



NEWS 'n NOTES

CHINESE HISTORICAL SOCIETY OF SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA

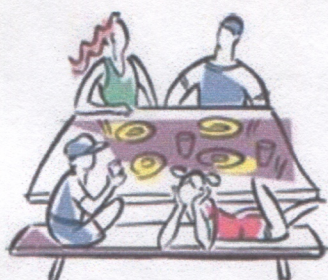
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Chinatown Heritage & Visitors Center: 323-222-0856

August 2007

August Program



Saturday

August 25, 2007

4:00 p.m. to 8:00 p.m.

415 Bernard Street

Los Angeles Chinatown

RSVP by 8/24: 323-222-0856

Parking in garage across the street from CHSSC, between Hill and Broadway.

Special guest: C.Y. Lee, author of *Flower Drum Song*.

Note: September program speaker to be announced

Around CHSSC

The conference room at the CHSSC's Heritage Center has been expanded by combining two rooms. The remodeling idea was originated by past CHSSC President Irvin Lai. The entire project was done by volunteers, Philip Hom a long time Society supporter, his brother Gilbert Hom, and Eugene Moy, Vice President and Vice President for Programs of CHSSC, respectively. An air-condition unit was installed, donated by Benjamin Nakayama, Treasurer of CHSSC.

The conference room was recently used by UCLA Asian Studies Center staff for their one-day retreat. It will be used for the upcoming oral history workshops. (For details, see www.chssc.org, or the July issue of News 'n Notes.) The room measures 12' x 28' with a partial kitchen. It can accommodate 16 persons around the conference table. CHSSC is looking into the feasibility of using the conference for classes in Mandarin, arts and crafts, cooking, etc.

Acknowledgement

- Paul and Emma Louie donated a copy of *The Historical Society of Southern California Quarterly*, Vol XLII—No. 3, September 1960. On page 239 is the article "The Celestials and the Angels: A Study of the Anti-Chinese Movement in Los Angeles to 1882."

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Chinese Historical Society of Southern California

August 2007

Historical Chinatowns

Tacoma's Chinese Reconciliation Project

Have you wondered why there is no Chinatown in Tacoma, a major city in the Pacific West of the United States? There was a Chinese community called Little Canton in Tacoma in the late 19th century but the residents were rounded up and driven out of town at gun point. The article below was forwarded to the CHSSC by Steve Yee, Friends of the Yee Fow Museum of Sacramento.

—Yvonne Chang, CHSSC Staff

Tacoma plans a Chinese-style garden to help bind century-old wounds

Tuesday, April 3, 2001

By ELAINE PORTERFIELD

SEATTLE POST-INTELLIGENCER REPORTER

TACOMA -- They had come to the West for jobs and to escape poverty and starvation at home in China.

Everywhere, they'd face oppression and hatred. But only in Tacoma would one searing act of racism against them become so infamous as to result in an actual title -- "The Tacoma Method."

It happened Nov. 3, 1885. On that day, the mayor, the sheriff, the fire chief, a judge, the head of the Young Men's Christian Association and hundreds of other men -- at the sound of a prearranged signal blast from local mills -- rounded up 200 Chinese immigrants and marched them at gunpoint to the railroad station.

The immigrants were placed on a train to Portland. The next day, their homes and possessions were burned to the ground. Afterward, anyone of Chinese ancestry was actively discouraged from settling in Tacoma, an prohibition that continued until the 1920s.

Today, a Baptist minister, a Taiwanese immigrant and a group of Tacoma citizens and elected officials are seeking to heal the wounds opened by the actions of that mob 115 years ago through the creation of what is being called the **Chinese Reconciliation Park** on the city's waterfront.

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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 American community in support of a better appreciation of the rich, multi-cultural society of the United States.



(from "Tacoma's", page 2)

The ambitious project will cost \$6 million. The financial package is still being assembled, but the city likely will pay for most of project, part of a string of parks along the waterfront. Construction, which will be done in stages, should get underway sometime before 2003.

In February, the City Council approved spending about \$400,000 to complete designs for the 3.4-acre park. The garden will be next to Commencement Park on Schuster Park Way -- a mere quarter-mile from the city's former Little Canton, where 13 homes belonging to Chinese immigrants were burned in 1885.

The Rev. Dr. David Murdoch, a psychologist and Baptist pastor, is credited with the idea for a memorial to the incident. He says his idea originated in a feeling he and his wife Signy both had soon after they moved to Tacoma in 1981.

"We both sensed something was not quite right," Murdoch said. "We felt something was wrong with the city."

"I happened on a local newspaper that ran a story on when the Chinese were run out of Tacoma, and I immediately knew what it was. Part of our 'family' here was hurt. ... It opened the door for the city to be dysfunctional."

Theresa Pan is chairwoman of the Chinese Reconciliation Project Foundation, which has raised about \$30,000 for the park. The native of Taiwan was floored when she learned about the expulsion shortly after she moved to Tacoma in 1979.

"At first, I was kind of in denial," Pan said. "I didn't believe it. Then I wondered, should I stay here or should I move? My son was born in 1980. I thought about if it happened again, could I protect him? "It was just unbelievable to me."

The Tacoma expulsion capped a series of anti-Chinese incidents around the Northwest in 1885.

A once-booming frontier economy of logs, mining and fishing had slowed into a near depression, along with the economy around the rest of the country. Menial labor performed by the Chinese, work once rejected by whites, began to appear more desirable. Frictions increased throughout the region as whites - some of them immigrants themselves -- began to blame the Chinese for the economic slowdown.

In September 1885, a group of Chinese hop pickers in King County were attacked by a mob of whites and Native Americans. Two Chinese were shot dead, three wounded, and their tents and possessions burned. A week later, a group of Chinese coal miners in East King County were attacked at night, their dormitory and cookhouse burned.

In Tacoma, city leaders and citizens began meeting to decide how to best drive the Chinese from the city. The leader of the effort: mayor and merchant Jacob Weisbach, himself from the Rhine in Germany.

An edict was passed that anyone of Chinese origin had to leave by the end of October. About 150 left the area by Halloween 1885, sailing on a steamer to Victoria, B.C. On Nov. 3, a raincoat-clad mob led by Weisbach and other leaders gathered to drive out the remaining 200 Chinese.

Historian Murray Morgan, in his book "Puget's Sound," recounts the observations of one witness:

"They were herded and driven away like cattle. ... The elderly and sick Chinese were permitted to ride. The rest trudged after the wagons, wrapped in blankets against the cold rain, duffels slung on poles over their backs. Their sandals sucked mud; some took them off and went barefoot. Many were crying."

The Tacoma garden is envisioned as both an opportunity to explore the history of the expulsion and to celebrate Chinese art and culture. Its style and architecture will reflect garden traditions in

(continued on back page)

(from "Tacoma's", page 3)

Southeast China, the birthplace of many of the immigrants living in Tacoma in 1885.

The site will be modeled after public gardens that ordinary residents might visit in a Chinese city. Designers will combine classic elements of Chinese gardening -- plants, paths, rocks, buildings and water -- to evoke a variety of feelings and experiences. Eventually, the park will feature a multi-purpose hall with classrooms.

The site offers dramatic views of Maury Island, where a number of Chinese residents lived at the time of the expulsion, along with views of Vashon Island, Browns Point and the distant Olympics.

Murdoch credits former Tacoma Mayor Karen Vialle with ardent support for the project from the beginning.

Tacoma attorney Linda Lee also volunteers with the Reconciliation Foundation.

To this day, Lee notes, Tacoma remains the only major West Coast city without a Chinatown.

That curious fact gnawed on her when she first moved to Tacoma, but she never really knew the reason for it. Then she learned of the expulsion.

"My reaction was hard to articulate," Lee said. "It was sort of shock, sort of mortification."

"People who have lived here all their lives didn't know this happened as a part of Tacoma history."

Note: Steve Yee has advised CHSSC that the Tacoma Reconciliation Garden plans an opening in September 2007. And, there is discussion on developing a Chinese Meditation Garden in Sacramento's Railyard. Stay tuned.

For more information please go to:

www.crpfatacoma.org/ and

www.yeefowmuseum.org/



**Chinese Historical Society
of Southern California**

**415 Bernard St.
Los Angeles, CA 90012-1703**

**Open House
Picnic
8/26/07**

