



OCTOBER 2019

## October Monthly Meeting: Russell Low, writer of *Three Coins* returns by popular demand

The CHSSC summer meeting in July featured author Russell Low who spoke about his book, *Three Coins: A Young Girl's Story of Kidnappings, Slavery, and Romance in 19<sup>th</sup> Century America, in Cerritos*. This October, Low will be back again to share his work at the C.A.C.A. LA Lodge in Chinatown. If you did not have the opportunity to come to Cerritos, here is an opportunity to see what you missed! You can read our original cover story about Low on [chssc.org/news-n-notes](http://chssc.org/news-n-notes) in the "Summer 2019" issue.

### About *Three Coins*:

*Three Coins* teaches, and illustrates early Chinese American history through the stories of the people whose lives shaped this history. The saga of Ah Ying and Lai Wah is intertwined with the history of the American West. It begins with the building of the transcontinental railroad, a project only made possible by the heroic actions of 12,000 Chinese men, including the author's great grandfather, Hung Lai Wah and his brother Jick Wah. Their story recounts the hardships of building the railroad through the mountains, the bitterly cold winters, and the blasting accident in the Great Summit Tunnel that claimed Jick Wah's right eye.

The story then explores the devastating effects of the Chinese Exclusion Act, and the subsequent trafficking of young Chinese women as part of the illegal slave trade. *Three Coins* sheds light on the role of the Presbyterian church, and the Cameron House who boldly rescued many of these Chinese women giving them a new life in America. Ah Ying is a 9-year-old girl when she is brought to America as a child slave in 1880. She refuses to be held down by

slave owners, missionaries, or Tong high binder thugs, who kidnap her. With the help of her romantic interest, Lai Wah, she escapes and takes control of her life. Against great odds she survived, found romance, and started a family that to this day continues to shape the world.

The heroic role of the early Chinese women is often overlooked. Yet, these courageous women who came to America under the worst of circumstances, became the foundation of early Chinese American society. These women were bold and courageous, and above all else they knew how to survive.

The story is compelling because it is told by the great-grandson of Lai Wah and Ah Ying. Low masterfully weaves family stories, and real-life characters with the historical and political events of 19<sup>th</sup> century America. *Three Coins* is meticulously researched and documented with over 100 newspaper articles, photographs, and photographs. It is a text of Chinese American history brought to life by the drama, romance, and intrigue of his rich family story.

### CHSSC will be meeting at the CACA Lodge:

Wednesday, October 2, 2019

6:30PM (check-in and refreshments), 7:00PM  
(program) to 9:00PM

Chinese American Citizens Alliance LA Lodge  
(behind Phoenix Bakery)  
415 Bamboo Lane  
Los Angeles, CA 90012

Parking available on the street (meters run until  
8:00PM) and at Bamboo Plaza and Mandarin  
Plaza. For any questions, please contact  
[info@chssc.org](mailto:info@chssc.org).

**PHOTO DAY**

CHSSC will be hosting another Photo Day: unidentified photos in our collection will be brought out, and shared in hopes of recognizing faces and neighborhoods.

Come by to enjoy memories and camaraderie.

11AM-2PM  
Saturday, November 2, 2019  
415 Bernard St.  
Los Angeles, CA

A light lunch will be provided.



## Summer Potluck

by Cindy Fong

Do the members of CHSSC enjoy food? Do we like to eat? If you were at our annual summer picnic on August 24, you know the answer is a resounding **YES!!!**

A special shout-out to Gordon Hom for setting up canopies the day before and, with his faithful wife Rose, serving his unforgettable black bean spareribs over rice. Much appreciation for Gene Moy and Susan Sing for preparing vegetables and skewers to round out a fabulous rendering of BBQ chicken and sausage links. We are lucky that Gene loves to be next to a fired up BBQ! There appeared a spectacular array of dishes from members, an attendance of about 80, and a good time was had by all. Thanks to all who brought food. A special note of thanks to Ken Chan and Phoenix Bakery for providing a delicious strawberry/banana whipped cream half sheet cake. And remember, we get to have another food orgy at our annual Christmas party. What will you be bringing?



## September meeting recap

At our September monthly meeting, first-time author Bernice Ng discussed writing her book, *Never Go Hungry Again*. The focus of her portion of the talk was the writing process. After deciding to preserve her mother's intriguing, heart-breaking, and inspiring life, Bernice faced getting the story of her mother's early life in China. Questioning her mother, Betty, through email, Bernice pieced together a story of her mother's being left behind by a neglectful, harsh grandfather when her parents moved to the United States. It was a story of survival. Betty then discussed the suffering of her life and her transition to a new life when she moved to the U.S. Betty's life revealed the power of perseverance.



The author, Bernice Ng, standing in center, with her mother Betty to her right.

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### MISSION STATEMENT

The Chinese Historical Society of Southern California was organized in November 1975. The purposes of the Society are:

1. to bring together people with a mutual interest in the important history and historical role of Chinese and Chinese Americans in Southern California;
2. to pursue, preserve, and communicate knowledge of this history; and
3. to promote the heritage of the Chinese and Chinese-Americans community in support of a better appreciation of the rich, multicultural society of the United States.



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*From left to right: Eugene Moy, Susan Sing, Marian Chew, Anna Gee, Yvonne Chang, and Jeannie Lew manage the CHSSC table while Linda and Kirk Bentz peruse the collection.*

*Many of the items were donated by our members, and range from artwork to kitchenware to clothing. Thank you for your generous donations and support!*

## CHSSC's 2<sup>nd</sup> Flea Market at PCC

*By Marian Chew*

It was before the crack of dawn when my husband, Peter, and I arrived at the Pasadena City College's flea market on Sunday, September 1, 2019. The vendors were already setting up their merchandise, and the buyers were already scouting out bargains! Apparently, this happens every first Sunday at PCC. The grounds open at 4 am for the vendors to set up.

Susie Ling, a PCC faculty member, was already sitting at the space she secured for us. While Susie, Peter and I unloaded donated items from our car, Anna Gee, Shirley and Dean Ng, and Yvonne Chang showed up. We had to set up fast as buyers were already coming around eyeing our merchandise, seeing what we had and deciding if they were going to spend money on them. Later that morning, Jeannie Liu and Lou Quan also came to help out.

Some buyers were quick to buy our wares, while others haggled with us to lower the prices. It was eye-opening to see what the sellers were selling—everything from A to Z—and even some merchandise you'd think no one would be interested in. Seeing some of the things that were sold caused me to take another look at the things in my garage, thinking, "Hey, I can sell this at the flea market!"

A special thank you to Susie Ling for applying for and paying for the space. She was quite the saleswoman too! As she said, participating in the flea market is "treasure trading."

Another big thanks goes to the committee members who worked diligently through 8+ hours during one of the hottest days of the week to raise

money for CHSSC. The members are: Yvonne Chang, Marian Chew, Peter Chun, Anna Gee, Jeannie Liu, Shirley and Dean Ng, and Lou Quan.

## New Multimedia Library at CHSSC

The Chinese Historical Society of Southern California is developing a multimedia library due to a generous donation. The Society currently maintains an extensive library consisting of bound books in English and Chinese. We also hold additional digital assets such as online materials, audio files, films, photographs, databases, reports, lectures, Chinese Immigration Case Files, interviews and much more.

By creating a user-friendly multimedia library, CHSSC has determined that by integrating our library of bound books and digital assets we will enhance the availability of resources to the research community who will be searching for Chinese American Studies, Asian American Studies, and Chinese History. The new multimedia library will be located in two rooms at 415 Bernard Street in our Chinatown Heritage Center.

We are currently seeking a multimedia library specialist to devise technological strategies for establishment and effective management of the Society's digital assets. We will provide the public with updates as this project progresses.



*Yenyen Chan's talk in Yosemite Valley with Yosemite Falls in the background.*

## 2019 Sing Peak Pilgrimage to Yosemite

*By Tennyson Kwok*

Sing Peak, a 10,540 foot high peak in southeast Yosemite, is named after the famous Chinese American cook, Tie Sing, head chef for the U.S. Geological Survey for decades, and later for the 1915 Mather Mountain Party that led to the creation of the National Park Service. Since 2013, Yenyen Chan, Yosemite Ranger, and Jack Shu (a retired California State Park Superintendent) have organized the Yosemite Sing Peak Pilgrimage, to celebrate the Chinese contributions to Yosemite.

Between Friday July 12 and Wednesday July 17, 2019, the 7<sup>th</sup> Annual Yosemite Sing Peak Pilgrimage was held, sponsored by CHSSC, with a significant attendance by San Francisco Bay Area friends. Non-members have always been welcome, and over 60 persons attended, including a family of four from Orange County. Three very well-equipped cabins and one campground were reserved for attendees, near Wawona, and the south entrance to Yosemite. This article summarizes the first three days of the event, with ranger talks and hikes for general attendees. The

final three days of the event, the backpacking trip, was covered in the September News N Notes.

On Friday, the first day of the Pilgrimage, a morning walk in Yosemite Valley was conducted by Yenyen, along one of the early roads that the Chinese built for touring Yosemite Valley. The famous Yosemite Falls was in the background. We even spotted a young bear during her talk.

After lunch, Yenyen conducted another hike starting near Bridal Veil Falls, along a different unused early road constructed by the Chinese that led from the Wawona Hotel to Yosemite Valley. Rock walls that the skilled Chinese labor constructed to support the road were pointed out. Although this road was narrow and sometimes treacherous, wagons pulled by horses and early automobiles used this road. A few hardy hikers went beyond the first rock wall, where the road had been damaged by flooding, up to Inspiration Point.

Saturday was a busy day. Our first adventure was a walk conducted by NPS Ranger and Archaeologist Scott Carpenter at the newly renovated Mariposa Grove where Giant Sequoia trees are thriving. We ate our lunches in the shade of towering Sequoias. After lunch, we walked along one of the first roads built for access to Mariposa Grove, which was also built by Chinese. *(continued on following page)*



*Photo by  
Dennis Aguello*

*Sitting on Rock Wall Built by Chinese Workers on an early Yosemite Valley Road. Photo by Dennis Aguello.*



## Yosemite continued...

In the afternoon, we visited one of the original support buildings of the Wawona Hotel, the Chinese Laundry. Until recently, it was being used as storage. It is planned to bring this building back as a museum and will appear as it may have been when the Chinese were operating the laundry. Sabrina Diaz, Yosemite's Chief of Interpretation and Education, provided background on the development plans. At night, there was a pot luck cook out at the Wawona Community Center. Food was prepared with the theme "what the Chinese may have cooked in the early days of Yosemite." I'm sure that everyone was completely satisfied with the delicious dishes that were produced. On Sunday, for those who had not already left for home, we were treated to a pot luck breakfast and then a dinner in one of the cabins. Backpackers who just arrived also had a chance to interact with other attendees. During the day attendees were free to roam about on hikes, like to nearby Chilnualna Falls, or visit other Yosemite sights.



*Clockwise from top left: NPS Ranger Scott Carpenter leading the hike on the Mariposa Grove Road; At the Wawona Swimming Hole, just across from the Swinging Bridge; Potluck dinner preparation in Cabin 12 B "Stargazer." Last photo courtesy of Bak Jong.*

*One of the attendees made this nice video summarizing the entire 2019 Sing Peak Pilgrimage.*  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AUkjWmUxjwU>

## Recent Outreach:

**August 31:** The Taiwanese American Citizens League held its biannual convention in Irvine, CA with a focus on the 2020 U.S. Census. The gathering of mostly TAP (Taiwanese American Professionals) members heard presentations by Census Bureau representatives encouraging the Taiwanese community to be accurately counted by checking the appropriate boxes in the census forms. CHSSC member Eugene Moy was invited to present background on Chinese American-Asian American history.

*Q: Do you know which Southern California community has the most Asians? [A: Irvine] The most Chinese? [A: Alhambra] The most Taiwanese? [A: TBD, after the 2020 census]*

**September 11:** A group of 13 students led by Professor Ndindi Kitonga of Bard College-LA visited Chinatown to learn about our community. These are trained, working musicians who are seeking a master's degree to become educators within our large, culturally diverse region. A walking tour of the changing Chinatown environment was led by resident and community activist Iciar Rivera, with background assistance from CHSSC's Eugene Moy.





## Chinese Historical Society of Southern California

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Phone: 323-222-0856 Email: [info@chssc.org](mailto:info@chssc.org)  
Website: [www.chssc.org](http://www.chssc.org)

Please help us save paper and postage,  
Email us to indicate your preference for an online newsletter at [info@chssc.org](mailto:info@chssc.org)

### Community Calendar

**Monday, October 7, 2019; 6:00PM social, 6:30PM dinner**  
***The Allure of Matter: Material Art from China*—talk by Stephen Little, Ph.D. for the China Society of Southern California**

Stephen Little, Ph.D. will talk about *the Allure of Matter*, currently on display at LACMA. This exhibition brings together works from the past our decades in which conscious material choice became a symbol of the artists' expression. Each artwork focuses on one material, natural and man-made. RSVP to [info@chinasocietyofsocal.org](mailto:info@chinasocietyofsocal.org), admission \$25.

Golden Dragon Restaurant  
960 N. Broadway  
Los Angeles, CA 90012

**Saturday, October 12, 2019; 9:00AM-5:00PM**  
**14th Annual Archives Bazaar**

Come and celebrate the diversity of stories that make Southern California such a place of discovery. At the Los Angeles Archive Bazaar, presented by L.A. As A Subject and the USC Libraries, anyone with an interest in the region's history will find something of value. The CHSSC will have a booth, come by to say hi!

Doheny Memorial Library  
USC University Park Campus  
3550 Trousdale Parkway  
Los Angeles, CA 90089

**Thursday, October 17, 2019; 7:30-8:30**  
**Recasting the King of Flowers in Late Imperial China**

Kristen L. Chiem, associate professor of art history at Pepperdine University, explores the role of floral imagery in Qing-dynasty China. Focusing on the peony, Chiem traces how artists used the flower to demonstrate imperial power during the 17th through 20th centuries. Prominently adorning portraits

and material objects of Qing emperors and empresses, these images offer insight into gender, ethnicity, and diplomacy at court.

Rothenberg Hall  
The Huntington Library, Art Museum, and Botanical Gardens  
1151 Oxford Road  
San Marino, CA 91108

**Thursday, October 24, 2019**  
**Commemoration of the Chinese Massacre of 1871**

The Chinese American Museum will host a vigil concert and reception to commemorate the lives lost during the Chinese Massacre of 1871. This multimedia program will feature a pre-performance talk, a musical performance, reading of the names of those who passed that day, candlelit vigil, and a wreath-laying procession to the commemorative plaque. Join us after the program for a reception in the museum and a reflection activity in the courtyard. Visitors are invited to write their thoughts on a card and attach it to a tree, which will remain for 20 days as a memorial for all the lives lost in the historical tragedy and as a space for reflection on contemporary issues of race and violence. Free admission; please RSVP to [rsvp@camla.org](mailto:rsvp@camla.org).

Pico House  
424 North Main St.  
Los Angeles, CA 90012

**Sunday, October 27, 2019; 2:00PM-3:00PM**  
**Lecture: *Paper Son: The Inspiring Story of Tyrus Wong, Immigrant and Artist***

Author Judy Leung and illustrator Chris Sasaki discuss the inspiring true story behind their children's book, *Paper Son*. Li Wei Yang, curator of Pacific Rim Collections at the Huntington, introduces the program and offers historical context. A book signing follows the talk.

Rothenberg Hall @ the Huntington (address listed previously)