light is located near the building on the north end of this elevation.

### **Interior**

The interior of the building is open with no interior divisions (Photo 15, 16). As it is being used for storage it is filled with myriad items. The floor is partially rough-sawn wood. The walls and ceilings are covered with plaster and lathe which shows signs of deterioration (Photo 19). There is a small storage area below the floor at the southeast corner which is accessed by wood stairs (Photo 17, 18). This storage area was dug out sometime after the building was moved here in 1940. There are some shelves on the west wall and a coal burning stove near the chimney. These features probably date from the 1930s to 1950s.

Wong Sing Warehouse

Name of Property

Uintah County, UT

County and State

## **Other buildings on site**

### Wong Wing Store

Two other non-contributing buildings are located on the same parcel as the Wong Sing Warehouse—a store and a residence. They are not directly associated with Wong Sing, as he died in 1934 prior to their construction. They were built following his death by his nephew, Wong Wing. The Wong Wing Mercantile Store (Photos 12, 13) was constructed in 1939 and later altered as it changed hands. In 2004, it was remodeled to become Stockman's Restaurant, but this closed after only a few years. This large stucco building is centered on and toward the front of the property, with space for parking in front. It is much larger than the log building, with the narrow gable end facing the main highway. The gable roof is covered in standing seam metal. A glazed panel storefront and large mansard awning was added to the primary façade, along with metal standing seam siding, probably c. 1970s, along with side and rear additions also possibly dating from this same era. The building is currently vacant and has been for several years.

### Wong Wing House

The other non-contributing building is the Wong Wing house (Photo 14), dating to 1940. The gable end house is located directly to the north of the restaurant. The vernacular bungalow-type house is now covered in aluminum siding. It has an off-center doorway (left of center) on the primary, south-facing façade. The doorway is accessed by a small, covered stoop. Two windows flank each side of the door.

## **Setting**

Fort Duchesne is a rural scattered community located in the Uintah and Ouray Ute Indian Reservation in northeastern Utah. The Wong property is at the corner of a small neighborhood development along US-40/191. The Wong Sing Warehouse is located roadside toward the northwest (rear) portion of a 1.22-acre corner lot, and the non-contributing store building is on the front center of the property, with the non-contributing house just to the east of the store toward the front/east side of the property. The property around the store and log building is unlandscaped and covered with asphalt for parking. The rear open portion of the property, north of the Wong Sing Warehouse is gravel. As noted, there are two chain link fence sections near the north elevation of the log building where trash dumpsters are kept. There is a large mature tree near the northwest corner of the Wong Sing Warehouse and several other mature deciduous trees line the east side of the property by the residence.

## **Provenance**

All of the previous literature regarding this building referred to it as the 'Wong Sing Store'. After further investigation it was determined that this building is actually a warehouse that was located at the rear of the store complex. This determination was based upon a photo and caption of the store complex that was published in the *Salt Lake Tribune* in the same month that Wong Sing died. The caption of the photo (Figure 1) states "The central building, bearing the sign, was

Wong Sing Warehouse  
Name of Property

Uintah County, UT  
County and State

Wong Sing's first store, and as his business expanded, he built additions. All of the structures are part of his store, and at the rear are four large warehouse [sic]."<sup>3</sup>

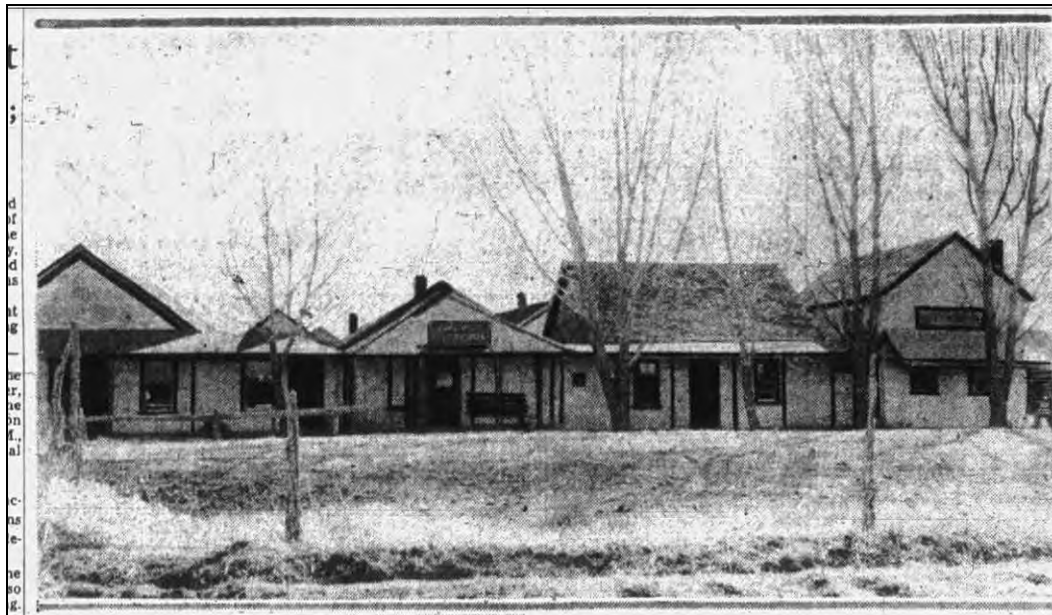


Figure 1: Wong Sing General Mercantile Store complex in its original location at Gusher. "Where Chinese Immigrant Established Big Business." March 25, 1934. *Salt Lake Tribune* (Salt Lake City, UT).

The building of this nomination does not match any of the buildings in the front row with its orientation and location of the door and window openings, so it is assumed to be one of the four warehouses. It is the only surviving building of the original Wong Sing General Merchandise Store complex, originally located approximately 1.5 miles southeast of the current location. In its original location, the Wong Sing Mercantile complex was on the old main road between Fort Duchesne and Vernal. This store complex was built up over time starting in 1912. Following Wong Sing's death in 1934, at least two of the buildings were moved to the current site in 1940. The original store complex was eventually demolished (date unknown). Historic aerial photos show that the original store complex was gone by 1960. The Warehouse retains its design, materials, workmanship, feeling, and association with Wong Sing. While the original location and setting have been comprised due to the warehouse being moved after the period of significance in 1940, the changes are not significant enough to result in an overall loss of historic integrity.

### Historic Integrity

Overall, the Wong Sign Warehouse retains good historic integrity in its design, materials, workmanship, with no major alterations to the building. The feeling and association with Wong Sing is therefore retained. There are aspects that have been impacted, particularly the location

<sup>3</sup> "Where Chinese Immigrant Established Big Business," *Salt Lake Tribune* (Salt Lake City, UT), March 25, 1934.



Wong Sing Warehouse  
Name of Property

Uintah County, UT  
County and State

and setting as the building was moved to its current location after the period of significance. However, the current location is near a main thoroughfare, similar to its original situation, which helps in retaining the historic feeling. And, although the building is not in its original setting, the current setting is also similar to the original, near other buildings and little landscaping. and does not overly compromise its historic integrity.

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## 8. Statement of Significance

### Applicable National Register Criteria

(Mark "x" in one or more boxes for the criteria qualifying the property for National Register listing.)

- A. Property is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history.
- B. Property is associated with the lives of persons significant in our past.
- C. Property embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction or represents the work of a master, or possesses high artistic values, or represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components lack individual distinction.
- D. Property has yielded, or is likely to yield, information important in prehistory or history.

### Criteria Considerations

(Mark "x" in all the boxes that apply.)

- A. Owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes
- B. Removed from its original location
- C. A birthplace or grave
- D. A cemetery
- E. A reconstructed building, object, or structure
- F. A commemorative property
- G. Less than 50 years old or achieving significance within the past 50 years

Wong Sing Warehouse  
Name of Property

Uintah County, UT  
County and State

**Areas of Significance**

(Enter categories from instructions.)

COMMERCE  
ETHNIC HERITAGE/ASIAN/Chinese

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Period of Significance**

c. 1890-1934

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Significant Dates**

c. 1890

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Significant Person**

(Complete only if Criterion B is marked above.)

Wong Sing

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Cultural Affiliation**

N/A

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Architect/Builder**

N/A

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Wong Sing Warehouse  
Name of Property

Uintah County, UT  
County and State

**Statement of Significance Summary Paragraph** (Provide a summary paragraph that includes level of significance, applicable criteria, justification for the period of significance, and any applicable criteria considerations.)

The Wong Sing Warehouse, constructed circa 1890 and located in Fort Duchesne, Uintah County, is locally significant under Criteria A and B. Under Criterion A the warehouse is significant in the Area of Commerce for its association with the locally prominent businessman, Wong Sing, also known as the “Merchant Prince of the Uintah Basin.”<sup>4</sup> During the late 19th and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries, Uintah County had a mostly Caucasian and Native American population base. The Chinese population in Utah was small and mostly found in localized populations in the larger cities. As was typical of the era, racism against the Chinese was prevalent. For Wong Sing to be such a success was very unique at the time. Wong Sing built the first Chinese laundry on the Uintah and Ouray Indian Reservation, and he owned the first private store in Fort Duchesne. During the height of his career, his store carried \$60,000-\$70,000 worth of goods, which was more than similar stores in the larger cities of Vernal and Roosevelt. The Warehouse is also significant under Criterion A in the Area of Ethnic Heritage/Asian because of its direct link to Wong Sing, a Chinese immigrant, and offers insights into a unique case of an individual’s success during a time of predominant racism towards the Chinese. The period of significance begins in 1890, the estimated date of construction for the log building and ends in 1934 when Wong Sing died in a car accident. The Wong Sing Warehouse meets Criteria Consideration B as a property removed from its original location. It is the only remnant of a complex of buildings, which housed the Wong Sing General Merchandise Store in the nearby community of Gusher and the only known extant building historically associated with Wong Sing. The current location, near a main thoroughfare, is similar to its original setting and does not overly compromise its historic integrity. Overall, the warehouse retains good integrity in its design, materials, workmanship, feeling and association with Wong Sing.

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**Narrative Statement of Significance** (Provide at least **one** paragraph for each area of significance.)

**Criteria A Significance: Ethnic Heritage/Asian**

The Wong Sing Warehouse is significant under Criterion A in the Area of Ethnic Heritage/Asian because of its direct association with Wong Sing, a Chinese immigrant, and highlights probably the most successful example of a Chinese immigrant who helped develop eastern Utah. During the 19<sup>th</sup> century, there was a dominant racism against ethnic groups of immigrants, including the Chinese. They were considered “heathens” who performed labor at starvation wages and were visibly different in appearance, dress, language, and culture from Euro-Americans.”<sup>5</sup> Many Chinese railroad workers arrived in Utah during the construction of the transcontinental railroad and were largely concentrated in Box Elder County along the Central Pacific Railroad

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<sup>4</sup> “Wong Sing Dies in Truck Crash Monday,” *Vernal Express* (Vernal, UT), March 22, 1934.

<sup>5</sup> Burton, *A History of Uintah County: Scratching the Surface*, 160-161.

Wong Sing Warehouse

Name of Property

Uintah County, UT

County and State

alignment.<sup>6</sup> After completion in 1869, many Chinese workers left the state, most likely returning to the west coast or China, with others starting communities in Corinne, Ogden, and Salt Lake City. The first population of Chinese were almost all employed in some way with the railroad either as section laborers, cooks, or operators of laundry services which followed work crews.<sup>7</sup> As railroads and mining operations expanded in Utah, many Chinese workers also began to disperse along these lines.<sup>8</sup>

Within Utah and nationally, Americans were antagonistic to Chinese immigrants for a number of reasons. Chinese immigrants were visibly different and often lived together in groups or Chinatowns. In addition, Americans were worried that Chinese laborers would take over their jobs and livelihoods since the Chinese worked for lower pay. These fears and similar issues lead to the enactment of the Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882.<sup>9</sup> This was the first significant law that restricted Chinese laborers from immigrating to the United States for 10 years. It made it incredibly difficult for Chinese families to join their family members already in the United States.<sup>10</sup>

There is little written about the comprehensive experience of Chinese immigrants in eastern Utah. Most of the current research focuses on the Chinese related to the Transcontinental Railroad across the northern part of the state and their eventual dispersal among Utah's northern urban counties and southwestern areas related to railroads and mining.<sup>11</sup> When the literature does highlight Chinese immigrants in eastern Utah, specifically Uintah County, Wong Sing is always mentioned and dominates the narrative.

The general population of Uintah County was prejudiced against the Chinese as well, mirroring state and national trends. It was not uncommon for most western mining districts to include in their articles of incorporation clauses such as, "No Chinaman shall be tolerated." When the Carbonate Mining District, north of Vernal, was organized, its constitution stated that, "No Chinaman would be tolerated in the district."<sup>12</sup>

Wong Sing was not the only Chinese merchant in Fort Duchesne or in the larger city of Vernal at the time. There was an area along south Vernal Avenue called "China Row." Many Chinese were victims of trouble and prejudice. In one such example, a Chinese man named On Chung, arrived in Vernal in 1895 and opened a restaurant, bathhouse, and laundry while selling Japanese and Chinese goods. The following year, the windows of his restaurant were broken and gunshots were fired at him. That same year, the sign of his restaurant was torn down and in the next couple years, he had reported to the Sheriff's office that two men had come into his

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<sup>6</sup> Anne Oliver, Anne, Kate Hovanes, and Stephanie Lechert. "Making a Place in the Beehive State: A Literature Review and Preliminary Identification of Asian and Pacific Islander Heritage Sites in Utah 1865-197, 5-7.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid, 5-6.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid, 8.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid, 12.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid, 11.

<sup>12</sup> Burton, *A History of Uintah County: Scratching the Surface, 160-161.*

Wong Sing Warehouse  
Name of Property

Uintah County, UT  
County and State

establishment and clubbed him over the head with a gun.<sup>13</sup> Other Chinese residents were also known to work in the gilsonite mines.<sup>14</sup> The fact that Wong Sing was able to become such a success against this backdrop was a testament to his business acumen and shows a rare example of an individual succeeding despite the predominant racism within the general society.

### **Criteria B Significance: Commerce**

The Wong Sing Warehouse is significant under Criterion B in the Area of Commerce because of its direct association with Wong Sing, a locally prominent Chinese businessman. Although Wong Sing's life in Fort Duchesne has been documented in numerous publications, there is still very little known about his early life. He was born in Canton, China, and according to the 1900 census was born in 1869.<sup>15</sup> As a young man he was recruited to work in the California gold mines and is known to have lived in San Francisco. In later census records, his immigration date is listed as 1880 and 1882. There are varying reports about how and why Wong Sing first came to Fort Duchesne. Some say that he immigrated to San Francisco with his father and was then hired by an army officer who brought him to the fort. Others claim he traveled to Utah to join an elderly Chinese laundryman who had become too old to pick up and deliver the laundry himself. Regardless of the beginning, all of the accounts state that he was in Fort Duchesne by 1889.<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>13</sup> Ibid.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid.

<sup>15</sup> Korral Broschinsky, "Wong Sing Store," Historic Site Form, Utah State Historic Preservation Office, Uintah County Historic Preservation Committee, 2005, 3.

<sup>16</sup> Doris Karren Burton, "Settlements of Uintah County: Digging Deeper," 282, Wong Sing Store-Ft Duchesne, Utah: Folder 2117, Uintah County Regional History Center, Vernal, UT.

Wong Sing Warehouse  
Name of Property

Uintah County, UT  
County and State

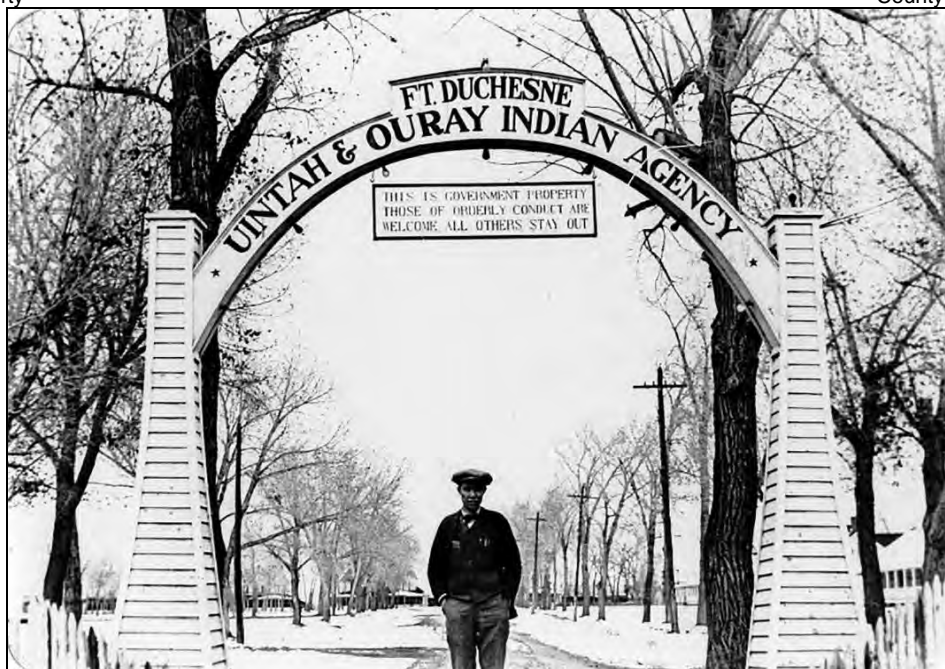


Figure 2: *Wong Sing*, 1900. The Uintah County Regional History Center, J. Willard Marriot Digital Library, University of Utah. <https://collections.lib.utah.edu/ark:/87278/s6c28945>.

Wong Sing had an important impact on the early economy of Fort Duchesne. Soon after he settled there, he built a laundry where he scrubbed the soldier's uniforms on the banks of the Uintah River near the southeast entrance gate of the Fort. This was the only Chinese laundry ever located on the Ute Reservation.<sup>17</sup> As his laundry business prospered, he began to order inexpensive chinaware, silk, and other commodities from China and sold it to the wives of the army officers and homesteaders. Thus began his career in merchandising. Using the profits from this venture, he continued to expand his business offerings, opening a restaurant and small mercantile store at the fort that catered to military personnel. He also started the first permanent general merchandise store in Fort Duchesne.<sup>18</sup> Although many of the biographies of Wong Sing paint a picture of him as a solitary and enterprising young man, starting the first laundry at the fort, the 1900 census lists him sharing a household with four other Chinese men. In the 1910 census Wong Sing is enumerated with a partner, 40-year-old Wong Hong, doing laundry for the United States Army.<sup>19</sup>

While working in his laundry business, Sing was constantly in contact with the Ute people. And although his English remained limited, he mastered five dialects of the Ute language and maintained an honest dependable policy in his trade dealings with them. This linguistic

<sup>17</sup> Virginia Carlson Parker, "Chinese Friend of the Red Man." *Indian Summers: A Memoir of Fort Duchesne, 1925-1935*, (Logan, Utah: n.p., 1998): 63.

<sup>18</sup> Helen Seeley Phillips, *Frontier Times, 44-45, Wong Sing Store-Ft Duchesne, Utah: Folder 2117*.

<sup>19</sup> Broschinsky, "Wong Sing Store," 3.

Wong Sing Warehouse

Name of Property

Uintah County, UT

County and State

accomplishment greatly endeared Sing to the local Ute population and added to his success. His popularity with the Utes meant that within a short time he enjoyed their entire patronage.<sup>20</sup>



Figure 3: *Wong Sing with Ute Women*. The Uintah County Regional History Center, J. Willard Marriot Digital Library, University of Utah. <https://collections.lib.utah.edu/ark:/87278/s6d25cjj>.

In addition, Sing was known as a skillful gambler, gaming with both soldiers and the Utes. Reportedly, his successful dealings with the Utes made other white settlers resentful of the competition and his store was removed from the government property. When other white merchants built another store, the Utes refused to patronize it, most likely in protest that Wong Sing was forced to move. That store later it caught fire and burned to the ground.<sup>21</sup>

<sup>20</sup> Kate B Carter, "The Early Chinese of Western United States," *Our Pioneer Heritage*, 465, Wong Sing Store-Ft Duchesne, Utah: Folder 2117.

<sup>21</sup> Doris Karren Burton, "Chinese laundryman comes to Fort Duchesne in 1889," Wong Sing Store-Ft Duchesne, Utah: Folder 2117.

Wong Sing Warehouse

Name of Property

Uintah County, UT

County and State

Determined to continue his mercantile business, Sing purchased a few acres of land across the river about a mile and a half east of the Fort, on what was known as “the Strip.”<sup>22</sup> Newspaper ads in the *Vernal Express* show that Wong Sing’s business was located at the fort until at least 1911.<sup>23</sup> By 1912, the same newspaper, reported that “Wong Sing, the popular merchant of Fort Duchesne has moved his store to the Boan building in Moffat [present-day Gusher].”<sup>24</sup>

In 1913, newspapers advertised the Wong Sing Store General Merchandise which offered ‘A Large Stock of Goods. Including Everything a Customer Needs’ located at the A. Q. Boan Place on the Main Road to Vernal.<sup>25</sup> At this time, the “main road” started at the southeast entrance to Fort Duchesne and proceeded in a northeastern direction toward Vernal. During this time, Sing was able to obtain several abandoned buildings, which he linked together to form his store complex. The subject of this nomination, the Warehouse, was most likely one of the buildings that was repurposed for the complex.

One account described the complex as follows: "Wong Sing's trading post consisted of half a dozen low wooden buildings lined up along the roadside. They were tied together by a plank porch and a hitching rail that marked the edge of the road. Over the door to the biggest building hung a sign which read: WONG SING GENERAL MERCHANDISE.<sup>26</sup> One report states that at the time, “it was the only store near the [Fort Duchesne Indian] Agency.”<sup>27</sup> Sing drew trade from every section of the Uintah Basin, especially after the opening of the Ute Reservation lands.

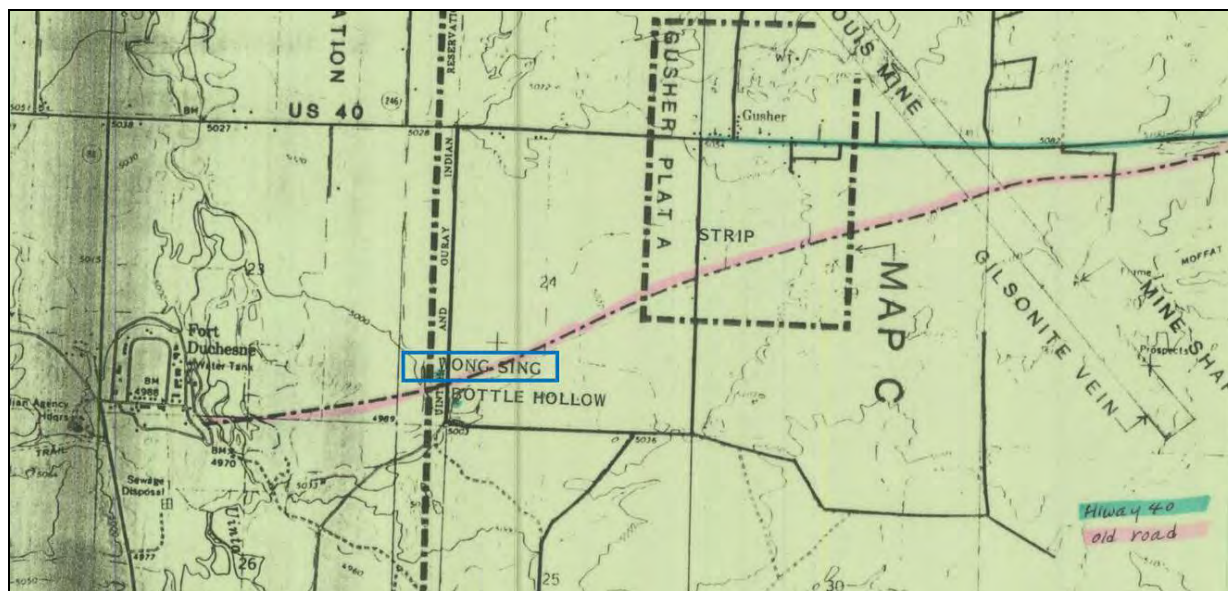


Figure 4: *Partial Map of Gusher, Utah.* The Uintah County Regional History Center, J. Willard Marriot Digital Library, University of Utah. <https://collections.lib.utah.edu/ark:/87278/s6tj3nk0>.

<sup>22</sup> Parker, “Indian Summers,” 63-65.

<sup>23</sup> “Classified Wants,” *Vernal Express* (Vernal, UT), September 29, 1911.

<sup>24</sup> “Briefs,” *Vernal Express* (Vernal, UT), June 19, 1912.

<sup>25</sup> “Ad,” *Vernal Express* (Vernal, UT), February 21, 1913.

<sup>26</sup> Parker, “Indian Summers,” 59-60.

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid*, 62.



Wong Sing Warehouse

Name of Property

Uintah County, UT

County and State

By 1917, US-40 was being constructed west to east across Uintah County. Originally it was planned to follow the old “main road” near the southeast edge of the fort then go northeast past Sing’s store to Vernal. However, the route was changed to its current straight course, crossing the Duchesne River,<sup>28</sup> although Sing’s store was still accessible via a dirt road leading off the highway. In 1919, Sing bought additional land [the current lot where the warehouse sits today] for future plans of building a “fine new store on the new road.”<sup>29</sup> Sing’s business was noted for being popular and often very busy. One newspaper even reported wishes for a speedy recovery regarding a sick employee at Sing’s business because customers had to wait half a day to be served during the “Big Rush.”<sup>30</sup> It was also reported that “Wong Sing is our local merchant, who does a large business throughout the Uintah Basin.”<sup>31</sup>

By the 1920s, Wong Sing was held in high regard by Ute natives and settlers alike. When the *Vernal Express* falsely published a report that Sing had been indicted on opium charges, they printed a retraction the following week with the headline "Our Wong Sing Not Indicted on Opium Charge as Reported," adding that "Banks, Business men, and salesmen, wherever Wong Sing has done business always speak in the highest terms of his business ability and regard his friendship highly."<sup>32</sup> As his reputation for integrity grew, Sing started shipping goods beyond eastern Utah and the Ute reservation. By 1922, he needed more space for his large stock of goods. He commissioned several additions to his store throughout the same year.<sup>33</sup> In 1923, the *Duchesne Courier* made an estimate that Wong Sing was probably the ‘wealthiest man of his race in Utah.’<sup>34</sup>

Wong Sing began to suffer from rheumatism, so in 1924 he arranged to have his nephew, Wong C. Wing, from China join him in Fort Duchesne to help run the business.<sup>35</sup> As a merchant, Sing would have been entitled under the federal Exclusion laws to have his wife and children join him, but the process was considered risky since all Chinese immigrants were detained for weeks or sometimes years at immigration stations. When Wing came to port at San Francisco, he was refused admittance by the immigration authorities. Wong Sing brought his cause to his friend William H. Siddoway, another prominent businessman and civic leader who served as a state representative. Siddoway telegraphed Senator Reed Smoot with his friend’s request. Smoot then convinced the authorities in Washington, DC, and in short time Wong Wing was on his way to assist Wong Sing in with his extensive businesses.<sup>36</sup>

<sup>28</sup> “State Road Near Ft. Duchesne is Changed,” *Vernal Express* (Vernal, UT), November 23, 1917.

<sup>29</sup> “Notice,” *Vernal Express* (Vernal, UT), April 18, 1919.

<sup>30</sup> “Moffat,” *Vernal Express* (Vernal, UT), January 16, 1920.

<sup>31</sup> Phoebe Lister, “History of Fort Duchesne,” *Vernal Express* (Vernal, UT), December 16, 1921.

<sup>32</sup> “Our Wong Sing Not Indicted on Opium Charge as Reported,” *Vernal Express* (Vernal, UT), November 10, 1922.

<sup>33</sup> “Moffat,” *The Roosevelt Standard* (Roosevelt, UT), September 27, 1922.

<sup>34</sup> “Myton,” *The Duchesne Courier* (Duchesne, UT), May 4, 1923.

<sup>35</sup> The historic literature and Wong Sing referred to Wong Wing as his son. However he is listed as a nephew on the 1930 census enumeration. See Broschinsky, “Wong Sing Store,” 4. Regardless, Wong Sing introduced him as his son and both enjoyed a close relationship over the years.

<sup>36</sup> Burton, “Settlements of Uintah County: Digging Deeper,” 284, Wong Sing Store-Ft Duchesne, Utah: Folder 2117.

Wong Sing Warehouse

Name of Property

Uintah County, UT

County and State



Figure 5: *Wong Wing and Wong Sing at Store.* The Uintah County Regional History Center, J. Willard Marriot Digital Library, University of Utah. <https://collections.lib.utah.edu/ark:/87278/s6894mtt>.

Descriptions of Wong Sing's store include recollections of Wong Wing working an abacus and writing long rows of Chinese characters. Many local residents were surprised to see the young man, as Sing referred to him as his son and had never mentioned having a wife in China, nor had he ever returned there as far as they knew.<sup>37</sup>

During the height of his career in the late 1920s, Sing employed eight clerks in a combination of dry goods, general merchandise, furniture store, implements and a meat market in addition to becoming a dealer in machinery. He was also a disbursing agent for other firms.<sup>38</sup> That was a considerable staff, considering the population of the area. At the time, the store carried \$60,000-\$70,000 worth of goods, more than similar stores in the larger towns of Vernal and Roosevelt. Wong Sing also served as an agent for a machinery firm and other types of manufacturers.<sup>39</sup>

<sup>37</sup> Broschinsky, "Wong Sing Store," 4.

<sup>38</sup> Burton, "Settlements of Uintah County: Digging Deeper," 282, Wong Sing Store-Ft Duchesne, Utah: Folder 2117.

<sup>39</sup> Phillips, "*Chinese Friend of the Red Man*," 45, Wong Sing Store-Ft Duchesne, Utah: Folder 2117.

Wong Sing Warehouse  
Name of Property

Uintah County, UT  
County and State

The wealthy Chinese merchant of Fort Duchesne was the only businessman in the area whose personal check was accepted as cash at the postal office and honored in the Salt Lake postal service accounting office, a practice almost unheard of at the time.<sup>40</sup> Superintendent L.W. Page of the Fort Duchesne Indian Agency claimed that:

He was the only individual I ever met whose personal check was accepted as cash by the post office department. If I wanted a double record of a transaction, and would attempt to purchase a postal money order with my personal check, the postmaster would tell me to exchange my personal check for one of Wong Sing's and the transaction could be made.<sup>41</sup>

Wong Sing has been described as "the Merchant Prince of the Uintah Basin" and an early "one-man Chamber of Commerce for the Fort Duchesne."<sup>42</sup> He did welfare work amongst the Utes, assisting them in business transactions, learning their languages, history and culture. Eventually he became so accepted that he was allowed to photograph tribal customs. He then lent the photographs to the Indian Service officials in an effort to increase their understanding of the tribes.<sup>43</sup> He published annual calendars, which featured Native American motifs, and the distribution of these calendars showed his extensive reach in the Western states. Dr. E. A. Pritchard of the National Park Service in charge of emergency conservation work for the western states, commented:

Wherever there are Indians in the west, you can find Wong Sing's calendars. I have seen them on the Kuinealt reservation on Raft River at Fort Hall, Camp Jack on the Flathead Reservation, at the Sacaton Agency in Arizona, at Shiprock, NM, and at the hotel in Glacier national park [sic]. Wong Sing enjoyed a wider acquaintance among western Indians than any other individual.<sup>44</sup>

Before his death, Sing had left a trust fund to be used toward building a new hospital. This trust fund was later used as part of the fundraising efforts of the Vernal Junior Chamber of Commerce to construct a much-needed hospital in 1949 and became the new expanded Uintah County Hospital.<sup>45</sup> He also donated to the construction of a Baptist meeting house in Gusher, which later became the Gusher Baptist Mission.<sup>46</sup>

On March 20, 1934, Sing was killed in an automobile accident. He and Homer Haynes were on their way to Salt Lake City to pick up merchandise for the store when the truck rolled several times near Park City. Homer survived with several injuries while Sing was instantly killed.

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<sup>40</sup> Ibid.

<sup>41</sup> Burton, "Settlements of Uintah County: Digging Deeper," 282, Wong Sing Store-Ft Duchesne, Utah: Folder 2117.

<sup>42</sup> "Wong Sing Dies in Truck Crash Monday," *Vernal Express* (Vernal, UT), March 22, 1934.

<sup>43</sup> Burton, "Settlements of Uintah County: Digging Deeper," 282, Wong Sing Store-Ft Duchesne, Utah: Folder 2117.

<sup>44</sup> "Whites, Indians Mourn for Wong Sing, Pioneer Fort Duchesne Merchant," *Vernal Express* (Vernal, UT), March 29, 1934.

<sup>45</sup> Burton, *A History of Uintah County: Scratching the Surface*, 412-413.

<sup>46</sup> Ibid, 242.

Wong Sing Warehouse

Uintah County, UT

Name of Property

County and State

Wong Wing was notified, retrieved the body and had it sent to Denver for cremation. There was no funeral; however, 60 Ute men assembled at a tribal council at the office of the Agency superintendent at Fort Duchesne to extol Sing's virtues. At the time, several newspapers carried the headlines stating, "Whites, Indians Mourn for Wong Sing, Pioneer Fort Duchesne Merchant."<sup>47</sup>

A week after Sing's death, Wong Wing took out an advertisement in the *Vernal Express* assuring the public that, "The business of the Wong Sing Mercantile will continue under Wong C. Wing, who will endeavor [sic] to follow the principles of the late WONG SING."<sup>48</sup> On the property previously purchased by Wong Sing with plans for future growth, Wong Wing constructed a new store, completed in 1939, followed by a new house in 1940. He then moved several buildings of the Sing's store complex to its present location at 7267 E. Highway 40 in 1940.<sup>49</sup> The subject log building was used as a warehouse at this new location. Wing eventually opened a branch store at 65 West Main [present-day 55 West Main] in Vernal in February 1951.<sup>50</sup> The store in Vernal has been heavily altered and its current form has no similarity to its original design. Unfortunately, Wong C. Wing died from heart failure on November 27, 1952. He was survived by his wife Jennie Wing (a.k.a. Jennie Jue or Lee Wing).<sup>51</sup>

Jennie Wing continued to run the business and remained the general manager of the store until 1958 when she sold the property to Claude Nebeker. Claude Nebeker sold the property to Brotherson Enterprises in 1975.<sup>52</sup> The property continued to function as a mercantile for many years after. In 2004, the store was remodeled and repurposed as Stockmans' Restaurant, which later closed after several years in operation. The property was last sold to Mark Hicken and the restaurant building is currently being renovated for use again. The Warehouse remains in use as storage facility at the rear of the property.

The log Warehouse building is the last of the original Wong Sing store complex to survive. Song Wing's 1939 store and 1940 house, although on the same parcel and from the historic era, are included as non-contributing buildings for this nomination as they are not associated with Sing. The log building is significant as the only remaining building associated with the remarkable life of Wong Sing in Fort Duchesne and the surrounding region. The importance of Sing's impact on the community cannot be overstated. Virginia Parker described Wong Sing's life is this way:

Wong Sing served his neighbors and friend [sic] with integrity. He contributed greatly to a better understanding between the races living on, and near, the Reservation. He was rewarded with material success, and the same measure of devotion which he extended to those he served. Wong Sing died an Honorable Merchant, and an Honorary Member of the Utah tribe. He will never be forgotten by those who knew him.<sup>53</sup>

<sup>47</sup> "Whites, Indians Mourn for Wong Sing, Pioneer Fort Duchesne Merchant," *Vernal Express*.

<sup>48</sup> "Notice," *The Roosevelt Standard* (Roosevelt, UT), March 29, 1934.

<sup>49</sup> "Improvements at Wing Store," *The Roosevelt Standard* (Roosevelt, UT), December 12, 1940.

<sup>50</sup> "Construction of New Buildings Start in Vernal," *Vernal Express* (Vernal, UT), September 7, 1950.

<sup>51</sup> Broschinsky, "Wong Sing Store," 4.

<sup>52</sup> "Family carries on Sing's tradition," *Vernal Express* (Vernal, UT), March 22, 2006.

<sup>53</sup> Parker, "Indian Summers," 66.

Wong Sing Warehouse  
Name of Property

Uintah County, UT  
County and State

Although only one building of the original larger complex, the extant Wong Sing Warehouse is a significant building and cultural resource in Fort Duchesne and Uintah County.

### Criteria Consideration B

The Wong Sing Warehouse retains historical integrity of design, materials, workmanship, feeling, and association with Wong Sing. While the original location and setting have been compromised due to the warehouse being moved in 1940 (outside the period of significance), the building continued to perpetuate Sing's mercantile business under Wong Wing, his nephew, following Sing's death. It was also moved to a similar setting as the original. The building originated as a warehouse at a store complex on the old main road between Fort Duchesne and Vernal. It was then moved to continue as a warehouse at the new store location on US Highway 40 which became the main road between Fort Duchesne and Vernal. The changes to its original location and setting are not significant enough to result in an overall loss of historic integrity.

### Additional Historic Information: Settlement of Uintah County

Uintah County is located in the central portion of the Uinta Basin in eastern Utah. In the first half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, American and French fur trappers found the area rich in wildlife.<sup>54</sup> When the Mormon pioneers arrived in the Salt Lake Valley in 1847, they quickly began settling the areas north and south of Salt Lake. However, the Uinta Basin was one of the last areas of the state to be colonized.<sup>55</sup> In 1861, President Abraham Lincoln established the Uintah Indian Reservation.<sup>56</sup> After this, ranchers and farmers began to settle the Ashley Valley (present-day Vernal) and by 1880, the valley had enough people that the territorial legislature created Uintah County.<sup>57</sup> With the construction of irrigation canals, other towns emerged including Jensen, Maeser, and Tridell. In 1882, President Chester Arthur created the Uncompahgre Reservation (commonly known as the Ouray Reservation).<sup>58</sup> In 1888, gilsonite was discovered in parts of the area and on the eastern portion of the Ouray and Uintah reservations. This discovery resulted in big changes in the area and greatly affected the Utes. Men looking to get rich from mining persuaded the federal government to strip 7,000 acres from the Uintah Reservation for mining.<sup>59</sup> Beginning in the 1890s and continuing for more than a decade, Congress passed a series of laws stripping parcels of land from the reservations for mining and settlers. In 1898, following a campaign by national and local mining interests, the federal government opened up the Ouray reservation land for mining. Six years later, the government opened the Uintah Reservation to settlers, which today are a fraction of the original Ute reservation lands and of their traditional homelands.<sup>60</sup>

<sup>54</sup> "Uintah County," I Love Utah History: Department of Cultural and Community Engagement, accessed June 25, 2023, <https://ilovehistory.utah.gov/uintah-county/>.

<sup>55</sup> Doris Karren Burton, *A History of Uintah County: Scratching the Surface* (Salt Lake City: Uintah County Commission, 1996), 6.

<sup>56</sup> *Ibid.*, 6-7.

<sup>57</sup> "Uintah County," I Love Utah History.

<sup>58</sup> Craig Fulmer, "Uintah County."

<sup>59</sup> Burton, *A History of Uintah County: Scratching the Surface*, 97.

<sup>60</sup> "Uintah County," I Love Utah History.

Wong Sing Warehouse  
Name of Property

Uintah County, UT  
County and State

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Wong Sing Warehouse  
Name of Property

Uintah County, UT  
County and State

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### List of Figures:

Figure 1: “Where Chinese Immigrant Established Big Business.” *Salt Lake Tribune* (Salt Lake City, UT), March 25, 1934. Newspapers.com. <https://www.newspapers.com/image/598607088>.

Figure 2: *Wong Sing*. Photograph. The Uintah County Library Regional History Center. J. Willard Marriott Digital Library. <https://collections.lib.utah.edu/ark:/87278/s6c28945>.

Wong Sing Warehouse  
Name of Property

Uintah County, UT  
County and State

Figure 3: *Wong Sing with Ute Women*. Photograph. The Uintah County Library Regional History Center. J. Willard Marriott Digital Library. <https://collections.lib.utah.edu/ark:/87278/s6d25cjj>.

Figure 4: *Partial Map of Gusher, Utah*. The Uintah County Regional History Center, J. Willard Marriot Digital Library, University of Utah. <https://collections.lib.utah.edu/ark:/87278/s6tj3nk0>.

Figure 5: *Wong Wing and Wong Sing at Store*. Photograph. Uintah County Library Regional History Center. J. Willard Marriott Digital Library, <https://collections.lib.utah.edu/ark:/87278/s6894mtt>.

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**Previous documentation on file (NPS):**

- preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested
- previously listed in the National Register
- previously determined eligible by the National Register
- designated a National Historic Landmark
- recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey # \_\_\_\_\_
- recorded by Historic American Engineering Record # \_\_\_\_\_
- recorded by Historic American Landscape Survey # \_\_\_\_\_

**Primary location of additional data:**

- State Historic Preservation Office
  - Other State agency
  - Federal agency
  - Local government
  - University
  - Other
- Name of repository: \_\_\_\_\_

**Historic Resources Survey Number (if assigned):** \_\_\_\_\_



Wong Sing Warehouse  
Name of Property

Uintah County, UT  
County and State

**10. Geographical Data**

**Acreege of Property** 1.22 acres

Use either the UTM system or latitude/longitude coordinates

**Latitude/Longitude Coordinates**

Datum if other than WGS84: \_\_\_\_\_

(enter coordinates to 6 decimal places)

1. Latitude: 40.302539 Longitude: -109.863723

2. Latitude: Longitude:

**Or**

**UTM References**

Datum (indicated on USGS map):

NAD 1927 or  NAD 1983

1. Zone: Easting: Northing:

2. Zone: Easting: Northing:

**Verbal Boundary Description** (Describe the boundaries of the property.)

Legal Parcel Description: BEG 1130 FT W OF THE SE COR OF SEC 15, T2S, R1E, USM, AND RUN TH W 190 FT; TH N 330 FT; TH E 190 FT; TH S 330 FT TO POB. (LESS FA PROJECT HIGHWAY 40 94D).

**Boundary Justification** (Explain why the boundaries were selected.)

The boundary is the original parcel that includes the Warehouse and the original Wong Wing Store and residence. The parcel boundary has not changed since the period of significance. The warehouse is the only associated building with Wong Sing. His nephew, Wong Wing, moved the building to this property and continued on with Sing's mercantile business.

Wong Sing Warehouse  
Name of Property

Uintah County, UT  
County and State

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### 11. Form Prepared By

name/title: Alena Franco and Korral Broschinsky  
organization: UT SHPO  
street & number: 3760 S Highland Drive  
city or town: Millcreek state: UT zip code: 84106  
e-mail afranco@utah.gov  
telephone: 801-245-7233  
date: May 16, 2024

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### Additional Documentation

Submit the following items with the completed form:

- **Maps:** A **USGS map** or equivalent (7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the property's location.
- **Sketch map** for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources. Key all photographs to this map.
- **Additional items:** (Check with the SHPO, TPO, or FPO for any additional items.)

Wong Sing Warehouse  
Name of Property

Uintah County, UT  
County and State



Wong Sing Warehouse  
Name of Property

Uintah County, UT  
County and State



Wong Sing Warehouse  
Name of Property

Uintah County, UT  
County and State

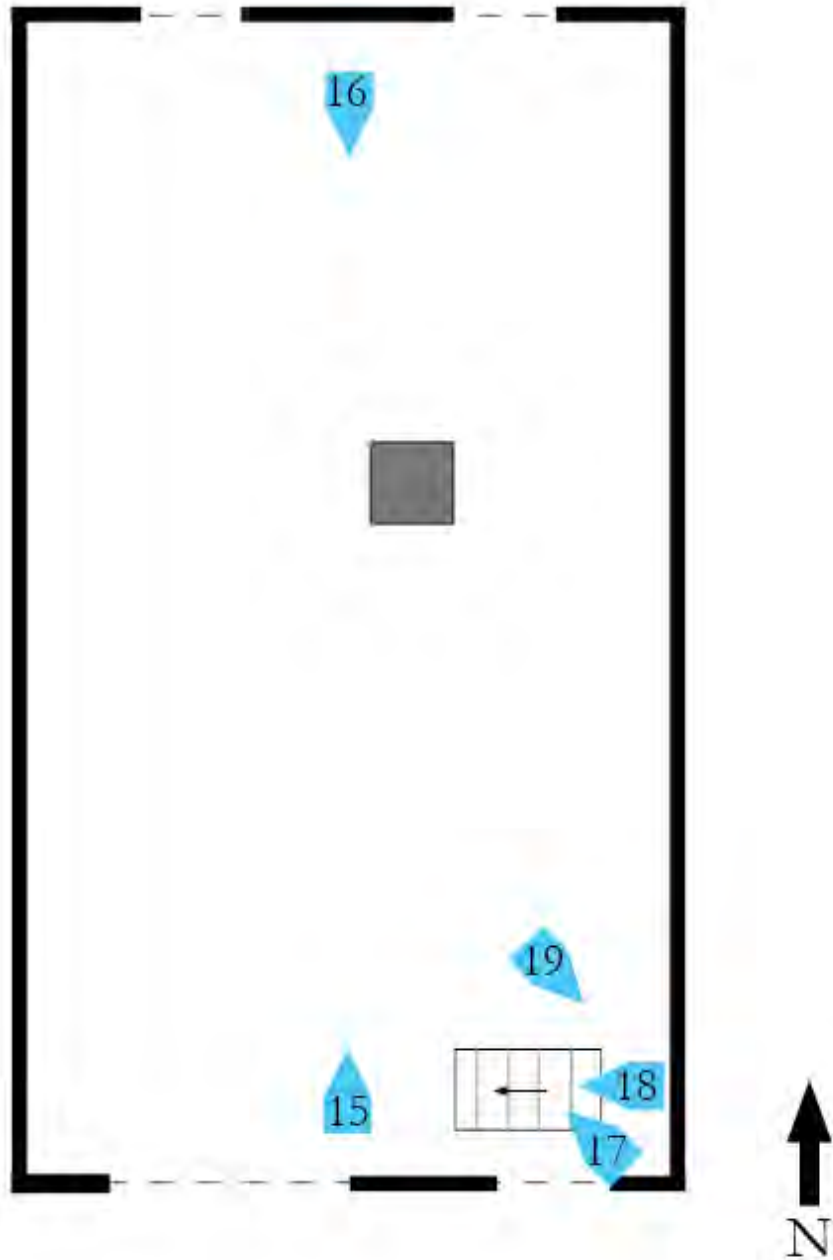
Photo Key 1: Wong Sing Warehouse Exterior



Wong Sing Warehouse  
Name of Property

Uintah County, UT  
County and State

Photo Key 2/Floor plan: Wong Sing Warehouse Interior



Wong Sing Warehouse  
Name of Property

Uintah County, UT  
County and State

### Photographs

Submit clear and descriptive photographs. The size of each image must be 1600x1200 pixels (minimum), 3000x2000 preferred, at 300 ppi (pixels per inch) or larger. Key all photographs to the sketch map. Each photograph must be numbered and that number must correspond to the photograph number on the photo log. For simplicity, the name of the photographer, photo date, etc. may be listed once on the photograph log and doesn't need to be labeled on every photograph.

### Photo Log

Name of Property: Wong Sing Store

City or Vicinity: Ft. Duchesne

County: Uintah State: UT

Photographer: Cory Jensen and Alena Franco

Date Photographed: April 2023 and October 2023

Description of Photograph(s) and number, include description of view indicating direction of camera:

1 of 19. Overview of site/Warehouse south and west elevations. Camera facing northeast.



Wong Sing Warehouse  
Name of Property

Uintah County, UT  
County and State

2 of 19. Close-up of log notching at the corner of the south and west elevations. Camera facing northeast.





Wong Sing Warehouse  
Name of Property

Uintah County, UT  
County and State

3 of 19. West Elevation. Camera facing east.



4 of 19. West and North Elevations. Camera facing southeast.



Wong Sing Warehouse  
Name of Property

Uintah County, UT  
County and State

5 of 19. North Elevation. Camera facing south.



6 of 19. North and East Elevations. Camera facing southwest.



Wong Sing Warehouse  
Name of Property

Uintah County, UT  
County and State

7 of 19. East Elevation. Camera facing west.



8 of 19. Close-up of filled-in section on the east elevation. Camera facing west.



Wong Sing Warehouse  
Name of Property

Uintah County, UT  
County and State

9 of 19. East and South Elevations. Camera facing northwest.



10 of 19. South Elevation. Camera facing north.



Wong Sing Warehouse  
Name of Property

Uintah County, UT  
County and State

11 of 19. Sing Warehouse (left) and Wing Store (right). Camera facing northeast.



12 of 19. Wong Wing Store, west and south elevations. Camera facing northeast.



Wong Sing Warehouse  
Name of Property

Uintah County, UT  
County and State

13 of 19. Wong Wing Store, south and east elevation. Camera facing northwest.



14 of 19. Wong Wing House, south elevation. Camera facing north.



Wong Sing Warehouse  
Name of Property

Uintah County, UT  
County and State

15 of 19. Warehouse interior overview of west, north, and east walls. Camera facing north.



16 of 19. Warehouse interior overview of east, south, and west walls. Camera facing south.



Wong Sing Warehouse  
Name of Property

Uintah County, UT  
County and State

17 of 19. Warehouse interior view of stairs and below-ground storage area. Camera facing northwest.

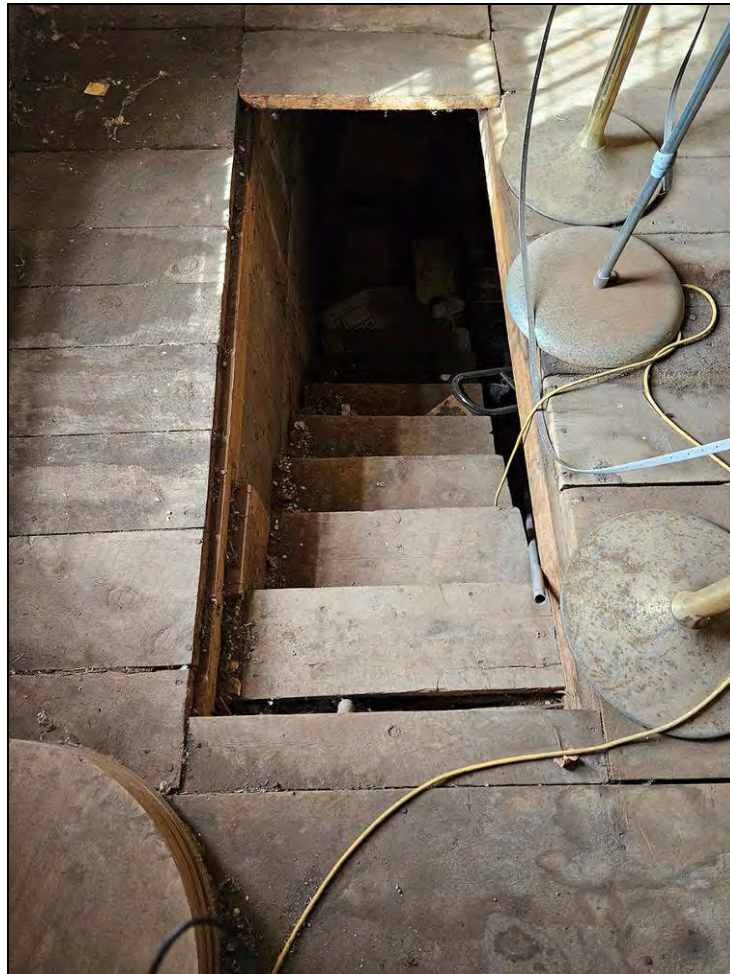




Wong Sing Warehouse  
Name of Property

Uintah County, UT  
County and State

18 of 19. Warehouse interior view of stairs to below-ground storage area. Camera facing west.



Wong Sing Warehouse  
Name of Property

Uintah County, UT  
County and State

19 of 19. Warehouse interior close-up of lathe and plaster wall finish. Camera facing southeast.



**Property Owner information:**

(Complete this item at the request of the SHPO or FPO.)

Name Mark Hicken

Address 91 N Main

City or Town Roosevelt State UT Zip code 84066

Telephone/email 435-722-3810 / mhcpa@hotmail.com

**Paperwork Reduction Act Statement:** This information is being collected for applications to the National Register of Historic Places to nominate properties for listing or determine eligibility for listing, to list properties, and to amend existing listings. Response to this request is required to obtain a benefit in accordance with the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended (16 U.S.C.460 et seq.).

**Estimated Burden Statement:** Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 100 hours per response including time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining data, and completing and reviewing the form. Direct comments regarding this burden estimate or any aspect of this form to the Office of Planning and Performance Management, U.S. Dept. of the Interior, 1849 C. Street, NW, Washington, DC.