

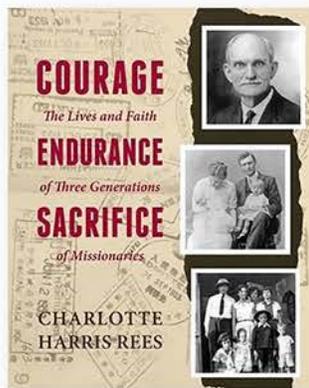


OCTOBER 2017

## Courage, Endurance, Sacrifice

*The Lives and Faith of Three Generations of Missionaries*

By Charlotte Rees



The China Society of Southern California and  
The Chinese Historical Society of Southern California  
Invites you and your friends to attend a joint meeting

Wednesday, October 4, 2017

Check-in 6:15 pm, Dinner 6:45 pm

*Golden Dragon Restaurant*

*960 N. Broadway, Los Angeles, CA 90012*

\$25 general admission,

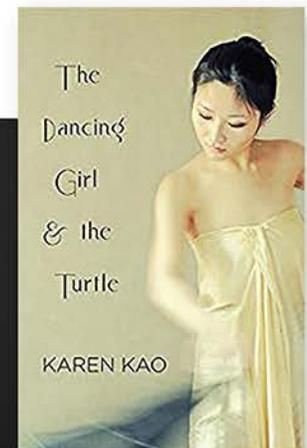
pay at the door, cash or check payable to China Society  
RSVP –chssc@hotmail.com or call Bob Lee 213-284-4438

*Courage, Endurance, Sacrifice* relates the adventures and trials of three generations of pioneering Baptist missionaries in Charlotte Rees' family. Starting in 1875 and covering a span of almost 100 years, all three missionary families exhibited times of bravery when their very lives were at risk.

Charlotte Harris Rees has spoken at the Library of Congress, Washington, DC; the National Library of China, Beijing; Malaysia; Switzerland; London; Canada; Australia; Macau; and across the USA, (see her schedule for some of the locations) as well as on television, and National Public Radio about the early arrival of the Chinese to America. For the past 14 years she has done extensive research on this topic.

## The Dancing Girl and the Turtle

by Karen Kao



Wednesday, October 18, 2017

6:30 pm

*Castelar Elementary School*

*840 Yale Street, Los Angeles, CA 90012*

Free parking - enter via College Street

This event is open to the public.

Karen Kao, poet, short and long form fiction writer and essayist, will speak on her first novel *The Dancing Girl and the Turtle*, inspired by her father's stories of his childhood in old Shanghai.

*The Dancing Girl and the Turtle* breaks barriers with its brutally honest account of the courtesan culture in 1930s Shanghai. In a searing portrayal of women as commodities, Song Anyi, a rebellious young woman, is thwarted by her conventional family, the social mores of the day and the war with the Japanese that is about to engulf China.



OCTOBER 2017

## The Essence of Tea

Last month, we resumed our monthly meetings at Castelar Elementary with a tea presentation by the owner of the Bana Tea Company, Linda Louie. Linda began her presentation with a lecture on tea and tea leaves--how and where they are grown, and how the leaves are prepared to make a variety of different teas. She followed up her presentation with a live demonstration of a brewing, pouring, and tasting of her tea. During her demonstration, she imparted some useful brewing techniques for optimal and consistent flavor. CHSSC members and guests were treated to freshly brewed white and black tea, courtesy of Linda.

Please note that our next monthly meeting at Castelar will be on October 18, 2017, the third Wednesday. Be sure to mark your calendars accordingly. See you all at the next meeting.



Photos: O.C. Lee

## Board of Directors

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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.



# Archive Spotlight

The Archive Committee has been busy this summer. We have been organizing our collections, creating finding aids and container lists, and discovering exciting new information. Our main objectives were to locate and place all archival materials in the Archives. While opening drawers and boxes we found a treasure trove of historical and recent photographs. Identifying the places and individuals shown in the pictures is an on-going process. We also uncovered beautiful traditional clothing, and stacks of historical magazines, newspapers and scholarly articles have been added to the Archives.

During the summer, we prepared an inventory for the William Chew Collection. William (Bill) wrote the book, *The Unnamed Workers of the Transcontinental Railroad*. His collection includes historical photographs, research materials and copies of Chinese workers' payroll records from the 1860s. Bill's scholarship and attention to detail is highly evident in this very important collection.

In August, we became extremely excited by a small collection that was unearthed from deep inside a pantry. Several boxes of Chinese herbal medicines were found in a bright red box. Among the medicines there were some tools, an old pocket watch and a vintage cigarette holder. A metal cigarette box was sitting right in the middle of these items. There is nothing more fun than opening a mysterious, old, rusted cigarette box, because we all know that only treasures are found in these types of containers. The metal box held a variety of goodies: a large dried root, a wristwatch, a giant safety pin, and several papers and envelopes dated in the 1920s. One envelope held a dog gall bladder! Some papers were written in Chinese, and others were written in English. Our former intern, Cheng Wang, came to our aid and translated the Chinese documents. Cheng told us that we have a Chinese poem written in a traditional style, and an accounting page written in a classical form of Chinese. Once all of the clues were compiled we figured out that the herbs and the metal box belonged to Ella Yee Quan's grandfather, Y.W. Yee. He had an herbal store, called the See Lee Wo Company, located at 829 Santa Barbara Street in Santa Barbara. These small items give us a deep, and personal understanding of the life, and business practices of a Chinese settler living in Santa Barbara's Chinatown in the 1920s.





## The Bitter Legacy of Chinese Immigrant Labor in Building California's Levees

By Lu Sun

Two major engineering fetes indispensable to the early economic boom of California owe a great deal to Chinese immigrant labor. The impact of their arduous labor continues to be felt to this very day. These historical achievements were: 1) construction of the Sacramento Delta levees and 2) building the railroads that connected north and south, east and west regions of this country.

The highly productive California agriculture has been the result of the extensive network of levees in its Central Valley. These levees don't just protect the farmland, but there was no farmland until they were built. These levees that turned swampland into farmland were built between 1860 and 1880 by thousands upon thousands of Chinese immigrants. Many of them farmed and worked on some of the land that they wrenched from the swamps. By the 1890s, almost all of the Chinese immigrant laborers who reclaimed the Delta were driven off this land by anti-Chinese laws and vigilante mobs.

### *Treacherous Ocean Voyage to "Gold Mountain"*

After the 1849 discovery of gold in California, the first wave of Chinese immigrants started coming to this State. Lured by stories of a "Mountain of Gold", about a quarter million Chinese arrived in California from 1849-1880. Many came as indentured bond servants who were given passage to the U.S. in return for years of work. Impoverished peasant families in China went into debt to pay for the long and difficult crossing of the Pacific Ocean. They were packed into hulls of ships, often 500 into one hull, and where up to one-fifth died on the journey.

The mainly Chinese male immigrants were not allowed to bring family members, even a spouse, and also were not allowed to marry whites. Chinese women were mostly prevented from immigrating unless they could prove their "good character" (i.e. not prostitutes) even as some of them were bought or kidnapped and shipped to brothels in the U.S.

The first wave of Chinese who came tried to work small gold mines throughout California but was soon hit with anti-Chinese laws and racist violence. By the 1860s mining was no longer profitable and the Chinese immigrants who came joined displaced gold miners working on building the railroads. The Central Pacific Railroad started to recruit workers in China in 1866 for its construction crews in California. The role of Chinese immigrant laborers in building the railroads is a story of its own and will only be briefly touched on here. It was truly an incredible feat of human sacrifice and suffering. Chinese laborers shoveled and drilled as they labored through 60-foot snowdrifts, tunneling, blasting and laying tracks for the railroad. Many of these workers died. In one incident, when the workers struck, the company cut off all food supplies to the remote work camps and starved them for a week, and threatened them with a posse of well-armed white men.

When Chinese immigrants died in America it was a common practice for their ashes or bones to be sent back to the villages they had come from in China. In 1870, one newspaper reported that 20,000 pounds of bones had been gathered from shallow graves along roadbeds. These were from the bodies of about 1,200 Chinese workers -- some of the thousands of Chinese immigrants who died building the railroads. Yet specific data on deaths of Chinese workers from industrial accidents or work related illnesses or epidemics are hard to find, and likely were not carefully recorded.

### *Turning Swamp into Farmland*

When the transcontinental railroad was completed in May 1869, many Chinese laborers hoped to return to farming, which the vast majority of them had done back in China. Though some of them were able to buy small plots in California, thousands had no money to buy land and found work for the next decade building the levees.

There had been earlier, primitive levees built in California in the 1850s using Chinese, Kanaka (indigenous Hawaiians) and Indian laborers. But these early levees were routinely destroyed by floods. In 1868 a series of laws were passed that made it profitable to reclaim Delta lands for farming. Delta landowners took over from the railroad bosses, hiring whole work crews from the railroad to build the levees.

The levee workers lived in tents right at the site of the levees and worked in crews of eight to 30 men. They built the levees by piling up parallel walls of sun-dried peat bricks and filling in the space with mud. Chinese immigrants made many innovations in construction, including developing an oversized horseshoe wired to the hooves of horses for packing and leveling dirt. Between 1860 and 1880, laborers, mostly Chinese, worked on 88,000 acres of rich Delta farmland. Building the levees was hellish, dangerous work. The workers labored waist-deep in water, draining swamps and marshes, digging up hard peat soil by hand to fill the levees. They were paid by the yard of land moved, which came to about a dollar a day.

One of the largest landowners in the Delta was George D. Roberts, president of the Title Land Reclamation Company. Roberts had close ties to California legislators and used these connections to obtain tens of thousands of swampland acres for practically nothing. He hired 3,000 to 4,000 Chinese laborers and paid them about \$1 a day. The total cost of reclaiming an acre of land came to \$7 per acre, and Roberts was allowed to buy the land from the state for \$2-3 an acre. In total, it cost him about \$10 an acre to reclaim the land, and he sold tracts for between \$20 and \$100 an acre making huge profits off the exploitation of these workers.

During and after the time they worked building the levees, Chinese people settled in the Delta growing fruit and vegetables and working in the canneries. Many Chinese farmers grew asparagus in the 1890s. Others grew potatoes or labored on the farms of others. By 1870 Chinese immigrants made up 45 percent of all farm laborers in Sacramento County.

In the book *A Different Mirror*, Ronald Takaki describes a form of sharecropping, where "In exchange for the use of the land, equipment, and the marketing of crops, tenant farmers raised fruit and vegetables and then divided the profits with the white landowners." The landowner's cut of the total income from the land might be 25% in addition to charging land rent and tool fees. This tenant farming took place on the edges of the newly reclaimed land. Sometimes, Chinese farmers got land to work from small white farmowners in exchange for building levees. In other cases, they leased land on newly built islands in the Delta rivers from large corporations. Between being small farmowners, working land they rented for cash, sharecropping or working as hired farm laborers, Chinese immigrants were the dominant workforce in Delta area agriculture in the 1870s and 1880s.



### *Anti-Chinese Xenophobia*

The Chinese immigrant had come looking for the "Golden Mountain" but instead ended up doing the hardest, most dangerous and lowest paid labor. They were denied the most basic rights and subjected to official and unofficial racist violence and terror. Scores of municipal, state and federal laws were passed between the mid-1800s and early 1900s that targeted Chinese.

The California legislature enacted a foreign miner's tax in 1852 that was mainly aimed at the Chinese. In 1858, the State of California passed an immigration law excluding Chinese from entering the State. A "White Labor Protection Act" was passed in 1862. The constitution of California was rewritten in 1879 forbidding any man or woman of "Chinese or Mongolian" ancestry from earning a living by working for a white man. And the legislature delegated "all necessary power" to towns and cities "for the removal of Chinese." The State constitution declared that the Chinese people were "dangerous to the well-being of the State."

In 1882 the U.S. Congress enacted the infamous Chinese Exclusion Act. It set a precedent for legally discriminating against an entire group of people based solely on ethnicity and country of origin. It decreed that a Chinese man who worked with his "hands," who was a "manual" laborer, would be prohibited from coming to America. And the people from China who were already residents were barred from becoming citizens. Chinese, like Black people and Indians, were not allowed to testify against whites in court, even for murder, which legally protected white vigilante-killers from prosecution. They were barred from public schools and forbidden to own real estate or get business licenses or government contracts. The Chinese Exclusion Act was not repealed until 1943, and even then immigration of Chinese was given a quota of only 105 per year. Laws that specifically targeted Chinese immigration stayed on the books until 1965.

In San Francisco, laws were passed against the Chinese like a "queue tax," a "cubic air ordinance" requiring that every residence have so many cubic feet of air per inhabitant, and a "pole law" prohibiting the use of carrying baskets on poles. Newspaper articles helped to fan a society-wide xenophobic atmosphere. For example, the San Francisco Chronicle wrote in 1873 "Who have built a filthy nest of iniquity and rottenness in our very midst? The Chinese. Who filled our workshops to the exclusion of white labor? The Chinese. Who drives away white labor by their stealthy but successful competition? The Chinese."

Fueled by such laws and the mass media, the labor movement in California, overwhelmingly white at that time, became a major force behind the racist campaigns to drive the Chinese out. Mobs stormed through towns where Chinese immigrants lived, burning homes and looting shops. Chinese were lynched and scalped, had their pigtailed cut off and were branded with hot irons. On a single autumn night in 1871 in Los Angeles, 17-20 Chinese men and boys, including a doctor, were tortured and then lynched by a mob of about 500 whites. Four Chinese men were crucified spread-eagle and then executed with knife and gun.

### *Driven Off the Land*

By the beginning of the 1890s an economic depression hit the U.S. and Chinese immigrants were subjected to a whole new level of attack. The people who had built the railroads and levees were painted as a plague on society. White workers who were losing their jobs were told that the problem was Chinese immigrants. In 1893 the Los Angeles Times wrote: "White men and women who desire to earn a living have for some time been entering into quiet protest against vineyardists and packers employing Chinese in preference to whites."

A wave of racist anti-Chinese riots broke out in the Central Valley. Ronald Takaki writes that "From Ukiah to the Napa Valley, to Fresno to Redlands, Chinese were beaten and shot by white workers and often loaded into trains and shipped out of town." These violent attacks on Chinese immigrants were concentrated in the Sacramento and San Joaquin River valleys, and especially where they join at the Delta. Chinese immigrants bitterly remembered this violence and expulsion as the "driving out."

While a handful of Chinese towns remained in the Delta, the vast majority of Chinese immigrants were driven from the land and forced into marginal survival. For the most part, they were denied any opportunity for work except menial jobs like washing and sewing clothes, or cooking. The levees built by Chinese immigrants created huge profits for large corporations and landowners, capitalists like George D. Roberts, and opened up some of the most fertile and productive land in the world. In return, these immigrants were denied the most basic rights, their humanity and dignity. Rather, they depicted as inherently evil and sinister foreigners, who were responsible for all of American's economic and social problems. They were thus forced from the very land they had created from the Delta swamps with their blood, sweat and tears.

## WAPOW Magazine Launches First Issue



The CHSSC is proud to support WAPOW Magazine. On September 15, 2017, the CHSSC participated in the WAPOW Magazine launch party at the Los Angeles State Historic Park to celebrate the inaugural issue of the magazine. The festivities included delicious treats and refreshments from local Chinatown restaurants and businesses, a lion dance performed by East Wind Lion Dance Troupe, a submission booth for future issues of WAPOW, and karaoke. The CHSSC would like to thank Editor-in-chief Wendy Chung for inviting us to participate in the festivities. In the first issue, the CHSSC is featured throughout, including a spotlight on our recent trip to Yosemite and Sing Peak, and an excerpt from our 2015 Gum Saan Journal highlighting Hiram Kwan and his career. You can pick up a free issue of WAPOW magazine today at CHSSC Headquarters. Congratulations again to Wendy and the WAPOW team.

### WAPOW's Mission Statement:

As the Los Angeles Chinatown neighborhood evolves, WAPOW seeks to be a resource to share information and highlight local heritage and personal stories to help locals better cope with change, and promote dialogue across the community's diverse cultures and generations.



# 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

*Please help us save paper and postage,  
email us for your online newsletter at [chssc@hotmail.com](mailto:chssc@hotmail.com)*

## Community Calendar

**Wednesday, October 4, 2017**

**Courage, Endurance, Sacrifice: The Lives and Faith of Three Generations of Missionaries** Charlotte Rees has written a new book about her ancestors' missionary background including three generations of family in China and the Orient which will be focus of her program, brought to you by the China Society of Southern California and CHSSC. \$25 general admission, pay at the door, cash or check payable to China Society, RSVP- [chssc@hotmail.com](mailto:chssc@hotmail.com) or call Bob Lee (213) 284-4438, Golden Dragon Restaurant, 960 N. Broadway, L.A., CA 90012

**Thursday, October 5, 2017, 6:00 -8:30 pm,**

**Screening: Above The Drowning Sea to be followed by a panel discussion** Recounting the courageous intervention of Ho Feng Shan, the Chinese Consul in Vienna who defied his own government and braved the Gestapo to issue visas to refugees. Panelists are René Balcer, Director of the film, Clayton Dube, Director of USC-China Institute, Kori Street, Director of Education, USC Shoah Foundation, and Keith Eisner, son of a Jewish refugee to China. USC Wallis Annenberg Hall Auditorium, ANN L105A, 3630 Watt Way, Los Angeles, CA 90089

**Saturday, October 7, 2017, 5:00 pm – 12 midnight**

**79th Annual Mid-Autumn Moon Festival**

Celebrating the full harvest moon and a time to give thanks for a bountiful harvest, Traditional Chinese cultural demonstrations alongside hot local bands and DJs mark a celebration uniquely Angeleno and uniquely Chinatown. Come by for the annual Dessert Eating Competition, or to taste Mooncake samples from Chinatown's popular bakeries, or to take a peek at the full moon in her glory through scientific telescopes!

Central Plaza, 943 N Broadway, Los Angeles, CA 90012

**Sunday, October 8, 2017, 9:00 am – 5:00 pm**

**CicLAvia Chinatown Hub** Street Closure: North Broadway will be closed between 7am-6pm with crossing points located at Alpine Street & Cesar Chavez. Inspired by Bogotá's weekly ciclovía, CicLAvia temporarily closes streets to car traffic and opens them to Los Angelenos to use as a public park. Free for all, CicLAvia connects communities to each other across an expansive city, creating a safe place to bike, walk, skate, roll, and dance through Los Angeles.

**Wednesday, October 18, 2017, 6:30 pm**

**The Dancing Girl and The Turtle by Karen Kao**

Inspired by stories from her father's childhood in old Shanghai, author Karen Kao joins CHSSC to share her novel the Dancing Girl and the Turtle, which depicts a brutally honest account of the courtesan culture in 1930s Shanghai during the 2nd Sino-Japanese War and the Battle of Shanghai.

Castelar Elementary School 840 Yale Street, L. A., CA 90012

Free Parking - enter via College Street Refreshments will be served. This event is free and open to the public.

**Saturday, October 21, 2017- 9:00 a.m. - 5:00 p.m.**

**12th Annual Archives Bazaar**

For more than 20 years, the L.A. as Subject consortium has brought to life the diverse, often hidden stories that make Southern California such a fascinating place of discovery. In 2005, we inaugurated the Los Angeles Archives Bazaar to give anyone with an interest in the region's history a one-stop opportunity to interact with dozens of archives, from large institutions to private collectors. In all, more than 70 archives are represented at this event, which is free and open to the public. Doheny Memorial Library, USC University Park Campus, 3550 Trousdale Pkwy, Los Angeles, CA 90089