



# NEWS 'n NOTES

CHINESE HISTORICAL SOCIETY OF SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA

415 Bernard St., Los Angeles, CA 90012; Voice: 323-222-0856;

Fax: 323-221-4162; Email: [chssc@earthlink.net](mailto:chssc@earthlink.net); Web: [www.chssc.org](http://www.chssc.org);

Chinatown Heritage & Visitors Center: 323-222-0856

November 2007

## November Program

### Portrait of a Chinese Diplomat:

#### Sir Chentung Liang Cheng

Wednesday, November 7, 2007 @ 7:00 p.m.



Sir Chentung Liang Cheng  
Reproduced from a photograph by J. E. Purdy  
in the Library of Congress

By Lorena Tong

As a diplomat Sir Chentung Liang Cheng was knighted twice by Queen Victoria. He mitigated the treatment of Chinese immigrants in the U.S. and negotiated a Boxer Rebellion indemnity from the U.S. that not only funded the prestigious Tsinghua University in Beijing, but also enabled thousands of Chinese students to study in the U.S. Moreover, he was known for his great love of baseball.

**December 5th**—Pot luck dinner, caroling, white elephant sale, fun, and catch up with friends.

**January 9th**—The first Wednesday of January 2008 is January 2 and Castelar School will still be closed for the holidays. CHSSC will have its program on the second Wednesday. Henry Ong's oral history class will make a presentation.

Castelar Elementary School Multipurpose Room  
840 Yale Street, Los Angeles Chinatown.

Open to the public, free admission and parking,  
enter from College Street between Yale and Hill  
Streets.

## Around CHSSC

### Review of the October 2007 Program

A film on the Yee family was shown at last month's program meeting. It was first aired on television in 1979, then again in 1981. It is the story of one Chinese American family.

In 1898, Jimmy Yee, leaving his wife and son in China, came to America and worked the railroad and then settled in Omaha where he worked in a laundry. In 1908 he moved to Midland, a small steel-mill town 30 miles from Pittsburg, Pennsylvania and opened a laundry. It took him eight years to save

### Inside this issue:

- November and December 2007 Programs
- Review of October 2007 Program
- Chinatown Remembered Project Update
- Spring 2008 Fundraising Dinner
- Pacific Grove's Feast of Lanterns: Fun or Racism?
- Community Calendar





# Chinese Historical Society of Southern California

November 2007

*("Around CHSSC," from page 1)*

enough money to send for his son Chaw-Lai to join him in running the family laundry. Chaw-Lai in turn spent years saving enough money to send for his wife and son.

Six brothers and one sister were born in Midland, in the bedroom above the family laundry. All eight siblings worked in the laundry. During the Depression there were very little business, sometimes only a few removable collars to do a week. By this time Chaw-Lai and his wife had purchased a house where they grew the vegetables that they ate at dinner.

Two brothers served in the Air Force and Navy during WWII, and three brothers served in the Korean War in the Army. They were all educated through the GI Bill. The oldest sibling moved to Los Angeles in 1931, followed by a brother in 1939. All other siblings and their parents except the youngest, Bill, joined them in the 1950s and 1960s. Bill remained in Midland until 1979, two years after the family laundry was sold and then came to Los Angeles.

In 1981 Chaw-Lai Yee and Wong Wee Ying celebrated their 70th wedding anniversary with their eight sons and daughter, and many younger generations of the Yee family. The reunion was held in Los Angeles where many Yee's settled and prospered.

In recognition of the couple's 70th wedding anniversary then Mayor Tom Bradley, sent them a commemorative certificate, then Governor Edmund G. Brown, Jr. and then President Ronald Reagan sent them personal letters.

The story of the Yee family is the story of the United States and the Chinese Americans. They have persevered and passed on the values of their immigrant parents to the younger generations.

---

Reprint of 3,500 copies of Portraits of Pride Book 1 were delivered to the CHSSC office last month. About 2,000 out of the targeted 3,000 copies have been distributed to public and university libraries throughout the country. About 500 copies are available for purchase. Use the order form in the October 2007 News 'n Notes or go online at [www.chssc.org](http://www.chssc.org) to download a copy of the form.

---

The landscape at the CHSSC facility is looking very good with flowers blooming and driveway lined with brick borders. Persimmons have been picked from the tree. All other trees are thriving and some will bear fruits.

*(continued on page 3)*

## **BOARD OF DIRECTORS**

### **Officers**

Kenneth L. Chan, President  
Gilbert Hom, Vice President  
Eugene Moy, V.P. for Programs  
Ben Nakayama, Treasurer  
Albert Chang, M.D., Secretary  
William Gow, Membership Secretary

### **Members at Large**

Pete Chinn  
Ernesto Con  
Susan Dickson  
Irvin Lai  
Jeannie Liu  
Donald Loo, Ph.D.  
George Yin

*News 'n Notes Editor, Yvonne Chang*

## **MISSION STATEMENT**

The Chinese Historical Society of Southern California was organized in November, 1975. The purposes of the Society are: 1) to bring together people with a mutual interest in the important history and historical role of Chinese and Chinese Americans in Southern California; 2) to pursue, preserve and communicate knowledge of this history; and; 3) to promote the heritage of the Chinese and Chinese American community in support of a better appreciation of the rich, multi-cultural society of the United States.





*("Around CHSSC," from page 2)*

### Chinatown Remembered Project Update

The Chinatown Remembered, an oral history project headed by CHSSC Board of Director officer Will Gow has received a \$9,000 grant from the California Council on the Humanities. Four interns have interviewed four Chinatown residents who talked about their lives in the 1930s and 1940s. It was presented in a video shown at the June 2007 program meeting.

The current phase has three interns interviewing three other residents of the same periods. The interns meet with Will every Saturday mornings and learn the techniques of oral history interview and filming. If the reader of this newsletter knows of anyone who is a good candidate for a subject of the Chinatown Remembered Project please contact the Society at [chssc@earthlink.net](mailto:chssc@earthlink.net) or Will at [wgow@ucla.edu](mailto:wgow@ucla.edu).

### Spring 2008 Fundraising Dinner

A date and venue have been set for CHSSC's annual fundraising dinner. It will be Saturday, May 3, 2008, at the Almansor Court in Alhambra. The menu consists of choice of Rib Eye Steak, Sea Bass or Vegetarian Lasagna. Wine, salad, appetizer, desert, coffee or tea are included.

Donations for raffles and silent auction will be greatly appreciated. Please make sure all donations are of high quality items and the kinds that people will want to pay for.

Honorees will be Chinese American clubs in the Los Angeles, Orange and Ventura Counties. If you know of any organizations or individuals who might consider sponsoring the event or make major donations please call CHSSC office, 323-222-0856 or email at [chssc@earthlink.net](mailto:chssc@earthlink.net).

Solicitation for sponsorships and donations will begin in earnest in early November

### Historical Chinatowns

#### Pacific Grove's Feast of Lanterns: Fun or Racism?

Can a community celebration be all in the spirit of having fun without regard to cultural sensitivity? An article in the Monterey County Weekly raises that question. Residents in Pacific Grove of California have been holding the Feast of Lanterns since 1905.

The following is an excerpt from , "History Burns: Does Pacific Grove's Feast of Lanterns celebrate a racist past?"

"In the 1850s, Chinese immigrants sailed onto the Monterey Bay, where they promptly set to work fishing and building a community. After frustrated attempts to settle at Point Lobos and Pescadero Point they established a village near Point Alones, on the coastal border between Pacific Grove (PG) and Monterey."

"The first local Feast of Lanterns celebration was held in July 1905 at the end of the 'Chautauqua season,' when adults would congregate for educational presentations organized by the Methodist-run Chautauqua Literary and Scientific Circle of Pacific Grove. During that first feast, participants decorated the town's buildings and roads with paper lanterns and gathered to watch fishing boats lit up by glowing charcoal baskets—not unlike those the Chinese fishermen used to lure squid—float across the water at dusk. Chinese residents were invited in order to 'lend authenticity' to the celebration, according to a 1905 article in the Monterey New Era newspaper."

"Simultaneously, some of PG's white residents went out of their way to make their Chinese neighbors feel unwelcome. Portuguese whalers made a practice of cutting the fishermen's nets. Police, responding to complaints from citizens or the major, routinely arrested the Chinese for creating a 'public nuisance,' ... In the 1880s, Congress adopted the

*(continued on page 4)*





(*"Historical Chinatowns," from page 3*)

Chinese Exclusion Act to staunch the inflow of Asian immigrants, and over the next two decades the state imposed ever-tighter restrictions on Chinese fishing."

"In 1905, the Pacific Improvement Company, which owned the Point Alones property, failed to renew the Chinese community's lease and began to evict its tenants. That process was underway on May 16, 1906, when a fire ignited in the village, burning down most of its wood-framed houses. Historians have not confirmed the origins of the fire, but oral evidence—including a testimony that the residents' hoses were cut—point to arson. Photographs show whites picking through the ashes within 24 hours of the blaze"

"Despite the turmoil at the Point Alones, the Chautauqua group held its second annual Oriental-themed celebration that summer. The Pacific Improvement Company donated hundreds of dollars to the festivities, even as it built a fence around the Point Alones village and hired armed guards to keep the Chinese out."

"During the four-day festival, a Chinese dragon snakes through streets lined with paper lanterns. High school girls—the Royal Court—pose in Chinese gowns, their hair piled high. Until the mid-1980s, the Queen and eight Princesses even made up their faces in Asian caricature, with white skin and elongated eyes...The practice was eventually ditched...'It became politically incorrect to do it.'"

"Another festival tradition puts the mayor in stereotypical Asian attire. This year Mayor Dan Cort plans to don a Chinese robe—and if he can't find it, he'll wear a Japanese one—to kick off the July 16 street dance. 'There was an uncomfortable history with our Chinese immigrants,' he admits. 'We hope that celebrations like the Feast of Lanterns honor the contributions of the Chinese to Pacific Grove.'"

Stanford University doctoral student Bryn Williams, who is writing his dissertation on 19th-century Chinese American communities, views the

celebration in psychological terms. He says, "It's an interesting juxtaposition to have this celebration the Chinese at the same time that a legal mechanism was taken to burn them out. There are various possibilities for why any group of people will celebrate the aesthetics of what they are in the process of destroying."

The Feast of Lanterns was temporarily stopped during WWI and WWII. It was revived in 1958. Up until this year, festival organizers and local officials never saw it fitting to change the cartoony Oriental caricature and respect the Chinese culture. They do not feel it necessary to acknowledge the local historic Chinese community.

Today neither Pacific Grove Mayor Dan Cort, nor the Feast of Lanterns Festival spokeswoman Dixie Layne concedes that the Chinese in Pacific Grove were forced out. They both insist that the Chinese left because jobs were limited rather than they did not feel welcome by the white residents.

A recently published book, *Driven Out: The Forgotten War Against Chinese Americans*, documents the story of how the Chinese were driven out in California and the Pacific Northwest in the second half of the nineteenth century. The book's author is Jean Pfaelzer, a professor of English, East Asian studies, and American studies at the University of Delaware. It is published by Random House in 2007.

—Yvonne Chang, CHSSC Staff

### References:

Abraham, Kera, "History Burns: Does Pacific Grove's Feast of Lanterns celebrate a Racist past?" Monterey County Weekly, July 26, 2007.

Pfaelzer, Jean, "Driven Out: The Forgotten War Against Chinese Americans," Random House, 2007





### Acknowledgements

- Howard Fong donated *Hearts of Gold*, a comedy centering around two women who happens to share a room at a hospital. The film's DVD version is now available in CHSSC's media room for viewing or borrowing.
- Dorothy Lew, Winnie Lew, Mary Yee Kwok and Ken Chan brought snacks and tea to the September meeting. Lupe Chee donated a cake in honor of the Yee Family whose family's story was told in a film shown at the meeting. Two others donated cookies and pumpkin seeds.
- Gilbert Hom, Philip Hom and Gene Moy moved the 3,500 copies of PoP Book 1 into the CHSSC buildings for preparation of distribution to libraries.
- Philip Hom donated a wireless card to enable internet connection on a spare computer in the CHSSC office.
- Liana Hachiya made a donation in memory of Elsie Wong, a long time supporter of CHSSC.
- Randy Bloch, former CHSSC Administrator is in town to help with the distribution of PoP Book 1 2008 Reprint, and work on the MTA reburial issue.

### Words of Wisdom

Life is like melted butter, once you cool it down,  
it can be reshaped.

—Cy Wong  
Past t CHSSC President

### Announcements

#### From CHSSC Member Susie Ling:

**Boyle Heights** - the home of Evergreen Cemetery - now has its own Historical Society. As early as 1835, Don Estevan Lopez received a land grant from the *ayuntamiento* of Los Angeles. In 1858, Andrew Boyle of Ireland bought the homestead. His daughter, Mary Elizabeth, married William Workman. The Boyle Heights Historical Society is invested in preserving the rich ethnic heritage of our community. For more information, check out [www.boyleheightshistoricalociety.org](http://www.boyleheightshistoricalociety.org).

#### From Chinese American Museum

***Sunshine and Shadow: In Search of Jake Lee*** will be on display from November 30, 2007, through April 13, 2008. Presented by the Chinese American Museum at El Pueblo de Los Angeles Historical Monument and produced in cooperation with the Automobile Club of Southern California.

This exhibit offers the first comprehensive survey of this renowned yet enigmatic California artist. A full-color catalogue accompanies this exhibit and will be available at the Museum gift store for a limited time.

Chinese American Museum hours are from 10:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m., Tuesday to Sunday. For more information, call (213) 485-8567 or visit [www.camla.org](http://www.camla.org).

#### Reminder:

Chinatown Revisited Exhibition will continue until December 30, 2007. It features the recreated office of Y.C. Hong, a noted immigration lawyer, and the cloisonné artworks of Jim Fong. It is at the Central Plaza on Gin Lin Way, opens Saturdays and Sundays from 1:00 to 5:00, \$3 admission.





### Community Calendar

#### **Bone Marrow Drives**

Asians for Miracle Marrow Matches  
Various locations throughout Los Angeles area  
Information: (888) 236-4673  
[www.asianmarrow.org](http://www.asianmarrow.org)

Thursdays, 3:00 p.m.—7:00 p.m.

#### **Chinatown Farmers Market**

727 N. Hills Street, Los Angeles Chinatown

Through November 11, 2007

#### **Exhibition: Daily Rituals: Himalayan Art in Practice**

Through January 27, 2008

#### **Rank and Style: Power Dressing in Imperial China**

Pacific Asia Museum

46 N. Los Robles Avenue, Pasadena, CA

\$7 general admission, \$5 seniors and students  
(626) 449-2742

Saturday, November 3, 12:00 noon —3:45 p.m.

#### **Chinese Family Festival**

Pacific Asia Museum

46 N. Los Robles Avenue

Pasadena, CA 91101

- Lion dance
- Arts and crafts activities.
- Chinese calligraphy demonstration and talk on etymology of Chinese characters, by a professor of Chinese languages of UCLA.
- Feng Shui lecture by Angi Ma Wong.
- Performance by Cold Tofu
- Teapot balancing act

This festival is made possible in part by a grant from the City of Pasadena.

**Admission: Free**

#### **2007-2008 Chinese Garden Lecture Series at the Huntington Library**

Friends Hall, admission free

**Oct. 2, 2007, Tuesday, 7:30 p.m.**

“Yin Yu Tang: The Voices and Spaces of a Chinese Home”

Lecture by Dr. Nancy Berliner, curator of Chinese art at the Peabody Museum

**Feb. 5, 2008, Tuesday 7:30 p.m.**

“Poetry and Calligraphy in the Garden”

Lecture by Professor Yang Ye, Department of Comparative Literature & Foreign Languages at the University of California, Riverside. He teaches classical Chinese prose, classical Chinese poetry and poetics, and 20th century Chinese poetry and prose.

**April 8, 2008, Tuesday 7:30 p.m.**

“Garden Beyond the Garden”

Lecture by Dr. Louise Yuhas, currently Professor of Art History and Asian Studies at Occidental College in Los Angeles. Her research interests include Chinese landscape painting of the Ming Dynasty.

**May 6, 2008, Tuesday 7:30 p.m.**

“Chinese Furniture and Architecture”

Lecture by Chinese Art Historian Dr. Sarah Handler, an independent scholar and has written definitive books on Chinese furniture.





### CHSSC Wish List

- Donation of or fund to purchase "Chinese American Death Rituals" edited by Sue Fawn Chung and Priscilla Wegars. Cost is \$68 plus tax and shipping if purchased online at [www.altamirapress.com](http://www.altamirapress.com) or call 800-462-6420.
- Donation of "California's Chinese Heritage" by Thomas A. McDannold. It is out of print and CHSSC needs a copy for its reference library.
- One flat panel PC for CHSSC Administrator.
- High quality raffle and silent auction items for Spring 2008 Fundraiser.
- New or gently used items for White Elephant Sale at the Christmas potluck December 5.
- One 6' or 8' light weight folding table.
- Cash gifts for general operating expenses such as track lighting in the conference room, new paving in driveway and backyard, air condition unit for the archive room, repair of sky light in Heritage Center, etc.





**Chinese Historical Society  
of Southern California**

**415 Bernard St.  
Los Angeles, CA 90012-1703**

Ella Quan  
6555 Meridian Street  
Los Angeles, CA 90042

