

APRIL 2017

## The Asparagus King

*with historian Sylvia Sun Minnick*

Wednesday, April 5, 2017  
6:30 p.m.

*Castelar Elementary School*  
840 Yale Street, Los Angeles, CA 90012

Free parking - enter via College Street  
This event is open to the public.

The period of the Roaring Twenties has often been associated with economic boom connected to the rise of the Rockefellers, Andrew Carnegie, Henry Ford and major companies and industries. Among the many Chinese entrepreneurs there were a handful whose names rose to distinction during this period – one such was Thomas Foon Chew, better known as the “Asparagus King.” Some say he left a decided mark on the Chinese communities in northern California, more particularly San Francisco and San Jose. What type of a person was he? Did he live the life of the stereotypical, hard-working, frugal Chinatown merchant or did he step out of the so-called Chinatown “box”? How was it that the mayors, dignitaries and state officials became honorary pall bearers at his funeral?

As an integral segment of her book NEVER A BURNT BRIDGE, historian Sylvia Sun Minnick will focus on this man’s Chinese organizational abilities, usage of familial ties and his western-thinking advancements in the canning industry. Minnick, a noted research-historian, has also authored several other history books, most notably SAMFOW: The San Joaquin Chinese Legacy.







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## Faith and Fire / My Life in China

*As witnessed by O.C. Lee*

At the Chinese Historical Society of Southern California March monthly meeting, Helen Kimmei Chan shared her graphic novel "Faith and Fire", a pictorial journey of a Chinese boy coming to "Golden Mountain" America in 1882. His culture shock, his desire to help his impoverished family, and his own desire for riches bring about struggle, inner-conflict and friendship.

Filmmaker Kenneth Eng screened his documentary "My Life in China". A story of migration is passed down from father to son, retracing the precarious steps he took in search of a better life. Ultimately asking the questions, what does it mean to be both Chinese and American?



Photos: O.C. Lee

*Thank you to*  
**Isobel and Chong Lew**

for sponsoring our April monthly meeting.  
Your generous gift will ensure that CHSSC  
will continue to provide free monthly programs.

### Board of Directors

#### Officers

Gordon Hom, President  
Linda Bentz, Vice President  
Winifred Lew, Secretary  
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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, multicultural society of the United States.



Chinese Historical Society  
of Southern California

南加州華人歷史學會

Annual Golden Spike Awards Dinner  
*Storytellers*

Saturday, May 20, 2017 –6:00pm

**Ocean Star Restaurant**

145 N. Atlantic Blvd., #201-203  
Monterey Park, CA 91754

*Recognizing:*

**Jenny Cho**

*Chinatown and China City in Los Angeles, Chinatown in Los Angeles, Chinese in Hollywood*

**John Jung**

*A Chinese American Odyssey, Southern Fried Rice, Chinese Laundries*

**L.P. Leung**

*The Jade Pendant, Portraits of Pride I & II*

**Susie Ling**

*Linking Our Lives: Chinese American Women of Los Angeles, Bridging the Centuries, Gum Saan Journal*

**Lisa See**

*On Gold Mountain, China Dolls, Shanghai Girls*

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Please reserve \_\_\_\_ tickets @ \$100 per person (members), \_\_\_\_ tickets @ \$125 per person (non-members), OR

I wish to be a:

☐ Silver Table Sponsor \$1,250

☐ Gold Table Sponsor \$5,000

☐ Diamond Table Sponsor \$10,000

☐ I want to donate silent auction item(s): Please call me at ( ) \_\_\_\_\_

☐ I want to place an ad in your event program. Please call me at ( ) \_\_\_\_\_

Sponsor Name \_\_\_\_\_

Please list guest names: \_\_\_\_\_

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☐ I/we will not be able to attend, but please accept my donation in the amount of \$ \_\_\_\_\_

Name \_\_\_\_\_ Title \_\_\_\_\_

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Phone \_\_\_\_\_ Fax \_\_\_\_\_

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**Checks are accepted.** Please remit form and submit payment to: CHSSC 411 Bernard Street, Los Angeles, CA 90012  
**Credit Card transactions** can be processed online at: [www.chssc.org/Events/GoldenSpikeDinner.aspx](http://www.chssc.org/Events/GoldenSpikeDinner.aspx) or phoned in during regular business hours Mon-Fri 10:30AM-2:30PM at: (323) 222-0856.

The Chinese Historical Society of Southern California is a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization. Tax I.D. # 95-3155357





Chinese Historical Society  
of Southern California

南加州華人歷史學會

## *Storytellers*

### **Annual Golden Spike Awards Dinner**

Saturday, May 20, 2017 – 6:00 pm

**Ocean Star Restaurant**

145 N. Atlantic Blvd., #201-203

Monterey Park, CA 91754

Yes, we will support the Chinese Historical Society of Southern California as a:

☐ **Diamond Sponsor \$10,000**

- Your Company Name and/or logo as Diamond Sponsor on all promotional materials for the event
- Invitation to VIP Reception with Honorees
- Reserved PREMIER VIP Tables for twenty (20) at the dinner
- One Full-page ad (Back Cover) in the Annual Golden Spike Awards Program Book
- Web Banner with link to Company Website
- Recognition in the Golden Spike Awards Program Book
- Special Stage Recognition at the Dinner
- Special giveaways to all attending guests
- Exclusive meal option & wine

☐ **Gold Sponsor \$5,000**

- Your Company Name and/or logo as Gold Sponsor on all promotional materials for the event
- Reserved PREFERRED Table for ten (10) at the dinner
- One Full-page ad in the Golden Spike Awards Program Book
- Web Banner with link to Company Website- Up to 1 year
- Recognition in the Annual Golden Spike Awards Program Book
- Special Recognition at the Dinner

☐ **Silver Sponsor \$1,250**

- Your Company Name and/or logo as Silver Sponsor on all promotional materials for the event
- Reserved Table for ten (10) at the dinner
- Recognition in the Golden Spike Awards Program Book
- Special Recognition at the Dinner

☐ **Ad/Congratulatory Message (Deadline: April 25<sup>th</sup>, 2017. File Type: JPEG, 300 dpi)**

- ☐ Back Cover \$1,000 – 8 1/2" w x 11" h
- ☐ Inside Cover \$750 – 7 1/2" w x 10" h
- ☐ Full Page \$500 – 7 1/2" w x 10" h
- ☐ Half Page \$300 – 7 1/2" w x 5" h
- ☐ Quarter Page \$250 – 3 3/4" w x 5" h

Please email all sponsorship inquiries to [chssc@hotmail.com](mailto:chssc@hotmail.com), you may also call us at (323) 222-0856



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## Archive Spotlight

The Archive Committee has been busy during the past month! We have been cleaning and organizing the archives with the help of staff and interns Jeremy Cole and Cheng Wang who come to us from Cal State Northridge. The Chinese Historical Society of Southern California is grateful to all of the individuals, companies, and organizations that have donated their collections. The archive consists of textual materials, phonograph records, oral histories, clothing, headstones, furniture and archaeological collections. Members of the Archive Committee are currently preparing inventories for each collection. These inventories will be converted to finding aids and uploaded onto the Online Archive of California ([www.oac.cdlib.org](http://www.oac.cdlib.org)). Placing information about CHSSC's archives on the Internet will contribute to the Society's mission to share the historical role of Chinese and Chinese Americans in Southern California.



Volunteer Jeannie Chen, Intern Jeremy Cole, and Board Member Linda Bentz spend a Sunday afternoon building new shelves for our archive room.

## 411 Bernard Street Restoration



The CHSSC Bernard St. headquarters have transformed much over the years. With the help of our interns and volunteers, the CHSSC headquarters is one step closer to being restored to its original Victorian glory. It is a large undertaking, but the diligence of our volunteers, interns, and staff, have all lent a hand in improving our facilities. There is still a long way to go and any help would be appreciated. If you are interested in helping restore our facilities, please let us know by email or phone at [chssc@hotmail.com](mailto:chssc@hotmail.com) or (323) 222 - 0856. Our CSUN interns Jeremy Cole and Cheng Wang have done a phenomenal job in restoring our front porch. We would also like to thank Travis King and Ryan Conkling for also volunteering this past month.





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## History Day L.A.

March 25, 2017

*an annual event hosted by  
Azusa Pacific University*



Students are invited to create posters, exhibits, papers, web sites, performances, and documentary presentations to explore a historical theme. CHSSC sets up a table annually at this event to share our history as Chinese Americans with participants and onlookers and to help judge the different exhibits and presentations. On his first History Day LA outing, our intern Jeremy Cole commented that "the venue was packed to the brim. We especially enjoyed witnessing the students champion history for themselves and find a creative way to present it". We would like to thank our interns Jeremy Cole and Cheng Wang and our fellow CHSSC board members for helping us table our booth and for helping spread their knowledge of Chinese American History. We would also like to thank David Landers and Azusa Pacific University for inviting and hosting us.

## Lantern Festival

March 4, 2017 - Hosted by the Chinese American Museum



In its 16th year, the Los Angeles Lantern Festival is one of the major cultural events in Los Angeles. To support our friends at the Chinese American Museum, the CHSSC board and staff set up an arts and craft booth inviting people young and old to come and participate in the festivities. The response was overwhelming, the arts and crafts activities continued until the end of the day up until all the supplies ran out! Thank you to those who came to volunteer, and those who visited our booth. It was hard work, but it was worth it to see so many people enjoying themselves, having fun, and taking part in the appreciation of our culture.

Board Members John Chan, Teresa Chung, Susan Dickson, and Rick Eng oversee arts and crafts activities at the CHSSC table at the 2017 Lantern Festival hosted by Chinese American Museum.





## Notes on Chinese American History

*A monthly column about Chinese American History by CHSSC member, William Gow.*

In the fall of 1892, Chinese Americans across the nation took part in one of the largest actions of civil disobedience in the nineteenth century. Under the sponsorship of California Congressman Thomas Geary, the United States renewed the Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882, reaffirmed the ban against Chinese immigrants naturalizing as American citizens, and passed new requirements for Chinese labors living in the United States to carry photo identification certificates proving they were legal residents. In order to be issued these certificates, the Geary Act stated that Chinese immigrants had to identify two white witnesses to verify the legality of the immigrant's presence in the United States. All Chinese Americans, including those who were US born citizens, were expected to carry the certificates. Those who did not register risked either deportation or imprisonment and a year of hard labor. In response the Chinese Consolidated Benevolent Association in San Francisco urged their members to disobey the new legislation. Chinese Americans followed this suggestion in mass, initiating a massive wave of civil disobedience.

Of course, Chinese were not alone in their fight against this injustice. White allies joined Chinese Americans in protesting the law. In New York more than a thousand supporters joined 200 Chinese Americans at Cooper Union on September 22, 1892 to protest the Geary Act. In Congress, Illinois representative Robert R. Hit gave an impassioned speech against the law, declaring, "Never before in a free country was there such a system of tagging a man like a dog to be caught by the police and examined, and if his tag or collar is not right taken to the pound or drowned or shot." When the May 1893 deadline for registration had passed, few Chinese in the nation had registered. In Los Angeles, for example, only 103 out of a population of around five thousand Chinese Americans living in the city had registered under the law.

In the months that followed, the CCBA sponsored a test case to challenge the legality of the Geary Act. Much to the organization's surprise the Supreme Court ruled 5-3 that the law was, in fact, constitutional. The court affirmed the right of immigration officials to deport Chinese immigrants in violation of the law even without a trial. Following the Supreme Court decision and facing the prospect of mass-deportations of Chinese immigrants, the CCBA urged compliance by Chinese Americans across the country.

The Chinese Exclusion era (1882-1943) proved to be a dark period for Chinese American immigrants and for the nation as a whole. Today, as our nation enters a period of renewed anti-immigrant sentiments, with the number of hate crimes and hate

groups on the rise, a focus on the history of anti-Chinese organized violence and legislation can help us better explain the historical roots of our current moment and offer a lesson on how to challenge this rising bigotry. With this in mind, in the coming columns I will focus on the history of Chinese exclusion, tracing the effects that exclusion had on the Chinese American community; examining the violence the period engendered, and recounting stories of the ways people resisted.

*William Gow is currently a doctoral candidate in Ethnic Studies at UC Berkeley where he is writing a history of Los Angeles Chinatown in the 1930s and 1940s. He has been a CHSSC member for more than a decade. He invites feedback, suggestions, or questions about this column and his academic work. William can be reached by email at [wgow@outlook.com](mailto:wgow@outlook.com)*

### New Chinatown, China City, and Hollywood Cinema:

*An Oral History of Los Angeles  
in the 1930s and 1940s*

Do you have memories of Los Angeles  
Chinatown in the 1930s and 1940s?

Have you heard stories from parents  
or relatives from the period?

Would you like to have your oral history archived  
at UCLA's Center for Oral History Research?

Graduate student William Gow, working with faculty advisor Professor Shari Huhndorf, is looking for community members to participate in recorded oral histories as part of his dissertation research in the Ethnic Studies Department at UC Berkeley. If you are a US-born adults who has memories about the Chinese American community in Los Angeles in the 1930s and 1940s, or if you are an adult who has heard stories about the Chinese American community directly from those who lived in Los Angeles in these decades, you may qualify to take part in this project.

To find out more information, email William Gow at [williamgow@berkeley.edu](mailto:williamgow@berkeley.edu) or call William at 310-795-4730.





# Chinese Historical Society of Southern California

411 Bernard Street, Los Angeles, CA 90012

Phone: 323-222-0856 Email: [chssc@hotmail.com](mailto:chssc@hotmail.com)

Website: [www.chssc.org](http://www.chssc.org)

*Help us save paper and postage, email us for your online newsletter at [chssc@hotmail.com](mailto:chssc@hotmail.com)*

## Community Calendar

**Tuesday, April 4, 2017 - 11:30am**

***Reunification* a film by Alvin Tsang**

While divorce is quite a common occurrence in America, it is a subject rarely discussed in the Asian community... the dialogue is raw with emotion, but rich and rewarding to understand the how and why the parents parted ways.

Cal State Fullerton – Titan Student Union

**Wednesday, April 5, 2017 - 6:30pm**

***The Asparagus King*** As a granddaughter, Sylvia Sun Minnick was more than two decades too late to meet her grandfather Thomas Foon Chew. People said he left a decided mark on the Chinese communities in northern California, more particularly San Francisco and San Jose.

Chinese Historical Society  
of Southern California monthly meeting  
Castelar Elementary School  
840 Yale Street, Los Angeles, CA 90012  
Free parking - enter via College Street  
Refreshments will be served  
This event is free and open to the public

**Saturday April 8, 2017 - 3:00pm**

***The Tea Girl of Hummingbird Lane* by Lisa See  
Chevalier's Books**

**126 N Larchmont Blvd, Los Angeles, CA 90004**

Come celebrate the publication of Lisa See's new novel

*The Tea Girl of Hummingbird Lane*

Don't miss Lisa See at a bookstore near you. For additional dates, please visit [LisaSee.com](http://LisaSee.com)

**Saturday April 8, 2017 11AM-4PM**

**6th Annual Kite Festival honoring Tyrus Wong:  
Otis College of Art and Design**

Location: Just north of the Santa Monica Pier  
Everyone will receive a free, unique kite along with color theory instruction. Otis College students will provide advice and assistance. Featured artists: Ron Gilbrian, Charles Gillespie, George Peters, Melanie Walker

**Saturday April 22, 2017 10:00AM-12:00PM**

***Screening of Home of My Heart film***

**Directed by Can To, Produced by Jenny Le**

Chinese American Citizens Alliance (CACA)

415 Bamboo Lane, Los Angeles, CA 90012

Award-winning Hong Kong film director Can To's *Home of My Heart* will be screened at the Chinese Family History Group of Southern California's April 22 meeting. The 45-minute documentary film will be presented with subtitles. Commentary for the film will be provided by Munson Kwok,

**Saturday April 30, 2017 2:30PM**

***Finding Kukan* by Robin Lung, LA Asian Pacific Film**

**Festival Where: Tateuchi Democracy Forum at JANM**

111 N. Central Avenue, Los Angeles, CA 90012

CHSSC is a community partner for a the screening of *Finding Kukan*, presented by Visual Communications. Filmmaker Robin Lung uncovers the forgotten story of Li Ling-Ai, the un-credited female producer of KUKAN, an Academy Award-winning documentary about World War II China that has been lost for decades. For more information about this festival please visit: [www.festival.vconline.org/2017](http://www.festival.vconline.org/2017)