

MARCH 2016

Night of Terror - The Destruction and Rebirth of Pasadena's Chinatown

Wednesday, March 2, 2016
6:30 p.m.

Castelar Elementary School
840 Yale Street, Los Angeles, CA 90012

Free parking - enter via College Street
Refreshments will be served.

This event is free and open to the public.



The LA Times called it “a sensation which will be read of this morning from end to end of the United States.” Pasadena’s newspaper referred to it as a “Black Friday.” One-hundred and thirty years ago, a white mob turned Pasadena’s Chinatown into an inferno, obliterating it from the landscape, and, for many years, from the history books as well.

Over the course of 24 hours, enraged racists drove Pasadena’s 60 to 100 Chinese citizens from the city in an ordeal that began with a dropped cigar and culminated in threats of a mass lynching.

Roughly 100 men — nearly one-quarter of the population of Pasadena — participated in the riot, yet no one was ever arrested or charged in the case. To this day, the rioters’ names remain unknown.

Though historians have long thought it to be a random act of violence perpetrated by a gang of lawless hoodlums, new evidence suggests a coordinated effort between Pasadena’s elite and its underclass. City officials may have even joined in the mayhem.

It was a pivotal incident in the city’s early history, leading to the creation of its first fire department and ushering in an era of racial separation that endured for decades.

Historians — and even journalists of the time — differ on minor details of what happened on the night of Nov. 6, 1885, but the overall facts are clear.

Join us at our monthly meeting as Matthew Hormann recounts the events, and the environment leading up to and after that frightful evening,



Matthew Hormann, local historian, who has written for Hometown Pasadena, the Sierra Madre Historical Society, Westways, and the Pasadena Weekly.



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Y.C. Hong: Advocate for Chinese American Inclusion

On February 3, 2016 the Chinese Historical Society of Southern California (CHSSC) presented "Y.C. Hong: Advocate for the Chinese American Inclusion," its monthly talk featured Nowland Hong, son of Y.C. Hong, and Li Wei Yang, curator of Western American History at The Huntington Library in San Marino and curator of the exhibition about the life of the legendary Y.C. Hong, his life and work. The exhibition is on view at the Huntington Library in San Marino through March 21, 2016.

—Article by Rick Eng



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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, multicultural society of the United States.



MARCH 2016

2016 Ching Ming Festival

Saturday, April 2, 2016
11:00 A.M. to 1:00 P.M.

*Los Angeles County Crematorium
in Boyle Heights
3331 E. First St., Los Angeles, CA 90063*

Enter From First Street by Concord Street
This event is free and open to the public.
A light lunch will be served.



CHSSC will host the Annual Ching Ming (Chinese Memorial Day) Festival. Ceremonies will begin at the Los Angeles County Crematorium and continue at the historic Chinese Memorial Shrine at Evergreen Cemetery. The Shrine stands at the center of what was once a 19th century Chinese cemetery. Built in 1888 by the people of Los Angeles' Old Chinatown, the Shrine is considered the earliest extant Chinese structure in Los Angeles. The site remains culturally and historically significant and has been designated Los Angeles Historic/Cultural Monument No. 486. It is owned and maintained by the Chinese Historical Society of Southern California. Please join us for this culturally rich event.

117th Golden Dragon Parade

In the most popular Lunar New Year celebration in Los Angeles, the CHSSC members and volunteers were joined by our friends at Rotary District 5280 to march in the 117th Golden Dragon Parade. In a sea of American flags we proudly embraced our identities as Chinese Americans, and are happy to share the culture that our organization represents. We would like to thank CHSSC Board Members Gordon Hom, Susan Dickson, and Eugene Moy for helping to organize our unit, Will Yuen for leading our flag squad, Susan Sing for preparing the lettuce to feed the lions (Choi Chiang Ceremony), and everybody who made it out to march or watch the parade with us. Whether you were in the parade, or at the house watching the lion dance groups perform, we hope that everybody had a great time. See you all again next year!





Notes on Chinese American History

This is a monthly column about Chinese American History by CHSSC member, William Gow.

All history is written through archives. The ability of historians to document certain stories about the past and to answer specific historical questions they have about particular people and time periods is contingent on archival material. In his book *Silencing the Past: Power and the Production of History*, the philosopher of history Michel-Rolph Trouillot uses the metaphor of “historical silences” to explain the way that the histories of some groups of people get overlooked and remain untold. Trouillot explains how the silencing of the past is linked to power in the present. According to Trouillot, one of the key ways in which a particular history can be silenced is through the creation of historical archives. The documents that are

included in those archives and the perspective presented in those documents form the basic building blocks from which history will be written. If a certain community’s history is not archived or the archived history is only what other people have written about them and not what they have written about themselves, aspects of that group’s history are silenced. In short prejudice against a group in the past can affect how that group is portrayed in histories written in the present.

One of the reasons that so few books have been written about aspects of Chinese American history in Southern California stems from a lack of archival materials.

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Photo: Albert Lee



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Certainly before the formation of the CHSSC in 1970s, there were no regional organizations devoted to documenting and preserving this history. Institutional racism led many archives to conceive of Chinese American history as unimportant and not worthy of collection. This meant so much of our community's history remained in the hands of private family collections. Even today, as archives increasingly show an interest in Asian American history, with the exception of the Y.C. Hong Collection, few Chinese American family collections have found a permanent home in traditional archives.

Many members of the CHSSC are, like myself, fourth or fifth generation Chinese Americans with some type of connection to Southern California. Most of us have our own family collections. Some collections like the one in my family are small and consist mainly of family photos while other family collections are more extensive and include diaries, letters, community publications, and newspaper clippings. The importance of making sure these documents are saved is paramount. The ability of the Chinese American community to become part of the historical record rests in part on ensuring that our history is archived. Certainly families can donate their collections to an existing archive, like the CHSSC, the Chinese American Museum, or the Asian American Studies Reading Room at UCLA. Yet many families, including my own, have been reluctant to part with their family collections. While we may understand the importance that our family documents have to history more generally, we also often have deep

emotional attachments to these documents and the special links they provide us to our own personal history. Digitalizing family records may offer us a solution. Scanning and maintaining a digital archival can often allow organizations and archives to make copies of photos while physical objects remain in the hand of the families that often originally produced them. While copyright law may prevent the copying of certain types of documents, for many types of family history, archiving digital copies provides a perfect solution. Community members can maintain their own family collections while also donating copies to an archive, museum, or historical society. While these types of projects take money and resources to conduct and maintain, this seems like one way for organizations like the CHSSC or the Chinese American Museum to expand their collections, while also making sure that individual families can maintain control of their own history and memorabilia.

A member of the CHSSC for more than a decade, I am currently a doctoral candidate in Ethnic Studies at UC Berkeley, where I am writing a history of Los Angeles Chinatown in the 1930s and 1940s. If you currently have community publications, newspaper clippings, or family history that you'd be interested in sharing with me for use in my dissertation, I'd be quite interested in hearing from you. I also enjoy receiving general feedback, suggestions, or questions about the column and my academic work. I can be reached by email me at wgow@outlook.com

Call for Donations

Calling for donations to fund two paid summer internships with CHSSC! Please help us meet our goal to raise \$2,000. to fund two internships for undergraduates interested in Chinese American history. We have been successful with our student interns from local college campuses and CHSSC has greatly benefitted from their help. These interns have helped CHSSC grow over the past few years, including organizing our library; digitally cataloging our books, artifacts, and archives; participating in and helping organize our events including our 2015 40th anniversary banquet; and helping renovate our Bernard St. headquarters. Many of our interns continue to volunteer with CHSSC regularly after the completion of their internship. We envision paid internship opportunities as a way to build our internship program beyond undergraduates earning course credit in service learning courses. Your contribution will allow us to continue building relationships with youth, foster interest in Chinese American history and communities, provide a wonderful opportunity for students to gain work experience, and foster the next generation of CHSSC members and leaders.



Chinese Historical Society of Southern California

411 Bernard Street, Los Angeles, CA 90012
Phone: 323-222-0856 Email: chssc@hotmail.com
Website: www.chssc.org

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Community Calendar

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Saturday, March 5, 2016 - 12:00 noon - 7:00pm

Los Angeles Lantern Festival

El Pueblo de Los Angeles Historical Monument

125 Paseo De La Plaza

Los Angeles, CA 90012

Free Admission--Lion dancing, arts and crafts, continuous entertainment and so much more!

Now through March 22, 2016 Mon.-Fri. 12:00pm-4:30pm

Sat.-Sun. 10:30am-4:30pm Closed Tuesdays

Y.C. Hong: Advocate for Chinese-American Inclusion

Drawn from The Huntington's You Chung Hong family papers, acquired in 2006, this exhibition is the first opportunity for the public to get a deeper sense of the life of an extraordinary figure in Chinese-American history.

The Huntington Library, Art Collections, and Botanical Gardens
1151 Oxford Road San Marino, CA 91108
626.405.2100

Saturday, April 2, 2016 - 11:00 A.M. to 1:00 P.M.

Annual Ching Ming Festival

CHSSC will host Ching Ming (Chinese Memorial Day) Festival. Ceremonies will begin at the Los Angeles County Crematorium and continue at the historic Chinese Memorial Shrine at Evergreen Cemetery. The Shrine stands at the center of what was once a 19th century Chinese cemetery. Built in 1888 by the people of Los Angeles' Old Chinatown, the Shrine is considered the earliest extant Chinese structure in Los Angeles. The site remains culturally and historically significant and has been designated Los Angeles Historic/Cultural Monument No. 486. It is owned and maintained by the Chinese Historical Society of Southern California. Please join us for this culturally rich event.
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