

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

lockefoundation1915@gmail.com

Spring 2026

www.locke-foundation.org



 **Locke Foundation Presents**

Asian Pacific Spring Festival

樂居鎮亞太春節聯歡

Saturday, May 9th
11 am - 4 pm
Main Street, Locke, CA

Lion Dance
Martial Arts
Taiko Drums
Dance
Music
Brush Painting
Arts & Crafts
Food

Free Admission
Free Parking

Locke Foundation is a 501(c)3
Organization
FEIN: 200364281
www.locke-foundation.org
Tel: 916.776.1684/916.776.1828



Visitors Help Locke Celebrate the Year of the Horse

Photo contributions from Jason Lundberg, Eva Chu, Stuart Walthall, Anita Lo, Honey Lum, Pamela Tom, Millie Dong and Debbie Cunningham

Each spring the town of Locke rolls out the red carpet inviting the community to celebrate the Lunar New Year. 2026 was no exception. The weather was balmy; over 600 visitors came to enjoy the festivities.

The opening ceremonies included greetings from Stuart Walthall, president of the Locke Foundation, Amanda Bohl, executive director of Delta Protection Commission. The colorful lions from Eastern Ways always dazzle the audience.

Children enjoyed the zodiac puppet show led by Liz Wong and friends. Pamela Tom, Betty Louie and Rose Wong led arts and crafts activities including creating paper horses with movable legs, fortune cookies and cherry blossom trees. Fernando Sumarit painted whimsical faces on excited children.

The Pearl was packed full of audiences as they listened to Sharon Fong's stories about one Owyang family's history in Isleton and Locke. The Voices documentary featured stories from women who raised families in the Delta.

It takes an army of volunteers to ensure a massive event is well executed. Honey Lum was instrumental in assembling a cohort of volunteers from all walks of life to oversee the myriad of details.

Our activities are always supported by generous sponsors; this year's include County of Sacramento, Chinese American Council of Sacramento, Darrel Woo, Honey Lum, Douglas Hsia, Mark Miller, and Pattie Fong. In-kind donors include Daniel Chan, Bel-Air Supermarkets, Starbucks, Honey Lum and Betty Louie.



Locke Foundation president Stuart Walthall welcomes visitors to the Boarding House Museum.



Opening ceremonies with greetings from state and local dignitaries kick off the festivities in front of the Chinese School



Capitol Chinese Orchestra entertain visitors to the Boarding House with traditional Chinese New Year melo-



Volunteer Millie Dong offers oranges to visitors



Eastern Ways lion bestows the Boarding House with a New Year blessing for continued good fortune and service to the community.

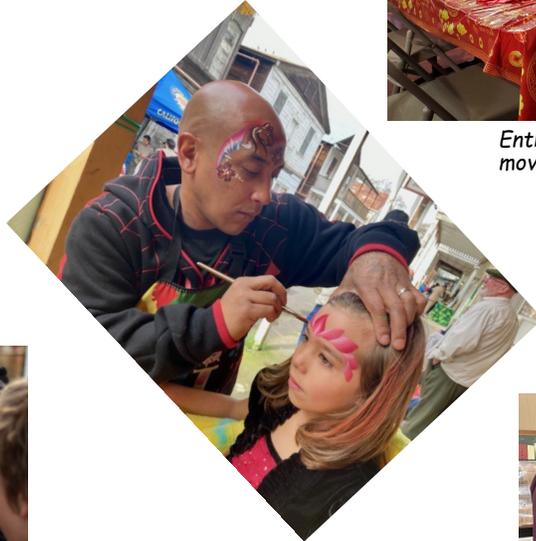


Visitors to the Boarding House sample typical new year snacks and fruits.



Long-time native of Isleton, Sharon Fong, relates the legacy of her Owyang family; to a packed room. Lili Ong Kan provides supporting illustrations to bring life to a by-gone era.

Face painter Fernando deftly designs an awesome graphic for a young patron.



Wild-eyed child sports scary face painting.



Enthusiastic audience learns to construct a movable horse.



Liz Wong leads children wearing zodiac masks along Main Street.



Local artist Annie Zhang demonstrates traditional Chinese painting in the Chinese School.



Patrons browse through merchandise selections



Child learns to fabricate movable horse.



State Parks representatives Max Ullman, Logan Currin and Tracy Kosinski describe free escorted walks in the Delta



Anita Lo shows Boarding House merchandise to customers.

LOCKE BOARDING HOUSE MUSEUM OFFERS NEW PASSPORT PROGRAM

The Locke Boarding House Museum is pleased to announce the launch of the Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta National Heritage Area's Passport Program, a brand-new way to experience the cultural and natural riches of the California Delta.

California's first and only National Heritage Area (NHA) established Passport stamping stations as part of the "Passport to Your National Parks" program to inspire visitation and exploration of our unique and culturally significant region.

Encouraging travelers to "capture stories, preserve memories, and discover America's natural and historical treasures," the Passport Program provides stations at Delta venues where visitors can access free cancellation stamps to create a lasting memento of their adventures. Official passports may be purchased through the nonprofit partner of the National Park Service.

Delta NHA sites offering Passport cancellation stations, including the Locke Boarding House Museum, range from museums and libraries to California State Historic Parks and nature preserves. Locations span four of the five counties that make up the NHA: Sacramento County, Yolo County, Contra Costa County, and Solano County.

The Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta National Heritage Area was designated by Congress in 2019 and is managed by the Delta Protection Commission, which supports the region's economic development while preserving its historical and cultural significance.

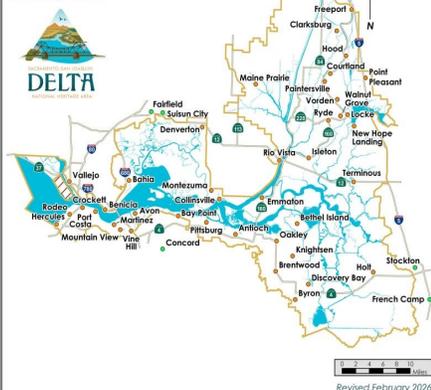
There are 62 National Heritage Areas across the United States. NHAs support historic preservation, natural resource conservation, recreation, heritage tourism, and educational initiatives through public-private partnerships.

THE SACRAMENTO-SAN JOAQUIN DELTA NATIONAL HERITAGE AREA

The Delta NHA extends from Sacramento to Stockton to Vallejo with the junction of the Sacramento and San Joaquin rivers at its heart.

The NHA includes portions of Contra Costa, Sacramento, San Joaquin, Solano, and Yolo counties, and 41 cities, Census-designated places and unincorporated areas.

For more information, go to:
delta.ca.gov/NHA



first and only National Heritage Area Passport Program," said Congressman Garamendi. "This exciting new initiative will inspire a new generation to explore the Delta's breathtaking landscapes, rich history, and vibrant communi-



Contra Costa County Supervisor Diane Burgis, U.S. Congressman John Garamendi, and NHA Advisory Committee Vice Chair Elizabeth Patterson placing the ceremonial "First Passport Stamp". (Photo by Stuart Walthall).

ties. Through the Passport Program, visitors can capture stories, preserve memories, and discover America's natural and cultural treasures in a hands-on way. I invite everyone to visit the Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta National Heritage Area and experience the Delta for themselves."



"The Passport program provides residents and visitors with a fun opportunity to explore the Delta and appreciate the tremendous variety of landscapes and communities within the NHA," says Delta Protection Commission Chair and Contra Costa County Supervisor Diane Burgis. "We are thrilled to be part of a popular National Park Service program that enhances the region's connection to America's important cultural, historic, and natural resources."

The Locke Boarding House Museum invites you to visit the museum, bring your Passport Book, learn more about the Delta National Heritage Program, and most of all - enjoy the historic and picturesque town of Locke, "The largest, most complete example of a rural agricultural Chinese American community in the United States".

National Park Service passport books can be purchased at most national park visitor centers, gift shops and bookstores. Alternately, you can buy them online through the America's National Parks online store. To learn more about the Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta National Heritage Area, view the NHA fact sheet and Management Plan (PDF), visit the Delta Protection Commission's website, or call (916) 375-4800.

Locke Foundation Offers Scholarships

The principal mission of the Locke Foundation is educating the public about the rich history and legacy of the town of Locke and the surrounding Sacramento River Delta. Included with this is telling the public about the compelling Chinese immigrant experience that played an important role in the history of California and the nation. An important part of this is involving young people in exploring their local history.

Mark Miller, chair of the Scholarship Committee, is pleased to announce the availability of three \$1,000 scholarships to be awarded to graduating seniors from Delta High School and Rio Vista High School. The deadline for applying for these grants is 5 pm, April 18, 2026. The scholarships will be awarded at the Locke Asian Pacific Spring Festival on May 9, 2026. Information on applying for these scholarships and the application forms are available at: www.locke-foundation.org/scholarship



2025 LF scholarship recipients honored at May 10, 2025 festival. Photo by Norval Chan



Locke Foundation is pleased to introduce our newest board member. A native of San Francisco, Jason Lundberg answered our call for someone to archive /catalog our growing inventory of artifacts. His background is in archaeology, history and conservation. A gentle giant, his work ethic and dedication have impressed his fellow volunteers. He joins a passionate and committed cohort of individuals who work tirelessly behind the scenes.

He is interested in Locke because it is one of the few historical sites that focuses on the lives of the working class of a particular era. Moreover, the social issues that fostered the historical mistreatment of Chinese immigrants is a lesson for future generations and custodians of the history the Chinese in California.

He would like to focus on the improvement and preservation of Locke's historical treasures, and how to best educate the public thorough them. His travels to many countries in Eastern Europe and Japan have given keen insight into how to organize exhibits to emphasize core educational points. The staging of artifacts must not only illustrate authenticity, but tell the story behind them.

Save the Date

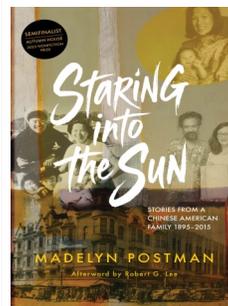
May 31, 2026 Sunday, 1-4 pm
The Pearl (River Rd Art Gallery)
13944 Main St. Locke



Joe Shoong was the first Chinese-American millionaire and founder of the National Dollar Stores. As a major champion of charitable causes, Shoong supported the Chinese School in Locke. His rise to fame began when he immigrated to Vallejo as a teenager from Zhongshan his village in Guangdong, China. His rags-to-riches story is legendary.

Joe Shoong, Founder of National Dollar Stores

The great-granddaughter of Joe Shoong, Madelyn Postman will be coming to Locke, all the way from the United Kingdom, to kick off the release of her book, *Staring into the Sun*, which chronicles the multi-generational legacy of the Shoong family in America and the reverberations of the Chinese Exclusion Act. The lecture will be in English; autographed books will be available for sale.



Following Ms. Postman's talk, there will be a question and answer period and a short intermission. The 30-minute *Voices* documentary will be shown. This film includes interviews with Chinese men and women of the Delta who raised families and survived the harsh social inequities in the mid-20th century milieu. Admission and parking are free.

For additional information about this event, you can email us at lockefoundation1915.org

Bay Area talk: Ms. Postman will also be speaking about her book at the Shoong Family Chinese Cultural Center in Oakland Chinatown on Sunday, May 31, 2026, from 1-3 pm. The venue is located at 316 9th St. Oakland, CA 94607. Please tell your family and friends.

For additional information, please contact Anna Sophie Loewenberg: office@shoongccc.org or (510) 452-1204.

Admission is free, but parking is not.

One Owyang's Family Legacy in the California Delta

By Sharon Fong in collaboration with Lili Ong Kan

My name is Sharon Wong Fong. I am the eldest grand-daughter of Gone Sing and Lum Shee Owyang, who retired to Locke in 1936. Gone Sing's father, Chong Ting, grew



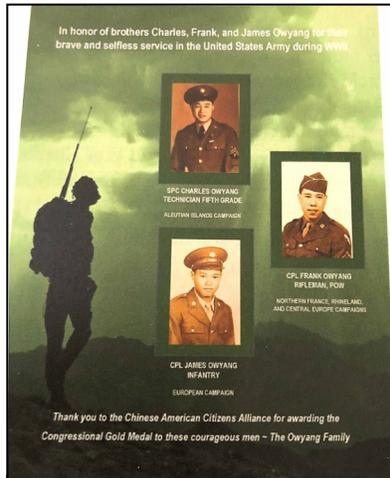
Family photo taken in 1927.

lychee fruit in Dai Liang village in southern China., which continues to grow and harvest lychee for over 2100 years.

Gone Sing, aka Goon Goon (Grandpa), farmed along the Sacramento River from 1914 to 1936. My grandmother Lum Shee, aka Pau Pau, arrived with their second son in December 1914. Eight children were born in America from 1915 to 1925.

I grew up in Isleton but traveled the 10 miles with my mother, Marion Owyang Wong, in the family car, a blue 1940s Chevrolet pickup truck, to Locke frequently to attend Sunday dinners and special holiday gatherings. It was during those times when I got to know my uncles, aunts, and first cousins. Exploring Locke with my first cousins was adventurous and exciting.

I dedicate this lecture to my brave and selfless uncles—Charles, Frank, and James, who served in the Army during WWII. They were among 20,000 Chinese Americans who volunteered their service. My uncles were individually honored and given a bronze replica of the Congressional Gold Medal in 2020. Charles and Frank had already passed away.



Poster for 3 uncles' military service in WW2 by Brenda Kaku.

My mother, Marion, was my "storyteller". Throughout life, she would share tidbits of her early years growing up—her schooling, the Depression years, the discrimination, etc. However, it was more intense when I lived full-time in her Isleton home during the last 7 years of her life.

It was only recently that I found my Owyang family to be one of the diplomats.

Gone Sing's father's first cousins, Ming Owyang, was the first consul general to America in the year 1885 during the Qing Dynasty.

Subsequent diplomats were King and his brother Kee Owyang. King was among the first group of students sent from China to study in America in 1872. He attended and graduated from Yale University.



Kathryn Owyang & Marion Owyang, with Friends

Marion and classmates, 1933



Grandfather's house on Key Street, painting by Randolph Choy.

Initially, Gone Sing worked in San Francisco in the garment industry. Later, he came to the Sacramento Delta, where many other Owyangs were working on pear orchards. With his limited English, he was a tenant sharecropper on various ranches along the Sacramento River.

Through the years, he farmed in Clarksburg, Freeport, Hood, Courtland, and Isleton, then retired in Locke in 1936.

My grandfather kept a detailed record in a small black notebook of each child's birth (where, when, what time, etc.) starting with "Charles Waylum" in 1915. He wrote partially in English and Chinese. My mother was born "Hang Sam" in 1916, as was written in the little black notebook. She didn't have an English name till she entered school. Her English name, Marion, was given to her by her teacher at Freeport School.

She later graduated from Isleton Oriental School in 1933 at the age of 16. She attended different schools during the family's various moves.

My "Goon Goon" finally retired in Locke in 1936. I remember his home on "Yih Guy", Cantonese words for "second street". It's called "Key St." now. There is a watercolor painting of their house in Locke by my first cousin's husband, Randolph Choy. Goon Goon lived there until his death in 1949.



Grandpa, Gong Sing Owyang, 1885-1949

My grandmother continued to live in Locke, gardening and attending activities such as being a member of the Women's Club at the Locke Christian Center. In 1959, she sold her home and went to live with her youngest child, James, in Sacramento. She died in 1964.

My fondest memory of my grandparents' home in Locke was "Sunday Dinners with Pau Pau". Here is a portion of my article published in Locke Centennial Book. (My Owyang family was one of fishermen and good cooks. My uncles and aunties would come into Locke on the weekend. The men usually went fishing at their favorite fishing hole and frequently came home with a variety of fish, depending on the season. Seldom would they come home "skunked",



Pau Pau, Grandma, Lum Shee Owyang (1887-1964)



Locke Women's Club, 1950; Lum Shee on second row on the left.

(which I later learned was not catching a single fish). The fish I remember were black bass, striped bass, catfish, sturgeon, and perch. Many times, they were brought home, still alive, the hook still attached to their mouth. The fish would be scaled and cleaned in the back of the house.)

Pau Pau cooked the fish in various ways, whether fried, steamed, or stir-fried. Sometimes the striped bass would be eaten raw in a salad of iceberg lettuce, cilantro, minced green onions, and peanuts. Sometimes white vinegar and dark sesame oil were lightly sprinkled on the salad.

Early Chinese came to America during the Gold Rush. Their labor was needed in the completion of the transcontinental railroad. It was the Chinese who built the primitive levees in the Sacramento Delta, eventually being the workers to bring agricultural growth to California. My grandfather was one of the Chinese workers who contributed to agricultural growth in California.

As a tenant sharecropper, my grandfather was given a house for his family, which accommodated 8 children born in America. My mother remembers being poor but eating well. Fruits and vegetables were plentiful. Chicken and pigs were raised. Although it was grandmother who did much of the cooking, Marion recalled her father making wonton

soup. She remembered sitting upstairs, anxiously looking forward to a midnight snack, "Siu Yeah".

It was important to the family that the boys attend high school, so Marion stayed on the farm and helped her mother with daily chores.

Marion married my father, Sing Wong, in 1936. Together, they first started a business, "National Grocery" in Isleton. Two years later, my parents opened another business, "National Cafe". However, since my father was not a U.S. citizen, he was unable to obtain an alcohol beverage license; my mother, at the age of 21, had to purchase the license for "National Cafe". My parents operated the beer and wine tavern until 1972.

Marion also worked outside her home in the nearby cannery, attaining the status of "forelady". Though she only finished 8th grade in Oriental school at the age of 16 in 1933, an opportunity to be in charge of the payroll for a farm labor contractor came about in the late 1950s for Marion. Mexican Braceros picked tomatoes during the harvest season. She was capable of filing her own tax returns all her life. Through her years living in Isleton, Marion helped many Chinese in the community as a translator. In fact, she helped many to register and become voters.

In 1995, Marion was appointed "Grand Marshall" in Isleton's Chinese New Year celebration. Marion passed away in 2009 at the age of 93. She lived in Isleton for close to 77 years.



Marion was "Grand Marshall" in 1995 Isleton Chinese New Year Parade.

In 2004, I planned the first Owyang Reunion in Isleton. My mother had told me that all Owyangs were related, regardless of how the surname was spelled. I started out with the addresses of Owyangs from my mother's address book. I sought out email addresses. More than 200 people attended, mostly from San Francisco, the Bay Area, and Sacramento. Since then, there have been 6 reunions in different locations. The 20th anniversary reunion was held in Isleton in October, 2024. Close to 100 attended.

As a 3rd generation Chinese American, I am proud of my heritage in the Sacramento River Chinatowns, including Locke. I am proud of my brave and risk-taking grandfather who chose to come to America for a better future. I am indebted to my pioneer, hardworking grandmother who taught me the importance of family and the manners and ways of being a good granddaughter. My grandparents are a part of Locke history, the history of Chinese families living and prospering in their own separate community, their home of "LOCKEE".

Note: Currently, Sharon Fong is on the Isleton Museum Board and docent on the 4th Saturday of each month. She leads group tours for seniors to both Locke and Isleton, by reservation only.

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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