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A Most Excellent Field for Work: Christian Missionary Efforts in the Los Angeles Chinese Community, 1870-1900**

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In our present age of growing cultural sensitivity, it is startling to read the accounts of what the pioneer Chinese suffered when they arrived in the United States to pursue their dreams. Few people welcomed them, and even church-going Christians had serious reservations about the culture and traditions of these immigrants from Asia. Acting with the best intentions, many Christian ministers preached that the Chinese must adopt Western dress, speak only the English language, abandon cultural practices, and accept Christian beliefs. These clergymen sincerely believed in the superiority of American civilization over any other culture, no matter how ancient or how sophisticated. To their way of thinking, to Christianize and to Americanize was to civilize. It was the age of supreme American self-confidence.¹

From the time that the first Chinese disembarked at San Francisco in the early 1850's, various Christian communions sought out these pioneers as converts. The Presbyterians took a commanding lead in this outreach and gradually followed the Chinese from the Bay Area to other communities throughout the state. Initiating this ministry in San Francisco in November of 1852, Reverend William Speer was the first of three Presbyterian preachers who returned from China to work among the Chinese in the United States. Speer's successor in 1857 was Reverend August Ward Loomis and his wife. Loomis gained an

assistant in 1870, Reverend Ira Condit, who had served a missionary tour in Guangzhou (Canton) and there learned to speak fluent Cantonese. Because so many of the Chinese in California hailed from Guangzhou, Condit was soon traversing the state to preach the Gospel message to them.²

While the Presbyterians were building their churches in San Francisco, here in Los Angeles things developed far more slowly. The city's population in 1860 was a mere 4,385 - and there were only eleven Chinese in the entire county.³ Ten years later, the census takers counted 5,728 people in the community, and the Chinese in the city now totalled 172.⁴ This growth in the Chinese quarter attracted the notice of Reverend Isaac W. Atherton, the pastor of the First Congregational Church. There were only six churches in town at the time, and yet none of them had attempted to reach out to the Chinese community.⁵ The congregations were small, the pastors overworked, and the salaries were barely enough to cover expenses. Nevertheless, in February of 1871, members of the Congregationalist church initiated a Sunday-evening language school in their white clapboard meetinghouse on New High Street at Temple.⁶



The Chinese Mission School of the Congregational Church, circa 1900, with superintendent Mrs. D. V. Rice. The Mission was located on Commercial Street.

Courtesy of: California Historical Society/TICOR Title Insurance, Los Angeles, Department of Special Collections, University of Southern California Library.

We know about this school in part because of strong prejudice against the Chinese in the community. The town newspaper, the *Los Angeles Star*, printed a steady stream of biased anti-Asian stories which focused upon crime and violence involving the Chinese. The editor, Henry Hamilton, voiced the approving though racist and condescending sentiments of many Angelenos when he described the first month's progress of the Congregationalist class. "The Heathen Chinees [sic] Sunday school suits John Celestial to a dot; he eats of the tree of knowledge without money and without price, and swears it is cheaper than rice, if not so fattening."⁷ Such were the bigoted sentiments of certain residents of the community.

This was early in 1871. Later that year, early in October, 1871, occurred the mob violence known as the Chinese Massacre on the Calle de los Negros.⁸ What began as a dispute among residents of the Chinese community, escalated into the death of Robert Thompson, a citizen assisting the police, and the wounding of one of the police, Jesus Bilderrain. As we know, a mob formed, rushed the buildings, and shot and killed any Chinese found in the area.⁹ It is important to remember that the handful of men who attempted to restore order included prominent members of the town's churches: Colonel George H. Smith, Cameron E. Thom, S. B. Caswell, and H. C. Austin of St. Athanasius Episcopal parish; and Judge Robert M. Widney of the Fort Street Northern Methodist church.¹⁰ Each man had risked life and limb endeavoring to restore order or to rescue the victims from the hands of the mob.

In this environment, the little Congregationalist church continued its outreach to the Chinese community. The staff was comprised of volunteers, primarily made up of female parishioners, and the curriculum was English grammar and conversation. Interestingly, religion was not a formal part of the course of study. During that first year, church members struggled to meet the demand for these classes and soon decided that they needed further assistance. They turned to their denomination's renowned educational organization, the American Missionary Association.

Famous for their Freedman's Schools, members of the Association founded, funded, and staffed hundreds of schools for former slaves throughout the Southern states after the Civil War. By 1867, volunteers were teaching 38,719 students in day and night classes. Fisk and Atlanta Universities were begun by this Association, which also assisted in founding Howard University in Washington, D.C. The members of this

dynamic Missionary Association voted in 1869 to expand their efforts to the Pacific Coast to undertake "a vigorous missionary work" among the Chinese to show that prejudice "is not the spirit that actuates a Christian people."¹¹ Reverend John Kimball and later Reverend William C. Pond placed and supervised the volunteer teachers in California. Work commenced in Los Angeles in the summer of 1872 and continued for approximately three years. The Association recruited and placed three women in Los Angeles, paying them very little but offering them encouragement and praise.

The pioneer teacher, Miss Agnes McCormick, began her lessons at the meetinghouse in August, 1872, and remained at this post for approximately nine months.¹² McCormick had volunteered in Winona, Minnesota, and her lack of familiarity with Chinese proprieties is evident in a letter to her supervisor describing her first month's challenging work:

"I go to their [the Chinese] shops and beg them to go with me; sometimes [I] meet them on the street and insist upon their coming in to see the school, if they can not stay. They promise to come when they have time. They are *very* industrious, and their ruling motive is love of money. I have found it utterly impossible to establish a day-school. I can not get one to come."¹³

Despite the strange sight of a woman urging them to follow her, twenty-six men eventually enrolled in language classes. McCormick's successor, Maria M. Woodbridge, arrived in July of 1873 from Marietta, Ohio, but illness forced her soon to resign. Woodbridge complained that the air quality in Los Angeles was detrimental to her health, so she relocated to Santa Barbara.¹⁴ She was immediately succeeded by Miss Mary P. Stewart, who taught in the school from the fall of 1873 until some time in 1876.¹⁵

All three of these instructors were single Christian women who traveled across the country to volunteer for this work in Los Angeles. Little is known about any of them prior to their arrivals in the Southwest or subsequent to their departures. Mary P. Stewart is the only one of the three who had any previous experience with the Chinese. She had left Vermont for a similar mission school in Portland, Oregon, one year before her arrival in Southern California. Stewart later remained at her Los Angeles post when the American Missionary Association retired from the field in favor of the Presbyterians.¹⁶

Though classes in English were originally offered to Chinese men at the Congregational church, McCormick and Stewart both extended

their language classes to Chinese women. They soon learned that there was both a wrong way and a right way to do this. McCormick, who had the least experience with Chinese customs, invited the women to come to the church. This invitation provoked a storm among Chinese men who believed it disgraceful for respectable women to appear in public. The controversy that arose, plus the difficulties of living in frontier Los Angeles, apparently so discouraged McCormick that she resigned from the school in June of 1873. Learning from this episode, Mary Stewart later resumed female education, but met with the twelve women in their homes in the Chinese quarter of town south of the Plaza.¹⁷ This was tolerated by the men because the women were not publicly traveling great distances through the streets of the community. Though certain men continued to grumble, Stewart pressed on with the course of home study.

Mary Stewart was the most successful of the three teachers, and her predecessor described her as "a most lovely Christian woman, a good teacher, and full of health and energy" - even if she could not sing or play the organ.¹⁸ Slow mails frequently delayed the missionary association's check of \$53 per month living expenses and caused her embarrassment in meeting her bills.¹⁹ Her enthusiasm remained high. Besides her classes for men and for women, Stewart initiated a course in English for children and recruited volunteers to help her. Stewart also started making job referrals through a placement service for domestics which assisted Chinese workers who could find only menial labor arranged through their own family associations.²⁰

Language classes had first met in the Congregationalist church, but later moved to the schoolhouse which during the week served as the segregated public school for African-American children.²¹ The conditions under which the women operated are quite evident in their letters to the superiors of the mission society. Maria Woodbridge described the plain whitewashed room with its borrowed furniture:

The walls are literally covered with printed cards of Scripture texts and hymns, and a large map of the United States, and ornamented with evergreens, sea mosses, flowers, flags, etc. A little clock ticks on a shelf near the organ, and everything I can contrive has been done to make the room respectably clean and attractive.²²

She also explained that a policeman stood at her door during each class session because "some Irishmen (haters of the Chinese) and the Hoodlums" threatened to repeat an attack made on the students and herself in July, 1873.

None of the three women received much help from residents in town, even from members of the churches. Woodbridge had to hire three women assistants and pay from her own pocket whatever part of their salaries the missionary association could not afford.²³ Stewart approached both the Northern Methodists and Congregationalists, but discovered that “people manifest little interest in the Chinese.”²⁴ When her supervisor, Reverend William Pond, questioned the Congregational pastor about the school, he also received a startlingly candid response. The minister Reverend David Packard, wrote that his denomination was “utterly unable to help” because “we are lean and poor and starved for means” to maintain their own parish. He went so far as to comment, “It seems a great mistake that she [Miss Stewart] ever came here, but it is useless to speak of that now.”²⁵ Pond reluctantly closed the school for lack of funds in December, 1874, but Miss Stewart remained at her post and carried on as best as she could.²⁶

During these discouraging days for the Congregationalists, the Baptists in San Francisco sent a missionary to visit Los Angeles. Reverend John Francis and a Chinese Assistant, Lee Kee, arrived in Los Angeles in the fall of 1874. They had worked together as a team in San Francisco, with Lee Kee offering running translation of the minister’s sermons. With Lee Kee at his side, Francis began preaching on the sidewalks in front of the Temple block between Main and Spring streets at Temple Street.²⁷ Results were sparse, but both men attended the founding of the First Baptist Church in Los Angeles, where “Brother” Lee Kee was invited to speak.²⁸ Two weeks later “See Key” [sic] preached alone in the Chinese section of town in a final appeal to his countrymen.²⁹ After a disappointing visit, Francis and Lee Kee departed Los Angeles, and Baptist missionary work with the Chinese would not resume for twenty-two years.³⁰

The Presbyterians who had been so successful in San Francisco were next to turn their attention towards the Chinese community in Los Angeles. Early in 1876 they dispatched one of the most famous missionaries on the West Coast, Reverend Ira M. Condit, who preached to large groups of Chinese in Los Angeles, Anaheim, San Bernardino, and Santa Barbara. He returned to Los Angeles in April with Mansie, his wife, and their children to establish the “South Coast Chinese Mission.”³¹ Amazingly, he found Mary Stewart still teaching English to sixty-four Chinese, and the two joined efforts for the next year.³² Ira Condit was an energetic and engaging man. Lacking a church, he put \$1,500 of his own money into purchasing a lot on Wilmington Street

near First and erecting a five-room "Branch Mission Church." He wrote dozens of letters to his superiors in New York City which document his progress. These letters also reveal the great interest among members of the Chinese community in this outgoing minister who spoke their language.³³

A newspaper clipping of the time reports that at the dedication of the little chapel, over one hundred Chinese crowded every seat and stood in the doorways and at the windows for the dedication on 21 May 1876. For the ceremonies that evening Condit hosted the three local Congregational and Presbyterian ministers, as well as the choir and members of the First Presbyterian Church.³⁴ Condit and his wife commenced a night school the next day. These efforts soon bore fruit when eight Chinese presented themselves for baptism at First Presbyterian Church. The Session agreed to a special mission status for the Chinese as well as approved their admission to baptism, which Condit administered in their native tongue. The eight Chinese were Wong Kwong, Lem Loon, Mo Hing, Lim Shan, Ham Chin, Leung Hong Chung, Lee Foo Shing, and Wong Ark.³⁵

By the following January, Condit reported that he was assisted by his wife Mansie, Shing Chack, "a native helper," and volunteers from "our Christian people" to conduct every week an evening class, three Chinese services, and a Sabbath school.³⁶ By April, 1877, forty-six Chinese regularly attended the mission. They had raised sixty dollars toward its operation. The Sunday evening Sabbath school staffed by First Presbyterian parishioners counted forty students. Much of this progress can be ascribed to Condit's familiarity with Cantonese, as well as to the involvement of the missionary and his wife in Chinese community affairs.³⁷ However, financial problems once again crippled the missionary work, much as it had in the time of Mary Stewart. A severe economic depression gripped the nation in 1877 and forced officials of the Synod of the Pacific to retrench and consolidate ministries.

Reverend Condit transferred to Oakland during the summer of 1877, and the Presbyterian Board of Foreign Missions surrendered the growing Mission to the care of a related denomination, the United Presbyterian Church.³⁸ Local Chinese Christians were disappointed with Condit's departure and with their new pastors, so they rented rooms for worship, and sought the assistance of the First Presbyterian Church with which they had first associated.³⁹ Extended negotiations resulted in permission from the officials of the Presbytery of Los

Angeles and the national foreign mission board to found an independent congregation. Between 1876 and 1884, thirty-nine Chinese had affiliated with the Presbyterian church. This new church was known as the First Chinese Presbyterian Church. It would become what we presently know as the True Light Chinese Presbyterian Church.

The independent congregation raised \$1,450 on their own to purchase a lot on San Pedro Street and petitioned the Presbyterian Board for Church Election for funds to construct a chapel.⁴⁰ The community rejoiced the next year when Condit returned as director in 1885. At least forty-one members comprised the parish when the minister assumed responsibility. Remaining for five years, Condit also supervised his denomination's outreach to the Chinese in all of California.⁴¹ In 1900, Condit published his memoirs in a book entitled *The Chinaman as We See Him and Fifty Years of Work for Him*. In this volume, the minister described the social and religious customs of the Chinese, their virtues and vices, and his assessment of their progress as a people.⁴²

Two facts stand out in *The Chinaman as We See Him* which may surprise modern readers: Condit's condescending attitudes towards much in Chinese society, and the strong Chinese antagonism towards those who embraced Christianity. Repeatedly in his memoirs the preacher refers to these "heathen people" who possessed "stagnant minds" and "foolish superstitions."⁴³ His mission was to "lift them into a higher civilization" and bring them the message of Jesus Christ. Such attitudes belong to a past age, but they are a sad if very real part of Christian missionary history. These assumptions about American and Christian superiority partially explain the adverse reaction among the Chinese towards those who embraced the culture and religion Condit preached.

Condit narrated numerous vignettes about his converts and the trials they endured for attending the mission school or for accepting baptism into his church. Frequently their Chinese relatives and neighbors beat or verbally abused these new Christians who often shaved their queues, began to speak English, and adopted Western clothing.⁴⁴ The minister compares these converts to the early Christians who suffered persecution in ancient Rome. Throughout these stories and reminiscences, Condit displays the pride of a successful teacher and missionary who loved his converts, even if he was far from understanding the nuances of their sophisticated culture. Condit notes with great satisfaction that he was succeeded in his Los Angeles pastorate by one very accomplished convert, Ng Poon Chew, who served from 1896 to

1901 and then moved on to San Francisco where he gained fame for his newspaper work.⁴⁵



Congregationalist Mission to the Chinese, circa 1895. The man dressed in Western clothing is possibly Reverend Ng Poon Chew, who ministered to fellow Chinese in Los Angeles from 1894 to 1898, before relocating to San Francisco where he published a daily newspaper, the Chung Sai Yat Po.

The banner to the left of the men has the text for the Lord's Prayer, while the banner immediately behind the group is a poem, "Christianity is the light in the morning, and all people on earth come to worship." On the table are hymnals and Chinese language texts of the Bible.

Courtesy of: California Historical Society/TICOR Title Insurance, Los Angeles, Department of Special Collections, University of Southern California Library.

After Condit's return to Los Angeles, the largest congregation in the city began its outreach to the Chinese community in 1888. The Northern Methodists of the Fort Street church began with a Sunday school and soon expanded under the leadership of Mrs. A. A. Birdsall and Dr. Otis Gibson. Within one year at least six Chinese who had accepted baptism in this denomination were listed in the parish's Annual Register for 1889. In this slim booklet we find their names, addresses, and occupations of these new members:

- Kan Yuen Lo, cook
- Kioni Sing Lee, merchant, 210 South Spring
- Kin Sing Chan and wife, interpreter
- Ah Kam Cheong, 17 West 3rd

Tong Ho, merchant, 17 West 3rd

One of these members, Chan Kiu Sing (spelled above as Kin Sing Chan), later received his license to preach, reputedly the first Chinese in the United States which this denomination recognized for preaching. He then went on to serve between 1900 and 1923 as the pastor of the Los Angeles Chinese United Methodist Church, a congregation which continues to this day.⁴⁶

The "boom" in Los Angeles with its population explosion in the late 1880s enabled the First Congregational Church to renew the work they had pioneered in Los Angeles. In 1880 Los Angeles counted 11,000 people; ten years later there were 50,00 inhabitants. Despite this amazing growth, the Congregationalists in 1890 still found the results of their missionary outreach discouraging. For a variety of reasons, among other Christian groups only the Baptists initiated outreach in the Chinese community prior to 1900.⁴⁷ Local churches confined themselves to more immediate concerns and usually established a foreign mission society chapter to raise funds for Chinese and overseas missions.

The most significant missionary efforts among the Chinese were those which the Presbyterians and Congregationalists founded and maintained. Historians maintain that missionaries experienced their greatest success when the services they offered coincided with particular needs of the Chinese.⁴⁸ The Congregational and Presbyterian undertakings provide ready examples of such service. A number of Chinese were quite anxious to master the English language, primarily for business purposes. Members of these two local churches were willing to undertake teaching language classes as one means to gain access to the inhabitants of the Los Angeles "Chinatown." These educational ventures eventually gained converts to Christianity. This schooling also helped Chinese immigrants to acculturate to American society, as well as to sensitize the two peoples to one another.

Missionaries involved in this early outreach strove to increase mutual understanding between peoples of different races and religious traditions. Given the violence of racial prejudice among certain Angelenos, these first contacts were very limited but important first steps in the frontier settlement. Religious workers like the Condit and Mary Stewart provided material and spiritual comfort to many Asian immigrants in times of need.⁴⁹ A man of his times and training, Ira Condit vigorously opposed Chinese "superstitions" - as well as anti-Asian prejudice. He and his wife served as the first liaisons between white

society and the Chinese community in times when racism was violent throughout the western states. Along with the three women volunteers sent by the American Missionary Association, the Conditis believed firmly in the value of education and Christianization to acculturate the Chinese to American life.

The service-oriented approach of Stewart and the Conditis secured for the Christian evangelizers a limited operational base which they developed as well as they could. Such denominational work was a significant accomplishment because of the anti-Chinese violence and bigotry so prevalent in the community. The Chinese who responded to the missionaries also merit respect. They struggled with the dual obstacles of prejudice from their European-American neighbors as well as from fellow Chinese. Against great odds, they persisted in their struggles to sustain their small worshipping community of newly baptized Christians. The True Light Chinese Presbyterian Church and the First Chinese Methodist Church are the fruits of these efforts and the custodians of this heritage.

These examples of missionary work are worth recalling today when our city continues to grow in cultural diversity. The history of these early church workers reveals that people in frontier Los Angeles had to grapple with issues of pluralism, much as we do, in order to understand their neighbors' cultural traditions. Limited in their vision and knowledge, these pioneers often failed. Their experiences, however, offer us valuable insights into the sensitivity required while extending spiritual and humanitarian assistance.

Respect for others must be broad and inclusive; helpfulness must be free of expressions of cultural or religious superiority. Toleration requires such difficult-to-attain attitudes, and respect for others rests upon continued efforts to understand the differences among people. While we may critically assess the efforts of these first missionaries, we can learn from their well-intentioned labors. So informed, we must avoid their errors and match the best of their achievements in order to enrich the city they served long ago.

Endnotes

^{*} Portions of the material in this article appear in the author's recently released work, *Frontier Faiths: Church, Temple, and Synagogue in Los Angeles, 1846-1888* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1992), chapter six, "Evangelization of the Chinese."

¹ Shin-Shan Henry Tsai, *The Chinese Experience in America* (Bloomington: Indiana

University Press, 1986), p. 33-35; Gunther Barth, *Bitter Strength: A History of the Chinese in the United States, 1850-1870* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1964), p. 167-168; Wesley S. Woo, "Presbyterian Mission: Christianizing and Civilizing the Chinese in Nineteenth Century California," *American Presbyterian* LXVIII (Fall, 1990), p. 167-8; Raymond Lou, "The Chinese American Community of Los Angeles, 1870-1900: A Case of Resistance, Organization, and Participation" (Ph.D. dissertation, University of California, Irvine, 1982), p. 264.

² Barth, *Bitter Strength*, p. 156, 167; Ira M. Condit, *The Chinaman as We See Him and Fifty Years of Work for Him* (Chicago: Fleming H. Revell, 1900), p. 116, 90; and Wesley S. Woo, "Protestant Work Among the Chinese in the San Francisco Bay Area, 1850-1920," (Ph.D. dissertation, Graduate Theological Union, Berkeley, 1983), p. 33-45.

³ Thomas W. Chinn, Mark Lai, and Philip P. Choy, *History of the Chinese in California: A Syllabus* (San Francisco: Chinese Historical Society of America, 1969), p. 21. The Los Angeles Star under the date of 24 January 1857 had noted the occurrence of the Chinese New Year, commenting that the three Chinese in town had celebrated in an appropriate manner. In April, 1861, the newspaper reported that twenty-one men and eight women worked in numerous kitchens and in some five wash houses in town. *Los Angeles Star*, 27 April 1861.

⁴ U. S. Bureau of the Census, *Ninth Census of the United States: Volume I. Population* (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1872), p. 90, 347.

⁵ The others were Our Lady of the Angels Roman Catholic Church on the Plaza (1822), Congregation B'nai B'rith, now known as Wilshire Boulevard Temple (1863), St. Athanasius Episcopal Church (1865), the Fort Street Northern Methodist Church (1868), and the First African Methodist Episcopal Church (1869). See my volume, *Frontier Faiths: Church Temple, and Synagogue in Los Angeles, 1846-1888* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1992), passim. See also Chinn et al., *Chinese in California*, p. 21.

⁶ *Los Angeles Star*, 1 February 1871.

⁷ *Los Angeles Star*, 28 March 1871.

⁸ The Associations were the Los Angeles branches of San-Francisco-based Chinese social institutions. These organizations functioned as mutual aid societies and exercised great influence within local Asian communities. They also served to mediate Chinese interaction with the Anglo-American populace who frequently confused these associations with more criminally oriented groups involved in gambling, prostitution, opium dens, and labor racketeering. See Lou, "Chinese American Community," p. 25-26; Tsai, *Chinese Experience in America*, p. 41-41; and Chinn, et al., *History of the Chinese in California*, p. 66-67.

⁹ This summation is drawn from Paul M. De Falla, "Lantern in the Western Sky," *Historical Society of Southern California Quarterly*, XLII (March and June, 1960), p. 67-86, 161-185. Other sources include Wilson, *History of Los Angeles County*, p. 84-85; the account of a participant, C. P. Dorland, "Chinese Massacre at Los Angeles," *Historical Society at Southern California Annual Publication*, III, Part II (1894), p. 22-26; and Lou, "Chinese American Community," p. 24-25.

¹⁰ Los Angeles *Star*, 28 October 1871.

¹¹ *Annual Report*, American Missionary Association (1872), p. 74-75; *American Missionary*, XVI (December, 1870), p. 271; and Joe M. Richardson, *Christian Reconstruction: The American Missionary Association and Southern Blacks, 1861-1890* (Athens, Georgia: University of Georgia Press, 1986), p. 37, 123-140. See also the "History of the American Missionary Association, with Facts and Anecdotes Illustrating Its Work in the South," revised edition, New York: American Missionary Association, 1874.

¹² Los Angeles *Express*, 26 June 1873.

¹³ *Annual Report*, American Missionary Association (1872), p.74.

¹⁴ Describing Los Angeles, Woodbridge wrote to General C. H. Howard of the American Missionary Association, "My health is completely shattered... the quality of the air seemed to oppress me." She followed the advice of friends and moved to Santa Barbara. See her letter of 20 September 1873, San Francisco; found on Roll 1, microfilm #1060, of the "California-Colorado" correspondence files, American Missionary Association Manuscripts, Amistad Research Center, Tulane University, New Orleans, Louisiana; hereafter cited as CA-CO, AMA.

¹⁵ Letter, Mary P. Stewart to Reverend E. M. Cravath [Executive Secretary of the American Missionary Association], 22 October 1873, Los Angeles; CA-CO, AMA.

¹⁶ *American Missionary* XVI (June, 1872), p. 247; XVII (September, 1873), p. 201; XVIII (April, 1874), p. 83; XIX (February, 1875), p. 32; and XX (February, 1876), p. 31, and (November, 1876), p. 249. See also Manual (Los Angeles: First Congregational Church, June, 1886), p. 27; and *Annual Report*, American Missionary Association (1872), p. 74.

¹⁷ Letters, Mary P. Stewart to Reverend E. M. Cravath, 22 October 1873, Los Angeles, and 6 November 1873, Los Angeles; and Stewart to Gen[eral] C. H. Howard, 19 November 1873, Los Angeles; CA-CO, AMA.

¹⁸ Letter, M. M. Woodbridge to Gen[eral C. H.] Howard, 20 September 1873, San Francisco; CA-CO, AMA.

¹⁹ Letter, Stewart to Reverend E. M. Cravath, 17 November 1873, Los Angeles; letter, William C. Pond to Ex[ecutive] Com[mittee], American Missionary Association, 11 June 1874, San Francisco; CA-CO, AMA.

²⁰ Los Angeles *Express*, 26 June 1873; and Lou, "Chinese American Community," p. 255-256.

²¹ Letter, Stewart to Cravath, 6 November 1873, Los Angeles; CA-CO, AMA.

²² Letter of 4 August 1873, reprinted in *American Missionary*, XVII (October, 1873), p. 225.

²³ Letters, M. M. Woodbridge to Gen[eral Charles] Howard, 10 September 1873, San Francisco, and 20 September, 1873, San Francisco; CA-CO, AMA.

²⁴ Letter, Stewart to Cravath, 9 February 1874, Los Angeles, CA-CO, AMA.

²⁵ Letter, D. T. Packard to "Bro. [William C.] Pond," 17 April [1874], Los Angeles; CA-CO, AMA.

²⁶ Letter, Pond to Cravath, 30 April 1874, San Francisco; letters, Pond to "Ex[ecutive] Com[mittee], A[merican] M[issionary] A[ssociation], 11 June 1874, San Francisco; CA-CO, AMA. The *Directory for Los Angeles* for 1875 lists Stewart's Chinese school, but with the annotation "Attendance irregular." (Los Angeles: Mirror Book and Job Printing, 1875), p. 82; see also letter, William C. Pond to Reverend E. M. Strieby, D. D., 24 August 1882, San Francisco; CA-CO, AMA.

²⁷ Los Angeles *Express*, 1, 5, 7 September 1874.

²⁸ "Official Records", vol. I, p. 1, First Baptist Church, Los Angeles, California.

²⁹ Los Angeles *Evening Express*, 19 September 1874.

³⁰ Local Baptists did not turn their attention again to evangelization of the Chinese until 1896. This outreach resulted in the formation of the First Chinese Baptist Church in 1903. Ivan C. Ellis, "Baptist Churches of Southern California," (Ph. D. dissertation, Northern Baptist Theological Seminary, Chicago, 1948), p. 219.

³¹ Condit, *The Chinaman as We See Him*, p. 156; Lou, "The Chinese American Community," p. 259; The Pacific, XXV (21 September 1876), p. 4, and (2 November 1876), p.4; and Woo, "Presbyterian Mission: Christianizing and Civilizing the Chinese," p. 174.

³² *American Missionary*, XX (November 1876), p. 249; Lou, "Chinese American Community," p. 259; and Letter, Stewart to Reverend E. M. Cravath, 12 December 1877, Cincinnati, Ohio; CA-CO, AMA. Condit described Stewart's class as a "small dying" school in a letter to John C. Lowrie [Executive Secretary, Presbyterian Board of Foreign Missions], 1 May 1876, Los Angeles, found in Presbyterian Board of Foreign Mission, Correspondence, 1829-1895, Record Group 31, Box 45, Folder 4, Presbyterian Office of History, Philadelphia, hereafter cited as PBFM and POHP, respectively.

³³ I located these letters through consulting the work of Wesley Woo, "Protestant Work Among the Chinese in the San Francisco Bay Area," cited earlier. The collections of the Presbyterian Historical Society in Philadelphia contain many of Condit's letters to his superiors during his labors in Los Angeles.

³⁴ Letter, Condit to Lowrie, 22 May 1876, Los Angeles, with an unidentified newspaper clipping of 22 May 1876 describing the chapel dedication in PBFM, Correspondence, 1829-1895, RG 31, Box 45, folder 4, POHP; Condit, *The Chinaman as We See Him*, p. 156; E. S. Field, "Historical Address," (typescript, 4 February 1894), p. 6, Huntington Library, San Marino, California, hereafter cited as HL.

³⁵ Minutes, vol. I, p. 37, Session, Minutes and Records, 1874-1879, First Presbyterian Church, Los Angeles, POHP.

³⁶ Letter, Condit to Lowrie, 12 January 1877, Los Angeles, PBFM, Correspondence, 1829-1895, RG 31, Box 45, folder 4, POHP.

³⁷ *Occident*, XVII (6 September 1876), p.285; and Lou, "Chinese American Community," p. 259.

³⁸ Condit was a member of the Presbyterian Church in the United States of America, commonly known as the Presbyterian Church, U.S.A. The United Presbyterian organized in 1865 in Iowa and established a congregation in San Francisco the

following year. Growth on the West Coast warranted the foundation of two Presbyteries in 1877. See *The Occident*, XVII (6 September 1876), p. 281. The mission for the Los Angeles Chinese long antedated the denomination's formation of a congregation amongst Anglo-Americans; that body did not come into existence until 1883. The United Presbyterian pastors who replaced Condit were both former missionaries in China: H. V. Hoyes and J. C. Nevin. "Minutes" ledger, p. 1-2, First united Presbyterian Church, Los Angeles, California.

³⁹ *Minutes*, Synod of the Pacific (1878), p. 30; Condit, *The Chinaman as We See Him*, p. 156, 162; Woo, "Protestant Work Among the Chinese in the San Francisco Bay Area," p. 48; *The Pacific*, XXVI (2 May 1877), p. 4, and (23 August 1877), p. 4.

⁴⁰ *Minutes*, vols. I and II, *passim*, Session, Minutes and Records, 1874-1892, First Presbyterian Church, Los Angeles, POHP; *Minutes*, vol. I, p. 214, Records of the Presbytery of Los Angeles (P.C.U.S.A.), 1873-1887, POHP; Woo, "Protestant Work Among the Chinese," p.48; the *Occident*, XXV (23 April 1884), p. 1; *Minutes*, Synod of the Pacific (1884), p. 4, 50; "History of the Chinese First Presbyterian Church," (typescript, 1946), p. 1-2, Chinese First Presbyterian Church file, "Presbytery of Los Angeles" box, Archives of the San Francisco Theological Seminary, San Anselmo, California; and Pat Hoffman, *History of the First Presbyterian Church of Los Angeles* (Los Angeles: United University Church, 1977), p. 3-4.

⁴¹ Condit remained in charge of Presbyterian missions to the Chinese and later the Japanese from 1870 to 1903. Clifford M. Drury, *Presbyterian Panorama: One Hundred and Fifty Years of National Missions History*, (Philadelphia: Board of Christian Education, Presbyterian Church of the U.S.A., 1952), p. 195.

⁴² Condit, *The Chinaman as We See Him*, p. 157-161.

⁴³ Condit, *The Chinaman as We See Him*, p. 108.

⁴⁴ Condit, *The Chinaman as We See Him*, p. 157, 161.

⁴⁵ *True Light Presbyterian Church, 1876-1976, Centennial Anniversary* (Los Angeles: True Light Presbyterian Church, 1976), p. 2; and Condit, *The Chinaman as We See Him*, p. 134-135.

⁴⁶ *Annual Register* (Los Angeles: Fort Street Methodist Episcopal Church, 1889), *passim*; *The Horizon* (Los Angeles: First Methodist Church, June, 1938), p. 18-19; Marco R. Newmark, "The Story of Religion in Los Angeles, 1781-1900," *Historical Society of Southern California Quarterly*, XXVIII (March, 1946), p.38, 41; and Dr. J. Wesley Hole, "History of the Los Angeles Chinese United Methodist Church," quoted in *Los Angeles Chinatown Souvenir Book* (1991), p. 35-36.

⁴⁷ Royal G. Davis, *Light on a Gothic Tower* (Los Angeles: First Congregational Church, 1967), p. 58-59.

⁴⁸ *Bitter Strength*, p. 167.

⁴⁹ Barth, *Bitter Strength*, p. 169; Lou, "Chinese American Community," p. 254.

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CHINESE HISTORICAL SOCIETY OF
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CHINATOWN MILITIA UNITS - 1942 LOS ANGELES and SAN FRANCISCO

Norine Dresser

Photographs Courtesy of: Peter Soo Hoo, Jr.

Abstract

Shortly after the onset of America's involvement in World War II, Chinese American men in both Los Angeles and San Francisco demonstrated their patriotism by voluntarily forming special companies for the California State Military Reserve. There is no documentation of these efforts in military records—except for a picture of the pin used by the Los Angeles Chinatown militia unit as part of its insignia—but a few photographs and personal recollections attest to the existence of these military units.



October 10, 1942 Parade in Los Angeles - 2nd Platoon Lt. Jack Hom. Color Guard: Lee Young, Kenneth Ung, Walter Quan & Tom Wing Kwai.

Snapshots of Chinese American men in uniform are all that remain as testimony to a time when the Chinese American community demonstrated its patriotism during World War II by organizing a militia unit. These photographic remnants discovered in Peter Soo Hoo Sr.'s old family album and now supplemented by memories of a few surviving members, show the readiness of the Chinese American community to make an overt statement of its feelings of loyalty to this country. They bear witness to the Chinese American community's active involvement in the larger war effort on the home front.

Even though most Americans had never heard of Pearl Harbor before December 7, 1941, they were nonetheless stunned when the Japanese attacked. Shortly thereafter, Chinese American men in Los Angeles awaiting induction into the regular military branches or unable to serve because of age or physical disabilities joined a special unit of the California State Military Reserve which they dubbed the "Chinese Militia."

Former member Billy Lew reminisces from a 1992 perspective, "Come to think about it after so many years—I think we were a little crazy to organize that thing. What could we do if the Japanese invaded?"¹ However, when the unit first formed, the outlook was different.

Anti-Asian sentiments in Los Angeles were strong in 1942. Most non-Asians couldn't distinguish between Chinese, Japanese, or Korean residents. This was the time when Los Angeles Chinese, fearful of being mistaken for Japanese, put "Chinese American" stickers on their cars or wore "Chinese American" buttons or "ABCD" (American Born Chinese Descent) buttons to stave off dirty looks from suspicious Angelenos. Even Life Magazine, probably the most significant disseminator of public information at the time, was caught up in this preoccupation and published an article, "How to Tell Japs From the Chinese."²

The Los Angeles Chinatown militia unit was born in this hostile environment. Parades and visible training sessions at the California State Armory in Exposition Park called attention to the men's patriotism, creating a public marker of their non-Japanese status. Consciously or not, they were divorcing themselves from the Japanese because they were concerned that they might be suspected of anti-American sentiments. Early in 1942, volunteer state militia units organized in both Los Ange-

les and San Francisco Chinatowns. They were part of the California State Military Reserve which had been created to take over emergency tasks in the event of federal mobilization of the State Guard. California Governor Culbert Olson requested that men between 16⁵ and 24 not serving in the armed forces or National Guard volunteer for service in the Reserve.³

Brigadier General Donald E. Mattson, Commander of the Center for Military History in Sacramento, explains that the government created the State Guard at the onset of World War II because it was thought there would be fighting in California.⁴ To promote concern about protection of home territory the State Guard circulated a recruitment poster in the Bay Area proclaiming, "To All Male Citizens of San Francisco: . . . If you would rather fight for your home and family than live like a slave you will join the 17th Infantry, California State Militia . . . Now!" Fear about California being attacked was reinforced by a newspaper article about a Japanese submarine surfacing off the coast of Santa Barbara on February 23, 1942.⁵

Yet, beyond deployment in Chinatown, the men in both militia units were not clear about what their responsibilities would have been in case of emergency.⁶ George Tom recollects, "I don't think there was that much call for us to do anything at the time. There were no real riots or anything like that. But I would think that if there was an invasion or something like that and they needed the manpower to guard something that we would be called."⁷ In addition, since many residents in Chinatown didn't speak English well, most assumed they would be used as communicators to the community.

LOS ANGELES CHINATOWN MILITIA UNIT

Prominent community leader and one of the founders of New Chinatown in Los Angeles, Peter Soo Hoo, Sr., was the commander of the Chinese community militia unit and convinced others to join him. Soo Hoo had been active in the Chinese American Citizen's Alliance (CACA)—an organization to protect the civil rights of Chinese Americans—and he recruited his friends from there. According to Stanley Mu, "Peter Soo Hoo was the motivator. He put in many hours, but of course, he was one of the leaders of the community."⁸

George Tom was 20 when he joined the Chinatown militia.



Peter Soo Hoo, Sr. - Commander of the Chinatown Militia Unit in Los Angeles.

“I was active in community affairs at the time. I had the Chinese Boy Scout Troop. Most of the young persons who had the time would join. You see, a lot of the Chinese people work on Saturdays and Sundays, so they couldn’t go or join up.”

A 1942 Los Angeles Times article states that the Chinatown militia unit drew celebrities like Hollywood actors Roland Got and Richard Loo as well as UCLA star wrestler Ed Tom.^{9, 10} The article quotes Second-in Command Loo who stated: “Naturally we want to do our part.”¹¹

Militia members met on weekends for drill practice at both the CACA Lodge located at 415^{1/2} No. Los Angeles Street and at the Armory in Exposition Park. They drew on the expertise of their own members for leadership. For example, Stanley Mu, who was still a student at Belmont High School, was experienced in handling rifles and guns because he was enrolled in the United States Army Reserve Officer Training Corps or ROTC classes. He taught these skills. George Tom had taken an Instructor’s Course from the American Red Cross, so he gave lessons in First Aid. Professor Isadore L. Contera of Filipino descent, who taught at the California Institute of Technology (or Caltech), became a volunteer teacher of Jiu Jitsu.

Esprit de corps ran high. The men bought their own standard United States military uniforms but the rifles they carried

were old ones supplied by the Armory. With the encouragement of Peter Soo Hoo, Sr., they designed their own shoulder patch and pin to embellish their uniforms. The designs were based on Sun Yat-sen's famous Three Principles or San Min Chu I, incorporating Chinese symbols of blue sky, white sun, golden pagoda, and the color red.

Parades were one of their most important activities. Stanley Mu relates that when the men marched, the Chinese American community always clapped and cheered them on. "Our militia drew the community a lot closer together. I think they felt more secure because we had a unit."

Both the Chinese American and non-Chinese community enthusiastically received them. The men paraded down major thoroughfares on occasions such as the Chinese celebration of Double Ten Day (October 10, being the birthday of the Republic of China, established in 1911), as well as American celebrations like the Fourth of July. Eventually the militia unit grew to about 60 members.

SAN FRANCISCO CHINATOWN MILITIA UNIT

In contrast to the high-keyed Los Angeles division, San Francisco's Chinatown militia unit did not have such a positive response. Their commander, Thomas Chinn, remembers that they received little support from either the California State Military Reserve or the Chinese American community, which remained essentially unaware of their existence.

Captain Maurice Hursh Auerbach of the Reserve had approached Chinn, who had been an Air Raid Warden, about organizing a Chinatown militia unit to be known as Company F of the 17th California Infantry.¹² Chinn agreed and brought in Johnny Kan as Assistant Commander. Chinn recalled, "It was difficult to recruit members. It was mostly by word of mouth. At that time, if you put something like that in the Chinese newspaper, you would start them on a scare and they would be more and more afraid that something was going to happen. We explained that our job was to defend Chinatown in case of an attack. Otherwise we had no function."¹³

Chinn comments on a situation that underscores the racial distrust of those times. Two Caucasians wanted to join his group claiming eligibility because they lived in the Chinatown

area. Although the Chinese Americans welcomed them, the suspicion among members was that the Caucasians were there to keep an eye on their activities. This suspicion was never confirmed or disproven.

The State Military Reserve promised the San Francisco men that rifles were forthcoming, but none ever arrived. No pins or insignias were available to them, either. Chinn recalls that when they requested a special design for their shoulder patch, Capt. Auerbach recommended against it. "Special insignia doesn't mean anything outside of Chinatown. And if they [non-Chinese] see a foreign insignia, that means more trouble for you... Don't try and change anything." And they never did.

The San Francisco Chinatown militia unit never had access to actual weapons. Instead they purchased wooden bayonets from an Army surplus store. Walter Lee was put in charge of bayonet practice because of his ROTC experience. He complains. "Even the high school ROTC had 1903 Springfield models... but we had nothing, nothing at all."¹⁴ In spite of this, Lee used an Army manual and taught the volunteers how to use bayonets—step one, step two. He showed them basic drill commands and how to salute.

Drill practice took place Friday nights from 7:00 to 9:00 p.m.. Since they did not have access to the Armory, they met in the auditorium of the Nam Kue Chinese Language School, located on Sacramento Street in the heart of Chinatown. But many had to take time off from work to get there at those hours. Some took the bus and for those with cars getting there was equally difficult because of gas rationing and the lack of parking places.

According to Chinn, when they first formed they became a kind of "half-baked" company. "We got nothing. We were promised—forever being promised—but after six, eight months with nothing and we were still going through this thing—what for? We were paying money for every little thing ourselves. Why keep it up? We would be ashamed to ask our friends to come in. We couldn't promise them anything because we couldn't get our promised fulfilled."

The Chinatown militia unit had no financial support. They were never given any directives from above. There were no mock drills for first aid practice. They were never told what to do in case of attack. They had only one parade through



Los Angeles - Beale Wong and Archie Got in training.

Chinatown and that was under the guidance of a few police inspectors, including Inspector Manion who was the head of the police squad for Chinatown. Although they ultimately recruited as many as 34 men, many dropped out of the organization because there were no rewards in being members.

It was not until 1990 that Chinn and Lee first learned that there had been a Los Angeles Chinatown militia unit at the same time as theirs. They were amazed by what the Soo Hoo photos revealed, but they were also disheartened. They recollected that no matter how much recognition they craved, they were rejected and never fully acknowledged for their support of the war effort at home. For example, only Chinn and one other person, Johnny Kan, ever received official certificates of appointment as Commissioned Officers. All the rest of the men never received anything to say that they were members. Chinn laments, "That was something we were promised and never got."

While looking at one photo of the Los Angeles Chinatown militia unit proudly parading down Wilshire Boulevard, Walter Lee concluded, "Compared to those people, we were just a bunch of jokers here."



Relaxing at a picnic, Stan Mu (3rd from left), Others identified; George Tom, Herb Tom, Forrest Yee, Mayward Tom and Cy Chan of Los Angeles.

FAINT MEMORIES AND MEMENTOES

In both the Los Angeles and San Francisco Chinese communities, the militia units were short-lived. Most men recall being in it for one year or less. Brigadier General Mattson speculates about its disappearance: "As the combat zone moved further into the Pacific, California ceased to be in danger." Thus membership declined as the need for their services diminished. In addition, when members moved into regular servicemen roles, they were not replaced. Because of the short life span of the Chinatown militia units, most surviving members have only vague memories of their experiences which pale in comparison to their vivid recollections of active duty in the regular armed forces.

The Soo Hoo photographic mementos and the faint memories that they stir evoke a kind of pathos in the militia men's struggle to declare themselves loyal to the United States. Their public-spirited efforts on the home front, particularly in San Francisco, were never completely appreciated which may explain, in part, why their activities and achievements have been ignored in official records.¹⁵

The two Chinatown militia units were part of a brief moment in history—one that has been overlooked and unmarked in the military documents of those times.¹⁶ All that exists officially is a picture of the pin worn with pride by the men in the Los Angeles Chinatown militia unit while demonstrating their patriotism.

Endnotes

I wish to thank George Tom, Stanley Mu, Billy Lew, Thomas Chinn, and Walter Lee for sharing their memories with me. I am also appreciative to Peter Soo Hoo, Jr. for allowing me to duplicate his priceless family photos and to George Tom for lending me his memorabilia. In addition, I am deeply indebted to Brigadier General Donald Mattson and his gracious staff at the Citizen Soldier Museum for giving me permission to forage through their documents and for helping me with this research.

1. From an interview, 2 July 1992.
2. "How to Tell Japs from the Chinese: Angry Citizens Victimize Allies with Emotional Outburst at Enemy," Life (22 December 1941), pp. 81-82.
3. For a complete history of the California State Guard, see History of the California State Guard published by the Adjutant General of the State of California, 1946.
4. From an interview, 9 May 1990.
5. James Hart, Companion to California (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1987), p. 452.
6. During wartime, confusion as to the precise duties of the State Guard was not limited to Chinese Americans. An April 13, 1942 article in The Nation, "Confusion Hampering Growth of the Home Guard Movement," pp. 27-28, gives details of problems in the Home Guard movement across the country.
That situation no longer exists and their responsibilities are clearly defined on the Fact Sheet of the California National Guard, Number 6, regarding the State Military Reserve and published by the Military Department Office of Public Affairs, Sacramento, CA 95821-4405.
Emergency tasks, in support of civil authority, potentially include: emergency medical services; homeless shelter operations; mass care and shelter; protection of critical state facilities; communications support; operations liaison with emergency services organization.
7. From an interview, 3 July 1984.
8. From an interview, 12 March 1985.
9. "California Chinese Reserves Put in Day of Training," Los Angeles Times (20 April 1942), Part II, p. 1.

10. Roland Got's career ended abruptly during the war when he drowned in a boating accident. Richard Loo, who died in 1983, became best known for his wartime roles portraying villainous Japanese military officers in such films as "Keys of the Kingdom," "Purple Heart," "God is My Co-Pilot," "China Sky," "Back to Bataan."
11. "California Chinese Reserves Put in Day of Training," (20 April 1942), Part II, p. 1.
12. The Los Angeles Chinatown militia unit was also a company of an infantry, but none of the interviewees recalled the precise information.
13. From an interview, 7 May 1990.
14. From an interview, 7 May 1990.
15. Information, other than designs for specialized insignia, is also missing about specialized Korean and Mexican divisions of the State Guard as well as a Philippine Suicide Squadron and a Women's Suicide Squadron. If any reader has information on these other units or knows more about the Chinese American militia units, I would appreciate hearing from them. Please contact Professor Norine Dresser, c/o Gum Saan Journal, Chinese Historical Society of Southern California, P.O. Box 862647, Los Angeles, 90086-2647.
16. The Citizen Soldier Museum at: 119 2nd Street in Sacramento, CA 95814 is the best source for those seeking more information about the California State Military Reserve. Headed by Brigadier General Donald E. Mattson, Commander of the Center for Military History, the museum contains more than 30,000 military papers, documents, and memorabilia pertaining to Californians who served in all branches of the military from the Spanish period to contemporary times.
For information call: (916) 442-2883.

Editor's Note:

Due to technical difficulties we were not able to reproduce the slides taken of the Los Angeles Chinatown Militia pins owned by George Tom nor the photocopies of the materials owned by Thomas Chinn which pertain to the San Francisco Chinatown Militia Unit.

ORIGINS AND DESTINATIONS: A CONFERENCE ON CHINESE AMERICANS

Thomas A. McDannold
Photographs By: Tom Eng

Over 200 individuals attended Origins and Destinations: A Conference on Chinese Americans. Held on the campus of the California State University, Los Angeles (CSLA), from August 28 to August 30, 1992, the conference was national in scope and attendance. The majority of participants were from California with others from states such as Hawaii, Virginia, Illinois, Missouri, Massachusetts, New York, Washington, D.C., Texas, Arizona, Nevada, Idaho, Nebraska, Washington, and Florida.

The conference was a joint effort of the Chinese Historical Society of Southern California (CHSSC), Institute for Asian American and Pacific Asian Studies at CSLA, the Asian American Studies and the Center for Pacific Rim Studies at the University of California, Los Angeles (UCLA). Under the direction of Mr. Stan Mu, CHSSC board member, planning for the event spanned two years. During that time, CHSSC worked to organize and facilitate the overall effort. Dr. Ruth Wu, CSLA, coordinated the facilities which included on-campus



Conference Group Photograph on Sunday, August 30, 1992.

housing for participants. Dr. Lucie Cheng and Mr. Scott Gruber, both with the Center for Pacific Rim Studies organized the program.

A total of 56 papers were read. The categories in which the papers were grouped consisted of: political activism, Chinese American women, regional history, Chinese American identity, interethnic relations, using primary Chinese language materials, the performing arts, literature, exclusion, classroom materials selection and use, Chinese language education in America, museums, transformation, entrepreneurship, and archeology.

Opening on Friday evening, the conference began with a buffet reception and plenary session in the campus dining room. Introductions were made by Ms. Sue Yee, CHSSC president. Welcoming comments were given by Dr. James M. Rosser, President of CSLA, and Dr. Eui-Young Yu, Director of CSLA's Institute for Asian American and Pacific Asian Studies. A proclamation from March Fong Eu, California Secretary of State, was presented to the conference by her representative Ms. Gerrye Wong. The plenary speakers were Dr. Judy Chu, Councilwoman and former mayor of Monterey Park, California, and Dr. John Tchen, Director of Asian American Studies at Queens College, New York. Dr. Chu spoke on the challenges for Chinese Americans. Dr. Tchen addressed a new agenda for Chinese Americans.

Saturday was a full day of conference activities held in the campus Student Union. Most of the papers were given on this day. In addition, there was an exhibit room that contained displays from the Chinese Historical Society of San Diego and Upper Baja, the Organization of Chinese American Women, and the Museum of Chinese American History. Printed material announcing programs, organizations, and soon-to-be released books was abundant. Also, there were a number of book vendors who offered materials on Chinese Americans, China, and Chinese literature. Both Chinese and English language media reporters were on hand to capture the events. The day concluded with a light supper in the dining room during which there were many lively discussions about the papers.

On Sunday, the participants heard the last of the presentations and attended the closing plenary session. Speakers were Mr. Him Mark Lai of the Chinese Historical Society of America



Receiving a proclamation from the Secretary of State, March Fong Eu. L to R. Stanley Mu, Sue Yee, Gerrye Wong, Eu's representative.



Lucy Cheng welcoming participants at the first plenary session, Friday afternoon.



Ruth Wu of California State University Los Angeles.

(CHSA), Dr. Munson Kwok (CHSSC), and Dr. Lucie Cheng (UCLA) as the discussant. Lai, after reviewing the development of the body of Chinese American literature and Chinese American studies, indicated a need to use more Chinese language materials in the research effort. Also, he felt that the exclusion period itself needed more investigation. In closing, he pointed out that the term "Chinese" means something different to the immigrants of today.

Kwok, recapping the development of Chinese historical societies, indicated that during the last twelve years, the number of organizations has grown from eight to possibly twenty-two. Further, there was a substantial movement to increase the number of Chinese American museums. Overall, he felt that the societies were a meeting ground for professional, academic, and lay persons, regardless of racial or ethnic origin. He concluded his presentation by stating that the societies were assuming a greater institutional role in the community and had moved into an advocacy position. He cautioned that for the membership to grow, they needed to address the changing immigrant population.



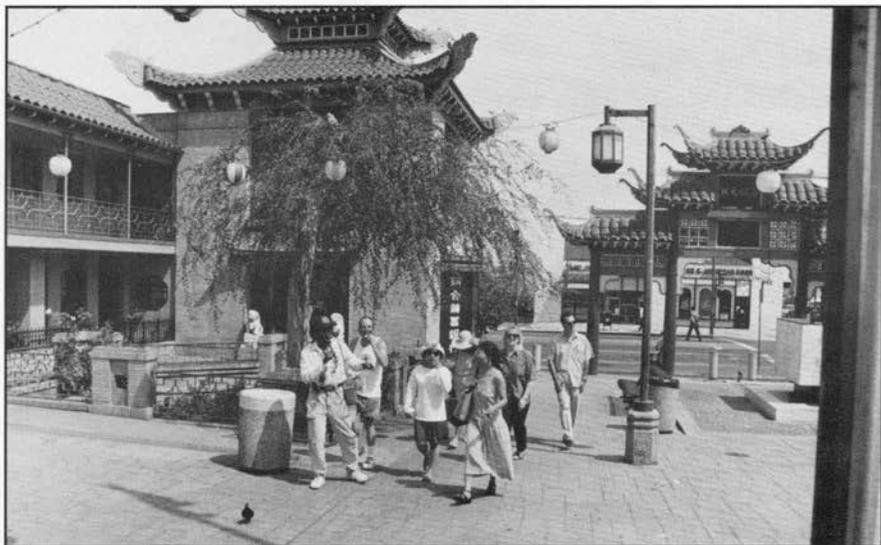
Angie Ma Wong speaking on materials selection for school children.



Enid Lim, President of the Chinese Historical Society of America.

Cheng, responding to the previous speakers, warned of becoming mired in debunking past stereotypes and misconceptions. She suggested that to remain a vital field of study, there was a need to develop over-arching concepts and theories which showed the Chinese American experience as being significant in today's social, economic, and political world.

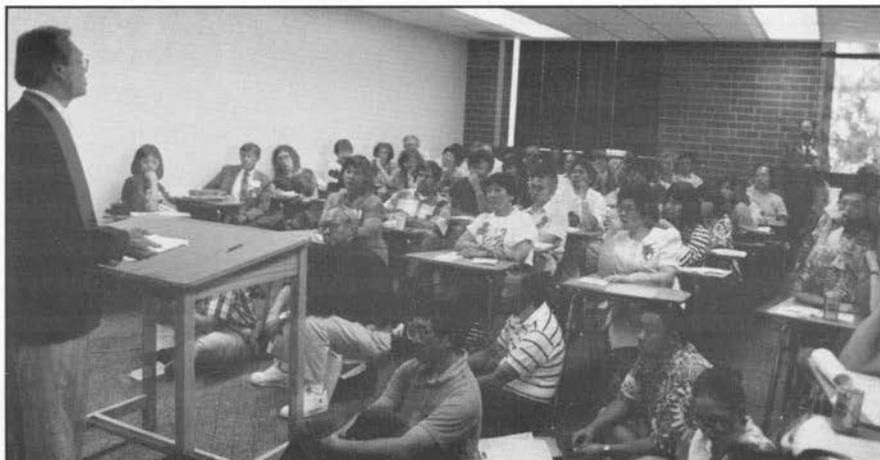
After the conclusion of the conference, a group picture was taken in front of the Confucius statue that dominated the campus quad.



Cy Wong, far left, leading one of the three groups touring Central Chinatown, Los Angeles.



Camaraderie during a break between sessions.



Charles Wong speaking on false papers at the session on Exclusion.

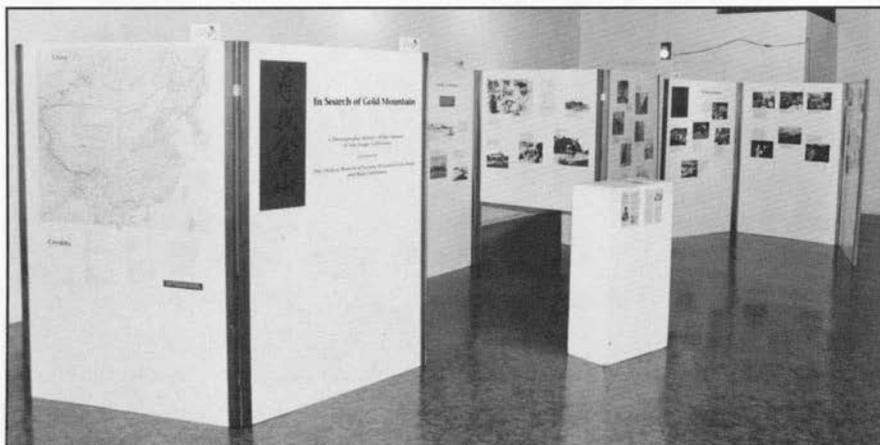
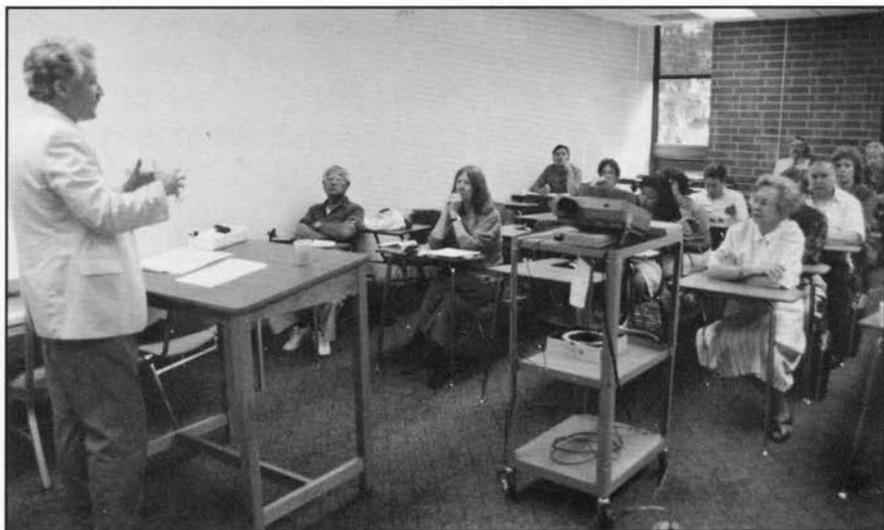


Exhibit by the Chinese Historical Society of San Diego and Upper Baja, one of several exhibits presented.



Session on Chinese American Women-2nd Generation. L to R, Yen Siu Fong, Judy Yung, Marjorie Lee and Colleen Fong.



James E. Ayol speaking on the Chinese in Arizona.



Three of the dedicated volunteers at their posts. L to R, Chong Lew, Isabel Lew and Ella Quan.



All smiles from the Chair of the Conference, Stanley Mu.

Contributors

Norine Dresser is a folklorist, specializing in contemporary urban folklore, who recently retired as Professor of English from California State University, Los Angeles (CSULA). She is the author of American Vampires: Fans, Victims, and Practioneers. Her fourth coming book, Our Own Stories: Cross-cultural Communication Practice, will be published in Spring 1993. It was written for teaching English as a Second Language (ESL).

Thomas A. McDannold, Professor of Cultural Geography, Ventura Community College, served as President of the Chinese Historical Society of Southern California, 1991-1992. His term ended in June shortly before the Conference on Chinese Americans. His current research interest is Chinese place-names in California. His collection of 500 place-names include street names, Chinese temples, beaches, and recreational facilities such as Ming Road, Weaverville Joss House, and China Camp.

To the Reader

Since the publication of Gum Saan Journal in 1977, there have been two editors; first, Margie Lew, followed by Ella Quan. With this issue, I become the third editor; a hard act to follow in the footsteps of two such excellent editors. They have set the style and tone for the Journal and the consensus of the Editorial Board is to continue to have one that would be enjoyable to read for both knowledge and pleasure; a journal in keeping with the purposes of the Society.

Our plans for next year include an Index to all past Journals in the June 1993 issue. The December 1993 issue will commemorate the 50th Anniversary of the Repeal of the Chinese Exclusion laws. Incidentally, it was on December 13, 1943 that President Franklin Delano Roosevelt signed the "momentous 'Act to Repeal the Chinese Exclusion Acts, to Establish Quotas, and for Other Purposes'."

In the meantime, the Editorial Board and I will be working out guidelines for the submission of manuscripts. We welcome your suggestions and ideas.

Note from the Editor

CHINESE HISTORICAL SOCIETY OF SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA

Founded in Los Angeles, California, November 1, 1975

Incorporated under the Laws of California, December, 1976

The Purpose of the Chinese History Society of Southern California, Inc. shall be to bring together people with a mutual interest in the Southern California history of Chinese and Chinese Americans, to perform all the functions and activities of an historical society in pursuit of gaining, preserving, and communicating knowledge of this important history and to understand the significant Southern California historical role of Chinese and Chinese Americans.

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Membership in the Chinese Historical Society of Southern California includes Gum Saan Journal and News 'n Notes, the monthly newsletter.

Gum Saan Journal, in publication since 1977, is issued in June and December yearly.

Editor

Emma Woo Louie

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