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## **LOS ANGELES CHINATOWN LIBRARY WAS A 12-YEAR DREAM**

by MARION BARTOO

Where would you expect to find a public library that evolved from under the roof of a school? A neighborhood branch library that contains some 37,000 items. Books in Chinese and English, a Chinese American collection and collections in the Spanish and Vietnamese languages as well? A library partly funded by a community whose hunger for books was so great it donated \$227,000 toward the cost?

The answer would be the expanded Chinatown Branch Library in Los Angeles. It began with one person's request in 1971 and saw fruition in a dedication ceremony on April 18 when a squalling rainstorm failed to dampen the spirits of city dignitaries, the Friends of Chinatown, honored donors and the general public who crowded the cozy, modern 12,000 square foot facility that can house up to 45,000 items.

The person whose dream this was 12 years ago is Dr. Ruby Ling Louie, who holds a Ph.D. in Library Science from the University of Southern California. Her own children were then attending Castelar Elementary School in Chinatown.

On days when she did not have to commute to her job as an elementary school librarian in Long Beach, Dr. Louie typically served as a volunteer in the Castelar School library. It was then that she became acutely aware of the great need of the community of Chinese American people to have their own branch library.

Her vision was spurred by Aksel G. S. Josephson, a Swedish American bibliographer of Lenox Library, New York, who once wrote in a professional journal that to make good citizens of foreign immigrants was "to provide them with books in their own language and about their old country. . . .

When the immigrant has been accustomed to find his way to the public library, he will soon begin to read about his new country, to become more and more acquainted with the new conditions under which he is to live."

With this goal in mind Dr. Louie started on the long path to seeing her dream become a reality. Of course she did not do it alone. In December 1976 a dedicated group of volunteers was formed: The Friends of the Chinatown Library. Dr. Louie served as their president, with Mrs. Dolores Wong as vice president and fundraiser.



Dolores Wong (left) and Dr. Ruby Ling Louie proudly examine a Chinese-style book signed by over one thousand borrowers at the newly expanded Chinatown Branch Library in Los Angeles, California.

*Photo by Marion Bartoo*

A survey conducted by Dr. Louie in 1973-75 had shown the need for providing an information center for Chinatown residents. This study helped the L.A. city government to agree to establish a local branch of the City Public Library. An ad hoc committee was organized by Joyce Law, then director of the Chinatown Service Center, and Dr. Louie to find a site. The one finally chosen was the Castelar School auditorium, once earthquake damaged and restored in 1955. Principal of the school, Dr. William Chun-Hoon was immediately receptive to the proposal.

The L.A. city government, L.A. Unified School District Board of Library Commissioners and Friends harnessed their efforts and the Chinatown Branch Public Library was first opened on Feb. 7, 1977. However, it was immediately obvious that this renovated school auditorium would not fill the needs of the community. In just two months permanent status had been reached by meeting the 30,000 volume circulation quota. Now an expanded facility was necessary.

Two city Housing and Community Development grants were applied by the Friends. It was decided to rebuild the library on the same site. In

another team agreement the site was offered, rent free, by the Board of Education and City Council. The expansion was begun on July 27, 1981. The overall cost was estimated at \$876,000. Choy and Choy associates were chosen as the architects.

The project was \$227,000 short, so the Friends began a fundraising drive to supply that amount. Through a community Benefit Dinner (which raised \$120,000), proceeds from a book fair and individual contributions which came as far away as Hong Kong and Taiwan as well as all over California, the Friends succeeded in raising this amount.

On April 10, a week before the formal dedication, a Special Preview was held for all the 350 Friends and donors whose efforts had helped bring about the newly expanded library. This was a "family party" and the book-lined aisles hummed with murmurs of quiet joy and appreciation.



L.A. Chinese Music Association entertains donors and Friends at the Special Preview of the newly expanded Chinatown Branch Library.

*Photo by Munson Kwok*

Stepping through the big double blue doors on the corner of College and Yale streets, one enters a foyer where the walls gleam with the names of the donors who have endowed the library with gifts and memorial contributions. Their names will fill a volume. Inside, what had once been an area of only 2,600 square feet is now 12,000, with an airy central reading room where the light flows down from the skylights high above.

A gracefully curving stair to one side leads to the mezzanine where special areas with partly partitioned desks invite study. There are conference and community rooms leading off the mezzanine and beneath are two

wings, one of which now houses the Castelar School Library. Another wing houses the Microfiche and Multimedia Language Learning Collections.



Mr. and Mrs. Robert Jung and family are given a guided tour by Dolores Wong of the Library Reading Area donated by the Jungs in memory of their son, Brian.

*Photo by Munson Kwok*

The children's section nestles under the mezzanine at the end where a drawing done for the children of Chinatown by author Leo Politi adorns a wall.

There was standing room only on all levels with officiating dignitaries on one side of the mezzanine and television cameras filling the stairway on dedication day. Speakers included Mayor Tom Bradley, Councilman Gilbert W. Lindsay, Wyman Jones, city librarian and members of the Board of Education, Board of Library Commissioners, Board of Education and Unified School District, introduced by Beulah Quo, Mistress of Ceremonies.

Speeches were sparked by a Lion Dance by third grade students, accompanied with drum and firecrackers (set off outside) and a colorful Fan Dance.

In her speech Dr. Louie expressed her "jubilation" and mentioned her beloved parents, Mr. and Mrs. Tsin Nan Ling who had come to the United States in the 1920s and whose teachings and example inspired her own life goals. She hoped that the example set by the realization of the Chinatown Library would be an incentive to all other communities to do likewise and establish their own centers of information and study.

A plaque of appreciation from the Board of Education and Library Commissioners was presented to the Friends, also a book to be treasured:

of Chinese-red velvet binding with gold plate enscribed to the Friends of the Chinatown Library and signed by over a thousand borrowers, young and old. It had been compiled with patient care by Branch Librarian, Juliana Cheng, and staff, and will be a lasting symbol of the achievement an entire community had played a part in seeing born.

**AUTHOR:** Marion Bartoo is a composer, lyricist, writer, poet, lecturer, volunteer, former teacher and 1981 co-winner of the Volunteer Activist Award with Dr. Ruby Ling Louie. Mrs. Bartoo was a friend of the Chinatown Branch Library even before the Friends was organized. On a visit to a library in Hong Kong, Mrs. Bartoo presented the library there with a book by Leo Politi. In return, she was given a book of poetry which she accepted and then donated to our Chinatown Branch Library.

*NOTE: Dr. Ruby Ling Louie, Mrs. Dolores Wong, Mr. & Mrs. Robert Jung and photographer Munson Kwok are all active members of the Chinese Historical Society of Southern California.*

## LIBRARY DEDICATION WELCOME

by RUBY LING LOUIE, Ph.D.

On behalf of the Friends of the Chinatown Library, it is my jubilant privilege to say, "Welcome to our central city community and neighborhood library!"

It is indeed because of the team cooperation of our Los Angeles City, library and school agencies, and our many private supporters that PUBLIC LIBRARY AND INFORMATION SERVICE in Chinatown today is ALIVE AND WELL!

At this moment, I feel extremely humble to have been born in America of early Chinese immigrant parents whose *overwhelming satisfaction* was to have taken full advantage of the public education offered to their children ONLY IN AMERICA, AND to have contributed IN RETURN four exemplary *universal* citizens to this, their adopted country.

I believe this was the underlying spirit of the Friends of the Chinatown Library who have so PERSISTENTLY VOLUNTEERED in this joint venture. For we have not only created a LIVING NEIGHBORHOOD BRANCH LIBRARY, but more importantly we have provided an ever continuing source for community pride and self esteem as Chinatown newcomers and the native born, once again, have the uniquely American opportunity to become an integral part of the total American society.

In our professional journal almost one hundred years ago, a controversial question was debated by librarians as well it might be today when you visit our library and are confronted with a mass of "foreign materials" not found in your neighborhood library. The question was: Is the public library's mission to create and to perpetuate the basis for the American way of life, which unites all peoples into good Americans and good citizens through what I would like to call, INTERNATIONAL BOOKS?

We, the Friends, agree wholeheartedly with the 1894 Swedish American bibliographer of Lenox Library who responded to his negative proponents by asking, and I quote: "How is *good* citizenship to be promoted among foreign immigrants? Shall they cut off all connections with their past, never read their own literature, abolish the use of their old language? Is it supposed that people who could do this would make GOOD citizens?"

The best way, he answered, was "to provide them with books in their own languages and about their old country, a subject that naturally interests the man who lives apart from it. When the immigrant has been accustomed to find his way to the public library, he WILL SOON BEGIN to read about his NEW COUNTRY, to become more and more acquainted with the NEW CONDITIONS under which he is to live."

Anyone now wishing to bear witness to the truth of this basic democratic process needs only stand on any street corner in our neighborhood,

as I did recently. I saw a HIGH SCHOOL immigrant girl walk by my apartment preciously clutching library copies of *Henry and Ribsy* and *Ellen Tebbits*! It would have been gratifying if I could be assured that some children's librarian had hold this young newcomer that the author of those ELEMENTARY, stepping-stone books to Americana happens to be a living California resident, though born in Oregon! Now surely, my parents and mentors here and in spirit would say, "Ruby, a job well done, BUT will you please get back to work and try to help public AND school library service for EVERY CHILD?"

In conclusion, I thank you for coming and invite you to visit our library when it is open to the public. Then I hope you will immediately visit your own neighborhood library, in honor of National Library Week, to check if it is as "alive and well" as ours. And if it is NOT, I plead with you to take it upon YOURSELF as the Chinatown Library Friends have, to care enough to DO something positive to make it so. Then truly, this Chinatown Branch Library experience will become a constructive example for other neighborhoods all over this great city to achieve the same possibilities for themselves.

## THE EXCLUSION ACT OF 1882: A CHINESE-AMERICAN PERSPECTIVE

by DR. LOREN B. CHAN

*Dr. Loren Chan is an electronics technician in the computer industry. From 1970 to 1981, Dr. Chan taught in the California State University system, first at Northridge, then Hayward and at San Jose where, for several years he was Associate Professor of History. His field has been in American History, Chinese American History, and Modern Chinese History. Dr. Chan presented the following paper at the Society's May, 1982 dinner meeting.*

It is not often that I am asked to participate in a commemorative observance of a past event that had a decidedly negative effect on the Chinese in the United States. The passage of the Chinese Exclusion Act on May 6, 1882 was such an event, and so it is with rather mixed emotions that I will attempt to present you with one man's interpretation of the law's historical impact. I speak tonight as a student of history and as a Chinese-American. This having been said, let us now proceed to the subject at hand.

One hundred years ago, California and the rest of the United States were caught up in a maelstrom of anti-Chinese sentiment. Anti-Chinese legislation was being proposed at both the state and national levels. In Congress, for example, seven exclusion bills were introduced. California, with approximately one-eighth of its population consisting of Chinese, took the lead in demanding an end to the free immigration of Chinese to the United States. One of its U.S. Senators, John F. Miller, initially called for a twenty-year prohibition on further immigration of Chinese laborers, citing the horrors of the so-called "coolie" trade and using stock arguments about the unfair economic competition and culturally unassimilable nature of Chinese laborers. Miller received political support from his Senate colleagues representing the solidly Democratic, "redeemed" South. Miller's bill easily passed both houses of Congress, but was vetoed by President Chester A. Arthur, who believed in allowing the eastern states the option of having access to Chinese immigrant labor in the future.

The reaction in California was swift. Negative criticism of his veto became widespread. Not to be deterred, white politicians continued to press for some kind of Chinese exclusion legislation. Within two weeks after Arthur's veto, four new exclusion bills were introduced in the House of Representatives.

Ultimately, one such bill did pass both houses of Congress; and Arthur, a chief executive not blind to the directions from which the political winds were blowing, signed it into law. We know this law as the Chinese Exclusion Act of May 6, 1882. For those of you who are interested, the text of the law

may be found in the United States *Statutes at Large*, volume 22, pages 58 to 61. Most college, university, and law libraries have this volume.

The law begins with the following proviso:

Whereas, in the opinion of the Government of the United States the coming of Chinese laborers to this country endangers the good order of certain localities within the territory thereof. . . .

Thereafter, the text of the law spells out in detail the suspension of the immigration of Chinese laborers for ten years and reaffirms previous legislation and judicial decisions prohibiting the naturalization of Chinese resident aliens.

Who was considered a laborer? Section 15 of the 1882 law defined a laborer as any skilled or unskilled worker, and anyone employed in mining. That meant that Chinese students, government officials, and businessmen might still enter the United States and stay for relatively short, fixed periods of time; but for the vast numbers of Chinese who had the greatest *reason* to emigrate from their homeland and sojourn abroad, the American door was legally close.

Historically, the 1882 law is unique in several ways. First of all, its enactment marked the first time in American history when a federal law that was directed toward a single ethnic and racial group for the sole purpose of preventing their free entry into this country was passed. The only thing that comes close would be the 1808 provision in the U.S. Constitution which prohibited congressional interference with the West African slave trade until the year 1808. But the 1808 provision was concerned with the buying and selling of enslaved individuals from European colonies in Africa or from parts of that continent which the American government did not consider to be sovereign entities. The 1882 law, however, was aimed at curbing the further entry of free Chinese who came from a sovereign nation with which the United States had diplomatic relations and to which the United States was bound by bilateral treaties. Even those Chinese who *were* contract laborers voluntarily chose such status, and the exclusionist comparison of Chinese contract laborers with West African slaves was at best a grossly misleading one.

Once the door to Chinese immigration was closed, it remained closed, save for those classes of people which the law did not cover. This brings us, then, to the 1882 law's second point of historical significance. It must be emphasized that the law is a landmark in Chinese-American history, because it spawned a succession of related laws that made Chinese exclusion not a matter of a mere ten years, but permanent. The list of subsequent Chinese exclusion legislation includes the Scott Act of 1888, the Geary Act of 1892, the exclusion laws of 1902 and 1904, and the National Origins Act of 1924. No move was made to lift the various bans on Chinese immigration and naturalization until 1943 when the United States — in wartime as an ally of

the Republic of China – conceded to a *racial* quota (as opposed to a national origins quota) of 105 Chinese immigrants annually. It would take until the 1960s for the remaining racially discriminatory immigration laws against the Chinese to be lifted.

But between the administration of President Chester A. Arthur and those of Presidents John F. Kennedy and Lyndon B. Johnson – a period of about eighty years – the Chinese community in the United States had to live under the onus of racial discrimination as institutionalized in the various Chinese exclusion acts and later restrictive immigration laws. This brings us to the 1882 law's third point of historical significance. It and subsequent laws like it had a definite impact on the size, characteristics, and outlook of the Chinese community. The laws determined whether the community could grow, shrink, or remain a constant size. They determined whether it would be a community of stable families or be composed predominantly of male laborers. And they shaped the attitudes of several generations of American-born Chinese regarding their place and future in American society. It is this third point of the 1882 law's historical significance to which I would like to turn.

I believe that the law and those of a similar vein which followed it accomplished their basic purpose, namely, to prevent the growth of the Chinese population in the United States. A small Chinese community – denied the opportunity to grow through immigration or through natural increase because of its predominantly male composition – would ultimately die of attrition and old age. The plan worked as intended, only maybe not as completely as white American politicians envisioned. A look at United States census figures shows that the Chinese population increased in a fairly linear fashion from 1860, when there were about 35,000, to 1890, when a high of approximately 107,000 was reached. Thereafter, we can clearly see the effects of Chinese exclusion legislation. After 1890 and lasting until 1920, there was a fairly linear *decrease* in the size of the Chinese community, until by the latter year there were only around 62,000 Chinese residing in the contiguous 48 states. This means that after the 1882 law took effect (and was later renewed by other laws) more Chinese left this country than entered it.

We must remember that many Chinese who immigrated to the United States did not consider themselves as immigrants, but only as sojourners. At least half of them were married and had wives and families in China. They left their homeland originally to go abroad and work, save, and send remittances home. After having made their fortunes in America, they hoped to return to China to live out the remainder of their lives. Therefore as the years passed, the exclusion laws took effect, and the Chinese sojourners got older, the size of the Chinese community naturally decreased.

The community remained overwhelmingly male, and overwhelmingly China-born. Respectable, married Chinese women were not expected to go

abroad. The number of Chinese women in the United States during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries remained exceedingly small. This meant that the American-born Chinese population also was extremely small.

But try as American politicians did to prohibit Chinese immigration, they did not succeed in destroying the Chinese community in this country. After 1920 and until about the 1940s, the Chinese population increased only slightly, and a good part of such growth was through natural increase.

Many American-born Chinese entered this world and came of age during those years, and their lives were definitely shaped by the effects of the 1882 law. This usually meant growing up in a Chinatown, or on "the wrong side of the tracks" in small town America. This meant being a Chinese-speaking monolingual or a bilingual. It meant being bicultural, or at least trying to be. Maybe your father was an alien, barred under American law from becoming a naturalized United States citizen because of his race and birthplace. Maybe he had purchased false immigration papers and had a "paper surname" as well as his real one. The Caucasian world knew you as a "Fong," but your Chinese friends knew you were really a "Chin." If it wasn't confusing, then at least maybe it was a little bit funny, or strange!

Growing up in the depression decade of the 1930s as an American-born Chinese meant going to school, getting an education, and working at whatever kind of job one could get, but *not* like everyone else. Because in addition to the economic hard times which most Americans faced, a Chinese-American had to fight the codified racism and racist mind set of the America of that day. What could a college educated Chinese-American hope to do? Civil service and other government positions at the local, state and federal levels generally were closed to persons of Chinese descent. Labor unions routinely barred Chinese from membership. The best that one could hope for would be to work at some sort of retail small business in a Chinatown, or at some kind of menial task in the world beyond the confines of Chinatown in urban, small town, and rural America. Maybe after years of hard work, a family might open a small cafe or restaurant, or maybe a small laundry business.

In the 1930s, employment opportunities were so hard to find that a small number of American-born Chinese college students actually pondered whether their futures were to be made in China or the United States. Their fathers were mostly immigrants, and they grew up as bilinguals; some were even biliterate. Contrast those individuals with the American-born Chinese youths of today!

Recently, a cousin of mine, a third generation American-born Chinese, told me about his plans to attend law school after his graduation from the University of California at Berkeley. We started to converse, and he communicated to me his sense of wonder as to why there aren't too many Chinese-American lawyers. My cousin had grown up without learning to understand, speak, read, or write Chinese, and had attended the public

schools through community college in Contra Costa County in northern California. In his years of schooling he had never been taught the history of the Chinese-Americans. Like all good students, he took his required survey courses in United States history, complete with their transitory and solitary references to the Chinese role in building the Central Pacific Railroad. Naturally, he knew nothing about the 1882 exclusion act and subsequent laws of a similar stamp.

Why so few Chinese lawyers? Turn the clock back to the 1930s, 1940s, and 1950s. Imagine yourself as an impressionable American-born Chinese youngster. What did the law mean? What did government mean? The law meant the Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882 and similar measures. It meant the application of the "separate but equal" doctrine in public education where significant numbers of non-whites resided — including the Chinese. It meant not being able to work at a government job despite being a native-born citizen — just because of one's racial ancestry.

It was the law that prevented family members in China and America from being united here. It was the law that denied either or both of your China-born parents from becoming naturalized American citizens. It was the law that prevented you from speaking out against racist persecution and harassment — after all, your resident alien parents could always be deported as undesirables.

In America, the so-called "land of the free," contacts with the law and government were to be avoided if at all possible, for such contacts inevitably meant trouble. The laws were stacked against the Chinese in this country. In the supposedly egalitarian United States as in despotic imperial China and in warlord-ridden republican China, government meant authority, taxation, conscription in wartime, and little else. Why would a Chinese-American want to be an attorney, of all things? To be a lawyer would mean handling immigration and divorce cases for non-English-speaking residents of Chinatown and not much more. How many lawyers of this type could the small Chinese community support? Not many. In addition, those Chinese who *were* faced with their day in an American court often preferred a white lawyer. After all, it was the white man's government, the white man's court, and the white man's law. Why not employ the services of a white lawyer, whose word might mean more than that of a Chinese-American?

After listening to this type of explanation, my third generation monolingual cousin came to know what the perceptions and outlook of a second generation, bilingual, American-born Chinese are. Twenty years, one generation on our respective paternal sides, and a knowledge of the Chinese spoken and written languages separate us, although we are both members of the same extended family and native northern Californians. In my case, I was born in the 1940s, and formed my earliest impressions of life in the 1940s and 1950s. My cousin was not born until the early 1960s. I grew up knowing about the long-term effects of anti-Chinese legislation on the Chinese-American community, whereas my cousin escaped such experiences.

For any Chinese-American who has endured the real long-term legacy of the Chinese Exclusion Act, it would seem easy to pass judgment about the law's inherently unethical nature and racist intent. I have done so many times, both in public and in private. But to approach an historical subject with absolute and inflexible standards of moral judgment is to make the majority of our past seem like an infinitely long tale of woe. Also, for us to use the political, legal, and social values and standards of the 1980s in assessing a law passed in the 1880s is perhaps to misread history. In other words, what I am saying is that for us to develop a sound and balanced view of the 1882 Chinese Exclusion Act, we must avoid making anachronistic and morally absolute judgments. I think that most of us know that in so far as questions regarding race and political equality in American history are concerned, standards of right and wrong are relative to time and place.

Well then, in what kind of historical context did the 1882 law emerge? In other words, what were the world, America, and China like in the late nineteenth century? Only if we are aware of the broader picture of reality of that era can we understand *why* a bill such as that which President Arthur signed could have been passed.

From the long view of history and in the context of western civilization, the late nineteenth century may be considered the culmination of the several-centuries-long process of overseas expansion, settlement, colonization, and economic imperialism. The process started by the exploits of early explorers like Bartolomew Dias, Vasco de Gama, and Christopher Columbus in the late fifteenth century had run its course. By the late nineteenth century, the western European "Big Five" powers of Renaissance times (i.e., England, France, Spain, Portugal, and the Netherlands) still had colonial empires of various sizes, and had been joined in the centuries-long contest to acquire overseas possessions by newly unified nation-states like Germany and Italy. Rationales for European overseas expansionism changed from the extension of Christianity and the divine rights of kings to the more mundane ideas of the nineteenth century English philosopher Herbert Spencer (1820-1903), who modified Charles Darwin's "survival of the fittest" theory of natural selection and applied it not just to the world of animals, but also to the realm of human beings.

Social Darwinism — as Spencer's thought became known — provided the justification not only for European colonialism and imperialism, but also for urbanization and industrialization in western Europe and the United States. Europe and America had "the white man's burden" of ruling over the supposedly "inferior" nonwhite peoples of Africa, Asia, and Oceania. And in the United States, even after slavery was abolished and all black Americans were supposedly free, there were still the Indians to be suppressed, the Chinese to be excluded, and so forth.

We all recognize that the late nineteenth century was *the* time when the United States took part in the Industrial Revolution as a leader, rivaled

only by Great Britain. In 1860, the American population was 31 million; by 1898, it was 76 million. In about forty years, then, the population more than doubled, and a good part of the increase was accounted for by European immigration. The new immigrants came not only from northern and western Europe as in previous periods, but also from central and eastern Europe and the Mediterranean basin. Many of these Europeans wound up in the American West where — as in other parts of the country then and before — wealth was produced through the use of cheap labor.

In 1882, the West was only partially settled. Much of it was still a frontier. Only California, Oregon, Nevada, and Colorado were organized as states. In the Southwest, Geronimo was leading the Apache resistance to the advancement of white settlement, and the Mormons in Utah were fighting their own peculiar battle against the federal government to preserve and protect their sacred ordinance of polygamy.

California had the largest Chinese population of any of the states due to its gold rush heritage. One eighth of its population was Chinese. In fact, the Chinese were the state's most visible nonwhite minority.

The white population of California and other parts of the West consisted to a considerable degree of European immigrants. In 1870, for example, the California labor force consisted of about 40% native white Americans, 35% European immigrants, and 25% Chinese. As the early euphoria of the gold rush evaporated during the Civil War era and later the depression decade of the 1870s, this European immigrant sector joined with white Americans of midwestern, eastern, and southern origins to demand Chinese exclusion. All of this is not to say that anti-Chinese prejudice was lacking in California at the time of the gold rush when many of the early Chinese arrived here — far from it. Discriminatory mining tax laws, exclusion from the unionized trades, public school segregation, and other types of unfair treatment faced the Chinese even before the 1870s.

But it did take several decades of the Chinese presence in California and elsewhere in the West for enough anti-Chinese feeling to fester and grow to such a point to where political move to enact a national Chinese exclusion law could succeed.

By the 1880s, each section of the country had its own racial or ethnic "problem." The West had its Chinese and Indians; the South, its blacks; and the East, its steady influx of Roman Catholic, Jewish, and other so-called "undesirable" immigrants from Europe. It took intersectional political compromising for the Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882 to be passed, but the law's enactment did show that the West had achieved political equality as a region of the country. The political agreement reached also indicated that there existed a national intersectional consensus regarding the social and perhaps economic undesirability of nonwhites and anyone not fitting the white, Anglo-Saxon Protestant mold. All of this, then, was the America of the late nineteenth century. And what was China like?

Historians generally agree that the *entire* nineteenth century was a period of dynastic decline for its Ch'ing ruling house. After China's defeat in the Opium War, then followed by the T'ai-p'ing Rebellion, the T'ung-chih Restoration, the Self-strengthening Movement, further defeats by the European powers, and finally, to close out the century, defeat at the hands of Japan in the 1890s. Clearly, China's Manchu rulers were not in control, as foreign imperialists steadily encroached on the nation's sovereignty and internal political stability seemed nonexistent for considerable periods of time in various parts of the country. Kwangtung province in South China felt the brunt of the Opium War, was exposed first and longest to western imperialism, and gave birth to both the T'ai-p'ing Rebellion and the Republican Revolution of 1911. It is also the province from which came most of the Chinese immigrants to the United States prior to the 1960s.

Amongst the peasantry in rural districts of Kwangtung like T'aishan and Chungshan, for example, the urge to emigrate and sojourn abroad only increased as the years of the nineteenth century passed. The Manchu rulers of the Chinese Empire were demonstrating their increasing inability to cope with the twin threats of western technology and western military aggression on the traditional Chinese way of life. Throughout those years, the Golden Mountain (or *gum-saan*, as San Francisco and California were popularly called in Kwangtung) remained a destination for the sojourners, some of whom remained in the United States as immigrants.

If life was difficult for them to bear in the United States, it was even more difficult in China. In America, at least, there was the hope of enjoying the fruits of one's labor — limited though those fruits may have been, and limited though employment opportunities may also have been. America must have had something to offer, otherwise the Chinese would not have come. Moreover, once here, a considerable number decided to stay, despite the reality of exclusion and other discriminatory legislation.

Through their toil, courage, and perseverance, these immigrants formed the backbone of the Chinese community in the United States. They and their progeny endured exclusion and other attempts to suppress both their human dignity and their presence as a step in the United States. Through all of their years of suffering, their rights were furthered neither by the Chinese nor the American governments. Manchu-ruled imperial China was in decline throughout the nineteenth century; and the republican government that succeeded it in 1912 continued to be plagued by military impotence in the face of foreign aggression, factionalism, warlordism, and civil war. And the American government, reflecting the will of the majority of its white constituents, made Chinese exclusion its permanent policy through periodic renewals and then an indefinite extension of the 1882 law.

Now that we understand more about the world, the United States, and China in 1882, I think that, we, living in 1982, can say this much about the Chinese Exclusion Act. In the context of its time and place, its enactment

is completely understandable. Relative to the ethos of late nineteenth-century America, there was no sense of conscience aroused among white Americans over any wrong or injustice being done. Anti-Chinese racism was politically fashionable, morally acceptable, and economically realistic to the majority of white Americans whether they were native-born citizens, naturalized citizens, or resident aliens newly arrived from Europe.

However, to excuse in this way those who agitated for Chinese exclusion is not entirely proper. We can avoid being anachronistic, and we can avoid being moral absolutists, but we can *still* say that the 1882 law was wrong and unethical. We can do this if we adopt a Chinese-American perspective.

The 1882 law and laws like it were aimed at a *specific* group of people, and their lives in many cases were forever affected by such statutes. In this way, I think, we can better understand how and why the 1882 law came about, without neglecting the very real impact it had on the many Chinese who came here – some of whom left to return to China, and others of whom remained here to make a future for themselves and their posterity.

After reviewing the historical record, I find that it is indeed *fitting* for us to be gathered here this evening to commemorate the centennial of the passage of the Chinese Exclusion Act. For without an appreciation of the past and what our forebears had to endure, we cannot know how far we have come, how much we have changed, and what we must still strive to achieve as Chinese-Americans, and, more simply, just as Americans.

Los Angeles Public Library  
Chinatown Branch

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This study focused on the settlement patterns of the Chinese in Butte County from the Gold Rush Days to 1920.
- California History, special issue: the Chinese in California. S.F., California Historical Soc., 1978. (979.4 C152-1)  
The entire Spring 1978 issue of *California History* focused on the Chinese in California.
- Cather, Helen Virginia. History of San Francisco's Chinatown. Thesis, U. of Calif., 1932. Reprinted by R & E Research Asso., 1974. (301.450951 C363)  
This book covered the Chinese in San Francisco before 1870, the Kearney period, the economic life of Chinatown before the fire of 1906 and the New Chinatown.
- Chen, Jack. Chinese of America. S.F., Harper and Row, 1980. (301.450951 C5177)  
This history of the Chinese in America was written by a Chinese who only "immigrated" to the U.S. in 1977. Jack Chen, born a British citizen in Trinidad, lived and worked in China for 20 years before coming to the U.S. He is the author of *A Year in Upper Felicity*.
- Chen, Julia I. Hsuan. Chinese community in New York: a study in their cultural adjustment, 1920-1940. Dissertation, American Univ., Washington, 1941. Reprinted by R & E Research Assoc., 1974. (301.450951 C518)  
A general study of New York's Chinatown - the life and activities, its philosophy and behavior, its social, educational and religious institutions, its occupations, its second generation problems, its relations with the adopted country and its connection with the Fatherland.
- Chiu, Ping. Chinese labor in California, 1850-1880: an economic study. Madison, Wisconsin, U. of Wisconsin, 1963. (331.62 C543)  
This study analyzed the role of the Chinese immigrants within the framework of the general economic development of California. Emphasis was placed upon the timing of their entry and exit, the wage level, and the number of percentage of Chinese in the major industries, together with their relation to the changing regional and national economy in the period 1848-1880.
- Chow, Willard T. The reemergence of an inner city: the pivot of Chinese settlement in the East Bay Region of the San Francisco Bay Area. S.F., R & E Research Asso., 1977. (301.450951 C552)  
This study was a 1974 Univ. of Calif., Berkeley dissertation on Oakland's Chinatown. The research was conducted from 1971 to 1974 on urban ethnicity and the way in which it was affected by public policies.
- Chu, Daniel. Passage to the Golden Gate: a history of the Chinese in America to 1910. N.Y., Doubleday, 1967. (325.251 C559)  
This book on the history of the Chinese in the U.S. from the very beginning to 1910 was written especially for the juvenile audience.

Chu, Li-min. Images of China and the Chinese in the *Overland Monthly*, 1868-1875, 1883-1935. Dissertation, Duke Univ., 1965. Reprinted by R & E Research Asso., 1974. (951.03 C559)

The author examined all issues of the San Francisco literary magazine *Overland Monthly* for articles, poems, stories and editorials that contained references to China or the Chinese. He presented them in a summarized version arranged by several interest areas and characterized the writers' approaches or intents and evaluated the images formed by these articles.

Coolidge, Mary Elizabeth. Chinese immigration. N.Y., Holt, 1909. (325.251 C774)

Courtney, William J. San Francisco's anti-Chinese ordinances, 1850-1900. Dissertation, U. of San Francisco, 1956. Reprinted by R & E Research, 1974. (325.1151 C865)

This dissertation analyzed the local San Francisco enactments from 1850-1900 with regards to the following factors: motivating causes, circumstances and contemporary comment, the legal disposition of each enactment and a conclusive statement of significance.

Dicker, Laverne Mau. Chinese in San Francisco: a pictorial history. N.Y., Dover Publications, 1979. (979.42 S2241Dic)

A pictorial work consisting mostly of b/w photos telling the story of the Chinese in S.F.

Dobie, Charles Caldwell. San Francisco's Chinatown. N.Y., Appleton-Century, 1936. (979.42 S2241Oo-1)

This is mainly a series of word pictures of S.F.'s Chinatown accompanied by sketches. The author's hope was to catch Chinatown's quality and charm and put it in a permanent form "before it completely disintegrated."

Edson, Christopher Howard. Chinese in Eastern Oregon, 1860-1890. S.F., R & E Research Asso., 1974. (325.251 E24)

Using the U.S. Census Reports for 1860, 1870, and 1880, the author identified the numbers, occupations, ages and sex of the immigrants in Eastern Oregon and examined their influence upon Baker, Grant, Umatilla, Union and Wasco Counties.

Fan, Tin-chiu. Chinese residents in Chicago. Dissertation, U. of Chicago, 1926. Reprinted by R & E Research Associates, 1974. (301.450951 F199)

A dissertation on the Chinese immigration to Chicago, their number and distribution, their occupations and earnings, their living conditions and educational status. Criminality, organized forces and outstanding problems in Chicago were also included.

Fong, Stanley L. M. Assimilation of Chinese in America; changes in orientation and social perception. Thesis, San Francisco State, 1963. Reprinted by R & E Research Inc., 1974. (301.450951 F674)

This paper focused on the psychological processes of assimilation of the Chinese in America.

Hoexter, Corinne K. From Canton to California, the epic of Chinese immigration. N.Y., Four Winds Pr., 1976. (979.4 H695)

A history of the Chinese in the U.S. from their early days in California to the present, including the biography of Dr. Ng Poon Chew, who, as editor of the first Chinese language newspaper in the U.S., became a leader of all Chinese Americans.

Hoyt, Edwin Palmer. Asians in the West. Nashville, Tn, Nelson, 1974. (301.45095 H869)

This book considered the whole question of Asians in the West. Included was a section on the Chinese in America -- their life in Chinatown, the socioeconomic factors that underlied intolerance, the life of recent immigrants and their cultural gifts that helped change our society.

Hsu, Francis L. K. The challenge of the American dream: the Chinese in the U.S. Belmont, Ca, Wadsworth, 1971. (325.251 H873)

- Ignacio, Lemuel F. *Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders. (Is there such an Ethnic group?)*. San Jose, Pilipino Development Associates, Inc., 1976. (301.45095 I24)  
 The author wrote about four years — 1971 to 1975, of his experience when he was involved in Asian and Pacific affairs and activities in U.S. It was the author's contention that there was no Asian American ethnic group, rather there were Cambodian, Chinese, Guamanian, Hawaiian, etc.
- Jones, Claire. *The Chinese in America*. Minneapolis, Lerner, 1972. (x325 J76)
- Kingston, Maxine Hong. *China men*. N.Y., Knopf, 1980. (92 K553-1)  
 Her second book after *Woman Warrior*, this one is about the men of her family, some of them close to her, a part of her own life, some of them dim figures from an almost mythical past. Through these fathers, grandfathers, sons, and brothers, the readers could find out about the discovery of America, the claiming of America, and becoming American in spite of rejection and misunderstanding.
- Kingston, Maxine Hong. *Woman warrior; memoirs of a girlhood amongst ghosts*. N.Y., Knopf, 1976. (92 K553)  
 The story of her Chinese American girlhood, growing up amidst ghosts — ghosts that her parents brought with them from China (the millennia — old legends, traditions, imperatives, folk beliefs etc.) and the new ghosts (Policeman ghosts, social worker ghosts, garbage ghosts) that she had to learn to confront herself.
- Lee, Calvin. *Chinatown, U.S.A.* Garden City, N.Y., Doubleday, 1965. (325.251 L477)  
 The life, influence and the role of the Chinese in the United States, 1776-1960. S.F., Chinese Historical Soc. of America, 1976. (301.450951 L722)  
 A collection of papers presented at the first national conference on the history of the Chinese in America, held at the University of San Francisco, July 10, 11, 12, 1975.
- Lui, Garding. *Inside Los Angeles Chinatown*. N. p. 1948. (R 979.41 L881Lui)  
 This is the only full-length book-treatment of the history of the Los Angeles Chinatown we have in this library. It was a poorly written book, but because of the historical information available in it, we are hanging on to our volumes. It is also out-of-print.
- Lydon, Edward C. *Anti-Chinese movement in the Hawaiian Kingdom, 1852-1886*. S.F., R & E Research, 1975. (325.251 L983)  
 This is a study of the anti-Chinese movement in the Hawaiian Kingdom beginning with the first large immigration in 1852 and ending with the immigration restrictions of 1886.
- Lyman, Stanford M. *Chinese Americans*. N.Y., Random House, 1974. (301.450951 L986)  
 This book provided answers to questions about the "Chinese diaspora" which took them to America; the background of communal organizations and their transplantation in the New World; the anti-Chinese movement that lasted from 1785 to 1910 and then took subtler form in patterns of institutional racism in cities across the land; the class structure of the Chinese Americans; internal social problems and particular ways of coping with them; and the alienation, rebellion, new consciousness, and transvaluation of the words "Yellow Peril" in recent years.
- McCunn, Ruthanne Lum. *An illustrated history of the Chinese in America*. S.F., Design Enterprises of San Francisco, 1979. (325.251 M133)  
 This book on the history of the Chinese in America is suitable for the younger audience. It focused on where the Chinese came from and why; their contributions, hardships, and achievements; their assimilation as well as their preservation of what was unique to their cultural group and their lives today. Well illustrated.
- Melendy, H. Brett. *The Oriental Americans*. Boston, Twayne, 1972. (301.45095 M519)  
 This book concentrated on the Chinese Americans and Japanese Americans in the U.S.
- Meltzer, Milton. *Chinese Americans*. N.Y., Crowell, 1980. (301.450951 M528)  
 This book traced the history of the Chinese in the U.S., describing their contributions to the development of this country and their struggle for economic and social equality.

- Miller, Stuart Creighton. *Unwelcome immigrant: the American image of the Chinese, 1785-1882*. Berkeley, U. of Calif Pr., 1969. (325.251 M651)  
 In this exhaustively researched study, Professor Miller traced systematically the evolution of the unfavorable image of the Chinese in nineteenth-century America and examined the role of this image in the national decision to exclude the Chinese from the melting pot.
- Miller, Wayne Charles. *Handbook of American minorities*. N.Y., New York University Press, 1976. (301.4502 M652)  
 This volume contains essays that provide basic historical overviews of many American minorities as well as bibliographical introductions to some of the most useful sources for the study of them. Has a chapter on "The Chinese-American Experience."
- Minke, Pauline. *Chinese in the Mother Lode, 1850-1870*. S.F., R & E Research Asso., 1974. (325.251 M665)  
 This paper attempted to point out the fault and peculiarities which made the Chinese so obnoxious and objectionable to the people of early California and recounted some of the persecutions and contempt to which the Chinese were subjected by a supposedly Christian race.
- Nee, Victor G. *Longtime Californ': a documentary study of an American Chinatown*. N.Y., Pantheon Books, 1973. (301.450951 N372)  
 This book attempted to bring to the surface the past of San Francisco's Chinatown as well as present-day life of the people who make up the community. The research was conducted in a large part through informal oral interviews with English-speaking members of the community's social groups.
- Ng, Pearl. *Writings on the Chinese in California*. Thesis, University of California, 1939. Reprinted by R & E Research Associates, 1972. (301.450951 N576)  
 An exhaustive list of books and pamphlets on the history of Chinese in California arranged by subjects, with an author index; and a list of periodical articles arranged alphabetically by author or title. Unfortunately most of the materials listed were published in the 1800's and may not be readily available now.
- Perkins, Peter. *Chinatown, San Francisco*. Berkeley, Lancaster-Miller Pub., 1981. (R 979.42 S2241Per)  
 Description of San Francisco's Chinatown, illustrated heavily with many color photos.
- Perrin, Linda. *Coming to America, immigrants from the far east*. N.Y., Delacorte Press, 1980. (301.45095 P458)  
 Discussed the experiences of immigrants from China, Japan, the Philippines, and Vietnam to the U.S. included a chronology of U.S. immigration laws.
- Salter, Christopher L. *San Francisco's Chinatown: how Chinese a town?* San Francisco, R & E Research Associates, Inc., 1978. (301.450951 S177)  
 A Univ. of Calif., Berkeley thesis in geography, written in 1967, published eleven years later. This paper explored the origins, visual and functional morphology, and cultural isolation of San Francisco's Chinatown.
- Saxton, Alexander. *The indispensable enemy: labor and the anti-Chinese movement in California*. Berkeley, U. of Calif. Pr., 1971. (331.62 S273)
- Seward, George Frederick. *Chinese immigration in its social and economical aspects*. N.Y., Scribner, 1881. (325.251 S514)
- Steiner, Stanley. *Fusang*. N.Y., Harper and Row, 1979. (301.450951 S822)  
 This is a book about the Chinese who discovered America, who built America, and who became America.
- Stereotypes, distortions and omissions in U.S. History textbooks*. N.Y.: Council on Interracial Books for Children, 1977. (371.322 S838)  
 The book examined history texts published since 1970 for their treatment of six groups: women, African Americans, Asian Americans, Chicanos, Native Americans

and Puerto Ricans. Criteria designed to evaluate the information in the textbooks, especially for wrong information, omission and distortion were given. Checklists were provided so readers could rate any textbook's performance with regards to racism and sexism.

Sue, Stanley. Asian-Americans, psychological perspectives. Palo Alto, Science and Behavior Books, 1973. (136.495 S944)

A selection of articles on the assimilation, sex roles, personality, mental health and contemporary issues relating to different Asian American groups.

Sung, Betty Lee. Chinese in America. N.Y., Macmillan, 1972. (x 325 S958)

An account of the Chinese in America from the earliest days of immigration to the present time. Betty Sung, a second-generation Chinese-American who lived for many years in China, drew on her experiences to describe the details of Chinese customs, foods, festival celebrations, and general life styles.

Tachiki, Amy, ed. Roots: an Asian American reader. UCLA, Asian American Studies Center, 1971. (301.45095 R783)

An anthology focusing on the identity, history and community of the Asian American people.

Tow, Julius Su. The real Chinese in America; being an attempt to give the general American public a fuller knowledge and a better understanding of the Chinese people in the U.S. N.Y., Academy Pr., 1923. (325.251 T737)

Townsend, Luther Tracy. The Chinese problem. S.F., R & E Research Asso., 1970. (325.251 T748)

Tung, William L. The Chinese in America, 1920-1973: a chronology and fact book. Dobbs Ferry, N.Y., Oceana, 1974. (325.251 T926)

This is one of the Oceana's Ethnic Chronology Series books. It followed the series format by treating the history of the Chinese in the U.S. in 3 parts: 1) chronology, 1820-1973, 2) documents, and 3) bibliography.

Wong, Don. Chinese Americans, past and present. San Francisco, The Assn. of Chinese Teachers, 1977. (301.450951 W8715)

This is a collection of Chinese American readings and learning activities, suitable for G4 students and up. It provides meaningful reading materials about the experiences of Chinese in America and from the late 1800's to the present day.

Wong, Jade Snow. Fifth Chinese daughter. N.Y., Harper and Row, 1950. (92 W872)

The autobiography of a Chinese American girl's first twenty-four years, growing up in San Francisco's Chinatown.

Wong, Jade Snow. No Chinese stranger. N.Y., Harper and Row, 1975. (951.0425T W872)

Continuation of her life story first told in *Fifth Chinese Daughter*. Included was her trip to China for the first time in 1972.

Wong, James I. Aspirations and frustrations of the Chinese youth in the San Francisco Bay Area - aspersions upon the societal scheme. S.F., R & E Research Associates, 1977. (301.450952 W8715)

A three-part expose of the frustrations of the Chinese in the U.S., from historical and sociological viewpoints, followed by an analysis of the results compiled from questionnaires disseminated to 326 Chinese students.

Wood, Ellen Rawson. Californians and Chinese: the first decade. Thesis, U. of C., 1961. Reprinted by R & E Research Associates, 1974. (301.450951 W874)

Using the Journals and Appendices of the State Legislature and the San Francisco *Daily Alta* as the primary sources, this paper studied the reaction of Californians to the Chinese presence in the 1850's.

Yee, Sylvia. Got me a story to tell - a multi-ethnic book: five children tell about their lives. S.F., St. John's Educational Threshold Center, 1977. (x 920 Y42)

Book was based on taped interviews with 5 children from different ethnic groups - Black, Latino, Chinese, Hindustani and Filipino. Here 8-year-old Camelia from Hong Kong talked about her life in San Francisco after her family immigrated to U.S. Another perspective of an immigrant's life, from a child's viewpoint.

**CHINESE HISTORICAL SOCIETY OF SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA**

1648 Redcliff Street • Los Angeles, California 90028

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# *Gum Saen Journal*

DECEMBER, 1983

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## CHINESE HISTORICAL SOCIETY OF SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA

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### SOCIETY HONORS SOM SHEE AND SAM CHANG

The Chinese Historical Society of Southern California was privileged to be able to honor two grand Chinese American pioneers of Los Angeles County on January 21, 1984. They are Mr. Sam Chang (張思逸), age 98, and his wife Mrs. Som Shee Chang (岑治元), age 100, on the occasion of Mrs. Chang's centennial birthday banquet.

Mr. Chang studied to be a scholar but in 1914, the government of the newly-formed Republic of China sent him to the United States. His task was to study peacekeeping strategies and tactics to deal with post-Revolution problems. However, his father was already well-established in Los Angeles as an herbalist and was expanding into farming. He asked his first-born son Sam to remain here to manage the family affairs and enterprises which included produce and farming.

Shortly after, Mrs. Chang joined him here. Although she was from a well-to-do family, she assisted Mr. Chang in the hard work of establishing and developing a farm in the San Fernando Valley.

Before long, the Changs devised means of growing and packing asparagus efficiently. The farm grew to nearly 100 acres, first in an area in North Hollywood and later in the area that became Van Nuys airport. Their produce was shipped as far as Chicago and New York.

Mr. Chang is a co-founder of the Los Angeles Asparagus Growers Association. In his heyday, he could be called, properly, one of the "asparagus kings" of Los Angeles. Mr. Chang was also a member of the Board of Directors of Lung Kung Tin Yee Association for a number of years.

Mr. and Mrs. Chang have always been noted for their generosity towards young people in need. Over a lifetime, they have helped and sponsored over one hundred students, most of whom came from China for further learning in America.

Today, the couple still lives on their remaining land in their original farmhouse in the Valley. They have three daughters and a son, all accomplished, and several grandchildren. Now retired, Mr. Chang has returned to scholarly pursuits. He has written a poem commemorating this event of his wife's birthday. We are pleased to present this piece below.

As Mr. Chang has always been proud of Chinese culture and heritage and for over sixty years has endeavored to preserve it in his new home in America, the Society salutes Mr. and Mrs. Sam Chang for all their accomplishments and contributions to our community.



余與內子治元岑夫人百歲初度感賦

張恩逸一九八四年春

夫妻百歲喜延年  
琴瑟和諧知樂天  
奉派美邦查敬言  
務承歡羅省力耕田  
欣看後輩學業成  
日應念庭闈教道先  
和藹笑容談往事  
存誠書禮是家傳

(註)先祖父椿理公頗富  
有生三則在開平

袍溪鄉新沙里建有存誠書室  
淵大壯觀在書室內設男女義學  
子遠近男女就學不少  
彪炳大伯母王氏在此為女  
學教員治元曾在此助教  
小孩讀書習禮

**A POEM IN CELEBRATION OF THE BIRTHDAY  
CENTENNIALS OF SOM JIH YUEN, MY WIFE, AND MYSELF**

by CHANG SI YAHT (Sam Chang)  
Spring 1984

We, husband and wife, are happy for our longevity in reaching the age of one hundred years.

We have lived together harmoniously because we are optimistic in nature.

I was sent by the Chinese government to America for study in the police sciences.

To please my father here in Los Angeles, I remained to become a farmer.

We are joyous when our children and descendants succeed in their studies. They must never forget the careful moral teachings of their parents.

We recall cheerfully the past, and we have faithfully followed the traditional way of our family laid down in "The Book of Rites" and the "Canon of History."

(Note) My grandfather, Jong Lei, was a rather rich man. He set up a private library on New Sand Lane of Robe Stream Village of Hoy Ping County. The building and yard were so large that, later, a free school was created. Many students, male and female, far and near, came to study. Some became famous. My great-Aunt Wong was the teacher in the school. My wife Jih Yuen helped children there to study and to read and to learn the (Confucian) Rites.

**THE CALIFORNIA CONNECTION**  
(or: **HOW TWO AMERICANS FROM SOUTHERN  
CALIFORNIA PLAYED A SIGNIFICANT ROLE  
IN CHINA'S REVOLUTION IN 1911**)

by HENRY WELCOME

*(Mr. Henry Welcome is a founding member of the Chinese Historical Society of Southern California and one of its staunchest supporters. He was the first president [serving a total of six years at various times] of the Eagle Rock Valley Historical Society. He has resided in Eagle Rock for 57 years. He has had a number of historical articles published in various magazines. Our thanks to Mr. Welcome for this interesting article.)*

China is one of the very oldest civilizations on earth. Her culture and history go back many centuries B.C., and historians refer to her past periods of dominations as dynasties, several of which were ruled by aggressive neighbors. An example was the Yuan Dynasty (A.D. 1280-1368) which governed for a relatively short period but had a strong influence upon the people. Foreigners as they were from Mongolia, the great Khans ruled with an "iron hand". Nearly three hundred years later, another group of outsiders, the Manchus, conquered China and remained in power for over 250 years.

With rare exceptions, China was ruled by despots, tyrants, and seemed always in a state of disunity. Revolts, civil wars and corruption were the burdens that saddled the populace for most of the 4,000 years of her history. Seldom was there unity and peace, and during the last two and a half centuries extending well into the present one, several European countries, and even the United States, were guilty of adding to the problems of an already troubled country.

**THE MANCHU DYNASTY**

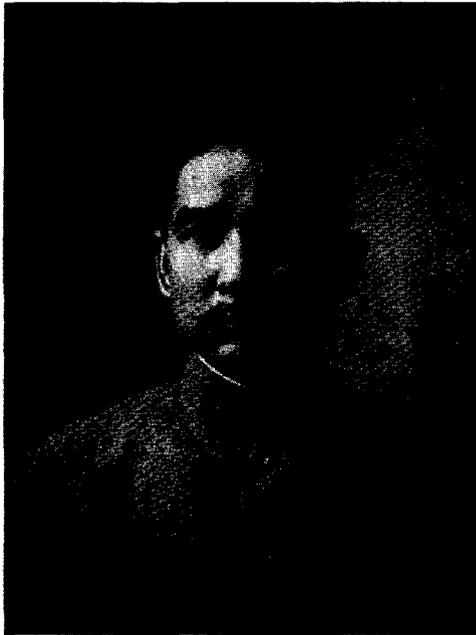
In the mid-17th century, the Manchus swept down from the north and conquered the people of China in 1644. This Manchu dynasty lasted for over 260 years and was finally overthrown in 1911 by the Chinese Reform Army which in turn attempted to establish a republic. When the Manchus first came to the Dragon Throne in Peking, they attempted to introduce their culture to the Chinese without destroying the native ways in art and literature, a true desire to amalgamate the two societies. As the decades passed, corruption began to enter the government. Oppression by these rulers through excessive taxation, unjust laws, favoritism and other abuses all became part of the Peking scene. The 19th century also brought problems with European countries and Japan. Eager for favorable trade

agreements and also to steal territory from this loosely-governed, far-flung land, these foreigners made economic inroads on the Chinese nation.

The first true attempt within the empire to bring about reform was the Tai Ping Revolt in 1851. For nearly 13 years, this movement grew in strength even though it lost its original leader very early in the revolt. The rebellion ultimately failed, not due to the power of the Manchus, but to the inability of the Tai Ping insurgents to organize their conquests. Other movements against the Peking government followed, the most noteworthy occurring shortly after the turn of the century.

### **FOREIGNERS HELP THE 1911 REVOLT**

In the American Revolution foreigners came to the aid of the Colonists and it was through them, especially the French, that the United States was able to win its independence. So it was with the Republic of China in her successful attempt to throw off the yoke of the Manchus. Not only did Americans help with the rebellion, but much of the planning and preliminaries were carried out in the United States, some of it in the Los Angeles area.



**DR. SUN YAT-SEN**  
(1867-1925)

In the closing years of the nineteenth century came forth a man — an idealist — whose dream was a united China, a republic. His name was Sun Yat-Sen and his efforts bore fruit in 1911 after many years of struggle.

To many people Dr. Sun is regarded as the "father of the Chinese Republic". Born into a Christian convert's family, he remained a Christian throughout his life. When grown, he entered upon a medical course at a newly-founded school in Hong Kong where he was the first graduate in 1894. With several fellow students, he joined a secret society dedicated to the Chinese revolutionary movement. Involved in an abortive plot in 1895 when most of the other conspirators were caught and executed, Dr. Sun managed to escape, and for many years was forced to live abroad.

In 1905 the Chinese Revolutionary League was formed in Europe and Japan. Through this organization, Dr. Sun enlisted the support of great numbers of overseas Chinese. He managed to raise large sums of money and to spread his ideas through secret societies within China. With a price of nearly \$500,000 on his head, he led a very dangerous life for a number of years.

While the Chinese felt the desperate need to rid themselves of the Manchu yoke, they had little understanding of how to establish a republic. Dr. Sun's idea for the Kuo-min-tang was to turn the anti-Manchu tide to the pro-republican government.

Dr. Sun was in England when the revolt began in late 1911. He managed to return to China early in January 1912, when at the request of the national convention in Nanking, he took office as the republic's provisional president. On February 12, the Manchu government fell. Dr. Sun was then forced to resign his position in favor of Yuan Shih-Kai and accept a minor position in the new republic. Not until 1917 and Yuan's death would Dr. Sun finally come at last to the leadership of the South China Republic, itself an independent entity. He was soon again forced to relinquish his position. In 1923 Dr. Sun gained control of Canton Province, a position he held until his death two years later. During that time, his influence reached little beyond the province itself. His dream of a truly united Republic of China never materialized.

The history of Sun Yat-Sen's struggle to free China from the imperialistic Manchus would not be complete without the mention of two Americans from the southern California area who were sympathetic to his cause.

### **HOMER LEA** (1876-1912)

The name sounds Chinese, but he was not. Homer Lea was a native of Denver, Colorado, born November 17, 1876 of Caucasian parents. He was slight of build, about five feet, four inches tall, and weighed less than 120 pounds. He was deformed by curvature of the spine and suffered ill health throughout his short, but eventful life.

Lea came to Los Angeles in 1896 with his widowed mother, Mrs. Alfred Lea. He graduated from Los Angeles High School the following year.

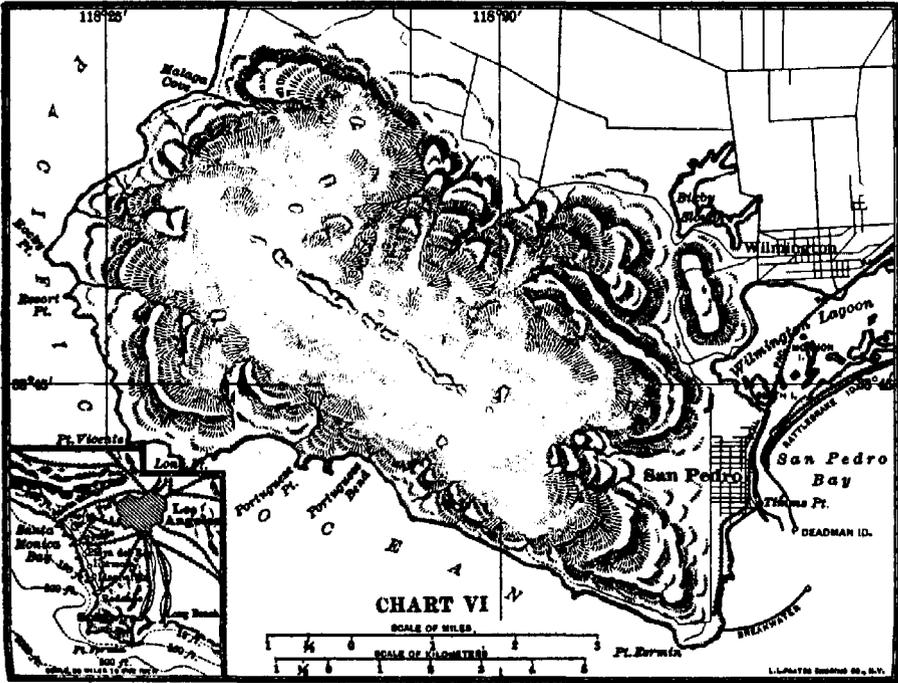
He attended Occidental College for a short time, eventually transferring to Stanford University. At Stanford, Lea found that he had a natural ability for military tactics — in fact, it was soon discovered that he was a genius on the subject. At the university, he met and was befriended by two Chinese students, Allen Chung and Lou Hoy. These young men belonged to a secret Chinese revolutionary society which had numerous followers in San Francisco Chinatown. Homer Lea was introduced to some of the members and soon found himself in full sympathy with their ideals. His ability to learn Chinese rapidly was also an asset. Lea was so taken by this intrigue and the possibility of actually carrying out his military theories, that he never graduated from Stanford, but sailed for Canton in June 1900 to join the revolution.



With victory nearly in their grasp, the revolt failed and Lea had to flee back to America. He had so convinced the Chinese revolutionaries of his competence and loyalty, his ability in military leadership and his fluency in their language, that before the revolt was over, the brilliant little hunchback had been promoted to lieutenant general in the Chinese Reform Army — a military genius while still a young man.

Lea returned to southern California where he lived most of the time in the Los Angeles area. He wrote three books while waiting and planning

further revolt with his Chinese co-conspirators. Two of these books were military prophecies. *"The Valor of Ignorance"*, published in 1909, was to prophesy the Japanese attack on the United States over thirty years before the 1941 bombing of Pearl Harbor. Lea also predicted the possible landings of Japanese forces on the Pacific Coast, which fortunately never came to pass. The following example was accompanied with a map:



“As Los Angeles is the objective point, landing will be made upon the closest available seaboard. And in a military sense San Pedro is twice as far from Los Angeles as Santa Monica Bay. This harbor, moreover, is so contracted that the danger of submarine mines and torpedoes would, under all circumstances, prohibit its utilization by the Japanese until the harbor itself and the surrounding country passed into their control. Santa Monica Bay, on the other hand, gives a free seaboard of over twenty miles in extent – adjacent to the environs of Los Angeles.”

Three years later, *"The Day of the Saxon"* was published, depicting the fall of the British Empire, which Lea predicted would happen after England would be worn down by years of war with Germany.

In 1904 Homer Lea returned to China where he met former Prime Minister Kang Yu Wei to discuss the establishment of a republic. Upon returning to the United States, Lea conceived the idea of training officers for the Chinese Reform Army here on the west coast. The recruits would be Chinese living in the United States, and the program would be financed in this country. As such an undertaking was illegal in the U.S., this training idea was sworn to secrecy.

In October 1911, Lea married Ethel Powers, who had been his secretary and was of great assistance in the preparation and writing of his books. The couple traveled to Wiesbaden, Germany to consult an eye specialist for Lea's declining vision. While in Germany, Lea received a message from Dr. Sun Yat-Sen in London, stating that the revolution had broken out prematurely, and suggesting that Lea come to London where the two could meet and perfect their plans.

Early in 1912, the Leas went to Nanking where the convention was held to establish the Republic of China. Growing weaker and progressively ill, Lea and his young bride returned to Ocean Park, California, where he died on November 1, 1912. He was only thirty-six years old.

In his obituary of Homer Lea, Harry Carr stated that without military education, other than his private reading, this man became not only a world figure, but the only consulting strategist the world had ever seen, and that the finest military minds in Europe and America turned to him for advice and counsel.



**ANSEL O'BANION**  
(1876-1964)

Ansel O'Banion was a Nebraska farm boy, born of Irish-American pioneers. Farm life held so little excitement for the young boy that he left

home at age 16, working his way westward. He spent several years in Montana and Washington as a ranch hand and a cattleman. He finally drifted to southern California, where he became a ranch foreman in the Santa Ana area.

In June 1899, having again gotten "itchy feet", O'Banion enlisted in the U. S. Cavalry. Following basic training, he was shipped to Manila where he served his country in the Philippine Insurrection. After his three years' service was completed, he left the army as a staff sergeant with a splendid service record and seven battle citations. He returned to Orange County and to ranching for another year. In the summer of 1903, he was encouraged by his doctor, A. J. Scott, to contact General Homer Lea. After a year of indecision on O'Banion's part, the two men finally met. O'Banion was Homer Lea's choice to train the Chinese recruits in America for military leadership in Dr. Sun Yat-Sen's Reform Army. He was commissioned a captain, and for more than seven years, trained the recruits in groups of 120 men. Training took place in the evenings and on Sundays for a 3-year period, all done in secrecy. The uniformed company would leave their



"Armory" in Chinatown and ride on the Pacific Electric (the Big Red Cars) out to Highland Park (where the Arroyo Seco Library stands today on North Figueroa Street). Here the trainees would leave the street cars and with their leaders, march up Eagle Rock Road (Figueroa Street) to brush-covered hills to practice field maneuvers.

As it was against the U. S. Government's laws for reserve non-commissioned officers to train foreign troops on U. S. soil, Ansel O'Banion was

convicted for his efforts and served a number of months in a federal penitentiary. Fortunately, the government was sympathetic toward the Chinese cause, and O'Banion's sentence was shortened by a pardon. Following this period, he settled in Sierra Madre, a few miles north of Los Angeles, living there for many years until his death in 1964.

The young Chinese that O'Banion trained for the Reform Army came from all walks of life — the farm, the shop and the factory. They made great sacrifices, both in time and financial contributions, to obtain their training. When their three years of military instruction were over, most of them returned to their homeland where some even managed to infiltrate the Imperial Army of the Manchus. Though the revolt in 1911 was successful as far as the overthrow of the Manchu dynasty was concerned, the Republic never functioned as the true and only government of China. It was constantly torn by strife, and by outside invaders (the Japanese). When World War II finally ended, the internal struggle found the Communists in power by 1949.

**CHINESE HISTORICAL SOCIETY OF SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA**  
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