

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

lockefoundation1915@gmail.com

Winter 2026

www.locke-foundation.org



Locke Foundation Presents

**Celebrate
Chinese New Year
In Locke**

樂居鎮慶祝農曆新年聯歡

**Saturday, February 14, 2026
12 Noon to 4 PM at Main Street**

Lion Dance (12 noon)
Martial Arts Demonstration
Tai Chi Demonstration
Chinese Musical Performance
Free screening of Voices documentary
Delta Owyang Family Lecture
Chinese Painting & Calligraphy
Children's Arts & Crafts
Children's Face Painting
Food

**Free Admission
Free Parking**

Red Envelope Lucky Money of The Year
(For the first 100 children under age 12)

For more information please contact

Locke Foundation:

Phone: 916.776.1684

Phone: 916.776.1828

Website: locke-foundation.org



Locke Foundation Stages Volunteer Appreciation Dinner

By Stuart Walthall

Photos courtesy of Nancy Jo Overmeyer and Stuart Walthall

Quote by former LA Lakers basketball coach Phil Jackson: "The strength of a team is each individual member. The strength of each member is the team". Many hands with one mind. Together, we can do so much.

The story of the Locke Foundation is a two-decade saga of inception, growth, fruition, and success. Founded on hopes, dreams, and a bank balance of zero, the Locke Foundation has evolved into a viable, effective, and influential organization. And the reason for such success? TEAMWORK.

The mission of the LF is to educate the public about the history, culture, and legacy of Locke. However, the scope of that mission has expanded as the LF evolved and matured. Our once-fledgling organization now offers numerous educational opportunities that extend far beyond our original mission. We would now like to acknowledge those whose dedication

and commitment brought these accomplishments to fruition - the Locke Foundation volunteer teams. Fortunately, distinct volunteer teams, with varied and diverse skill sets, have been recruited and trained to accomplish our ever-growing mission goals.

Volunteer teams include Locke Boarding House Museum volunteers; Archival and Artifact Cataloging crew; Event Staging team; LF Chinese Demonstration Garden volunteers; Locke Historic Tour docents; LF Oral History Project; Newsletter staff; Membership Committee; LF Scholarship Program; Social Media team; and more.

These teams have worked in silent yet satisfying obscurity. It was time to thank and acknowledge these dedicated individuals. Thus, the Locke Foundation staged a Volunteer Appreciation Dinner on October 11, 2025, at the Aviator Restaurant in Sacramento. Over 40 team members attended....and it was FUN!



LF chair Stuart Walthall welcomes guests.



Guests include Jacob Locke, Jason Lundberg, Max Ullman and James Xiao.



Clockwise: Eugene Louie, Reuben Sanchez, Betty Louie, Alan Chan, Nelson Loo, Alfred Yee, Pam Tom, Eugene Wong.



Clockwise: Myra Concepcion, Faye Ong, Lili and Dee Kan, Mark Miller, Yansong Li, Jianhong Liang, JayLee Tull



Clockwise: Nancy Jo Overmeyer, Nancy Woo, Darrel Woo, Clarence Chu, Eva Chu, Eileen Leung, Anita Lo, Sharon and Joe Prassa

Erle Stanley Gardner and His Love of the Delta

By Stuart Walthall

The Sacramento-San Joaquin River Delta, with its flowing waterways, picturesque landscapes and rich history, has perpetually been a magnet for those seeking adventure, sanctuary, and solace. The Delta is a refuge from the din of city life, commitments, rules and regulations. It is conducive to creativity and imagination.



One individual who loved and celebrated the Delta was Erle Stanley Gardner – one of the most prolific writers in American literary history. He was a working rancher, an amateur geologist, photographer, archaeologist, engineer, astronomer, forensic criminologist – and most famously, the author of the Perry Mason books. Within Gardner's lifetime, the Perry Mason books became massive best sellers and were adapted into radio, film, and a hugely successful television series.

Gardner (1889-1970) was born in Massachusetts, but his family moved to Palo Alto, CA. He studied law independently and passed the California bar exam in 1911. He spent some twenty years practicing law, and in the meantime, he began writing stories. He hit the big time as an author in 1933 with his first Perry Mason novel, The Case of the Velvet Claws.

Erle loved exploring new places. In 1937, he stopped at a campground near Temecula, California. He liked the look of the area and decided to purchase some and there. Starting with 150 acres, his ranch grew to 3,000 acres. He named it Rancho del Paisano – a Mexican slang term for a Road Runner bird. Gardner lived there for 33 years – from 1937 until his death in 1970.

Later in life, Gardner loved exploring the Sacramento-San Joaquin River Delta. In the 1960s he wrote three travel books about the summers he spent on the Delta: The World of Water, Gypsy Days on the Delta and Drifting Down the Delta. The books read more like journals, written in a conversational style, and filled with Gardner's photographs.

In the early 1960's he made his first purchase of a houseboat. Then another. The houseboats carried work supplies, dictating machines, and cameras. The two boats were tied together and became floating havens for fishing, entertaining friends, relaxing, and writing.

During his 1960s sojourns, Gardner befriended numerous Delta residents and business owners. He was a friend of Manuel "Moe" Morais, owner of Giusti's Place (destroyed by fire in 2021), where Gardner ate and drank.

Moe Morais' son, Mark Morais, was 14 or 15 when his father and Gardner became friends. "He was a very easy-going, laid-back guy. This was his hangout."

Connie King, known as Locke Mom, remembers Gardner's visits. They became friends. She would bake pies and share recipes with Gardner's secretaries. He joked with her and Locke residents. "He spoke a little Chinese," King said. "He had no problem talking to the people of Locke. He was very happy."

King said the Delta influenced Gardner and made him want to write about it. He was always asking questions and taking photographs.

Gardner was also friends with George Marr, owner of the Yuen Chong Market, located on Main Street, Locke. The 1967 Gardner book, Gypsy Days on the Delta, mentions George Marr.

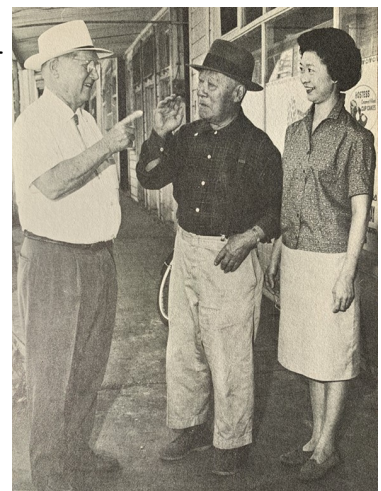
So much can be written about Erle Stanley Gardner. Too much for one short article. However, he left behind millions of fans, including President Harry S. Truman, Pope Paul XXIII, and Supreme Court Justice Sonya Sotomayor,



George Marr, owner of Yuen Chong Market, with Gardner and Connie King.

who frequently cited Perry Mason as one of her earliest influences.

It is rumored that when Albert Einstein died, a Perry Mason novel was at his bedside.



Gardner with Tommy King's father and Connie King in Locke.

Help us raise \$5000 before year end!

The Locke Foundation is the only organization whose sole mission is to advocate for the town of Locke - its preservation, history, legacy and its future. To educate the public of the history of TWO important structures in Locke the LF plans to commission two bronze plaques to be placed in public view on the exteriors of both historic buildings -The Locke Chinese School and the Jan Ying Association Building.. The text contained on these plaques will present a succinct history of each building along with its cultural influence on the early residents and business owners of Locke. The cost for these 2 bronze plaques will be around \$5,000.

To meet our mission and to provide services in our community, we rely on the generosity of individuals, organizations, and businesses for support. Without this assistance, we would not be able to serve the public while accomplishing our mission goals. We ask that you make a commitment to support our appeal by making a cash donation to the Locke Foundation.

To donate to this worthy project - Make checks payable to:

Locke Foundation/Donation P.O. Box 1085 Walnut Grove, CA 95690 Or locke-foundation.org/about/make-a-donation

The Locke Foundation is a 501c(3) tax deductible non-profit. Tax ID: 20-0364281

The Locke Chinese School was built in 1916 with funding provided by the Nationalist Party, Kuomintang, or KMT, founded by Dr. Sun Yat-sen. The original usage was for the KMT branch office in Locke. It also served as a town hall. Dr. Sun, considered the "Father of Modern China", was crucial in starting the revolution to overthrow the last dynasty of China. He also came from the same Zhongshan region as the group that established Locke.

The building was converted into a Chinese language school in 1926 due to the growing number of children in Locke. There was still a fear that families could be forced to return to China by the federal government, and parents wanted their children to be fluent and literate in the Chinese language in case they had to move back to China.

The Chinese kids would attend regular school in nearby Walnut Grove. After regular school, they would come to the Locke Chinese School to learn to read and write Chinese from 4 pm to 6 pm. The school was closed during WW II due to economic reasons.



In 1954, the Joe Shoong Foundation provided funding to renovate the building and purchase new equipment, enabling the school to open under the new name: Joe Shoong School. Mr. Shoong was a prominent merchant who owned the National Dollar Store. The school was closed in 1983 due to a lack of Chinese kids on Locke. The building was opened as a Chinese School Museum in 1985.

Photo courtesy of Lili Kan.



The building was constructed in 1916 in Locke as the branch office of the Jan Ying Benevolent Association. The headquarters of this association is in San Francisco, with additional branch offices on Los Angeles and Fresno.

The association served merchants and laborers, particularly Chinese immigrants from the Zhongshan district, and was exclusively open to male members. This was a social center where members can make new friends or look for job opportunities. They also received their mail here, and assistance was available for reading and writing letters. Additionally, members could read newspapers and magazines, play friendly



games of chess and dominos, enjoy tea and sweets, and occasionally play Chinese instruments.

The association would host annual Spring and Fall events. Members from all offices were invited to participate in these celebrations. The sheriff and political dignitaries frequently attended these events. Residents volunteered to cook the large feasts in the building's spacious kitchen, equipped with two large woks. Professional singers from San Francisco would also perform Cantonese Opera during these events.

Due to the decline on new members and the Chinese population in Locke, the headquarters decided to close this branch in 1990. The building was subsequently sold to Locke businessman Clarence Chu, who opened the building to the public in 2008 as the Jan Ying Benevolent Association Museum.

Partnerships for Delta Parks Explored

Members of the State Park and Rec Commission toured various sites in the Delta to assess and develop improved experiences for park visitors on September 24, 2025. These sites included Brannan Island State Recreation Area, Delta Meadows Property and the Locke Boarding House. Partnerships with these sites enable the State to share funding through the Waterways Connection Initiative. The delegation traveled by caravan and paused for lunch at Delta Meadows Park.

Current programs at Delta Meadows and Brannan Island include birding walks, recreational boating safety and canoe instruction. At the Locke Boarding House, Stuart Walthall described announced added visitor hours and introduced new park aides Logan Currin and Max Ullman. Blake Roberts from Delta Protection Commission explained how the expansive geographical footprint of the Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta National Heritage Area supports historic preservation recreation and heritage tourism activities when implemented through federal funding and public-private partnerships.



Photo courtesy of Cameron Morrison, Diablo Range District

BERKELEY STUDENTS CREATE LOCKE STORY BOOKLET

Inspired by a visit to Locke, followed by a deep dive into Locke's colorful history, a talented group of Cal Berkeley students have created a charming little book entitled "LOCKED IN TIME - A Tale of How a Little Girl Met and Made Friends of Connie King".

This 24-page story booklet, published by the Locke Foundation, consists of watercolor images and historic photographs. The original artwork was created by Kira Wong-Tracy, and the text was written by Cal students Bee Wong, Kailani Raulins, and Willa Lui.

Locked in Time



A Tale of how a lonely girl met and made a friend of Connie King.

"LOCKED IN TIME" tells the tale of a little girl's visit to Locke, where she befriends a local cat, meets "Locke Mom" Connie King, and learns a valuable lesson about Locke's history, culture and legacy.

The booklet is a tribute to Connie King, legendary resident of Locke. One encounter with Connie and you will carry the memory of her for the rest of your life. Her open heart, her gracious smile, and, for those fortunate enough, her famous almond cookies.

Permission to publish the work was provided by University of California Berkeley, Chinese American History Department, Professor Harvey C. Dong.

"LOCKED IN TIME" is available at the Locke Boarding House Museum for a suggested donation of five dollars, which helps support the mission of the Locke Foundation.

Boarding House Hours: 11:00 to 4:00 Friday, Saturday, Sunday.



Chinese Celebrate Winter Solstice on December 21, 2025

For many ancient agrarian civilizations that struggled to subsist through harsh winter months, the winter solstice marked a time of spiritual rejoice and celebration. Modern heating technology and the globalization of food markets make the seasonal transition remarkably easier for modern humans to survive, but people still do celebrate the day with festivities and rituals. This is traditionally the time when workers gathered food to sustain their families through the cold season. *Yang* begins right after Winter Solstice and *Yin* begins right after Summer Solstice in the northern hemisphere.

Dong Zhi, like other Winter Solstice festivals, is marked by hope and optimism and well as joy. It can be regarded as a Chinese Thanksgiving where food, wine and feasting are integral parts of the celebration. The festive food is also a reminder that everyone now is a year older and should behave better in the coming year. Even today, many Chinese around the world, especially the elderly, still insist that one is "a year older" right after the Dongzhi celebration instead of waiting for the lunar new year.

Celebrated on the longest night of the year, Dong Zhi (冬至) is the day when sunshine is weakest and daylight shortest. The latter falls on the 15th day of the 11th moon; in 2019 the date is December 21. The coming of winter is celebrated by Chinese families and is traditionally the time when farmers and fishermen gather food in preparation for the coming cold season. It is also a time for family reunions. The last festival of the year, Dong Zhi coincides with the winter solstice, and it is a time for the entire family to get together to celebrate the past good year. Some Chinese "traditionalists" even believe that everyone turns a year older after Dong Zhi.

The Winter Solstice officially became a festival during the Han Dynasty (206 BC-220 AD). This celebration can be traced to the Chinese belief in *Yin* and *Yang*, which represent balance and harmony in life. *Yang* symbolizes masculine and positive, *Yin* has the opposite meaning. At winter solstice, the *Yin* is at its peak and will disappear gradually. While the *Yang* or positive things will become stronger and stronger from the day. So winter solstice is regarded as an auspicious day to celebrate. It is believed that the *Yin* qualities of darkness and cold are at their apogee at this time, but it is also the turning point, giving way to the light and warmth of *Yang*.

Dong Zhi means the "arrival of winter". The army was sequestered, frontier fortresses closed, business and traveling stopped. Relatives and friends presented delicious food to each other. It was a day to offer sacrifices to Heaven and ancestors. Emperors would go the suburbs to worship Heaven; commoners would offer sacrifices to deceased parents or other relatives. The importance of family and community are paramount, as is honoring ancestors. It is believed that ancestors return to the family this day. People carried out rituals for the gods not only to thank them for the harvest but to pay homage to ensure future prosperity.

One activity that occurs during these get-togethers, especially in the southern parts of China and

in Chinese communities overseas, is the making and eating of *tangyuan* (湯圓), balls of glutinous rice. The round shape symbolizes wholeness and unity, and the tradition is an important celebration of family unity and family prosperity. Each family member receives at least one large *tangyuan* in addition to several small ones. The flour balls may be plain or stuffed. Sweet fillings may include sugar, walnuts, sesame seeds, rose petals, peanuts, tangerine peel or bean paste. They can be cooked in a sweet soup or savory broth with both the ball and the soup/broth served in one bowl. A savory broth would include minced meat, vegetables, cilantro and toppings. Early Chinese immigrants from Guangdong call Dong Zhi: *Guo Dong* (過冬). Frozen ready-to-boil *tangyuan* are now sold in Asian grocery stores.



In parts of Northern China, people eat dumplings with hot soup on this day; believing that doing so will keep them from frost in the upcoming winter. Zhang Zhongjing (150-219), was a famous physician in Eastern Han Dynasty. He was once an official in Changsha. When he returned home for private life, he saw people lived a very hard life, and their ears were red with cold in winter. He was very sad and let his disciple cook to drive out the chill with mutton, hot pepper and some herbs. Zhang let him boil them first, mince them, then wrap them with flour. After boiling, he gave the food to the people there. By eating this kind of ear-like food, people's ears were all cured. Later, every winter solstice, people cooked this kind of food which was called dumplings to avoid ears from being frozen. This tradition was hence passed down one generation after another. The dumplings contained meat and high-level *Yang* warming herbs such as ginger and garlic. This helped the people stave off illness and disease and stay warm. It helped them adapt to the onset of winter and buoyed their mood during the darkest days of the year.

Dumplings or *jiaozi* (餃子) consist of semi-circular or half-moon shaped pasta with different fillings inside. Making the dumplings is a family affair. Dumplings are given different names because of their various fillings. There are different ways to cook dumplings, such as fried, boiled or steamed.



Dong Zhi remains a festive holiday that many overseas Chinese celebrate with family and friends.

The Life and Times of Victor Wong (in the Delta)

By Eileen Leung

Victor Wong was an American actor, artist and journalist of Chinese descent. He was a colorful, and enigmatic individual. He lived in the Delta throughout various stages of his life.

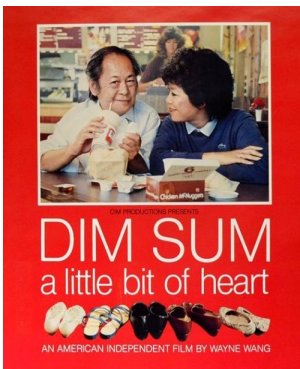
One of five children, he was born in San Francisco Chinatown to Chinese parents in 1927. At the age of 2, he and his family moved to Courtland where his father worked as a teacher and principal of a Chinese school for local Chinese laborers. Three years later his family returned to San Francisco. He regularly attended First Chinese Baptist Church. At a young age, he contracted tuberculosis and spent several years in a sanatorium which fostered his introspective personality. He graduated from Lowell High School in 1945. He studied political science and journalism at Berkeley. He also studied theology at the University of Chicago; he received his MFA degree from the SF Art Institute.

CAREER AS A JOURNALIST

As an on-air reporter at KQED from 1968; he focused primarily on stories from SF Chinatown where he discussed local politics and social issues. He is credited with inventing the "photojournalistic essay" covering stories with his still camera and returning to narrate them in the studio. He won a Regional Emmy in 1974. He was stricken with Bell's palsy, a neurological disorder that causes paralysis or weakness of the face.. While this gave him a distinctive physical appearance, he felt disadvantaged with this image and withdrew from live shows.



CAREER AS AN ACTOR



He pursued a career in local Asian American theater and New York City. At Asian American Theater Company in SF, he debuted in Paper Angels by Genny Lim. In New York, he acted in Family Devotions and Sound and Beauty by David Henry Hwang. In 1984, he debuted in Dim sum: A Little Bit of Heart directed by Wayne Wang. In between acting gigs, he lived

in Sacramento.

A notable role was his character as a eunuch in The Last Emperor by Bertolucci. In 1993 he starred in the Joy Luck Club. He retired from acting after suffering 2 strokes and return to art.



JOINING THE BEAT GENERATION

In the 1950's Wong had his first art exhibition in the city of Lights Bookstore in SF. He became friends with Lawrence Ferlinghetti; he met Jack Kerouac and wrote about their meeting in his novel Big Sur. Wong actively participated in North Beach's vibrant scene, participating in poetry readings and jazz-infused performances. Living a bohemian life style at the time, Wong's first art exhibit as a painting student was hosted by his friend Lawrence Ferlinghetti, the owner of City Lights Bookstore in San Francisco. Wong was also friends and spent much time with another prominent member of the Beat Generation, writer Jack Kerouac, who refers to him in his novel "Big Sur" in the form of the character "Arthur Ma".

PERSONAL LIFE



Wong was married 4 times; he had 2 daughters and 3 sons. He married his 4th wife Dawn Rose, an artist in Locke in 1998; they were planning to open an art gallery and teahouse in Walnut Grove; however he died of a heart attack on September 12, 2001.

Victor Wong's film career spanned variety of television and movie roles during his lifetime. He gained prominence in the 1980s with supporting roles that portrayed wise paternal figures. He was a favorite of Asian American audiences who identified with his characters as a typical family man.

Although he did not have any major starring roles, his performances challenged stereotypes of generations of Asian American actors navigating Hollywood's limited opportunities.

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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