

DESCRIPTION AND POETRY OF XIANG JIANG PAVILION AND AIWAN PAVILION

The Xiang Jiang Pavilion 湘江亭 located in the St. Paul-Changsha China Friendship Garden of Whispering Willows and Flowing Waters at Phalen Regional Park, is a gift to the City of St. Paul from the City of Changsha and Changsha Yanghu Wetlands Park in 2018, the 30-year anniversary of the St. Paul-Changsha sister-city relationship. The Xiang Jiang Pavilion is named after the Xiang River 湘江 that runs through the heart of the City of Changsha, much like the Mississippi River through St. Paul. The Xiang Jiang Pavilion is a replica of the 18th Century Aiwan Pavilion 爱晚亭 in Changsha, one of four famous pavilions in China.

The Xiang Jiang Pavilion illustrates the Changsha architecture with sweeping eaves and landscaping style with open garden grounds, unlike the Beijing style with straight eaves and the Suzhou Southern style with extreme sweeping eaves and enclosed grounds.

These couplets are beautifully carved in the right and left front granite columns on the Xiang Jiang Pavilion in St. Paul and Aiwan Pavilion in Changsha. The couplet is read right column first, then left column as in traditional Chinese writing.

shān jìng wǎn hóng shū
山径晚红舒
wǔ bǎi yāo táo xīn zhòng dé
五百夭桃新种得
xiá yún shēn cuì dī
峡云深翠滴
yī shuāng xùn hè dài lóng lái
一双驯鹤待笼来

*Along the mountain path, a red
sunset unfolds,
Blossoms of 500 peach trees burst
forth,
Jade green clouds descend over the
mountain cliffs,
A pair of red-crowned cranes await
their bamboo home.*



Blooming Peach Trees: Peach trees produce vibrant-colored flowers and bear edible fruits. In China, accomplished students are often compared to peach and plum trees. The young peach trees in the parallel prose symbolize new generations of esteemed students graduated by the Yuelu Academy.

Red-Crowned Cranes: In Chinese literary tradition, red-crowned cranes were considered companions to scholars. Some reclusive literati pride themselves in raising and training red-crowned cranes to dance to Guqin music (Guqin is a traditional Chinese string instrument that looks like a zither, and is considered a staple accessory of intellectuals).

History and Description of Aiwan Pavilion

- Built in 1792 under Qing Emperor Qianlong (1711-1799; sixth Emperor of the Manchu-led Qing Dynasty)
- Created by Luo Dian, Dean of Yuelu Academy. Yuelu Academy is one of China's four most prestigious institutions of higher learning over the last centennial. Founded during the Northern Song Dynasty, in 976 A.D., Yuelu Academy produced numerous influential intellectuals ranging from Confucian philosophers to scholars of practical subjects such as martial engineering and political economy in the nineteenth century.
- The Pavilion is located on Yuelu Mountain in Changsha, Hunan Province, China, and faces the Xiang River, with the Yuelu Mountain at its back.
- This is 1 of 4 Famous Pavilions in China; the others being Zuiweng Pavilion (1046) in Anhui Province; Lake Xin Pavilion (1552) in Hangzhou West Lake; and Taoran Pavilion (1695) in Beijing Taoran Pavilion Park.
- 爱晚亭 “Aiwan” Pavilion is translated as “Love Night” or “Love Late” or “Autumn Admiring” Pavilion
- Aiwan Pavilion was originally named 红叶亭 Hongye Ting (“Red Leaf Pavilion”), also known as Ai Fengting
- Later, Bi Yan (1730-1797), the Governor of Huguang changed the Pavilion's name to Aiwan Pavilion, taking its name from the verse of the “Mountain Walk” poem by Tang Dynasty poet 杜牧 Du Mu (803-852):

"I stop my carriage to admire the maple trees at nightfall,
whose frosty leaves are redder than the flowers of early spring."

停车坐爱枫林晚，霜叶红于二月花
tíng chē zuò ài fēng lín wǎn, shuāng yè hóng yú èr yuè huā

- The Pavilion has undergone several restorations. During the Xuantong reign (1908-1911), when the Hunan Academy Supervisor Cheng Songwan presided over the restoration, a couplet was engraved on the two pillars of the four granite pillars of the Pavilion (see couplet on page 1).
- Chairman Mao Zedong often visited this Pavilion to discuss current affairs with his friends when he was studying at Hunan First Normal University in Changsha.
- During the Second World War, Changsha was the scene of major battles and the Pavilion was destroyed by the Japanese Army.
- The Aiwan Pavilion was rebuilt in 1952, when Hunan University was rebuilt. The Principal Li Da sent a letter inviting Chairman Mao to inscribe the name for “Love Late” Pavilion. A horizontal tablet bearing Chairman Mao's calligraphy hangs between the two sets of tiled roofs facing South.
- There is a tablet with the poem, "Qinyuanchun, Changsha" written by Mao Zedong which describes the magnificence and beauty of Changsha City.
- The Pavilion is surrounded by red maple trees that show their beauty in the late autumn.
- The two overhanging roof eaves are covered in green glazed tiles.
- The upper lattice windows allow hot air to escape and allows cool air to flow through the structure, important in the warm southern climate of Changsha.
- Inside the Pavilion is a round table and 4 stools made of granite, used for drinking tea, playing Chinese chess, relaxing.