

NEWS'N NOTES



Chinese Historical Society of Southern California

411 Bernard Street, Los Angeles, CA 90012
Phone: 323-222-0856 Email: chssc@hotmail.com
Website: www.chssc.org

Meet: The Los Angeles Drum & Bugle Corps

Our November program will feature a panel of former members of the Los Angeles Chinatown Drum & Bugle Corps. The Corps, also called the Imperial Dragons, was a community organization that ran from 1954-1977. Youth participated at local and national levels, representing the Asian American community in the city. The group became more than just a place to learn marching and musical skills, but also to socialize and make lifelong friendships.

A group of panelists will be present at the monthly meeting to discuss with the audience the legacy of the LA Chinatown Drum & Bugle Corps, answer questions, and share stories.

**Wednesday, November 7, 2018
6:30pm-9:00pm
Castelar Elementary School
840 Yale Street, Los Angeles, CA
90012**

**Free parking (via College Street)
This event is open to the public.**

Linda Ching-Ikiri was a member of the LA Chinatown Drum & Bugle Corps for over 8 years as a colorguard in the rifle line. She grew up in North Hollywood, attended UCLA, and later worked as a non-technical staff member in an aerospace company. The teamwork and discipline she learned at the Corps. has served her well throughout her 30+ year career.

Lynne Choy Uyeda was part of the Parent's Auxiliary at the Corps,



the parents who supported their children in behind-the-scenes roles. Her sons, Clifford (soprano bugle) and Curtis (drumline) were Corps members from 1971-1973. She grew up in the mid-Wilshire area, but now lives in Seal Beach and remains active in the Chinatown community and is a member of CHSSC.

Greg Fong participated in the Corps as a drum major from 1963-1965, and became an instructor in the early 1970's. He was raised in the Crenshaw district and attended CSLA and the USC School of Pharmacy. Today, he lives and works in the South Bay area as a Certified Financial Planner and is a member of CHSSC.

Frank Wong initially began his time at the LA Chinatown Drum & Bugle Corps as a first soprano bugle, but later became an instructor, committing 1954-1978 to the club. He grew up in Chinatown.



Photos courtesy of Cliff Uyeda (top picture) and Los Angeles Chinatown Drum & Bugle Corps. (bottom). Both the subjects and dates are unknown in the images; if you have any information this content, contact: info@lacimperialdragons.org. To see more pictures and videos visit the Los Angeles Chinatown Drum & Bugle Corps' website: www.laimperialdragons.com.



Chinese Historical Society of Southern California

Celebrating the LA Drum & Bugle Corps. exhibit

As a special event for the opening of the LA Drum & Bugle Corps. exhibit, a potluck was held at the Chinese Historical Society. On October 29th, guests and former members were given the opportunity to view the display of memorabilia and learn about the development of the group and their significance in the Los Angeles Chinatown community. Besides taking the time to acknowledge the organization, visitors also enjoyed a barbecue and the assortment of food that was brought to share. The exhibit is currently open on Sundays from 1:00-4:00pm at CHSSC's 415 Bernard St. house.



From top: Eugene Moy cooks at the grill; Linda Ching-Ikiri and Susan Dickson; Cindy Fong cuts the first slice of cake donated by Phoenix Bakery.

Hanzi film screening

In conjunction with WAPOW Magazine, the Chinese Historical Society will be hosting a showing of the documentary *Hanzi*. This documentary explores the relationship between tradition, modernization, and communication in the development of Chinese language fonts. For more information, check out the Community Calendar on the back page, or visit www.wapow.la.

Cindy Fong joins CHSSC board

Cindy Fong taught in Los Angeles Chinatown's historic Castelar Elementary for 34 years. Raised in Oakland, California's Chinatown, she proudly acknowledges her heritage from immigrant Chungshan parents. She became involved with CHSSC as its second secretary at the behest of the late great Ella Quan. She hopes to contribute more directly to the health and mission of the Society.

Correction: in our previous newsletter, Kathy Ceppi's name was mistakenly listed as Pat Ceppi.

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

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Wendy Chung

Cindy Fong

Lauren Hom

Winifred Lew

Franklin Mah

Felicia Tabing

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.

To the CHSSC Family and Friends,

Our Victorian Homes at 411 (built 1886) and 415 (1892) Bernard Street need some tender loving care! We are proud to announce that a generous anonymous donor has offered CHSSC a \$50,000 challenge match for our capital campaign. We are reaching out to our members to secure the \$50,000 required to match this challenge and to realize our **\$100,000** goal.

Necessary improvements:

Central air for our valuable books, archives and guests

Electrical panels and wiring for 21st century codes and new digital support

Repair rotten windows/ capture insulation benefits

Update restrooms with new plumbing and handicap access

Replace exterior paint to correspond with original exterior themes, and enhance historical significance of the Heritage Center



We moved into our present home in December 1994 and many improvements have been made in the past 24 years with the generous help of volunteers. But now we need some work by professional contractors.

Please help us with our endeavors by pledging your support or sending your donation to:

Chinese Historical Society of Southern California
411 Bernard Street
Los Angeles, CA 90012

Thank you!



LA Chinatown celebrates its 80th year

LA Chinatown Corp. turned 80 this year and hosted a party to commemorate the event. By Cindy Fong

Over 300 celebrants gathered on September 28, 2018 to commemorate the 80th anniversary of the founding of the Los Angeles Chinatown Corporation. Faced with eviction because of the construction of Union Station, community leaders established the LACC to fund and build a New Chinatown. It became the only Chinatown in the United States to be founded, owned, and operated by Chinese American. Held outdoors at Central Plaza, the celebration was a fitting tribute to the driving spirit of our Chinatown pioneers. Beginning with roast suckling pig, Peking duck, and assorted dim sum, the festive evening continued with a 9-course Cantonese banquet and ended with a delectable Wonder Bakery cake. Lion dancers, singers, hip-hop dancers, and speeches added to the evening. CHSSC was represented by a full table of members.



Archives Spotlight by Linda Bentz

The processing of the Duty and Honor Collection continues at CHSSC. Our archivist, Albert Lowe, is sorting and organizing the collection. He is preparing a finding aid, which will be uploaded onto the Online Archives of California. We welcome two interns, David Castro and Cassidy Rowe, who have joined the project. They are transcribing the Duty & Honor interviews to share with the public. While working with the audio, David conducted additional research about interviewee Yolk Lew's war experiences. In 1944, Lew flew 42 missions for the U.S. Army AirCorps. His most memorable experience was dropping supplies in a town near Marseilles, France, for the 442nd Regimental Combat Team's rescue operation during the "Battle of the Bulge." Lew was an Aerial Gunner for a B24 Liberator Bomber nicknamed "Little Mac," commemorating the birth of pilot William McCoy's baby boy. Note that Y.T. Lew's name is painted on the plane.



Clockwise from top: the CHSSC table wishes LACC a happy birthday; A lion from the Immortals; Visitors observe the table put together by Will Gow for Chinatown Remembered.

Chinatown Remembered table shares WWII-era memories from locals

In September, the CHSSC commemorated the 10th anniversary of Chinatown Remembered. This undertaking was a community history project that paired high school and college-aged interns with community elders to document the history of the Chinese Americans in Los Angeles during the 1930s and 1940s. Interns conducted oral interviews with community members. Using these interviews and personal photos from participating families, short documentary videos were put together. The project was sponsored, in part, by the California Council for the Humanities.

Will Gow the Project Director, prepared an exhibit displaying a selection of the photographs collected. The exhibit was presented in Chinatown Plaza during the LA Chinatown Corp's 80th anniversary celebration and the Moon Festival on the following day.



Photo of Yolk's B24; inset: artist rendition of the nose art. Lew is listed third from the top.



Annual Yosemite trip proceeds despite summertime delays

In addition to the honor from the California State Assembly, the CHSSC continued on the Sing Peak pilgrimage to visit multiple sites at Yosemite National Park.

The presentation of the Assembly Resolution was postponed from the originally scheduled July Pilgrimage date due to forest fires that forced closure of Yosemite National Park. This spontaneous October trip was organized quickly to fit into Assemblymember Frank Bigelow's schedule. Our members, along with friends from the Bay Area, all squeezed into a big cabin for shared meals and to take a couple of short hikes and enjoy some of Yosemite's natural wonders. On the way back home, the CHSSC stopped at historic Fresno Chinatown-Japantown, and toured the remnants of Bakersfield's two Chinatowns.

Below, from top: 17 CHSSC members and friends gathered at a cabin in the Yosemite woods the night prior to the presentation of the Assembly Resolution; On the return trip, the CHSSC caravan stopped at F Street in the heart of Fresno's historic Chinatown and Japantown.



Above, from left to right: Susan Sing, Eugene Moy, Cindy Fong, and Susan Dickson at Yosemite National Park.



Last month's recap: Paula Madison presents on diaspora and family

In the beginning of October, for the CHSSC's monthly meeting, Paula Madison came to share her documentary *Finding Samuel Lowe: from Harlem to China* at Castelar Elementary. Despite the predicted rainy weather, a sizeable crowd gathered to watch her special. This piece touched on the Chinese-diaspora, identity politics amongst mixed-race individuals, and her experiences regarding family and race relations in the United States. In the process, she discovered an extended family of 300(!) in China.

Her story is familiar to many Chinese Americans who are a generation or two removed from their immigrant predecessors. As with the previous month's presentation, there was a drive in Madison's work to find a connection with her heritage and understand what it meant in the larger understanding of herself.





Notes on Chinese American History

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

Last month, Los Angeles Chinatown hosted its annual Moon Festival celebration. Featuring musical performances, appearances by the Miss Chinatown contestants, and a showing of the Bruce Lee statue, the evening celebration attracted throngs of visitors to Chinatown. This celebration differed significantly from the way the mid-autumn festival would have been traditionally celebrated in China. Rather, the 2018 Moon Festival combined performances, allusions to Hollywood, and aspects of a traditional mid-autumn festival in an event meant to attract tourists and community members to support local businesses in Chinatown. While it would be easy to assume that this type of performative, tourism-driven Moon Festival was a new phenomena, these type of events have a long history in California. In Los Angeles, the first Moon Festival directed at drawing in tourists was actually hosted eighty years ago in Old Chinatown.

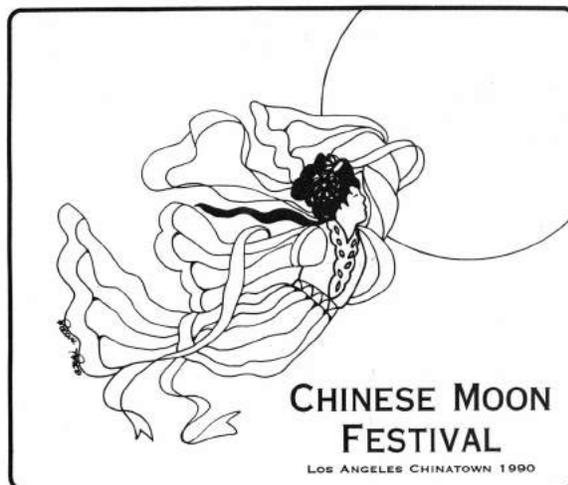
In the summer of 1938, the Pacific War was already underway as Japanese forces expanded their colonial reach into Asia. In June of that year, Chinese American communities across the United States took part in so-called “Bowl of Rice” festivals as a means of raising war relief funds for war victims in China. In Los Angeles, the community hosted China Nite earlier in the summer as their first large scale fundraising festival. China Nite was so successful that the community decided to host a second fundraiser later that year in October, and they decided to promote the event as a Moon Festival. Even though both New Chinatown, and China City had already opened by October of 1938, the Moon Festival of 1938 was held in the last remaining sections of Old Chinatown. In this way the event not only helped raise funds for China war relief, but it also served to remind tourists and other would-be visitors that a section of Old Chinatown remained open for business.

The Moon Festival of 1938 featured appearances by Anna May Wong, along with the other Chinese American actors of the day including Soo Yung and Keye Luke, both of whom had recently appeared in 1937 Hollywood remake of Pearl S. Buck’s *The Good Earth*. Among the Chinese American performances that tourists witnessed at the festival were more than a hundred Chinese American

women carrying lanterns and an appearance by the Moon Festival queen. Perhaps, most memorably, the event featured the first full performance of the Los Angeles Mei Wah Girls Drum Corps. The all-female Mei Wah Drum Corp was composed of local high school and college-age youth including Barbara Jean Wong, a local Chinese American radio and film performer, who was the group’s majorette.

At the 2018 Moon Festival this year, I could not help but think of the similarities between this event and the one held in Old Chinatown eighty years ago. While I am sure that some people may want to consider the Moon Festival celebration in Los Angeles as a corruption of the traditional mid-autumn festival, those who would dismiss the festival in this way misunderstand the ever-changing nature of culture. Indeed, I would argue that a better way to understand the Los Angeles Moon Festival is as a Chinese American synthesis of American performance, Hollywood film, and Chinese American culture. Today, the Moon Festival has truly become a Los Angeles tradition.

William Gow holds a PhD in Ethnic Studies from UC Berkeley. He is currently writing a book on Los Angeles Chinatown and its relationship to Hollywood cinema in the 1930s and 1940s. William welcomes comments and questions on his column; he can be reached at wgow@outlook.com.



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An image from the 1990 Chinese Moon Festival program.



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Please help us save paper and postage,
Email us to indicate your preference for an online newsletter at info@chssc.org

Community Calendar

October 26-November 18, Fri-Sat at 7:30pm, Sun at 3:00pm Letters From Home

Presented by Independent Shakespeare Co.

Written and performed by ISC Ensemble Member Kanean Ung and developed in the ISC Studio, *Letters From Home* is the extraordinary story of Kanean's discovery of her family history and, ultimately, herself. Her father arrived in America in the 1960s, but soon found himself on a harrowing quest to rescue family members from the genocide perpetrated by the Khmer Rouge. Forty years later, Kanean discovered a locked drawer full of letters to her father from family members, each one imploring him for help. Visit iscla.org or call (818)710-6306 for more details.

ISC Studio
3191 Casitas Avenue, #130
Los Angeles, CA 90039

Sunday, November 4th, 2:00pm Calligraphy Demonstration by Tang Qingnian

The art of ink and brush calligraphy has long been prized in China as a form of creative expression and an embodiment of scholarly culture. Contemporary artist Tang Qingnian will demonstrate his calligraphy, which enlivens past traditions with a modern aesthetic sensibility. Originally from Beijing, Tang was at the forefront of China's "New Wave" art movement in the 1980s before relocating to the United States. A discussion with the artist will follow the demonstrations. Free; no reservations required.

The Huntington, Rose Hills Garden Court and Rothenberg Hall
1151 Oxford Road
San Marino, CA 91108

November 24, 5:00pm-8:00pm Backyard Movie—*Hanzi* screening

Hanzi is a feature-length documentary exploring international design, visual culture, and identity through the lens of modern Chinese typography. Exploring universal subjects such as "how does language shape identity? What role does handwriting play in the digital age?", *Hanzi* encourages audiences around the world to revisit and rethink their own culture, language, and identity. Light refreshments will be provided. Suggested donation (\$10 general/\$6 students, seniors). Please visit www.wapow.la for more information and to RSVP.

CHSSC backyard
411 Bernard St.
Los Angeles, CA 90012
*venue subject to change depending on weather conditions.

May 8-11, 2019 2019 Golden Spike Conference

This annual event is hosted by the Chinese Railroad Workers Descendants Association. The Golden Spike Conference is designed to educate, motivate, inspire, and celebrate all that is Chinese America. Centered around the contributions in building the Transcontinental Railroad, we will explore little known facts about our shared history in America. There will be events and workshops throughout the week to share the history of early Chinese-American laborers. Please contact Margaret Yee at mhkyee@aol.com for more information or visit www.goldenspike150.org.

Marriott City Creek Hotel
75 South West Temple
Salt Lake City, UT 84101