

Way We Were

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Taking flight with their little red wagon

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In celebration of “the power of imagination on wheels,” the last Wednesday of March each year is designated as National Little Red Wagon Day, an initiative of the Radio Flyer Company.

The iconic red wagons are produced by the Radio Flyer Company, founded around 1920 by Italian immigrant Antonio Pasin. In 1917, Pasin, a skilled woodworker, built small wooden wagons to carry around the phonograph cabinets that he sold door to door. People often asked to buy the wagons in addition to the cabinets and, sensing a market, he began selling them to local shops. The Liberty Coaster Company, named in honor of the Statue of Liberty, was officially founded in 1923.

Initially the wagons were made of wood but demand far outpaced production and after four years the company switched to stamped steel and an assembly line process. The wagons sold for about three dollars each, about forty dollars today.

The Liberty Coaster Company was renamed to Radio Steel in 1930 and the wagons rebranded as “Radio Flyers.” With this name, Pasin honored Guglielmo Marconi, known for his wireless telegraph inventions, and Charles Lindbergh, the first pilot to successfully complete a solo transatlantic flight. Radio Flyer is still synonymous today with a little red wagon.

Pictured here are the Mon children of Park City. Frank, Lillian, and Lincoln Mon paused in their play to pose with their wagon in 1930. Their father, Richard Mon, had moved to Park City in 1923 to work with his uncle Charlie Chong at the Senate Café, which Chong owned. After a few years in business together, Mon opened his own restaurant, the King Far Low.

There were five Mon kids in all. William and Lincoln were both born before the family’s move to Utah; Lillian, Frank, and Thomas Richard (who went by Richard) were all born here in Park City. Though Park City once had a thriving Chinatown, by 1930, the Mon family was one of only three Chinese families remaining.

With the bombing of Pearl Harbor in 1941 and the United States’ entry into the ongoing Second World War, many of America’s young men left to fight overseas. William, Lincoln, and Frank all joined the military upon graduation from Park City High School. By 1943, only Richard and Lillian were living at home, and the Mon family decided to pack their bags and move to California, in search of better opportunities.

Before he left town, Richard Mon gifted his wagon to his friend Merrill Sanchez. “I remember,” Mon recalled in an interview with the Park City Museum in 2012, “he was so

happy because they used to live up on the top of Empire Canyon. And we used to ride wagons down."



Image ID: digi.44.14

Credit: Park City Historical Society and Museum, Mon Digital Collection

Caption: The Mon children, (l-r) Frank, Lillian, and Lincoln, play with in Swede Alley with their wagon, ca.1930.