

FEBRUARY 2022

### February Monthly Meeting

## The Untold Chinese History in Yosemite



Ranger Yenyen Chan will talk about the new Chinese Laundry exhibit and give an update on the historic information about the Chinese in Yosemite. Jack Shu will discuss how the CHSSC Pilgrimage helped shape the ways that the National Park Service presents this narrative.



**Wednesday, Feb 2, 2022, 7pm**  
**Free to attend. RSVP via Eventbrite**  
**on the CHSSC website:**  
**<https://chssc.org>**

As a result of research that was coming to light regarding Chinese contributions in Yosemite National Park, a small group thought it would be a good idea to have an annual celebration of these contributions in the park. That was the start of the Yosemite Pilgrimage project which CHSSC helped launch ten years ago and has been its lead organizer. Since then, there have been great outdoor educational walks in Yosemite, tasty potlucks, a State Resolution to commemorate the contribution of Chinese Americans, many articles written about the event, and, last October, the opening of Yosemite's Chinese laundry building exhibit. The new exhibit shares with the public the stories and history of people who had not been portrayed much before.

Join us at our February 2nd meeting. CHSSC's Eugene Moy will introduce and moderate the talk, which will include a discussion of what we have learned and what are some of the next steps forward for this project.

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## President's Letter

Happy Year of the Tiger! CHSSC greets the challenges of the new year with enthusiasm.

CHSSC has many on-going projects. First and foremost, CHSSC continues our commitment to make our archives not only accessible to the public, but interesting as well. Our interns are busy updating our Duty and Honor collection by adding photos and old interviews to a newly created online exhibit. Another online exhibit will focus on Evergreen Cemetery. The interns are sorting through the large number of books donated by Paul Chace and John Jung's son so that we can list them on Libib.

More than 40 years ago CHSSC and UCLA established the Southern California Chinese American Oral History project. CHSSC members conducted 169 interviews. Our goal this year is to put these newly digitized interviews online.

With the help of the Louie Family Foundation grant, CHSSC will be researching the history of Grandview Gardens Restaurant in order to make an online exhibit. The focus of the exhibit will be two large Tyrus Wong murals which belong to CHSSC. The murals haven't been seen since the mid 90s.

Our outreach is expanding due to our popular Zoom program meetings. In January, Lorraine Dong, a professor in the Asian American Studies Department at San Francisco State University, spoke about her journey to collect her family's history. Many Chinese Family History Group members joined us to learn about events in Chinese American history that affected the Dong family.

The finding aids for our archival collections, created by our interns, are attracting the attention of researchers. In February, a PhD student from Chicago will visit our archives to look for information for his dissertation. This is part of our vision of making the Center a research destination.

CHSSC is finally ready to move ahead with our plans to update and improve both of our buildings, better known as the Heritage and Visitors Center. Construction will be a challenge, but it will prepare us for the future when the Center can be open to the public.

Susan Dickson

Take the time to renew your membership before  
Chinese New Year, February 1, 2022.

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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.



## February Monthly Meeting (cont.)

### Featured Speakers



Yen-Yen Chan

A graduate of Yale College and the Yale School of Forestry-Environmental Studies, Yen-Yen Chan works as a U.S. Park Ranger in Yosemite National Park. Her activities focus on natural and cultural tours. She spends much of her time teaching about the rich history of Yosemite.

In 2011 Yen-Yen created a YouTube video of the history of the Chinese in Yosemite. The following year, Yen-Yen worked with CHSSC and the National Park Service (NPS) to create an annual pilgrimage to Yosemite to help spread the history of the Chinese and their contributions to the park. Yen-Yen is credited with telling the story of Tie Sing, a cook for the Mather Mountain Party, and helps to lead a pilgrimage to Sing Peak, the remote mountain named in honor of Tie Sing.

After years of working with the NPS, the National Parks Conservation Association (NPCA), Yosemite Conservancy, and CHSSC, Yen-Yen participated in the ribbon-cutting for a new exhibit about the history of the Chinese in Yosemite at the refurbished laundry building adjacent to the Wawona Hotel. Yen-Yen continues to work with CHSSC and NPS to improve the exhibit which will open to the public in April 2022.



Jack Shu

Jack Shu has 29 years of experience with the California Department of Parks and Recreation primarily as a Parks Superintendent. He has received numerous awards and commendations; such as from the California Senate Rules Committee for developing programs to serve youth and families; “Urban Hero” award from People for Parks in Los Angeles; and the President’s Award from the California Police Activities League.

Jack has also been a consultant on diversity strategies for organizations and community involvement programs. He has conducted training programs on diversity and outdoor recreation leadership, meeting the needs of law enforcement, national and state agencies.

In 2020 Jack ran for public office and became the first Asian American City Councilmember in La Mesa, California. He now serves on the governing Board of the regional planning agency and air pollution control district.

Jack has been involved in the Yosemite Pilgrimage from its inception. In 2022 he will be attempting to summit Sing Peak for the tenth year in a row. This project commemorates the contributions of Tie Sing and other lesser known people who contributed to the history of Sierra Nevada Mountains.



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## CHSSC's Five Chinatowns Oral History Project

Do you have memories of the Chinese American community in Los Angeles before 1965? Are you willing to sit for two oral history interviews with society interns to record those memories? If so, volunteer to be interviewed for the CHSSC's Five Chinatowns oral history program. This summer, our high school and college interns will be conducting and cataloging oral history interviews focused on Chinese American life in Los Angeles before 1965. We are looking for community members who are willing to have their memories recorded by our summer interns. All memories are welcome, no matter how big or small. Our program is continuing this summer after a generous donation by one of our society members. Take advantage of this opportunity to have your memories documented for history.

The ideal candidates will be seventy-years or older and be willing to sit for two one-hour oral history interviews with one of our interns this summer. All interviews will be conducted via phone or on Zoom. You do not have to currently live in Southern California. Youth interns will transcribe the interviews and work with you to make sure that the public version of the interviews reflect your experiences and memories. These edited oral histories will be included in our Five Chinatowns book and on a related website. The unedited transcripts will be archived in the CHSSC's permanent collection. Contact William Gow at [wgow@outlook.com](mailto:wgow@outlook.com) for more information.

A major donation received earlier this month will fund four interns this summer. This generosity is greatly appreciated.



The Chinese Historical Society of Southern California (CHSSC) is accepting applicants to its 2022 Summer Chinese American History Internship focused on documenting Los Angeles Chinatown before 1965. For more information and to apply, visit [chssc.org/internship](http://chssc.org/internship).

**APPLY BY  
MARCH 15,  
2022**



FEBRUARY 2022

## New Collection of CHSSC Records and Community Histories

CHSSC Archives is pleased to announce the addition of five boxes of historical material to our collections, generously donated last month by Munson Kwok and Suellen Cheng. The boxes consist of a wide variety of records that chronicle both CHSSC's history as well as that of Chinese American communities in Los Angeles.

Highlights of the donated materials include watercolor paintings of Old Chinatown, a scrapbook of CHSSC events dating back to the 1970s, color slides from the Golden Spike Centennial event at Lang Station, photographs from the Southern California Oral History project, and several artifacts such as plates donated on behalf of Peter SooHoo, Jr. and a Pacific Coast Railroad spike.

Once processed, this collection will also have a published finding aid online, which we hope will encourage researchers, community members, and any interested parties to visit the Chinatown Heritage Center and see these fascinating materials for themselves.



Charter Member and former president, Munson Kwok, donates his personal collection of materials from the Chinatown Redevelopment Project. Also pictured are Linda Bentz and Coryn Hardison.



Munson Kwok presents president Susan Dickson a copy of the 2 commemorative books of the Chinese American Citizens Alliance CGM project. Also pictured are Coryn Hardison and Linda Bentz.



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## Hiram Wai Kwan

May 7, 1924 – December 16, 2021



Hiram Kwan, a prominent attorney in the Los Angeles Chinatown community since the 1950's, has passed away at the age of 97.

Hiram was born in Cuba where his father, a bilingual banker was tasked with opening a new branch of the Bank of Canton to serve the growing Chinese community there. After three years, the family returned to San Francisco before moving to Los Angeles. Hiram had 4 brothers and 2 sisters.

Throughout his youth Hiram was very busy. He attended Chinese school 6 days a week—first at the Chinese Congregational Church and later at the Presbyterian Church on East Adams. He had a series of part-time jobs: working on an asparagus farm, cleaning the Congregational church, delivering papers, working as a busboy and as a store clerk.

WWII changed his life. Hiram moved to San Francisco where he trained as a radio operator at San Francisco City College. He studied at San Mateo City College to finish a degree in electrical engineering. As an aviation cadet, he trained to be a navigator for the B-24. Afterwards he went overseas: Hawaii, the Philippines, Iwo Jima (Shima), and Tokyo. He became Second Lieutenant. After his discharge, he stayed in the reserves for 25 years.

Hiram originally wanted to be an engineer and to move to China to be successful. In 1948 when the Nationalist government left the Mainland, Hiram and his brothers switched to law. Hiram graduated from USC in 1953. He also got a teaching credential and taught contract law and immigration law at USC, Pepperdine and Southwestern Law Schools. Hiram was the first Chinese American to be appointed to be a federal prosecutor in California. He worked 3 years as a federal prosecutor in LA before working in civil law fraud cases. He started his own office in Chinatown in 1957, eventually forming the largest Chinese American law firm in Los Angeles. Although he had a general practice, he did a lot of immigration law. He helped form many business corporations and partnerships in the community. He continued working into his 90s.

In addition to his legal and teaching work, Hiram supported USC alumni groups, helped found the Southern California Chinese American Lawyers Association, joined and became president of the American Immigration Lawyers Association of Los Angeles, and was a co-organizer and Commander of the American Legion Post 628 in Chinatown. He remembered his roots, becoming active in the Lung Kong Tin Yee Association and the International Kwan Association. Hiram also joined the Chinese American Citizens Alliance in 1953; up to his passing, he was the senior living member of the Los Angeles C.A.C.A. In May 2021, he was honored by the C.A.C.A.'s Chinese American WWII Veterans Congressional Gold Medal project. With all of his community involvement, the CHSSC recognized his service to country and community with a Golden Spike Award in 2014. The CHSSC has also published a biographical article on Hiram in 2016 (Chinese Americans in the Legal Profession). We will miss his intelligence and leadership.



## January Donations

### *In Memory of Rose Hom*

Peter Ahn  
Linda Bentz  
The family of Madeline Lee Tham: Madeline Tham,  
Marla Chung, Les & Cheryl Hata, Lori & Joe Vachon,  
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### *In Memory of Frieda and Allen Wong*

Bob Lee and Jin Hing Co.

### *In Memory of Kwan Ying and Gin C. Young*

Cynthia & Gary Young

### *In Memory of Hiram W. Kwan*

Adeline and Calvin Chan

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Evelyn Lu, Jane Tam, Aaron Hugh, Adrienne Hugh

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### *In Honor of Munson Kwok's 80th Birthday*

Joanne & Winston Young

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Helen Chan

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# Chinese Historical Society of Southern California

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