

Locke Foundation Newsletter 樂居鎮基金會
Preserving Locke's history and legacy

lockefoundation@frontiernet.net

Winter 2024

www.locke-foundation.org



Locke Foundation Presents

Celebrate Chinese New Year In Locke



Sunday, February 18, 2024
12 Noon to 4 PM at Main Street

Dragon & Lion Dance (12 noon)

Martial Arts Demonstration

Tai Chi Demonstration

Bonsai Class Presentation

Calligraphy Demonstration

Student Arts Exhibit

Chinese Musical Performance

Chinese Zodiac Puppet Show

Chinese New Year Lecture

Food

Red Envelope Lucky Money of The Year
(For The First 100 Visitors)

Free Admission
Free Parking

For more information please contact

Locke Foundation:

Phone: 916.776.1684

Phone: 916.776.1828

Website: locke-foundation.org



Oral History Luncheon Draws Capacity Crowd

By Carol Lee

Our Fundraising/Reunion Luncheon was a HUGE Success!! On November 5, 2023, the LF OHP (Locke Foundation Oral History Project) and the LockePRDA (Locke Prior Residents & Descendants Association) partnered to host a special Fundraiser/Reunion Luncheon. Proceeds of the fundraiser were earmarked for the production of a film documentary titled, "Voices: Chinese Women of the Delta".



Members of LF Oral History Project, LockePRDA & Locke Foundation. L to R: Douglas Hsia, Corliss Suen Lee, Clarence Chu, Carol Lee, Mark Miller, Honey Lum, Dustin Marr & Stuart Walthall. (Photo by Danny Lee 2023).

The Sacramento-San Joaquin River Delta, or California Delta, has a long and rich history of the presence and contribution of the Chinese. In the 19th century, the Chinese came to build the levees, drain the swamps and transform the wild wetlands into the most productive farmland in the U.S. It was the Chinese who truly built California.

Gone are the Chinese women who endured the hardships and who supported the way of life of the Chinese immigrant community. This documentary project, "Voices: Chinese Women of the Delta", will focus on the Chinese women's sacrifice and contribution to the Delta through the recollection of those that remain.

After a four-year hiatus due to the challenges of COVID, LockePRDA brought together residents, descendants, friends and supporters of Locke and the Delta for a long-awaited reunion, some of whom had not seen each other since the last reunion of 2019. The LF OHP featured some of the oral histories collected thus far. From that collection the luncheon honored Gay Hoi Lum (posthumously), Ruth Chan Jang, Harry Sen and Corliss Suen Lee. A trailer of the Voices documentary was revealed as the finale to the event.



Prior Residents & Descendants Table. L to R: Sandy Owyang Fong, Penny Petersen, Linky Hamolka, Corey Okamoto, Janie Lee, Eileen Okamoto, Chip Lim, Wally Owyang (age 99), Melanie Gee. (Photo by Melanie Gee, 2023)

and all earnings were donated to the Voices project. The banquet room was packed with 275 in attendance.

After lunch, each honoree was recognized for their contribution and a short video snippet was shown.



Prior Residents & Descendants Table: L to R: Eddie Suen, Loretta Law Oh, Margaret Soon (old friends visiting). (Photo by Danny Lee)

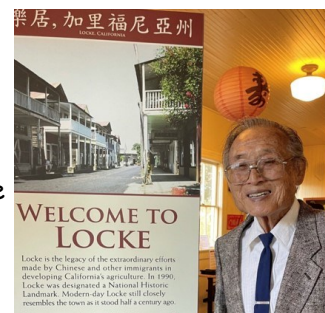


Paulette Hennum (former State Park Interpreter); Lynne Hasz (Isleton Bing Kong Tong); Don Nottoli (Former Sacramento Supervisor); Gerry Zink; Jean Yokotobi (Isleton Chamber of Commerce). (Photo by Danny Lee)



Palma You (Chinese Historical Society of America), Steve Haines (CHSA), Harry Sen, Leila Sen, Carol Lee (OHP, PRDA). (Photo by Danny Lee)

Gay Hoy Lum, born in 1927, sadly passed in September 2023, just before the event. Gay and his cousin were sponsored by this father (Lum Chew) and passed through Angel Island before arriving in Locke at the age of 11. During his first year in Locke, Gay worked along side his father weeding in the tomato fields. His father was paid \$1.00 a day and he was paid \$.50 for the same work. After one year in Locke, he was hired by the JB Thomas Ranch as a houseboy, sleeping in the barn. In high school an art teacher recognized Gay's



exceptional artistic talent; becoming his biggest fan she advocated for a scholarship to the San Francisco Academy of Advertising. In 1953 he was drafted into the Korean War and trained as an interpreter assigned to the 35th parallel - Demilitarized Zone (DMZ). Upon his return he married the daughter of the cook from the ranch where he worked as a young man. In 1957, Gay was the first Chinese hired by the Sacramento Bee Newspaper as an Editorial Illustrator and retired after a notable career of 35 year. In 1997, Gay was acknowledged by the Asian American Journalists Association (AAJA) with the Pioneer Spirit Award for "Leading the Way for Asian American Journalists." The video snippet shown was from an interview conducted by the Oral History Project in 2021. Gay told the story of three adventurous and mischievous 11 year-old boys and the "whore house". Everyone laughed and was entertained while Gay Hoi Lum shared his sense of humor one last time with everyone in attendance.

Ruth Chan Jang was born in Walnut Grove to Chuck Wing Chan and Lum Sue Ying. Her parents operated a dry goods store in Walnut Grove until they moved to Locke's Happy Café at 13964 Main Street. Ruth Jang is now 100 years old, soon to be 101 in December. At age 21, she and a friend went to the recruitment center and contrary to their mutual agreement, her friend enlisted in the Navy. Ruth, who could not swim and was afraid of the ocean, entered the Army. It was a wonderful eye-opening experience compared to life in Locke. Once a pilot took her up in a B25 Bomber where they dive-bombed cows on a farm when Ruth was stationed at Moody Field, Georgia. In New York, she was assignment to take wounded soldiers to free Broadway show and to see the Radio City Music Hall Rockettes. In her unit she never felt any discrimination as the only Chinese. After the service Ruth married Harry Jang, who was a lieutenant in the Air Force during WWII and who had received the Distinguished Flying Cross for his exceptional navigational skills under fire in Asia. The video snippet shown was produced by ABC10 after an interview.



Harry Sen was born in 1933 to a family of pear and vegetable farmers. He was the "Gum Jai" (Golden Son) in a family of 7 sisters. Harry developed his work ethics, sense of responsibility and drive for success at an early age. His parents emphasized family and the importance of the education they themselves did not receive. He tended the family garden as well as the pigs, ducks, and chickens. By age 10, he helped his father prune pear trees at various orchards during holidays and school vacations. His

grandfather's grocery store in Locke, Foon Hop, was known for scrumptious prepared foods and popular freshly made tofu. Barely tall enough to reach the pot, Harry eagerly helped his aunties stir the cooking concoction that would become tofu. His mother and aunts were integral to the success of Foon Hop. Harry is known for his love of fishing, his culinary skills and his expert gardening knowledge...all of which he attributes to his mother's influence. These stories about the women in his life that have helped the OHP capture a glimpse of women's lives in the delta. His video only reinforces Harry's willingness to help PRDA and OHP.

Corliss Suen Lee grew up as a resident of both Locke and Walnut Grove. As evidenced by her long lineage in Locke and Walnut Grove, Corliss cares deeply and is passionate about preserving the legacy of the Chinese women of the Delta. Intensely impacted by the resilience of the women around her, Corliss is committed to sharing their silent struggles. Empowered in her own right, Corliss was President of her own company, in a male-dominated industry, as a developer/builder of subdivisions of homes. Her insight as a woman was what launched her success. Corliss became the first minority woman president of the Building Industry Association and served as Vice Chair of the California Seismic Safety Commission. In Contra Costa County Corliss worked with nonprofits, building the first Habitat for Humanity houses in Contra Costa County. Raising \$600,000 she directed those resources and her expertise to manage the construction of a Battered Women's Shelter. As a resident and descendant Corliss embraces the responsibility to revive whatever stories remain. Corliss's video is an excerpt from Min Zhou's documentary, "Land of Luck".



Min Zhou is an international award-winning filmmaker who is dedicated to researching and telling Chinese American immigration history. Seven years ago, inspired by the stories of Gene Chan and Corliss Suen Lee, Min produced "Land of Luck", about Locke. Min and Corliss became fast collaborators in the important topic of the marginalized and forgotten women of the Delta. The LF OHP and LockePRDA are thrilled to be working with Min to produce the documentary film project, "Voices".

To support the documentary, please direct your **donation to: Oral History Project**, P.O. Box 1085, Walnut Grove, CA 95690 **Attention: "Voices"**.

For questions, contact:

Corliss Suen Lee, OHP corlissmlee@gmail.com or
Carol Lee, PRDA chinasilk88@gmail.com

Locke will feature a Dragon Dance to celebrate the Year of the Dragon

This unique dance is not as frequently performed as the Lion Dance, so visitors to our event on February 18, 2024, will be treated to special experience at noon.

By Eileen Leung

Dragons hold significant cultural importance in Chinese culture, symbolizing positive attributes such as luck and goodness. The Dragon Kings in Chinese culture are believed to have the ability to manipulate the weather and control the tides. They are seen as powerful and authoritative figures, capable of bringing both blessings and calamities upon the waters and the people who rely on them.

In ancient agrarian China, farmers relied on rainfall for agricultural production, leading them to offer sacrifices to dragons in spring as a prayer for good harvest. Many believed that dragons could safeguard their lands and crops from flood damage. Unlike western dragons, Chinese dragons are frequently depicted as long, serpentine creatures with vibrant colors, resembling a combination of different animal features such as scales of a carp, body of a serpent, claws of an eagle, and antlers of a deer.

Tracing its origins to the Han dynasty (206 BCE–220 CE), the traditional dragon dance began as a ceremony for worshipping ancestors and praying for rain. Originally performed to please the [ancestors](#) and to plead for enough rain for crops and hence preventing sickness and hunger, the Dragon Dance has gradually become a cultural activity. Since the Tang Dynasty (618–907 AD) and Song Dynasty (960–1279 AD), Dragon Dances can be seen in every festival.

From its origins in combining stylized depictions of natural animals, the Chinese dragon evolved to become a mythical creature revered in Chinese culture. In Chinese art the dragon evolved from a limbless snake-like creature in the pre Qin dynasty (pre 221 BC) to the composite creature, a combination of many [animals](#), including the horns of a stag, ears of a bull, eyes of a [rabbit](#), claws of a tiger and the scales of a fish, all on a long serpent's body. With these traits, it was believed that dragons were amphibious with the ability to move on land, fly through the air and swim in the sea, bestowing them roles as governors of cloud and rain in weather. This wise animal has special powers and dignity, symbolizing fertility, wisdom, auspiciousness and imperial authority. Furthermore, the dragon is the source of the [elements](#) - water, wind, earth and fire - and the [custodian of the seasons](#), thus symbolizing life and prosperity.

The dance later became more of an entertainment, often performed during Lantern Festival, Mid-autumn Festival and Chinese New Year. In Chinese culture, dragons symbolize wisdom, power, dignity, fertility, and auspiciousness, and have also become a symbol of Chinese culture itself. Odd numbers of the dragon's joints are regarded as auspicious, so people often make an odd-numbered jointed dragon puppet. Right before the dance, the head and the tail of the dragon are connected to its body. Then, someone holding a rod with a large ball at the top leads the dragon during the dance. As the dragon follows the ball's movement—left and right, back and forth, up and down, and thus moving in waves—it appears to be dancing.

While western descriptions of dragons often portray them as menacing, fire-breathing and evil creatures, Chinese dragons resemble long snake-like creature with sharp claws. The dragon dance costume is typically made of grass, bamboo, paper and cloth. To evoke power, its joints are often made in odd numbers, resulting in 9-jointed or 11-jointed bodies. The body is meticulously woven from thin bamboo strips forming a circular shape and covered with a vibrant red cloth. The performers manipulate the dragon using poles to control its movements. Dancers can raise, lower, dip,



Eastern Ways dragon dance team

thrust and sweep the dragon's head. To ensure flawless coordination, all performers must work together to move its body in perfect synchronization to the rhythmic beats of the drum. The performance of the dragon dance is accompanied by the intense, mesmerizing rhythm of cymbals, gongs and the big drum. The sound and the rhythm controls the movement of the dragon. The artistic choreography of the dance team mimics the supposed movements of this spirit and hence brings the motionless body to life.

A fairy tale tells the legend: One day, the Dragon King felt some terrible pain around his waist. After consuming all medication he could find, the pain persisted. Without any other option, he turned into human form and sought a doctor's advice. After the inspection, the doctor claimed, "You are not a human." Realizing that he couldn't pretend anymore, the Dragon King turned into his original form. The doctor still helped, removing the pain from the dragon's waist by a small operation and applied medication on the wound. The Dragon King felt relieve immediately. In appreciation to the doctor's help, the Dragon King said this to the doctor, "Dance in gears in the form of a dragon and you shall be granted with smooth weather and great harvests." The news quickly spread and people began to dance in gears built to the form of a dragon to plead for rain in drought seasons.

LOCKE FOUNDATION

*A non-profit organization benefiting the
last rural Chinese town in the United States, the Town of Locke*

Dear Friends,

Now in existence for nearly two decades, the Locke Foundation continues to expand its programs, activities and offerings to the public. It is our mission to educate the public about the historic legacy of Locke and to tell the stories of California's compelling immigrant experience.

In order to meet our mission and provide services in our community, we rely on the generosity of individuals, organizations and businesses for support. Without this assistance we would not be able to serve the public while accomplishing our mission goals.

We ask that you make a commitment to support our annual appeal with a cash donation. Our goals next year include: Modernization of cataloguing and preservation of the Locke's precious artifact collection; Renovation of the Locke Chinese vegetable demonstration garden; Staging of the Locke Chinese New Year Celebration and the Locke Asian Pacific Spring Festival; and continued operation of the Locke Boarding House Museum.

Your generosity will make a difference by allowing us to continue in our meaningful work. Checks may be made payable to Locke Foundation, and mailed to PO Box 1085, Walnut Grove, CA 95690.

Sincerely,



Stuart Walthall
Chairman, Locke Foundation

Extension for recognition of WWII veterans.

The Chinese American WWII Recognition Project has re-opened the registration process to accept new applications for consideration to receive the U.S. Mint replica of the Chinese American Veterans of WWII Congressional Gold Medal. The application period will only be open from December 7, 2023 to January 11, 2024. No applications will be accepted after January 11, 2024, 5:00 pm PST.



For those who missed being included in the last group that was presented with these important Medals, please help spread the word among your friends and family members as it's important we honor as many Chinese American WWII Veterans as possible before it is too late. Here is the link: <https://www.caww2.org/preservation>

PRESERVING LOCKE'S ROOTS

By Stuart Walthall

For decades following WWII the Chinese residents of Locke spent countless hours nurturing the gardens that fed their families, filled their days with meaningful activity and fostered a strong sense of community.

The precious vegetables, fruits and herbs were shared with pride to neighbors who did likewise. Community news and gossip were also shared out in the gardens. Locke's Chinese gardeners were diverse and individualistic- families large and small, widows and widowers, single bachelors ... the old and not-so-old. But there was one common denominator: The Gardens.

The original Chinese gardeners and their gardens have passed into the history and lore of Locke. However, there is much evidence of these original gardener's efforts captured in photographic images published in numerous books, articles and on display at the Locke Boarding House Museum. Their saga will live on forever. The Locke Foundation intends to continue that saga today.

The Locke Chinese Demonstration Garden has been in operation for over a decade. The garden, funded and maintained by the Locke Foundation, was created in order to help fulfill the mission of the LF: To educate the public about the history and CULTURE of Locke. One way to educate the public about Locke's culture is to show what the original residents grew and ate. That's culture!



Unfortunately, the Demo Garden has grown old and tired. Its sandy soil has become depleted of organics and nutrients. The scourge of Bermuda Grass has invaded the space. Annual crops have faded and failed. Thus, the space needs rejuvenation... back to the way it flourished a few short years ago.

The rejuvenation process has already begun. Volunteers from the University of California, Davis, along with Locke volunteers, have stepped forward to help with this meaningful project. (see Fall Issue of Locke Foundation Newsletter by visiting: <http://www.locke-foundation.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/09/LF->

[newsletter-Fall-2023-final.pdf](#)).

To eradicate the Bermuda Grass, the garden space has been completely covered by a 5 mil plastic silage tarp. This will kill the Bermuda Grass through a process known as occultation - depriving the weed from sunlight and therefore inhibiting photosynthesis. After the tarp has been removed the space will be tilled and Fava beans planted to initiate Nitrogen fixation. Then come Spring the costly issues must be addressed.

The entire 2000 square foot space must be enriched with manure and compost, each at least three inches deep. This amounts to several large truckloads of each supplement. Also, additional topsoil will be added to the mixture. This is where you the reader can help.

The Locke Foundation is staging its annual fundraising outreach program (see this issue). The LF is asking for your financial support with the continued operation of the Locke Boarding House Museum, preservation of Locke's precious artifacts, the Locke Chinese Demonstration Garden, and other worthy activities.



Please consider donating to the Chinese Demonstration Garden Project and other worthwhile Locke Foundation activities by sending your tax deductible contribution to:

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

A Primer on Chinese Vegetables from the Delta

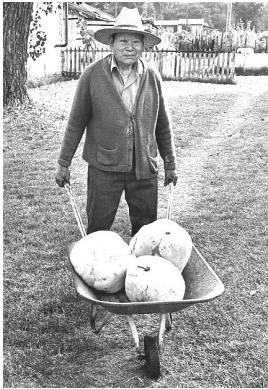
By Eileen Leung

Basic staples in a typical Chinese garden:

1. Winter melon: The vegetable's seasonal name likely comes from the fact that, while grown during the summer and autumn, it can be stored for up to three to four months and eaten during the winter. Additionally, immature melon has fine hairs and this fuzziness reminds some people of snow. Once it matures, it loses its hair and gets a waxy coating. The most desirable ones are the mature ones: they should have a coating of white powder on the rind and mostly hollow with a layer of flesh.



Winter melons can grow to more than a foot in length and weigh more than 40 pounds. They resemble a large [watermelon](#) with its oblong shape and dark green, waxy skin, although some are more round in shape. Unlike a watermelon, the flesh and seeds are white, it's relatively tasteless, and it cannot be eaten raw. Instead, recipes with winter melon often call for steaming, simmering, or parboiling, but be careful not to overcook it—it can get mushy. You can find winter melon in the produce department already sliced and packaged, which makes them more convenient and economical.



2. The Chinese long bean (*Vigna unguiculata*) truly lives up to its name, as long bean plants can have pods of up to 3 feet (.9 m.) in length. The leaves are bright green, compound with three heart shaped smaller leaflets. Both flowers and pods are usually formed in joined pairs. The blooms are similar in appearance to those of the regular green bean, with the color varying from white, to pink to lavender. More closely related to [cow peas](#) than string beans, Chinese long beans nonetheless taste similar to the latter. Some people think they taste a bit like [asparagus](#), hence the alternate name.

Although the beans can attain lengths of 3 feet, the optimal picking length is between 12-18 inches (30-46 cm.) long. Packed full of vitamin A, the sheer novelty will have your friends and family begging for more. They can also be kept in the fridge for five days placed in a sealable plastic bag and then in the vegetable crisper with high humidity. Use them as you would any green bean. They are awesome in stir fries and are the bean used for the Chinese green bean dish found on many Chinese restaurant menus.



3. Chinese okra or loofah squash. The Chinese okra squash has dark green skin and prominent ribs that must be peeled before cooking. It is sweet and tender like zucchini. It is usually stir-fried with meat. Upon maturity, the inside fiber hardens and becomes the loofah sponge that can be used for scrubbing and bathing.



4. Bitter melon: the unique taste of this vegetable comes from quinine, an antimalarial mineral found in tonic water. While it is an acquired taste, many Asian families stir fry or stuff the melon rounds with ground pork and black beans. However, the bitter melon is prized for its medicinal qualities.

The flesh of the fruit which contains most of the medicinal benefits. These benefits include skin health, blood sugar control, and the ability to stimulate the immune system. Research has also demonstrated that bitter melon contains various medicinal abilities including antifungal, anti-inflammatory, antiviral, antibiotic and expectorant properties.



Locke Foundation Membership Application/Renewal

Last Name _____ First Name _____

Mailing address _____

Email address _____ Tel () _____ Cell () _____

I would like to volunteer for the following activities:

Guided tour docent _____ Boarding House Volunteer _____

Contributor to newsletter _____ Media contacts _____ Landscape maintenance _____

Donation: _____ Designated purpose (if any) _____

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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Season's greetings