



Locke Foundation Newsletter 樂居鎮基金會

Preserving Locke's history and legacy

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Summer 2017

www.locke-foundation.org

Locke Foundation Scholarship Awards



Lauren Korth, field representative for Assemblyman Jim Frazier; Colton Zhang, Stuart Walthall, Carlin Cline and Christine Hoang. (Photo courtesy of Norval Chan.)

At the annual Locke Asian Pacific Spring Festival, Locke Foundation president Stuart Walthall awarded 3 scholarships to college-bound seniors from the Delta community. They were selected on academic achievement, letters of recommendation and essays on What can I do to help the town of Locke preserve its heritage?

The winners include (1) Colton Zhang, Kennedy High School, Sacramento, heading for San Jose State to major in aeronautical engineering; Christine Hoang, Monterey Trail High School, Elk Grove, heading to UC Santa Barbara, majoring in communications and Asian American Studies; (3) Carlin Cline, Rio Vista High School, heading to Cal Poly San Luis Obispo, majoring in industry management.

Lauren Korth, representing Assemblyman Jim Frazier, District 11, presented resolutions to each scholarship recipient and to Locke Foundation.

Main Street vendors and activity stations

By Mark Miller

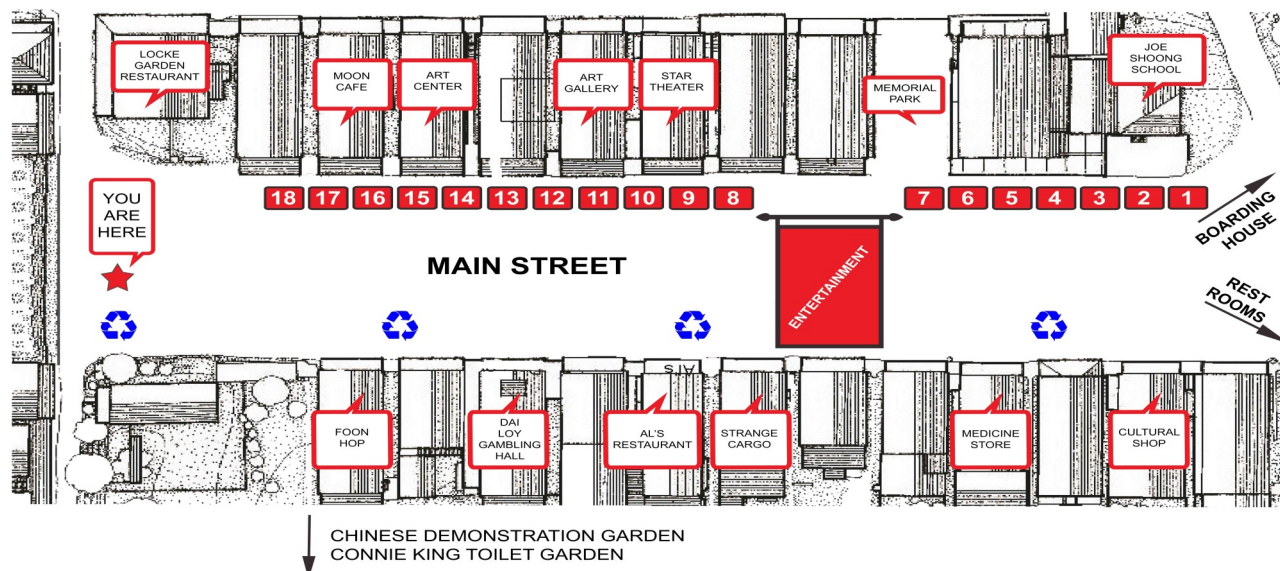
1. LOCKE FOUNDATION INFORMATION
2. LOCKE FOUNDATION MERCHANDISE
3. PERFORMER CHECK IN
4. JOHN ZHANG HATS

5. CHINESE PAPER LANTERNS
6. MRS. KWOK
7. JINAN
8. HENRY PUBLIC ANNOUNCEMENTS

9. MRS. VUONG TOYS
10. WALNUT GROVE LIBRARY
11. SMUD
12. CACS

13. MY SISTER'S HOUSE
14. OCA
15. SHASTA SHAVED ICE
16. MR. POPS

17. PANDA EXPRESS
18. STEVIE'S STEAMERS



Chinese Pioneers in the Foothills of Amador County

Article and Photos by Stuart Walthall

The following article is extracted and reproduced from a number of chapters from *Banished & Embraced - The Chinese in Fiddletown and the Mother Lode* by Elaine Zorbas. A majority of the text contained in this article is taken verbatim from the author's book. Selections, occasional rephrasing and additional text (in italics) added by Stuart Walthall. Photographs by Stuart Walthall or from the book.

Founded in 1915, Locke is one of California's newest Chinatowns. Contrasting Locke's relatively youthful history is a much older legacy of the Chinese presence in California. It is the history of a dream which the Chinese called gum saan - Gold Mountain. That dream offered hope to the people of southwest China during desperate times.

The discovery of gold in 1848 sparked a mad rush for quick and easy riches. Men from across the U.S., Mexico, South America, Europe and China came to California (gum saan) to make their fortunes.

The epidemic of gold fever among the Chinese was especially intense. Additional factors encouraged a wave of immigration from the southern province of Guangdong (Canton) during the late 1840s. There was overpopulation, lack of land, inundation of floods and consequent famine, clan warfare, local uprisings and rebellion.

In 1852 approximately twenty thousand people from China came to Gold Mountain. The vast majority of Chinese immigrants to California were men, many of which were married. Most Chinese men did not intend to stay permanently. The responsibility to provide for the family was a powerful incentive to work hard, make money and then return home. Arriving in California with high hopes, these Chinese immigrants encountered extreme hardship and hostility in the land of opportunity, yet they endured. A few even prospered. Some stayed despite the many obstacles they encountered.

A majority of Chinese who came to California arrived in San Francisco. From there they set off to the foothills of the interior where placer mining was active. The Sacramento and San Joaquin rivers brought the newcomers on boats to the cities of Sacramento and Stockton, and from there they traveled by stage, pack horse or on foot towards camps in the mining regions in the Sierra Nevada foothills.

Chinese neighborhoods, or Chinatowns, became a visible part of these growing towns, all connected with gold discoveries nearby. The Chinese lived clustered together where they could socialize and do business with people who spoke the same language. Chinese sections were located in areas of commercial activity, usually along the main street of town. They were close to the centers of trade yet segregated because of their ethnicity and race.

Large Chinatowns were established in Jackson, Ione, Drytown and Fiddletown. Towns with smaller Chinese neighborhoods included Volcano, Lancha Plana and Amador

City. Chinese were also present in Plymouth and Sutter Creek.

FIDDLETOWN



Elaine Zorbas

Little remains of the various Chinatowns once located in the Amador County region of the foothills. Fiddletown is the exception. It has more structures remaining from an early Chinatown than any other community in California. All were built in the mid-1850s or early 1860s - the Chew Kee Store, the Chinese Gambling House opposite, the Chinese General Store to the east as well as an adobe building on a nearby hill. Furthermore, the Chew Kee Store

survived with furnishing and artifacts intact until its last Chinese inhabitant died in 1965. And equally important, its written papers have been preserved, many of these in Chinese, now translated.

Fiddletown started out as a mining camp in 1849 during the height of the gold rush, attracting miners from many parts of the world. According to legend, it was settled initially by a group of miners from Missouri who played fiddle during slow times. The town started to grow in 1852 after gold discoveries in nearby terrain enticed miners and merchants into the area. This was also the year that thousands of Chinese arrived in California in search of *gum saan*.

By the mid-1850s Fiddletown had a population of two thousand. By the end of that decade, Chinese had formed their own neighborhood and commercial section. Main Street Chinatown included merchandise stores and groceries, the herb shop, gambling houses, brothels, restaurants, residences and boarding houses.

By 1860 close to a third of the population of greater Fiddletown was Chinese. The Chinese were a major constituent of the town's workers and residents for the next several decades. A few Chinese residents purchased property on Main Street, contrary to the common belief that Chinese could not own land.

THE CHEW KEE STORE

Dr. Yee Fung Cheung was the first known occupant to live and work in the rammed-earth building on Main Street known as the Chew Kee Store. It was constructed by Chinese workers using an ancient technique of packing (i.e. ramming) earth mixed with water and straw between removable wooden forms, resulting in walls about two feet thick. This technique was used to build the Great Wall of China. The building faces south, an auspicious orientation according to the ancient principle of *feng shui* or geomancy.



The Chew Kee Store S. Walthall

cy.

Yee Fung Cheung was trained in China in the ancient science of herbal medicine, and this proved to be a much more lucrative prospect in frontier California than the difficult work of gold mining. His skills proved valuable to those who ventured into his shop after learning of the efficacy of his cures.

He had about 150 herbs, an essential number for practicing herbal medicine. They were carefully arranged in twenty-five drawers, each divided into four or six sections and labeled with Chinese characters. Most were imported from China.

Dr. Yee Fung Cheung expanded his business to Sacramento where he gave medical treatment to Chinese workers who came from Guangdong Province to construct the western portion of the transcontinental railway.

His next destination for expanding his herb business was Virginia City, Nevada, which attracted Chinese during the big silver strike known as the Comstock Lode. In 1869, his younger son, Yee Lok Sam, came from China to join him. Together, with another partner, they established their medical practice in Virginia City. 1869 also marked the completion of the transcontinental railroad.

Dr. Yee Fung Cheung spent his final years practicing herbal medicine in Sacramento before departing for his village in China where he died in 1907. His son Yee Lok Sam (known as T. Wah Hing) made his life in California, bringing his family to join him. Along with his father, he established an office in Sacramento as a physician and a surgeon, where he continued to practice herbal medicine for the next thirty years.

The details of the sale or conveyance of Dr. Yee Fung Cheung's rammed-earth building are unknown, but it is plausible that due to his busy enterprises in Sacramento and Virginia City Dr. Yee turned over the operation of his herb store to prominent Fiddletown businessman and gambler Chew Kee.

When Chew Kee took over the herb store in 1884, he turned it into a general merchandise and grocery store that also provided medicine. Under his management, the

original herb drawers, baskets, prescription packets, and other items from Dr. Yee Fung Cheung remained in the commercial front of the store. Customers were also able to purchase whatever paraphernalia they needed for gambling. Playing cards, mah jong tiles, fortune telling cards and dominoes (pai gow) were all available at the store. The store also functioned as a gathering place for Chinese residents of Fiddletown.

Chew Kee and his wife Sigh Choy were both in their forties when they were requested to take custody of a very young boy. His parents, who also lived in Fiddletown, were returning to China and could not take the child with them. Chew Kee and Sign Choy, being childless, would have welcomed the opportunity to raise the boy, Fong Chow Yow. They added a small child's cot next to their plank bed and Chow Yow became their "adopted" son. (When Chow was



Interior of Chew Kee Store Flickr.com

seventeen years old, he was formally adopted by Chew Kee). Starting in the 1890s they made several expansions to the existing building to accommodate a second bedroom, kitchen, and living space.

Having weathered several financial difficulties, Chew Kee continued to operate his business through 1912. His wife Sigh Choy died several years before. When he was 76 years old in 1913, he deeded his properties along with the Chew Kee Store, with "love and affection" to his adopted son, Fong Chow Yow. Chew Kee died one month later on July 18, 1913 and was buried in Fiddletown's Chinese cemetery.

Read the story of Fong Chow Yow/"Jimmie Chow" in the next issue of the LF newsletter.

Chew Kee Store in Fiddletown is open to the public free of charge on Saturdays, noon-4pm, from April through October. For more information, log on to www.fiddletown.info

Celebrating Asian Pacific Heritage in Locke: A Class Act

Photos courtesy of Norval Chan

Excitement buzzed on Main Street on a sunny Saturday as preparations were underway to invigorate the sleepy town of Locke on May 20, 2017.



The sixth annual Locke Asian Pacific Festival kicked off with the resounding drums and gongs by Eastern Ways



Silver Flower, Iu-Mien dancers, makes its first debut at Locke Street Festival.



Jim Chong, Wok Star radio personality, returned again to emcee the festival. He is taking a break from the balmy weather with a treat from Shasta Valley Shave Ice!



Kudos to volunteers from Delta High School in Clarksburg who saved the day by providing muscle power in setting up canopies, tables and chairs.



Award-winning robotics team from Kennedy High School show off their un-manned creations.



Wayne Miller greets visitors to Boarding House and manages the gift shop sales.



Main Street vendors offer array of food and festival items



Ofa Mann dancers provide of medley of Pacific Islander folk dances.



Children's author Oliver Chin displays his books.



Long time Locke residents Morrison Chun and sister Lorraine Chun Fong return to their roots.

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Raffle
LF Sales
Volunteers
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Logistics

Photographer
Poster artist
Graphic support
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Eileen Leung
Anita Lo
Anita Lo, Nelson Loo
Honey Lum
Eva Chu
Clarence Chu, Mark Miller, Wayne Miller, Stuart Walthall
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Stuart Walthall

Our sponsors make it possible for the Locke Foundation to present the annual street festival with free admission

10,000 Steps: One Woman's Insistence on the American Dream

By Eileen Leung

Jeff Gillenkirk wrote a one-act play on the life of Connie King, a Chinese woman born in the Delta who cared for the Chinese bachelors of rural Locke, California. After the turn of the 20th century, Locke grew from a bump in the road to a vibrant town with Chinese immigrant workers who cleared the deltas and built levees—for \$1 day.

10,000 Steps shares the story of how the residents turned the sleepy town into a colorful destination of restaurants, brothels, gambling halls, dry goods stores, saloons, hotels and homes. And how this woman led the campaign for the town citizens to own the land beneath their homes.



The monologue was performed by Nancy Wang, of Eth-Noh-Tec, on June 3, 2017, at the San Francisco International Art Festival at Fort Mason.

Nancy Wang carries her invalid husband up-stairs each day. Photos courtesy of Jeff Kan Lee, former resident of Locke.



Q & A panel: James Motlow, co-author of *Bitter Melon* and Locke resident; Sylvia Sun Minnick, historian; and Eileen Leung, Locke Foundation.

Chinese Demo Garden in Full Bloom

By Stuart Walthall

After a very wet winter and a late spring, the Locke Chinese Demonstration Garden is finally up and running. Weeds have been whacked, ground tilled, trellises rebuilt, furrows dug, drip lines laid, and vegetation planted. And from all early indications this season will yield a bumper crop.

Iconic vegetables which once served as staples in the daily diets of Locke's original Chinese residents are now thriving and ready for visitors to view and enjoy. This season's crops include: bitter melon (fu gwa), winter melon (dong gwa), long beans (dow gok), Chinese gourds (hulu gwa), luffa (cee gwa), bok choy, Chinese



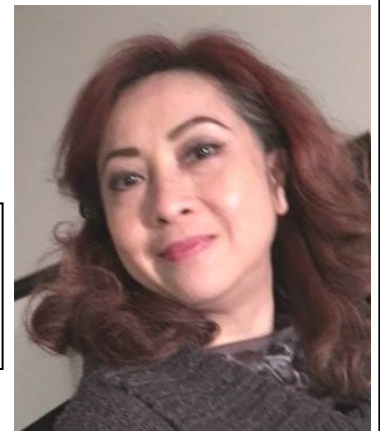
red dates (hong jao), cucumber (wong gwa), several varieties of grapes, decorative flowers, and more.

And to commemorate the lives of the early 20th century Russian immigrants who once lived and commercially fished along Locke Slough, Russian sweet melons have been added to this year's demonstration garden.

To visit the Locke Chinese Demonstration Garden, take one of the wooden walkways from Main Street to the back portion of the town, veer right along the gravel road, and look for the Chinese calligraphy sign above the demo garden entrance. While there you can also view the Connie King Toilet Garden display. Be sure to bring your camera.

Those interested in supporting the Chinese Demonstration Garden Project may do so by sending a check to: Locke Foundation P.O. Box 1085 Walnut Grove, Ca 95690.

Anita Lo, loyal Locke Foundation supporter, painted the Chinese sign on the left for Demo Garden.



National Historic Landmark Finally Arrives

In 1990, the Locke Historic District was designated a National Historic Landmark by the National Parks Service. It took 27 years for the NPS Marker to arrive in Locke, but we are glad it finally did. Volunteer and former Locke resident Nelson Loo, a professional mason, did a masterful job in installing the brick pedestal under the crape myrtle tree in the Memorial Garden, a fitting location for all to enjoy.



Photo courtesy of Kelley Woodward



Nelson Loo
Mason extraordinaire

SAVE THE DATE

Locke Reunion Dinner Food-Raffle-Silent Auction

Date: Saturday, October 28, 2017

Time: 6pm-8pm

Place: Hong Kong Islander Restaurant,
5765 Freeport Blvd. Sacramento, CA
95822

Price: \$500/table of 10; \$55/person

Benefit for Locke Foundation projects to
sustain the historic legacy of Locke.

www.locke-foundation.org



Locke Foundation Membership Application/Renewal

Last Name _____ First Name _____

Mailing address _____

Email address _____ Tel () _____ Fax () _____

I would like to volunteer for the following activities:

Volunteer docent _____ Donor _____ Visitor Center Volunteer _____

Contributor to newsletter _____ Media contacts _____ Landscape maintenance _____

Membership Dues: circle one

_____ \$25 Individual Annual/\$200 Lifetime

_____ \$50 Family or Non-Profit Organization Annual/\$300 Lifetime

_____ \$100 Business Annual/\$500 Lifetime

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Locke Foundation
P. O. Box 1085
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