



### Mon-History

Among all ethnic groups in Burma, Mon people have been known as the first group to arrive in the present of Burma. Their arrival was estimated around 1500 BC. They settled in today's Lower Burma and established their kingdoms in Thaton and Pegu. They were also the first group who had contacts with the Buddhism in India and introduced the Buddhism to the rest of Southeast Asia. Since their civilization was highly developed, they introduced both writing system and Buddhism into Burma. Their sovereign kingdoms enjoyed peace and prosperity for many centuries.

In 1757, however, the Burmese/Burman ruler U Aungzeya invaded and devastated the last Mon kingdom, Hongsawato, killing tens of thousands of Mon, including learned Mon priests, pregnant women, and children. Ever since, Mon people lost their independent sovereignty and became a people without a country.

Unfortunately, the oppression of the Mon people has persisted to the present day. Under the oppressions of successive Burman rulers once highly developed culture, literature and language, ethnic identity of the Mon are endangered and almost extinct. Burmese military regime continues prohibiting practices of Mon culture and learning of literature and language in Burma.

### Mon People in Fort Wayne

Fort Wayne has the largest Mon population in the United States. It is estimated around 500. They came here as political refugees from Monland (Lower Burma) and have been resettled in Fort Wayne since 1993. Most of them fled their homeland from Burmese military persecution. As they immigrated into the United States, so do their culture, literature and religion. After they have settled in Fort Wayne, they not only learn culture and literature of their adopted country, but also preserve their own culture and literature. Since most of them Buddhists, they have established a Mon Buddhist Temple at 5824 Decatur Road where they can hold religious ceremony. The temple also becomes a center for holding meeting, social gathering, and teaching and training Mon literature and traditional dances.



### Culture activities

There are three Mon organizations in Fort Wayne: Monland Restoration Council (MRC), Mon Women Association of America (MWAA), and Mon Youth Organization (MYO) which MWAA and MYO are subsidiary of MRC. One of these organizations' objectives is to promote Mon culture in the United States. To do so, they have been training Mon traditional dance to Mon children and performing cultural show both in Fort Wayne and outside Fort Wayne. Over the past five years, they have participated in many cultural events including Three River Festival and Face of Fort Wayne. They have also been participating in Asia Festival in Columbus, Ohio over the past three years. Asian Festival is one of the largest cultural festivals in the United States. They also hold annual event to celebrate their culture. This occurs every year in February when they celebrate their National Day. With the help of Knight Foundation through Art United, they are able to bring different types of Mon musical instruments from Monland. This not only helps them to preserve their culture but also helps them to educate others more about Mon culture.



**Monland Restoration Council  
(Fort Wayne Branch)**

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