

## Ah Lums Store

Middlesex Street,

Arrowtown's Chinatown, ARROWTOWN

<http://www.historic.org.nz/Register/ListingDetail.asp?RID=4366&sm=>

Register Number:4366 Registration Type: Historic Place -

Category I Region:Otago Region Date Registered:26/11/87

City/District Council: Queenstown-Lakes District Council

Brief History: The building now known as Ah Lum's store is one of the few buildings constructed by nineteenth-century Chinese goldminers in Otago that still stands. Chinese settlement in New Zealand began around 1865. Although those administering most regions in New Zealand actively discouraged Chinese miners from moving to New Zealand, the Otago Provincial Council invited

Chinese working in Australia to come to the region. Despite the official encouragement, Chinese miners in Otago, as in all other regions, frequently met with hostility from other miners as well as from bureaucrats. The heyday of Chinese mining was during the 1870s and 1880s, when many Chinese became involved in reworking gold-bearing areas that had been deserted by European miners.



The Chinese settlement at Arrowtown was about 200 metres away from the main street of Arrowtown. Despite this, the settlement and its occupants was quite socially separate from the rest of the town. By 1885 the Arrowtown settlement had grown to consist of about ten huts, made of stone or mud, a social hall and at least two stores. There was also an extensive garden area. The community was almost definitely made up entirely of men. There were a number of similar Chinese settlements adjacent to other Central Otago goldfield towns, but today Arrowtown's is the best preserved.

The building known as Ah Lum's store was constructed of mortared stone rubble, with an iron roof. It has a floor area of approximately 8 m x 5 m and is divided into five rooms, with lofts above. The very small kitchen has a large fireplace, cupboards and meat safe built into the wall. The building was probably built by an earlier Chinese storekeeper Wong Hop in the early 1880s. The building was used as a shop, a place for socialising and may also have been used to provide accommodation. Ah Lum bought the section in 1909; he lived in the building and ran his businesses from there until his death in 1927. Ah Lum was held in high regard by both the Chinese and European communities. As well as running a store and bank from the building, he was an interpreter, transacted business dealings for the Chinese community and grew vegetables for sale. After Ah Lum's death, his boarder Ah He continued to live for there for a short time and was the last remaining Chinese man to live in the settlement.

After Ah Lum's death the store was acquired by the Dudley family. The family greatly contributed to the building's long term preservation and has also ensured that information about Ah Lum and rest of the community was retained. In 1983 the family sold the building to the Otago Goldfields Park to ensure that it would be preserved and protected.

Ah Lum's store is one of the only original buildings that remains standing in the Chinese settlement of Arrowtown, and the only substantially intact Chinese store left in Otago. Along with the remnants of other buildings, the building is a significant reminder of the Chinese presence on the Central Otago goldfields. Large numbers of people now visit Arrowtown's Chinese miners' area; Ah Lum's store forms a significant part of that historical landscape. Current Use: Civic facilities and recreation - Historic Property

Former Uses: Finance - Bank

Residential buildings and associated places - House

Retail and Commercial - Shop

Construction Dates: Original Construction: 1883

NZ Archaeological Association Site Number: F41/436 Easting: 2180100, Northing: 5577500  
GPS References: Easting: 2180852, Northing: 5577246  
Entry Written By: Chris Jacomb Entry Completed: 24/1/02 Information Sources: Erik Olssen, A History of Otago, McIndoe, Dunedin, 1984  
Neville Ritchie, 'The Arrowtown Chinese Settlement: An Interim Report on the Excavation', Department of Land and Survey, 1983  
Salmon, J.H.M. 'A History of Goldmining in New Zealand', Wellington, 1963  
Associated Listings: [Ah Wak's Lavatory](#)  
[Chinatown](#)

Information on this page is correct to the best of the Trust's knowledge. If you have any additional information you would like to share with the Trust, please You may wish to contact the Trust to view our paper records.

## Ah Wak's Lavatory Otago Goldfields Park,

ARROWTOWN

<http://www.historic.org.nz/Register/ListingDetail.asp?RID=2084&sm=>

Register Number: 2084 Registration Type: Historic Place - Category II Region: Otago Region Date Registered: 24/11/83  
City/District Council: Queenstown-Lakes District Council  
Other Names: Ah Waks Lavatory Associated Listings: [Ah Lums Store](#)  
[Chinatown](#)

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Arrowtown Borough Council Building 57 Buckingham St, ARROWTOWN

<http://www.historic.org.nz/Register/ListingDetail.asp?RID=2095&sm=>

Register Number: 2095 Registration Type: Historic Place - Category II Region: Otago Region Date Registered: 24/11/83 City/District Council: Queenstown-Lakes District Council

## Chinatown

ARROWTOWN

<http://www.historic.org.nz/Register/ListingDetail.asp?RID=5613&sm=>



Register Number: 5613 Registration Type: Historic Place - Category II Region: Otago Region Date Registered: 14/6/85 City/District Council: Queenstown-Lakes District Council  
Other Names: Arrowtown Chinese Settlement Brief History: The Arrowtown Chinese Settlement was one of at least ten Chinese settlements that grew up adjacent to gold mining towns in nineteenth-century Otago. In 1865 many miners left Otago for the newly discovered West Coast goldfields, leading the Otago Provincial Council to invite Chinese miners from the Australian goldfields of Victoria to work the fields in Otago. The first Chinese miners arrived in Otago in 1866. The heyday of

Chinese mining was during the 1870s and 1880s, when many Chinese began reworking gold-bearing areas that had been deserted by European miners. The miners in Otago, as in other areas, frequently met with hostility from both miners and bureaucrats.

The Chinese settlement at Arrowtown, on the south bank of Bush Creek, was only around 200 metres away from the main street of Arrowtown. Despite this, the settlement and its occupants were socially quite separate from the rest of the town. By 1885, the Arrowtown settlement had grown to consist of about ten huts, a large social hall and at least two stores. There was also an extensive garden area. A range of construction techniques was used for the buildings, including mud brick, mortared stone, wood, corrugated iron, and canvas. Some buildings were thatched while others were roofed with corrugated iron. At first the men lived together in communal huts, usually between two and six men to a house. It seems that the community centred around the large social hall, which was perhaps 15 metres long, until it collapsed or was demolished in around 1900. It seems that Ah Lum's store (separately registered as an historic place) later took over this social function. It is unlikely if any women ever lived in the settlement; the first recorded arrival of a Chinese woman in New Zealand was not until 1873 and by 1896 there were only eleven throughout the country.

By 1888 the Chinese population living in the settlement may have reached as high as 60 men, but as the profitability of gold mining declined in the years that followed, many Chinese men returned home to China or moved to other areas. By 1910 many of the huts were uninhabited and the shop known as Ah Lum's store was the only one still operating. The residential area was virtually abandoned by 1923, when only Ah Lum, and his boarder Ah He, still lived there. They continued to live there until Ah Lum's death in 1927.

The large wooden social hall which for a time formed the centre of the community has unfortunately been demolished. Ah Lum's store, and the outhouse that was once behind the community's other store owned by Ah Wak, still remain. The Arrowtown Chinese Settlement was the subject of archaeological excavations in 1983 by the Department of Lands and Survey. Remnants of a number of huts were found during this work, and a number have since been reconstructed. Many of the items found during that work can be seen in displays at the Lakes District Museum in Arrowtown. The area is now a popular place to visit.

The Arrowtown settlement is the last remaining Chinese settlement in a relatively intact state in Otago, the others having been affected by residential, horticultural or hydroelectric development. The area is a significant reminder of the Chinese presence on the Central Otago goldfields, and the way in which the miners lived. Current Use: Civic facilities and recreation - Historic Property

Former Uses: Mineral Extraction and Processing - Mining camp/settlement/housing

Construction Dates: Original Construction: 1866 - 1920

NZ Archaeological Association Site Number: F41/435 Easting: 2179900, Northing: 5577500

GPS References: Easting: 2180880, Northing: 5577270

Entry Written By: Chris Jacomb Entry Completed: 25/1/02 Information Sources: Erik Olssen, A History of Otago, McIndoe, Dunedin, 1984

Neville Ritchie, 'The Arrowtown Chinese Settlement: An Interim Report on the Excavation', Department of Land and Survey, 1983

Salmon, J.H.M. 'A History of Goldmining in New Zealand', Wellington, 1963

Associated Listings: [Ah Lums Store](#)

[Chinatown](#)