The Fiddletown Preservation Society (FPS) came into being in 1964 over the issue of saving the Fiddletown Schoolhouse. Because the property had not been used as a school since 1955, the Oro Valley School District intended to put it up for sale. Members of the FPS were concerned that the schoolhouse building would be demolished. Instead, the school district deeded the schoolhouse and property to the new organization later that year. Preservation of the schoolhouse has been a target of the FPS ever since.

In September 1965, the FPS was incorporated by the Secretary of State “to preserve, maintain and restore the historical buildings, records, and relics of Fiddletown…as a living museum for the education of the general public in the history of the Fiddletown area.” Earlier that year, the FPS and the Fiddletown Community Club jointly sponsored Fiddletown’s first Homecoming Barbeque and Picnic to raise funds for the schoolhouse and to honor its alumni and teachers. The day featured a fiddlers’ contest, the genesis of the annual event that continues to the present.

Since its inception, the FPS has been involved in several preservation projects. The organization succeeded in urging Amador County to acquire the Chinese herb store and gambling hall as historical sites. In 1968, the Chinese herb store (later known as the Chew Kee Store) was dedicated and opened as a museum, maintained and staffed by members of the FPS.

In 1978, eighteen historic sites in Fiddletown, nominated by the FPS, were listed on the National Register of Historic Places. This followed a long battle in which the Fiddletown Preservation Society actively contested a proposed limestone quarry that would threaten fragile historic structures.

The FPS has saved Fiddletown’s unique and endangered Chinese structures through grants and fundraising. Restoration work on the Chew Kee Store was undertaken in 1987. The project received the Governor’s Historic Preservation Award in 1989. The Fiddletown ROCS (Restoration of Chinese Structures) project was initiated in 2001 after Amador County acquired ownership of the Chinese General Store. In 2008, exterior preservation was accomplished on both the Chinese Gambling Hall and the Chinese General Store. This project received the 2010 Governor’s Historic Preservation Award.

Improvements and maintenance of the buildings under our care is ongoing. The Chew Kee Store Museum, containing thousands of objects from its past Chinese residents, opens for special events and on Saturdays from noon to 4:00, April through October. Fiddletown’s 1862 schoolhouse opens for special events and is available for rental.

Today, Fiddletown hosts two active, nonprofit community organizations:

FIDDLERTOWN PRESERVATION SOCIETY welcomes new members interested in preserving and promoting Fiddletown’s historical legacy and buildings. To become a member or make a donation, visit online at www.fiddletown.info

FIDDLERTOWN COMMUNITY CENTER maintains the Community Hall and Library and provides event space, community services, and local gatherings. To become a member or make a donation, visit online at http://fiddletownac.org
windows, was stabilized and weatherproofed in 2008. The building, which had large fissures beneath the upstairs, could be used for storage. The building was originally constructed with adobe brick by Chinese. It consists of a square, rather than the common rectangular shape. Note the single small brick wall in order to save the building.

The building was owned by the Fiddletown Community Center, which made many improvements in the first decade of 2000. The brick building abutting the hall was constructed about 1853. Now used as the community library, it was originally owned and operated as a store by the merchant Chew Kee, who sold merchandise and other provisions to the early residents of Fiddletown.

The building was used as a blacksmith shop it had iron doors to protect it from fire. It was deeded in 1871 to the Chinese merchant Foo Kee, owner of more property in Fiddletown than other Chinese residents. This structure served as a merchant's office and store with an upstairs room that could be used for storage. The building, which had large fissures beneath the upstairs windows, was stabilized and weatherproofed in 2008.

The building was originally established as an herb shop by herb doctor Yee Fung Cheung, who arrived during the Gold Rush to attend to the medical needs of Chinese miners and railroad workers. In the 1880s, the merchant Chew Kee took over. The store functioned as an herb shop, grocery, and community center for the Chinese population. Chew Kee and his wife Sigh Choy added the wooden rooms at the rear of the building, including two kitchens. In 1913, they left the store to their adopted son Fong Chow Yow or "Jimmie" Chow, who lived in the store for most of his life and, fortunately, kept the contents of earlier occupants. Preservation work includes reattachment of the wooden rooms, a new roof and porch, and artifact repair.

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