

JULY-AUGUST 2020

PBS' new documentary, “Asian Americans”

BY ROY NAKANO

In 2018, the Chinese Historical Society of Southern California honored filmmaker Renee Tajima-Peña with its coveted Golden Spike Award for her role as a highly influential storyteller of the Chinese and broader Asian American experience. Her body of work includes founding the New York-based Asian American International Film Festival, and generating several films of critical acclaim, including the Oscar-nominated “Who Killed Vincent Chin”.

In May of 2020, the Public Broadcasting System debuted what is arguably Tajima-Peña's finest and certainly most ambitious work of filmmaking: The five-part, five-hour documentary series called “Asian Americans.” As the series' producer, Tajima-Peña showcases 150 years of the Asian American experience.

Episode One: Breaking Ground introduces the vast spectrum of the Asian immigrant story, and then turns its attention to the Golden Spike sesquicentennial celebrating the completion of America's first transcontinental railroad in Promontory, Utah, to Joseph and Mary Tape—one of the earliest Chinese American families in San Francisco—the rise of anti-Chinese sentiment and the Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882, which barred immigration on the basis of race for the first time in U.S. history, and Anna May Wong and Sessue Hayakawa, two of the first Asian Americans to prominently grace the silver screen.

Episode Two: A Question of Loyalty explores Japanese American families torn apart by mass incarceration, the first female gunnery officer in the United States Navy and the eldest daughter of Korean independence activist Ahn Chang-ho and Helen Ahn, the first married Korean couple to emigrate to the United States, and how Chinese, Korean, Japanese and Filipino Americans answered the call of the nation.

Episode Three: Good Americans tells the story of Chinese and Japanese Americans overcoming adversity to be labeled the model minority and the pressures it has put on a new generation of immigrants, about Toy Len Goon, who was voted American Mother of the Year in 1952, how Chinese hand laundries, groceries and small businesses have frequently become the only recourse for even the most educated because of rampant discrimination, how the Chinese Exclusion Act led people to falsifying their birth information, how Asian Americans began aspiring to national political office, and Bruce Lee's rising stardom in Hollywood.

Episode Four: Generation Rising focuses on a new generation of Asian Americans fighting for equality in the fields, on campuses and in the greater society. It also tells the story of Larry Itliong and how the farm labor movement began with Filipino farmworkers, the story of Asian Americans who confront their identities in the Korean and Vietnam Wars, and how Asian American students at San Francisco State University campus identified with the African American communities struggling to define their place in American society.

Episode Five: Breaking Through looks at Asian America in modern times, with Hollywood featuring more Asian Americans on-screen, a look at how Vincent Chin's death affected Asian Americans across the country, how the beating of Rodney King and the killing of Latasha Harlins ignited tensions across racial lines, how Silicon Valley was impacted by the efforts of Asian Americans such as Yahoo! founder Jerry Yang, and how Tereza Lee became one of the first DREAMers. The episode ends by circling back to the Golden Spike sesquicentennial commemoration in Utah.

“Asian Americans” can be viewed in various venues. The episodes can be streamed from the internet, and PBS stations still air it from time-to-time. You can also purchase “Asian Americans” through Amazon Prime. Viewing venues continue to evolve and you can get the latest information at

<https://www.pbs.org/show/asian-americans/>



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Chinese Exclusion Act Case Files at the National Archives

BY LINDA BENTZ

We are happy to announce that the National Archives in Riverside has uploaded additional Chinese Exclusion Act Case Files. A portion of files from the very large Los Angeles District is now available at <https://catalog.archives.gov/id/5830001>.

We invite you to tag and transcribe the files. For instruction about interacting with the files please visit:

<https://www.archives.gov/citizen-archivist/missions/chinese-heritage>

As mentioned in last month's News 'n Notes, the National Archives at Riverside has curated 700 boxes of Record Group 85, which contain documents related to the enforcement of Chinese Exclusion within the Southern California region. Files provide vital information pertaining to Chinese immigrants applying for approval to travel to China and return under the terms of the 1894 Gresham-Yang Treaty. All of the files from the Nogales District have been uploaded and can be viewed at this address: <https://catalog.archives.gov/id/5831061>. The National Archives is currently closed due to COVID-19. Digitization of the Chinese Exclusion Act Case Files will resume when the facility reopens.

We Love LA Chinatown Webinar

BY SUSAN DICKSON

As part of Asian Pacific Heritage Month OCA-GLA planned a webinar, *We Love LA Chinatown*. George Yin, the moderator, briefly discussed three parts of Chinese history: the reality of the history of struggle of waves of Chinese immigration; the imagination of others about the Chinese as an inferior race or an object of fantasy; and the bridge of commitment to the future. The brief film, "Street Angel", which was made by filmmaker and performance artist Michelle Sui was previewed. Throughout the film Michelle walks through LA Chinatown and performs in various locations. Michelle discussed her rediscovery of Chinatown as a destination for local artists.

CHSSC member Eugene Moy, who is also in the film, joined her on the panel to discuss LA Chinatown. Eugene related the history of Chinatown from Old Chinatown to New Chinatown, China City, and the City Market, the wholesale produce center on San Pedro. Eugene also discussed Chinatown as a real community of families and the businesses that have given Chinatown a strong sense of community for immigrants.

Another panelist, Lydia Lin, co-owner of Steep LA Tea Room, discussed her decision to start a business in Chinatown was rooted in the desire to bring the tea culture to LA. COVID-19 has forced her successful business to pivot in order to succeed.

The webinar was a successful partnership of OCA-GLA with community groups including CHSSC.

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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.

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Chinese Brown Glazed Stoneware Jars

BY LINDA BENTZ

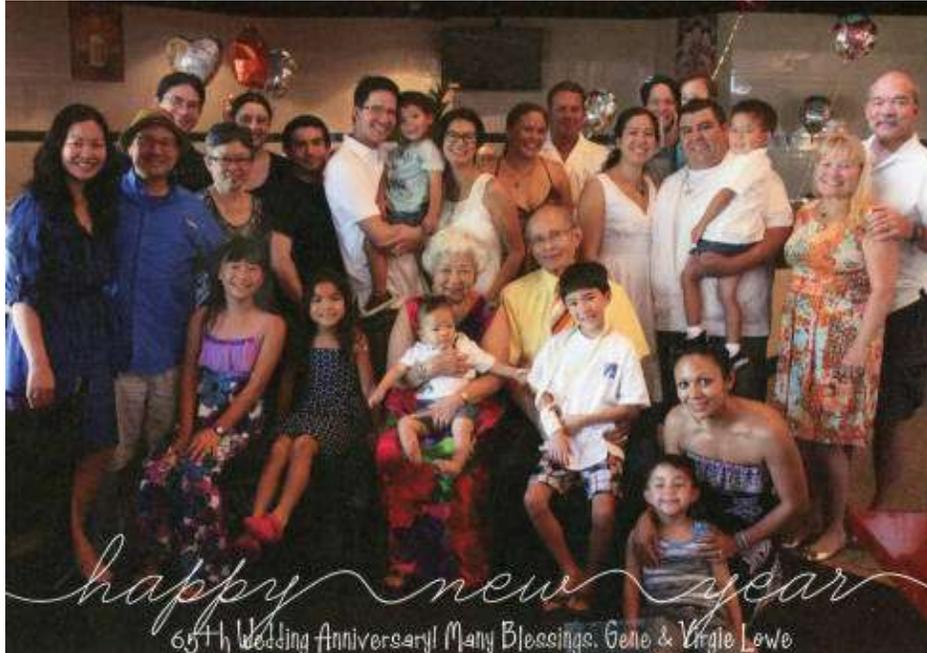
Chinese brown glazed stoneware (CBGS) jars, utilitarian vessels, are found in most 19th century Chinese American archaeological sites. Whole jars and fragments were recovered in the excavation of the Old Los Angeles Chinatown. These vessels were used for food storage and were mass-produced in China. There is no difference between the jars found in China and those found at historical Chinese sites in the United States. Historian Phillip Choy described the kilns where the stonewares were manufactured. The CBGS found in Chinese historical sites were produced in the kilns such as the Nanfeng kiln in Shiwan, Guangdong Province. Shiwan was once a ceramic town of no less than ninety-nine kilns, but today only the Nanfeng kiln remains. The kiln was built in the reign of Zhengde (1426-1436) and operated for 500 years to the present day.

Some of the stoneware vessels collected in the Old Los Angeles Chinatown were soy sauce jars, liquor jars and wide mouthed jars. The soy sauce jar held other liquids beside soy sauce such as liquor, black vinegar and peanut oil. The liquor jar held two types of alcohol that was distilled. The liquor was consumed for medicinal use, cooking as well as drinking. The wide mouth jars were produced in many sizes and held foods such as preserved tofu; sweet bean paste; black, brown and white beans; pickled turnips; cabbage and shrimp paste.

Small brown glazed stoneware jars were also recovered from the Old Los Angeles Chinatown. It has been suggested that these jarlets held Chinese medicinal herbs, or other high value substances.

Do you remember seeing Chinese brown glazed stoneware jars in your family home? If so, what did the jars contain? Were they reused for other purposes? We would like to hear from you, as your memories will add to the archaeological record. Please email us at info@chssc.org.





Eugene Henry Lowe (1930-2020)

BY SUSIE LING

Eugene Henry Lowe was a 4th generation American, born in 1930 in San Diego to Ann Tinloy and Albert Lowe, and brother to Al and later, Evelyn. His father worked for the Bank of America in Calexico, in the Imperial Valley, before moving north in 1939 to open Lowe and Sons gift shop at 463 E. Colorado Boulevard in Pasadena. In 1948, Lowe and Sons hired the first African American to work in retail on Colorado Boulevard. For its 56 years in service, Lowe and Sons had 9 locations and became an interior design business.

At the age of 15, Eugene attended USC and graduated in 1949. In 1948, Eugene married Virginia Ng-Yuen Lowe, a Los Angeles native. They had three children Virgene, Jeff, and Roger. Eugene and Virginia managed Lowe's Office Furniture. Eugene also attended Fuller Seminary for two years. They were with the Pasadena Covenant and the San Gabriel Presbyterian Church.

In 1965, Eugene achieved an MBA from USC. In 1977, he was admitted to the California State Bar, one of very few attorneys who passed the bar exam through self-study. He served 42 years in family and probate law. When he was six, Eugene played a Chinese boy in *The Little Rascals*. In their senior years, Eugene and Virginia enjoyed acting in some commercials. Eugene and Virginia were married for 72 years and often surrounded by grandchildren, great-grandchildren, and a network of friends.



May Donations:

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Chinese Historical Society of Southern California

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Community Calendar

June 21, 2020, 11:00 AM PDT

Virtual talk by Prof. Charlotte Brooks on her book, *American Exodus*, about the many Chinese American families who migrated to China in the early 1900's to seek better opportunities, in light of Exclusion and racism against Chinese in the U.S., and a desire to support the future of China. Info and RSVP at <https://www.eventbrite.com/e/talk-story-american-exodus-tickets-106414414378>

July 1, 2020, Time TBD

The Chinese American Museum is hosting a Book Talk on Wednesday, July 1st with Arthur Dong and guest moderator, Janet Yang to support Dong's book, *Hollywood Chinese: The Chinese in America Feature Films*. The event will conclude with a Q&A and a chance to chat directly with Arthur Dong. An opportunity to hear Arthur if you missed his talk at CHSSC in February. More info and RSVP will be posted at: <http://camla.org/upcomingevents/>

Late July

8th Annual Yosemite/Sing Peak Pilgrimage. A virtual tour sharing Chinese American history and food in the High Sierra.