

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

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Spring 2025

www.locke-foundation.org



Locke Foundation Presents

# Asian Pacific Spring Festival

樂居鎮亞太春節聯歡

**Saturday, May 10th**

**11 am - 4 pm**

**Main Street, Locke, CA**

Lion Dance  
Martial Arts  
Taiko Drums  
Dance  
Music

Brush Painting  
Arts & Crafts  
Food  
and more

Free Admission  
Free Parking



Locke Foundation is a 501(c)3  
Organization  
FEIN: 200364281  
www.locke-foundation.org  
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# Chinese New Year Celebrated in Style in Locke

Phots by Pamela Tom, Kira O'Donnell, James Xiao, Eva Chu,, Daniel Zarazua ,

Over 700 visitors poured into Locke on February 22, 2025. It was a fantastic and enthusiastic crowd who came to see the town decked out in red lanterns and Year of the Snake banners.

Dignitaries present at the Opening Ceremonies included Sacramento County Supervisor Pat Hume; Locke Foundation chair Stuart Walthall; Alex Eng, president of the Chinese American Council of Sacramento; Kathy Chao Rothberg, Lau Family Community Development; Darren Suen, Elk Grove City Council; and Douglas Hsia.



Eastern Ways lion dancers provided their usual dazzling cadence of multi-colored lions and martial artists. The lions stopped at selected businesses to pick the greens to ensure a prosperous year. The businesses will tie a red envelope filled with cash to a head of romaine lettuce above the front entrance. The lion would approach the lettuce like curious cat, consume the lettuce, spit out the leaves, but not the money.



Children and families participated in arts and crafts activities in the Jan Ying building led by Pamela Tom and Shuqin Jiao. These included making fortune cookies and snakes with paper chains.



Like the Pied Piper, Liz Wong assembled children together for a skit about the 12 zodiac animals.







Author William Wong spoke before a packed venue in The Pearl, about his experiences growing up as a Chinese kid in Oakland Chinatown. He grew up to become an award winning journalist for the Oakland Tribune, Wall Street Journal and San Francisco Chronicle focusing on Asian American and community topics.



Capital Chinese Orchestra entertained audiences with classical Chinese instruments.



On display on the second floor of the Boarding House is a lighted map of the Delta highlighting Chinese communities along the Sacramento River.. The display was designed by DeeDee and Lili Kan.



Mary Ellen Burns, president of the Sacramento River Delta Historical Society, spoke on non-Chinese pioneers who established communities in the Sacramento Delta.

Co-chairs for the festival were Honey Lum and Clarence Chu, board members of the Locke Foundation.

They were supported by a host of volunteers including Parking volunteers (Eugene Wong, Nelson Loo, Alan Chan, Reuben Sanchez, Eugene Louie, Angela Fong, Carie Alexander and Negin Liaghat) Boarding House volunteers (DeeDee and Lili Kan, Eva Chu, Stuart Walthall, Mark Miller, Eileen Leung, Douglas Hsia, Betty Louie, Christina Ung, Johnston Wang, Rose Wong, James Xiao, Carol Lee), Pearl speaker support (Mark B. Miller and Mark H. Miller.)

Financial sponsors of the event included Farmers & Merchants Bank, Chinese American Council of Sacramento, Clarence Chu, California Grocers Association, CAPITOL, and Confucius Church of Stockton.



## Why Don't the Chinese Just Celebrate New Year on January 1 like the West?

Chinese New Year is never on January 1 because the Chinese have a different traditional date for New Year. Though China has a day off on January 1, and some fireworks are let off then, most attention is focused on the traditional date of New Year, according to China's lunar calendar. Chinese New Year falls in the period from January 21 to February 20. The Chinese get no time off for Christmas (except those in HK, Macau, and Taiwan). Instead of earlier in winter, the Chinese have their much-needed winter break in mid to late winter. The holiday time was chosen for farmers. It's a good time for them to get together, relax, and pray for the next year of farming, as it's the slack time before spring ploughing etc. begins.

## Why Does the Date for Chinese New Year Change Every Year?

Firstly, China's lunar calendar is according to the moon. New Year always starts with a new moon for the Chinese. Secondly, it is according to the sun. Chinese New Year is always 1 to 2 months after China's shortest day of the year (the winter solstice, December 21 or 22). The Chinese lunar date is always 21-51 days behind the corresponding Gregorian (international) calendar date... except when they add a month.

## Why Do the Chinese Call Chinese New Year 'Spring Festival'?

Chinese New Year always falls within half a month of 'Start of Spring' (beginning February 4), the first of the 24 solar terms of China's traditional solar calendar. As 'Start of Spring' begins the 'farming calendar' it is logical that New Year should be celebrated then, with a "spring" festival.

'Start of Spring' is an oddly-named solar term, because spring is still a month or more away in China's cold north, and wintry weather still lingers in temperate south China. However, Chinese still celebrate (the coming) spring with the Spring Festival.

To distinguish between "international" New Year (January 1) and Chinese New Year, instead of using 'New Year' (新年, usually meaning CNY in China), Chinese call January 1 'first dawn' (元旦) and Chinese New Year 'Spring Festival' (春节).

## Why Is Each New Year Associated with a Different Animal?

Since ancient times, Chinese people have been using the Chinese Zodiac animals to represent the years. Each lunar year is related to a zodiac animal, beginning at Chinese New Year. The 12 zodiac animals recur on a 12-year cycle.

## Why Are There Not Enough Trains at Chinese New Year?

Chinese New Year is the most important time for family reunions. No matter how far Chinese are from their homes, they do whatever they can to get back for a family reunion dinner on New Year's Eve, which results in the world's biggest annual migration of people (over 200 million in China). Even with the rail network at capacity, train tickets are the first to sell out.

## Why Do the Chinese Set Off So Many Firecrackers?

For the right vibe: Chinese New Year is a happy and lively festival, so for Chinese people lots of noise is a must to heighten the festival atmosphere, and firecrackers (and fireworks) are the cultural way to do it. In ancient times, it was believed that the explosive sound of firecrackers scared away evil spirits, who might otherwise bring bad luck.

In modern China, people set off firecrackers and fireworks during festivals to express their happiness, and invite good luck (all firecrackers are the lucky color red).

## Why Do the Chinese Hand Out Red Envelopes at Chinese New Year?

**For luck:** In Chinese culture, red is a lucky color, so giving money in a red envelope is a way of giving best wishes, as well as a financial present. It's like sending a greetings card with money inside in the West. Red envelope money is called "lucky money", though it's really the red envelope that's lucky.

**Demon suppression:** Traditionally red envelope money is called 'suppressing years money' (压岁钱). According to many New Year legends, evil spirits are scared of red, so red envelopes were originally used to suppress or ward off demons while giving money.

Chinese New Year, like Christmas in the West, is "**the season of good will**" in China, so most people receive a red envelope from someone, whether employer or family. There are lots of customs about who gives who how much in a red envelope. Red envelopes are handed out to younger generations by their parents, grandparents, relatives, and even close neighbors and friends during Chinese New Year.





# East Indians in the Sacramento Delta

By Justin Cairns, archaeologist

I grew up in Walnut Grove and the first Indians I met had arrived in the 1990s. A Sikh family ran a bait store, video rental, and a laundry mat, all in the same building that resembled a miniature mini mall. In the years that passed the property changed hands to another branch of the same family. It was during this period Quijin also known as Sony to some locals, began running the property with his wife and dad. In 2008 I interviewed the family for a college project, to better understand their culture. It was at that time I learned the name of their religion and the five items which symbolize their faith. The small knife called the Kirpan which symbolizes their duty to stand up against injustice. The uncut hair called "Kesh", a sign of their dedication to God. The Kangha is a small wooden comb which symbolizes cleanliness and organization. The Kara is a steel or iron bracelet worn on the wrist symbolizing oneness with God. The shorts worn as underwear are called "Kachera" which symbolizes a man's readiness for battle.

Justin Cairns

This compilation of references is about the East Indians living in the Sacramento Delta around the turn of the century into the early 1950s. These people were misunderstood by most of the local community. These people were in fact not Hindu, nor were they Mohammadians, but instead Punjabi Indians who follow the religion of Sikhism.

## Dennis Leary-Born 1897- Interviewed by Robert James

"The Hindus, they were great asparagus cutters. It is said that they took their lunch with them and kept it in the turban. Most of them wore turbans and that was a safest place to keep the dust out of their lunch. The Hindus are all gone. The Filipinos are too old now to cut asparagus, although some of them still do. They were very clever at that. The cutting was done by fork-shaped, long knife made from a chisel. I guess they would see a little break in the soil, would spear down and bring out the head of asparagus. That was for the white. At the time green asparagus was not commercially grown. That meant that those asparagus beds had to be worked and had to be knocked down and brought up again every short while. It was the dustiest, hardest job in the world - cutting asparagus. We owe a great deal to those fellows. I think the Hindus, to a great extent, have gone up to Marysville and now are owners of many pear orchards."

## William Hutchison-Born 1892- Interviewed by Kathie Graham

William is asked by his son "Do you remember Isar Singh." Williams replies "Yes." Williams's son asks "what was the period, the period where there were Hindus there working? It seems to me more on Tyler Island more than anything. What do you remember about the Hindus?" William replies "Well, there were Hindus doing agricultural work... a lot of them, especially cutting asparagus. That was during the revolution time in India. And most of their money went back to India. One time they were cutting asparagus, the Hindu cutters for the asparagus, and when we were setting up for the year, I said, "what are you doing with all that money?" It seemed like at the end of the season to be a hell of a lot of money then and they hadn't been paid anything for five months, four or five months. And I said, "What do you do with your money?" "We send it back to India. Make India free." William's son asks, "Were there any women?" Williams responds, "No women at all, at least I never saw one."

## Pete Budnik—Born 1918—Interviewed Dixie Wilson

When Pete discusses the various jobs done around the Delta, he

comments the Portuguese cleaned ditches also mentioning "You had Hindus cleaning the ditches." Referring to Locke Pete says "We had a flour mill up there. I don't know if anyone knew it. But the Hindus were in the flour mill. When the country first started here, we had a league of nations. There were a lot of Hindus. The Hindus were great. They wouldn't eat meat, but they ate a lot of butter. Oh my God, they ate butter by the ton. And they'd make these tortillas - they were about as thick and that big around. They make them on a disk, is what they'd make them on. And that was their mainstay of food. So consequently, they sold so much flour there that the Hindus decided to open a mill of their own. And the building is still partially standing there. Tommy King still runs it as a junk store in there." The tortillas as described by Pete were called roti by the Sikhs. The Sikhs also make a type of roti called capati which is made with ghee, unclarified butter. The disc shaped griddle used to make the roti is called the tawa.

Peter later talks about how his father tended bees, primarily to sell the honey to the local Indians. Peter says, "The Hindus bought a lot of honey. They loved that honey. He sold 99% to the Hindus. Like 50 cents for a two pound can of honey."

## Bill Shelton -Born 1920- Interviewed by Jerry Watersworth

"The only Hindu store in the whole country was here in Walnut Grove, behind Tony's. That's not talked about at all. We had a bunch of Hindus on our ranch." Bill is referring to the 1930s when he was a teenager. The interviewer Jerry Waterworth asks Bill "No that was the hills building. Sing was there in the 50s and he lived upstairs off the balcony, and he would drop a basket, and you put your money in it and he would pull it up and make change. He also had a shot gun up there so that you didn't walk out without paying for what you had." Bill continues "Well the Hindu store was different from that. It was just a little shed." Later Bill continues to discuss the Indian population "They became wealthy, the Hindus did. They mostly moved up north of Woodland. Occasionally, I see a Hindu and he indicates he has some grapes. They have done very well financially." The interviewer Jerry asks, "De Lip Sing had a ranch up at Hood and finally sold it." Bill replies "There was Isher Sing who was a big man on Grang Island and he would wander around with a white shirt with buttons down the front, Hindu style, and he could speak very good English. I don't know if he owned land or worked for someone. There was a lot of Oriental exclusion in those days." The long white shirt that Sikh Indians wear signifies they are married.

## Barbara Brooks -born 1925—Interviewed by Dixie Wilson

"When Dixie talked about the Hindus, it brought back a memory of mine because our house was right next to the levee, and we had a sleeping porch which had screen all around and often I had to take my nap there. They would walk by, and they had different color turbans on, and they were usually tall and walked beautifully, they had marvelous posture, and I always told to look like them as an example. I was five feet nine in those days and my mother said, "If you're going to be tall, you can't be bent over, it's not pretty." They were always an example, and I think of it still today when I start leaning over and I try to stand up straight." The turbans described by Barbara are called Dastar by the Sikhs and appear in four types and various colors. The Dastar symbolizes pride, spirituality, and the commitment to the Sikh way of life.

# Cameras Roll Again in Picturesque Locke

Article by Stuart Walthall  
Photos by Mark H. Miller

Locke has always been a magnet for artists, photographers, and film makers seeking to capture the town's picturesque and unique charm. Since its founding in 1915, dozens of films and documentaries have been shot in Locke.

In January, 2025, cameras were rolling once again on Main Street and throughout the back streets and fields of Locke when a Bay Area production company came to town.

Unlike most of the recent documentaries and "shorts" filmed in Locke, this project is a full-length feature film. The working title of the film is UNSAVORY ELEMENTS, an Indy horror genre with a large cast and crew. The three-day shoot involved numerous specialists, technicians and go-fers.



Location Manager Christian Powell: "The production involved a full crew - Camera Department in charge of lenses, operators and assistants; Electrical Department overseeing power, gaffers and laptops; Grip Department managing dollies and tracks; Vanities Dept. handling hair, costumes and makeup; Art Dept. supervising sets and props; Soundman operating mixers and booms; media center, canteen, and much more. We brought in 25 young "extras" for the scenes shot in the Chinese School and we rented a 60-foot condor (cherry picker) to fully light Main Street for night shots".

The production company worked closely with Locke merchants during the three-day street closure to help maintain normal operating hours, facilitate parking, and to bring benefit to local businesses. Meals were supplied by Al's Place Bar and Restaurant; staging and logistics utilized The Pearl on Main Street, production was centralized at the Jan Ying Museum, and various property owners were compensated for the use of their buildings.

After the Locke shoot the production continued for another 17 days on San Francisco's Treasure Island in an empty rented warehouse where a sound stage had been erected. The remaining story line and interior shots were filmed there.

It will take about one year before the film is ready for release. Post-production involves film editing, color correcting, and music scoring. Initially plans are to submit the finished work to film festivals and shop it to marketers. Let's keep an eye out for UNSAVORY ELEMENTS. Nothing like a scary horror movie and some popcorn.



Production crew in the Pearl

Note: The Sacramento and California Film Commissions advocate Locke as a resource for film, TV and commercial productions. Locke is an authentic, ready-made, user-friendly locale for creative film making. Why build it when it's already here for the shooting?

## 2025 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 benefit to Locke and surrounding Delta communities.

Douglas Hsia, chair of the Scholarship Committee, is pleased to announce the availability of four \$1,000 scholarships to be awarded to graduating seniors from Delta High School and Rio Vista High School. Deadline for applying is 5 pm, April 18, 2025. The scholarships will be awarded at the Locke Asian Pacific Spring Festival on May 10, 2025.

Information and application forms can be accessed at: [www.locke-foundation.org/scholarship](http://www.locke-foundation.org/scholarship)





# Locke Demo Garden Showcased at Chinese New Year Celebration

Story and photos by Stuart Walthall



Raised planting beds enriched with compost

For the past dozen years, the Locke Foundation has offered the public a glimpse at an essential element of Locke's past; a living example of what nourished the bodies and souls of Locke's original inhabitants - the Locke Foundation Chinese Demonstration Garden.

Life in Locke centered around the beautiful gardens carefully tended by Locke's Chinese residents. Main Street, with its bustle of business, traffic and noise, was the hurried breath of Locke, while the backstreets, with their gardens, slow-paced lifestyles, and diligent residents, were, and are, the heartbeat of Locke.

Gardens were the catalysts that unified the community. Fruitful and productive, these living spaces fulfilled essential needs of Locke's Chinese families - food, fraternity, familiarity, sharing, healthy work, and an escape from the alienation and discrimination suffered by those who lived the immigrant experience. The Locke Foundation desires to showcase a bit of Locke's cultural legacy with the presentation of the Chinese Demonstration Garden.

## THE FESTIVITIES

February 22, 2025, marked the sixth annual Locke Foundation Chinese New Year Celebration, and offered a perfect opportunity to bring elements of the Demo Garden to



Main Street. This signature event brings hundreds of guests to Locke to celebrate and partake in this historic and picturesque heritage community.

The Chinese Demo Garden exhibit augmented a colorful and interesting day filled with lion dances, martial arts, Tai Chi, lectures and much more. The exhibit was staged in front of The Pearl on Main Street - right in the middle of the action.

The Demo Garden exhibit, manned by UCD volunteers Mayra Concepción, Yansong Li, Jianhong Liang, plus Locke volunteer Nancy-Jo Overmeyer, offered free *laissez* (good luck red envelopes) containing seeds of two iconic Chinese vegetables - Cee Gwa (Luffa Sponge) and Dow Gok (Chinese long beans).

The display also offered informational signage, photos and examples of other vegetables grown in the Demo Garden - Fu Gwa (Bitter Melon), Hulu Gwa (Chinese Gourd), Hong Jo (Chinese Red Date), Bok Choy, Dong Gwa (Winter Melon),

and more.

Handouts were distributed informing the public of present and future projects planned for the garden. Visitors were given the opportunity to volunteer their time and energy with garden planting and maintenance.

Spring is right around the corner and the Demo Garden is expanding. The Demo Garden crew schedules an open work-day once a month.



Building Hulu Gwa Trellis



Dow Gok seeds

When visiting Locke, be sure to take a stroll to the back of town and check out the Community Gardens and the Chinese Demonstration Garden .... and Connie Kings Toilet Garden!

## VOLUNTEERING

Those interested in helping with the garden or donating to the project may do so by contacting the Locke Foundation at [lockefoundation1915@gmail.com](mailto:lockefoundation1915@gmail.com).

New Prices for tours of the town of Locke:

Adults: \$7  
Students/seniors: \$5

By appointment only  
916-776-1684

# Locke Foundation Membership Application/Renewal

Last Name \_\_\_\_\_ First Name \_\_\_\_\_

Mailing address \_\_\_\_\_

Email address \_\_\_\_\_ Tel ( ) \_\_\_\_\_ Cell ( ) \_\_\_\_\_

I would like to volunteer for the following activities:

Guided tour docent \_\_\_\_\_ Boarding House 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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