

Locke Foundation Newsletter 樂居鎮基金會
Preserving Locke's history and legacy

lockefoundation@frontiernet.net

Spring 2023

www.locke-foundation.org



Locke Foundation Presents
Asian Pacific Spring Festival
樂居鎮亞太春節聯歡

Saturday, May 13, 2023
11 am - 5 pm
Main Street, Locke, CA

FREE ADMISSION
FREE PARKING

Lion Dance
Martial Arts
Taiko Drums
Dance
Music
Tea Ceremony
Brush Painting
Arts & Crafts
Food
and more


Year of the
Rabbit

Locke Foundation is a 501(c)3
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Prominent Citizens of Courtland's Chinatown 葛崙埠僑領

By Eileen Leung

The 2020 census shows the population of Courtland to be 326. Who knew that such a sleepy hamlet had such a colorful history of enterprising Chinese residents.

Prominent citizens in Courtland include Dr. Raymond Primasing, Dr. Henry Go, Lincoln Chan, and Chew brothers. Below are excerpts from family history of the Chew family written by Paulette Liang Norberg, granddaughter of Chauncy Chew, for Angel Island's Immigrant Voices.



Lum Ah Chew 林亞兆

Several generations of the Chew Family called Courtland home. The 1900 census lists the Chew household as one of only 6 families in Courtland, but they were all related one way or another.

Lum Ah Chew was a respected member of Delta's farming community for over 40 years. He was a loyal supporter of Sun Yat Sen. Always known as Ah Chew, Chew was adopted as the family surname. He left his village Shar Peng Har in Zhonghan at age 19 due to the usual problems facing the homeland: bandits, poverty, warring factions, poverty. In 1860 his name was found on the census as "laborer". He worked in the mines and later for the Transcontinental railroads as a cook and a waiter. Detailed payroll records for Lum Ah Chew have been documented on Central Pacific payroll ledgers. After completion of the transcontinental railroad, he became a farm worker on the Solomon Runyon Ranch. The 1900 federal census lists Ah Chew's household as one of only six in Courtland; his occupation was fruit grower. He employed five fruit packers and 5 farm laborers. He became a foreman and tenant farmer for the Deming family. They had a verbal agreement that Ah Chew and his family could live on the ranch as long as the Demings were alive.

Solomon Runyon was a major landowner in the Delta. Following his arrival in California from Illinois, he gave his time and energies to agricultural pursuits and also to fruit-raising. About 1858 he settled on the ranch where his widow still resides, about three miles below Courtland on the Sacramento river, this being known as the Live Oak Farm. It contains one hundred and sixty acres of land and is largely devoted to the raising of fruit of many varieties.

Theodore Deming, brother-in-law of Charles Crocker, came to California in 1855. For a number of years he resided in Yolo County where he had large land interests. In 1885 he moved to Sacramento and operated a fruit ranch near

Courtland until his death in 1896. Apparently the Chew family had close ties to the Deming Family.

Chauncey Lum Chew 林關燦

Ah Chew's oldest son was Chauncey Lum Chew, born in 1882. He was named Chauncey by Ms. Deming who sent him to St. Joseph's Academy in Rio Vista. Because he was fluent in



English, he became a spokesman for the Chinese. He farmed onions and potatoes on virgin Delta land. He invested in modern machinery, became a labor contractor, opened a general store, invested in restaurants and gambling houses, and operated a shuttle from river towns to San Francisco.

Started in the early 1920s by Chauncey Chew, this shuttle traveled from Courtland to San Francisco daily until the 1940s, making stops in Locke, Walnut Grove, and Isleton. People without vehicles could travel to San Francisco on the shuttle that ran from the Sacramento Delta to San Francisco daily, known in the Chinese American community the limo, bus, or taxi service. People would go to San Francisco to shop, visit family and friends, or watch the Chinese opera. Furthermore, both people and goods traveled on this shuttle; if people needed items from San Francisco, they left a shopping list with the driver, who purchased the items and dropped them off on the return trip.

He sent his oldest son and daughter to UC Berkeley. He started a Chinese school in Courtland and supported Dr. Sun Yat Sen's movement to establish a republic in China. In 1910 Chauncey was a member of the North America Young China Association. Chauncey and wife Susan Chuck had 8 children. Paulette's mother is Edna Chew Liang.



His son, Jack Chew, said that Chauncey became the purchasing agent for Sun's air force and used the back of his ranch as a training area for pilots. The planes were leftover from World War I. Besides flying, the trainees learned to repair and disassemble/assemble the planes. Unfortunately the barn where the planes were stored was destroyed by fire before the planes could be shipped to China.

After Dr. Sun's death in 1926, Chauncy continued to support the movement to establish a democratic China.

Chinese New Year event draws record crowd to Locke

Article by Stuart Walthall, photos by John Dorne

Attendance for the Locke Chinese Lunar New Year Celebration exceeded all expectations. It was strikingly evident that visitors throughout Northern California were primed and ready to partake in a festival which celebrates the rich historical and cultural heritage of China and Locke.

Opening ceremonies were initiated by speeches from local dignitaries, including two current and one retired Sacramento County Supervisors, Locke Foundation Directors and leaders from Chinese organizations. The Locke Foundation was then presented with a Resolution from Sacramento County in recognition of its service to the Chinese American community.

Punctuating opening ceremonies was a traditional Lion Dance, whereby local businesses and residences were "blessed" by multi-colored lions, dancing up and down picturesque Main Street to the cacophonous sounds of cymbals and drums, meant to scare away evil spirits.

The February 11, 2023 event featured martial arts and Tai Chi demonstrations; flower arrangement presentation; painting and calligraphy contests; New Year cooking lecture; Chinese musical performances, Locke Boarding House Museum exhibits, and more. Clarence Chu and Anita Lo were co-chairs.



Civic leaders L-R: Rebecca Sloane, chief of staff for Supervisor Hume, Sacramento Supervisor Patrick Hume, Douglas Hsia, LF Board, Clarence Chu, LF Board, Anita Lo, co-chair of event, Stuart Walthall, LF president, Honey Lum, LF board, Alex Eng, CACS president, Steve Ly and Don Nottoli, outgoing Supervisor.



Frolicking lions from Eastern Ways dazzle crowds.



Flower arranging expert Zhu Zhi displays creations and Anita Lo, co-chair of event.



Liz Wong engages children in puppet show using zodiac animals.



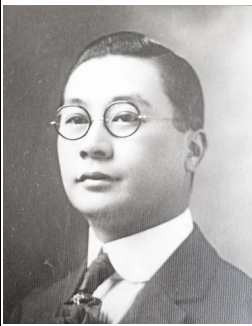
Chef David SooHoo lectures on history of Unknown cooks in America.



Children eagerly await distribution of lucky red envelopes.

An Opera Singer and Revolutionary in the Delta 歐永福

By Darin Ow-Wing, grandson of Ow Wing Fook, and supporting research by Carol Lee



Ow Wing Fook as a young man was already a community leader and activist in Courtland and the Delta prior to 1914. Location unknown. (Courtesy of Ow-Wing Family).

Like Arnold Schwarzenegger and Volodymyr Zelensky, my grandfather Ow Wing Fook was a performer who parlayed his fame and communication skills into political leadership. Trained in Chinese opera from childhood, he performed in communities up and down the west coast of the US. As a teenager he co-founded a chapter of the Young China Association (also known as the Kuomintang) in the Sacramento Delta to aid in the overthrow of imperial rule in order to establish a democratic republic in China. He became an effective fundraiser in the Delta for the revolution of 1911, and later held positions of leadership in San Francisco Chinatown, including being the President of a tong, one of the district associations, and possibly became a member of the Six Companies.

Ow Wing Fook aka George Ow aka Granddad was born in 1890 or 1893, probably delivered in the family house on the Sacramento River in the town of Courtland. He and his brother were the first generation born in America. His parents were merchants in Courtland.

During this time, instability and danger beset the lives of Chinese in America and in China. In America, the Chinese Exclusion Act, combined with laws that prevented Chinese from owning land, testifying in court, seeking medical care, or even marrying had the effect of rapidly shrinking the Chinese population. The Driving Out, in which hundreds of communities across the American West violently ejected their Chinese residents, had pushed nearly all the Chinese in America into just two areas: San Francisco and the Sacramento Delta.

In China, Western imperialism and the decline of the once brilliantly effective Qing Dynasty combined to create conditions ripe for political change. A movement ostensibly led by Dr. Sun Yat-sen to overthrow China's ancient dynastic system of rule gathered steam. Here in California, Granddad helped to establish a chapter of the North America Young China Association in Courtland in the early 1900's to raise funds and organize support for the coming revolution that successfully overthrew the last emperor in 1911. A friend recently told me, "It seems like every Chinese American family claims that they were once best friends with Dr. Sun Yat-sen." Bearing this in mind, our family story is that Dr. Sun stayed at Granddad's house in Courtland (as well as many other places) when he would come to Amer-



Ow Wing Fook in opera costume in San Francisco. Cousins remember being brought to the opera as young children to watch Granddad performed into the 1950s. (Courtesy of Ow-Wing Family).



Three generations photo including Great Grandma, (Ow Mark Shee), Granddad (Ow Wing Fook) and his 7 children, as well as Granddad's older brother (Ow Yue Fook) and his side of the family including his 8 children and 2 spouses.

ica on fundraising tours. This was part of a broader effort to protect Dr. Sun from imperial spies during these visits (there must be spies to spice up the story!). We have a portrait that Dr. Sun gave to Granddad in appreciation for his efforts on behalf of the revolution. The calligraphy is believed to be by Dr. Sun himself, and the message is personalized to Granddad. Dr. Sun surely must have given these portraits away left and right, but we regard it with pride nevertheless.

The last emperor was deposed, and the new Republic of China (kind of sort of not really) was established in 1911. Perhaps it is not coincidental that, right after the defeat of the imperial government, Granddad went to China to marry my grandmother, Yeung Wai Mun.



Ow Wing Fook in center front (7th from left). Young China Association in Courtland in 1925, commemorating death of Sun Yat-sen. Photo in book *Bitter Melon* by Gillenkirk & Motlow. Also in Dai Loy museum in Locke.

After the revolution, Granddad helped raise funds for China's air force (an effort led in the Sacramento Delta by Chauncey Chew). The planes were actually purchased and stored in a warehouse in the Delta, awaiting shipment to China. An arsonist put an end to that effort. Granddad may have also raised money for the Joe Shoong Chinese School in Locke.



Grandpa and Grandma upon arrival at Angel Island in 1914.

Heading into the 1920's, anti-Chinese laws were having the intended effect of nearly ending the existence of Chinese in America. In 1922, the year Dad was born in Courtland, there were less than 30,000 Chinese in all of America, and a headline in the SF Examiner excitedly proclaimed that just a few

more years of hard work were needed to complete the job of making America free of Chinese.

Sometime in the 20's or early 30's their general merchandise store closed. Granddad ran a "taxi" service bringing people to and from San Francisco (at least one other family ran the same service) for \$1 each way. Grandma bought herbs in SF Chinatown and was taught by an uncle to become an herbalist. Dad and some of his siblings worked as farm laborers.

Granddad got into a heated argument with a Courtland resident over a plot of land, and the other gentleman came at Granddad with a hatchet. Dad says he saw Granddad get in close, chest-to-chest, to prevent the man from getting in a strong swing.

Sometime during this period, one story says that Granddad got fed up with a drunk White guy who was harassing the Chinese residents in Locke. He hit the White guy on the back of the head with a pipe and killed him. Dad finished the story, "and if you go to the Dai Loy Museum in Locke, you can see the pipe on display." Yes, the Museum does actually display two iron pipes wrapped in old newspaper that were kept behind the door as tools for dealing with unruly patrons.

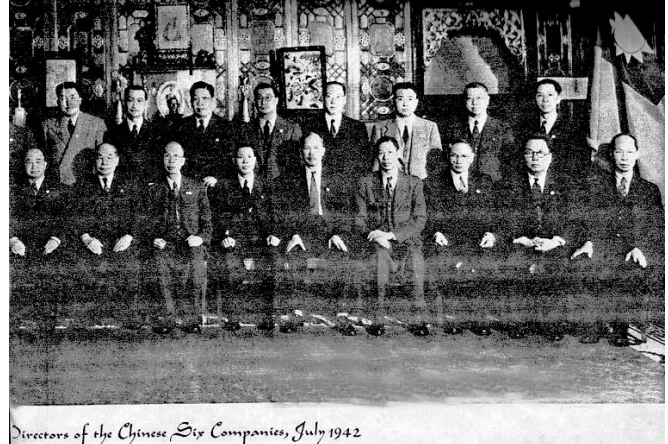
Uncle Henry said that he was riding in the back of a car being driven by Granddad (the car that Granddad used for his Delta-to-SF taxi service) on the levee road when a White guy drove up next to them and tried to run them off the road. According to my uncle, Granddad pulled out a gun and shot the other driver and killed him.

Granddad and his family (including my dad and his siblings) left the Sacramento Delta for San Francisco during the Great Depression. Upon arrival, they lived in the basement of the Hop Sing Tong on Waverly Place for a while before getting an apartment in Chinatown.

My Dad said that Granddad became president of the Yeung Wo Association, and that I've seen a picture of Granddad showing him to be a member of the Six Companies in the 1940's...which of course I can't find anymore!

There is some mystery about Granddad. During his years living in Chinatown from the 1930's until he passed away in the late 50's, while he held one or more positions of authority, it does not appear that he held a regular job. People remember him standing in different locations looking pretty

suave...possibly brokering agreements or business or political deals? If so, he didn't make any money, and it was Grandma who raised the kids off sewing factory work. As my Dad recounted, a good dinner was a big mound of rice with one fish split among 5 kids. Well, maybe there's no mystery! Granddad did his thing for no money while Grandma did the work of raising the family. She was traditional and while she lived, all the cousins referred to the aunts and uncles by their Chinese name, like Oy So ws Auntie Sue and Chew Sook was Uncle Willie. Aunt Rose, who married into the Ow fami-



Directors of the Chinese Six Companies, July 1942

Chinese Six Companies Director Ow Wing Fook in San Francisco in 1942. (Top row fourth from the left). Photo taken from Yeung Wo Association archives. Courtesy of the Wing Family)

ly, said that Grandma had a "beautiful demeanor, and never gossiped about any of the daughters-in-law." Dad says he was inspired to become a pharmacist

because he saw his mom helping people through Chinese herbs.

Ah, but wait, this recounting of family history and legend is still short one killing. Here's killing #3...probably set in the mid to late 30's.

Granddad was crossing Broadway from Chinatown to deliver something in North Beach when he was "jumped by a White guy" - literally the guy jumped on Granddad's back. After a struggle, the assailant fell to the ground on the north side of Broadway after Granddad knifed him. Granddad completed his task and upon returning to Chinatown, saw the man's body still laying in the gutter and assumed he was dead.

Could a Chinese guy really have gotten away with killing 3 White guys? Even if the stories are not literally true, there must be a reason we have three stories of Granddad engaged in mortal violence. How remarkable and beautiful and frightening is a universe that calls forth an opera singer / revolutionary / community leader / combatant?

In the end, Granddad was just one of countless people of all backgrounds who, despite poverty and discrimination, struggled to better the lives of their community here and in ancestral lands. Born here, yet a minor leader in the revolution that sought to re-create China as a democratic republic, his life choices are examples of loyalty across generations, openness to transnational ideas of human rights, the daily experience of violence as a means of oppression and freedom, and the racist isolation of Chinese in America by White nationalists. As an opera performer turned leader turned combatant, he was an early example of the artist/activist that is such a central role in the story of California.

Chinese Pioneers: Power and Politics in Exclusion Era Photographs

February 11 through April 26, 2023
Locke Boarding House Museum
13916 Main St, Walnut Grove 95690
Museum Hours: 11:00 to 3:00
Saturdays and Sundays

Chinese Pioneers: Power and Politics in Exclusion Era Photographs presents a visual history of the social, political, and judicial disenfranchisement of California Chinese - as well as moments of Chinese agency and resilience - in the decades before and after the 1882 Chinese Exclusion Act. Through the generosity of the Henry Mayo Newhall Foundation, you can view the exhibit at the Locke Boarding House through April 26. (On loan from California Historical Society)



One of 11 panels on display on the second floor of Locke Boarding House Museum..

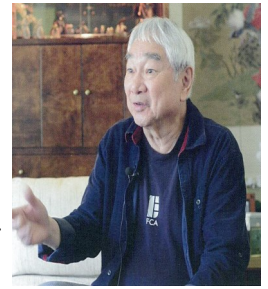
2023 Scholarship Opportunities for Local High School Students

The principal mission of the Locke Foundation is educating the public about the rich history and legacy of the town of Locke and informing the public of the compelling Chinese immigrant experience that played an important role in the history of California and the nation. Another mission of the LF is to bring benefit to Locke and surrounding Delta communities.

For these reasons the Locke Foundation is pleased to announce the availability of seven \$500 scholarships to be awarded to graduating seniors from Delta High School and Rio Vista High School. Deadline for applying is 5 pm, April 7, 2023. The scholarships will be awarded at the Locke Asian Pacific Spring Festival on May 13, 2023. Information and application forms can be accessed at: www.locke-foundation.org/scholarship

In Memoriam: Gene Chan 1932-2022

Gene Chan was born and raised in Locke, the fourth generation of his family in the Sacramento Delta. He graduated from Courtland High School and UC Berkeley, where he earned an engineering degree. Although Gene is famous for his own accomplishments as a rocket propulsion designer for Aerojet, he was more eager to speak in awe of his relatives.



His great grandfather was Jim King who helped build the western portion of the first Transcontinental Railroad which linked the central Pacific Railroad from the West to the East at Promontory Point, Utah. Jim came to California in 1855 at the age of 15. It is likely that Jim spent some time in Sacramento, including this city's Chinatown before going to work in the mines near Coloma. His name was Jow Kee, but the miners named him Jim King. So, he went to work for the railroad as Jim King. Gene heard from relatives that Jim was a very good worker, and some of the miners taught him English.

In 1865 when the railroads needed workers, Jim was hired to recruit Chinese laborers because he could speak English and Chinese. Thousands of people, the majority of whom were Chinese, were hired as laborers to build the Central Pacific Railroad. Gene found his great grandfather's name recorded in January 1866 payroll log, archived at the California Railroad Museum. His grandfather was a foreman, interpreter and labor contractor. He was among the first group of Chinese employed by Central Pacific and he was hired from California, not Toisan (China).

Gene's mom, Lillian, grand-daughter of Jim, grew up in Locke. One of her brothers is Bill King of Flying Tigers fame in WW2. Another brother is Tommy King, who was married to Locke matriarch Connie King. Gene spent 9 years studying dozens of his Uncle Bill's letters written on rice paper, photos and flight logs. Bill King was the second boy born in the town of Locke. He was a hero and highly decorated, but when he came home, he did not want to talk about his experience. Gene's father was also a partner in Locke's Yuen Chong Market with George Mar and Stanford King.

Gene has deep roots in Locke, and he is proud of Locke's legacy. He and Connie King gave tours to school children who visited Locke. He told them about going to a school

Lion Dance in Chinese Culture

By Eileen Leung

The lion dance is an important tradition in China. Usually the dance is part of festivities like Chinese New Year, opening of new businesses and weddings. If performed well, the lion dance is believed to bring good luck and happiness. The lion is a vehicle for dispensing all the good blessings of heaven to the entire community.

Although the lion is not native to China, Buddhists and many others use it to represent courage, energy and wisdom. The Chinese consider lions to be peaceful, unlike the fierce tiger which is native to China. The lions came to China via the famous Silk Road; rulers in the Middle East sent lions to Chinese emperors as gifts to get trading rights with merchants. The lion dance dates back to the Han Dynasty (205 B.C. to 220 A.D in China) and during the Tang Dynasty (716-907 A.D.) it was at its peak. It was particularly performed during religious festivals. The lion dance was not only introduced in China, but also in Korea and Taiwan, where lions are not native as well. The dances are not exactly the same in these countries, but the symbolism is quite similar.

The lion possesses mythical qualities. The costume is composed of symbolic shapes which cure sickness, bless marriages and guard against misfortune:

1. The bird-shaped horn represents the phoenix
2. The ears and tail represents the unicorn
3. The protruding forehead is adorned with mirrors to deflect evil forces
4. Long beards are characteristic of Asian dragons

The lion is operated by two dancers. One handles the head, made of strong but light-weight materials like paper-mache and rattan; the other plays the body and tail under an ornate cloth that is attached to the head.



Modern heads are made with aluminum and plastic. The lion is accompanied by three musicians playing a large drum, cymbals and a gong. Sometimes, a little Buddha teases the lion with a fan or

giant ball. The head dancer can flap the lion's eyes, ears and mouth for expression of moods. The lion walks back and forth in a zigzag pattern to confuse the evil spirits which move in straight lines. He may scratch an itch, or shake his mane.

Lion dances practiced in the U.S. originate from the Guangdong Province. These dances are different from those seen in Beijing opera or acrobatic performances. The Cantonese lion is an extension of the martial art spirit and thus always performed by students of Kung Fu. Early martial artists studying in Buddhist temples imitated the fighting styles of animals in nature that they observed such as the tiger and crane. Other styles include the praying mantis, leopard, eagle, snake and dragon; the forms you see imitate the movements and characteristics of these animals. No matter what style, the lions movements are feline in nature. The lion dance combines art, history and kung fu moves. Every move has a specific musical rhythm. Normally the performers are training in martial arts. While a lion dance might look like a dragon dance, the dragon requires more than two operators.

For a proper lion dance, the movements must match the music played by a minimum of three pieces: drum, gong and cymbal. Either the person performing in the lion head or the drummer initiates the movement and signals the other, so that the movement and music are synchronized. Certain movements must follow a specified sequence: for example, the 3-Star movement, then the 7-Star movement, followed by High Dance. Variations to the basic beats help keep the music lively. The loud music, along with the firecrackers and lion movements, are used to scare away "evil spirits" so that good luck will follow.

When hired by businesses to guarantee a prosperous year, the lions must "pick the greens: "choy cheng" or "cai qing". The businesses will tie a red envelope filled with money to a head of lettuce and hang it high above the front entrance. The lion would approach the lettuce like a curious cat, consume the lettuce and spit out the leaves but not the money. The lion will then pick up the green in his mouth and "chew" it. The person manipulating the head first removes the "lay see" (red envelope) and places it inside his shirt, so as not to drop it, which would mean bad luck. Then he will tear the lettuce apart and throw it out first to the left, then to the right and then to the middle to help spread prosperity in all directions. The music will then change to "high dance" and the head will be raised and moved as if the lion is happy to have consumed his prize.

Eating and disbursing of greens symbolizes the distribution of wealth and good fortune to all those present. The lion is supposed to bring good luck and prosperity to the business, and the dancers receive the money as a reward. The tradition become a mutual transaction.

In modern times, businesses do not demand much from the performers and it is easy money for martial arts schools. In the old days, the lettuce was hung 15-20 feet above ground and only well trained martial artist could reach the money while wielding a heavy lion head. These events became a public tournament where the audience could judge the quality of martial arts schools on how well the lions competed. Some lions even dance on bamboo stilts; others form human pyramids to reach the lettuce. Variations to the cadence of drums keep the music lively.



Note the lion going after the greens (romaine lettuce).

Having a lion dance team perform at a wedding is getting popular in the United States, but it usually isn't cheap. The cost will depend on whether the wedding couple wants one or two lions, as well as how fancy a performance they want, how much experience the lion dance team has, and age of the performers. In addition, a table may also be reserved for the team to eat dinner after the performance.

Lions are imported from Guangdong, China and other southeast Asian countries; full size ones cost several thousand dollars.

Locke Foundation Membership Application/Renewal

Last Name _____ First Name _____

Mailing address _____

Email address _____ Tel () _____ Cell () _____

I would like to volunteer for the following activities:

Volunteer docent _____ Donor _____ Visitor Center Volunteer _____

Contributor to newsletter _____ Media contacts _____ Landscape maintenance _____

Donation: _____ Designated purpose (if any) _____

Membership Dues: circle one

_____ \$25 Individual Annual/\$200 Lifetime _____ \$50 Family or Non-Profit Organization Annual/\$300 Lifetime

_____ \$100 Business Annual/\$500 Lifetime

Make check payable to Locke Foundation. Please return this form with check to Locke Foundation, P. O. Box 1085, Walnut Grove, CA 95690. Contributions are tax deductible to extent allowed by law. Tax ID: 20-0364281.

Office use only:

Date application received _____ Membership Year _____ Renewal _____

Locke Foundation
P. O. Box 1085
Walnut Grove, CA 95690

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