

# Legacy Business Registry Staff Report

HEARING DATE MAY 8, 2017

## CHINESE HISTORICAL SOCIETY OF AMERICA

*Application No.:* LBR-2016-17-043  
*Business Name:* Chinese Historical Society of America  
*Business Address:* 965 Clay Street  
*District:* District 3  
*Applicant:* Sue Lee, Executive Director  
*Nomination Date:* November 28, 2016  
*Nominated By:* Supervisor Aaron Peskin  
*Staff Contact:* Richard Kurylo  
legacybusiness@sfgov.org

### BUSINESS DESCRIPTION

Established in Chinatown in 1963, the Chinese Historical Society of America (CHSA) is the oldest and largest archive and historical center in the United States that documents the Chinese American experience. As a nonprofit organization, CHSA is “dedicated to the interpretation, promotion, and preservation of the social, cultural, and political history and contributions of the Chinese in America.” It accomplishes this mission by hosting exhibitions and public programs at its Museum and Learning Center, producing publications on Chinese American history, offering tours of the surrounding Chinatown neighborhood, and serving as the steward of the historic Chinatown YWCA, which it has owned and operated since 2000. The organization holds one of the country’s largest collections of Chinese American historical objects and frequently serves as a resource for historical research. Its programming focuses on three core values, as described in its application: (1) respect for cultural traditions and history/heritage; (2) the belief that innovation is part of how the organization keeps traditions relevant and up-to-date; and (3) a goal to reach “above and beyond” Chinatown in order to continue the process of expanding definitions of the Chinese American community and its role in society. In addition to showcasing rotating exhibitions, the CHSA Museum offers several permanent exhibitions, including *Chinese American: Exclusion/Inclusion*, the *History of the Chinatown YWCA*, and *Living in Chinatown: Memories in Miniature*. Founded by local Chinese American community advocates, CHSA has continued a legacy of community advocacy through its historical and educational work, and also through its support of local historians. CHSA also remains deeply connected to its surrounding neighborhood of Chinatown, keeping its doors open six days a week and collaborating with others to offer film screenings, book readings, presentations, workshops, and panel discussions in the neighborhood.

### CRITERION 1: Has the applicant operated in San Francisco for 30 or more years, with no break in San Francisco operations exceeding two years?

Yes, the applicant has operated in San Francisco for 30 or more years, with no break in San Francisco operations exceeding two years:



17 Adler Place from 1966 to 1969 (3 years).  
650 Commercial Street from 1969 to 1993 (24 years).  
644 Broadway #402 from 1993 to 2001 (8 years).  
965 Clay Street from 2001 to Present (16 years).

**CRITERION 2: Has the applicant contributed to the neighborhood's history and/or the identity of a particular neighborhood or community?**

Yes, the applicant has contributed to the Chinatown neighborhood's history and identity.

The Historic Preservation Commission recommended the applicant as qualifying, noting the following ways the applicant contributed to the neighborhood's history and/or the identity of a particular neighborhood or community:

- CHSA, a nonprofit organization, is the oldest and largest archive and historical center documenting the Chinese American experience in the United States. It is associated with the curatorial, archival, and story-telling traditions; promoting Chinese and Chinese-American heritage and culture; and the tradition of stewarding and interpreting a historic site.
- CHSA has contributed to the history and identity of San Francisco's Chinatown neighborhood by promoting the history, heritage, and culture of Chinese Americans in the Bay Area and beyond through its museum exhibitions, educational and cultural programs, and historical archive.
- The property at 965 Clay Street is Article 10 Landmark No. 122, significant for its architecture and social history. Designed by master architect, Julia Morgan, in 1932, the historic Chinatown YWCA is associated with Chinese and Chinese American history of the neighborhood.
- The business has been cited in the following publications:
  - San Francisco Chronicle, 10/29/2016, "NY gives SF vivid view of Chinese immigrants' history," by Carl Nolte.
  - San Francisco Chronicle, 10/3/1966, "Chinese Society Opens Museum," by Jerry Root.
  - San Francisco Chronicle, 10/6/1966, "Boost for Chinese History," by Millie Robbins.
  - San Francisco Magazine, 2/1967, "Or a Chinese Historical Society?" by Thomas W. Chinn.
  - Bulletin for April 1969, East/West News, 1/14/1988, "Historical Societies Play a Key Role in Chinese American History."
  - Tri-Valley Herald, 11/16/2001, "Museum gives Chinese-American history its due," by Titania Leung Inglis.
  - San Jose Mercury, 11/17/01, "Chinese-American museum conceived in '63 opens," by L.A. Chung.
  - San Francisco Chronicle, 11/18/01, "Chinese museum finally gets a home," by Tyche Hendricks.
  - New York Times, 2/11/11, "Lost for Years, a Trove of Chinatown Art is Tracked Down," by Bernice Yeung.
  - nbcnews.com, 11/11/16, "Chinese-American History Finds Permanent Home in San Francisco," by Frances Kai-Hwa Wang.
  - nbcnews.com, 2/11/17, "Oldest Chinese Laundry in the U.S. Closes Shop After 140 Years."
  - nbcnews.com, 2/11/17, "CAAM to Launch 'Who is American?' Education Campaign on Chinese Exclusion Act."
  - Asian Pacific America with Robert Handa, an interview with Sue Lee, Executive Director of CHSA, aired on NBC Bay Area January 29, 2017 (available on YouTube, see application for links).



CHSA has been the recipient of numerous awards, including: 2004 National Preservation Award from the National Trust for Historic Preservation; 2005 Preservation Award from California Heritage Council; and 2016 Award from the Art Deco Society of California.

**CRITERION 3: Is the applicant committed to maintaining the physical features or traditions that define the business, including craft, culinary, or art forms?**

Yes, CHSA is committed to maintaining the physical features or traditions that define its practice of operating museum, archive, and historical center focused on Chinese American history, heritage, and culture.

**HISTORIC PRESERVATION COMMISSION RECOMMENDATION**

The Historic Preservation Commission recommends that Chinese Historical Society of America qualifies for the Legacy Business Registry under Administrative Code Section 2A.242(b)(2) and recommends safeguarding of the below listed physical features and traditions.

Physical Features or Traditions that Define the Business:

- Dedication to the interpretation, promotion, and preservation of the social, cultural, and political history and contributions of the Chinese in America.
- Function as a home for the stories and experience of the Chinese in America.
- Chinatown location.
- Maintenance of a cultural asset that is the historic YWCA Chinatown building.
- Function as a museum, historical archive, and source of educational programming focused on Chinese and Chinese American history.

**CORE PHYSICAL FEATURES OR TRADITIONS THAT DEFINE THE BUSINESS**

Following are the core physical features or traditions that define the business that would be required for maintenance of the business on the Legacy Business Registry.

- The interpretation, promotion and/or preservation of the social, cultural and political history and contributions of the Chinese in America.

**STAFF RECOMMENDATION**

Staff recommends that the San Francisco Small Business Commission include Chinese Historical Society of America currently located at 965 Clay Street in the Legacy Business Registry as a Legacy Business under Administrative Code Section 2A.242.

Richard Kurylo, Manager  
Legacy Business Program





# Small Business Commission Draft Resolution

HEARING DATE MAY 8, 2017

CHINESE HISTORICAL SOCIETY OF AMERICA

LEGACY BUSINESS REGISTRY RESOLUTION NO. \_\_\_\_\_

<i>Application No.:</i>	LBR-2016-17-043
<i>Business Name:</i>	Chinese Historical Society of America
<i>Business Address:</i>	965 Clay Street
<i>District:</i>	District 3
<i>Applicant:</i>	Sue Lee, Executive Director
<i>Nomination Date:</i>	November 28, 2016
<i>Nominated By:</i>	Supervisor Aaron Peskin
<i>Staff Contact:</i>	Richard Kurylo legacybusiness@sfgov.org

**ADOPTING FINDINGS APPROVING THE LEGACY BUSINESS REGISTRY APPLICATION FOR CHINESE HISTORICAL SOCIETY OF AMERICA, CURRENTLY LOCATED AT 965 CLAY STREET.**

**WHEREAS**, in accordance with Administrative Code Section 2A.242, the Office of Small Business maintains a registry of Legacy Businesses in San Francisco (the "Registry") to recognize that longstanding, community-serving businesses can be valuable cultural assets of the City and to be a tool for providing educational and promotional assistance to Legacy Businesses to encourage their continued viability and success; and

**WHEREAS**, the subject business has operated in San Francisco for 30 or more years, with no break in San Francisco operations exceeding two years; or

**WHEREAS**, the subject business has operated in San Francisco for more than 20 years but less than 30 years, has had no break in San Francisco operations exceeding two years, has significantly contributed to the history or identity of a particular neighborhood or community and, if not included in the Registry, faces a significant risk of displacement; and

**WHEREAS**, the subject business has contributed to the neighborhood's history and identity; and

**WHEREAS**, the subject business is committed to maintaining the physical features and traditions that define the business; and

**WHEREAS**, at a duly noticed public hearing held on May 8, 2017, the San Francisco Small Business Commission reviewed documents and correspondence, and heard oral testimony on the Legacy Business Registry application; therefore







SAN FRANCISCO

OFFICE OF SMALL BUSINESS

CITY AND COUNTY OF SAN FRANCISCO
EDWIN M. LEE, MAYOR

OFFICE OF SMALL BUSINESS
REGINA DICK-ENDRIZZI, DIRECTOR

BE IT RESOLVED that the Small Business Commission hereby includes Chinese Historical Society of America in the Legacy Business Registry as a Legacy Business under Administrative Code Section 2A.242.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Small Business Commission recommends safeguarding the below listed physical features and traditions at Chinese Historical Society of America:

Physical Features or Traditions that Define the Business:

- Dedication to the interpretation, promotion, and preservation of the social, cultural, and political history and contributions of the Chinese in America.
Function as a home for the stories and experience of the Chinese in America.
Chinatown location.
Maintenance of a cultural asset that is the historic YWCA Chinatown building.
Function as a museum, historical archive, and source of educational programming focused on Chinese and Chinese American history.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Small Business Commission requires maintenance of the below listed core physical feature or tradition to maintain Chinese Historical Society of America on the Legacy Business Registry:

- The interpretation, promotion and/or preservation of the social, cultural and political history and contributions of the Chinese in America.

I hereby certify that the foregoing Resolution was ADOPTED by the Small Business Commission on May 8, 2017.

Regina Dick-Endrizzi
Director

RESOLUTION NO. \_\_\_\_\_

- Ayes -
Nays -
Abstained -
Absent -





SAN FRANCISCO

OFFICE OF SMALL BUSINESS

CITY AND COUNTY OF SAN FRANCISCO  
EDWIN M. LEE, MAYOR

OFFICE OF SMALL BUSINESS  
REGINA DICK-ENDRIZZI, DIRECTOR

**Legacy  
Business  
Registry**

# Application Review Sheet

*Application No.:* LBR-2016-17-043  
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*Nomination Date:* November 28, 2016  
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**CRITERION 1:** Has the applicant has operated in San Francisco for 30 or more years, with no break in San Francisco operations exceeding two years?       X       Yes                      No

17 Adler Place from 1966 to 1969 (3 years).  
 650 Commercial Street from 1969 to 1993 (24 years).  
 644 Broadway #402 from 1993 to 2001 (8 years).  
 965 Clay Street from 2001 to Present (16 years).

**CRITERION 2:** Has the applicant contributed to the neighborhood's history and/or the identity of a particular neighborhood or community?       X       Yes                      No

**CRITERION 3:** Is the applicant committed to maintaining the physical features or traditions that define the business, including craft, culinary, or art forms?       X       Yes                      No

**NOTES:** NA

**DELIVERY DATE TO HPC:** March 24, 2017

Richard Kurylo  
 Manager, Legacy Business Program



Member, Board of Supervisors  
District 3



City and County of San Francisco

**AARON PESKIN**  
佩斯金市參事

November 28, 2016

Director Regina Dick-Endrizzi  
San Francisco Office of Small Business  
City Hall, Room 110  
1 Dr. Carlton B. Goodlett Place  
San Francisco, CA 94102

Dear Director Dick-Endrizzi:

It is my honor and privilege to nominate The Chinese Historical Society of America (美國華人歷史學會) for inclusion on the Legacy Business Registry.

Founded in 1963, The Chinese Historical Society of America has become a cornerstone of Chinatown history, and maintains its position as a bastion of art, tradition and culture for the Chinese American experience. The Chinese Historical Society of America has played a rich role in shaping the understanding of the Chinese American experience across the Bay Area. Not only is it one of Chinatown's most storied societies and museums, it also is the oldest and largest archive and historical center documenting the Chinese American experience in the United States. With its traditional Chinese facade, the Chinese Historical Society of America is brimming with inspiring Chinese culture inside and out. From hosting art exhibits to conferences, the museum acts not only as a collection of artifacts and modern art but as a venue for the discussion of the Chinese American experience and the American immigrant experience.

I hope for the continued success of Chinese Historical Society of America. It is a critical part of the cultural heritage of Chinatown, District 3 and, indeed, the San Francisco Bay Area.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Aaron Peskin".

Aaron Peskin

## Section One:

**Business / Applicant Information.** Provide the following information:

- The name, mailing address, and other contact information of the business;
- The name of the person who owns the business. For businesses with multiple owners, identify the person(s) with the highest ownership stake in the business;
- The name, title, and contact information of the applicant;
- The business's San Francisco Business Account Number and entity number with the Secretary of State, if applicable.

<b>NAME OF BUSINESS:</b>		
Chinese Historical Society of America		
<b>BUSINESS OWNER(S) (identify the person(s) with the highest ownership stake in the business)</b>		
Sue Lee		
<b>CURRENT BUSINESS ADDRESS:</b>	<b>TELEPHONE:</b> 415-391-1188	
965 Clay Street San Francisco, CA 94108	((415))391-1188	
	<b>EMAIL:</b> suelee@chsa.org	
<b>WEBSITE:</b>	<b>FACEBOOK PAGE:</b>	<b>YELP PAGE</b>
www.chsa.org	facebook.com/chsamuseum	yelp.com/biz/chinese-historical-society-of-america-san-francisco

<b>APPLICANT'S NAME</b>	
Sue Lee	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Same as Business
<b>APPLICANT'S TITLE</b>	
Executive Director	
<b>APPLICANT'S ADDRESS:</b>	<b>TELEPHONE:</b>
965 Clay Street San Francisco, CA 94108	(415) 391-1188
	<b>EMAIL:</b> suelee@chsa.org

<b>SAN FRANCISCO BUSINESS ACCOUNT NUMBER:</b>	<b>SECRETARY OF STATE ENTITY NUMBER (if applicable):</b>

<b>OFFICIAL USE: Completed by OSB Staff</b>	
<b>NAME OF NOMINATOR:</b>	<b>DATE OF NOMINATION:</b>



## Section Two:

### Business Location(s).

List the business address of the original San Francisco location, the start date of business, and the dates of operation at the original location. Check the box indicating whether the original location of the business in San Francisco is the founding location of the business. If the business moved from its original location and has had additional addresses in San Francisco, identify all other addresses and the dates of operation at each address. For businesses with more than one location, list the additional locations in section three of the narrative.

ORIGINAL SAN FRANCISCO ADDRESS:	ZIP CODE:	START DATE OF BUSINESS
17 Adler Place, San Francisco, CA	94133	January 5, 1966
IS THIS LOCATION THE FOUNDING LOCATION OF THE BUSINESS?	DATES OF OPERATION AT THIS LOCATON	
<input type="checkbox"/> No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes		

OTHER ADDRESSES (if applicable):	ZIP CODE:	DATES OF OPERATION
650 Commercial Street, San Francisco, CA	94111	Start: 1969
		End: 1993

OTHER ADDRESSES (if applicable):	ZIP CODE:	DATES OF OPERATION
644 Broadway #402, San Francisco, CA	94133	Start: 1993
		End: 2001

OTHER ADDRESSES (if applicable):	ZIP CODE:	DATES OF OPERATION
965 Clay Street, San Francisco, CA	94108	Start: 11/2001
		End: present

OTHER ADDRESSES (if applicable):	ZIP CODE:	DATES OF OPERATION
		Start:
		End:

OTHER ADDRESSES (if applicable):	ZIP CODE:	DATES OF OPERATION
		Start:
		End:

OTHER ADDRESSES (if applicable):	ZIP CODE:	DATES OF OPERATION
		Start:
		End:

## Section Three:

### Disclosure Statement.

#### San Francisco Taxes, Business Registration, Licenses, Labor Laws and Public Information Release.

This section is verification that all San Francisco taxes, business registration, and licenses are current and complete, and there are no current violations of San Francisco labor laws. This information will be verified and a business deemed not current in with all San Francisco taxes, business registration, and licenses, or has current violations of San Francisco labor laws, will not be eligible to apply for the Business Assistance Grant.

In addition, we are required to inform you that all information provided in the application will become subject to disclosure under the California Public Records Act.

Please read the following statements and check each to indicate that you agree with the statement. Then sign below in the space provided.

- I am authorized to submit this application on behalf of the business.
- I attest that the business is current on all of its San Francisco tax obligations.
- I attest that the business's business registration and any applicable regulatory license(s) are current.
- I attest that the Office of Labor Standards and Enforcement (OLSE) has not determined that the business is currently in violation of any of the City's labor laws, and that the business does not owe any outstanding penalties or payments ordered by the OLSE.
- I understand that documents submitted with this application may be made available to the public for inspection and copying pursuant to the California Public Records Act and San Francisco Sunshine Ordinance.
- I hereby acknowledge and authorize that all photographs and images submitted as part of the application may be used by the City without compensation.
- I understand that the Small Business Commission may revoke the placement of the business on the Registry if it finds that the business no longer qualifies, and that placement on the Registry does not entitle the business to a grant of City funds.

Sue Lee

2/16/2017



Name (Print):

Date:

Signature:



The Chinese Historical Society of America, (CHSA) was founded in 1963 and opened its first place of business in 1966 at 17 Adler Place (now Jack Kerouac Alley) in San Francisco Chinatown between Grant and Columbus Avenues, where it remained until 1989. Through the 1990s, CHSA would be located at 650 Commercial Street between Clay and Sacramento. It moved to 644 Broadway between Stockton and Grant for two years between 2000 and 2001 before opening at the newly renovated and retrofitted Chinatown YWCA at 965 Clay Street; it's current home, which CHSA owns, in November 2001. As such, CHSA has operated within the Chinatown community for nearly 51 years and has been housed for 17 years in one the neighborhood's major properties that is a City Landmark and significant tourist attraction as a Julia Morgan designed architectural marvel.

CHSA was founded by well-known Chinese American figures and community advocates Thomas W. Chinn, C.H. Kwock, Chingwah Lee, H.K. Wong, and Thomas W.S. Wu D.D.S. In the contemporary period, grand historians Philip Choy and the late Him Mark Lai, made major contributions to the understanding and awareness of Chinese American history through scholarly work and advocacy projects through CHSA, including the saving from destruction and preservation of Angel Island Immigration Station.

The content of the Museum overall, is a treasure trove of the historical record of the experience of Chinese in America, which includes the remarkable narrative of the phoenix like rising from the ashes of Chinatown after the 1906 Great Earthquake and Fire, the creation of one of the nation's iconic neighborhoods, and the ongoing triumph of a vibrant residential and business nexus that has defined San Francisco's unique cultural importance. CHSA is the steward of the community narrative of Chinese in America and makes this narrative a living history through a variety of high quality cultural content such as exhibitions and public programs. It provides ongoing service as an anchor community-based organization for the Chinatown neighborhood that is open six days a week, ensuring a continuous opportunity for the public to engage with the remarkable narrative of our community.

CHSA promotes the contributions and legacy of the Chinese in America through its exhibitions, publications, and educational and public programs in the Museum and Learning Center. We offer tours of the Museum and the surrounding Chinatown community for a nominal charge. We have extended our reach with online content with online exhibits through our main portal [chsa.org](http://chsa.org), sharing information and news through our Facebook, Twitter, and Tumblr, and sharing photographs through our Instagram. We have also opened our doors to collaborations with others who want to share their stories and experiences through film screenings, book readings, presentations, workshops, panel discussions and so much more.

The CHSA Museum provides a permanent home for the stories and experience of the Chinese in America that stretches back to the Spanish period in California history. It shares these stories with a world class \$2 million exhibition entitled *Chinese American: Exclusion/Inclusion*,

numerous rotating exhibitions, and through regular schedule of public engagement programs such as literary events, film screenings, lectures and panel discussions, performances, and walking tours of the neighborhood. It also serves as an important resource for historical research in the writing of multiple books and films, including the upcoming PBS Documentary film by Ric Burns “The Chinese Exclusion Act”. As part of the wealth of content that CHSA provides, it holds one of the largest collections of historical objects of Chinese American historical interest from works of art, clothing, household objects, and books.

CHSA serves the local San Francisco Chinatown neighborhood, the greater City-wide population, and the Bay Area region which is home to over 500,000 Chinese Americans. Moreover, CHSA has a national and international footprint, providing value to individuals and organizations interested in the significance of the history of Chinese in America to our nation and to our world. The Chinatown neighborhood of which CHSA a homegrown product is one of the oldest communities of its kind in the country that is both an active commercial center and residential hub. It is a coveted cultural destination for a City of cultural destinations, attracting over six million visitors annually.

CHSA represents the heart and identity of the Chinatown community and as such contributes to positive and vibrant quality of life for the neighborhood as well as a place of learning for the many visitors. If CHSA were to cease to exist, the Chinatown would lose a significant cultural and physical asset that would harm the economic and cultural well-being of the neighborhood.

The core values of our programming include: 1) Respect for cultural traditions and history/heritage. 2) That innovation is part of how we keep our traditions up to date and relevant. 3) That we must reach “above and beyond” Chinatown to continue the process of expanding our definitions of our community and its role in our society. The content of our programming stretches from exploring our historical narratives to how these narratives inform our current world in a variety of ways from culinary art to fashion, the visual, literary and performing arts, and in the media.

An aspect of the Museum’s presentation is sharing of stories of how Chinese women built the YWCA during the era of the Exclusion, traveling up and down the coast to raise money, engaging architect Julia Morgan, and built a highly impactful social and cultural institution during 60+ years of operations. As a significant historical cultural asset we are committed to following the guidelines for the preservation of the building. This takes the form of organizational policies governing visitors and programming to our ongoing maintenance of the building.

The CHSA Museum has been recognized multiple times for its historic significance including: 2004 National Preservation Award from the National Trust for Historic Preservation, 2005 Preservation Award from California Heritage Council, and 2016 award from The Art Deco Society of California.

The CHSA Museum is a City of San Francisco registered landmark, #122. It is recognized as of architectural significance both for its age (built in 1932) and as a singular artistic achievement of one of the 20th Century's most famous architects. It is also recognized for its cultural and historical significance for the lived experience associated with the YWCA in Chinatown and now more recently as the home of one of the neighborhood's significant cultural institutions.

Continuing to celebrate our name and organizational and community history is critical to maintaining our own historical traditions. Our priority on cultural and historical interpretation as a cornerstone to our content shapes each of our offerings to the public as well as our communications strategies.

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## About CHSA



The Chinese Historical Society of America Museum is the oldest organization in the country dedicated to the interpretation, promotion, and preservation of the social, cultural and political history and contributions of the Chinese in America.

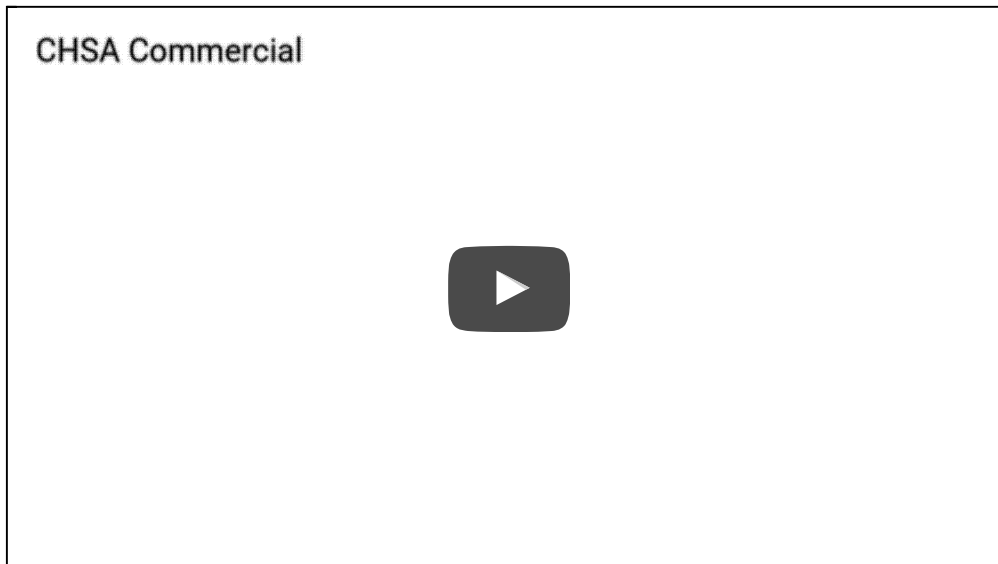
When founded in 1963, there were fewer than 250,000 people of Chinese descent living in the US and CHSA was a lone voice for the study and dissemination of the history of this segment of the US population. Today, as the number of Chinese in the US has risen to nearly 4 million, CHSA strives to be a responsible steward of the remarkable narrative of this rapidly growing and increasingly visible community.

### **What we do**

CHSA promotes the contributions and legacy of the Chinese in America through its exhibitions, publications, and educational and public programs in the Museum and Learning Center. We are housed in the landmark Julia Morgan-designed Chinatown YWCA building at 965 Clay Street, San Francisco.

We offer tours of the Museum and the surrounding Chinatown community for a nominal charge. We have extended our reach with online content with online exhibits through our main portal [chsa.org](http://chsa.org), sharing information and news through our Facebook, Twitter, and Tumblr, and sharing photographs through our Instagram. We have also opened our doors to collaborations with others who want to share their stories and experiences through film screenings, book readings, presentations, workshops, panel discussions and so much more.

## Come visit CHSA today



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Share this:

# Chinese Historical Society of America

Commercial:

<https://youtu.be/cxYD20fxzeo>



*Asian Pacific America with Robert Handa* recently interviewed Sue Lee, Executive Director of Chinese Historical Society of America. The episode aired on NBC Bay Area January 29, 2017. This 3-part episode can be viewed:

[http://www.nbcbayarea.com/on-air/as-seen-on/Chinese-American\\_-Exclusion\\_Inclusion\\_Bay-Area-412344753.html](http://www.nbcbayarea.com/on-air/as-seen-on/Chinese-American_-Exclusion_Inclusion_Bay-Area-412344753.html)

[http://www.nbcbayarea.com/on-air/as-seen-on/Chinese-Exclusion-Act\\_Bay-Area-412344073.html](http://www.nbcbayarea.com/on-air/as-seen-on/Chinese-Exclusion-Act_Bay-Area-412344073.html)

[http://www.nbcbayarea.com/on-air/as-seen-on/Chinese-Inclusion\\_Bay-Area-412344763.html](http://www.nbcbayarea.com/on-air/as-seen-on/Chinese-Inclusion_Bay-Area-412344763.html)

Chinese American: Exclusion/Inclusion

SUE LEE  
CHINESE HISTORICAL SOCIETY OF AMERICA EXEC. DIR.

2:09 / 5:41

Asian Pacific America with Robert Handa: The Chinese Historical Society of America talks about its new exhibit.

Published at 3:30 PM PST on Jan 31, 2017

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DRAWINGS AT 9PM

October 29, 2016, the San Francisco Chronicle published “NY gives SF vivid view of Chinese immigrant’s history”, an article about CHSA’s opening of a major exhibition. Full article can be found:

<http://www.sfchronicle.com/bayarea/nativeson/article/NY-gives-SF-vivid-view-of-Chinese-immigrants-10421722.php#photo-11656974>

## NY gives SF vivid view of Chinese immigrants’ history

By Carl Noto, San Francisco Chronicle | October 29, 2016 | Updated: October 29, 2016 1:54pm



Photo: Amy Osborn, Special To The Chronicle

IMAGE 7 OF 7

Left: Sae Lee is executive director of the Chinese Historical Society of America.

Chinese Historical Society of America has operated at 965 Clay Street, San Francisco  
from 2001 to the present. ©2001



Exterior plaque detail. ©2017



Architectural detail of exterior. ©2017





Interior photo of Chinese Historical Society of America foyer. ©2013



Architectural detail of interior. ©2001



Architectural detail of interior. ©2001



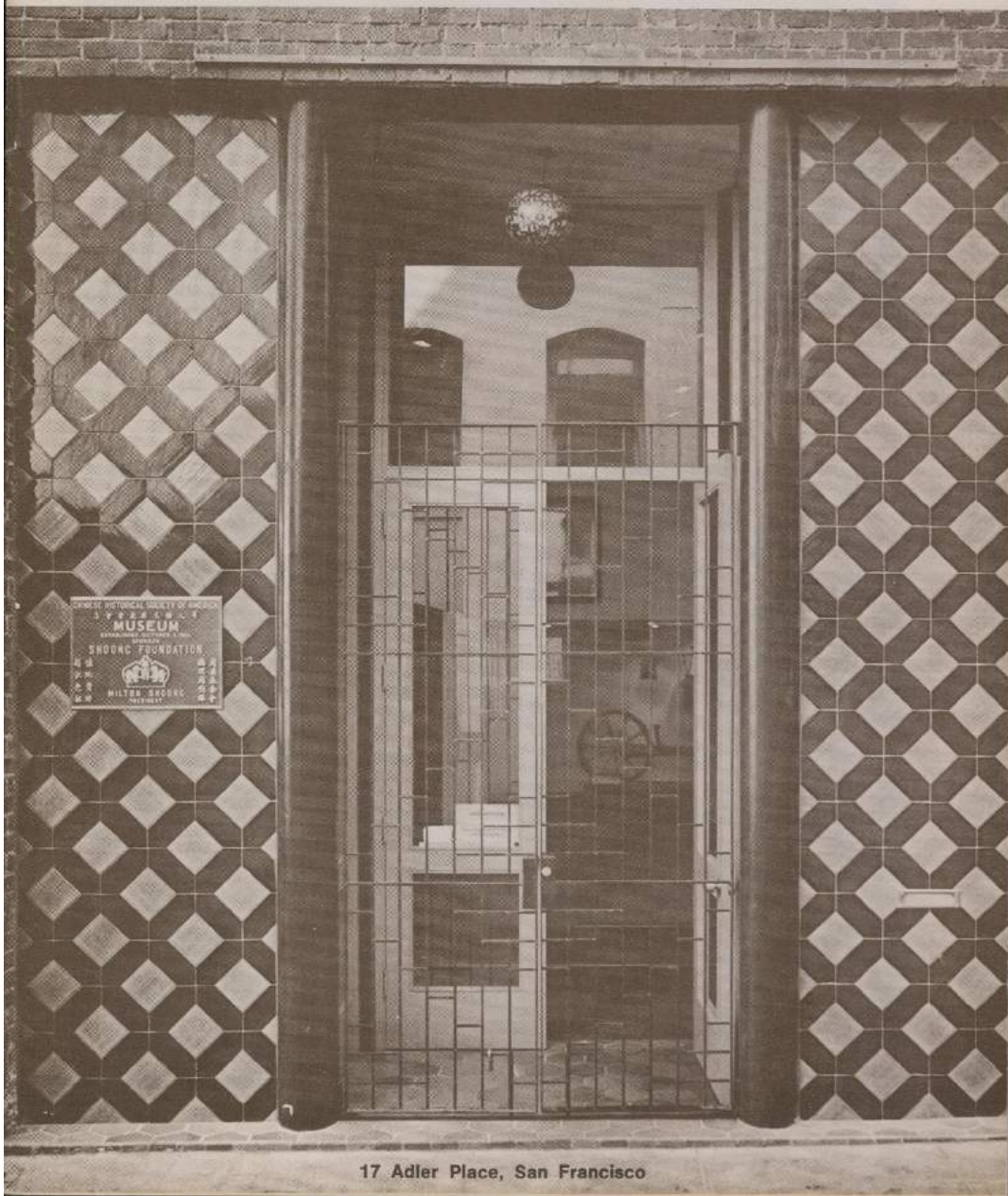


Architectural detail of garden. ©2007





Chinese Historical Society of America operated at 17 Adler Place,  
San Francisco from 1966-1989. ©1968



17 Adler Place, San Francisco

In January 4, 1981, YWCA Chinatown Center (at 965 Clay Street) became a Registered  
Landmark #122 of the City & County of San Francisco. ©2017



In 2004, Chinese Historical Society of America received the National Preservation Award from the National Trust for Historic Preservation for the adaptive use of the Julia Morgan-designed YWCA. ©2017



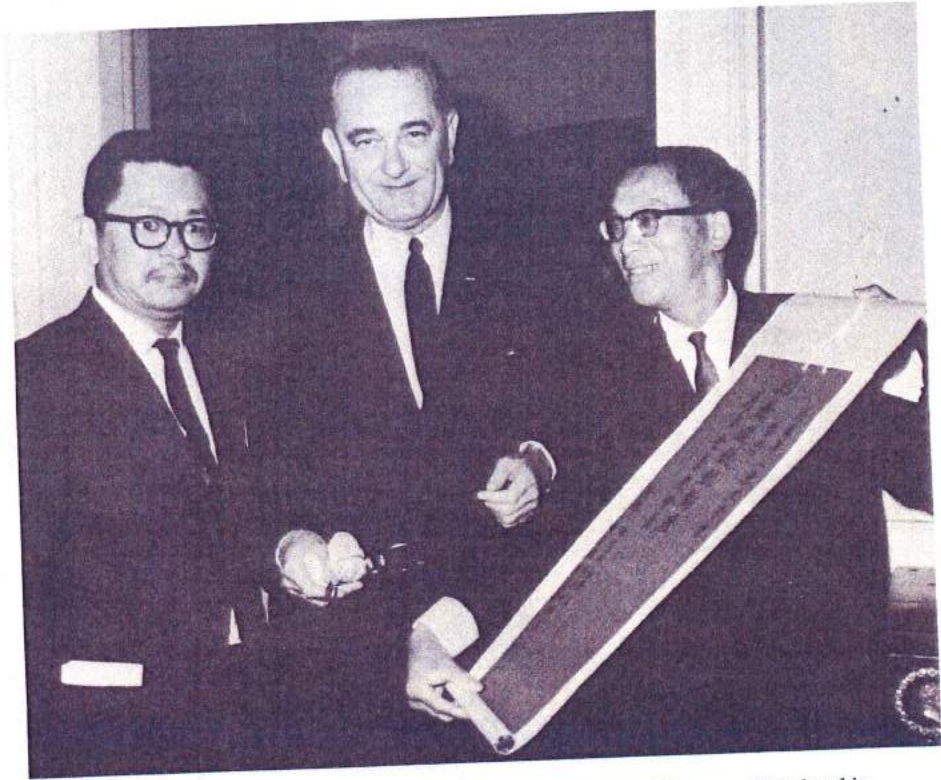
In 2016, Chinese Historical Society of America received an award for historic preservation and stewardship of the 1932 Julia Morgan Chinatown YWCA from The Art Deco Society of California. ©2017





President Lyndon B. Johnson became the first honorary member of the Chinese Historical Society of America in 1964. ©1964





Society members C. H. Kwock and H. K. Wong presenting Honorary Membership scroll to President Lyndon B. Johnson at the White House, August 2, 1964.







CHINESE HISTORICAL  
SOCIETY OF AMERICA



MUSEUM  
AND LEARNING CENTER

THE MUSEUM IS  
**OPEN**  
PLEASE COME IN  
ADMISSION IS FREE

博物館  
開放  
請內進  
入場免費



# 源流四海

## A Diverse Chinese America

From the west of Texas to the east coast, the Chinese American population is diverse. In many ways, it is a reflection of the diversity of the United States. Chinese Americans have lived in America since the 1800s, and their lives have been shaped by the experiences of their ancestors. They have worked in many different jobs, and they have contributed to the growth of the United States. Today, Chinese Americans are an integral part of the American fabric, and their stories are an important part of our history.

Chinese Americans have made significant contributions to the United States in many fields, including science, technology, and the arts. Their hard work and dedication have helped to build a better life for everyone. We honor their legacy and look forward to their continued contributions to our nation.

## Chinese of America, Year 2000

2000年美國華人人口分佈圖



The Chinese of America







CHINESE AMERICA

CHINESE AMERICA

CHINESE AMERICA

Benjamin Chao  
a Home in San Francisco

FASHION

FASHION

EARLY

EARLY

化裝茶台



# CHINESE HAND LAUNDRY











# CHINESE AMERICAN

美籍華人

## EXCLUSION / INCLUSION

**A**merica's desire for trade with China is older than Independence, yet in 1882 the nation's borders shut for the first time to exclude Chinese workers. A long and bitter contest over immigration and citizenship ensued, influenced by tensions within the United States and the changing tenor of relations between the two countries.

This struggle over freedom and the right to belong shaped the Chinese American experience and the very formation of American society. It is a story of extraordinary individuals, fearful and courageous acts, and unexpected twists and turns that have surprising relevance to our world today.









THE CHINESE  
ACT!  
er 13th

Exclusion



...





**Signs of Change**  
1941-1971

Over the course of the 1940s and 1950s, the fashion industry in Hong Kong underwent a significant transformation. As the city's population grew and its economy diversified, the traditional Chinese qipao evolved into a more modern and diverse style. This period saw the emergence of new fabrics, patterns, and silhouettes, reflecting the city's unique blend of Eastern and Western influences.

The 1960s and 1970s brought further changes, with the rise of the "mod" style and the influence of international fashion trends. Designers began to experiment with bold colors and abstract patterns, creating a new look for the qipao. This era also saw the introduction of synthetic fabrics and the use of modern tailoring techniques, which allowed for greater flexibility and comfort in the garment.

Textual information panel on the left wall, providing context for the historical photographs.



Textual information panel on the left wall, positioned below the group photograph.



Textual information panel on the left wall, positioned to the right of the small photograph.







Text panel describing the historical context of immigration during this period.



### Immigration Begins Again 1950s-1960s

The United States has always been a nation of immigrants. In the 1950s and 1960s, immigration from Europe and Asia increased significantly. This was due to a combination of factors, including the end of the Cold War and the desire for a better life in America. The Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS) processed millions of immigrants during this time, many of whom were seeking political asylum or economic opportunity. The INS also played a key role in enforcing immigration laws and ensuring that immigrants met the requirements for entry into the United States.

Text panel providing additional information about immigration policies and procedures.

Text panel providing additional information about immigration policies and procedures.



### The Empress of China Sails from New York to Canton

The Empress of China, a clipper ship, sailed from New York to Canton in 1847. The ship was the first to sail from New York to Canton, and it was the first to sail from New York to Canton. The ship was the first to sail from New York to Canton, and it was the first to sail from New York to Canton.

### Global Trade

Global trade has been a major force in the world's history. It has allowed people to trade goods and services across the globe, and it has helped to create a global economy. Global trade has been a major force in the world's history, and it has helped to create a global economy.



The display case contains the following items:

- A framed photograph of a harbor scene with the caption "THE BRICK SHEDDING FOR EXPORT" and "AMERICAN AND FOREIGN SHIPS" below it.
- Two small informational cards.
- A framed photograph of a busy harbor scene with a large building in the background.
- A photograph of a harbor scene with a large building in the background.
- Two blue ceramic figurines of deer or similar animals.
- A small wooden box.
- A set of silver teacups and saucers.
- A long wooden object, possibly a pipe or a tool, resting on a small stand.
- A small informational card on the right side of the case.





# LANDMARKS PRESERVATION ADVISORY BOARD

100 LARKIN STREET • CIVIC CENTER • SAN FRANCISCO • 94102

FINAL CASE REPORT, RESIDENCE CLUB AND CLAY STREET CENTER APPROVED MAY 21, 1980

BUILDING NAME CLAY STREET CENTER

OWNER: YOUNG WOMEN'S CHRISTIAN ASSOCIATION

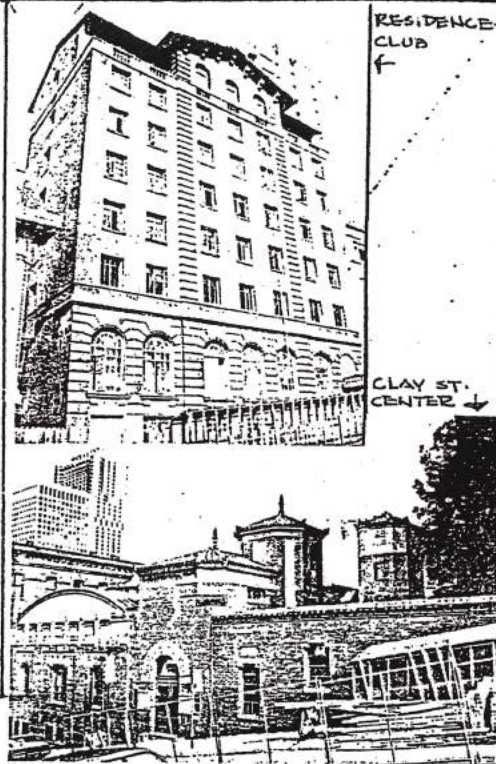
BUILDING ADDRESS 965 CLAY STREET

BLOCK AND LOT: 224/24. PORTION LOT 18

ZONING RM4

**BACKGROUND**

Original occupant/use	residences, social services
Current occupant/use	social services
No. of stories:	one to three
Exterior Materials	brick
Window Type	steel casement
Lobby/Public Spaces	Chinese motif



## CRITERIA

### A. Architecture

Style	of Chinese influence
Type of Construction	Brick
Date of Construction	October 8, 1932
Design Quality	Excellent
Architect/Builder	Julia Morgan/K.E. Parker
Interior	use of traditional Chinese courtyard

### B. History

(a brief narrative associating the building with persons, events and/or patterns of significance):

The founding of the Chinese YWCA was the result of efforts of both missionary workers and Chinese community members who saw the need for social services among Chinese women. Among them were Mrs. P.D. Browne, Donaldina Cameron, Mrs. Poon Chew.

### C. Environment

(relation to surroundings in terms of continuity, setting and/or importance as a visual landmark)

The architecture expresses the ethnic composition of the neighborhood, reflecting Nob Hill on the Powell Street side and Chinatown on the Clay Street side.

### D. Integrity

(cite alterations, if any, and current physical condition)

Presently being brought up to date to comply with structural safety requirements with the use of gunite on the interior surfaces of the brick walls of the gym. Interior space of basement being altered. Integrity of other areas is maintained.

## RATINGS

DCP INVENTORY	HERITAGE	HERE TODAY	LPAB VOTE	STATE LANDMARK
2	N.R.	N.R.	C/C VOTE	NAT'L LANDMARK
				NAT'L REGISTER - Eligible

## STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

(pertaining to special character or special historical, architectural or aesthetic interest or value)

Julia Morgan was a woman pioneer architect with many firsts. She was the first woman to be graduated in engineering from the University of California, Berkeley; the first woman to study at the Ecole des Beaux Arts; and the first woman architect licensed in California. The YWCA and the Women's Residence Club reflected the era when women sought equal rights entering the world of men, while the Chinese YWCA reflected the process in the socialization of the Chinese into American traditions.

Julia Morgan was the most important woman architect in America. The Clay Street Center and the Residence Club are examples of her high quality work.

(cont'd on back)

BIBLIOGRAPHY: list original sources on back of this page.

PREPARED BY Philip P. Choy  
 ADDRESS 1350 Union Street  
 DATE 5/15/80



# LANDMARKS PRESERVATION ADVISORY BOARD

100 LARKIN STREET • CIVIC CENTER • SAN FRANCISCO • 94102

FINAL CASE REPORT, RESIDENCE CLUB AND CLAY STREET CENTER APPROVED MAY 21, 1980

BUILDING NAME RESIDENCE CLUB  
BUILDING ADDRESS 940 POWELL STREET

OWNER: YOUNG WOMEN'S CHRISTIAN ASSOCIATION OF  
SAN FRANCISCO  
BLOCK AND LOT: 224/18 ZONING RM4

### BACKGROUND

Original occupant/use Women's Residence  
Current occupant/use Housing  
No. of stories: Eight (8)  
Exterior Materials Sandstone, brick, concrete  
Window Type steel casement & fanlight sash  
Lobby/Public Spaces Chinese motif

J O I C E S T.

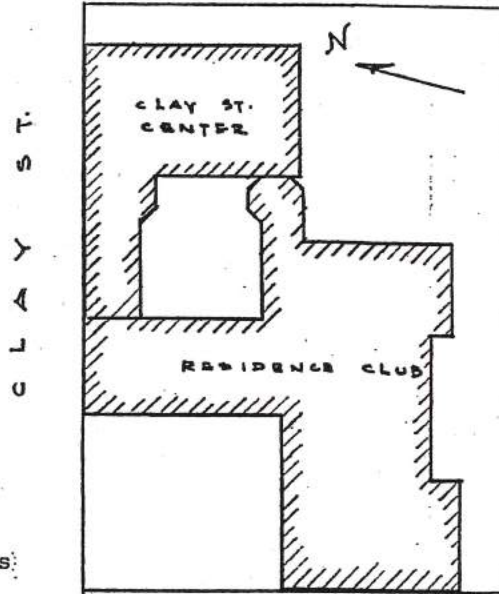
### CRITERIA

#### A. Architecture

Style eclectic  
Type of Construction reinforced concrete  
Date of Construction August 15, 1932  
Design Quality Excellent  
Architect/Builder Julia Morgan  
Interior Excellent; sensitive integration of Chinese interior within a

#### B. History western structure.

(a brief narrative associating the building with persons, events and/or patterns of significance):  
The Residence Club was built by the YWCA in response to the need for housing of single women in the Progressive Era (1930's) when women aspired to enter the business world.



P O W E L L S T.

#### C. Environment

(relation to surroundings in terms of continuity, setting and/or importance as a visual landmark)  
Maintains the character of neighboring surroundings respecting the hotel mass on Powell Street. (see Page 1)

#### D. Integrity

(cite alterations, if any, and current physical condition)  
Upper floors of living quarters being altered to meet present housing needs. Integrity of public spaces to be retained.

### RATINGS

DCP INVENTORY	HERITAGE	HERE TODAY	LPAB VOTE	STATE LANDMARK
2	N.R.	N.R.	CFC VOTE	NAT'L. LANDMARK NAT'L REGISTER - Eligible

### STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

(pertaining to special character or special historical, architectural or aesthetic interest or value)

see Page 1

BIBLIOGRAPHY: list original sources on back of this page.

PREPARED BY Philip P. Choy  
ADDRESS 1350 Union Street  
DATE 5/15/80

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1. A History of the San Francisco Young Women's Christian Association 1878-1953, unpublished manuscript at 620 Sutter Street, San Francisco, California, 1953
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# Chinese Society Opens Museum

By Jerry Root

The Chinese Historical Society of America opened its doors ceremonially yesterday at 17 Adler place on the northern fringes of Chinatown.

At least 300 persons, including the spectrum of State and local officialdom, attended the ceremony despite a drizzly rain and became the first visitors to the society's small new museum.

Mrs. Glenn Anderson, the beautiful blonde wife of California's lieutenant governor, was one of the principal ribbon-cutters, and easily the most charming.

"Wives of politicians don't have to make speeches," she said, midway in a program abounding in speeches. "They just have to smile," which she did to appreciative applause.

## MOTHER

Yin-Shou Che, the consul-general for the Republic of China, also wielded scissors, as did Supervisor Kevin O'Shea and Mrs. Chinn Lee Shee Wing, the 95-year-old mother of society president Thomas W. Chinn.

The society and its headquarters are "in recognition of the contributions made to America" by the Chinese who came to San Francisco in the mid-1800s to escape the Manchu tyranny, said Albert C. Lim, the master of ceremonies for the occasion.

The society was founded four years ago by five men — Chinn, writer C. H. Kwock, Dr. Thomas Wu, art dealer Chingwah Lee and businessman H. K. Wong.

## JOHNSON

It is the only Chinese-American organization in the Nation which can claim as a member President Johnson, who sent a congratulatory telegram.

Among the other speakers were State Senator



Cutting the ribbon at the ceremony were H. K. Wong, Mrs. Chinn Lee Shee Wing and Mrs. Glenn Anderson.

J. Eugene McAteer, Assemblyman John Burton, Supervisor Peter Tamaras and Louis L. Stein Jr., vice noble grand humbug of the Yerba Buena chapter of E Clampus Vitus.

The society's headquarters, and its \$20,000 remodeling by the noted architectural firm of Campbell and Wong, was a gift from Chinatown tycoon Milton Choong, who was presented with a golden key in appreciation.

In the four years since founding the society, its members have searched the Chinese community for relics of the Chinese's earliest years in California, and although the collection is still small, it is growing.

Among the exhibits:

- The altar of a Chinese temple built in Napa a century ago by quicksilver miners.

- A petition to President Theodore Roosevelt asking for more lenient immigration laws.

- A Chinese lumber camp cook's broken spatula repaired by a reckless prospector with a gold nugget.

- Scores of old photographs of early Chinese life in California, clothing worn by the Chinese '49ers, mining tools, hand-made wheelbarrows, pioneer merchants' cash boxes and tape recordings of the recollections of Chinatown old-timers.



# Boost for Chinese History

By Millie Robbins

AMONG a resounding volley of firecrackers followed the usual oratory, the new headquarters of the Chinese Historical Society of America was officially opened last Sunday afternoon . . . and guests remained in to have a look.

The small but smart red-brick-fronted building at 17 Adler Place, an alley that cuts into the 1100 block of Grant avenue, is owned by Milton Shoong, who gave it to the organization rent-free for 15 years.

Most recently this had been an art gallery. Previous to that it had housed a laundry in the basement, now converted into an attractive room that'll probably be used for meetings.

(The narrow courtyard opening off it is prettily decorated with plantings and a stack of cobblestones that once paved the street at the intersection of Washington and Grant avenue.)

Before that, according to H. K. Wong, the association's first vice president and one of its founders, this probably was the site of a monwab furnace.

Time out now for a spot of explanation:

Certain societies believed that all Chinese writing was sacred and should never be stepped on, thrown out or disposed of in any way except by burning.

So all scraps of paper on which writing appeared in households or business offices were separated from other discards, collected, and taken to a specific place in Chinatown.

There, after a brief traditional ceremony, they were burned, the ashes gathered and dumped into the sea.

The practice, however, was discarded here some 50 or more years ago.

The membership of the three-year-old society, divided into active and associate status, currently stands at around 100—approximately 60 Chinese.

The first life member was James Wong Howe, the eminent motion picture cameraman, who was here from Hollywood for a few days recently, by the way, and recorded his life story on tape for posterity.

Moreover, he donated his first camera—an unwieldy, wooden 1802 job with which he took the still photos of movie stars that helped start him on the road to fame.

Mrs. Rose T. Y. Chen, a businesswoman, was the second life member.

The directors plan to establish a library of documents. They already have an important nucleus in the files of valuable material collected by William Hoy, who willed it to Mr. Wong when he died seven years ago.

The building also will be a museum of art and arti-



MILTON SHOONG, H. K. WONG AT DEDICATION  
Fireworks and oratory at Chinese Historical Society

facts, and a series of rotating exhibits are to be arranged.

It's hoped that eventually it will be open to the public daily. For the present, however, visitors will be welcomed only between 7 and 9 o'clock Tuesday and Friday nights.

Incidentally, early Sunday morning, while the staff was rushing to get everything in readiness for

the dedication, the sister of one of the first Chinese aviators brought in his collection of memorabilia.

Then, just a half hour before "curtain time," an elderly gentleman arrived with his family's priceless ancient altar.

The society would like to expand, and interest in establishing similar chapters in Hawaii, Texas and Colorado has been evinced by

Chinese with pioneer ancestors and others.

After the dedication folderol, a number of guests, including civic officials and representatives of various local historical societies, were entertained at a sumptuous "tea luncheon" at the Imperial Palace restaurant.

(Fortune could comment on initial affair—"Sockeroo Success.")



# Or a Chinese Historical Society?

by Thomas W. Chinn

It started with an interview for a Chinese New Year's edition of the old *News-Call Bulletin* in 1962.

Don Canter wanted to interview my mother, Mrs. Chinn Wing, 91-year-old matriarch of our family. So there we were, the three of us, in the room. Don said, "Now you translate what questions I ask her, and when she answers, give me the reply." I started out innocently enough, but soon his questions seemed so apparent to me, the son, that I commenced answering him without putting the questions to my mother. "Enough!", roared Don, "I want her answers—not yours!"

That's when I found out the earliest member of our family to come to America was not my father who, as a lad of 16, arrived here from China in 1877. Don's questioning revealed two things I had not known: my mother's first name is "Ah Guk," or Chrysanthemum, and my maternal grandfather came to America in 1849—one of the first 700-800 to arrive after the discovery of gold in California. "But why didn't you tell me these things before?" I asked my mother. She replied, "You never asked me."

This became the final prod I needed to stir into action. I reflected that it really started in 1924, while I was in a small, obscure village in interior Canton, China. Father had just sent me there to acquire a Chinese education. I listened to the many stories about the village elders, and about those who came to America in the days when China was still a strong monarchy. There were tales aplenty for a youngster.

In 1935-36 Chingwah Lee and I started a weekly English language newsmagazine: to devote much space to Chinatownia; a record of the Chinese, past and present. However, the climate was still too close to the Depression, and the magazine stopped publication in 1937.

Time stood still for 25 years. Now it was 1962! So I contacted four friends of mine: H. K. Wong, Chingwah Lee, C. H. Kwock and Dr. Thomas Wu. We met many times that summer of 1962, and discussed and wrote a Constitution and by-laws which officially launched the Chinese Historical Society of America on January 15, 1963.

One of the first activities which we started was annual field trips to places where Chinese activity had been part of a local community. The first year was to Armona, near Hanford, to visit that ghost Chinatown, with its one 60-odd-year-old Chinese man keeping his lonely vigil.

After several other field trips, it quickly became apparent that many inaccuracies in "Chinatownia" existed. In one town, a Chinese temple had engraved on its entrance way: "This temple was built partly with funds donated by the Emperor of China, and when the temple was completed, the Emperor sent a representative to its opening." Chinese historians easily point out the Emperor of China had, in fact, proclaimed that all persons leaving China be declared outlaws, with punishment a threat to deter others from leaving. It turned out that the money was sent to the temple builders by a suddenly prosperous Chinese from the San Francisco Bay Area. A guilty conscience made him present the gift in the Emperor's name; when the temple was completed, he designated himself as the Emperor's emissary.

This and other inaccuracies in historical records have made Society members deeply conscious of the special role they can play to help others in presenting a really complete history of the Chinese in America.

The steady stream of inquiries received also makes it clear that scant background material can be found on this subject. Consider the case of more than 100,000 Chinese in the late 1860's and 1870's. For nearly a half century most of these people never knew a western doctor. How did they manage to survive? They used herbs, and there were herb doctors. A hundred stories, each on a different phase of Chinese life in America, could be written and still others would want attention.

Hitherto, one of the greatest drawbacks to writing a history of the Chinese has been the reluctance of the Chinese to talk about themselves. The bugaboo of deportation for "illegal entry" was too great a risk. Following World War II, rapid strides were made in the field of racial understanding, and the Chinese gradually emerged from their self-imposed shell of silence.

The California Historical Society, the Society of California Pioneers, and the Conference of California Historical Societies have given material as well as moral support to our group. Our membership represents a strong cross-section of cosmopolitan individuals, from bank president to homemaker.

Shortly after the Society started, it became apparent that a headquarters was an absolute necessity. Much of the material and artifacts were being stored in members' and friends' homes and basements.

Although a museum was one of our objectives from the beginning, we thought that it would be a long time forthcoming.

Luckily, the Society's plight reached the ears of the Shoong Foundation. The foundation promised the use of a small building and funds to entirely remodel it into a headquarters and museum. Campbell and Wong voluntarily undertook the designing and supervision of the remodeling at 17 Adler Place.

On October 2, 1966, dedicatory ceremonies were held and telegrams came from throughout the State. Congratulatory cables were also received from the Vice President of the Republic of China and several cabinet members. To crown the event, the City of San Francisco presented a resolution commending the Society and felicitations came from President Lyndon Baines Johnson who became an honorary member in 1964. □

The author, his mother and Milton Shoong.





# Bulletin

FOR APRIL, 1969

VOL. IV, NO. 4

## Chinese Historical Society of America

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### MONTHLY MEETING APRIL 11, 1969 - 7:30 p.m.

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Volunteers to help with the April 19th Seminar for educators are requested to attend for briefing on assignments and duties, etc.

Following the meeting, member Charles Chuck Chan of San Mateo, will review some recent books on the Chinese. Mr. Chan also writes book reviews for the East-West Weekly.

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### RAILROAD CENTENNIAL

One hundred years ago on May 10, 1869, the first transcontinental railroad in America was built. As the people throughout the nation observe the centennial of this historic event, our Society would remind its members and friends of the part that the Chinese played in making possible the joining of the Central Pacific and Union Pacific railroads on that historic date.

Oscar Lewis, in the foreword to his book, *The Big Four* (Alfred A. Knopf, New York, 1938), wrote that "the building of the first transcontinental railroad profoundly influenced the social, economic, and political life of the Pacific Coast, bringing about its transition from an isolated and largely self-sustaining region to one with fortunes closely linked with those of the rest of the nation." . . . "Typical products of that period were the Central Pacific's Big Four: Huntington, Stanford, Crocker, and Hopkins—men who from places behind the counters of pioneer stores had, in far less than two decades, shouldered their way upward to places of national importance."

Locally, these men were to bring about social, economic and political changes which wrought in the area, the very essence of our west as we now know it. It would be pure conjecture to hazard a guess as to the region's social and political development had the Union Pacific managed to push its way entirely to the end of the line in Sacramento. Cer-

tainly it would be hard to conceive that the Union Pacific's eastern capital would have the same personal interest as those of the "Big Four" in developing the west.

From the railroad's completion, the Central Pacific, Southern Pacific and the "Big Four" were good friends of the Chinese community. Huntington, in 1900 said in a major speech that among the Chinese "will be found some of the best men who ever lived." Stanford provided in his will for permanent Chinese employment for many, some of whom were still working at Stanford University in the 1930's.

As we watch the approach of that centennial date, it is hard to realize that while credit for the Central Pacific's achievements is generally given to the Chinese workers whose labor made it possible, there has never been a physical token of credit placed or erected to serve as a reminder of this fact. (Nevada, during its centennial in 1964, placed two markers paying tribute to its Chinese pioneers.)

To partially rectify this situation, one in which neither local nor national agencies seem inclined to take the initiative, the Chinese Historical Society of America has decided to shoulder this responsibility.

On the morning of May 9, 1969, an historical plaque will be placed during centennial ceremonies in Sacramento, California, the starting point of the Central Pacific over a century ago. (After the ceremonies, the plaque will be stored until the completion of a new Historical Locomotive Museum in that city. The plaque will then be permanently attached to the building.)

On May 10, 1969, an identical plaque will be dedicated at Promontory Point, Utah, where the two railroads were joined. The wording on the markers will read: "To commemorate the centennial of the first transcontinental railroad in America and to pay tribute to the Chinese workers of the Central Pacific Railroad whose indomitable courage made it possible. May 10, 1869 - May 10, 1969. Plaque placed by the Chinese Historical Society of America." These words will also be translated into Chinese on the plaques.



## THE CHINESE LABORERS AND THE CENTRAL PACIFIC

By GEORGE KRAUSE

*Reprinted by special permission from the  
Utah Historical Quarterly  
Winter 1969, Vol. 37, No. 1*

The stern task faced by Central Pacific's Big Four in driving the nation's first transcontinental railroad over the High Sierra and across the Nevada plains and desert to join with Union Pacific at Promontory Summit, Utah, would have taken much longer were it not for the Chinese laborers who played such a significant role in building the railroad.

Charles W. Crocker — known as the organizer, construction genius and leader of men among the Central Pacific's "Big Four" — was the man responsible for recruiting the Chinese, first in California, and later in Canton province and bringing them to California.

Due to a shortage of money, Leland Stanford told the Pacific Railroad Commission in 1887, that Central Pacific was able to field only 300 workers during the extremely mild Sierra winter of 1864 compared with the 13,500 they would have on the payroll two years later.

But on January 2, the California Supreme court reaffirmed the constitutionality of the state legislature's act providing for payment by California of interest on \$1.5 million in bonds for the hard-pressed Central Pacific at the rate of seven per cent. This made the bond immediately salable and gave the railroad instant financial relief from long and agonizing financial strain.

Four days later, the Sacramento "Union" carried a Central Pacific ad calling for "5,000 laborers for constant and permanent work; also experienced foremen."

Construction, long halted at Newcastle, California, speeded immediately — but apparently the need for labor continued strong, for the Shasta Courier carried this advertisement on January 2.

"The Central Pacific Railroad Company advertises for 5,000 laborers to work upon the road between Newcastle and Illinoistown (Colfax). It is the intention of the company to employ at once as many men as can be advantageously worked on the distance between these points — 23 miles. The iron for laying this additional amount of track is already in Sacramento and it is expected that the cars will run to Illinoistown by August

next. The above opportunity affords a chance for those out of employment."

Base camp for Supt. J. H. Strobridge's construction crews was in Auburn. New men were hired as a result of the fresh money in the treasury and were put to work completing the unfinished grading of the 12 miles between Newcastle and Clipper Gap.

It was after passing Auburn early that year that the first Chinese were employed — apparently because Central Pacific was unable to fill its ranks.

The first indication of this appears in an April 12, 1865 letter written by Central Pacific's legal counsel — Judge E. B. Crocker — to his longtime friend Cornelius Cole, who was retiring as a California Congressman and returning to his home.

"Friend Cole," he said, ". . . . we have now about 2,000 men at work with about 300 wagons and carts and I can assure you they are moving the earth and rock rapidly. We are now on some of the heaviest work in the mountains, but so far we have been very fortunate in meeting very little hard rock. You will be astonished when you come back and see the amount of work we have done.

"A large part of our force are Chinese and they prove nearly equal to white men in the amount of labor they perform, and are far more reliable. No danger of strikes among them. We are training them to all kinds of labor, blasting, driving horses, handling rock, as well as the pick and shovel. We want a body of 2,500 trained laborers and keep them steadily at work until the road is built clear across the continent, or until we meet them coming from the other side . . ." <sup>1</sup> Charles Crocker, who conceived the plan of employing the Chinese, was opposed by Strobridge, who gave in only after a series of trials demonstrated the worth of the Celestial worker.

Crocker insisted that the race that built the Great Wall of China could certainly be useful in building a railroad, countering Strobridge's claim that they were "not masons."

Strobridge finally agreed to try 50 Chinese. They did so well, he agreed to 50 more — and before the road was finished, there were about 12,000 on the payroll. As the Chinese increased their numbers and their skill, the ascent of the railroad toward the Summit also increased in speed, despite ever-greater difficulties. <sup>2</sup>

Shovel and pick and black powder were the only aids to grading — and horsepower meant horses pulling small carts. Speedy construction under such conditions required em-



ployment of many men — and nothing was scarcer in California than labor in 1865. Such Caucasians as were not employed on ventures of their own found it more profitable to work in the mines or follow agricultural pursuits than to face the hardships of hand-carving a railroad right-of-way up the steep slopes and through the granite spires of the Sierra. At the same time, there were many thousands of Chinese in California. Drawn here by gold fever, they were eager for employment.<sup>3</sup>

S. S. Montague, in his annual report of 1865, said "It became apparent early in the season that the amount of labor likely to be required during the summer could only be supplied by employment of the Chinese element in our population. Some distrust was at first felt regarding capacity of this class for the services required, but the experiment has proved eminently successful. They are faithful and industrious and, under proper supervision, soon become skillful in the performance of their duty. Many of them are becoming very expert in drilling, blasting and other departments of rock work."

The Chinese on the Central Pacific were divided into little groups. Each had a cook, who not only prepared their meals but was required to have a large boiler of hot water ready each night so that when the Chinese came off the road they could fill their little tubs made from powder kegs and take a hot sponge bath. This bath and change of clothes was a regular thing every night before they took their evening meal. Strobridge pronounced them "the best in the world. They learn quickly, do not fight, have no strikes that amount to anything, and are very cleanly in their habits. They will gamble, and do quarrel among themselves most noisily — but harmlessly," he noted.

Stanford, in a report to Andrew Johnson, had this to say about the Chinese on October 10, 1865:

"As a class they are quiet, peaceable, patient, industrious and economical. Ready and apt to learn all the different kinds of work required in railroad building, they soon become as efficient as white laborers. More prudent and economical, they are contented with less wages. We find them organized into societies for mutual aid and assistance. These societies can count their numbers by thousands, are conducted by shrewd, intelligent business men who promptly advise their subordinates where employment can be found on most favorable terms. No system similar to slavery, serfdom or peonage prevails among these laborers. Their wages, which are always

paid in coin each month, are divided among them by their agents who attend to their business according to the labor done by each person. These agents are generally American or Chinese merchants who furnish them their supplies of food, the value of which they deduct from their monthly pay.

"We have assurance from leading Chinese merchants that, under the just and liberal policy pursued by the company, it will be able to procure during the next year not less than 15,000 laborers. With this large force the company will be able to push on the work so as not only to complete it far within the time required by the Acts of Congress but so as to meet the public impatience."

The difference in the eating and drinking habits of the Chinese and white workers building the Central Pacific was as great as their other living habits.

The Chinese menu included dried oysters, abalone and cuttlefish, dried bamboo sprouts and mushrooms, five kinds of vegetables, pork, poultry, vermicelli, rice, salted cabbage, dried seaweed, sweet rice crackers, sugar, four kinds of dried fruit, Chinese bacon, peanut oil, and tea. Seemingly, this was the forerunner of the modern American well-balanced diet.

The fare of the Caucasian laborer consisted of beef, beans, bread, butter and potatoes.

On the grade, the Caucasians relieved their thirst with water — not always the best and at times, despite all precautions, a source of illness.

The Chinese drank luke-warm tea. It stood beside the grade in 30 and 40-gallon whiskey barrels, always on tap. Several times daily, a Chinese mess attendant brought fresh tea, pouring it into the big barrel. These beverage reinforcements were carried to the work site in powder kegs suspended from each end of a bamboo pole which was balanced on a Celestial shoulder.<sup>4</sup>

On October 10, 1865, Governor Stanford again wrote President Andrew Johnson and Secretary of Interior James Haran:

"A call was issued for 5,000 laborers and from that day to the present, every able-bodied laborer that could be procured has been employed and kept constantly at work in the construction of the road.

"Labor is, however, scarce and dear in this state. For several months the number procured was comparatively small, but recently they have increased more rapidly, until now, 5,000 men are employed, with over 6,000 teams and the prospect is that the number of



laborers will be increased to 6,000 during this season.

"A large majority of the white laboring class on the Pacific Coast find more profitable and congenial employment in mining and agricultural pursuits, than in railroad work. The greater portion of the laborers employed by us are Chinese who constitute a large element in the population of California. Without them it would be impossible to complete the western portion of this great national enterprise within the time required by the Acts of Congress."

Governor Stanford held the Chinese workers in such high esteem that he provided in his will for the permanent employment of a large number. Some of these were still living and working lands now owned by Stanford University in the '30s.

Building the Central Pacific road over and through the granite walls of the Sierra Nevada was literally hand carving. Pick and shovel, black powder and one-horse dump carts were the only aids to grading. Chinese were lowered in baskets over cliffs 2,000 feet above the base of the American River Canyon to literally chisel a roadway through the granite reaches and occasional shale deposits for the iron rails. It is thus easy to understand why Central Pacific's Chinese became known as "Crocker's Pets."<sup>5</sup>

Central Pacific and its Chinese laborers met the biggest problem in the fight to cross the Sierra head-on after the line was opened to Cisco. This was the Summit Tunnels — ten of them, numbered 3 to 13 within a 20-mile stretch between Cisco, located at Mile Post 92 (from Sacramento) and Lake Ridge at Mile Post 112 just west of Cold Stream Valley on the eastern slope of the Summit.

These tunnels were bored while the mountain slopes were covered under as much as 30 feet of snow at times.

Civil Engineer John R. Gills, who worked on these tunnels, told the American Society of Civil Engineers, which recently declared the Central Pacific (not the Union Pacific) a National Civil Engineering Landmark:

"During the fall of 1866, the track reached Cisco, and as fast as the gangs of (Chinese) were released, they were hurried to the Summit to be distributed among the tunnels in its vicinity. The year before (in August, 1865) some gangs had been sent to Summit Tunnel No. 6, and commenced the cuts at its extremities; winter set in before the headings were started, and the work had to be abandoned. To avoid a repetition of such de-

lay, the approaches to all the tunnels were covered with men (who) worked day and night in three shifts of eight hours each. Thus, time was saved, and the tunnel organization started at once. As an illustration of the hurry, I may mention walking two miles over the hills after dark and staking out the east end of Tunnel 12 by the light of a bonfire. At nine o'clock the men were at work . . ."

Gills went on to describe the weather problem at the Summit and said that "At Tunnel 10, some 15 or 20 Chinese were killed by a slide" that winter. The year before, in the winter of 1864-65, two wagon road repairers had been buried and killed by a slide at the same location.

J. O. Wilder, a Central Pacific — Southern Pacific employe for many years, in an interview with the late Erle Heath, onetime Southern Pacific historian, said:

"The Chinese were as steady, hard-working a set of men as could be found. With the exception of a few (Caucasians) at the west end of Tunnel No. 6, the laboring force was entirely composed of (Chinese) with white foremen. A single foreman with a gang of 30 to 40 men generally constituted the force at work at each end of a tunnel; of these, 12 to 15 worked on the heading, and the rest on the bottom removing material. When a gang was small or the men needed elsewhere, the bottoms were worked with fewer men or stopped so as to keep the headings going.

"The Chinese were paid \$30 to \$35 in gold a month, finding (maintaining) themselves, while the (Caucasians) were paid about the same with their board thrown in . . ." Nine-tenths of the force on the road, he said, was Chinese. Using black powder, the Chinese averaged an advance of 1.18 feet daily.

The first train arrived at Summit from Sacramento November 30, 1867. The Summit tunnels had been completed in August of that year when the thousands of workers, mostly Chinese, were turned loose to build the line which had previously been graded to the Nevada State line. Now the job of hauling locomotives, cars and iron over the Summit, for the 40 miles of roadbed awaiting the rails, began.

A. P. Partridge, who also aided in construction, told Heath this story:

The snows came early that year, he said, "and drove the crews out of the mountains. There were about 4,000 men . . . 3,000 of them Chinese. Most . . . came to Truckee and filled up all the old buildings and sheds. An



old barn collapsed and killed four Chinese. A good many were frozen to death."

A construction report by Strobridge indicated that crews, that winter, were at work many miles ahead of the line. "It was necessary," he said, "to have the heavy work in Palisade Canyon done in advance of the main force, and 3,000 men with 400 horses and carts were sent to that point, a distance of 300 miles in advance of the track. Hay, grain and all supplies for the men and horses had to be hauled by teams over the deserts for that great distance. Water for men and animals was hauled at times 40 miles."

On August 1, 1867, C. P. Huntington issued a report from his New York office as the race to meet Union Pacific gathered storm:

"The company hopes to increase its force of 10,000 men to 15,000 during the present season when progress over the plains will be very rapid."

Charles Crocker announced as a New Year's resolution "a mile a day for every working day in 1868." Apparently, the other associates were of the same mind as on January 26, 1868, Collis P. Huntington wrote to Crocker, "I consider it of the most vital importance that we build to the Wasatch Mountains. . . . I would build the road in the cheapest possible manner then go back and improve it at once, because the Union Pacific have built the cheapest kind of road."

On June 20, 1868, the *Alta California* of San Francisco carried a story on the first trip between Sacramento and Reno. The reporter who told the story mentioned this item in passing: Below Chisno, "Chinamen are swarming all along the road. They have nearly finished their work in this vicinity and are packing their traps preparatory to passing on over the Summit into the great interior basin . . . ."

On passing the Summit, he went on, "As the first through passenger train sweeps down the eastern slopes of the Sierras, John (meaning the Chinese laborers) comprehending fully the importance of the event, loses his natural appearance of stolidity and indifference and welcomes with the swinging of his broad-brimmed hat and loud, uncouth shouts the iron horse and those that he brings with him."

"John with his patient toil, directed by American energy and backed by American capital, has broken down the great barrier at last and opened over it the greatest highway yet created for the march of commerce and civilization around the globe . . ."

"Central Pacific found it desirable to increase grading forces considerably, so they brought several hundred (Chinese) direct from China and organized them into construction gangs. The Piute Indians got among these Chinese and told them some big stories about enormous snakes out on that desert large enough that they could swallow (a man) easily . . . four or five hundred took their belongings and struck out to return directly to Sacramento. Crocker & Co. had spent quite a little money to secure them and they sent men on horseback after them . . . Most of them came back again, kind of quieted down, and after nothing happened and they never saw any of the snakes, they forgot about them."

Despite such diversions, progress was swift. San Francisco's *Alta California* pictured the pace of Central Pacific Construction: "Camp equipage, work shops, boarding house, offices and in fact the big settlement literally took up its bed and walked. The place that knew it in the morning knew it no more at night. It was nearly 10 miles off and where was a busy town of 5,000 inhabitants in the morning, was a deserted village site at night, while a smooth, well-built, compact road bed for traveling stretched from the morning site to evening tarrying place."

Caxton, pen name for San Francisco *Chronicle* Correspondent W. H. Rhodes, along on an inspection trip by railroad commissioners early in September, 1868, wrote: ". . . . we were informed by Mr. Crocker . . . he had just placed upon the work all the Indian tribes living in the great basin of the Humboldt, consisting chiefly of the Pah-Utahs, Cowchillas and Washoes. I asked him how many men he had at work? He replied that it was impossible to tell as no list of names was kept and the men worked by the squad and not as individuals. In explanation, he added that Indians and Chinese were so much alike personally that no human being could tell them apart and, therefore, for fear of paying double wages, he devised the scheme of employing, working and paying them by the wholesale. Thus, every morning a count is made of those who go to work, a second of those who eat and a third of those who quit at night. In this way, lengthy book-keeping is avoided, time is saved and cheating prevented. At the present time, there are about 10,000 Chinese, 1,000 (Caucasians) and 'any number' of Indians employed on the road . . ."

At the end of the track, 307 miles from Sacramento between Mill City and Winnemucca, the train trip ended, Caxton reported.



"Here we found a very large number of men at work — principally Chinese — laying the track . . . A horse was furnished me by Gen. Crocker and I rode on a gallop to the front. The grading is completed several hundred miles in advance of the track laying, so there is no delay in placing the rails.

"It would be impossible to describe how rapidly, orderly and perfectly this is done without seeing the operation itself. There are just as many employed as can conveniently work, and no more. Vehicles laden with ties are always in advance, and Chinese with gauge and leveling rod place them across the grade, almost as quick as thought. The car with the rails is brought up at a gallop and six white men — three at each rail — roll the iron off the car and drop it upon the track with the velocity of steam. The empty car is lifted off the track, and then one fully loaded is drawn to the front, and the same operation repeated ad infinitum.

"I found it was no joke (when) Gen. Crocker (said) it would be no easy task to overtake the end of the road. Taking out my watch, I timed the last half mile I saw laid, and it took a little less than 28 minutes . . ."

On November 9, 1868, the San Francisco Alta California, further pictured the Chinese forces in action at the rail end:

"Long lines of horses, mules and wagons are standing in the open desert near the camp train. The stock is getting its breakfast of hay and barley. Trains are shunting in from the west with supplies and materials for the day's work. Foremen are galloping here and there on horseback giving or receiving orders. Swarms of laborers, Chinese, Europeans and Americans, are hurrying to their work . . . By the side of the grade smokes the camp fires of the blue clad laborers who could be seen in groups waiting for the signal to start work. These are the Chinese, and the job of this particular contingent is to clear a level roadbed for the track. They are the vanguard of the construction forces. Miles back is the camp of the rear guard — the Chinese who follow the track gang, ballasting and finishing the roadbed.

"Systematic workers these Chinese — competent and wonderfully effective because tireless and unremitting in their industry . . .

"The Chinese board themselves. One of their number is selected in each gang to receive all wages and buy all provisions. They usually pay an American clerk — \$1 a month apiece is usual — to see that each gets all he earned and is charged no more than his share of the living expenses. They are paid from \$30 to \$35 a month, out of which they board

themselves. They are credited with having saved about \$20 a month. Their workday is from sunrise to sunset, six days in the week. They spend Sunday washing and mending, gambling and smoking, and frequently, old timers will testify, in shrill-toned quarreling.

"At sunrise a signal to turn to is given from the camp train. What at first seemed confusion to the visitor soon is the aim of this third gang to keep pace with the rail gang. At times lack of wagons make it impossible to keep up the supply of poles and the telegraph gangs, who pride themselves on never letting the track get ahead of them utilize sage brush, barrels, ties — surreptitiously taken from the track — or anything else that would keep the wire off the ground until the supply of poles again equal the demand.

"Then comes a wagon bearing a reel of wire which unrolls as the wagon goes ahead. As the wire uncoils it is carried up on the poles and made fast to the insulators.

"Back of the track builders follows a gang with the seven or more ties necessary to complete the foundation for each rail. These are put into position and spiked by another gang, which also level up the track and leave it ready for the ballasters.

"Meanwhile on board the camp train cooks are preparing dinner, clerks are busy with accounts and records, and the telegraph wire is tapping back the needs for tomorrow in the way of material and supplies.

"Twice a day the camp train moves to the end of the track — at noon to give all hands the hot dinner that six-hours of labor has earned and at night to give supper and sleeping accommodations.

"Immediately on reaching the end of the track at night a telegraph wire is cut in from the last pole to the telegraph car and Sacramento is notified of the number of miles of track laid."

The Vallejo Evening Chronicle of January 11, 1869, told how the Chinese gangs were paid:

"Sisson and Crocker Co. had an interpreter named Sam Thayer and also a Chinese interpreter. When they came up to these gangs of Chinamen, the money due them would be already counted out and they would dump the money in one of the Chinese' hats for that gang with a statement written in Chinese. There would be no time for explanations. They had to take it whether they liked it or not. This Sam Thayer claimed he could speak half a dozen Chinese dialects. If there were any claims about the pay, they



would take it up with the Sisson and Crocker Company later."

Most intense construction came in the early months of 1869. One day Union Pacific's Irish "terriers" laid six miles of track. Crocker's "pets," paced by Central Pacific's own Irish track builders, followed with seven. This was bettered by the rival camp and brought the boast from Crocker that his men could lay ten miles of track in a day. It is said that his wager of \$10,000 was "covered" by Thomas C. Durant, vice-president of the Union Pacific. Crocker and Strobridge made careful plans. Ties were laid several miles in advance and materials were hauled ahead to strategic points. April 28, 1869, was the day. While a number of officers of both companies, including Gen. G. M. Dodge, chief engineer of the UP, several newspaper correspondents, and workers from the rival camp looked on, the Central Pacific forces, working with military precision and organization, laid ten miles and 56 feet of track in a little less than twelve hours, a feat that has never been equaled. This day's performance brought the CP rail-head past Camp Victory, later Rozel, a few miles from Promontory and completion of the Central Pacific.<sup>6</sup>

Although many claims have been made about the Central Pacific and Union Pacific powder crews blowing up each other's forces as the grades began to parallel in Utah, I have been unable to substantiate this with any contemporary account.

The Salt Lake City Deseret Evening News of March 25, 1869, reported that "Sharp Young's blasters are jarring the earth every few minutes with their glycerine and powder, lifting whole ledges of limestone rock from their long resting places, hurling them hundreds of feet in the air and scattering them around for a half mile in every direction. Mr. T. E. Ticks showed me a boulder of three or four hundred pounds weight that was thrown over a half mile and completely buried itself in the ground within twenty yards of his cook room. I ate a hearty breakfast and left that spot *sine dine*. At Carlisle's works a few days ago, four men were preparing a blast by filling a large crevice in a ledge with powder. After pouring in the powder they undertook to work it down with iron bars, the bars striking the rocks caused an explosion; one of the men was blown two or three hundred feet in the air, breaking every bone in his body, the other three were terribly burnt and wounded with flying stones . . .

"From what I can observe and hear from others, there is considerable opposition between the two railroad companies, both lines

run near each other, so near that in one place the UP are taking a four feet cut out of the CP fill to finish their grade, leaving the CP to fill the cut thus made in the formation of their grade.

"The two companies' blasters work very near each other and when Sharp & Young's men first began work, the CP would give them no warning when they fired their fuse. Jim Livingston, Sharp's able foreman, said nothing but went to work and loaded a point of rock with nitro-glycerine, and without saying anything to the CP 'let her rip.' The explosion was terrific. The report was heard on the Dry Tortugas, and the foreman of the CP came down to confer with Mr. Livingston about the necessity of each party notifying the other when ready for a blast. The matter was speedily arranged to the satisfaction of both parties."

Nothing was mentioned of any injury or death resulting from actions of either road, however.

On May 6, the San Francisco Evening Bulletin reported a Chinese Tong war:

"A battle has occurred between two rival companies of Chinamen, several hundred in number, laborers of the See Yup and Teng Wo Companies. They have been idle at (Camp) Victory, eight miles from here, for a number of days past. The row occurred about \$15 due from one camp to the other. After the usual braggadocio, both parties sailed in, at a given signal, armed with every conceivable weapon. Spades were handled and crewbars, spikes, picks and infernal machines were hurled between the rank of the contestants. Several shots were fired and everything betokened the outbreak of a riot. At this juncture, Superintendent Strobridge, with several of his men, rushed into the melee and, with the assistance of the leading 'Chinamen,' who were more peaceably disposed, he succeeded in separating the combatants and restoring order . . .

"The casualties include the shooting, fatally, it is supposed of a Chinaman. The ball penetrated his left side, tearing the flesh and inflicting a very ugly wound. If this man dies, another encounter will certainly follow and much bloodshed will doubtless ensue. Dr. Blackwood has rendered surgical attendance to the wounded man." Further fighting was apparently avoided since no other mention appeared in the newspaper.

On May 8, a dispatch to the San Francisco Bulletin reported that "A large gang of graders attached to the Union Pacific road, made their appearance here today, announcing their intention to 'clean out' the Chinese



who had an encounter here yesterday . . . Though much bluster and menacing language was indulged, still no positive demonstration has yet been made. . . . At all events, no collision can occur today and steps will be taken to prevent such altogether."

"Crocker's Pets" — who had made the road possible, almost disrupted the final events that were to celebrate their labor.

On the way to Promontory, the Stanford special narrowly escaped catastrophe. Chinese, cutting timber on the mountains above the entrance to Tunnel No. 14 near the State Line east of Truckee, saw the regular train pass. Unaware of the following special, they carelessly skidded a log down upon the track below. The log, 50 feet long by 42 inches in circumference, landed in a cut with one end against the bank and the other on a rail. The engineer, rounding a curve there, braked his train but it struck the log, crippling the engine. A guest, riding on the cowcatcher, was seriously injured. The log scraped all along one side of the car, taking the steps with it. A wire was sent ahead from the next station in time to hold the train at Wadsworth until the Stanford coach could be attached. Thus, the Chinese were responsible for the use of the CP Locomotive "Jupiter" at the ceremonies, rather than the "Antelope" which had started to make the trip.

The famous Gold Spike ceremony that united the Central Pacific and Union Pacific railroads at Promontory took place only a few days later — on May 10, 1869.

With the completion of the Central Pacific, many Chinese workers moved to other railroad construction jobs, including some for

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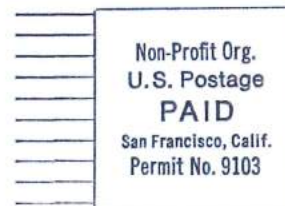
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the Central Pacific. Others returned with their savings to their families in Canton. Others still sent to China for wives and settled in various western communities as laundrymen and restaurateurs. The majority who remained, however, returned to the Pacific Coast.

- 1 "Memoirs," Cornelius Cole, published 1908.
- 2 "From Trail to Rail," Chapter XV, series in the Southern Pacific Bulletin by Erle Heath and Lindsay Campbell.
- 3 *Ibid.*
- 4 *Ibid.*
- 5 *Ibid.*
- 6 *Ibid.*

CHINESE HISTORICAL SOCIETY OF AMERICA  
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# Historical Societies Play A Key Role

(In tribute to this week's celebration of the 25th anniversary of the Chinese Historical Society of America, EastWest is printing the following article, excerpted from a longer article, "Chinese American Studies: A Historical Survey," in current issue of "History and Perspectives.")

The society's events scheduled for Jan. 16 include an auction, 2:30-4 pm, and open house, 10:30-3pm, at 17 Adler Place, between Columbus and Grant Ave., and a banquet at the Empress of China Restaurant at 6 pm. - Ed.

By H.M. LAI

During the post war period, the Chinese American middle class began to participate in mainstream society in increasing numbers and to press for recognition as equal partners in America's pluralistic society.

Ethnic awareness was especially heightened after the black-led civil rights struggle that began in the late 50's. American-born Chinese expressed increased interest in the Chinese American heritage, and the time was ripe for the appearance of an organized historical group.

In 1962, Thomas Chinn, H.K. Wong, Ching Wah Lee, C.H. Kwok, and Thomas Wu met and planned a Chinese historical society.

On January 5, 1963, the Chinese Historical Society of America (CHSA) held its first organizational meeting and became the first major scholarly group formed to document and disseminate information on the history of the Chinese of America.

In 1966 the Shoong Foundation provided a small building for the society to establish a headquarters and a museum. The museum, open to the public, is still the only facility in the US with a permanent exhibit devoted solely to the history of the Chinese of America.

## ETHNIC HISTORY

By the late 60's and early 70's, the civil rights movement had led to the gradual acceptance by the larger society of ethnic history and culture as valid components of a pluralistic, multi-cultural America.

During this period CHSA expanded its activities. At the centennial of the completion of the transcontinental railroad in 1969, CHSA erected plaques at Sacramento, California, and at Promontory Point, Utah, to commemorate the contribution of Chinese railroad workers.

That same year CHSA organized a seminar on Chinese American history for educators and published "A Syllabus, A History of the Chinese in California."

In 1975, in observation of the United States bicentennial, the society organized the first national conference on Chinese American studies in the country.

In 1980 CHSA cosponsored a second national conference with the Chinese Culture Foundation of San Francisco. Since 1966 CHSA has published a monthly bulletin with historical items of interest to the membership.

In 1987 the society also published its first annual collection of historical essays, *Chinese America: History and Perspectives*, 1987.

## OTHER GROUPS

The increasing ethnic awareness among Chinese Americans during the 1970s stimulated the formation of similar historical groups in other Chinese communities.

In 1970 Irma Tam Soong, Larry F.C. Ching, Dr. Bernhard C. Hornmann, and others met to discuss the possibility of founding a Chinese historical society in Honolulu. The Hawaii Chinese History Center (HCHC) was incorporated in 1971.

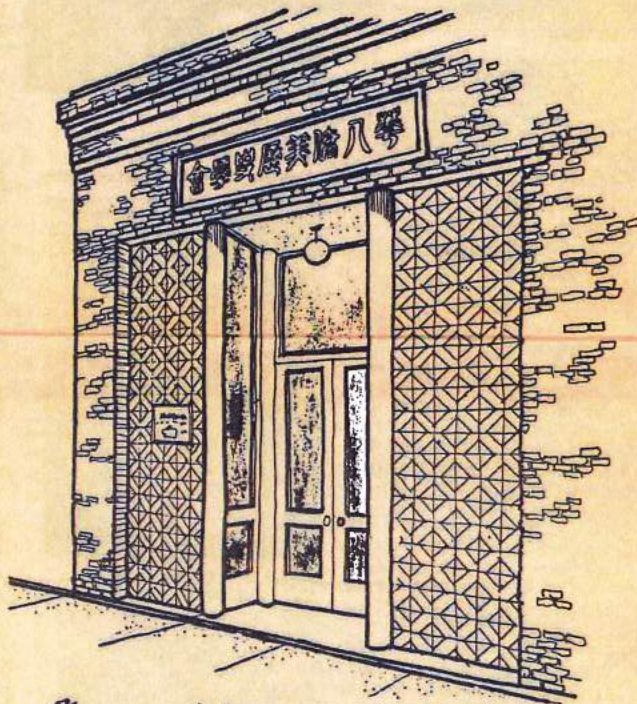
HCHC focuses on the Chinese in Hawaii. It particularly emphasizes research on family history and genealogy, and in 1985 it sponsored a conference, "Researching One's Chinese Roots."

HCHC is also planning a conference on Chinese Hawaiian history to be held in Honolulu in 1988 to commemorate the bicentennial of the first arrival of the Chinese in the islands.

The Center has co-sponsored publication of several historical works on the Chinese of Hawaii with University of Hawaii Press. HCHC's best-known historical writers are probably the husband-and-wife team of Tin Yuke and Wai Jane Char.

## LOS ANGELES GROUP

In November 1975 Ann Lau, Stan Lau, Emma Louie, Paul Louie, Gerry Shus, and 22 others from the greater Los Angeles area organized the Chinese Historical Society of Southern California (CHSSC).



## Chinese Historical Society of America

In 1976 CHSSC dedicated a plaque to honor Chinese laborers in Southern California who built the Southern Pacific Railroad and the San Fernando Tunnel.

In 1978 it worked with UCLA's Asian American Studies Center on an oral history project that resulted in the publication of *Linking Our Lives: Chinese Women of Los Angeles* (1984).

Currently the society is helping to develop a Chinese American historical museum at El Pueblo de Los Angeles State Historic Park. CHSSC periodically publishes historical essays in its *Gum Saan Journal*.

## NY HISTORY PROJECT

The New York Chinatown History Project (NYCHP) is the only major Chinese American historical research group in the East. It began in 1976 when John Tchen coordinated the Asian American Resource Center (AARC) as part of New York City's Basement Workshop.



CULTURE

# In Chinese American History

In 1980 Tchen and Charles Lai inherited the AARC collection and founded NYCHP. NYCHP gathers information on New York City Chinese community life and history and applies it to a wide range of activities such as radio docu-dramas, historical slide programs, and video documentaries.

Since 1980 NYCHP has been conducting historical interviews of New York residents, particularly members of the Chinese Hand Laundry Alliance.

In 1983 it organized a prize-winning exhibit, "Eight Pound Livelihood: Chinese Laundry Workers in the U.S." Three times per year NYCHP publishes *Baogaoban*, which includes historical information and news of NYCHP activities.

### PACIFIC NORTHWEST

Another organization, formed in 1980, is the Chinese Historical Society of the Pacific Northwest (CHSPNW). The founders include the late Willard Jue and other individuals from Seattle's Chinese community and Prof. Douglas Lee and others from academic circles.

In 1984 CHSPNW co-sponsored a traveling exhibit of Chinese herbal medicine with the Wing Luke Museum of Seattle. The society has published two collections of historical essays *The Annals of the Chinese Historical Society of the Pacific Northwest* in 1983 and 1984, respectively.

Other groups are still being formed. The Chinese Historical Committee of Stockton began in Spring 1985 as a special project of the Stockton Cathay Club, with Dr. Yi Po Anthony Wu appointed as head of the group. Later the Chinese Cultural Society of Stockton also joined as co-sponsor. The society publishes a quarterly newsletter.

Eve Armentrout and professors Donald Gibbs, Gary Hamilton, and Benjamin Wallacker of the University of California, Davis, initiated the Chinese/Chinese American History Project around 1979. In 1986 the group was reorganized as the Chinese and Chinese American History Association (CCAHA). CCAHA publishes a newsletter, "Chung-Hsi Liao-wang T'ai."

The Chinese Historical Society of Greater San Diego and Baja California, founded in 1986, was founded as the result of efforts to preserve historical sites in San Diego's old Chinatown. An active leader is Dorothy Hom, member of a pioneer San Diego Chinese family.

Chinese historical groups are basically volunteer organizations. Their interest in sensitizing the larger society to Chinese American contributions in the development of America has led to efforts to preserve historic sites such as the Angel Island Immigration Detention Station, China Camp, the town of Locke, and Hanford's Chinese temple, with varying degrees of success.

Having many links to the Chinese American community also facilitates access to informants and historical records. Hence, historical societies can be effective at the grass-roots level in recording oral history as well as in collecting and preserving historical documents and artifacts.

### CULTURAL ORGANIZATIONS

Some Chinese cultural organizations have also played significant roles in disseminating information on Chinese American history. The most prominent of these is the Chinese Culture Foundation (CCF) of San Francisco. Founded only two years after the founding of CHSA, in 1965, CCF established a Chinese Culture Center (CCC) in 1973.

Major CCC Chinese American historical exhibits, some organized in cooperation with CHSA, include "Three Generations of Chinese: East and West" (1974); "Island: History of the Chinese Immigrants Detained on Angel Island, 1910-1940" (1980); "Chinese of America, 1875-1980" (1980); and "Chinese Women of America, 1834-1982" (1982). Texts based on each of these exhibits were also published.

In 1982 CCF also co-sponsored with other community organizations an exhibit and seminar to commemorate the centennial of the 1882 Chinese Exclusion Act.

The exhibits "Island," "Chinese of America," and "Chinese Women of America" have traveled to several American and Canadian cities. In 1985 "Chinese of America" was sent to the People's Republic of China and was the first exhibit on Chinese American history and society to be shown in that country.

It was seen by the public in Shanghai, Beijing, Guangzhou, as well as Jiangmen, Taishan, and Zhongshan in the Pearl River delta region.

### NYC, BOSTON & SEATTLE

New York City's China Institute, Boston's Chinese Culture Institute, Seattle's Wing Luke Museum, and Santa Ana's Chinese American Historical and Cultural Council also have from time to time organized activities connected with Chinese American history.

Another group active in the field of Chinese American history is The Association of Chinese Teachers of San Francisco, which developed audiovisual materials on Chinese American history for use in the schools. Articles in community newspapers such as *East/West* and *Asian Week* and in periodicals such as *Bridge* (now defunct) have also helped to popularize Chinese American history.

The same factors stimulating the proliferation of organized historical and cultural groups also stimulated the publication of works on Chinese American history for the general public.

In 1967 Betty Lee Sung published *Mountain of Gold: The Story of the Chinese in America*. Other works of this nature are Ruthanne Lum McCunn's *Illustrated History of the Chinese in America* (1979), Jack Chen's *Chinese of America: From the Beginnings to the Present* (1980), Diane Mark and Ginger Chih's *A Place Called Chinese America* (1982), and Judy Yung's *Chinese Women of America: A Pictorial History* (1986).

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Continued from previous page

2324 Alameda Ave., Alameda. (510) 521-1233 or (510) 522-3056.

**ART INC.** — Photographs by Edna Bingham, oils by Rosalie Mahakian and acrylics by Helene Miscovich are on display at the Willow Park Restaurant through Dec. 29. Hours are 5 to 10 p.m. Thursdays through Sundays. 17007 Redwood Road, Castro Valley. (510) 537-3174.

**EAST BAY HERITAGE QUILTERS** — "Quilt Show" continues through Jan. 4. Admission is free and quilts are for sale. Hours are 7:30 a.m. to 6 p.m. weekdays. Mezzanine Art Gallery, Oakland Kaiser Center, 300 Lakeside Drive, Oakland. (510) 834-3706 or (510) 853-9534.

**GREEN SHUTTER GALLERY** — "Unique Voices 2001" continues through Dec. 7. Mixed media, painting, prints and sculpture by artists including Linda DeLaurenti, Susan Serf and William Wolf are displayed. Hours are 11 a.m. to 4 p.m. Wednesdays through Saturdays. 22654 Main St., Hayward. (510) 538-2787.

**JOHN F. KENNEDY UNIVERSITY ARTS AND CONSCIOUSNESS GALLERY** — "Elaine Toland" closes Tuesday. Toland's paintings explore the experience of intimacy. Reception is Saturday from 4 to 7:30 p.m. Gallery hours are 11 a.m. to 5 p.m. weekdays. JFUK Arts Annex, 2956 San Pablo Ave., Second Floor, Berkeley. (510) 649-0493.

**LIZABETH OLIVERIA GALLERY** — "Recent Work" continues through Nov. 24. New pieces by Nick Ackerman, David Huffman and Christopher Oliveria. Hours are 10:30 a.m. to 5:30 p.m. Tuesdays through Saturdays. 942 Clay St., Oakland. (510) 625-1350.

**NIAD ART CENTER** — "Layers" closes today. Works explore layers of images and meanings. Hours are 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. weekdays, and by appointment. 551 23rd St., Richmond. (510) 620-0290 or www.niadart.org.

**OLIVE HYDE ART GALLERY** — "Peering In — Peering Out: Figurative Paintings by Valerie Winslow and Maxine Solomon" continues through Nov. 25. Hours are noon to 5 p.m. Wednesdays through Sundays, 8 to 8:30 p.m. Thursdays. 123 Washington Blvd., Fremont. (510) 791-4357.

**PHANTOM FINE ART GALLERY** — "Spirits of the Seasons" closes Saturday. Watercolors by John Svenson and sculptures by Dorleas Barmettler-Ewing are on display. Hours are 11 a.m. to 5 p.m. Tuesdays through Saturdays. 22475 Foothill Blvd., Hayward. (510) 538-9763.

**PRO ARTS** — "Holiday Arts Fest" continues through Dec. 1. Prints, photography, jewelry, textiles and ceramics by Bay Area artists are for sale. Hours are 11 a.m. to 5 p.m. Wednesdays through Saturdays. 461 Ninth St., Oakland. (510) 763-9425.

**THIRD STREET GRIND AND GALLERY** — "Paintings Between" continues through Nov. 30. Works by Amanda Lockwood are on display. Hours are 6:30 a.m. to 2:30 p.m. weekdays. 464 Third St., Oakland. (510) 832-5282.

By Titania Leung Inglis  
STAFF WRITER

**C**HINESE records indicate that Chinese explorers may have reached America more than 1,000 years before Columbus encountered it, and Spanish records show that Chinese were on this continent by the 1630s.

So when Melissa M. Szeto, executive director of the Chinese Historical Society of America, talks to community members about the society's new museum, she's not too surprised that their usual reaction is, "Finally!"

San Francisco is about to become the third city in the nation — after New York and San Diego — to boast a museum of Chinese-American history. After a decade of planning, the society's Museum and Learning Center opens its ornate, Chinese-style doors to the public this weekend in the newly renovated San Francisco Chinatown YWCA building.

The Julia Morgan-designed landmark will provide a space for society's educational programs, as well as a permanent home for the more than 50,000 artifacts and works of art in the historical society's collection.

At the premiere Tuesday, historian and society board member Jim Mark Lal made his way through the crowd, inspecting the exhibition for mistakes as he greeted friends. Now an adjunct professor of Asian American studies at San Francisco State University, Lal was working the engineer at Bechtel when Chinese Historical Society of America was founded in 1963.

A society-sponsored photography exhibit he came across in 1965 sparked his interest in Chinese American history and led him to join the young organization. After writing a syllabus for a seminar on Chinese-American history, Lal was asked by San Francisco State to teach the first class on the history of the Chinese in America, which he co-taught with fellow board member Phillip P. Choy.

In his years with the society, Lal has watched the founders of the historical society fade out of the scene to be replaced by what he describes as "more Westernized Chinese" who are interested in history but often have little grasp of their ancestral language.

In that time, he says, Chi-



**THE CHINESE** Historical Society of America's new museum opens this weekend in the San Francisco Chinatown YWCA, an historical landmark.



**A LANTERN** near the door says "YWCA" in English and Chinese.

nese America as a whole has also changed as new Chinese immigrants arrived from nearly every Asian country, establishing themselves in all 50 states and all social classes.

"We still don't have enough space to show the diversity and richness of Chinese-American society today," he lamented.

This creates a new challenge for the historical society, says Lal, in representing the diversity of Chinese America and teaching more recent immigrants about the history of their forebears.

In the former gym, the main exhibition gives an overview of Chinese-American history, celebrating Chinese-American entrepreneurs while reminding

viewers of the anti-Chinese racism that has endured from the Chinese Exclusion Act to the recent espionage trial of Wen Ho Lee.

And of course, there's room for art. In a climate-controlled room adjoining the main gallery, the featured exhibition pays tribute to celebrated watercolorist Dong Kingman, who died last year.

The artist's son, Dong Kingman Jr., says his Oakland-born father retained a lifelong love of the Bay Area, even though he spent the last 50 years of his life in New York City. That affection shines through the simple watercolors in the exhibition, many of which evoke the lively urban settings of San Francisco's Chinatown.

Just downstairs, a work by one of Kingman's proteges brightens the otherwise empty Learning Center.

James Leong recalls meeting Kingman in the 1940s, when Leong was studying at the California College of Arts and Crafts in Oakland, and Kingman frequented a nearby restaurant, trading his watercolors for spaghetti. Kingman took the young artist under his wing, and when he received a commission for a mural for a housing project in San Francisco's Chinatown, Kingman passed it on to Leong.

That mural, a colorful piece depicting various periods of Chinese American history, was rediscovered by the artist's wife in the late 1970s, and was later

## IF YOU GO

### Chinese Historical Society of America Museum and Learning Center

■ **When:** Grand opening 11 a.m.-4 p.m. Saturday and Sunday; regular hours, 11 a.m.-5 p.m. Tuesdays through Fridays, noon-4 p.m. Saturdays and Sundays, closed Mondays

■ **Where:** 965 Clay St., San Francisco

■ **Admission:** Free Saturday and Sunday; \$3 adults, \$2 students and seniors, \$1 ages 6-17

■ **Call:** (415) 391-1188 or visit [www.chsa.org](http://www.chsa.org)

donated to the historical society. Visiting from his current home in Seattle, Leong declared that he was "pleased and proud" to be exhibiting together with his old mentor and friend.

Lal appeared equally pleased and proud to be taking part in the museum's opening.

"The Chinese are a part of this country," he emphasizes. "Their history is a part of this country. And it really should be told."

You can reach Titania Leung Inglis at [tinglis@angnewspapers.com](mailto:tinglis@angnewspapers.com).



## HOW TO HELP THE NEEDY

Area food banks and social-service agencies are collecting donations to help the needy through the holidays. Here's how you can help:

**Second Harvest Food Bank of Santa Clara and San Mateo Counties** is seeking 2 million pounds of food, \$3.5 million and 20,000 turkeys and chickens to feed 170,000 people this holiday season and an average 120,700 people a month year-round. Items needed most are powdered milk, peanut butter, canned meats, tuna, cereals, 100 percent fruit juices, meals in a can (stew, chili, soup), and canned foods with pop-top lids. Donations can be dropped off at all Safeway and Albertson's markets and at public libraries in both counties; in Santa Clara County also at all Longs Drug Stores, Federal Express centers, California Federal Bank branches and Willow Street Wood-Fired Pizza parlors; at the dock of the food bank in San Jose, 750 Curtner Ave., 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. today and Sunday, and 7 a.m. to 7 p.m. Monday through Wednesday. In San Mateo County, food can be dropped off at 1051 Bing St., San Carlos, from 9 a.m. to noon today, and 7:30 a.m. to 6 p.m. Monday through Wednesday. Call (800) 870-3663 or visit [www.donatefood.org](http://www.donatefood.org).

**CityTeam Ministries** needs 3,500 fresh or frozen turkeys, canned food and non-perishable items. Drop off donations of food, warm clothing and blankets at CityTeam's Family Service Center, 1297 N. 13th St., San Jose, weekdays from 7 a.m. to 4 p.m. Call (408) 293-4657 for large pickups. Visit [www.cityteam.org](http://www.cityteam.org).

**Emergency Housing Consortium** needs funds to buy food to serve more than 1,000 meals a day this winter — 300,000 meals during the year — at San Jose's largest shelter, the Boccardo Regional Reception Center, 2011 Little Orchard St., San Jose. The agency also is seeking groups of volunteers to serve and prepare meals. Call (408) 294-2100, extension 204, or visit [www.homelessness.org](http://www.homelessness.org).

**InnVision** serves 11,000 people a year at 11 locations with emergency shelter, transitional housing, and job or skills training. The agency needs gift certificates from markets for turkeys, hams and other foods, and store gift certificates to purchase warm clothing, blankets and other winter items. Checks designating food or gift items can be sent to InnVision's main office, 974 Willow St., San Jose. Non-perishable foods may be brought any time to the Julian Street Inn

# Chinese-American museum conceived in '63 opens

Sometimes it takes succeeding generations to build what the first could only begin to dream of. This dream was born nearly 40 years ago.

Through Silicon Valley wealth and San Francisco political muscle, the first national museum of Chinese-American history opens in Chinatown today. It hopes to tell the multitude of stories about Chinese-Americans from gold rush days to modern times, from New York to Louisiana to Hawaii.



L.A. Chung  
city stories

"I wish the other founders of the Chinese Historical Society of America could be here to see this," said Thomas Wu, 87, among the core five who met and came up with the idea in 1963. After nearly four decades, Wu stood inside the handsome, Julia Morgan-designed building that had once been the Chinatown YWCA on Clay Street. It was the Y across from his boyhood home, the Y where he had played piano at chaperoned dances and wooed his sweetheart of 61 years, and now the Y that has been reborn into the \$3 million Chinese American National Museum and Learning Center.

Saturday's opening is one that has not only realized the dreams of a fading generation, but came about through the forging of an uncommon partnership among South Bay, Peninsula and San Francisco Chinese donors.

"It's not common for South Bay people to come up to San Francisco and San Francisco people to go to South Bay" to raise money, said Doris Him Grover, who was capital campaign co-chair of the museum with Sunnyvale resident Gerry Wong. Regional differences carried from China, different dialects, different immigration patterns, often separate Chinese-Americans in everyday life.

But times have been slowly changing.

Sometimes you just need a project that embodies everyone's hopes that untold stories will finally be heard.

"I had been talking to some of the very prominent Americans of Chinese descent who have made significant contributions to technology and the business development of Silicon Valley," said donor Kenneth Fong, chairman of Menlo Park biotech venture capital firm Kenson Ventures. "I felt this Chinese-American museum might be the

source of a way to tell these stories."

Inside the building are four exhibition halls, an art gallery, research space and an interactive educational center for children. School groups can visit.

The main exhibit is "The Chinese of America: Toward a More Perfect Union," one that traces Chinese immigration to the United States beginning in the 19th century and documents accomplishments along the way. It recognizes regional differences and common heritage.

In the climate-controlled rotating gallery is the opening exhibit, "Dong Kingman in San Francisco," a collection of works by the famous Chinese-American watercolorist. There is also a YWCA history room, documenting the history of the Chinatown Y, which since 1916 provided a haven and an incubator for leadership among young Chinese women in the community.

San Francisco's small, volunteer-run historical society had shepherded the museum in temporary sites across Chinatown — a series of basements and donated spaces — for more than three decades before turning to Wong and Grover to raise money for a first-class museum, managed by a professional staff.

For donors large and small, the idea of the museum



PENNY DE LOS SANTOS — MERCURY NEWS

Exhibit designer Steven Sutley puts some finishing touches on the Dong Kingman art display at the Chinese American National Museum and Learning Center in San Francisco, which opens today.

struck a chord, said Hazel Louie, who organized the first fundraiser for the museum.

For Phil Choy, not a founder but a longtime keeper of the flame who had stored much of the collection in his home and had kept the museum idea alive for many decades, it is particularly pleasing. And at age 74, he can't wait for the museum to start its programming.

"Having the Chinese Historical Society recording history doesn't mean much if that history doesn't remind us of important lessons to be learned," said Choy. "It's not for venerating the past. That we learn lessons from history is the important thing."

Contact L.A. Chung at [lichung@sjmercury.com](mailto:lichung@sjmercury.com) or (415) 394-6881.

## WEEKEND CELEBRATION

The Chinese American National Museum and Learning Center at 965 Clay St. in San Francisco celebrates its opening with two days of free admission, activities and tours. For more information, see [www.chsa.org](http://www.chsa.org) or call (415) 391-1188.

### TODAY

11 a.m.  
■ Dedication ceremony with Mayor Willie Brown and Assembly Majority Leader Kevin Shelley, former San Francisco Supervisor Tom Hsieh and White Crane Lion Dance Troupe

Noon to 4 p.m.  
■ Exhibition gallery tours, including the exhibit "Dong Kingman in San Francisco"  
■ Puppet theater by Charlie Chin and Cecily Chow  
■ Storytelling of Chinese

mythology with Irene Collier  
■ Storytelling of Chinese-American pioneers with Ruthanne Lum McCunn  
■ Chinese-American arts and crafts  
■ The Community College Foundation eBus, sponsored by Wells Fargo Bank

### SUNDAY

11 a.m. to 4 p.m.  
■ Exhibition gallery tours  
■ Community Youth Center performance  
■ Chinese-American arts and crafts  
■ The Community College Foundation eBus  
2 p.m.  
■ Dedication of the YWCA History Room

Source: Chinese American Historical Society of America





# BAY AREA

## AND CALIFORNIA

SUNDAY, NOVEMBER 18, 2001

A25

SUNDAY, NOVEMBER 18, 2001

San Francisco Chronicle A2

# Chinese museum finally gets a home

## New history center shows perseverance of immigrants

By Tyche Hendricks  
 CHRONICLE STAFF WRITER

For 10-year-old Dominic Chan, a family outing to the new museum of the Chinese Historical Society of America was a fun chance to see some cool artifacts, including an old Chinese fishing junk and a water cannon used by Chinese laborers in Placer gold mining.

For Kuimeuy Wang, 26, who drove up from Sunnyvale yesterday for the San Francisco museum's grand opening, it was a glimpse into an unfamiliar history: the story of Chinese immigrants in the United States over more than a century and a half.

"It's educational looking at what Chinese people have accomplished," said Wang, who is ethnically Chinese but was born in Laos and moved to California in

Perspectives," in 1987. And he watched with pride as the current board undertook an unprecedented \$3 million capital campaign to purchase and renovate the YWCA building.

"This is a joyous day," said Chu as he stood beside a shady courtyard amid hundreds of museum visitors. "We'll reach a lot more people now. I hope they come down and read our history and hear about our aspirations. Maybe they'll find out that we're like everybody else."

Chu said cases like the nine-month imprisonment of scientist Wen Ho Lee on unfounded espionage charges demonstrate there is still anti-Chinese prejudice in the United States that must be overcome.

Historical society director Melissa Szeo said the museum — which also includes a library, photo archive and learning center for monthly lectures, oral history seminars and K-12 curriculum development — will be national in scope.

"We want to help people see that the Chinese story is part of the American story," said Szeo. "Without the Chinese, you're missing part of American history."

The new museum, a block from the Powell Street cable car line and two blocks from Grant Avenue's tourist strip, is sure to attract visitors from all over the world, she said.

Wang, who works for a high-tech company in Santa Clara, said she was glad to find a place where she could learn about the struggles of earlier generations of Chinese immigrants.

"I came here when I was 7, I started learning English, and that was it. I assimilated," she said. "My parents were immigrants, and they were in survival mode. They didn't teach me about my own history. But learning about other people's journey. ... I can see that's probably what my parents faced, too."

*The Chinese Historical Society of America Museum and Learning Center is at 965 Clay St. For information, call (415) 391-1188 or go to [www.chsa.org](http://www.chsa.org).*

E-mail Tyche Hendricks at [thendricks@sfgate.com](mailto:thendricks@sfgate.com).



Kim Kowarsch / The Chronicle

The Chinese Historical Society of America celebrated its grand opening in the old Julia Morgan-designed Chinatown YWCA on Clay Street. The museum includes a library, photo archive and learning center for monthly lectures, oral history seminars and K-12 curriculum development.

"We'll reach a lot more people now. I hope they come down and read our history and hear about our aspirations."

DANIEL CHU  
 member of  
 Chinese Historical Society

1983. "They had to go through so much, but they demonstrated a lot of perseverance and strength."

For Daniel Chu, 87, the opening of the museum, in the old Julia Morgan-designed Chinatown YWCA on Clay Street, was the fulfillment of a dream of almost half a lifetime.

Chu joined the society in 1965 and served as president of the board in the early 1970s. He saw the tiny museum move through a series of rented spaces around Chinatown, including a basement on Commercial Street.

He helped the all-volunteer group launch a scholarly journal, "Chinese America: History and

On February 11, 2011, The New York Times published an article on Chinese Historical Society of America rediscovery of paintings by Chinese American artist.



NY Times 2/11/11

The poster size watercolors by Jake Lee, dating to 1959, include "Immigrants Disembarking Ship" and "Chinese Opera House."

## Lost for Years, a Trove of Chinatown Art Is Tracked Down

By BERNIE YEUNG

It's a modern detective story, set in San Francisco's atmospheric Chinatown.

It took an art-of-the-blue enamel and some old-fashioned legwork, but Sue Lee of San Francisco's Chinese Historical Society of America has solved a mystery that had stumped scholars of Chinese-American art for decades: the case of the missing Jake Lee paintings.

Mr. Lee, a Chinese-American artist who studied in Oakland and who died in 1991, made 12 works for the then-glamorous Kan's Restaurant in 1959. The poster-size watercolors hung in the Chinatown establishment for more than 35 years, but in the early '90s they disappeared.

The works are notable for their nice depictions of Chinese-American history, including laborers working in vineyards, on shrimp farms, and in cigar factories at the turn of the 19th century.

"People didn't know where they were because the restaurant had changed hands, and the paintings were gone," said Ms. Lee, the society's executive director (she is not related to the artist).

The trail on Mr. Lee's paintings had run cold — until last Lunar New Year, when an electronic tipster informed Ms. Lee that 11 of the 12 acclaimed Kan's Restaurant paintings were going up for auction in Southern California the following week.

Ms. Lee jumped to reclaim what she saw as a crucial piece of



JAKE LEE DEPICTED CHINESE-AMERICANS IN VARIOUS ACTIVITIES.

San Francisco and Chinese-American history. Her dogged work culminates in the exhibit, "Finding Jake Lee: The Paintings at Kan's," which opens Saturday in the historical society's gallery space.

Scholars say the recovery of the paintings — and their exhibition in a venue that is open to the public — is a victory for Chinese-American history. "This is the single most important acquisition that the historical society has made," said Gordon Ebata, a co-director of the Asian American Art Project at Stanford, who once tried to find the paintings. "Unfortunately, we have few artists in our history who have painted about the history of Chinese-Americans, and Jake Lee really stands out."

The watercolors also evoke a glittering history: Chinatown, even because they were originally displayed in the Gun-Span Room of the restaurant, a storied hangout

frequented by the likes of Frank Sinatra, Cary Grant, Marjorie Monaghan and Fern Gandy, the long-time newspaper columnist.

Raising money for acquisitions can take years, but within 72 hours of learning about the paintings whereabouts, Ms. Lee had poured \$60,000 — "old people, look, if we don't do this, the paintings will be lost," she said. "We thought they were already lost, but here we have a second chance to recover them and bring them back to Chinatown."

A few days later, after some white-knuckled bidding in Pasadena, she came away with 7 of the available 11 paintings. (The remaining four went to a Jake Lee enthusiast from Kern County, and the historical society hopes to exhibit the entire collection in the future.)

But Ms. Lee was still determined to find the missing 12th painting. After a bit of sleuthing, she found Guy Wong, who had taken over the restaurant after bunny Kan, the original owner, died in 1982. Mr. Wong said he had packed the paintings when he closed the restaurant in the early '90s — and then had stored the works in a bus-bay garage.

Ms. Lee then paid a visit to the busbay, Blue Chan, who now owns an auto repair business at the Bayview.

The mystery of the last painting was solved as soon as Ms. Lee pulled up to the business. From the car, she spied the missing work hanging on the auto shop wall above a parking disassembled car.

"I saw this amazing color," Ms.

Lee says of the eighth painting, which captures the ethnically Chinese neighborhood of Downtown S.F., circa 1888, at ferry-line landings. "You could see it from our office street."

Mr. Chan offered it to Ms. Lee immediately upon hearing of her quest.

How the other paintings were from Mr. Chan's garage to an auction house in Pasadena, however, remains unknown. Mr. Chan said that he had stored the paintings in his Daly City garage for a decade, but when he was forced to move two years ago, he no longer had space for them and he put them in the trash.

A representative of the Pasadena auction house, John Moran Auctioneers, would not disclose the identity of the paintings' consigners, though the catalog notes that the paintings had moved from the restaurant to private collectors in San Francisco, and then to their relatives in Los Angeles.

The paintings are the focal point of Ms. Lee's exhibit, but the show is also an homage to Mr. Kan, who is credited with introducing Cantonese fine dining to Americans, and the inventing of the much-favored ice cream and the restaurant's late success. The historical society has gathered artifacts from the restaurant: matchbooks, menus, plates — to name the paintings in their original context.

"This is a convergence, an entrepreneurship, art and history," Ms. Lee said of the exhibit. "It's the historical society's way of telling our stories, and not just showing somebody an artifact."

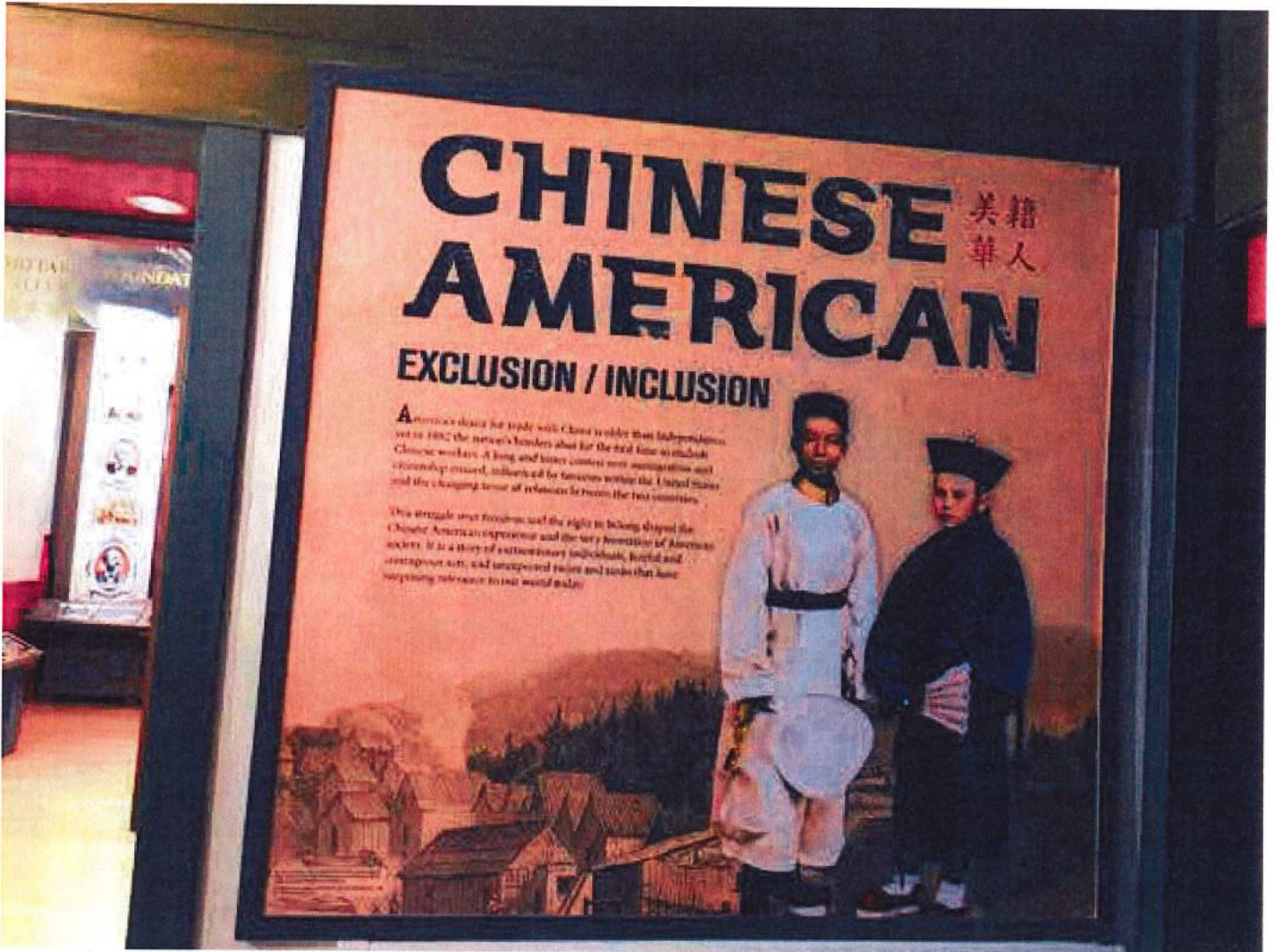


NEWS NOV 11 2016, 4:14 PM ET

# Chinese-American History Finds Permanent Home in San Francisco

by FRANCES KAI-HWA WANG

The largest exhibition to date about Chinese-American history and experience, "Chinese American: Exclusion/Inclusion," was permanently installed at the Chinese Historical Society of America (CHSA) in San Francisco this week.



The largest exhibition to date about Chinese-American history and experience, "Chinese American: Exclusion/Inclusion," was permanently installed at the Chinese Historical Society of America (CHSA) in San Francisco this week. Courtesy of CHSA

Originally created by the New York Historical Society, the exhibition explores the long history of immigration and trade between China and America, from the chinaware George Washington ordered from China, to the Chinese Exclusion Act — which banned Chinese immigrants to America from 1882 to 1943, to historic Jake Lee paintings of Chinatown, to contemporary explorations of identity through graphic novels and interactive media.



## RELATED: Oldest Chinese Laundry in the U.S. Closes Shop After 140 Years

"This is the most comprehensive exhibition on Chinese American experiences," Pam Wong, CHSA deputy director, told NBC News. "Though Chinese have been a part of this country from the very beginning, we're still seen as foreigners, as if we do not belong. This exhibition allows for us to tell our story. This is America's story."



A display featuring graphic novel art at "Chinese American: Exclusion/Inclusion" at the Chinese American Historical Society  
Courtesy of CHSA

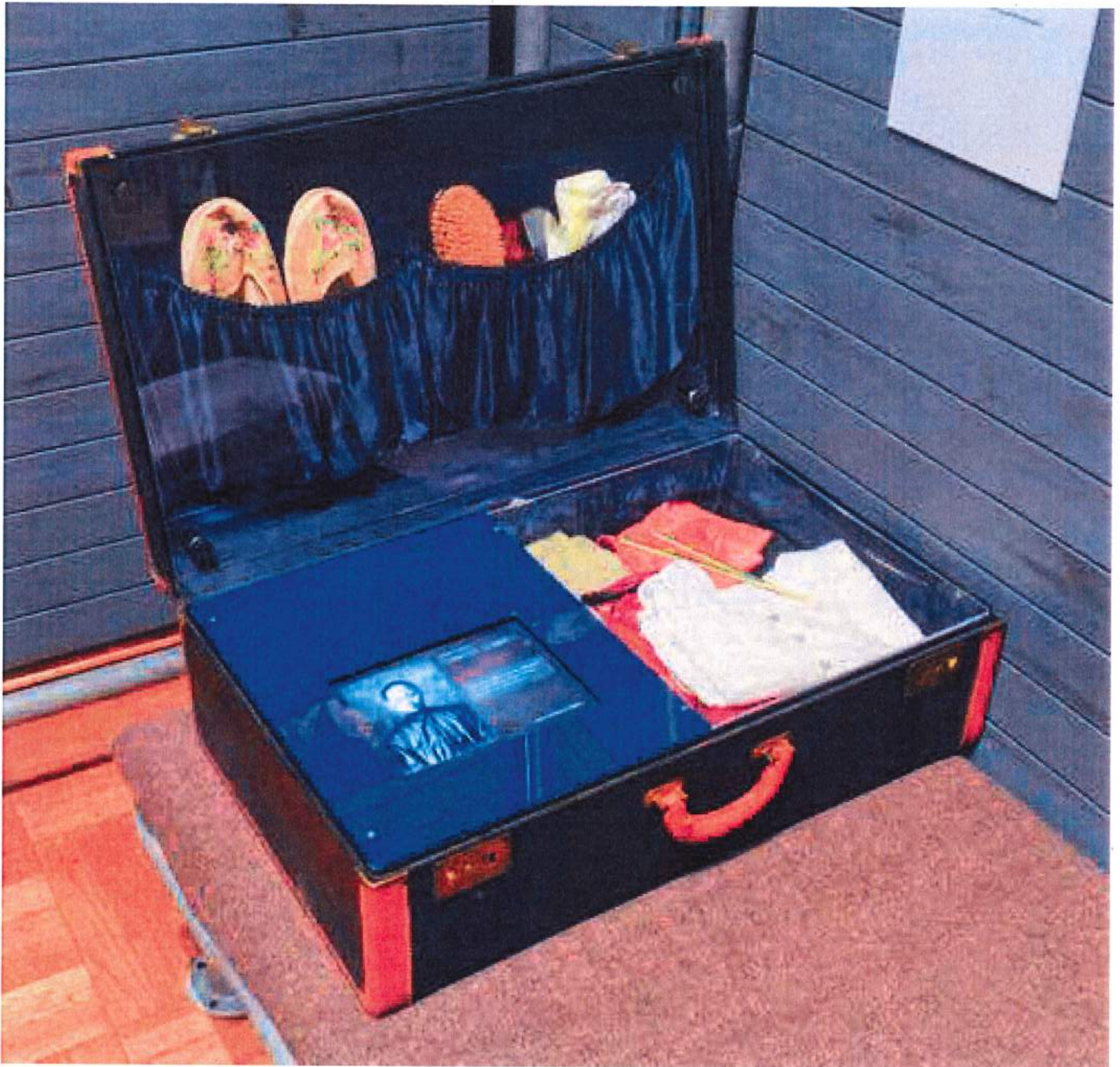
According to the exhibition prospectus, the exhibition "immerses visitors in a broad sweep of history, presenting key protagonists and signal events, while also creating compelling spaces that present stories and micro-histories and other layers of objects, documents, and media for discovery."

The exhibition also features an education curriculum meeting national content standards.

## RELATED: CAAM to Launch 'Who Is American?' Education Campaign On Chinese Exclusion Act



"This is an unprecedented opportunity and an unprecedented gift for us," Sue Lee, executive director of the Chinese Historical Society said in a statement. "The curatorial quality, the historical detail, and the hands-on interactive technology of this exhibit are unlike anything we have ever done. Its educational potential really raises the bar for us."



A suitcase on display in "Chinese American: Inclusion/Exclusion" Courtesy of CHSA

The museum closed for several months while the exhibition was being installed and reopened this week with the launch of the exhibition.

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*Filing Date:* March 24, 2017  
*Case No.:* 2017-003808LBR  
*Business Name:* Chinese Historical Society of America  
*Business Address:* 965 Clay Street  
*Zoning:* UMU (Urban Mixed Use)/  
65-A Height and Bulk District  
*Block/Lot:* 0024/078 and 079  
*Applicant:* Sue Lee, Executive Director  
965 Clay Street  
San Francisco, CA 94108  
*Nominated By:* Supervisor Aaron Peskin, District 3  
*Staff Contact:* Desiree Smith - (415) 575-9093  
desiree.smith@sfgov.org  
*Reviewed By:* Tim Frye – (415) 575-6822  
tim.frye@sfgov.org

## BUSINESS DESCRIPTION

Established in Chinatown in 1963, the Chinese Historical Society of America (CHSA) is the oldest and largest archive and historical center in the United States that documents the Chinese American experience. As a nonprofit organization, CHSA is “dedicated to the interpretation, promotion, and preservation of the social, cultural, and political history and contributions of the Chinese in America.” It accomplishes this mission by hosting exhibitions and public programs at its Museum and Learning Center, producing publications on Chinese American history, offering tours of the surrounding Chinatown neighborhood, and serving as the steward of the historic Chinatown YWCA, which it has owned and operated since 2000. The building, designed by renowned architect Julia Morgan, is designated City Landmark No. 122. CHSA previously operated out of 644 Broadway, 650 Commercial Street, and 17 Adler Place (now Jack Kerouac Alley). It holds one of the country’s largest collections of Chinese American historical objects and frequently serves as a resource for historical research; for example, CHSA’s archives were utilized in the making of Ric Burns’ PBS documentary film, “The Chinese Exclusion Act.” Its programming focuses on three core values, as described in its application: 1.) respect for cultural traditions and history/heritage; 2.) the belief that innovation is part of how the organization keeps traditions relevant and up-to-date; and 3.) a goal to reach “above and beyond” Chinatown in order to continue the process of expanding definitions of the Chinese American community and its role in society.

In addition to showcasing rotating exhibitions, the CHSA Museum offers several permanent exhibitions, including *Chinese American: Exclusion/Inclusion*, which tells the history of people of Chinese descent in the United States from the late 18<sup>th</sup> century to the present, and is accompanied by an education guide consisting of educational curriculum designed to meet national content standards. Other permanent exhibits include the *History of the Chinatown YWCA*, which sheds light into the life of Chinese American women from the 1930s to the 1980s, and *Living in Chinatown: Memories in Miniature*, which showcases the work of Chinatown artist, Frank Wong, who created miniature scenes of Chinatown.

Founded by local Chinese American community advocates, CHSA has continued a legacy of community advocacy through its historical and educational work, and also through its support of local historians



such as, Philip Choy and Him Mark Lai, both of whom “contributed significantly to the understanding and awareness of Chinese American history through scholarly work.” Their scholarship and advocacy has continued to demonstrate its impacts in the broader community. One such effort was the preservation of Angel Island Immigration Station, now open to the public for educational tours. CHSA also remains deeply connected to its surrounding neighborhood of Chinatown, keeping its doors open six days a week and collaborating with others to offer film screenings, book readings, presentations, workshops, and panel discussions in the neighborhood.

## STAFF ANALYSIS

### *Review Criteria*

1. *When was business founded?*

1963.

2. *Does the business qualify for listing on the Legacy Business Registry? If so, how?*

Yes, the Chinese Historical Society of America (CHSA) qualifies for listing on the Legacy Business Registry because it meets all of the eligibility Criteria:

- i. CHSA has operated for 54 years.
- iv. CHSA has contributed to the history and identity of San Francisco's Chinatown neighborhood by promoting the history, heritage, and culture of Chinese Americans in the Bay Area and beyond through its museum exhibitions, educational and cultural programs, and historical archive.
- v. CHSA is committed to maintaining the physical features or traditions that define its practice of operating museum, archive, and historical center focused on Chinese American history, heritage, and culture.

3. *Is the business associated with a culturally significant art/craft/cuisine/tradition?*

CHSA, a nonprofit organization, the oldest and largest archive and historical center documenting the Chinese American experience in the United States. It is associated with the curatorial, archival, and story-telling traditions; it is associated with promoting Chinese and Chinese American heritage and culture; and it is associated with the tradition of stewarding and interpreting a historic site.

4. *Is the business or its building associated with significant events, persons, and/or architecture?*

The property at 965 Clay Street is Article 10 Landmark No. 122, significant for its architecture and social history. Designed by master architect, Julia Morgan, in 1932, the historic Chinatown YWCA is associated with Chinese and Chinese American history of the neighborhood.

5. *Is the property associated with the business listed on a local, state, or federal historic resource registry?*

Yes, the property is a designated City Landmark under Article 10 of the Planning Code. It was also found eligible for listing on the National Register of Historic Places and the California Register of Historic Resources.

6. *Is the business mentioned in a local historic context statement?*

No.

7. *Has the business been cited in published literature, newspapers, journals, etc.?*

Yes. CHSA has been cited in numerous publications including but not limited to:

*San Francisco Chronicle*, 10/29/2016, "NY gives SF vivid view of Chinese immigrants' history," by Carl Nolte; *San Francisco Chronicle*, 10/3/1966, "Chinese Society Opens Museum," by Jerry Root; *San Francisco Chronicle*, 10/6/1966, "Boost for Chinese History," by Millie Robbins; *San Francisco Magazine*, 2/1967, "Or a Chinese Historical Society?" by Thomas W. Chinn; *Bulletin for April 1969*, *East/West News*, 1/14/1988, "Historical Societies Play a Key Role in Chinese American History"; *Tri-Valley Herald*, 11/16/2001, "Museum gives Chinese-American history its due," by Titania Leung Inglis; *San Jose Mercury*, 11/17/01, "Chinese-American museum conceived in '63 opens," by L.A. Chung; *San Francisco Chronicle*, 11/18/01, "Chinese museum finally gets a home," by Tyche Hendricks; *New York Times*, 2/11/11, "Lost for Years, a Trove of Chinatown Art is Tracked Down," by Bernice Yeung; *nbcnews.com*, 11/11/16, "Chinese-American History Finds Permanent Home in San Francisco," by Frances Kai-Hwa Wang; *nbcnews.com*, 2/11/17, "Oldest Chinese Laundry in the U.S. Closes Shop After 140 Years"; and *nbcnews.com*, 2/11/17, "CAAM to Launch 'Who is American?' Education Campaign on Chinese Exclusion Act."

*Asian Pacific America with Robert Handa*, an interview with Su Lee, Executive Director of CHSA, aired on NBC Bay Area January 29, 2017 (available on YouTube, see application for links).

CHSA has been the recipient of numerous awards, including: 2004 National Preservation Award from the National Trust for Historic Preservation; 2005 Preservation Award from California Heritage Council; and 2016 Award from the Art Deco Society of California.

### ***Physical Features or Traditions that Define the Business***

#### **Location(s) associated with the business:**

- 965 Clay Street

#### **Recommended by Applicant**

- Dedication to the interpretation, promotion, and preservation of the social, cultural, and political history and contributions of the Chinese in America
- Function as a home for the stories and experience of the Chinese in America
- Chinatown location
- Maintenance of a cultural asset that is the historic YWCA Chinatown building
- Function as a museum, historical archive, and source of educational programming focused on Chinese and Chinese American history

#### **Additional Recommended by Staff**

- No additional recommendations





# SAN FRANCISCO PLANNING DEPARTMENT

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## Historic Preservation Commission Draft Resolution HEARING DATE APRIL 19, 2017

1650 Mission St.  
Suite 400  
San Francisco,  
CA 94103-2479

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*Filing Date:* March 24, 2017  
*Case No.:* 2017-003808LBR  
*Business Name:* Chinese Historical Society of America  
*Business Address:* 965 Clay Street  
*Zoning:* UMU (Urban Mixed Use)/  
65-A Height and Bulk District  
*Block/Lot:* 0024/078 and 079  
*Applicant:* Sue Lee, Executive Director  
965 Clay Street  
San Francisco, CA 94108  
*Nominated By:* Supervisor Aaron Peskin, District 3  
*Staff Contact:* Desiree Smith - (415) 575-9093  
desiree.smith@sfgov.org  
*Reviewed By:* Tim Frye - (415) 575-6822  
tim.frye@sfgov.org

**ADOPTING FINDINGS RECOMMENDING TO THE SMALL BUSINESS COMMISSION APPROVAL OF THE LEGACY BUSINESS REGISTRY NOMINATION FOR CHINESE HISTORICAL SOCIETY OF AMERICA, CURRENTLY LOCATED AT 965 CLAY STREET (BLOCK/LOT 0024/078 AND 079).**

**WHEREAS**, in accordance with Administrative Code Section 2A.242, the Office of Small Business maintains a registry of Legacy Businesses in San Francisco (the "Registry") to recognize that longstanding, community-serving businesses can be valuable cultural assets of the City and to be a tool for providing educational and promotional assistance to Legacy Businesses to encourage their continued viability and success; and

**WHEREAS**, the subject business has operated in San Francisco for 30 or more years, with no break in San Francisco operations exceeding two years; and

**WHEREAS**, the subject business has contributed to the identity of San Francisco's Chinatown neighborhood; and

**WHEREAS**, the subject business is committed to maintaining the physical features and traditions that define the business; and

WHEREAS, at a duly noticed public hearing held on April 19, 2017, the Historic Preservation Commission reviewed documents, correspondence and heard oral testimony on the Legacy Business Registry nomination.

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the **Historic Preservation Commission hereby recommends** that the Chinese Historical Society of America qualifies for the Legacy Business Registry under Administrative Code Section 2A.242(b)(2) as it has operated for 30 or more years and has continued to contribute to the community.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the **Historic Preservation Commission hereby recommends** safeguarding of the below listed physical features and traditions for the Chinese Historical Society of America:

*Location (if applicable)*

- 965 Clay Street

*Physical Features or Traditions that Define the Business*

- *Dedication to the interpretation, promotion, and preservation of the social, cultural, and political history and contributions of the Chinese in America*
- *Function as a home for the stories and experience of the Chinese in America*
- *Chinatown location*
- *Maintenance of a cultural asset that is the historic YWCA Chinatown building*
- *Function as a museum, historical archive, and source of educational programming focused on Chinese and Chinese American history*

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the **Historic Preservation Commission's findings and recommendations** are made solely for the purpose of evaluating the subject business's eligibility for the Legacy Business Registry, and the Historic Preservation Commission makes no finding that the subject property or any of its features constitutes a historical resource pursuant to CEQA Guidelines Section 15064.5(a).

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the **Historic Preservation Commission hereby directs** its Commission Secretary to transmit this Resolution and other pertinent materials in the case file 2017-003808LBR to the Office of Small Business.

I hereby certify that the foregoing Resolution was ADOPTED by the Historic Preservation Commission on April 19, 2017.

Jonas P. Ionin  
Commission Secretary

AYES:

NOES:



**Resolution No. XX**  
**April 19, 2017**

**2017-003808LBR**  
**965 Clay Street; Chinese Historical Society of America**

ABSENT

ADOPTED: