



Locke Foundation Newsletter 樂居鎮基金會

Preserving Locke's history and legacy

www.locke-foundation.org

Fall 2014

lockefoundation@frontiernet.net

Locke Foundation Presents Harvest Moon Celebration

A Fundraising Event To Preserve Locke's History & Culture



Event will include Chinese Music, Folk Dance, Martial Arts, Stockton Bukkyo Taiko Drums, River City Taps, Mongolian Dance, Silent Auction of Artwork from local artists, and Raffle prizes.

Lunch will also be served.

~ **Adult \$25 / Children (under 12) \$10** ~

WHEN: Saturday, October 25, 2014
12 noon – 4:00 p.m.

WHERE: Jean Harvie Center Auditorium

14273 River Road, Walnut Grove, CA 95690 (Free Parking)

For more information or reservation call 916.776.1661
Or check our website at: www.locke-foundation.org

Enclosed is my payment for # _____ tickets \$ _____
No, I am unable to attend. _____ Enclosed is my contribution for \$ _____

Name: _____ Telephone: _____

Address: _____

Make checks payable to **Locke Foundation** and submit by **October 17, 2014**

Mail to: **Locke Foundation**, P.O. Box 1085, Walnut Grove CA 95690

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YOU CAN PAY AT THE DOOR OR ONLINE VIA PAYPAL. PLEASE CALL IN RESERVATIONS.

Walnut Grove: A Tale of Two Towns

by Eileen Leung

Located in south Sacramento County, Walnut Grove is halfway between Sacramento and Stockton along the banks of the Sacramento River. It is approximately 10 feet above sea level, and the road through town runs along a 10-foot high levee which keeps the Sacramento River from flooding the town in winter. It is the only Delta town that occupies east and west banks of the Sacramento River. The river was once a major artery for shipping agricultural products from the Delta to markets; today only excursion boats and houseboats traverse its waters. In their heyday, Sacramento River towns such as Rio Vista, Isleton, Ryde, WG, Courtland and Hood were populated by Chinese and Japanese immigrants.

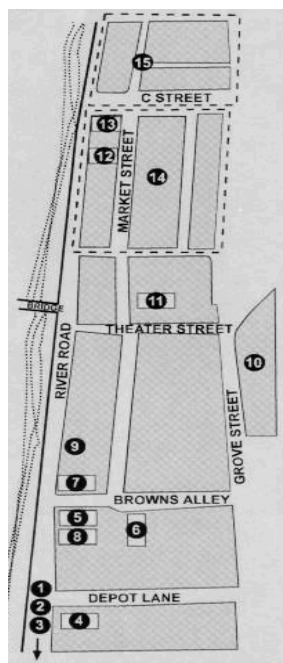
In 1850 John Sharp moved his family from Ohio to Walnut Grove, California, to seek a new life; he chose WG because of the abundant walnut and oak forests. An astute merchant, Sharp helped to establish the town as an agricultural center, riverboat stop and major shipping port for agricultural products and fish. By 1870, WG had several small businesses (many owned by the Sharp family), a school, a post office and Union Guard Armory. A super energetic man, Sharp served as farmer, ferryboat operator, postmaster, hotel owner, village blacksmith and establisher of an armory during the Civil War.

After Sharp's death in 1880, his heirs sold a large part of the estate to Agnes Brown and her son Alex Brown who came from New Hampshire. The Brown family subsequently operated a general store, hotel, asparagus packing house and the Bank of Alex Brown.

Immigrant laborers from China and Japan arrived in California to work on farms and levees. Alex Brown was a staunch supporter of the Chinese American and Japanese American communities in WG. He provided financial backing to several Asian businessmen and rented land to others at reasonable rates. Similarly, Japanese businessmen, wanting to serve the area's agricultural workers, began settling in the northern section of WG's established Chinatown about 1896. By 1905, Japanese were farming approximately 80 percent of the land in the Walnut Grove vicinity.

Asian immigrants were eyed with suspicion as they entered this country in the late 19th century, because they were competing with local citizens for jobs. During these turbulent times, the Chinese and Japanese grouped together for companionship and survival, forming ethnic enclaves known as *Chinatown* and *nihonmachi's* (Japan towns). For laborers who were able to immigrate to the U.S., the Chinese benevolent societies helped them with passage to America, assisted them in finding jobs and housing, and provided social fellowship. The Japanese government offered similar services through Japanese officials stationed in several western American cities. Early Japanese immigrants had a high degree of literacy. Their vision to become landowners with the ambition to work toward this goal and a high value placed on mutual aid, led to their future success.

Here is a tale of two such towns that were established in Walnut Grove. Walnut Grove was laid out with separate Japanese, Chinese, and white districts (north to south).



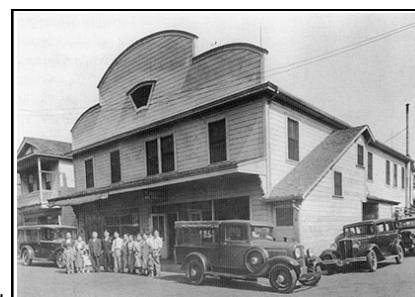
Map of Walnut Grove: Section 14 was Chinatown and Section 15 was Japan town. Courtesy of Sacramento River Delta Historical Society.

Japan Town

The *Issei* (first generation) farmers arrived in WG from Japan after 1892 and established themselves as itinerant contract laborers and then as tenant farmers. They settled in WG because of its proximity to San Francisco and to fertile fields. They picked asparagus, apples, pears, celery, lettuce and other products. They grew fruit, tomatoes, beans and asparagus. By 1914, Walnut Grove emerged as a thriving hub for Japanese in the Delta. They had a Buddhist and Methodist church,

Japanese language school, dry goods stores, 6 grocery stores, pool hall, physicians, dentist, midwife, 8 restaurants, 4 barber shops, 7 boarding houses, and prefectural associations. About 67 Japanese businesses were listed in the Japanese-American Yearbook in 1914.

The Alien Land Law of 1913 made it illegal for immigrants to be citizens and own land or property his law was enacted in California at a time where the Anti-Japanese movement was going strong. However, this law permitted three-year leases which created limitations for Asian Americans. Asian Americans struggled to work around this racially-constructed law. Walnut Grove's Japan Town remained wholly owned by a few white landholders. Alex Brown often loaned money to farmers and leased land to them in agreements secured only by a handshake.



Hayashi Grocery Store also delivered food to labor camps in outlying areas. Courtesy of Ralph Sugimoto.

After the 1915 fire in Chinatown, Tensions between these communities led the Japanese immigrants to rebuild on adjacent blocks owned by Alex Brown, a farmer, banker and major landholder who helped amend the Alien Land Laws to maintain his profitable relationship with Japanese immigrants. Brown installed water and sewage lines and constructed seven commercial buildings offered



for rent, along with additional parcels on which he encouraged Nikkei to build. Families drew numbers out of a hat to determine on which lot they would build their homes and businesses. Japanese builders and carpenters came from as far as San Francisco to lend their expertise and labor to the task of rebuilding Japan Town.

In 1918 the Japanese formed the WG Japanese Town Association to handle street repairs, water system maintenance, street lights and fire protection. The social center of Japan towns was the community bathhouse; here laborers relaxed and exchanged news and gossip after long hours in the fields.

Japanese language schools, or *gakuen*, were a critical components of almost all Japan towns. Most taught an assimilationist ethic designed to create "good American citizens," along with the basics of reading and writing in Japanese. Because WG's Japanese community was in a particularly tenuous position as tenants of one landowner, assurance that families could return to Japan if necessary made WG's *gakuen* even more important. By 1920, nearly 400 Nisei children lived in the Walnut Grove area and a Japanese language school had been in operation on Winnie Lane for seven years.

When a 1921 law enabling segregated schools was passed, Walnut Grove's *Issei* began raising funds for a dedicated school to ensure that their children received education in Japanese language and culture. In 1927, the community erected a new building on nearly an acre of land in the "backtown" neighborhood. This school became the WG Japanese Community Center. Traveling theater companies performed Kabuki and other traditional opera. Located at Pine and C Streets, it is listed on the National Register of Historic Places. *Gakuen Hall* is the only known example of a Japanese culture and language school designed and built by Japanese as a reaction to the California public school segregation laws of 1921. When the Japanese were forced into relocation camps during World War II, the local landowner held the building in trust until the Japanese could return. Today the building serves as a community center for the Japanese residents of WG.

"Oriental Schools" in the rural communities of Florin, Courtland, Isleton and WG reflected pervasive systems of racial discrimination and the perceived threat that Nikkei farmers' success posed to white residents. Prior to WWII, all of the children of Walnut Grove's Japanese, Chinese and Filipino families attended this school. (This school is different from Japanese language school.) Segregated schools in WG continued until 1942, when all Japanese Americans in California were interned, leaving Filipino and Chinese students in the Oriental School. Financial consideration were the deciding factor in desegregating the schools in 1943.



Japanese field workers

Chinatown

The California State Legislature passed the Swamp and Overflow Act of 1861 to encourage levee building for reclamation purposes. The Sacramento-San Joaquin levees were built in the mid - to late-19th century to prevent flooding on prime agricultural land. Most of the land was at sea level, and levees were frequently constructed on top of natural dirt barriers that formed along rivers and sloughs. Many of the levees were built by Chinese laborers using hand shovels and wheelbarrows.

Between three to four thousand Chinese laborers came to the Delta under contract to American developers built hundreds of miles of levees. Their task was arduous, requiring them to work in waist-deep water in an area which malaria was still endemic. They cut drainage ditches, built floodgates, and slowly piled up small levees. In this fashion, between 1860 to 1880, a total of 88,000 acres were reclaimed from the Delta marshlands. Coolie labor made reclamation possible because the pay was too low to attract white manual laborer.

Once the land became fit for agriculture, Chinese remained in the Delta to become farm workers and tenant farmers. The Chinese community, which may have been established as early as 1875, grew during the 1880s. Chinese businessmen developed a commercial and social center for the hundreds of Chinese laborers who worked throughout the region. Although these laborers usually lived near their jobs, they came into town on their days off.

The Chinese residents immigrated from two different areas in the Delta region in Guangdong [Canton], China; immigrants from Chung Shan resided in Locke, while those from Toi Shan county populated Walnut Grove. Most of the Chinese were unskilled laborers working in the fields and levee maintenance. During the Sino-Japanese War in the 1930s, the Walnut Grove-Locke-Isleton area was a prime target for visiting Chinese government VIPs to raise funds for the Chinese government.



Chinese laborers toil to reclaim Delta. Photo courtesy of California Department of Water Resources.

Like Japan Town, the Chinese in WG had their own Chinatown. Fire destroyed Chinatown and a small portion of Japan Town on October 7, 1915. At this time, the area contained 94 houses and numerous businesses. Many lives were lost. After years of less than peaceful coexistence, rather than rebuild in Walnut Grove, the Chung Shan group moved out and built themselves a town on land in Locke (less than a mile upstream) leased from a landowner, George Locke. By 1929, there were over 800 Chinese in WG. Their numbers increased to over 1000 during harvest time. The WG Chinatown was also rebuilt and its population expanded by Japanese families. Chinese men still wore their hair braided in queues as required by the Emperor. Since most Chinese expected to return to China,

Walnut Grove continued.....

they obeyed this edict, until the Chinese law was abolished in 1920. Chinese family associations flourished to help mediate quarrels, send bones of deceased back to China and oversee business.



**Bing Kung Tong Building
on River Road**

The Bing Kung Tong, a chapter of the mother organization in SF Chinatown, focused on charity, conflict resolution, and assisting members in relations with the non-Chinese world. It sponsored three large festivals yearly. Today, the Hall, stands on River Road, housing an art gallery.

Most buildings were two-story of frame construction. The second floor housed stores facing the levee road, often open 24 hours/day. The first floor also housed shops below the levee

facing Main Street. The Chinese operated grocery stores, gambling houses, opium dens, boarding houses for single men, language school, and dry good stores.

In the 1930s and early 1940s, a daily shuttle operated by the Ow family carried Chinese to and from San Francisco; it also accepted and executed orders for merchandise from San Francisco. The route started from Courtland with stops at Locke, Walnut Grove, and Isleton and returned nightly.

A fire in 1937 again destroyed Chinatown but Japan Town was saved and expanded beyond the rail fill. Another fire broke out and burned many buildings in Chinatown; many decided not to return when land rent was increased.

Caucasians and Asians lived separate lives in WG. The landed gentry lived on the right bank of the river; on the left bank were modest homes, packing sheds and warehouses. In the 1920's and 1930's, Hindus and Sikhs also came to the Delta as farm laborers. There was a small Indian store which later became a Filipino store. There were no distinct boundaries between Japan Town and Chinatown; both groups co-existed side by side. The town was racially segregated with whites living on the western bank of the river and Asians on the left bank. The eastern side was segregated further into a Japanese section and a Chinese section.



Chinatown

Life was not easy for the Chinese, but way better than their former life in China. These immigrants harnessed the delta's fertility in the 1870-80s by creating a network of levees and inland islands that controlled flooding in what had been a marshy swamp. White landowners reaped the primary benefits from this major project of land "reclamation" and dominated the local economy, along with the multiethnic population of immigrants who arrived in

succession from China, Japan, East India, the Philippines and Mexico to work the fields around WG.

Japanese farmers also made significant contributions to the agriculture of the western United States, particularly in California and Hawaii. Nineteenth-century Japanese immigrants introduced sophisticated irrigation methods that enabled the cultivation of fruits, vegetables, and flowers on previously marginal lands. While the *Issei* (1st generation Japanese Americans) prospered in the early 20th century, most lost their farms during the internment.

As self-sufficient microcosms, Chinatown and Japan Town provided the basic necessities for rural life in WG. After the American-born children of immigrants gained literacy in American schools and pursued higher education, few returned to their parents' bucolic neighborhoods. After World War II, gambling operations ceased. Members from the small Chinese community in Walnut Grove moved to the cities and many elder Filipinos returned to their homeland. As the older Asian residents retired and passed on, the population dropped, and the town's former vitality faded.

The Great Depression led to the agricultural decline in the Delta. Railroads and highways made centralized packing in cities more cost efficient. Today only a few packing sheds remain on individual farms for boxing fresh Bartlett's. After the Japanese families were released from WWII incarceration camps, many did not return because they were unable to pay off their indebtedness.

Walnut Grove today

Today WG is a sleepy little town. Market Street is divided into two sections, historic Chinese town at one end and a historic Japanese town at the other end. The B Street buildings are especially reminiscent of old Japan. 2010 census figures show about 1600 residents living in 582 households. Only 12% of its residents are Asian. The town is a destination for artisans, tourists and river boaters; its streets offer a unique glimpse into its Chinese and Japanese roots.

1. Sacramento River Delta Historical Society, June 2005 newsletter.
2. Dillon, Richard, *Delta Country*, Presidio Press, 1982.
3. National Park Service web site: <http://www.nps.gov/nr/twhp/wwwlps/lessons/Locke/lovisual1.htm>
4. California State Library web site: www.californiastatelibrary.tumblr.com
5. www.CaliforniaJapantowns.org
6. <http://www.water.ca.gov/levees/history/construction.cfm>

This newsletter will feature articles on various towns along the Sacramento River Delta in future issues with emphasis on the historical context of Chinese presence. The Chinese in Delta towns knew each other as co-workers, clansmen, merchants, herbalists and neighbors. These communities were an integral part of Delta life in the first part of the 20th century. Once centers for bustling agriculture enterprises, many of these towns have disappeared, and others have evolved into bucolic villages, echoing whispers of the past.

Photo Fun: Alien Life in Locke

Photo and article by Brock Alexander

They say for every grain of sand on Earth, there is a Star in the Universe. I find the scale and magnitude of this aphorism to be incomprehensible. Many questions come to mind when dealing with such enigmatic ideas- such endless holes. I often think about life on other planets. Does it exist? What does it look like? Has any alien life ever made it to Earth? To Locke? Stephen Hawking once said, "I believe alien life is quite common in the Universe" So do you believe in alien life? Do you need proof? Well, I have found it!

I have seen alien life. It happens to live in Locke. It was found in my neighbor James' refrigerator living in a large hot sauce jar. It had been growing there for years, silently mutating undetected for eons. How could this be possible?

Most all of us in the United States take refrigeration for granted. Fridges keep a wide range of items cold, thus enabling us



to store stuff for great periods of time. Most of us even keep more food than we can eat or need. The fridge is great invention! It has changed how we live our daily lives.

The refrigerator, "fridge" was invented by a German engineer named Carl von Linde in 1876. His patent would follow in 1877. There have been many updates and modifications since then, but the basic idea is still the same.

However, refrigerators have made us lazy and put us to sleep at the wheel. This cool place of safety and comfort has now become a teleportation devise and an incubator for alien life on Earth. That refrigerated space is really a place of nightmares and science fiction horror monsters.

Most of us have witnessed this putrescence in our own refrigerators, though we are not honest enough to admit it to the rest of the world. This large cold box is known to be the harbinger of these alien life forms. Aliens in our refrigerator have been known to scare guests and on occasion make a family member sick. Alien life hides in vessels beyond expiration dates. They can take many forms from green slimy mold to brown tentacle bacteria... or membrane looking yeast creatures. They often are paired with their own distinctive shape and smell- brackish, tangy, pungent, always surprising and unforgettable. Your first encounter with one of these will have you forever checking and worried about the next encounter. Avoid your close encounters. Clean out your refrigerator!

One can always look to the stars to find alien life. If you get tired of waiting, look in your refrigerator. Travel to the place beyond the expiration date and you just might find it there.



From the Chinese Demonstration Garden

By Stuart Walthall
Photos by Beth Chape

Autumn has arrived and ushered in another harvest season for Locke's Chinese demonstration garden... *almost*.

Due to a shortage of 100-degree August days and subsequent lack warm nights, a number of the Chinese vegetables are a bit late to ripen. Most of the tardy plants are tropical in nature and require many hot days spent growing in direct sunlight.



The Chinese cucumbers (Wong Gwa) did quite well, leading to an experimental second crop being cultivated. And the Long beans (Dow Gok) have been extremely productive. Long beans are featured in Chinese stir-fry dishes.

Long beans (Dow Gok)



We also had a bumper crop of Jujube, also known as Chinese dates (Hong Joe), in addition to the three delicious varieties of grapes which line the garden fences. Jujubes can be eaten raw like baby apples, or can be dried for soups.

However, the demo garden's signature crops are taking their sweet time. Stragglers include Bitter melon (Fu Gwa) and Winter melon (Dong Gwa), in addition to the vine crop Luffa (Cee Gwa) and two varieties of Calabash gourds (Hulu Gwa and Cheung Gwa). These stubborn veggies still need some more time in the sun. But not to worry, everything is doing just fine in the Chinese demonstration garden.

Jujube or Chinese dates (Hong Zou)



On a recent Sunday afternoon I had the pleasure of meeting up with photographer D.L. Cunningham who had come to Locke in order to photograph the Chinese demonstration garden for Edible Sacramento Magazine. Not only was she fascinated by the demo garden, she was also captivated by the community gardens as well as the entire town. She took hundreds of photos. Keep an eye out for the article on Locke's Chinese demonstration garden in a future edition of Edible Sacramento Magazine.



Bitter melon (Fu Gwa)



So the next time you come to Locke I recommend you venture off of Main Street and take an alleyway to the back of town. Then stroll through the Chinese demonstration garden. It now has cool new wooden identification labels for each plant. And while you are at it check out our large and diverse community garden area. And definitely do not miss the Connie King toilet garden situated at the gateway to the demo garden area.

When dried, Cee Gwa flourishing on vines will become luffa.

I want to thank the Locke Foundation and the Locke Management Association for their ongoing support of Locke's Chinese demonstration garden.

For those who wish to take a more in depth look at several of the iconic Chinese vegetables grown here in Locke, check out the winter, spring, and summer 2014 issues of the Locke Foundation newsletter at: www.locke-foundation.org. Go to EVENTS, and then NEWSLETTERS. We look forward to you seeing you on your next visit to Locke. Remember, next year Locke turns 100!



We want to thank Peggie Boston for her generous gift of Chinese demonstration garden seeds and Russell Ooms for his donation of hand-made wooden displays for labeling Chinese demonstration garden plants.

Edible Sacramento photographer D. L. Cunningham

New LF members

Lim Mar, Life
Sharon Fong, Life
Ronald Chong, Life
Virginia Wong, Life
Nancy Robey, Life
Sally Ooms
Bruce Nelson
Linda Busek
Laurie Prescott

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 book. We are seeking loan of artifacts and documents from family collections.

We are compiling essays from former residents for the commemorative book. One reunion event has been scheduled for Saturday, May 10, 2015, in Locke. We are grateful to Lucille Chin and Joe Enos for donations to the Centennial event.

Boarding House Museum update

Wayne Miller

The Locke Boarding House Museum is a California State Parks facility jointly operated by the Locke Foundation and California State Parks. In May of this year, the original contract between the Locke Foundation and California State Parks expired. A new contract is being negotiated, and the Locke Foundation continues to operate the Museum on a month to month basis. Most of the Parks staff that negotiated the original contract has moved on, and the new staff responsible for such contacts is not familiar with the terms and conditions negotiated under the original contract. LF has submitted a new formal application as concessionaire for the Museum and all issues should be resolved by the end of the year.

Our new web site is launched

www.locke-foundation.org

By Deborah Mendel

This summer the Locke Foundation was blessed with a very generous contribution by visual artist Angie Eng. Her gift did not come in the form of cold hard cash but rather by way of something both tangible and intangible. She offered her creative vision and expertise to develop and launch the Locke Foundation's new web site: www.locke-foundation.org. Although from the outside the new site seemed to appear out of thin air, Angie devoted hundreds of hours to envision, develop and execute a dynamic web presence which the Foundation can be proud of. Kudos and many thanks to Angie for spearheading and taking on

this project. She has created an impressive site that welcomes and informs the public about Locke's history, the Locke Foundation, opportunities to donate or purchase products from the LF, what's going on in Locke presently and even a "Great Wall of Locke" page where folks can contribute their photographic images of Locke and much more. Explore our new web site at www.locke-foundation.org!

Our web designer: The French Connection



Angie Eng is a multimedia artist living in Paris and New York City. Besides exhibiting and presenting her experimental video art (past venues: Whitney Museum, New Museum, Lincoln Center Video Festival, The Kitchen, etc), she teaches media arts to adults and youth.

During the dot.com craze of the 90's she worked for various companies designing and building web sites for many artists and art venues: Dance Theatre Workshop, Alex Katz, Reverend Billy, and Roulette performance space. She resigned from website building full time after working on 'I can't Believe it's not Butter' for Grey Advertising. Over the past 20 years she has worked for numerous non-profits in areas such as teaching youth media to marginalized populations, directing an AIDS awareness mural/theatre project in Ethiopia, volunteering for mobile medical camps in Niger, establishing an art therapy group for the handicapped, as well as taught drawing/painting to Chinese-American children in Chinatown, NYC. She'd like to dedicate the new Locke website to her grandmother who was raised on and 'ran away from' an asparagus farm in Pittsburg, California. For the Locke Centennial she plans to raise \$10,000 to enhance the Locke Museum with video and interactive audio.

Born in San Francisco, Angie grew up in Sacramento. She graduated from UC Santa Barbara majoring in Fine Arts and Psychology; she now attends graduate school at Brooklyn College. She is the daughter of former LF Board President Alex Eng and current LF Vice-President, Joyce Eng.

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 _____

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

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Bookmark our new website: www.locke-foundation.org