

NEWS'N NOTES



**Chinese Historical Society
of Southern California**

411 Bernard Street, Los Angeles, CA 90012
Phone: 323-352-8824 Email: info@chssc.org
Website: <https://chssc.org>

JANUARY 2024

Wednesday, January 3, 2024, 7 PM

Join us for a special book talk by Dr. Russell Low. His latest book describes the challenges of putting down roots and pursuing dreams in the world of Chinese Exclusion. It celebrates the immigrant American spirit shared by all of us today but is also set against the Anti-Chinese laws and attitudes that Chinese faced from 1882-1943.

That some Chinese stayed and persisted in their dream to become American is a tribute to their tenacity and belief in the future.

This story celebrates diversity, inclusion, and the immigrant American spirit that shaped and enriched the fabric of our nation.



Chinese Historical Society
of Southern California

南加州華人歷史學會

Three Coins II - A Continuing Saga
of the American West

**A Willow Tree
Becomes A Forest**

The Story of Hop Lee



Russell N. Low

**Free to attend. RSVP via Eventbrite on
CHSSC website: <https://chssc.org>**



Chinese Historical Society of Southern California

JANUARY 2024

President's message

I would like to take this opportunity to wish you a Happy New Year! I am grateful for all the things we have accomplished in 2023 and look forward to a bountiful year ahead.

We ended 2023 with our Holiday Open House. This well-attended event was held at our Chinatown Heritage Center. I believe everyone who attended had a great time. We were able to see old friends and meet new ones as well. There was good food, entertainment, and a nice holiday spirit. I would like to thank all the volunteers who helped make this such a successful event. Although there are too many to name, I would like to acknowledge my wife Grace who took on the responsibility of planning and organizing the Open House. There are some pictures on page 7 of this newsletter and more pictures will be posted on our website.

My wife and I were fortunate to be invited to lunch the following day by retired attorney Albert C. Lum. He is one of the founders of the Southern California Chinese Lawyers Association and had worked on immigration cases in Chinatown for over 20 years. We admire him because he wrote his memoir to share his life experiences with his family and others and asked CHSSC to edit and publish it. He understands the importance of documenting our Chinese American history and has set an example for others to follow.

We start another year of our monthly programs featuring interesting topics and speakers. For our January program, we are honored to have Dr. Russell Low talk about his latest book, "A Willow Tree Becomes A Forest". Dr. Low is a fantastic speaker and I'm sure you don't want to miss his presentation. Find out more on page 2. Reserve your tickets now!

Our 2024 Gum Saan Journal has now been printed and will be sent out to our 2024 members. If you haven't renewed your membership or want to join, please visit our website to do it online, <https://chssc.org/membership/>, or fill out the form on the bottom of page 5 and mail us your check. This is one of the many benefits of being a member of CHSSC. See Dr. William Gow's article on page 3 for details about our 2024 issue.

If you haven't seen the exhibit about the original Chinatown in Los Angeles at Union Station, I encourage you to do so. Our own Eugene Moy and Linda Bentz spent many hours working with Metro and the Huntington-USC Institute on California and the West. CHSSC provided much of the content you see and can even hear. It is definitely worth your time to visit.

*Happy
New Year*

Ricky Leo

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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

JANUARY 2024

January Program

“A Willow Tree Becomes a Forest”

By Russell Low

Join us in ringing in the New Year as we reflect on the past, celebrating the Chinese immigrant ancestors who paved the way for our American journey. In this continuation of "Three Coins," we delve into the tale of a young Chinese boy who, armed with a blank journal, a fortune teller's scroll predicting his life's path, and an ardent desire to embrace American identity, arrived in Oregon in 1877.

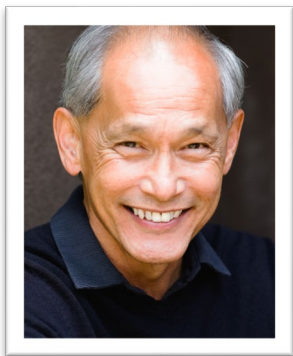
During the 1880s in the Pacific Northwest, Chinese communities faced expulsion from Tacoma, Seattle, Portland, and Oregon City. However, the story in the small town of Salem, Oregon, unfolded remarkably differently. In the midst of a social experiment, figures like Hop Lee and George Sun, alongside a handful of Chinese individuals, crafted a unique narrative.

Like our forebears, these young Chinese immigrants confronted a world marked by exclusion through anti-Chinese laws and attitudes. Responding with resilience, patience, and humor, they navigated these challenges, forming friendships and achieving financial success. To realize his dream of putting down roots and starting a family, Hop Lee must find the rarest of jewels—an American-born Chinese girl to form his own Willow Forest.

While the Chinese eventually departed Salem by the 1930s, the narrative of the Chinese and White communities in the city spanned four decades, characterized by mutual respect and affection. This tale merits exploration, particularly in light of today's prevailing anti-Asian attitudes and rhetoric.

This book and presentation celebrate the immigrant spirit born from the diversity which is at the heart of our nation.

Speaker Bio



Russell Low is a physician with a passion for discovery and storytelling. His discoveries in the medical field have changed the way that his colleagues worldwide practice medicine and image disease. Discovery of his own roots began 30 years ago through the stories of his parents and their siblings. Growing up in Central California, more American than Chinese, his connection to Chinese culture and history was limited and incomplete.

Russell frequently lectures on Chinese-American history, and his family's story has been featured on the History Channel, National Public Radio, the Voice of America, and the Smithsonian Museum of American History.

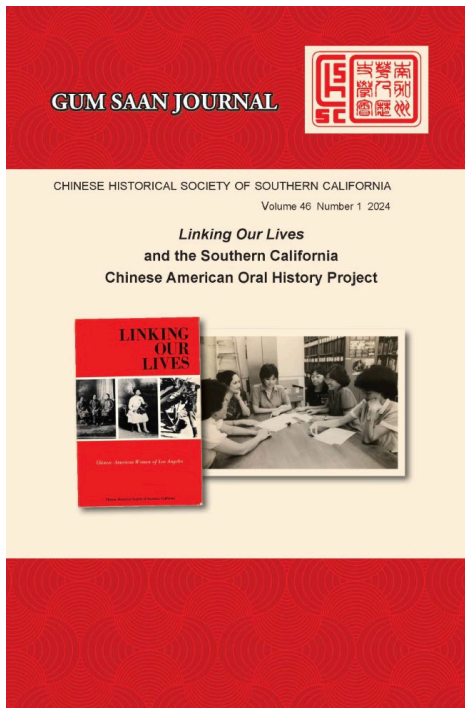


Chinese Historical Society of Southern California

JANUARY 2024

Announcing: Gum Saan Journal 2024

By William Gow



The Society is excited to announce the release of our 2024 issue of Gum Saan Journal which focuses on two of CHSSC's earliest community history projects: the Southern California Chinese American Oral History Project (SCCAOHP) and the book *Linking Our Lives*. On the fortieth anniversary of the publication of *Linking Our Lives*, this issue uses these two projects as an entryway into telling the early history of the Society and the larger movement for community history of which these projects were a part. The issue features first person recollections from more than a dozen people who worked on these two projects. The project demonstrates not only the historiographical importance of these projects but more importantly what these projects meant for the women and men who produced them.

The SCCAOHP represents one of the largest efforts ever to document the stories of Chinese Americans in the period before World War II. Conducted in the late 1970s and early 1980s, this joint project between the CHSSC and the UCLA Asian American Studies Center produced an extensive oral history archive. The project contains 165 interviews, mostly with Chinese American residents of Los Angeles who discuss their memories of the community before World War II. Recorded on cassettes and archived at both UCLA and CHSSC, collectively, these oral histories give us an

unprecedented look into the lives of Chinese Americans in Southern California in the first half of the twentieth century.

Drawing on these oral histories, UCLA professor Lucie Cheng brought together a team of graduate students and community members to write and produce *Linking Our Lives: Chinese American Women of Los Angeles*. The book represented one of the first book-length works on Chinese American women's history as well as one of the first book-length works on the history of Chinese Americans in Los Angeles.

As the guest editor for this issue, I was honored to have the opportunity to interview so many of my colleagues and friends at CHSSC and UCLA whom I have worked with for so long, including Suellen Cheng, Susie Ling, Eugene Moy, Munson Kwok, Marjorie Lee, Russell Leong, and Margie Lew, about their work in the Society's formative years. The project also gave me the opportunity to meet and talk with a group of scholars and Society members whose work I have idolized for decades, including June Mei, Jean Wong, and Sucheta Mazumdar. To round out this history, Susie Ling donated an interview she conducted with Lucie Cheng many years ago. Despite volunteering for the society for two decades, this was the first time that I had heard most of the stories contained in this issue. The Society was generous enough to allow us to increase the length of the journal in order to have enough space to tell this story. As a result, the 2024 issue of the journal is the most comprehensive account of CHSSC's founding years that has ever been published.

I hope that all of you find reading this issue as exciting and informative to read as I did to produce it.



Chinese Historical Society of Southern California

JANUARY 2024

Hidden Treasures

By Andy Tan

During the past 40 years generous donors, Lupe Chee, Gladys Waddingham, Harry Okita, Connie Liu, and Raymond Woo, gave CHSSC about 400 albums of mostly Cantonese operas that had been recorded on shellac 78s. The rarest album in our collection is an aluminum disc that was recorded at Jade Lamp Shop in China City. Its format has been obsolete since 1970 and is too fragile to play with modern equipment.



Last summer I applied to the California State Library's "California Revealed" initiative for digitization assistance. They have accepted 27 phonograph records from the CHSSC archives to be digitized. These records will be accessible online at californiarevealed.org in a few months.

At the end of November, CHSSC participated in Giving Tuesday. Our focus for this year's donation request concerns these hidden treasures. We want to catalogue all of the albums, to correctly store them in acid-free sleeves, to house the albums in correctly-sized boxes, and to digitize more of the albums. CHSSC received a little over \$1500 to work on this project. A special thanks to all the donors who participated in our Giving Tuesday campaign.



☐ New Membership ☐ Renewal

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Mail to: Chinese Historical Society of Southern California
411 Bernard St
Los Angeles, CA 90012

To join or renew your membership by debit card, credit card, or by using your PayPal account, visit our website at chssc.org.

We are a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization, tax ID 95-3155357

Membership Levels

- ☐ Regular \$ 57
- ☐ 100x100 Club \$ 100
- ☐ Supporter \$ 300
- ☐ Senior (60+) or student \$ 32

Donation (tax deductible) \$

TOTAL \$

Please make checks payable to CHSSC

☐ Check here if you would like our newsletter mailed to your home.

☐ Check here if you would like our newsletter sent via email.



Chinese Historical Society of Southern California

JANUARY 2024

Holiday Open House



Thanks Phoenix Bakery for the strawberry cakes!





Chinese Historical Society of Southern California

JANUARY 2024

Donations for November/December

In Memory of Dorothy Tamashiro

Cindy Fong

In Memory of Pauline Lum

Dorothy Schoon

In Honor of Sylvia W. Soo Hoo's 90th Birthday

Sylvia Soo Hoo

In Honor of Margie Lew's 102nd Birthday

Margie Lew

In Memory of Grace Quon

Winston & Joanne Young Family Trust

In Memory of Ray Chan

Daryl & Helen Quon

Donations

Kim Bailey

Cynthia Carter

Kenneth L. Chan

Yvonne Chang

Susan Dickson

Tom Eng

Haunt Ghost Tours

Marjorie Lee

Donations (cont.)

Henry Lem Charitable Giving Fund

Chong Lew

Eugene Moy and Susan Sing

Ryoka Maeda

Lila Quan

Supara Ratanasadudi

Judy Sai

Lynda Schmidt

Elaine & Ron Tom

Jimmy Y. Wong

Joseph Wong

Giving Tuesday Donations

Kelly Chan

Carey Gelernter

Jenny Kuo

Anita Lee

Susie Ling

Laura Ng

Shirley Quan

Helen Quon

Phung Thong

Lenore Tom

Steven Tom

Elaine Woo

Bz Zhang



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Current and Upcoming Events

“Where You Stand: Chinatown 1880 to 1939” Exhibit at Union Station

The exhibit invites participants into the center of the vibrant community of families, businesses, and associations through a multi-dimensional experience of the Chinese community of early Los Angeles.

View historic photographs, listen to oral history recordings, and view augmented reality presentations superimposed onto other locations around Union Station. Click on the link to learn more:

<https://storymaps.arcgis.com/collections/1e5f963472f4400da19fcb0e3ccfdd5e?item=1>

Walking Tour Guides Needed!
Join our walking tour training.
Contact CHSSC: info@chssc.org