



NEWS 'n NOTES

CHINESE HISTORICAL SOCIETY OF SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA

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March 2008

March Program

Wednesday, March 5, 2008 @ 7:00 p.m.

A Hard Road on Gold Mountain: A History of the Chinese in Yosemite



Tie Sing, a well known Chinese cook in the Yosemite region during the late 1800s and early 1900s. Photo by Edward S. Curtis.

Yenyen Chan, a Yosemite park ranger naturalist will present a brief history of the Chinese who traveled to California during and after the California Gold Rush and their significant role in the early history of Yosemite National Park. Many Chinese came to California in the mid to late 1800s lured by the prospects of gold. Unfortunately, although originally tolerated, the Chinese immigrants faced many challenges in America including unfair taxation laws and exclusion from several forms of employment. However, the Chinese in California persevered. Many worked in difficult jobs such as road and railroad building. In Yosemite, they were the primary labor force in constructing two of the major roads

through Yosemite's high mountainous terrain using hand picks, shovels and dynamite. They also worked in several of the Yosemite hotels as cooks and hotel staff.

Open to the public, RSVP not necessary

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

Enter from College Street between Yale and Hill Sts.



The old Wawona Road which was built and completed by Chinese laborers during the winter of 1874 to 1875. Photo by Yenyen Chan

April Program—Portrait of a Chinese Diplomat, Sir Chentung Liang Cheng, April 2, 2008 @ 7:00

Inside this issue:

- | | |
|---|---|
| • Upcoming Programs | 1 |
| • Family History Workshop Series | 2 |
| • Reburial Issue of Chinese Remains | 3 |
| • Chinaman's Chance Exhibition | 4 |
| • Year of the Rat Celebration | 5 |
| • Save the Date—33rd Annual Spring Dinner | 6 |
| • Marysville Chinatown | 7 |



Chinese Historical Society of Southern California

March 2008

Around CHSSC

Family History Workshop Series

By Anna Gee

Did you see the PBS show, *African American Lives 2*, recently? If you did, you saw how touched to the core all of the people were to be presented with information about their ancestors several generations back. Whether famous or not, this information somehow added to or changed the participants' self identity.

That's what we aim to do in the Family History Workshops, help give you, or anyone else in your family, the tools to gather together your family history, and in the process give to you and your family an added sense of roots and identity. However, you will have to do the digging—we don't have the funds of even a PBS show! But every month, we will have workshops to give you the tools, help, and, yes, support because we know how easily this effort gets pushed down the to-do list in our busy lives.

From the January speakers, did you know that it is NOT a good idea to do any of the following: laminate, use those glassine envelopes that photographers used, have documents with lignans touch other items, or let the surface of a photo touch glass while it is on display? For all handouts, check with the office or workshop.

On March 15, we begin a series of workshops on oral history to help you interview family members. Teresa Barnett of the UCLA Oral History Research Center will present tips on how to prepare for an interview, guided practice on how to ask questions to get the fullest information, and how to tackle sensitive subjects. In April, we help you create a timeline specific to your family, incorporating relevant historical timelines, which provide context for understanding your family history and to help you ask deeper questions during the interviews. In May, we focus on videography, the particularities of this form, as well as hands-on-training. June will be an opportunity to get specific feedback on interviews and help with specific problems. Later in the year, we will tackle genealogy and records research, and maybe even organize a field trip to one of the National Archives.

If working on your family history sounds like a big job, consider asking other family members to get involved and make it a family project. It usually works out that one person is more interested in the photography, another in talking to family members, and still another in the research. This can be a multi-generational project too, with the added benefit of providing a format in which to get acquainted on many new levels.

This brings us to another reason to record family history. Change is taking place at such a rapid rate that lives are different from one generation to another. We literally inhabit different worlds because of these changes. Inevitably, generation gaps will develop. But most germane, the generation still in school probably cannot imagine the hardships, the discrimination,

(continued on page 3)

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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.

Chinese Historical Society of Southern California

March 2008



("Family History," from page 2)

the ethnic tensions, as well as the cultural solidarity that were the parameters of older generations' lives. Without a record made, the memories will fade all too soon, and the lessons of history will be lost. Begin working on your family history now! Come March 15th and bring family members and friends !

Reburial Issue of Chinese Remains

By Susan Dickson

Two years ago, after CHSSC was notified that the Los Angeles County Metropolitan Transportation Authority (MTA) had unearthed Chinese remains and artifacts while they were excavating for the Goldline extension next to Evergreen Cemetery. An Ad Hoc Sub-Committee was set up by MTA to decide the disposition of these remains and artifacts. However, this fourteen-member committee only had three members representing the Chinese point of view: Irvin Lai, past CHSSC president and Chinese American Citizens Alliance (CACA) vice president of the Los Angeles; Daisy Ma; and me, also a past CHSSC president.

Recently, this subcommittee was disbanded after making decisions about the how to recognize and give respect to those whose graves had been disturbed. The committee decided to rebury all of the artifacts in Evergreen Cemetery next to the shrine without doing DNA testing. Other decisions were made concerning design and wording on the memorial wall that is to be built. Likewise, the committee decided on the grave markers and sayings to be used. As the meetings were conducted following Roberts Rules of Order, the majority ruled.

As reported in the January Los Angeles Times article, "Custody Dispute over History," the Chinese community differs with the major subcommittee decisions regarding DNA testing and reburial of the artifacts. During these past two years Mike Ten, city councilman from South Pasadena, has been

networking with the Chinese community and MTA Board members. However, when he tried to report on his efforts to the MTA Review Advisory Committee (RAC) in January, the RAC chair, Diana Tarango, was unwilling to bring up any issue for further discussion. In the Los Angeles Times article, she is quoted as saying, the idea "was too little too late." Through Mike Ten's efforts, a respected educational institution, California State University Los Angeles (CSULA), has expressed a willingness to house and study the artifacts as well as to do DNA testing of the remains. Also, the Chinese community is finally speaking with one voice about the artifacts and DNA testing. The Chinese Consolidated Benevolent Association, the CACA and the Organization of Chinese Americans of Greater Los Angeles are some of the organizations that have written support letters to the MTA board members. Elected officials such as Judy Chu and Mike Eng have stepped forward to support CHSSC. In addition, Mike Ten reported to the RAC that \$70,000 has been committed to allow CSULA to take possession of the artifacts for study. These are major developments that the RAC was unwilling to review.

The MTA RAC and Ad-Hoc subcommittees are only advisory. Mike Ten is continuing his efforts to lobby the MTA board members on our behalf. The final decision of the MTA board should be made in March 2008, followed by a ground-breaking ceremony at Evergreen Cemetery sometime the following month.

Interviews with past CHSSC presidents Irwin Lai and Angi Ma Wong as well as current president Kenneth L. Chan appeared in the feature article, "Remnants of a Lost Pioneering Community Continues to Stir Debate," in the Feb. 15-Mar 6, 2008 edition of *Pacific Citizen* (PC). This article is by Assistant Editor Lynda Lin and can be viewed at www.PacificCitizen.org.

Reminder: **Scholarship application** due March 21, 2008. For details see www.chssc.org/Scholarship/Application2008.pdf.



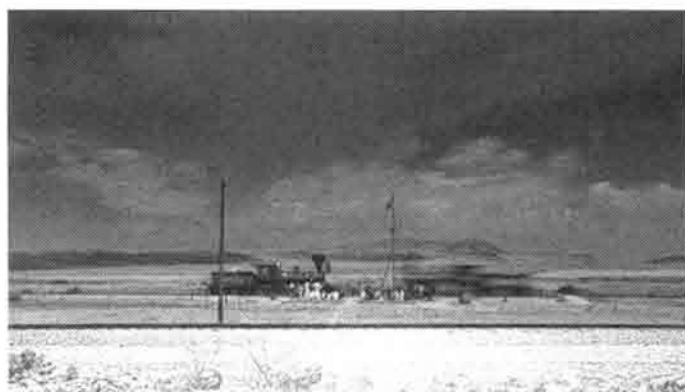
Chinese Historical Society of Southern California

March 2008

Chinaman's Chance: Views of the Chinese American Experience

Pacific Asia Museum
46 N. Los Robles Avenue, Pasadena, CA 91101

March 13 - July 27, 2008



Names of the Unremembered: Transcontinental,
Zhi Lin, Daniel Boord, Luis Valdovino

The discovery of gold in California drew unprecedented numbers of Chinese immigrants. By 1865 about 50,000 Chinese had come to "Golden Mountain" to try their luck. But the winds of fortune often blew in unexpected directions.

The majority of the Transcontinental Railroad's east-bound track was built by Chinese. To conquer the treacherous terrain, workers were often suspended from the top of cliffs to plant explosives. It was from this dangerous task that the phrase "A Chinaman's Chance in Hell" was coined. Later shortened to "Chinaman's Chance," the phrase unfortunately defined many immigrants' experiences.

Three contemporary artists – Amanda Ross-Ho, Zhi Lin and Arthur Ou – will examine the diverse Chinese American experience from the days of the Transcontinental Railroad's construction to today.

Several of the artists will be incorporating Pacific Asia Museum collections into their work, and all

draw their inspiration from the history encompassed in the museum's exhibitions.

While the experience of being of Chinese heritage and living in America is unique to each individual, *Chinaman's Chance: Views of the Chinese American Experience* will investigate the similarities and dissimilarities of these experiences. The experience of the viewer will be simultaneously cerebral, physical, historical, contemporary, foreign and universal.

Related Events

Thursday, March 13, 6:00 p.m.

Opening Party

Free for members and a guest. \$10 for non-members. Food, drinks and music by DJ Tony, and screening of *Chinese Ghost Story*. Call 626.449.2742 ext. 31 to R.S.V.P.

Film Premiere @ 7:00 p.m.

Chinese Ghost Story by Dan Boord and Luis Valdovino (2008, 25 minutes) It is estimated that over 1,300 Chinese laborers perished during construction of the Transcontinental Railroad. While the remains of many were eventually shipped home, others lie in unmarked graves throughout the American West. *Chinese Ghost Story* is a poetic essay in which history and landscape intersect in ghost towns, parks and undisturbed railroad grade. The filmmakers will introduce the film and answer questions.

Saturday, March 15, 1pm

Artists' Tour with Amanda Ross-Ho, Arthur Ou, and Zhi Lin. Free with admission; call 626.449.2742 x 31 to RSVP

Saturday, April 26, 1pm **Curator's Tour** Explore *Chinaman's Chance* with guest curator Chip Tom. Free with admission; call 626.449.2742 x 31 to RSVP

Sunday, May 11, 2-4pm **Performance "Chinese American Stories"** A presentation of community, family and personal memories collected in a writing/oral history workshop by playwright Henry Ong.* Free with admission; call 626.449.2742 ext. 31 to RSVP.

Chinese Historical Society of Southern California

March 2008



Sunday, May 18, 3-4:30pm **Concert** "Flute and Harp of East and West" Enjoy music from around the Pacific, from Mexico to China, played on guzheng, flute, and harp. Co-Sponsored by the Pasadena Symphony. \$10 for members, \$12 for non-members; includes museum admission. To register, call 626.449.2742 ext. 31.

Thursdays, May 29 and July 10, 8:30-9:30pm
Films in the Courtyard *Invisible Portraits* by **Hung Viet Tran (2008, 19 min.)** One Los Angeles night, seven people seek escape: Rosa searches for a mysterious *caballero* who will take her to her husband, while Todd and Phuong seek to leave their strict family. A long-distance romance has one couple trying to find each other outside the digital world, and two friends have an expected encounter on a desolated road. Hung Viet Tran is an artist and filmmaker. His work is about people, environment, technology, dream, story, and language, often inspired by his travels and the need to search for the unfamiliar.

Chinese Ghost Story by **Dan Boord and Luis Valdovino (2008, 25 min.)** See page 4, March 13 program, for description of film.

Saturday, June 7, 1pm

Lecture

"Chinese Pioneers in the San Gabriel Valley"

The San Gabriel Valley is the destination of many Chinese immigrants, but this is not a new phenomenon. A hundred years ago, small Chinese communities thrived in Pasadena and elsewhere. Join Professor Susie Ling as she discusses the history of Chinese Americans in the San Gabriel Valley, and their contemporary concerns. Susie Ling** is an Associate Professor of History/Asian American Studies at Pasadena City College and an active member of the Chinese Historical Society of Southern California. Free with admission; call 626.449.2742 ext. 31 to RSVP.

This article is reprinted with permission from the Pacific Asia Museum.

* This performance was presented at the CHSSC's January 2008 monthly meeting.

** "The Early History of Chinese Americans in the San Gabriel Valley" by Susie Ling is a feature article in CHSSC's Gum Saan Journal, 2005 Edition.

COASTAL SOUTH CAROLINA CELEBRATES YEAR OF THE RAT AT BURROUGHS-CHAPIN ART MUSEUM

By Randy Bloch

The Franklin G. Burroughs-Simeon B. Chapin Art Museum, in the resort town of Myrtle Beach, hosted a daylong series of Chinese New Year activities on February 2nd. The art museum opened in 1997 and is one of the foremost cultural venues in the South Carolina *Low Country*. The celebration is part of the Museum's "Free Family Days" in which the same three cultures and traditions are honored annually in separate events. This was the Museum's sixth lunar new year celebration.

On January 28, 2006, I attended Chinese New Year at the Museum, and was impressed by the preparation and effort behind it, including an elaborate display of children's books on Chinese culture.

When this year's event was in its planning stage, I contacted the Museum, asked to make a presentation on *Portraits of Pride* (PoP), met with the executive director, and donated a copy of the PoP book which was graciously received. I was placed on the event's schedule to give a thirty-minute lecture on the book.

The Chinese New Year Celebration at the Art Museum was held on its two floors with some activities spilling out onto the grounds. The varied events, compressed into a relatively small space, ran very smoothly. Activities began at 11:00 a.m. with the traditional Lion Dance, followed by organized

(BURROUGHS-CHAPIN, continued on page 6)



Chinese Historical Society of Southern California

March 2008

(BURROUGH-CHAPINS, from page 5)

workshops on brush painting, storytelling, martial arts, *Tai Chi*, and *Chi Gong*. All-day sessions included mask, lantern, and noisemaker workshops; and instruction on kite-making, use of chopsticks, and Mah Jongg. Beautiful wall displays of Chinese art; a lecture and demonstration on traditional Chinese musical instruments; the CHSSC Portraits of Pride lecture; and a talk on traditional Chinese medicine rounded out the day's program.

The Chinese New Year celebration was a golden opportunity to introduce and share Portraits of Pride with the public—the book's origins, its founder, its educational vision, and its role as a source book emphasizing pride in the accomplishments of Chinese Americans. It was a chance to talk about the PoP project's successes, such as the appreciative letters it receives for its book donations, and our "No Library Left Behind" program in which, to date, 7,000 copies of *Portraits of Pride* have been distributed to middle school, high school, college, and public libraries across the U.S. Other project accomplishments were noted, such as that every public library in the Hawaiian Islands and each of the 27 branches of the Boston Public Library has *Portraits of Pride* in its permanent collection.

The Portraits of Pride talk gave an opportunity to announce the upcoming PoP Volume Two, and preview some of its profiles. The audience enjoyed learning about UCLA's Dr. Terence Tao, the "Mozart of Math," who in 2006 won the MacArthur "genius grant" and the world's highest honor for mathematics, the Fields Medal. A summary of the career of biochemist Dr. David T. Wong was also presented. Dr. Wong is the inventor or co-inventor of 35 U.S. Patents, co-developer of the antidepressant drug Prozac, and enjoyed a distinguished 32-year career with pharmaceutical giant, Eli Lilly & Company.

The Burroughs-Chapin's sixth annual *Chinese New Year Celebration at the Art Museum* was a well organized, well-attended, and highly successful event. It was an honor and privilege to speak on behalf of CHSSC and the Portraits of Pride project.

The art museum deserves high praise for its wide ranging and diverse exhibits, and dynamic exhibit schedule. Its educational component includes art instruction for adults, free children's art classes funded by corporate sponsors, and literary discussions. The Museum may be visited on line at www.myrtlebeachartmuseum.org/index.shtml.

Save the Date

Saturday, May 3, 2008

CHSSC's 33rd Annual Spring Dinner

Almanson Court
700 Almanson Street, Alhambra, CA

Honoring community based
Chinese American organizations

Diamond Bar Chinese American Association

San Gabriel Valley Chinese Cultural Association

San Fernando Valley Chinese American Association

South Bay Chinese Woman's Association

South Coast Chinese Cultural Association

South Pasadena Chinese American Club

Temple City American Chinese Association

Ventura County Chinese American Historical Society

**RSVP form available online at www.chssc.org.
Hard copies RSVP form will be mailed with the
April 2008 issue of News 'n Notes.**

Chinese Historical Society of Southern California

March 2008



Acknowledgement

Johnny Yee donated three books to the CHSSC's reference library:

1. *From Canton to California: The Epic of Chinese Immigration*, by Corinne K. Hoexter
2. *Bury My Bones in America, The Saga of A Chinese Family in California, 1852-1996*, by Lani Ah Tye Farkas
3. *Chinese Historic Sites and Pioneer Families of Kauai*, edited by Tin Yuke and Wai Jane Char. This is a local project of Hawaii Chinese History Center.

Condolences

Howard Ng, the owner of the property next to CHSSC passed away in January 2008. Condolences to his family. Howard had been rolling out and retrieving our garbage bins ever since CHSSC bought the property in 1995, in addition to helping feed our dogs and keeping an eye out on the property when we were not around. We will miss him and his neighborliness.

Historical Chinatowns

Marysville's Chinatown

Marysville was a leading commercial center during the gold rush. And the Marysville Chinatown is one of the oldest Chinatowns in California and the last Chinatown of the Gold Rush era. It still has the only active Chinese temple in California that dates back to the gold rush. The Bok Kai Festival is said to be the oldest festival in the state, dating back to the early 1850s when the Chinese pioneers settled in Marysville."

The Chinese American Museum of Northern California, established in 2005 is located in the heart of the historic Chinatown at 232 First Street in Marysville. Their mission is to preserve the history of the Chinese in America.

The museum's permanent exhibitions include: *Marysville—The Last Chinatown of Gold Rush California*, and *The Lost Chinatowns of Old California—Ghost Towns and Survivors*.

The Bok Kai Temple in historic Marysville's Chinatown is listed by the National Trust for Historic Preservation as one of the country's 11 Most Endangered Historic Places. It sits on the bank of the Yuba River with the main altar facing toward the river. It was dedicated in 1880 replacing the first temple built in the 1850s. It served as a place for meeting, a court, and a place of worship. The Bok Kai Festival, honoring Bok Eye, the Chinese God of Water, pays tribute to the many Chinese who helped develop the American West in the 1800s.

One of the unique characteristics of the Bok Kai Temple is the surviving mural depicting vivid scenes of Chinese culture. A painting conservator from the Getty Conservation Institute in Los Angeles, Leslie H. Rainier, examined the magnificently painted frescos. He found "the quality and execution of the scenes equal to the few Daoist paintings in American museum collections."

This painting extends across the upper wall of the outside front entrance to the Temple. Most similar frescoes in China was destroyed during the Cultural Revolution of the 1960s and 1970s.

This year's Bok Kai Festival is scheduled for March 8 and 9. There will be a series of lectures on Chinese American history and tour of the museum. Admission to the museum is free during the Festival.

This year's winner of the museum's Pioneer Award is Steve Yee. The Award is given on the basis of contribution to the preservation and interpretation of the history of the Chinese in America. Steve Yee led the effort to reclaim the history of the Chinese in Sacramento. Award dinner tickets will be available at the museum March 8. Call 510-710-2342 for information.

Community Calendar

March 13, 2008 4:00 pm.—8:30 pm.
Japanese Food & Sake Festival
Hyatt Regency Orange County
11999 Harbor Blvd., Garden Grove
\$50—\$55
213-509-3701

March 13 through July 27, 2008
**Chinaman's Chance: Views of the Chinese
 American Experience**

For details on exhibition and accompanying programs see pages 4 and 5.

Saturday, March 15, 1:00 pm—5:00 pm

Family History Workshop Series

Interview Family Members

Teresa Barnett, head of the UCLA's Center for Oral History and Research will conduct a training session on how to prepare for interview family members. See page 2 for more information.

CHSSC Conference Room

415 Bernard Street, Los Angeles Chinatown

RSVP, 323-222-0856

Sunday, March 16, 2pm

Slide Lecture: Minority Tribes of Myanmar

By Pierre Odier, Explorer and Photographer



The lecture is an inside view of the minority tribes of the southern Golden Triangle. He will focus on the Wa people, a little-known group from the remote upland region of eastern Myanmar their costumes, headdresses, art and lifestyle and the effects of recent political and economic

change in the area. Odier is the author of *Some Last People: Vanishing Tribes of Bhutan, China, Mexico, Mongolia and Siberia* and is past President of the Los Angeles branch of The Adventurers' Club.

Pacific Asia Museum

46 N. Los Robles Avenue, Pasadena, CA

Free with admission call ext. 20 to RSVP.



**Chinese Historical Society
of Southern California**

415 Bernard St.
Los Angeles, CA 90012-1703

