

MARCH 2024

Asparagus Opera

A Chinese Family in the San Fernando Valley



Wednesday, March 6, 2024, 7 PM

Author Soo Yin Jue discusses her true story about a Chinese farming family in the San Fernando Valley as they navigate the storms of Chinese Exclusion and the inner landscape of changing identities brewing among its members, a combination that threatens to blow apart the family on two continents.



Soo Yin Jue

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



Chinese Historical Society
of Southern California

南加州華人歷史學會

History of the Asian Studies in Southern California

Wednesday, March 20, 2024, 6 PM

Guest Speakers: Ken Klein & Li Ping Chen

Ken Klein, head librarian emeritus of the USC Asian Library, will present the early history of the Asian Studies in Southern California prior to WWII. It is a little known and overlooked chapter of local Asian American history that has similarities to the development of Asian American studies of the 1970's and 80's.

Li Ping Chen, a postdoctoral scholar at USC, features the life and legacy of Professor Theodore Chen, the first staff member of USC's Asian department of Asian descent.



The China Society of
Southern California

Dinner/Program at Golden Dragon Restaurant

\$40 per person. Purchase tickets on CHSSC website:

<https://chssc.org/event/history-of-asian-studies-program-at-usc/>



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President's message

As we finish celebrating the Lunar New Year, the Year of the Dragon, I wish you a year filled with prosperity, good health, and time with your family and friends.

We had an excellent program last month, learning about the Los Angeles Chinese Drum & Bugle Corps, as past members reminisced about their experiences with this amazing organization. I would like to thank Cliff Uyeda, Eugene Moy, Linda Ching-Ikiri, all the panelists and the attendees who participated. If you missed it, a recording is available on our YouTube channel.

On February 15, my wife Grace and I attended a special celebration at Los Angeles Union Station sponsored by Metro Arts, "Celebrating In Our Ancestors' Footsteps" by the exhibition "Where You Stand: Chinatown 1880 to 1939". CHSSC worked in collaboration Huntington-USC Institute of California and the West (ICW) and Metro on this exhibition. Descendants of the families connected with the exhibition were in attendance. It was a pleasure to meet these families and learn about their connection to the businesses in Old Chinatown. You can view some photos on pages 6 and 7 and more on our website:

<https://chssc.org/celebrating-in-our-ancestors-footsteps/>

On Saturday, February 17, CHSSC proudly marched our banner and American flags in the 125th Golden Dragon Parade in Los Angeles Chinatown. You can read more about the parade in the article on pages 4 and 5. More photos are on our website:

<https://chssc.org/125th-golden-dragon-parade/>

We have two programs this month, one online featuring author SooYin Jue who will be discussing her book "Asparagus Opera – A Chinese Family in the San Fernando Valley" and we are co-sponsoring a dinner/program with the China Society of Southern California which features two speakers, Ken Klein, head librarian emeritus of the USC Asian Library, and Li Ping Chen, a postdoctoral scholar at USC. Both programs should be very interesting. Please plan on attending one or the other or both.

I am looking forward to a trip to New Orleans to attend a Congressional Gold Medal (CGM) ceremony for Chinese American WWII veterans who missed the registration for the medal. I am sad at the same time because of the recent passing of two living veterans my wife and I delivered the CGM to a few years ago, Sing Lai Lou and William D. Chan. It was an honor to know these veterans and the sacrifices they made to ensure our freedom.

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.



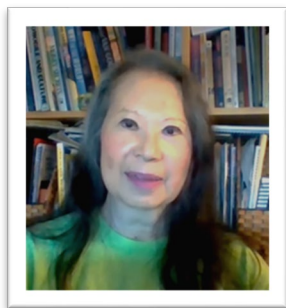
Chinese Historical Society of Southern California

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Asparagus Opera – A Chinese Family in the San Fernando Valley

Asparagus Opera follows a Chinese farming family in the San Fernando Valley navigate the storms of Chinese Exclusion and the inner landscape of changing identities brewing among its members, a combination that threatens to blow apart the family on two continents. The resilience of father and son immigrants in their decades long battle to find a place for the family in American society is witnessed by Soo-Yin Jue whose grandfather arrived from Guangdong, China, in 1874, and whose father emigrated in 1918 at the age of thirteen. It is also a lyrical and moving portrait of the Valley as a hub of fine produce for Los Angeles' export markets, especially during World War II. And it was made possible by the hard-working spirit of Chinese and Japanese farmers.

Speaker Bio:



Soo-Yin Jue is a second-generation Chinese American who grew up on a thriving asparagus ranch located in Van Nuys, California, on which workers came from multi-ethnic backgrounds. Growing up in this rich environment, she developed a keen interest in the history of Chinese in America, the transnational history of her own, and of other immigrant families. Now a retired Human Resources professional, Soo-Yin has been a guest lecturer at museums and at high schools sharing her family's colorful history. This is her first published book.

History of the Asian Studies in Southern California

The founding of China Society in 1935 is an amazing story. Within three months of its inception its inaugural meeting was held with almost two hundred and fifty participants! It was formed by the efforts of three groups—the local Chinese Americans led by Peter Soo Hoo Sr., the Chinese government led by Vice Consul Kang, and an intellectual group led by members of the Asian Studies Department of USC.

This program focuses on the early history of the Asian Studies in Southern California prior to WWII. It is a little known and overlooked chapter of local academic history that has similarities to the development of Asian American studies of the 1970's and 80's. This portion of the program is presented by Ken Klein, head librarian emeritus of the USC Asian Library. Ken has long ties with the local Chinatown community through his in-laws who ran the Hung Far Chun restaurant on Spring Street for many years.

The second part of the program features “The Life and Legacy of Theodore Chen”. Professor Chen was the first staff member of USC's Asian Studies department of Asian descent. He served as head of the department for over forty years. He also was President of China Society and aided the Society for many, many years. He was active on both sides of the Pacific and built the foundation for USC's excellent Asian Studies program. Li Ping Chen, a postdoctoral scholar at USC, is presenting “The Life and Legacy of Theodore Chen”.



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125th Annual Golden Dragon Parade

The 125th Annual Golden Dragon Parade was celebrated in Los Angeles Chinatown on February 17th. Once again CHSSC members marched with flags near the beginning of the parade, with Will Yuen carrying the tall 4'x6' lead flag that was donated by the late Johnny Yee. Bill Yee and his family, including grandkids, came to support us as well as Paul Chace who has previously donated his collection to CHSSC and Ken Chan who has donated many cakes from his Phoenix Bakery. Board member Grace Leo, past board member Helen Quon, past president Susan Dickson and others carried the CHSSC banner or American flags. Kenny Yee and members of his Yee family Association also carried flags alongside us.

For the first time, CHSSC was led by the American Legion's LA Chinatown Post 628 who honorably marched the route to show their presence and pride of service. Commanded by Stuart Chan with flag & banner bearers Vikki Huang, James Allan, Louis Quan and Ryan Wong, Vietnam veterans Bill Fong, Raymond Lou, and Ernest Low were in car driven by volunteer Raymond Lee to carefully bring up the rear. The Lincoln High School ROTC squadron delivered presentation of colors to commemorate the Post's 79th anniversary year. Chinese American Citizens Alliance Los Angeles member Will Tham pounded the parade route as the Post's photographer.

While we marched, others gathered to watch the parade from our porches and sidewalk. Susan Sing and Cindy Fong encouraged parade participants as they passed. Sum-Sum Chan, her family, and friends cheered and shot confetti. When the lion dancers performed in front of our Chinatown Heritage Center, young family members gave red envelopes which were dangling from a pole to the lions. A good time was had by all.



Photos courtesy Ricky Leo except where otherwise credited.



Chinese Historical Society of Southern California

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125th Annual Golden Dragon Parade Photos



Supervisor Hilda Solis & President Ricky Leo



Dean Ng & Shirley Chu Ng



Susan Sing & Board Member Cindy Fong



Kenny Yee with Yee Family Association



Ken Chan & Grace Leo



Winston Young, Assemblymember Hon. Mike Fong, & Joanne Young



Photo courtesy Majorie Lee



Chinese Historical Society of Southern California

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Families Gather at “Where You Stand: Chinatown 1888-1938” Exhibit

Los Angeles Union Station, February 15, 2024



Photos courtesy Ricky Leo except where otherwise credited



Back, L-R: Todd Amundson, Curtis Lee, Joseph A. Lee
Middle Left, L-R: Betty Lee, Sharon Lee, Kristalyn Lee, Tia Amundson, Justin Shirozono holding Maddox, Randall Lee
Middle Right, L-R: Joseph Y. Lee (in wheelchair), Julia Lee
Front (kneeling), L-R: Lauren Lee, Taryn Amundson, Christine Lee



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Families Gather at “Where You Stand: Chinatown 1888-1938” Exhibit (cont.)



Descendant family in front of Sang Yuen & Co exhibit.

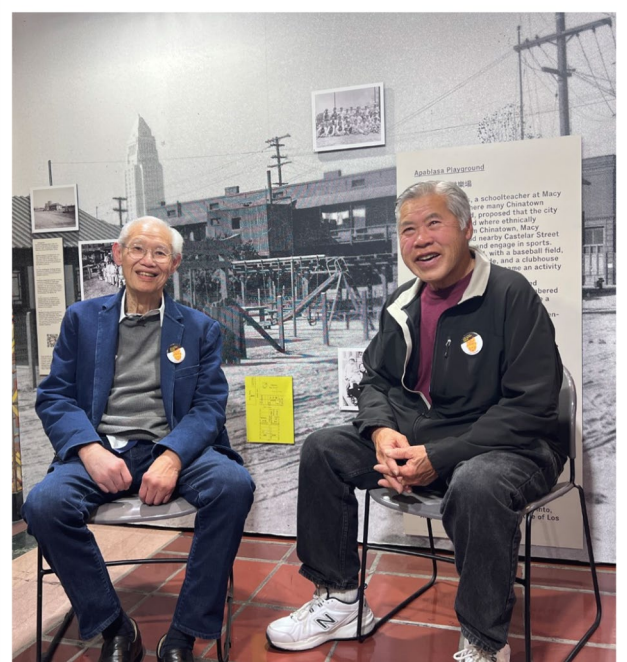
L-R: Mike Krose, Trudy Krose, Kevin Krose, Caitlin Bryant, Pat
Lem, Drew Bryant, Karen Bryant, Tom Bryant

L-R: Grace Leo, Ricky Leo, Ernest Low, Mei Ong, Warren Hong, Curtis Lee,
Linda Soo Hoo Dang, Cindy Yee, Eugene Moy, Patricia Mar



Photo courtesy Mei Ong

Descendants Nowland Hong and Wilbert Lew
in front of Apablaza Playground exhibit.





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/>

Donations for February

In Honor of Jack Shu

Bruce Chin

In Honor of Judy Lee's Retirement

Judy Lee

Donations

Wes Leslie

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>