



Presents

Chinese American Stories from the National Archives: Reasons to Keep Our Regional Treasure Open

With over 40 years experience, Grant Din is a leading expert on Chinese American genealogy research. Grant is with Save Our National Archives (SONA), a grassroots coalition opposing the announced closure of the San Bruno and Chicago branches of the National Archives. He worked with Angel Island Foundation and various San Francisco-based nonprofits. Grant is a graduate of Yale University and Claremont Graduate University.

Virtual Program. Free to Attend. Register
via Eventbrite on CHSSC website: chssc.org

REGISTER NOW

Speaker
Grant Din



Wednesday
September 2, 2026



7:00 - 8:30 pm



Moderated by Rick Eng, National Vice President of Chinese American Citizens Alliance (C.A.C.A.), Past President of the L.A. chapter of C.A.C.A. and Program Manager of L.A. County's L.A. vs. Hate agency.





Chinese Historical Society of Southern California

September 2026

PRESIDENT'S LETTER

Learning, learning, learning...

When I started Asian American studies in the 1970s, I was naïve enough to aspire to owning and reading ALL the books in this field. Now, I can't even finish re-cataloguing the books in our CHSSC library! I've been at it for weeks. And yes, we are using Libib technology. I can vouch that CHSSC has a fabulous and extensive book collection.

Today, I learned that since 1983, what was Szeyup or Siyi (Four Districts) is now Wuyi (Five Districts) or better known as Jiangmen (River Gate). The fifth district is Heshan which has about 20% Hakka population. "Szeyup" may hint at some century-old ethnic prejudice against Hakka.

I had a big learning moment when I went to the fabulous LACMA exhibit entitled "Fashioning Chinese Women". My mom would sometimes wear *qipao* dress, and the high collar and tight fit looked crippling. Like other young ignoramus, I may have said something like "I'm too modern and smart to follow such sexist traditions." But this was not Chinese tradition! In fact, *qipao* were quite loose until 1920s "modernity" and "fashion" dictated body-fitting darts, side zippers, and slits. I did not know there was so much history, global influence, and technology impacting the evolution of the *qipao*.



Lisa See's new novel informed me that there was a real Mrs. Tong. Tong Yu was the wife of Dr. Chee Long Tong, one of the victims of the 1871 Los Angeles Chinese Massacre. She actually went to court to file a legal complaint after her husband's murder. I didn't even know there was a Mrs. Tong. Then there's Dr. Mabel Ping Hua Lee – who marched for women's suffrage in New York City at the age of sixteen. If only I had known earlier. What inspiration!

In the last couple of years, I've been learning about Chinese grocers in Arkansas and Mississippi. You'll have to read about that in the 2027 *Gum Saan Journal* that I'm still working on – which will be eventually catalogued in the CHSSC Library, right?

Learning – and admitting past ignorance – is never ending. Because of CHSSC, I've also been learning Google Drive, Quickbooks, Canva, Square, and now this young intern promises to teach me to create and post Instagrams.

Susie Ling

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Mission Statement

The purpose of the Chinese Historical Society of Southern California, Inc. shall be:

- to advocate for a wider understanding of the significance of the role of Chinese and Chinese Americans in the history of Southern California;
- to bring together people with a mutual interest in the Southern California history of Chinese and Chinese Americans;
- to perform all the functions required to acquire, preserve, and communicate knowledge of this important history; and
- to promote a better appreciation of our rich multi-cultural society.



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September Speaker & Moderator



Grant Din has been conducting research at the National Archives branch in San Francisco (located in nearby San Bruno) since the 1990s, finding countless treasures. Learn about some of the stories he has found there and at other regional branches, and why the regional archives should be kept open.

Grant Din has been doing genealogy for family, friends, clients, and charity auction winners for over forty years. He has been on the staff of the Angel Island Immigration Station Foundation and worked with or volunteered for many other nonprofits, and was the lead author of the Chinese American Historic Context Statement in San Francisco and the co-curator of the permanent exhibit on Angel Island,

Taken From Their Families, about the WWII detention of Japanese immigrants there. Grant's given online or in-person genealogy presentations for countless organizations and currently he's spending a lot of time as communications co-chair of Save Our National Archives (saveournationalarchives.org), which is a coalition of people and organizations fighting to keep the National Archives branches in San Bruno and Chicago open and accessible to researchers.



Rick Eng (moderator) works for Special Service for Groups, Inc. (SSG), a Los Angeles-based health and human services organization established in 1952.

He is the current National Executive Vice President of the Chinese American Citizens Alliance (C.A.C.A.) and current secretary of OCA-Greater Los Angeles (OCA-GLA).



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From JACL's Action Alert of August 10, 2026:

BACKGROUND:

National Archives and Records Administration (NARA) has announced plans to close its San Bruno, California, and Chicago, Illinois, facilities within three years, with transfers potentially beginning as early as August 2026.

San Bruno holdings comprise 100,000 cubic feet of records, including Asian and Pacific immigration and naturalization materials; the original case file from *United States v. Wong Kim Ark*, the 1898 decision that helped establish birthright citizenship; Chinese Exclusion case files; German, Italian, and Japanese American World War II records; documents concerning the Tanforan Assembly Center incarceration; legal records related to the motion to vacate Fred Korematsu's 1944 conviction; Japanese picture bride files; Alien Files containing visas, photographs, and

family-history materials; records documenting Indigenous and Hawaiian communities; Mexican Land grant cases; and arrival case files for Russian Jews and other immigrants from throughout the world.

Chicago facility holds permanent records created by federal agencies and courts in Illinois, Michigan, Ohio, Indiana, Minnesota, and Wisconsin, including naturalization and genealogical records and Chinese Exclusion Act case files from Chicago and St. Paul, Minnesota.

Public access to historical records is under threat as demonstrated by the attempt to dismantle the Institute of Museum and Library Sciences—the only federal agency dedicated to providing funding for the nation's libraries—by executive order.

Emergency resolution of the National Council of the Japanese American Citizens League endorses a national advocacy campaign involving all JACL chapters to oppose the NARA closures by contacting Acting Archivist of the United States Edward Forster and JACL members' elected representatives, with written correspondence copied to the Save Our National Archives (SONA) advocacy group.



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A NEW APPROACH IN DISPLAYING OF ASIAN ART AT LACMA

PLEASE JOIN CHINA SOCIETY FOR AN IN-PERSON LECTURE BY STEPHEN LITTLE, THE HEAD OF CHINESE, KOREAN, AND SOUTH AND SOUTHEAST ASIAN ART. THE FOCUS OF THE PRESENTATION WILL BE THE ASIAN ART DISPLAYS AT THE NEW GEFEN PAVILION. STEPHEN, WHO HAS GIVEN US NUMEROUS TALKS, WILL GUIDE US THROUGH THIS NEW, REVOLUTIONARY APPROACH OF EXHIBITING ART.



**Sept 3
2026**

- Golden Dragon Restaurant, 960 N. Broadway, Los Angeles
- Check-in and Social: 4:15 P.M.
- Dinner at 4:45 P.M., \$40 per person; pay at the door, cash or check
- Program at 6:00 P.M. No cost



The China Society of
Southern California

RSVP: yvonnechang8@gmail.com



Chinese Historical Society
of Southern California

南加州華人歷史學會

Fashioning Chinese Women: From Empire to Modernity

Michaela Hansen, the curator of the current exhibition at LACMA, will discuss a century of evolution from of Chinese dresses from the late Qing Dynasty. According to our speaker, "The collection documents this period of incredible change that women are experiencing." She will discuss the social liberation and mobility many women experienced following the fall of the Qing dynasty in 1912.



Thursday, September 10, 2026
7:00 P.M.

Free to Attend, RSVP via Eventbrite
<https://chssc.org>

**Sept 10
2026**

Jointly Sponsored by:



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Selia Tan's Work

In Kaiping (Hoiping) villages, there are over 1800 diaolou 碉楼. These are multistoried “watchtowers” that also serve as living quarters. Many of them were built by funds sent back by Chinese Americans before the 1940s. In 2007, this unusual architectural legacy was designated a UNESCO World Heritage Site – thanks to the work of Dr. Selia Tan.

On August 10th and 12th, Irene Lam invited the Chinese Historical Society and the Chinese Family History Group to co-sponsor fascinating lectures entitled “Echoes Across the Ocean” by Professor Selia Tan. Dr. Tan is a leading expert on the history and impact of Cantonese migrants – on their home villages.

Dr. Tan explained that the Cantonese pioneers not only built the American railroads and developed agriculture and commerce in California, they also impacted the development of Southern China. The remittances migrants sent back eased family and regional poverty, but also helped modernize China and fund the War of Resistance against Japan (1931-45). Dr. Tan showed several slides of huge high schools (or translated as “middle school” 中学) built in Guangdong in the early 20th century. Dr. Tan claimed that Kaiping alone built 17 libraries. There were also newspapers, aviation, road systems, and other modernization made possible by the surge of funds from overseas Chinese. Dr. Tan insisted that $\frac{3}{4}$ of the funds for the War of Resistance came from overseas Chinese. In Kaiping, a collection of some 50,000 *qiaopi* (remittance letters) show a tangible trail of the impact of Chinese Americans on their home villages. These letters that date back to 1883 have been recognized by UNESCO Memory of the World Register.

Dr. Tan's own great grandfather left Kaiping to work in a laundry in Canada. Her appreciation of this legacy has encouraged her to establish the Cangdong Village Project, a preservation effort to appreciate architecture and culture in a “living museum” in a village in Kaiping. One conservation effort is to cherish the unique cobalt-blue glazed roof tiles of the DeXun Lin Ancestral Hall. The Blue Tile Heritage Foundation website says its well: “Preserving isn't just about saving old buildings; it's about keeping alive our stories, traditions and identity.”





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Summer Interns and Archives Team

The Archives Committee is pleased to announce that we have three summer interns and two new archivists working with CHSSC this summer. Zoe Lee-DiVito returns to the archives after interning with us during the 2025–2026 school year as the UCLA Andrew W. Mellon intern. We are pleased to welcome her back. Serving as a supervisor, Zoe will work with new interns Christina Garcia and Zakary Otrowski to organize the CHSSC administrative records. Dating back to 1975, these records document the Society's long history of preserving important materials, creating enriching programs, and generating historical content related to Southern California Chinese American history.

Returning archivist Aramis Sandoval will work with Community Archivist Riona Tsai to process our most recent acquisition, the Annie Soo Hoo Collection. The collection contains photographs, textiles, letters, and personal effects that offer a glimpse into Annie Soo Hoo's life as a resident of Los Angeles Chinatown from approximately 1895 to 1920.

Jennifer Nguyen Bernal joins the team as a digital specialist. She will migrate the Southern California Chinese American Oral History Project to a new platform, making its 169 oral histories and accompanying photographs easier for the public to navigate, explore, and enjoy.

We are thrilled to have such an enthusiastic and dedicated team working with us this summer and beyond. Please stay tuned as more of CHSSC's collections are processed and made available to the public.



Left to right: Riona Tsai, Aramis Sandoval, David Castro, Zoe Lee-Devito, Christina Garcia.
(Not pictured: Jennifer Nguyen Bernal, Zakary Ostrowski)



Chinese Historical Society of Southern California

411 Bernard Street, Los Angeles CA 90012

Community Events

September 2: “Chinese American Stories from the National Archives” with Grant Din (7 pm). RSVP on Eventbrite at chssc.org. (See page 1 for details).

September 3: “New Approach in Displaying of Asian Art of LACMA” @ Golden Dragon Restaurant (See page 5 for details)

September 5: 150th Anniversary of Lang Station @ Lang Southern Pacific Station (10am). For more information, contact Eugene Moy: ewmoy49@gmail.com

September 10: “Fashioning Chinese Women: Empire to Modernity” (7 pm). RSVP on Eventbrite at chssc.org.

September 26: Chinese American Museum Historymakers Awards Gala @ Westin Bonaventure Hotel. Los Angeles (6:30pm)