



APRIL 2019



Monthly Meeting: Film Screening, *The Canton Army of the High Sierras*

This year, America will be celebrating the 150th anniversary of one of the completion of the 19th century's greatest construction marvels, the First Transcontinental Railroad. This month, we will present a work by Loni Ding that chronicles the role played by Chinese workers on the Central Pacific Railroad, which built the western portion of the First Transcontinental. The late Loni Ding was an independent filmmaker, television producer, and university instructor for more than 30 years. She founded the Center for Educational Telecommunications in 1983, which produced *Canton Army*, and which specialized in Asian American history.

In addition, board member Eugene Moy will follow with a short slide presentation further illustrating the role of Chinese railroad workers in building the American West. He'll share the findings of late board member and railroad worker descendant William F. Chew in his research for his book, *The Nameless Builders of the Transcontinental Railroad* (2004), and the research of the Stanford Chinese Railroad Workers Project, which includes several new publications.

Wednesday, April 3, 2019

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

Chinese American Citizens Alliance 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.

Upcoming Events:

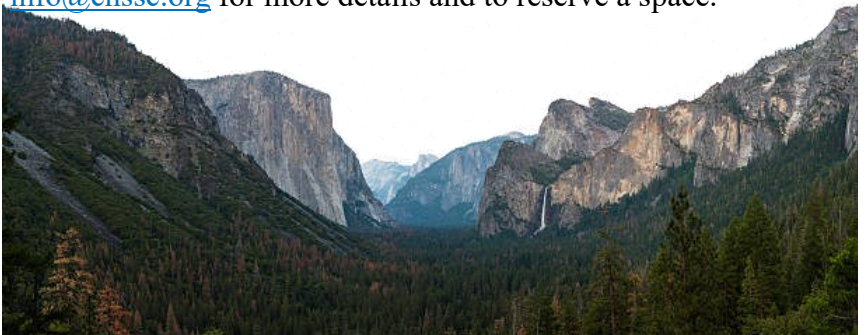
Ching Ming

The CHSSC will observe the Ching Ming Festival, or Tomb-Sweeping Day, on Saturday, March 30th. Traditional practices will be carried out: sweeping and placing flowers at grave sites, and lighting incense at the shrines to honor Los Angeles pioneers.

Afterwards, we will be going on a walking tour of three prominent grave sites in historic Evergreen Cemetery before getting food at a local restaurant. *Details listed in Community Calendar on page 8.*

Yosemite/Sing-Peak Pilgrimage

The CHSSC is preparing for the annual Yosemite Trip (July 12-14) and Sing-Peak Pilgrimage (July 15-17). Please e-mail info@chssc.org for more details and to reserve a space.





President's Letter

Within a month of last year's Golden Spike Gala, preparations for our 2019 dinner began. Even before the theme was identified, the Silent Auction/ Raffle committee began planning. You don't want to miss their yearlong efforts. Generous donors have made it possible for this year's Silent Auction to include items such as antique framed Chinese embroidery and Lakers' tickets. A wide variety of raffle items will tempt you: many gift cards (including a \$200 Costco gift card), Lisa See's audio books with tea sampler, a Video Ring doorbell with a one year cloud service, and a pair of Disneyland Park Hopper tickets.

The focus of our dinner is our honorees: Russell Leong, Frank Shyong, Oliver Wang, Elaine Woo, and Helen Zia. Their lifetime of work through their writing and editing has given voice to the community—making their stories available to a wider audience.

CHSSC Golden Spike dinners provide a yearly opportunity to greet old friends and make new ones. Camaraderie is shared by all.

Have you bought your ticket to our Golden Spike Dinner yet?

Sincerely,
Susan Dickson
CHSSC President

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

OFFICERS

Susan Dickson, President

Donald Loo, Vice President

Linda Bentz, Secretary

Teresa Chung, Treasurer

Gordon Hom, VP for Programs

Eugene W. Moy, Membership Secretary

MEMBERS AT LARGE

John Chan

Wendy Chung

Cindy Fong

Laureen Hom

Henry Leong

Winifred Lew

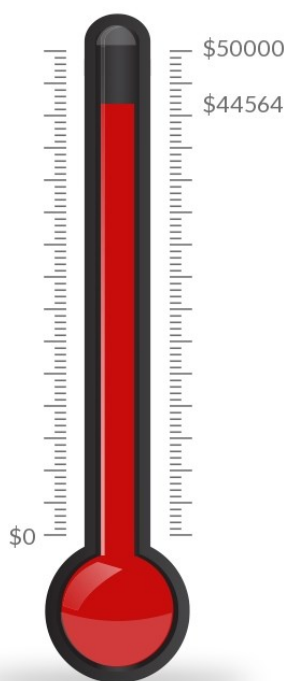
Franklin Mah

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.



Special thanks to...

Audrey Fong, *IMO Dr. Wing Mar* •
Susan J. Go • Munson & Suellen Kwok •
Winifred Lew • Edward Lyman Huang &
Shukun Wang • Eugene Moy • Mei Ong •
Victor & Frances Seeto, *IMO Dr. Wing
Mar* • Susan Sing • Lou Quan • Cy
Wong • Cindy Yee • Bill & Marjorie
Chun-Hoon, *major donors* • Rose &
Gordon Hom, *major donors* • Shirley Hui
Charitable Fund, *major donor*

**CHSSC's Capital Campaign continues,
please help us meet our \$50,000 goal.
Visit chssc.org to donate.**



GOLDEN SPIKE AWARDS DINNER GIVING VOICE TO THE COMMUNITY

04.27.19

Recognizing:
Russell C. Leong
Frank Shyong
Oliver Wang
Elaine Woo
Helen Zia

@ Ocean Star Restaurant

145 North Atlantic Boulevard, # 201-203, Monterey Park, CA 91754

I wish to (be a): ☐ Silver Table Sponsor, \$1,250 ☐ Gold Table Sponsor, \$5,000 ☐ Diamond Table Sponsor, \$10,000

Sponsor Name: _____

Please list guest names: _____

OR

Please reserve ☐ tickets @ \$100 per person (members), ☐ tickets @ \$125 per person (non-members). Please attach any seating requests.

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

☐ I want to place an ad in your event program: Please email me at: _____

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

Name _____ Title _____

Company _____

Address _____ City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Phone _____ E-mail _____

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 or phoned in during regular business hours Mon-Fri,
10:30AM-2:30PM at (323)222-0856



From left to right: Eileen King, Angela Salais, Joslynn Cruz, Shelly Barroa, and Linda Bentz at last month's Los Angeles Public Library's Reel to Reel event.

New Faces Around CHSSC

Three students from CSU Northridge have been helping Linda Bentz in the archives and on outreach projects.

Angela Salais grew up in Southern California's San Fernando Valley. She is an undergraduate at California State University, Northridge pursuing a double major, B.A. in Asian American Studies and Multimedia Production. Angela has always enjoyed photography and videography, which is why she chose to major in Multimedia Production. Through this major she found a great interest in web design and application development and plans to work in that area after graduation. Being an Asian American Studies major she has expanded her knowledge of the history and experiences of Asian and Asian Pacific American communities in the United States. In the fall semester of her second year, she had the opportunity to collaborate with two classmates on a short-term research project that focused on the socioeconomic status and experiences of Asian American and Pacific Islanders in higher education. At the end of the semester, the research project was presented to professors and other students in the Asian American Studies Department, which was a stressful but a worthwhile experience. Angela is looking forward to expanding her knowledge, and helping as an intern at the Chinese Historical Society of Southern California.

Shelly Barroa is an undergraduate student in her fourth year at California State University, Northridge. Graduating in the fall of 2019, she is majoring in Asian American Studies and is minoring in Psychology. She grew up in Ewa Beach, Hawaii and Oxnard, California. She works with the Chinese Historical Society of Southern California and has developed an appreciation for the effort that goes into preserving and disseminating historical knowledge. After graduating from California State University, Northridge, she hopes to work with people in maintaining mental health and wellness.

Joslynn Cruz was born and raised in the San Fernando Valley and is currently a senior at California State University Northridge, double majoring in Asian American Studies and Linguistics. She takes great interest in the experiences of Asian American people and their culture, studying different languages and after she graduates, she aims to teach English abroad in countries such as Japan and South Korea. Currently serving as an intern at the Chinese Historical Society has allowed her to gain a firsthand insight on the lives and experiences of Chinese-Americans and the history of Chinatown.



APRIL 2019

March Meeting Recap

Ken Fong gave an overview of his podcast “Asian America: The Ken Fong Podcast” by describing his process in preparing for an interview, giving a live demonstration of an interview, and highlights of past interviewees. He saw a hole in podcasts covering Asian-American experience, so created his podcast with his producer Christopher Wong.

Ken gave a demonstration of how he would conduct an interview with Winston Wu as his demonstration guest. First, Ken asks his guests to tell their story growing up, and Winston proceeded to give details about his birth in China and his journey to the United States. When the topic of college at UCLA came up, Ken intervened to ask about being a soccer star, playing for the school team, and his experience as a Chinese American on the team and at UCLA. Ken steered Winston to discuss his work with the C.A.C.A. and working with youth with essay and art contests and serving as a mentor to them. At the last part of the demonstration, Ken asked about what Winston thought was the difference between the young people he works with and the contrast with previous generations. Through this demonstration of interviewing Winston as a guest, Ken showed how he would change the direction of the interview by asking about the guest’s past, questions to prompt the guest to go into more detail, or bringing up facts about the guest that Ken found from research on the guest or prior interactions. It was fascinating to see how he framed his guest during the interview to bring out their



Ken Fong speaks with Winston Wu about Wu’s life and experiences. Listen to his other interviews on his podcast Asian America (www.asianamericapodcast.com). Photo courtesy of O.C. Lee.

personal story.

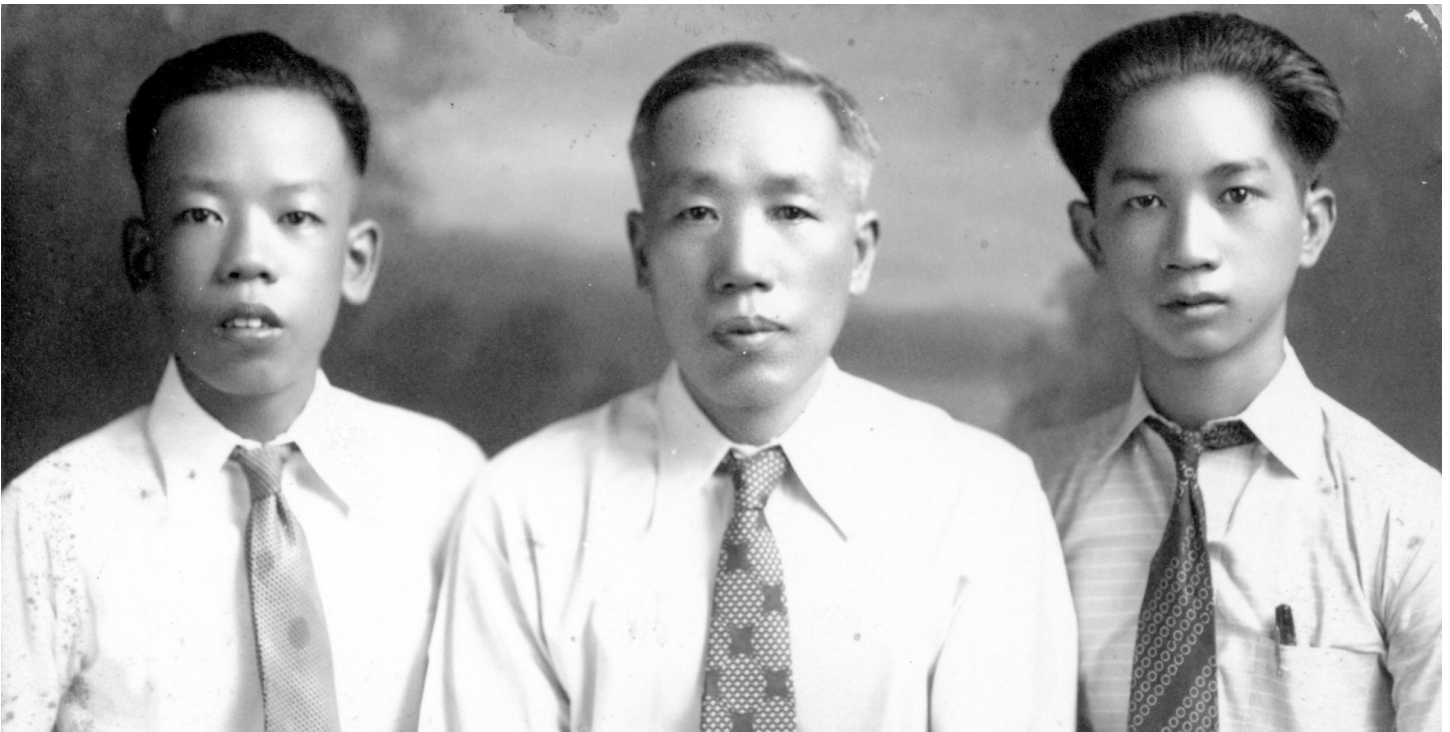
For the last part of Ken’s talk, he gave a nice summary of highlights from select interviews. He had some famous guests for his podcasts, such as Nancy Kwan and George Takei. Ken described how he attracts some guests to come on his show if they have something to promote, which is how he got George Takei to come onto his podcast to promote his role in the Broadway musical *Allegiance*. Demonstrating the diversity of his guests, he described his interactions with Melissa Chen, one of the leading atheists in the world, and how Ken was not the close-minded, religious person she thought he would be. As Ken described it, the Asian American podcast was a passion project, and because of this, he decided to retire as a pastor early at the age of 62 to continue this project.

Get Involved in the Community

CHSSC members can vote in a community election to select the 17-member board for the new Historic Cultural North Neighborhood Council (HCNNC). As CHSSC’s offices and its program meetings are located within the HCNNC boundaries, its members and participants are considered stakeholders and thus eligible to vote. Please visit the HCNNC web site for the list of candidates and more details: <https://www.hcnnc.info/>.

In 1999, the voters of L.A. authorized a new city charter which created a new system of neighborhood councils that would increase public participation and thus better advise the City Council in its decisions on public services and local development. L.A. Chinatown has been a part of the Historic Cultural Neighborhood Council, which encompassed a much larger area, but last year the Historic Cultural *North* Neighborhood Council was created, and now a new board will be selected by the stakeholders of the district. The new district includes Chinatown, Victor Heights, Solano Canyon, and El Pueblo.

Please take part, vote in person: April 4, 2019, 2:00-8:00PM, Alpine Recreation Center (817 Yale St.)



Franklin Mah's father (on the right) was the Paper Son of his uncle, sitting center. On the left, is Franklin's father's cousin, Jack Mah. Photo taken most likely in the late 1930s.

Jin Ging Mah

Franklin Mah writes about his father's immigration to the United States and the Paper Son status he had to adopt to stay. This would impact the family decades later.

The 1906 San Francisco earthquake and the resulting fires destroyed birth records and created a loophole allowing some Chinese to claim US citizenship by birth on American soil. "Paper sons" immigrated to America when they would have otherwise been unable to do so because of the Chinese Exclusion Act.

For the Chinese of my parents' generation, "paper sons" were an open secret. In our Toisan dialect, the term is actually "false paper son," pronounced "*ga ji doy*" [假紙仔]. My mother once said that at least 90% of the Chinese who went to America came over this way. She couldn't even think of anyone she knew who didn't.

For their children, it was not something most of them knew anything about at all. Either the illegality or the shame, it was not something that was really mentioned. But there were clues if someone knew what to look for. There would be relatives who did not share the same English surname. Or children were told to avoid dating people with certain Chinese surnames.

I think if my father, Jin Ging Mah, could have briefly told his story, it would go something like this:

I was born in China in 1923 after my father returned to China from the US where he was a citizen. When my mother passed away, I went to the US. I was 13 years old at the time. I lived in Westmoreland, going to school during the day and working at a grocery store in the morning and evening.

After high school, I moved to San Francisco where I worked as a cabin boy on Merchant Marine ships during World War II. When the war ended, I went to China where I met, then married, my wife in 1947. I stayed in China for almost two years before returning to San Francisco in 1949. I worked in Chinatown delivering Chinese food to earn the money needed to bring my family from China to the US. They were finally able to come to the US in January 1954.

The story is mostly true...except his father was not a US citizen, and his mother was still alive. It may have been somebody else's story, but it wasn't his own.



APRIL 2019



A photo of Jin Ging Mah as a teenager taken sometime in the mid-1930s after arriving in the United States.

The true story started to come out in the late 1960s. My father's mother had been living alone in Hong Kong since leaving China in the early 1950s. He would write her letters and send money, but he had not seen her for almost 20 years. My father wanted his mother to come live with us in the US. But this was not really possible. According to his paperwork when he arrived in the US, his mother had passed away in China during the 1930s.

But during the 1950s and 1960s, there was a Chinese Confession Program. I don't know if my father had applied as part of this particular program but the dates would fit. I heard that most people did not trust the US Government and did not participate. Some of my parent's friends had changed their names back to their correct Chinese family names about the same time in the late 1960s.

In any case, my father confessed to coming to the US making false representation. For that he lost his US citizenship. And because my sister and brother were also US citizens because of his "citizenship," they lost their status as well. I remember the night that he told the family about it. It was very quiet. I was confused and did not understand what was going on—I am sure that my younger sister and brother were clueless as well. But my father assured us that it would not be a problem for my younger siblings and I as we were born in the US. And he was right...it never was a problem because we were born here, but it was a different situation for our older brother and sister.

Later, my father was able to bring his mother to the US to live with us. My father became a citizen again in 1979 by naturalization. My older sister and brother eventually did become naturalized citizens as well. My mother did not lose anything because of the confession. She did become a naturalized citizen in 1986.

Years later, when I understood what that generation of Chinese had to do to come to the US, I asked him why his father had gone to Canada rather than the United States.

He explained that his father did try to enter the US through El Paso, Texas. But he was caught and deported back to China. Then, he decided to go to Canada instead of the US. My father's uncle also entered the US and was captured. However, he was calm enough to claim that he was born in California but that his birth records were destroyed in San Francisco during the earthquake. Since this could not be disproven, that was how he became a US citizen.

His uncle brought over both of his sons to the US as citizens. He also brought my father over as his own son. Yes, it was this uncle's wife who had died in China during the 1930s. But according to his story, she was his mother. My father said that his uncle did not charge anything for bringing him to the US, but nonetheless, my grandfather paid his brother \$1,000 for doing so. My uncle could have made much more money if he had brought someone else over instead of his nephew.

It was only after hearing this that all the pieces of the puzzle over many years started to fit together and make sense. It was my cousins' grandfather who lived next door to us for many years that was responsible for bringing my father to the US. If not for him, we probably would not have been able to live in the US. He was already very old and not very mobile when I was young. But by the time I learned what he had done for my family, he had already been gone a very long time.

Call for submissions!

December 2018 marked the 75th anniversary of the Magnuson Act which repealed aspects of the Chinese Exclusion Act and allowed limited numbers of Chinese people to immigrate to the United States. To commemorate this event, the CHSSC welcomes you to share how the exclusionary laws directly or indirectly impacted your family's story.

If interested, please send a written piece (50-250 words) to info@chssc.org accompanied by a photo(s).



Chinese Historical Society of Southern California

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

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

Community Calendar

Saturday, March 30, 2019—10:00AM-12:00PM **Annual CHSSC Ching Ming Ceremony**

We will sweep grave sites to honor Los Angeles pioneers. Activities include cleaning and placing flowers at the graves, lighting incense at the shrines, and going on a walking tour of three prominent grave sites in Evergreen Cemetery. Join us for lunch afterward at a local restaurant.

Historic 1888 Chinese Shrine, Evergreen Cemetery
204 N. Evergreen Ave, Los Angeles, CA 90033

Sunday, April 7, 2019—2:00PM

Helen Zia book talk and signing—*Last Boat Out of Shanghai* Opening Remarks: Congresswoman Judy Chu (U.S. CA-27)

Helen Zia's new book *Last Boat Out of Shanghai* tells the dramatic real life stories of four young people caught up in the mass exodus of Shanghai in the wake of China's 1949 Communist revolution—a heartrending precursor to the struggles faced by emigrants today. Register at: <https://goo.gl/forms/oPG8dbbKm5e7MKas1>

Monterey Park Bruggemeyer Library
318 S Ramona Ave, Monterey Park, CA 91754

Wednesday, April 17, 2019—7:30PM-8:30PM

Off the Beaten Tracks: Little-Known Facts and Well-Known Fiction About Chinese Railroad Workers

Sue Fawn Chung, professor emerita at the University of Nevada, Las Vegas, presents some facts and fictions about late 19th-century Chinese railroad workers. Chung also introduces a newly published work on the subject: *The Chinese and the Iron Road*. A book signing follows the program. Free admission.

Rothenberg Hall, The Huntington Library
1151 Oxford Rd, San Marino, CA 91108

Tuesday, April 23, 2019—7:30PM-8:30PM **The Making of a Chinese Medicine Text**

Sean Bradley, Ph.D. candidate at the University of Washington, explores the history and development of an early text on emergency Chinese medicine, *Emergency Medicines to Keep on Hand* by the 4th-century alchemist and scholar, Ge Hong. Over the next 1,200 years, the formulas of Ge Hong were lost, found, edited, discussed, and ultimately compiled in the 16th-century work that survives today. This program is part of the East Asian Garden Lecture series. Free admission.

Rothenberg Hall, The Huntington Library

Saturday, April 27, 2019—6:00PM-9:00PM

2019 CHSSC Golden Spike Awards: Giving Voice to the Community

This year, the CHSSC will be recognizing outstanding journalists and writers who represent the Asian-Americans in print media:

Russell Leong—Editor: *Amerasia Journal*; professor; award-winning author

Frank Shyong—Journalist, *Los Angeles Times*

Oliver Wang—Writer, National Public Radio; professor at California State University, Long Beach

Elaine Woo—Former *Los Angeles Times* journalist and editor

Helen Zia—Author: *Asian American Dreams: The Emergence of an American People*; editor: *Ms. Magazine*; activist

Please reserve tickets: \$100 Members, \$125 Non-members

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