



Locke Foundation Newsletter 樂居鎮基金會

Preserving Locke's history and legacy

www.lockeca.com

Summer 2012

lockefoundation@frontiernet.net

Good Vibes on Locke Main Street May 19, 2012

The weather was perfect for a day in the Delta at Locke's annual Asian Pacific Spring Festival. Hundreds meandered through the vendor booths selling jewelry, T-shirts, food, collectibles, clothing and souvenirs. The entertainment was kicked off by a dragon dance performed by students from Sierra Chinese School in Rocklin. Young ladies from the Pan Pacific Dance Studio enthralled the audience with hula and Chinese folk dance. Sean Wu played the Chinese flute to the cadence of the theme from War Horse.

This year's event was our largest ever. Many new faces were seen in Locke that day. Sales of the new Locke T-shirts, new Self-Guided Walking Tour brochure maps, memberships, silent art auction and a prize-filled raffle also made it a profitable fundraiser for the Locke Foundation.

The event would not have been possible without the tireless efforts of chair, Stuart Walthall, and his committee consisting of Clarence Chu, Deborah Mendel, Brock Alexander and Eileen Leung. The Locke Foundation would like to thank the following organizations, businesses, and individuals for their support of the Locke Asian Pacific Spring Festival:

- *Sacramento Chinese Culture Foundation
- *Dan Harris Graphics
- *Clark's Pest Control
- *Brandy Alexander Graphics
- *Brock Alexander
- *James Motlow Photography
- *Loki Rhythm World Music Band
- *Chinatown Mall Culture Fair, Freeman Lee
- *Gordon Walthall Music
- *Milton Briggs Music
- *Sonny 7even
- *Kazuyo Morishita Origami
- *Mike Jones
- *Kim Robertson

- *Darrel and Nancy Woo
- *Colton and Irisa Zhang
- *Connie Yee
- *Anita Lo
- *John Salacan
- *Tony Ragona
- *Jan Woods



Photographs courtesy of Locke Foundation

Locke Community Park Arises from Ashes

By Stuart Walthall

Photos courtesy of Locke Foundation

I would like to thank Whitney Marr, Memorial Park designer and former resident of Locke, for generously providing information most helpful in the creation of this article; but more importantly, for his tireless efforts in helping turn the dream of a Memorial Park into a reality. I am grateful to the many donors and volunteers who gave generously of their time, energy and resources in order to make this project a success.

It was a quiet autumn evening in 1984 when a fire erupted inside Bob Jang's building on Main Street Locke. Through the years the structure had housed a brothel, a gift shop, offices and various other enterprises. At the time of the fire, the building served as a single family residence. Some say the blaze was caused by a grease fire when unattended children attempted to cook on an old gas stove. Regardless of the cause, the results were disastrous.

Volunteers from the Walnut Grove Fire Department fought and contained the blaze, but not before the building lay in a heap of burnt rubble. Miraculously the adjacent Yuen Chong Market and Wah Li Dry Goods Store were saved from the flames. Lingering questions and rumors regarding the fire's origin persisted long after the debris piles were removed, and for years the barren weed infested lot glared like a missing tooth.

After years of tolerating the ugly vacant lot on Main Street some town residents, most notable longtime shop owner and current Chairman of the Locke Foundation Clarence Chu and Locke legend Connie King bantered ideas for a constructive use of the neglected space. It was finally decided that a good use of the lot would be a community park; a place where residents and visitors could sit, rest, and enjoy the uniqueness of Main Street Locke, and perhaps reflect on those individuals who built and once lived in the town.

The concept of a *memorial park* would come later when a young high school student named Elyse Marr, daughter of park designer Whitney Marr, volunteered (after a nudge from her father) to design and organize the construction and installation of the Locke Memorial Park Monument. The story of Elyse Marr and the Monument will be presented in the next issue of LF Newsletter.

Whitney Marr: "On the design of the park, Clarence (Chu) had a layout from a Sacramento landscape architect which I looked at, and it was a meandering landscape that showed

some experimental hodgepodge of different spaces and pieces. I knew immediately that it was totally out of scale and ridiculous. And he had a dollar figure attached to the plan that included the architect's fee as well as some exorbitant construction cost of over \$100 thousand. Clarence needed a plan the he could pin his hopes on."



"So he asked me and I developed a plan that I hoped could be built. There was no fee for my services, and I would leave the construction to Clarence. He asked me simply because I was an architect from Locke and my brother owned the store (Yuen Chong Market) next door to the park. Mostly my role would be to answer some practical questions and make a workable idea of what was to happen. Because of a limited budget, along with other very real concerns overall, I viewed the work as a collaboration with the neighborhood and tried to answer most of their concerns. I also envisioned a neighborhood park that would evolve as funds became available, and to accommodate all of the uses and ideas that would be floated.

"Coming from UC Berkeley School of Architecture, I wanted to be in agreement with the Locke Foundation Board and resist making any kind of architectural statement. And being from Locke, I did not want to come back to town and show off or anything ridiculous like that. Little did I know that Elyse would take care of all that later.



"Placemaking involves laying out appropriate spaces for folks to sit, remember, and commemorate. Really, just a place to reflect. I knew which axial relationship would be

the strongest and put it to paper. Pretty simple. Material came in place as we went. Some was chosen, some just appeared. Just how much was I directing?"

Local contractor Bill Schauer was chosen to build the arched gazebo located at the center of the park. The gazebo would offer a full view of the park, provide shade to those sitting in the rest area, and act as a trellis for growing flower vines. As a point of interest, the arched design of the gazebo was chosen to compliment to arched facade of the Star Theater located on River Road.

As work on the design and its execution proceeded, another crucial task was being spearheaded with equal vigilance. Donations were being sought and procured, and volunteers were stepping forward to help with the project.

The old top soil that remained after the fire had to be removed and replaced with good quality soil. This meant scraping and digging down to a suitable level, removing the littered and depleted old dirt, and bringing in good soil gathered from the open area in the back of town. Good Delta top soil abounds in Locke and the new soil made excellent beds for the Park's flora. Local volunteer Richard Nielsen brought in a back hoe and moved the dirt. Other volunteers including Dustin Marr, Nelson Loo, and Steve Giannetti helped insure that the job was accomplished. Larry Tyson generously gave of his technical expertise by designing the



irrigation system for the Park.

With help from the Walnut Grove Rotary Club, the grounds were leveled. Actually, the ground was graded to slope forward from the

levee located at the rear of the park towards Main Street to ensure proper drainage. Rotarians, including Bruce Tyson, also donated and installed materials used on the walkways and seating area. Town residents helped with levee beautification and general grunt work.

Clarence Chu organized several fund raising activities that generated much needed monies. The first event took place in 2004 on Main Street Locke. The event included a Cantonese Opera company along with lion dancers, food, music, and additional entertainment. Another successful fundraising event was held in 2005 at the Jean Harvey School in Walnut Grove. Entertainment for that event included a martial arts demonstration by the famous Shaolin Monks, a Chinese fashion show, music, plus dinner. These two events alone raised over \$17,000. As a testament to the generosity of Delta folks, many individuals generously opened their

check books to help with the Park Project cause. Now the money was coming in.

With Whitney Marr's plans in full motion and construction of the gazebo and circular brick seating area nearing completion, volunteers started work on the aesthetic features of the park. Large steel water troughs were converted into koi ponds and placed on opposite sides of the central walkway, then stocked with fish and water lilies. Walkways were completed and garden beds were prepared for the trees, shrubs, and flowers soon to be planted.

It quickly became obvious that the job of creating and maintaining the park's landscape area was not a job for amateurs. This is when Daisy Mar, Master Gardener, and future guardian of the park's flora, stepped forward. Daisy masterminded all of the park's floral features. Her story will be told in the third and final installment of this series on the Locke Memorial Park.

After years of planning and months of work, the Community Park was finally completed in October, 2006. The Park Monument was still in the planning and funding stages, and the Memorial Tile Walls had yet to be built. Planting of the grounds and levee had begun but it would take some time for the trees and foliage to mature into a cohesive natural landscape. The park was now a viable, friendly, and serene space ready to welcome visitors and residents. And with the imminent additions of the Monument and Memorial Tile Wall, the park was ready to bloom into The Locke Memorial Park.

Featured in the next quarterly Locke Foundation newsletter: The Story of the Locke Monument and the Young Local Artist Who Created it.

SAVE THE DATE Harvest Moon Celebration

Date: Saturday, October 27, 2012

Time: 12noon-4pm

Place: Jean Harvey School, Walnut Grove

Activities: Food, entertainment, raffle, mahjong tournament

Cost: \$25/person includes meal

Purpose: Fundraising for Locke Foundation

All the Days Were Sunny

Oral Interview with Locke Resident Roberta (Bobbi) Owyang

By Alfred Yee

The synopsis following this section is derived from a group interview with Genelle (Linky) Hamolka, Diana Lee, Eugene Lee, Roberta (Bobbi) Lee, Wallace Owyang, Walter Owyang, and Penny Pedersen in the home of Eugene and Roberta Lee of Granite Bay, California. The interviewees requested a group interview in order to reminisce and converse about their lives in Locke, California, the only existent town in America built and inhabited almost exclusively by Chinese until recent years.

Eugene and Roberta Lee are husband and wife, ages 95 and 93 years, respectively. Genelle (Linky) Hamolka, age 67, and Penny Pedersen, age 70, are daughters of Eugene and Roberta Lee. Wallace Owyang, age 83, and Walter Owyang, age 87, are brothers of Roberta Lee, whose maiden surname is Owyang. (Walter uses Owyang for the phonetic spelling of his Chinese surname.) Diana Lee, age 82, is the daughter of Rita Lee who is the sister of Roberta Lee, Wallace Owyang, and Walter Owyang. Rita Lee, age 103, was not present.

Roberta Lee was born in Walnut Grove in 1914, but raised in Locke. Wallace Owyang and Walter Owyang were born and raised in Locke. Their father built the Lockeport Hotel, in which members of the family lived at irregular periods from about 1915 to 1953 when the family sold the building. Diana Lee was born in San Francisco but visited Locke regularly, often staying for the summer. Eugene Lee was born and raised in Walnut



Family photo before Bobbi was born. Parents Owyang Wing Cheong and Jare Ping, and siblings, Annie, Peter, Ken, Ethel, and Rita.

Grove. Penny Pedersen was born in Walnut Grove but very soon moved to live with her grandparents in the Lockeport Hotel after her family home burned

down. Genelle Hamolka was born in San Francisco. "Whenever I think of Locke, all the days were sunny," Roberta (Bobbi) often said. This sentiment was endorsed by her two brothers, Walter and Wallace, who also grew up in Locke, and by her two daughters, Penny and Genelle (Linky), who spent their most of their juvenile years in Locke. Their memorable experiences took place during the heydays of Locke, primarily in the

1920s and 1930s.

During their childhood, the Owyang children swung on swings on church property, played hide-and-seek around and under the houses, and competed in marble games. As she grew up, Bobbi liked getting dressed up and flirting with the boys. Walter remembered hiking along the railroad track which ran along the back of Locke and playing a game with long sticks. Wallace liked fishing in the sloughs nearby with only a hook and line and some worms that he dug up. When he caught more fish than his mother wanted, he gave the rest away to the women of Locke. Nearly every kid in Locke climbed up the water tower located in the back of town to play on the catwalk. Next to the water tower, the boys and their friends cleared the land to build a miniature golf course, basketball court, and baseball diamond on which to play. Surrounded by sloughs and a river, swimming was a given among Locke children. On Saturdays, some of the Owyang children would hitch a ride on the bed of a truck which made weekly trips to Sacramento. While there, they would go to a movie theater to see a feature film for five cents or go to the Woolworth or Kress five-and-ten-cent stores to buy toys and other knickknacks. They used the money they earned from picking up fallen fruit and placing them in boxes for farmers. The children celebrated American and Chinese holidays, including Thanksgiving, Christmas, and Chinese Lunar New Year. They especially liked the firecrackers and red envelopes full of money of the New Year. The Baptist Church sponsored activities such as plays and parties, which helped draw the Locke children closer together. Diana remembered fondly the church sponsored retreats for out-of-town Chinese boys when she came to stay in Locke during summers. The teenage years was highlighted by the dances held in town. Along with a phonograph, all that was needed was a large room, which most homes had, if space in the church, community hall, family association building, restaurant, or back of a store was not available. Sometimes the Locke teenagers traveled to Stockton or Sacramento to attend larger dances.

The Owyang family saga in Locke began when Bobbi's father single-handedly built the Lockeport Hotel at around 1913. Her father had been a ranch hand earlier and later farmed Chinese vegetables himself. The Owyangs moved into the hotel to live after a fire in Walnut Groves' Chinatown burned down their house. Exact dates about when early events occurred were difficult to pinpoint because Bobbi's father rarely talked about them. The three-story building housed the Owyang family of ten children who lived on the lower floor, which was laid out like a family home. The middle floor was used by the family or rented by others to run a restaurant or cafe. The top floor was an eight-room



hotel, which the Owyang family operated. The family owned the building but like other residents in Locke, they paid rent for the land on which the building sat, ten dollars a month.

The Owyang patriarch died in the early 1930s, leaving the rest of the family to provide for themselves. The family was never prosperous but circumstances were not as difficult as one would think because the Owyang children grew up with a sense of independence, nurtured along by a progressive mother. As teenagers they took jobs wherever they could find them but they could count on their mother putting food on the table. As Bobbi put it, "Even if we don't have everything, we always had a full tummy." Food also came from the vegetables grown outside the family home and the fish Wallace and his brothers caught. The mother ran the hotel herself and at times the restaurant.



During their teenage years, the Owyang children worked at a variety of agricultural jobs. The foremost one was sorting and packing pears in one of the fruit packing companies. The boys pruned trees or labored in the fields, going to work at dawn and returning home at dusk. The girls, including Diana who also worked in the packing companies, helped their mother (in Diana's case, her grandmother) run the restaurant in the Lockport Hotel. It seems like everyone in the family washed dishes at one time or another. The wages they earned in

farm work ranged from ten cents to twenty-five cents an hour, or at times a dollar a day. If a labor contractor was involved in securing work, his commission plus breakfast and lunch money were deducted. After employment in the packing companies, Bobbi worked primarily in restaurants; in particular Al the Wop's, the famous steak eatery in Locke. While employed there, she was the waitress, cook, and dishwasher at the same time, earning ten dollars a day plus tips by the early 1950s.

Al the Wop's was owned by Italian brothers, one of whom lived in the building. He reputedly ran a brothel. But he was not the only non-Chinese to live in Locke when the Owyang children were growing up there. A Japanese man named George operated a café and lived in town. Most of the other men in Locke were Chinese farm laborers who lived the boarding houses, went out to farms or ranches in the morning, and returned at night. Others stayed on the farms and ranches during the work-season but came into Locke on weekends or at the end of the season, renting rooms in the boarding houses. Although they mostly kept to themselves, some of the Owyang children got to know a few of them. The men were considered singled, but in reality many had families in China who were supported by the earnings they sent home. By-and-large, the farm laborers worked hard, lived frugally, and saved meager earnings so that their families in China can live well.

The Chinese families in Locke like the Owyangs shopped at the markets and dry goods stores on Main Street but very rarely patronized the restaurants and bakeries because they could not afford to do so. The farm laborers were likewise for reasons noted

above. The question then becomes: who patronized all the restaurants, bakeries, gambling houses, whorehouses, and saloons on Main Street? According to the Owyangs, it was mainly the passengers of the ferryboats and trains that made regular stops in Locke who provided most of the patronage.

Bobbi, Walter, and Wallace attended the Oriental school in Walnut Grove because education in the lower grades was segregated. As such, getting along with Caucasian school children never became an issue. The Owyang children went to high school in Courtland by taking a school bus. Growing up in Walnut Grove, Eugene also attended the Oriental school but enrolled in the high school in Rio Vista. After school and on Saturdays, the Owyang children attended the Chinese school in Locke to learn the Chinese language. The Joe Shoong Chinese School is renowned but the children of Locke had already been taking classes to learn Chinese in the community hall, which was renamed the Joe Shoong Chinese School in 1926. Likewise, before the establishment of the Locke Baptist Church on Key Street, missionaries held weekend services at various venues, including the back of stores. By the time Penny and Linky attended school, integration was taking place.

Beginning at about the late-1930s, the sunny days in Locke gradually faded. Bobbi married Eugene and was helping her young family make ends meet by taking jobs wherever she could find them. But mostly she "played mommy" to her young daughters. Although working on farms, Walter and Wallace were soon drafted in the army and navy, respectively, to serve the country during World War II. Diana began her formal education to become a teacher; thus, had less time to spend in Locke. Penny and Linky were enjoying their playful years as second generation children growing up in Locke. They remembered the sweet smell of home-made pickled fruits or vegetables filling the air of Locke, making their mouths salivate. With flattery they got the women who were making the treats to give them a sample or two. And then there was Dick Wong, a distant relative who made the best breads, pies, and other foods in the restaurants he operated in Locke, drawing customers from far-and-wide. Some of the Owyangs, including Bobbi, worked for him but he eventually left Locke, returning to Hawaii to retire. After Wallace was discharged from the service, he went back to the family home in the Lockport Hotel, in which Bobbi's family was living. The other Owyang offspring had departed time for better economic opportunities or new domestic beginnings, like many of their peers after the war. Their mother's generation was beginning to pass away, further emptying out Locke. In 1953, the last of the Owyangs, Wallace and Bobbi's family, left the Lockport Hotel for good, ending their sunny days in Locke.



Bobbi Owyang passed away on June 22, 2009, in Granite Bay.

*Photos courtesy of Bobbi Owyang family
and Lucky Owyang*

Heungshan (Zhongshan) Immigrants to the Delta

樂居公民來自中山縣

By Lucky Owyang

Until World War I, 60% of the immigrants to American came from Taishan (Toisan) county. One of 98 counties in Guangdong Province, it was economically impoverished. Its residents worked as peddlers, shopkeepers and merchants; they did odd jobs as carpenters and fish farmers; they grew rice, vegetables, potatoes and raised chickens and pigs. Once in the US, they owned and operated laundries, restaurants and mall retail shops and grocery stores.

Another area that contributed immigrants was Heungshan District which means "fragrant mountain", a lowland area supported by the fertile soil of the Pearl River delta region. Heungshan people lived in relative strong economic area growing mulberries, silkworms, fishponds and fruit trees.

While waves of Chinese from Toishan district came to California for gold, it was the Chinese from Heungshan District who entered agriculture, growing primarily Bartlett pears in the rich earth of the Sacramento River delta and later in other places as Lake County, San Joaquin, Santa Clara and Solano Counties where the proper growing conditions would support plantings of various fruit trees brought from China. The Heungshan Chinese who had thousands of years of experience in growing fruits were a natural here in California. Bartlett pears was the primary fruit tree crop in each of these counties.

Before his passing in 2007, Lincoln Chan represented the epitome of the Chinese farmer who made his fortune in pears. He was born to pear farmers on Abraham Lincoln's birthday in 1919, thus his first name Lincoln. He had the depth of knowledge and expertise to act as an adviser to growers here and abroad. He once was asked by the Chinese government to advise them on pear production. Lincoln had the knowledge to grow, harvest, size and pack pears, as well as, transport and warehouse pears. The land in the Pearl River delta was bountiful with rich soil and various fruits and nuts. Persimmon, lychee, loquat, and kumquat along with pears would were the natural domain of Chinese of this southern China locale.

The development of the levee system created the Sacramento River delta which approximates closely many similarities of the Pearl River delta; these same fruit were grown, nurtured, and raised by Heungshan Chinese. All along the delta, towns such as Hood, Courtland, Vorden, Walnut Grove, Isleton, and the last town Locke in 1912, became enclaves for Chinese from Heungshan, as well

as Toishan. Locke was the only fully populated Chinese town in America. In each of the towns the Chinese of the two districts Toishan and Heungshan had the proclivity to separate. They tended to settle where there were compatriots, united by a common dialect. District and clan associations were vital to help assimilate these reluctant sojourners in a new world. Wary of being able to survive thousands of miles away from their home village, they relied on the aid of fellow villagers abroad. Lucille Chan-Searle, a native of Isleton, said that along Main Street, the Toishan and Heungshan Chinese lived in buildings holding businesses and residences on separates sides of the street. The division in lifestyle in Walnut Grove resulted in the Heungshan Chinese relocating to Lockepoint after the fire in Chinatown on October 7th, 1915, and creation of a new subdivision along Main Street, adding to the eight buildings already there on Levee Street in Lockepoint. Later the name was shortened to Locke or "Lockee" as spoken by Heungshan Chinese.



Many Heungshan were tenant farmers on ranches throughout the delta, and Bartlett pear production was a very tangible asset. They understood the nature of fruit trees, the procedures in tending them, and the meaning, in the case of pear trees, of having to spend a lifetime nurturing a young pear sapling to full maturity when it produces its best fruit. The Chinese have played a pioneering role in the development of the pear industry in California.

The most famous native son, Dr. Sun Yat-sen, father of modern China and a trained physician, was born in Heungshan District. Educated in China, Hong Kong and Hawaii, he came to Locke in 1900's to raise funds from his compatriots for the revolution to overthrow the Qing monarchy. Heungshan was changed to Zhongshan in 1925 after Dr. Sun's death. Others include Yung Wing, first Chinese to graduate from Yale in 1854 and Joe Shoong, founder of National Dollar Stores.

Locke Foundation welcomes new members

Corporate: Melissa and Saeed Irani
Norm and Flora Spalding

Lifetime: Eileen Leung

Individual and Family:

David/Carol Abelson	Collin Lai
Pat Brazier	Jeff Kan Lee
Raymond/Kathryn Chan	Johnny Lee
Robyn Flaherty	Anita Lo
James/Marilyn Gualco	Li Xi
Jim/Kazuko Huey	Tom Neary
Priscilla/Robert Jung	Penny Pederson
Darwin/Lili Kan	Irvin Sasaki
Deborah Mendel/Russell Ooms	Stuart Walthall



Cartoon by Brock Alexander, Locke resident

New look for Boarding House Museum

State Parks has installed new exhibits on the second floor to depict the life of farm workers. The first floor visitor's center has new interpretive panels to showcase the history and contributions of Locke residents. Souvenirs for purchase include T shirts, posters and walking tour maps. Please come and visit.



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. Tax ID: 20-0364281.

Office use only:

Date application received _____ Membership Year _____ Renewal _____

Locke Foundation
P. O. Box 1085
Walnut Grove, CA 95690

2012 Board

President: Clarence Chu
Vice-Pres: Eileen Leung
Secretary: Deborah Mendel
Treasurer: Brock Alexander
Newsletter: Eileen Leung

Dustin Marr
Pat Braziel
Darrel Woo
Jay Correia
Kristina Giannetti-Mabalot
Lo Giannetti