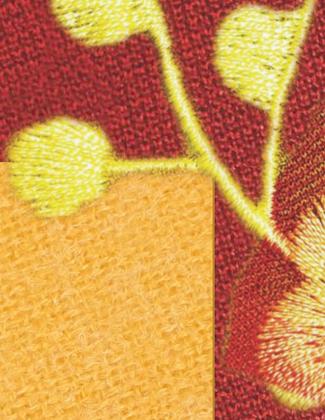


BOOK
CLUB
KIT

THE PAPER
DAUGHTERS
OF
CHINATOWN

BASED ON A TRUE STORY

HEATHER B. MOORE



Dear Reader,

Writing historical fiction and researching bygone eras has been a joy of mine for many years, and I leapt at the chance to create a historical retelling of Donaldina Cameron's lifelong work in San Francisco. Researching Miss Cameron's legacy on the surface quickly made clear that she'd accomplished something impressive, but as I dug deeper into her life and the experiences of those at the Occidental Mission Home for Girls, I was plunged into the dregs of the underworld of the dark beast of human trafficking.

A disconcerting topic to be sure, but each story and experience I studied had one thing in common—hope for a better world. Although the twisted and corrupt practice of the slave trade in Chinatown may be hard to comprehend, women like Donaldina Cameron and Tien Fu Wu did not close their eyes or turn their backs. They put their





trust in each other, walked directly into the fray, literally risking their safety, and changed lives forever. Their hope became the hope of those they rescued.

In my research for *The Paper Daughters of Chinatown*, my heart broke over the trauma these women and girls endured. But time and time again, Miss Cameron triumphed when her rescued girls triumphed as they built new lives and shed the old. By the time Donaldina Cameron retired, she and her staff had rescued over 3,000 girls and women from human trafficking.

It is my sincere wish, dear reader, that you will come to know the remarkable woman who Donaldina Cameron became, as well as acquire new understanding of the plights of women such as Tien Fu Wu, and appreciate what they underwent in order to bring freedom from oppression and slavery to those caught in the web



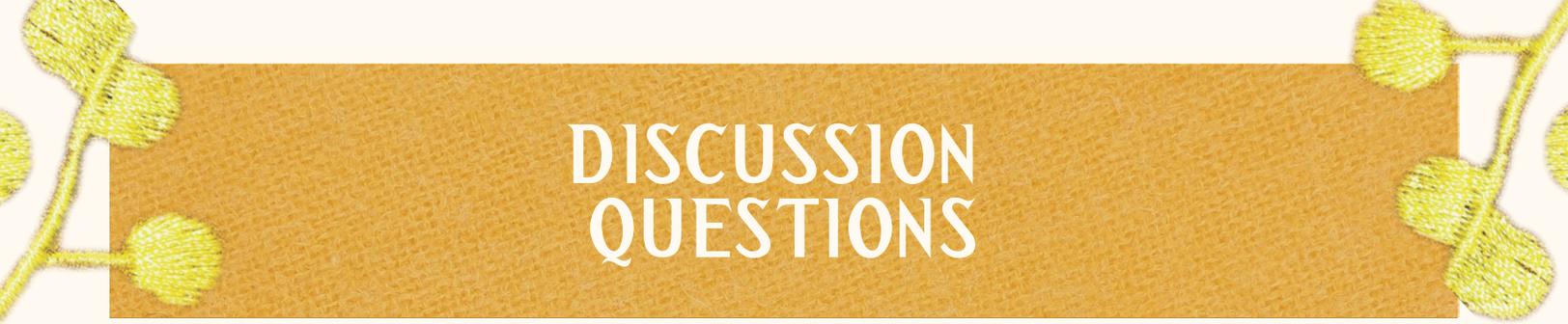


of human trafficking. I'm awed by the efforts of the diligent staff members of the Occidental Mission Home for Girls and the legacy of how they labored together to thwart the slave trade of Chinatown.

Thank you for joining me on this journey,

Heather B. Moore





DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- 1 Why do you think Donaldina Cameron and the mission home employees didn't have the prejudices or racial biases against the Chinese people that so many people of their era did?
- 2 What do you think about the contrast of Mei Lien arriving in San Francisco to start a new life, only to have it go so horribly wrong, with Donaldina's arrival in San Francisco and her expectations of working at the mission home for only one year?
- 3 Have you, in your life, made a prayerful decision, only to be faced with extreme challenges because of it? What sort of decisions did Donaldina make that led her to experiences she had never imagined being a part of?
- 4 Considering the era in which this story takes place, when marriage was deemed a pinnacle achievement in life, it might be surprising that Donaldina called off her engagement to Charles. Why do you think she did so?
- 5 Despite the mission home having other capable employees, why do you think it was so hard for Donaldina to take a vacation or time for herself?

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- 6 It's heartbreaking to think that some of the rescued girls and women didn't accept the help of the mission home. Why do you think some people have a hard time giving up what they know is hurting them?
- 7 How did Donaldina reconcile herself to a life that had so many unexpected events and dangers, versus the traditional path that her sisters and friends took into marriage and bearing children?
- 8 Do you think Donaldina did the right thing by teaching the Chinese girls and women English and requiring that they study the Bible, instead of letting them carry on their Chinese religious traditions?
- 9 Today, women enjoy freedoms only dreamed of in the early 1900s. What are some of the freedoms that you find significantly valuable?
- 10 Does it surprise you that even with all the work Donaldina Cameron and others in her sphere did to fight human trafficking, it is still so prevalent today?



A DEDICATED LIFE: A SPECIAL TRIBUTE TO TIEN FU WU

In *The Paper Daughters of Chinatown*, you will become familiar with Donaldina Cameron and many of her staff members, including Tien Fu Wu. I believe Tien deserves a special tribute, which I will share here.

“Auntie Wu” or “Tien” as the residents of the mission home called her, was brought to Chinatown as a *paper daughter* in the late 1800s. A loophole in the Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882 created a dubious opportunity for slave owners or members of the criminal tong to bring Chinese women into the country under false identities supported by forged paperwork. In this forged paperwork system, the young Chinese woman would memorize her new family’s heritage and claim to be married or otherwise related to a Chinese man already living and working in California, and the *paper daughter* was allowed into the country. “Upon arrival in San Francisco many such Chinese women, usually between the ages of sixteen and twenty-five, were taken to a barracoon, where they were either turned over to their owners or stripped for inspection and sold to the highest bidder” (see *Unbound Feet* by Judy Young, 27).

Such was Tien’s experience. In the records from the



A DEDICATED LIFE: A SPECIAL TRIBUTE TO TIEN FU WU (CONTINUED)

Cameron House, we learn that Tien was called Teen Fook or Tai Choi before her rescue. In an entry dated January 17, 1894, her rescue is detailed: “Tai Choie alias Teen Fook was rescued by Miss Houseworth, Miss Florence Worley and some police officers from her inhuman mistress who lived on Jackson St. near Stockton St. The child had been very cruelly treated—her flesh pinched and twisted till her face was scarred. Another method of torture was to dip lighted candlewicking in oil and burn her arms with it. Teen Fook is a pretty child of about ten years old, rosy cheeked and fair complexion” (see *Chinatown’s Angry Angel* by Mildred Martin, 46).

Adjustment to new life and expectations in the mission home wasn’t a simple road for any of the girls and young women, especially for Tien. She harbored deep resentments for anyone who was in a position of power over her, but through the months and years of love and consistency, Tien flourished and became an integral part of the mission’s work. She served as a translator for the mission home director, Donaldina Cameron, when they went on rescue work. Tien wanted to continue contributing, to give back, and to serve those in need. She was determined to get a college education so that she



A DEDICATED LIFE: A SPECIAL TRIBUTE TO TIEN FU WU (CONTINUED)

could open more doors and serve in greater capacities in the mission home and throughout the community.

The mission home found a sponsor for Tien's education, and she spent four years in Germantown, Pennsylvania, and two years in Bible Training School in Toronto, Canada (Martin, 153). Before leaving San Francisco, she promised Donaldina Cameron that she would return to the mission home and continue to work for the cause. True to her word, Tien returned to San Francisco and spent the remainder of her career as a champion for the women and girls of the Chinatown community. She truly lived a dedicated life in service, faith, and love as she persevered through extreme challenges, while lifting others with her along the way.

ADVANCED PRAISE:

“Recommend to fans of compelling, character-driven historical fiction inspired by true events, such as Lisa Wingate’s *Before We Were Yours* (2017). YAs will be drawn to the dramatic stories of the young Chinese women brought to America.” -*Booklist, starred review*

"Despite the disturbing subject matter, meticulously researched book is unputdownable. The book is as much a history lesson about a shameful piece of American history as it is a glimpse into the life of a heroine whose legacy lives on today. Readers will come to care about all the women featured in the book and will marvel at the extraordinary accomplishments of a determined woman ahead of her time. Based on true events...Fascinating." -*Historical Novel Society*



HEATHER B. MOORE

Heather B. Moore is a USA Today bestseller and award-winning author of more than seventy publications. She has lived on both the East and West Coasts of the United States, including Hawaii, and attended school abroad at the Cairo American College in Egypt and the Anglican School of Jerusalem in Israel. She loves to learn about history and is passionate about historical research.

RESOURCES

The Occidental Mission Home for Girls is still in operation today, renamed Cameron House, in honor of Donaldina Cameron. The Cameron House serves as a community center in San Francisco and provides various community programs and services.

Visit their website here: CameronHouse.org

Publisher's Website: ShadowMountain.com

Author's Website: HBMoore.com

Facebook: Fans of Heather B. Moore

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