



Locke Foundation Newsletter 樂居鎮基金會

Preserving Locke's history and legacy

www.lockeca.com

Summer 2014

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Main Street Awakens at Asian Pacific Street Festival

On May 10, 2014, the 6th annual Asian Pacific Spring Festival on Locke's Main Street was kicked off with a lion dance and martial arts demonstration by the VFW Chung Mei Post under the direction of Sifu Dean Lee and Ron Aviles. Over 20 young adults and children pranced through Main Street with frolicking lions, a traditional way to celebrate Chinese gatherings.



Over 500 visitors came to enjoy the stage entertainment, music by Loki Rhythm, arts and crafts vendors, calligraphy demonstration, community organization exhibits and food concessionaires.

High-end raffle prizes, such as a Keurig coffee maker, custom-made chopping board set, and electric paper shredder were offered to

winning ticket holders. Special acknowledgement to the Robotics team from School of Engineering and Sciences, Sacramento, who volunteered with logistics.



Stage entertainment line-up included Wayne Huey from Red Panda Acrobat, Shaolin martial arts performers from Kungfu Dragon USA, Polynesian dancers from Pan Pacific Dance Studio, Tai Chi performers from Confucius Chinese School, Japanese dancers from Sakura Minyo Doo Koo Kai and Capitol Chinese Orchestra.

This free annual event is supported by Locke Foundation, community sponsors and donations. Chaired by Joyce Eng, the event committee included Clarence Chu, Eva Chu, Stuart Walthall, Wayne Miller and Eileen Leung. (Photos courtesy of Eva Chu and Margie Granger.)

Connie's Toilet Garden Comeback

By Deborah Mendel



*Connie King sitting amongst her prized toilets.
Photo by: Kayla*

At the end of her town tours for the Locke Foundation, Connie King would usually make her infamous toilet garden the final destination for her group. She would beam with pride and use the spot to share with her audience the trials, tribulations and prejudices she encountered while growing up as a Chinese American in California.

The history of her ancestors and the story of Locke was an important message to convey to all she met here in the Delta. Well into her 80's, she would always finish her tours in her inimitable, impish and creative way here at her personal toilet garden- an imaginative and artistically displayed array of discarded vintage toilets and toilet tanks filled with a variety of plants, succulents, old faucet parts, toilet parts, plumbing and cacti.

Her final comments invited her guests to locate amongst the various plants the 'little boy, 'young man' and 'old man'. They were, of course, three strategically placed cacti in various stages of rigidity and size. Hearing unanimous laughter emanating from her groups there at her tour's last stop, I always knew what they had just seen.

Connie's whimsical garden has been relocated to

the entrance of the Chinese Vegetable Demonstration Garden, located across from the home where she lived since 1947. Locke resident artist and sculptor Brock Alexander has rearranged the display in a manner he felt would please Connie. Locke resident Kim Robertson lovingly maintains the toilet garden now.

Although last year's frost damaged many of the succulents, new ones have been purchased with funds from the Locke Foundation and placed among those Connie planted herself. A volunteer tomato plant has also drifted in on the wind as if to say "Hey, let's not get too serious about this!"

I think Connie would be pleased with this small part of her legacy and happy to know that on any given weekend at least one tourist will stop you on Main Street and ask..."Where's the toilet garden?"



Connie's toilets now welcome guests into the Chinese demonstration gardens. Photo by Deborah Mendel.

You can show your support for the town of Locke and the Locke Foundation by contributing to the Connie King Toilet Garden project and the Locke Chinese Demonstration Garden. We can always use: succulents, cacti, potting soil, fertilizer, garden tools, seeds, money, and volunteers.

CONTACT US AT:

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Walnut Grove, CA 95690

Or

916-776-4236

Did You Know...

By Stuart Walthall

What do Hearst Castle, Alcatraz, and Locke have in common? Answer: All three are National Historic Landmarks.

National Historical Landmarks are nationally significant historic places designated by the United States Secretary of Interior because they possess exceptional value or quality in illustrating or interpreting the heritage of the United States. Today, fewer than 2500 historic places (nationwide) bear this national distinction.

Working with citizens throughout the nation, the National Historic Landmarks Program draws upon the expertise of the National Park Service staff who work to nominate new landmarks and provide assistance to existing landmarks. National Historic Landmarks are exceptional places. They form a common bond between all Americans. While there are many historic places across the nation, only a small number have meaning to *all* Americans- these we call our National Historic Landmarks. NHLs are designated because they are:

1. Sites where events of national historic significance occurred
2. Places where prominent persons lived or worked
3. Icons of ideals that helped shape the nation
4. Outstanding examples of design or construction
5. Places characterizing a way of life

Locke was listed in the National Register of Historic Places in 1971. The vast majority of NRHP properties are *locally significant*. Consider that there are approximately 2700 properties in California listed in the National Register of Historic Places, but there are only 142 listed as National Historic Landmarks. NHLs, like Locke, are *nationally significant*.

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE (as designated by the U.S. Secretary of Interior- December 14, 1990):

Founded in 1915, Locke is the largest and most intact surviving example of an historic rural Chinese-American community in the United States, including more than 50 commercial and residential buildings and covering approximately 14 acres along the east bank of the Sacramento River, south of the city of Sacramento. Locke is the only such community remaining in the Sacramento-San Joaquin River Delta, which was a particularly important area of rural Chinese settlement.

Now you know.



View from Locke's River Road walkway circa 1970s

I would like to thank Jay Correia, Supervisor, Registration Unit of the California State Office of Historic Preservation, for his valuable assistance in the presentation of this column.



1970's overhead view of Locke from the roof of the Baptist Church

Photos courtesy Historic Architectural Building Survey (HABS)

From the Chinese Demonstration Garden

By Stuart Walthall



"May West" gourds from Locke's Chinese demonstration garden. Photo by Deborah Mendel.

I had always associated these bottle shaped gourds with the (once thriving) Chinese population of Locke. I knew them as May West gourds. I didn't know why they were called May West gourds or why they were so prevalent in Locke. So when I started growing them in Locke's Chinese demonstration garden I figured it was time to find out a little more about this iconic vegetable. I had no idea how interesting these gourds would prove to be.

I got the seeds from my neighbor James who had grown them quite successfully in the past. I asked James how the gourds got their unusual name and he informed me that Locke patriarch Tommy King had given them that name because their shape reminded him of the movie star sex goddess May West.

This slightly ribald snippet most definitely sounded like something Tommy would say. However, it was obvious I needed to do some homework. So I grabbed my notebook and went to visit my friend (and editor of this newsletter) Eileen Leung who happened to be volunteering that day at the Locke Boarding House Museum/Visitors Center. Eileen is active in the Chinese community, speaks fluent Cantonese and Mandarin, and is knowledgeable in both Chinese culture and customs.

Eileen stoically sat at the main desk typing away on the computer keyboard as I explained my mission. She then turned the monitor screen toward me revealing an image that left me a bit confused. It was the screen star, Jackie Chan.

As I took a closer look I saw my mystery gourd hanging from Jackie's belt. It was beautifully painted in shining red and gold, and covered with Chinese lexicons. I looked back at Eileen and she had one of those smarty-pants looks on her face, and then she started scrolling images across the screen.

What I viewed was rather mind blowing. I saw gourds that had been exquisitely carved and others branded with cryptic symbols. Some had gilded representations of animals or flowers. I saw epic Chinese brush paintings containing images of sages and monks carrying flasks fashioned from the gourds. Eileen explained that the vessels were designed to carry water or wine, medicines and magic elixirs... even deadly poisons.

I saw masterfully crafted musical instruments. All three *kingdoms* of musical instruments had been created from these gourds: percussion, wind, and string.

Some gourds had been grown in earthen molds to form different shapes with imprinted designs and then dried to house pet crickets, which were kept for their singing or fighting abilities.

Next there appeared a variety of food items prepared from the flesh of the tender young gourd: stir fries, stews, and soups. It was also juiced, steamed, and dried. (It should be noted here that having grown this veggie myself I could never really get past the odor emitted by the vine and gourd: *burnt plastic!* So go figure).

There were also examples of jewelry and adornments crafted in the shape of the gourd. The form is an important symbol for fertility and longevity as well as a popular charm to ward off evil spirits and disease.



Beautifully decorated vessels created from the gourds

In some dialects the pronunciation of the gourd's name means "happiness" or "good fortune". Which leads us back to the main reason I came to visit Eileen: *What is the name of this extraordinary gourd?*

Answer: **Hulu**. (or calabash). I prefer **hulu**.

So next time you come to Locke, don't let your visit be limited to just Main Street. Take a leisurely stroll to the back of town and check out the community gardens as well as the Chinese demonstration garden. We hope to see you this summer.

Hulu gourd on vine in Locke's Chinese demonstration garden. Photo by Deborah Mendel.



A Bout with Mother Nature

By Brock Alexander

With grit and spit I bit down on my mouthpiece. I circle to his left to avoid his right. I watch his weight transfer into his front leg, and then I know his right hand is on its way. Pow, pow, pow, one after the next he lands his fist on my face. My face becomes his punching bag.

Well, that's what I led most people to believe. If you look at my photo you might think "I was in a boxing match." If I am to be totally honest, the truth is a lot less glamorous. On a walk with my dog out behind Locke I got into poison oak. Poison oak or *Toxicodendron Diversilobum* is found throughout much of western North America. You get a red rash caused by contact with sticky oil called urushiol. The rash is caused and spread by the oil. In my case I got it all over my body including my face, and my eye closed shut. My friends were comparing me to Sloth from the Goonies.

As the story goes, I was on my daily routine walk with my puggle (pug and beagle mixed), when I noticed what looked like an old rusty sign in the trees. The American Picker in me was sure it was worth a million dollars. And even if it wasn't worth anything I still love old rusty junk. I headed off the trail and made a B-line through the trees. I was crashing and snapping branches all the way down. When I got to the sign I found out my million dollar sign was most likely not worth the effort. But that did not stop me from packing out that rusty weathered junk.

I got back to town and showed off my find like a proud father. I laid it on the ground, and decoded what was written on the sign, like Sherlock Homes. I am sure the val-

ue and purpose of this mission was lost on the locals. What can I say? I do what makes me happy.

The next day I got up to go to work and noticed my face was a little red. By mid-day many students were commenting on my swollen face and how it looked like I had been beaten. As the day progressed things got worse. By dinner time my eye was swollen shut and it was time to go to the Doctor. At Kaiser I pulled off my sunglass causing the doctor to wince. I was put on steroids, and given a bill for all my fun.

Did I learn my lesson? Well let's just say the next person to tell me "leaves of three, let it be" is going to get my right fist in their eye.



Brock's close encounter with poison oak.

High School Artists Shine at Moon Café Gallery

Photos by Margie Granger

By Stuart Walthall

It was an unseasonably pleasant evening in Locke, CA. Main Street bustled with activity, and the calm April air was filled with laughter and conversation. Most notable amongst this large and diverse crowd of curious visitors were cadres of well-dressed youth whose exuberance would not be contained. This was their shining moment: the first public presenta-



Instructors Catalina Haynes and Freddy Santana address the crowd.

tion of their artistic creations.

The Senior Class of Laguna Creek's International Baccalaureate Art Department had worked for two years in preparation for this show. IB Art Department instructor Catalina Haynes had ample opportunity to present this show at the high school but Haynes wanted this particular show to be special. She wanted her students' works displayed publicly, as most professional art shows are presented. So she reached out.

Haynes had heard of Locke's Moon Café Gallery and was aware that the gallery had hosted a variety of events: art receptions, music presentations, readings, etc. She contacted Brock Alexander, owner of the Moon Café building and member of the Moon Group Artist Collaborative, and presented her ideas

for the 30-student art show. Alexander happily agreed, and a date was set.

Participating students quickly began preparations for staging their art show. Advertising materials were designed and distributed. A social media publicity blitz was initiated. Students had to decide which of their works would be submitted for showing. Those works then had to be framed or otherwise properly prepared for presentation. Students had to decide what food and beverage was to be served at their reception. And of course, they had to decide what to wear to the event.

And the event was a huge success. The Moon Café Gallery was packed with friends, family, and strangers; all of whom had the pleasure of viewing the eclectic and daring creations of this talented group of young artists. Catalina Haynes and fellow IB Art Instructor Freddy Santana were there offering guidance and support. A frequent comment heard at the event: "I love the energy of this show!"

Congratulations to the Laguna Creek High School IB Senior Art Class for staging a very successful, professional, and meaningful presentation of your works of art.



Family and friends pack Locke's Moon Cafe Gallery.

Rio Vista Student Winner of LF Essay Contest



LF President Clarence Chu presents first prize check to Kayla Danielle Oglesby of Rio Vista

The Locke Foundation Award for Scholarly Excellence for 2014 was presented to Ms. Kayla Danielle Oglesby of Rio Vista High School. Ms. Oglesby is a graduating senior and will be continuing on to college with a goal of

becoming a registered nurse. The Award is given to area high school students who have demonstrated academic excellence and community involvement over a number of years and who submit an essay on how they would help preserve the unique cultural and historic heritage of Locke. Judges for this year's award included Wayne Miller, Clarence Chu, Joyce Eng and Darrel Woo. The award is a \$500 cash prize. In 2013 the Award was presented to Ms. Hannah Dumas of Rio Vista High School.

The award was made possible through a generous donation by Mrs. Winnie Ling of Sacramento.

Locke Centennial Celebration Planning Under Way

The town of Locke was established in 1915. Locke Foundation plans to commemorate the humble beginnings, struggles, survival and sustenance of this Chinese American community with a series of events for a Centennial celebration in 2015. The spirit of Locke's pioneers and forefathers will be honored.

A questionnaire has been mailed to former residents and their families and current residents to survey the scope and breadth of the celebrations. Some of the proposed activities include a one-day reunion event, ongoing photo exhibit showing life from 1915-2015, souvenir commemorative booklet. We are seeking loan of artifacts and documents from family collections.

SAVE THE DATE

LF Harvest Celebration Fundraiser
Saturday, October 25, 2014
Jean Harvie School
Walnut Grove
Noon-4pm



Locke Foundation Membership Application/Renewal

Last Name _____ First Name _____

Mailing address _____

Email address _____ Tel () _____ Fax () _____

I would like to volunteer for the following activities:

Event planning _____ Publicity _____ Membership recruitment _____

Write articles _____ Grant writing _____ Historical restoration _____

Membership Dues: circle one

_____ \$25 Individual Annual/\$200 Lifetime _____ \$50 Family or Non-Profit Organization Annual/\$300 Lifetime

_____ \$100 Business Annual/\$500 Lifetime

Make check payable to Locke Foundation. Please return this form with check to Locke Foundation, P. O. Box 1085, Walnut Grove, CA 95690. Contributions are tax deductible to extent allowed by law. Tax ID: 20-0364281.

Office use only:

Date application received _____ Membership Year _____ Renewal _____

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