

Locke Foundation Newsletter 樂居鎮基金會

Preserving Locke's history and legacy

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www.locke-foundation.org

New Exhibit Debuts at Boarding House Museum

By Stuart Walthall

The Locke Boarding House Museum (LBHM), a unit of the California State Parks & Recreation supported by the Locke Foundation, remained closed for the majority of 2020 due to Covid-19. But that's about to change.

2021 will usher in a new era for the LBHM. With proper safety equipment and procedures in place, plus personal protective equipment required (masks), the LBHM will open its doors to the many visitors of Locke.

The LBHM will continue as it has for the past 15 years - a first-stop family friendly resource center offering displays, artifacts, historical photographs, materials, on-sale items and information.

In addition to these permanent offerings and services the Locke Foundation will be presenting a new exhibit entitled: **Locke - From Its Founding to the War - 1915 to 1945.**



This fascinating exhibit will offer a glimpse into the daily lives of the original founders, business owners and residents of Locke. On display will be an extensive collection of pre-war clothing, household items, tools, games, musical instruments, traditional Chinese medicines, historical placards and more. Artifacts are augmented with detailed informational signage and some are interactive.

Over the years the Locke Foundation has amassed a large collection of donated and on-loan artifacts never before seen by the public. Here is an opportunity to step back in time and enjoy these rare treasures.

The Locke Foundation Archival & Artifact Program is an on-going mission to preserve and present materials related to the history of Locke, the Sacramento-San Joaquin River Delta and California.

If you or your family are interested in donating/loaning historic artifacts and materials, please contact the Locke Foundation at 916-776-1828.

Locke Foundation Welcomes Newest Director

By Stuart Walthall

The mission of the Locke Foundation (LF) is to educate the public about the history, culture and legacy of Locke, communities of the Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta and California. It's a blessing when individuals volunteer to help with this important mission. It's especially good fortune when an individual with deep Delta roots and impressive skill set steps forward to lend a helping hand. The Locke Foundation's newest director is just such a person - Carol Lee.

Carol: "I grew up in the rural setting of Walnut Grove where my family operated a grocery store (Lee's Market). I credit the store and my experiences in the richness of the Sacramento River Delta with helping shape my sense of self. The sense of community cultivated in Walnut Grove and Locke led me to dedicate my life to public service and caring for others".

Carol graduated from Delta High School in Clarksburg then enrolled in college. Despite the opportunity to attend University of California Berkley, she opted for CSU Sacramento (Sacramento State College) in order to be close to her aging parents. She continued working weekends and summers at Lee's Market to help support the family business and to fund her education.

She graduated from UC San Francisco Dental Hygiene School and began a 40 year career as a Registered Dental Hygienist. In addition to her hygienist duties she became active in public service through volunteerism, public speaking, professional activities and education.

Lee became a teacher at Sacramento City College. She served as president of state and local Dental Hygienists' Associations, Oral Health Coordinator to numerous community-based outreach services and has held positions of leadership in a vast number of professional and volunteer organizations. Her career reflects her credo: "to dedicate my life to public service and caring for others".

The Locke Foundation is pleased and grateful to welcome Carol Lee as the newest member of our team of volunteers.



Locke Historic District

By Mark Mariot

Located in the rich agricultural region of California's Sacramento River Delta, Locke's Historic District is the most vibrant and enduring example of a rural Chinatown in the United States. The town of Locke occupies an area of approximately 14 acres on four streets laid out in a grid pattern, bordered on the west by the Sacramento River and on the north and east by an orchard and community gardens, approximately 28 miles south of Sacramento and 75 miles northeast of San Francisco. The Historic District corresponds to the town's boundary and includes over 50 buildings, most of which were constructed between 1915 and 1917, when Chinese workers first moved to the new settlement.

Two-story structures along Main Street and River Road were constructed on rectangular lots with wood frames, gable roofs, false fronts, clapboard or board-and-batten siding, and second-story balconies. Many of the buildings display evidence of ad hoc construction, including exterior plumbing pipes and corrugated metal roofs and awnings. During Locke's heyday, commercial establishments—like the Yuen Lai Sing and Dai Loy gambling houses, the Wing Choy Owyung Rooming House and the Yuen Chong Market—operated in these buildings, which often served as residences for the business owners, their dependents, and renters. Commercial buildings, like the Star Theater, sometimes operated as a brothel and boardinghouse, reflect a similar design.

One-story dwellings, concentrated on Key Street and Levee Road on the town's eastern and southern periphery, were constructed with wood frames, clapboard or board-and-batten siding, and gable roofs. Most were occupied by single families; however, during Locke's early days, brothels also operated in some of these houses. Many of Locke's buildings include Chinese architectural details and signage with Chinese elements that incorporate compound ideographs and signboard calligraphy, reflective of the town's ethnic and cultural traditions.

Locke's foundation and evolution is a testament to the struggles that Chinese immigrants endured in California as well as the group's perseverance and gradual assimilation into American society. Cyclical demand for cheap labor during the second half of the nineteenth century conspired with nativist resentment, leading to various forms of racial oppression and vigilante violence against Chinese immigrants. In the early 1850s, unmarried males from Guangdong Province crossed the Pacific Ocean to seek their fortunes in the Gold Rush. Reflecting the

prevailing nativist sentiment, the California State Legislature passed a series of anti-Chinese laws, beginning with the Foreign Miners Tax in 1850 and 1852, which sought to deter non-white miners. Declining opportunities in the gold fields coincided with the construction of the western portion of the transcontinental railroad. Chinese workers filled the demand for labor, and official anti-Chinese sentiment temporarily subsided. In 1868, the U.S. government ratified the Burlingame Treaty, which actively encouraged Chinese immigration.

Once the railroad was completed, however, demand for cheap labor declined. The U.S. Congress passed the Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882, essentially halting Chinese immigration. The legislation was renewed in 1892 and 1902 and was not repealed until 1943. A further blow to Chinese workers in California came in 1913, when the State Legislature enacted the Alien Land Law, which prevented non-citizen aliens from owning land. This legislation was not repealed until 1956. The Alien Land Law directly affected the residents of Locke, as they sought to build permanence into their lives with the construction of a rural Chinese community.

Aside from mining and railroad labor, Chinese immigrants also were drawn to agricultural pursuits. In the Sacramento region this included the backbreaking work of dredging and reclaiming the silt-laden lands of the Delta as well as field and cannery work. By the end of the nineteenth century, Chinatowns had been erected in numerous settlements along the Sacramento River, including in Elliott Village, Courtland, Paintersville, Vorden, Walnut Grove, Isleton and Rio Vista. In 1912, three buildings catering to Chinese workers were erected in Locke—formerly known as Lockeport—in an unincorporated area of Sacramento County, named for the property's owner George Locke. The settlement was the site of a small shipping port and packing shed served by the Southern Pacific Railroad. In 1915, after a fire destroyed the Chinatown in nearby Walnut Grove, leaders of the local Chinese community initiated construction of additional buildings in the settlement, financed with the capital of industrious Chinese merchants, and led by Bing Lee, a successful first-generation merchant and entrepreneur.

The Walnut Grove Chinese inhabitants actually comprised of two ethnic groups from neighboring regions in Southern China, who spoke distinct dialects. Ethnic tensions may have contributed to the deci-

sion to relocate to Locke or that decision may have been based more on economic considerations; however, it appears that the social relationship between the Chinese inhabitants of the two towns continued after the move. Lee negotiated the lease of nine acres of orchard land from George Locke in 1915. The details of the oral agreement skirted the intentions of the Chinese Exclusion Act which denied the Chinese a means to becoming naturalized citizens, and the Alien Land Law, which required eligibility for citizenship as a prerequisite to property ownership. George Locke retained ownership of the land but the Chinese residents owned the buildings they constructed on that land and paid rent only for the lots. According to the 1930 U.S. Federal Census, while most residents of Locke were renters paying \$10 per month for a room, numerous dwellings were Chinese-owned and were worth between \$500 and \$1,000 each. The most valuable residence in town, valued at \$5,000, was owned by George Locke's son, Clay.

Locke's cultural and historical significance lies in its unique status as a Chinese town that managed to maintain its ethnic identity and social composition from the time of its formation in 1915 until the 1960s, when the Chinese population began to decline. The 1930 Federal Census confirms Locke's status as a predominantly Chinese town. However, Locke was also home to a significant multiethnic population of agricultural workers and their families from Spain, Portugal, Japan, Russia, Germany, Sweden, the Philippines, Canada, Scotland, Romania, Mexico and Italy. After World War II, many of the second-generation Chinese residents of Locke chose to settle in larger cities where better employment opportunities existed away from the hardship of agricultural labor. By the 1960s, only elderly Chinese inhabitants remained.

Locke has the designation of being the last surviving rural Chinese town in the United States. Unlike other Chinatowns in the U.S., which were constructed as neighborhoods within towns and cities, Locke's location in the Delta has left it little changed; indeed, the town retains much of its unique physical character. The area was designated an historic district in 1971 and a National Historic Landmark in 1990. Several restored buildings are home to the Dai Loy Gambling House Museum, the Locke Boarding House Museum, the Locke Chinese School Museum, and the Jan Ying Chinese Association Museum. All are open to the public.

This article is reprinted with permission from Mark Mairot and Society of Architectural Historians. Mark Mairot is lecturer of History at San Diego Mesa College.

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Make a Charitable Gift to the Locke Foundation

You can honor Locke's legacy through the Locke Foundation:

1. **IRA Gift:** For those aged 70.5 and older, you can make a gift directly from your IRA to meet your required minimum distribution without paying federal income tax on the withdrawal. This provision may be attractive to retirees who don't need all the current income from their IRA to meet current living expenses.
2. Leave a gift to the Locke Foundation through your will or living trust without reducing your current income. Gifts of retirement plan assets can provide tax advantages and can be given to LF by naming us as a beneficiary.
3. Donate books, photos or artifacts relevant to the Locke experience to Locke Foundation to preserve and share for future generations.

For more information on arranging a planned gift to LF, please send email to: lockefoundation@frontiernet.net

The Rise and Fall of Chop Suey Houses

雜碎館

Like the ubiquitous fortune cookie, Chop Suey was not invented in China; it is a Chinese American dish which originated in the mid to late 19th century, either with Chinese laborers working on the transcontinental railroad or Chinese immigrants in San Francisco. It was created to suit American tastes by utilizing available ingredients. "Chop Suey" is a Cantonese term for "odds and ends" or "miscellany". It is used to describe a dish and a restaurant serving Chinese-American fare.

Urban legends abound regarding the origins of this dish:

While visiting New York City in 1896, a Chinese ambassador's cook invented a dish for his employer's American guests with celery, bean spouts and meat in a brown sauce. Thereafter, Americans began to visit Chinese restaurants in large numbers.

Immigrant Chinese cooks charged with feeding railroad workers had only leftover meat and vegetables, so they stir-fried them with a bit of broth.

A Chinese merchant was invited to the White House for dinner; the American menu proved unpalatable, so he whipped up his own dish from whatever he could find in the White House kitchen.

Typical menu items at a Chop Suey House include:

Chop Suey: a bland mixture of vegetables and meat in the ubiquitous brown sauce.

Chow mein: fried noodles with vegetables and sliced meat, bamboo shoots, water chestnuts

Egg foo yung: scrambled egg omelet with onions and bean sprouts topped with the ubiquitous brown sauce.

Fried rice: leftover rice stir fried with scrambled eggs, greens, pork and soy sauce.

Egg roll: cabbage and vegetables wrapped in thick won ton skin and deep fried.

Sweet and sour pork: deep fried pork drenched with red food coloring and lots of corn syrup.

Fortune cookie.

Chop Suey could be reasonably produced in large batches by cooks with little training and sold for a reasonable price. Restaurants serving Chinese American cuisine are often run by descendants of early Chinese immigrants, generally concentrated in smaller cities and off the beaten paths.

In the 1980's, as more immigrants arrived from China and Hong Kong with sophisticated tastes for authentic Chinese cuisine, more diverse menu items and preparation methods became available at Chinese restaurants in major metropolitan areas in and surrounding San Francisco, Los Angeles and New York City. While Chop Suey Houses have declined in popularity, they played a pioneering role in introducing Chinese-American cuisine to the American palate.



Several small towns in the Delta had Chop Suey houses, too. In 1913, a directory of Chinese businesses lists the following Chop Suey Houses:

Walnut Grove: Hong Kong Low
Kim Gin Low
Yut Sun Low

Isleton: Woey Sun Low

Courtland: Wing Sing Gue

Locke: Happy Café (1930)

Today, these Chinese restaurants continue to operate in the Delta:

Locke: Locke Garden

Isleton: Pineapple Restaurant

Rio Vista: Hong Kong Seafood

What is the difference between Chinese and Chinese-American cuisine?

By Eileen Leung

The 1848 Gold Rush brought Chinese laborers to California, giving Americans their first experience with large numbers of Chinese. Chinese cooks in mining camps prepared quick and cheap food using what was available. After the Civil War, California state law forbade Chinese from owning land; vigilantes and lynch mobs forced Chinese into cities where there were few ways to earn a living except for working in a laundry or restaurant. The food served was mostly Cantonese because these immigrants came from Pearl River Delta region. The food was not gourmet, but peasant food that was filling, easy to prepare and went well with plain white rice.

Most Chinese restaurants in the US only serve Chinese-American food. If you go to a Chinese restaurant and order sweet and sour pork with pineapple chunks, egg rolls, Chop Suey with its ubiquitous brown gravy, egg foo young and fried rice, you will be served Chinese-American food. Chinese-American food has more exaggerated flavors at the expense of subtlety and diversity. No matter what you order, you end up eating food that is too salty, too sweet and too greasy. But if you go to a Chinese restaurant and order braised tofu, steamed black bass, pork hash with mustard greens, you would be served Chinese food. How many non-Chinese diners are ready to try thousand-year-old egg, stinky tofu or braised chicken feet?

The difference between Chinese and Chinese-American food is the quest to offer flavors that satisfy the American palate. Pungent sauces that are unique to the dish are toned down. More dishes are deep fried, instead of braised or steamed. True connoisseurs of Chinese food cringe when they see diners pour soy sauce of every dish before it is tasted or pour sugar into a cup of jasmine tea? Rice is supposed to be plain so you can appreciate the chef's skill in customizing the sauce for each dish.

Eating Chinese-American food is okay, but if you want to eat authentic Chinese food, remember:

Not everything offered on a Chinese menu is authentically Chinese.

Chinese food sold at Panda Express and P.F. Chang's China Bistro has been altered heavily for American tastes.

Chop Suey and fortune cookies are never found in restaurants in China.

If you walk into a Chinese restaurant and see mostly non-Chinese customers, leave. Most likely the food sucks or it is overpriced.

If there are menu items written in Chinese taped

to the walls, you know this restaurant serves authentic Chinese food. Even if you cannot read Chinese, you can ask the wait staff to translate for you.

Avoid the set items on the menu where you are allowed to choose one dish from columns A-B-C. They are just cop-outs for customers unwilling to try the real stuff.

Do not order soft drinks or ice water; order tea and do not put any sugar in the tea. Chinese tea is supposed to be unsweetened to cleanse the palate after each dish.

Avoid Chinese buffets as the food is too sweet, too greasy and prepared to the lowest common denominator of taste discrimination.

If you come across a Chinese restaurant that serves Szechuan, Shanghai and Cantonese cuisine, you can be sure they will excel in none of them. "Mandarin" cuisine is not a regional cuisine of China.

Any dish that uses broccoli, baby corn and carrots is not authentic because these vegetable combinations are just not offered in China.

Fried wonton with cream cheese is not authentic Chinese.

Avoid boneless chicken dishes that are battered, fried or covered in sauce. (e.g. General Tso's, lemon, orange, sesame). The dish is named after Zuo Zongtang (a Qing dynasty statesman and military leader, although there is no recorded connection to him nor is the dish known in Hunan, Zuo's home province).

Steamed fresh whole fish allows its fresh taste to be savored; it not supposed to be "fishy". Chinese diners prefer to select live fish from tanks, while non-Chinese diners cannot stand to see a whole fish with eyes intact. Boneless fish usually comes from frozen fish that is breaded, deep fried and heavily sauced to mask over the "less than fresh" taste.

Don't be afraid to let someone else order for you. Chinese food is meant to be served family style (shared). Daily lunch specials are not authentic Chinese food.

Cities with a huge Asian population often have a second menu; these may be printed in Chinese only and feature home-style dishes priced very reasonably. Ask for them, and you will be pleasantly surprised.

Honey Loquat Sore Throat Syrup : a staple in Chinese homes

Institute for Traditional Medicine
Portland, Oregon

Nin Jiom is a famous brand name in Asia. Ask almost any Chinese person what is the best cure for a cough and they will most likely tell you "Pei Pa Koa" (Pi Pa Gao, which means Loquat Syrup), the main product of Nin Jiom. Founded in 1946, Nin Jiom Medicine Manufactory Limited has become one of the leading Chinese medicine manufacturers in Hong Kong. Nowadays, Nin Jiom Herbal Cough Syrup is popular and available in over 20 countries around the world.

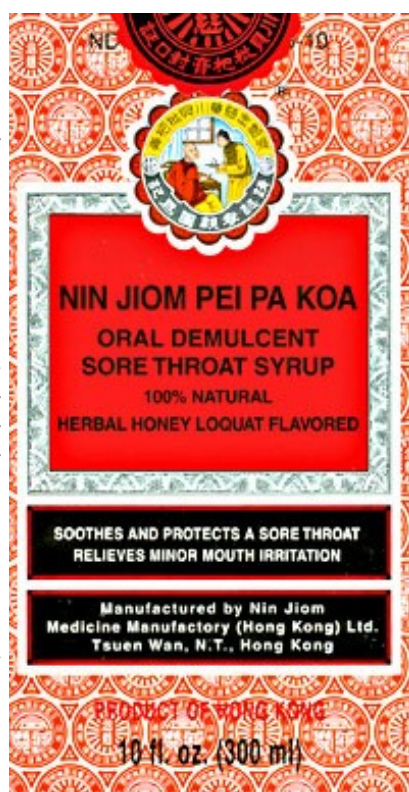
The story of Nin Jiom and its syrup begins with Yeung Kan (also known as Yang Xiaolan), a Qing Dynasty official (provincial commander), who was born around 1880. His mother was suffering from a serious lung condition, with persistent coughing, for which he searched for a cure. He found a successful remedy in a loquat syrup, using the recipe of Ip Tin- See, a famous Chinese physician. In memory of his mother, Yeung produced the medicine for others, giving it the name Nin Jiom, which means "memory of mother," and made it freely available to everyone, for posterity. From the story came the inspiration for the Nin Jiom logo - the Filial Piety Trade Mark.

At first, a small factory was set up in Beijing, but during the Sino-Japanese War, the Yeung family fled to Hong Kong and later emigrated to Brazil. The business was sold to a Hong Kong Chinese medicine practitioner, Tse Siu-bong. Nin Jiom Medicine Manufactory was thus established in Hong Kong (Kowloon Peninsula) by this doctor at his Chinese medicine shop. The manufacturing company was incorporated in 1962, and Tse remained head of the company for the next 40 years.

To cope with the increasing demand for the cough syrup, in 1984 the factory was relocated to the New Territories - with a 90,000 sq. ft. plant with fully-automated production lines and the most advanced equipment. The Hong Kong headquarters remains responsible for coordination of the marketing in Hong Kong, Macao, China, Asia, Europe and the U.S. In 1992 and 1997, the factory was awarded GMP (Good Manufacturing Practices) certification by the Australian Therapeutic Goods Administration and the Pharma-

ceutical Control Bureau, Ministry of Health of Malaysia, respectively.

A key ingredient in the syrup and derivative products (such as an herbal lozenge made from the same basic ingredients) is fritillaria bulb; the company imports HK\$17 million worth (more than 2 million U.S. dollars) from mainland China into Hong Kong annually. Other herbs used in its formula are grown mainly in western China (Sichuan Province), processed in Guangxi Province, and then imported into Hong Kong. The formula also contains loquat leaf (from S.E. China), adenophora root, poria mushroom, citrus peel, platycodon root, pinellia tuber, trichosanthes seed, polygala root, licorice root, ginger rhizome, schizandra fruit and peppermint. These herbs are well-known for clearing up phlegm congestion, alleviating cough, and soothing a sore throat. It is in a honey base. The product has the reputation of relieving coughing promptly with a soothing effect and pleasant taste. It is particularly suited for dry cough, irritated throat and thirst.



Discussing the success of Nin Jiom Pei Pa Koa, Chan Yin, director of the company, said that their corporate mission is to ensure product quality, efficacy and trustworthiness in the development of Chinese medicine in order to gain worldwide recognition. Annual sales turnover of Nin Jiom is HK\$400 million (over 50 million U.S. dollars) with steady annual growth. In 1999, Nin Jiom was awarded one of the "Hong Kong Top Ten Brand Names" by the Chinese Manufacturers Association. The prod-

uct has been available in the United States for more than 20 years and is the leading Chinese cough syrup product here.

An alternative to the Nin Jiom syrup is Natural Herb Loquat Extract, another product of Hong Kong, that is used for coughs but has a thinner consistency. Some people prefer the thinner syrup, but the thicker Nin Jiom formulation is better when there is a scratchy or sore throat, as it coats the throat and includes herbs that are particularly good for that application, such as platycodon.

The syrup can be purchased at any Chinese grocery store for about \$6.

The Last Toishan Girl in Walnut Grove

Article and photo by Carol Lee

Many articles have been written about Daisy Mah, including the Locke Foundation (LF) Newsletter. (Winter 2013). She is best known for her horticultural expertise and public service. The LF Oral History Project has taken a different perspective on Daisy. The last little Toishan girl growing up amidst a faded Walnut Grove Chinatown, Daisy Oy (Love) Mah is now retired and reflects on her childhood.



Daisy wears a handmade silk blouse made by her mother and was too precious/special for her mother to wear herself.

The youngest of six, Daisy's family lived simply in the back part of the barber shop. For the most part life was uneventful. Dad, Ming Mah, was one of four local barbers. He was a supportive and involved father, well read, speaking Chinese, English and some Spanish. Between haircuts, he often read to Daisy, instilling an early love of books, knowledge, and reading. This gave her a head start and self-confidence when starting school.

While reading his daily paper, the Sacramento Union, Mr. Mah found a name for his newborn daughter. "Daisy Mae" sounded similar to Daisy Mah. This Li'l Abner's comic strip character was well-endowed, in contrast to Daisy Mah's diminutive stature. But Daisy Mah would grow up to make a huge impact in her lifetime.

Her mom, Shuey Fun, never mastered English but became a "Chinese Martha Stewart". Her proficiencies included Cantonese cooking, gardening, sewing, mushroom foraging, fishing, as well as preserving foods, including "hom yu" (salted fish). Mom would generously invite strangers into her modest home for chow mein or fried rice. Especially poignant were times when she listened and sang along to recordings of Chinese opera.

When Daisy was eleven, Mom's 80-year mother, "ah Hoo", arrived from the ancestral village of Toisan, China. Forty-years had passed and Mom was moved to tears. Grandma would live minutes away in a studio cottage and had dinners with the family. The following year, Grandma's youngest son "ah Que", immigrated and settled into an adjoining cottage. Arriving with

neither work nor language skills, Uncle always seemed sad. Undoubtedly their world had changed dramatically. Then, while Daisy was spending her summer with her uncle and aunt in San Francisco, Brother Lim called with tragic news. Grandma committed suicide. Soon after, in despair, Uncle also committed suicide. In retrospect, it was hard to make sense of the tragedy. Displaced from familiar village life, a family unaware of their human toll, and the stoic lack of communication created a dire situation. We are taught to keep our problems to ourselves. Typically, Chinese would not seek aid. Unfortunately, social services that may have helped were unavailable.

Raised almost as an only child after her siblings left home Daisy was quiet and reserved. Daisy found adventure in books at the tiny local library. In contrast, Brother Fulton, four years older, was her playmate. Their most memorable play was the thrill of sliding down a short but steep nearby hill on sheets of cardboard. Each memorable adventurous slide down brought feelings of exhilaration, freedom and reckless abandonment.

Among the most treasured merchandise of Nobel's Pharmacy on River Road were countless boxes of special stationery. When Mr. Nobel noticed Daisy's interest, he presented her with a box. To this day she appreciates that act of kindness and the personal touch of hand written correspondence.

Salinas, the wife of a Toishan neighbor befriended Daisy, sewing a prized custom-tailored bright yellow Shantung silk dress for her 8th grade graduation...the ultimate gesture for a modest, humble girl living in the remote river delta.

Daisy's elementary education at Walnut Grove Elementary was outstanding with Mr. Ed Perry leading the pack. His social studies class involved working in committees, researching papers, planning visual displays and shining light on the contributions of many cultures, not to mention gaining insights into human nature. Exposure to cultures of the world was key in her understanding and embracing people's differences and uniqueness. Knowledge, an empowering tool, has provided Daisy a voice and confidence to manage a once overwhelming fear of public speaking.

Daisy looks upon living in Walnut Grove with appreciation of all who were so accepting a timid little Toishan girl. Now meet Daisy Mah, a horticultural powerhouse whose still unassuming demeanor belies the strength of character she is today.

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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 Boarding House Museum will remain closed to the public until Sacramento County allows opening of indoor museums. 2021 Information will be posted on our website: www.locke-foundation.org
2021 Free Museum Day has been cancelled.