



# 唐府

TANG  
FU

Issue No. 10 / Spring 2025



## FEATURED CHARACTER

calligraphed by  
Zhao Mengfu

(趙孟頫, 1254-1322)

造 [Zào] make

造型 [Zào xíng] modeling

創造 [Chuàng zào] create

造成 [Zào chéng] cause

天造地設 [Tiānzàodìshè]

made in heaven



Wikipedia.org/wiki/Zhao\_Mengfu

COVER CALLIGRAPHER

Zhao Mengfu (趙孟頫, 1254–1322), was a Chinese calligrapher, painter, and scholar during the Yuan dynasty (1271–1368). He was a descendant of the Song dynasty's imperial family. His work was greatly appreciated by the Confucian-inspired Yuan Emperor Renzong. Zhao was an official member in the Yuan court.

He was married to Guan Daosheng, who was also an accomplished poet, painter and calligrapher. His rejection of the refined, gentle brushwork of his era in favor of the cruder style of the eighth century is considered to have brought about a revolution that created the modern Chinese landscape painting. His landscape style focused more on a literal laying of ground. This made his paintings appear very simple and approachable and was the characteristic that many people valued about his style.

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SDCHM MISSION BUILDING  
404 Third Avenue  
San Diego, CA 92101

DR. SUN YAT-SEN MEMORIAL  
EXTENSION BUILDING  
328 J Street  
San Diego, CA 92101

MUSEUM HOURS  
Friday - Sunday  
12 pm to 4 pm  
Second Sundays Free

Director’s Letter:



Dear SDCHM Family and Friends,

As we step into the new year, I reflect on the incredible growth and progress the San Diego Chinese Historical Museum has experienced over the past six months. Together, we’ve celebrated achievements, navigated change, and laid the foundation for an exciting future.

Key highlights include:

**Facility Enhancements:** Thanks to District 4 County Supervisor Monica Montgomery Steppe, we refinished the museum floors and updated exterior signage, revitalizing our historic spaces.

**Expanded Educational Programming:** Our ethnic studies initiatives have reached more schools, libraries, and community groups, bringing our community’s history and culture to life for students and educators.

**Improved Accessibility:** Programs like SDCHM Second Sundays and Discover & Go continue to invite audiences of all backgrounds to explore, learn, and connect.

**Compelling Exhibitions:** The Art of Chunming Yu and Lan Wang opened to enthusiastic visitors, celebrating the unique contributions of these talented artists.

Change has been a defining theme, from refining strategic priorities to building new partnerships. While challenges like policy and funding shifts loom, they reaffirm our commitment to resilience and sustainability.

The year ahead promises new opportunities to grow our impact—from plans for the museum’s upcoming 30th anniversary to expanded collaborations, enhanced educational programming and deeper community engagement. None of this would have been possible without you. Your support—whether through time, resources, or advocacy—has been the driving force behind our progress. To our staff, donors, volunteers, board, members, and visitors, thank you for believing in our mission and for standing with us every step of the way.

I invite you to join us in envisioning what the next chapter holds for the SDCHM. Here’s to a new year of growth, connection, and shared success!

With gratitude and best wishes,

Jacinta Wong  
Executive Director

Message from Our Chairperson:



Dear supporters and friends of the SDCHM,

Greetings to all!

It is hard to imagine that the holiday season has come to a close!

I want to take this opportunity to wish you a great start to the new year.

Many of you have visited the museum over this past year. I hope you have enjoyed the multiple programs that the museum has offered. I want to take this opportunity to thank each and everyone of you for being a part of the Museum family. Your presence and your participation has meant a lot to me.

Many of you have consistently participated in our monthly Chinese American Experience and Beyond programs. This marquis program in collaboration with San Diego State University is continuing to improve with all your encouragement and support. I have received many positive comments about this program and we will continue to use this platform to inform and to grow.

As many of you may remember, the museum’s groundbreaking was more than thirty years ago. We will be celebrating our 30th anniversary in 2026. We have launched a brick program and you will hear more about it from our 30 year celebration committee very soon.

Again, I want to thank all the staff, volunteers and most importantly, all of you for being part of this magnificent family.

My best wishes for a most wonderful 2025!

Lilly Cheng  
Board Chairperson

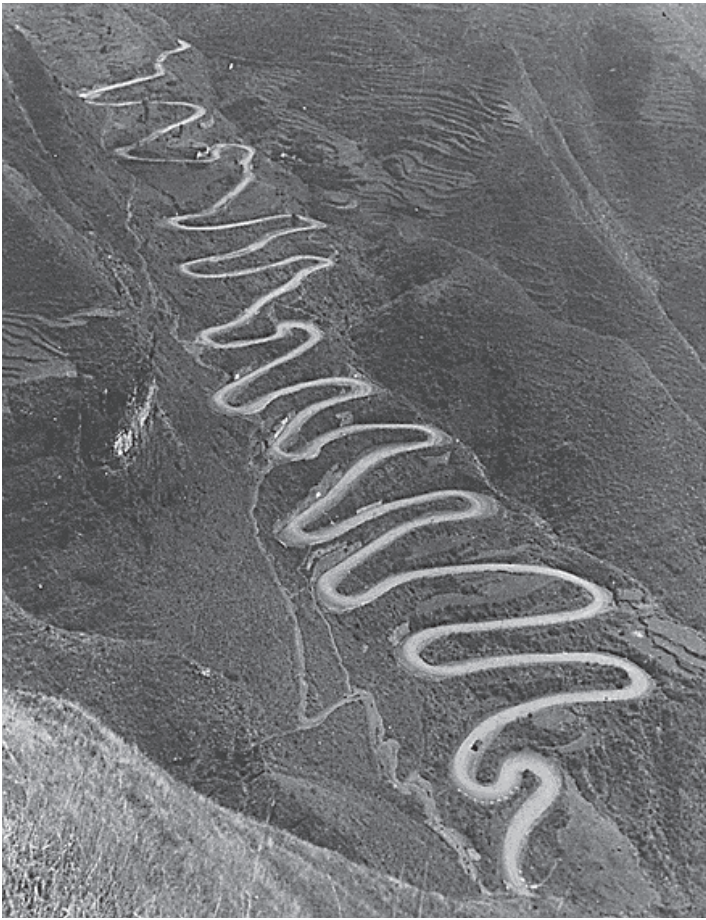


# 80th Anniversary of WWII Victory: Remember China-Burma-India Theater

April to September 2025

LILY TOU BIRMINGHAM

During World War II, the United States began to provide significant military supplies and other assistance to the Allies in September 1940. After the bombing of Pearl Harbor, the U.S. declared war on Japan in December 1941, but by then, China had already been fighting Japan in an all-out war in China since 1937. British colonies in Southeast Asia including India and Burma, now Myanmar, were also attacked by Japan by early 1942. Therefore, China, the U.S., and Britain emerged as the major Allies to fight against Japan.



Famous 24 bends of the Burma Road that took 200 engineers and over 100,000 workers to build.

The China-Burma-India (CBI) Theater was the United States military designation of the regional battlefields during World War II. Events in the CBI Theater have been largely marginalized in the western public memory, but their stories were as colorful as those from the more heavily documented areas of WWII. Many Chinese Americans served in the maintenance and service squadrons in the CBI Theater, and made significant contributions.



Sun Liren (孙立人), J. Stilwell and Liao Yaoliang (廖耀湘) in discussion.

This exhibition celebrates the 80th anniversary of the WWII victory with paintings, photos, oral stories and memorabilia. It reminds us of the CBI story that was mostly forgotten. Some highlights of the exhibition are included here.

## Burma Road 滇緬公路 and Ledo Road 中印公路

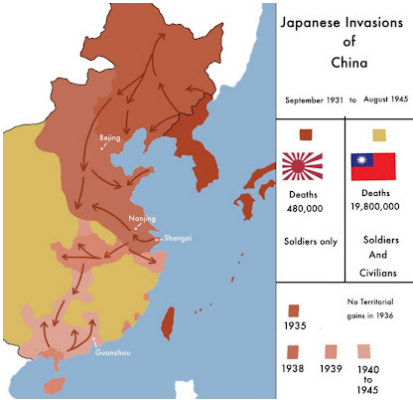
The Burma Road was built from 1937 to 1938 to convey supplies to China from Burma. It went from Kunming 昆明, China to Lashio 臘戍, Burma, where it connected to the railroad to Rangoon 仰光. From December 1938 to April 1942, about 452,000 tons of supplies (90% of total aid to China) went through this road, before Japan blocked its usage in April 1942.

The Ledo Road started from Ledo, India and connected to the Burma Road near the Chinese border. After the Japanese cut off the southern part of Burma Road in 1942, the Ledo Road was a land route to enable the allies to deliver supplies to China. It was built under the direction of General Joseph Stilwell and in early 1945 it was renamed the Stilwell Road, at the suggestion of Chiang Kai-Shek.

## Chinese Expeditionary Force 中國遠征軍

At Britain's request, the Chinese sent an Expeditionary Force into Burma in March 1942 to support the British Army. With many issues, the Allied military collapsed. The Chinese troops led by Sun Liren would later be equipped and trained by General Stilwell in India.

Another part of the Chinese Expeditionary Force led by Wei Lihuang would be stationed in Yunnan, China. Later, they attacked the Japanese from western Yunnan and met with Sun Liren's force, which attacked Burma from the northwest, in Wanding at the Burmese-Chinese border. This victory plus the hard labor of road construction helped to reopen the Burma Road and Ledo Road in January 1945.



The final Japanese surrender was on September 2, 1945 when they signed the official Instrument of Surrender aboard the USS Missouri in Tokyo Bay, marking the end of the war, also known as Victory over Japan Day (V-J Day).

## Flying the "Hump" 駝峰航線

The "Hump" was the trans-Himalayan airlift route that flew military transport aircraft from Assam, India to Kunming, China to resupply the Chinese war effort after the Burma Road was controlled by Japan. It was the most ambitious combat airlift operation in modern history. Flying over the Himalayas was extremely dangerous and made more difficult by a lack of reliable charts and radio navigation aids, and unpredictable weather. The airlift delivered approximately 650,000 tons of material to China at great cost in manpower and aircraft during its 42-month history.

## Legacy of the Flying Tigers 飛虎隊

Claire Chennault (1890–1958) was hired by Chiang Kai-Shek to help the Chinese Air Force in 1941. He purchased 100 Curtiss P-40 fighters, and recruited pilots and ground crew from the U.S. military. They formed the American Volunteer Group (AVG) to protect China. They seemed invincible during Japan's early advancement in the Asian-Pacific Region, and were known as the Flying Tigers. Later, Chennault was reinstated into the U.S. Army Air Force in command of the



Wei Lihuang and Sun Liren at the Burmese-Chinese border, 1945.



Transportation Lines in Burma and China.

14th Air Force, and part of the AVG was incorporated into Chenault's command. The name of "Flying Tigers" had also been inherited. The Chinese Americans who served in maintenance and service squadrons also proudly called themselves "Flying Tigers".

## Chinese Americans in CBI 華僑在滇緬戰爭

There were about 20,000 Chinese Americans who served in WWII in all theaters. A significant majority of Chinese American soldiers served in the CBI, including ground troops, air crew, maintenance personnel, and signal corps. Their language skills helped CBI divisions to communicate with their Chinese allies.

Ground support was extremely critical for fighter planes, and the planes that flew the "hump". The men who serviced the planes included mechanics, armorers, parachute riggers, radio technicians, and propeller specialists. The 14th Air Service Group (ASG) had six companies and three squadrons of all Chinese Americans.



# From Exclusion to Congressional Gold Medal

KAREN SOOHOO

In 2018 Congress passed the Chinese American Veteran World War II Congressional Gold Medal (CGM) Act, which also marked the 75th anniversary of the Repeal of the Chinese Exclusion Act. The CGM is the highest civilian honor bestowed by Congress, and collectively recognizes the dedicated service and significant yet overlooked contributions of Chinese American WWII veterans who served with honor from December 7, 1941 to December 31, 1946, while facing long standing institutionalized discrimination, racial prejudice and xenophobia.



The US Mint designed medal shows Chinese American men and women serving in all Armed Force branches (Army, Army Air Forces, Navy, Marines, Coast Guard, Merchant Marine, and Women Airforce Service Pilots). The reverse shows Chinese Americans in all WWII theaters land, air and sea. About 25% served in the Army Air Forces, with many in the China-Burma-India theater’s 14th Air Service Group, a unit of Chinese-American servicemen who supported the 14th Air Force “Flying Tigers.”

The Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882 that was in effect until 1943, denied citizenship to non-US born Chinese Americans, resulting in a dwindling bachelor population. Though small in numbers, approximately 20,000 Chinese Americans volunteered, or were drafted at a disproportionately high rate of 1 in 5, due to bachelor priority in the draft, as compared to non-Chinese. Nonetheless, Chinese Americans demonstrated equal levels of patriotism, dedication and valor in defending America, despite 40% being declared unfit for citizenship.

Furthermore, like other CGM awardees (Tuskegee Airmen and Native American Code Talkers) who experienced systemic discrimination, Chinese Americans saw their acts of military heroism, duty and sacrifice go unrecognized, and the government finally corrected it.

## TCAE&B Lecture Series Schedule

January 18, 2025  
“Never Go Hungry Again!”  
Bernice Ng

February 15, 2025  
“Going Home”  
Li Chin and Susan Zhou

March 15, 2025  
“Dr. Sun Yat-Sen”  
Speaker TBD

April 19, 2025  
“China-Burma-India Theater in WWII”  
Major General William S. Chen

May 18, 2025  
“An Introduction to the Science and Art of Chinese Qigong”  
Dr. Phoenix Liu

June 21, 2025  
“Not Your China Doll: The Wild and Shimmering Life of Anna May Wong”  
Katie Gee Salisbury



September 2025 to March 2026

LILY TOU BIRMINGHAM

Jewish refugees in Shanghai tried to recreate their lives in Europe as best they could. Here, a Jewish wedding in 1938. Shanghai Jewish Refugees Museum.

This exhibition related to World War II will be a collaboration of the Shanghai Jewish Refugees Museum, the local Jewish community and the San Diego Chinese Historical Museum. The Shanghai Jewish Refugees Museum will provide the digital files that they created for an exhibition in New York, and we plan to borrow artifacts and memorabilia from our local Jewish community to complement the exhibition.

The exhibition opens with the story below.

*Dr. Ho Feng-Shan 何鳳山 was the Council-General of the Republic of China in Vienna from 1938 to 1940. In March 1938, Germany annexed Austria. As a result, about 180,000 Jews in Austria were faced with imminent Nazi persecution, and the only way to survive was to leave the country. It was very difficult for a Jew to get a visa from*

*any of the consulates in Vienna. However, Doctor Ho, as well as his colleague, Zhou Qixing, managed to issue numerous visas to the Jews, seeking to escape Austria after the annexation. With his help about 2000 Jewish refugees managed to flee Austria for haven in Shanghai and other places. These visas were known as “visas for life”. In January 2001, the Israeli organization Yad Vashem (Holocaust Remembrance Center) posthumously awarded Dr. Ho the title of “Righteous Among the Nations”.*

During the Japanese occupation of Shanghai, Jewish people were forced to live in crowded ghettos where they survived and had good relationships with the Chinese.

The exhibition will tell many stories of these people’s journeys to Shanghai, and their lives in Shanghai and after WWII.



# APHD Walking Tour

AMIE LEE GARAPICH

My name is Amie Lee Garapich. It has been my honor to be a docent of San Diego’s Asian Pacific Historic District walking tour for approximately 3 years. I set up the tours and ran them from 2018–2020, until the pandemic began, and in 2023 the tours were resumed. They are being held, at the present time, on the first Sunday of every month at 11:00 a.m.

My maiden name is Amie Faylan Lee. I am half Chinese and half English. My dad was born in Ipoh, Malaya and his parents came there to work in the tin mines from a small

village outside of Guangdong, China. He came to the United States to study, where he met my mother. I was born in Chula Vista and have lived in the San Diego area for my entire life. In the late 1940’s and 1950’s when I was young, I would come to San Diego’s Chinatown mainly to go with my dad to Woo Chee Chong’s market (which was the major Chinese market in San Diego). I also attended Chinese language school twice a week in the Chinatown area. Throughout my tour I point out the pertinent places, such as the Chinese Historical Museum, the Chinese Benevolent Association, the Quin residence and the Ying-On Association which are still standing, as well as establishments which the residents might have used such as hotels, laundries and cafes. I also point out those places which are no longer in existence, but which I remember, and give you my recollections.



# The Power of Volunteering

JOSEPH AHLSTROM

According to the American Alliance of Museums, the ratio of volunteers to staff at museums is six to one. Needless to say, that means volunteers are extremely important, and it is no different here. We have several volunteers dedicated to our collection, and their work has been invaluable in the preservation of items.

Volunteering also allows the opportunity to learn new skills and gain a better understanding of the inner

workings of organizations. Particularly in the field of non profits, volunteering is an excellent way to get involved and ensure these organizations thrive. Whether you’re just starting in your field or are simply looking for a way to fill the time, volunteering is the most rewarding thing you can do.

I began as a volunteer here, and I am immensely proud of my work then. It gave me skills I would not have learned anywhere else and allowed me to figure out what I truly wanted to do. I want each of our volunteers to have the same experience, and feel just as proud of what they do. If you’ve ever thought about volunteering anywhere, now is the time to do so!

## School & Community Programs

### School & Community Programs

ELIZABETH HENSLEY C.

In recent months, we’ve engaged over four hundred community members and students in craft and calligraphy workshops, field trips, tours, and much more! Since June, we have received seven different schools and community groups at the museum. We also participated in three different

community festivals at the Chinese Bible Church of San Diego, the Allied Gardens Park, and on Island Avenue, as part of the 2024 Fall Back Festival. Now, we invite you to take a visual journey through these memorable programs. Join us as we celebrate these moments together!

#### OLD TOWN ACADEMY FIELD TRIP:



#### 2024 FALL BACK FESTIVAL:



#### DIMENSIONS COLLABORATIVE’S 2024 FALL FESTIVAL:







# QUON MANE AND SAN DIEGO'S RISE

DEDE HUANG

The story of how my maternal Quon family established its foothold in the US is inextricably linked to the history of early San Diego. My great-grandfather and his brothers arrived around 1883. In 1888, they opened Quon Mane & Co., a store selling Chinese and Japanese handicrafts to the tourist trade. The store was named after their fourth brother, the family go-getter. It quickly became the most prominent Chinese business in town, lasting for nearly a century in various locations on Fifth Street, in La Jolla, and elsewhere.

The Quons arrived in the US before the Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882 severely limited the number of Chinese allowed to enter. Arguably, their timing was good, and from their storefront facade, things looked rosy. Yet they still had to contend with

the complicated consequences of legitimized discrimination that lasted officially until 1943. These included a ban on naturalization, endless administrative hurdles, the constant threat of deportation, and constraints on the kind of jobs they could pursue.

Before opening his store, Quon Mane worked, like many Chinese, as a domestic servant. He was a houseboy for at least two leading families: that of W. W. Stewart, a commission merchant, and of George Marston who was in dry goods. At one point Quon Mane also helped to clear Coronado Island of sage brush so the Hotel del Coronado could be built. Later in life, he played another role as interpreter for the immigration service.

Quon Mane got to know the Marstons through one of the town's Chinese



Missions. Both he, George Marston and Marston's mother, Harriet, were among its earliest members. The church would play a key role as a social service center, softening some of Exclusion's harshness. Mrs. Marston taught Quon Mane English, and for years he taught Sunday school, while George Marston became an enduring benefactor.

In time, Quon Mane & Co. essentially became a boot camp for a next generation of Quons and other young men as they learned the business or prepared to start their own. Those that didn't live on the store premises generally lived in the Chinese Mission dormitory. That wood-frame facility — funded by Quon Mane, the Marstons and others — became the key to the Mission's longevity. Today the Mission

lives on as the Chinese Community Church in Tierrasanta, while one of its former buildings has become the SDCHM's home.

Quon links and traces turn up in other ways too: George Marston initiated the San Diego History Center, and its archive has yielded the photos accompanying this article. Together with the SDCHM such resources are enabling fresh discoveries about the role that San Diego's small but vibrant Chinese community played in making the city what it is today.

Over time, and after becoming an independent church, the congregation outgrew its facilities and moved to 47th Street in 1960, and later to Tierrasanta in 2006. Faced with the potential



demolition of the adobe structure, community activists, including Tom and Dorothy Hom and Sally Wong-Avery, spearheaded the efforts to save it, resulting in the donation of the building to the San Diego Chinese Historical Society. The City of San Diego generously contributed as well, donating land in the historic heart of old Chinatown — exactly where Ah Quin's house once stood — highlighting his history for future generations as the informal mayor of Chinatown. The story of Chinese missions in San Diego doesn't end there. The Presbyterians, Baptists, Methodist Episcopalians, and even the Voy Ying Gong Sue organization all played roles in this diverse mission movement, each uniquely contributing to the community. The Presbyterians, for example, organized a children's school



for integration into mainstream public schools by teaching them English and American cultural norms.

The legacy of the Congregational Chinese Mission is particularly notable. It was the longest continually operating Chinese mission in San Diego and, in 1946, it realized its founder's dream by becoming a self-supporting church, marking the end of the Chinese mission era in San Diego. This milestone was significant not only for the mission but also within the broader mission movement, as only two others out of 49 Congregational Chinese Missions achieved this status.

Today, this legacy lives on through the Chinese Community Church and the San Diego Historical Museum, testaments to the enduring spirit and contributions of the Chinese community in San Diego.

To learn more, see my article, "The Ah Quin Family and the Rise and Fall of San Diego's Chinese Mission Schools, 1870–1946" in the Journal of San Diego History (Spring 2024). I also gave a lecture on the subject in May, which is available via the SD History Center's YouTube Channel.



**Dede Huang is a family historian based in Hong Kong and the U.S. She and Dr. Susie Lan Cassel will be giving a joint presentation on Quon Mane, Ah Quin and early Chinese leaders of San Diego later in 2025.**



### Opening Reception of San Diego Zoo's Panda Ridge

JACINTA WONG

On August 7, 2024, I had the honor of attending the preview reception for Panda Ridge at the San Diego Zoo. This beautiful new exhibit, home to San Diego's newest resident pandas Yun Chuan and Xin Bao, symbolizes the power of "panda diplomacy". Panda Ridge not only provides a lovely habitat for these beloved animals but also highlights the importance of preserving their species. The exhibit's opening ties to the deep connections between the Chinese community and San Diego, where Chinese immigrants have long contributed to the cultural fabric of the region.

The event showcased both conservation efforts and cultural understanding, underscoring the shared history of San

Diego's diverse communities. Panda Ridge is more than an exhibit—it's a celebration of wildlife, history, and the connections that unite us.

I encourage everyone to visit and experience these remarkable additions to the zoo!



BY SDCHM STAFF

### American Library Association Conference & Exhibition – June 2024

During the summer of 2024, our neighbors at the San Diego Convention Center hosted the American Library Association's (ALA) Annual Conference & Exhibition. This six-day gathering brought together over 13,000 librarians, educators, authors, publishers, and friends of libraries to discuss the ever-evolving role of libraries in today's world.

We were honored to be chosen to participate in two conference activities as a local cultural heritage organization.

#### EARLY CHINESE IN SAN DIEGO LECTURE

Jacinta was invited to address the Local History and Genealogy Committee of the American Library Association at the Convention Center. She delivered an insightful lecture to session participants on the early Chinese American experience in San Diego, emphasizing the vital role of the San Diego Chinese Historical Museum (SDCHM) in preserving and sharing this important history.



#### PRESERVATION IN ACTION

In March 2024, we were contacted by Joaquim Neves, Preservation Manager at the UC San Diego Library. Jack (as he is also known) serves as the co-chairperson for the Preservation in Action (PiA) committee of the ALA.

Preservation in Action is a program that intends to promote understanding of the importance of preservation while engaging with cultural heritage collections at the ALA conference location. We were chosen by the committee to serve as a host-site for a one-day event where ALA volunteers would be convened to support preservation tasks needed by our organization.



On June 28, we received eighteen volunteers from the American Library Association in our Dr. Sun Yat Sen Memorial Extension, who learned methods to properly rehouse three types of collection items: paper cuttings, large format prints and works of art on paper, as well as textiles. Through the Preservation in Action event, we were able to improve the storage of the entirety of the museum's collection of paper cuttings. We were also able to properly rehouse artwork in large acid-free folders, which are now kept in a flat file cabinet within our onsite collections storage facility. Likewise, work was undertaken to improve storage for a portion of the museum's textile collection. All archival materials were donated by the PiA committee, and the event proved to be a godsend for our organization, helping to advance much-needed work to preserve the museum's collection of sensitive paper and textile items.





ASIAN PACIFIC  
ISLANDER FESTIVAL  
AT THE SAN DIEGO  
COUNTY FAIR

JUNE 15

For the second consecutive year, the San Diego Chinese Historical Museum (SDCHM) had the privilege of participating in Asian Pacific Islander Day at the San Diego County Fair in mid-June. During the event, SDCHM staff, YPAC members, and museum volunteers connected with over 300 community members through interactive zodiac-themed craft activities. These hands-on experiences highlighted the museum's dedication to cultural education and fostering meaningful community engagement.

INK & LEGENDS

JULY 27

As part of the 2024 San Diego Comic Convention, we hosted an exclusive after-hours meet-and-greet with an incredible lineup of artists: Amy Chu, Dan Parent, Soo Lee, Ming Chen, Jill Thompson, and G. Willow Wilson. Held in the enchanting ambiance of the Mission garden, the evening was filled with creativity, conversation, and inspiration. This special event was made possible thanks to the generous sponsorship of The UPS Stores at San Diego State University and Hillcrest. It was truly an evening to remember!



MID-AUTUMN MOON FESTIVAL

SEPTEMBER 22

In late September, the museum's Young Professional's Advisory Council invited community members to celebrate the magic of the Mid-Autumn Moon Festival in our Chuang Garden. Guests enjoyed a delightful afternoon of mooncake tasting sponsored by local bakeries such as Sunmerry, 85°C and Lady M, accompanied by soothing tea, live music, and enchanting Moon Festival stories.



Reception: *The Art of Chunming Yu & Lan Wang*

The San Diego Chinese Historical Museum (SDCHM) held a reception on October 12 to unveil its latest exhibition, *The Art of Chunming Yu and Wang Lan*. Guests explored the newly refreshed exhibition space, where Mr. Yu showcased his works and explained his artistic methods, offering insights into his creative process. The exhibition highlights a compelling blend of tradition and modernity in Chinese art. The exhibition will run until March 2025.

Recent Book Club Meetings

On June 22, 2024, sixteen museum members gathered in the Chuang Garden over pastries and tea. Through Laila Ibrahim's *Paper Wife*, we were taken along a migration narrative, starting in Southern China during the year of 1923.



For our fall book club meeting on October 26th, local author and a longtime friend to the museum, Russell Low sat down with twelve museum members, engaging in his new book *A Willow Tree Becomes a Forest: The Story of Hop Lee*. With the author present, members of the public were also provided fascinating insight into the research behind the novel.



Recent Collaborations

Anti-Defamation  
League Luncheon

MAY 28

The SDCHM hosted an engaging luncheon that brought together leaders from the Chinese and Jewish communities to discuss shared perspectives and address local topics impacting us all. This unique gathering fostered dialogue, built connections, and strengthened the bonds of our diverse community.



National Association of Asian American Professionals  
(NAAAP) API Heritage Month Cultural Exploration & Celebration

MAY 28

Networking event with NAAAP and Bank of America members.



Harvard Alumni  
Club Breakfast

JULY 28

Local Harvard alumni gather for breakfast in the museum garden with fellow alum, Amy Chu.



Wellesley College  
Alumni Luncheon

AUGUST 17

Local Wellesley alumni gather before their walking tour of the APHD.







# DISCOVERING THE HISTORY IN MEXICALI:

SDCHM EXPLORES LA CHINESCA & MEXICALI'S CHINESE HERITAGE

JACINTA WONG



In November, the SDCHM staff coordinated a tour with Art Scene Baja, bringing 12 museum members to Baja California. The group drove to Mexicali to dive into the city's unique history and connect with its rich Chinese heritage. Known as one of northern Mexico's most multicultural cities, Mexicali has strong ties to the Chinese immigrant community—ties that still thrive today in a neighborhood called La Chinesca.



Mexicali came to life in 1903 as a farming hub in the fertile Mexicali Valley. Its name blends “Mexico” and “California,” reflecting its location right on the border of Baja California. Early inhabitants included Mexican farmers and American entrepreneurs eager to develop the region's agriculture.



Chinese immigrants arrived soon after, brought in by companies like the Colorado River Land Company to work in the fields and help build the infrastructure for the local irrigation system. Despite the harsh desert conditions and tough work, these immigrants played a major role in building Mexicali's agricultural industry.



As Chinese immigrants began to put down roots in the area, they created La Chinesca—a neighborhood that became a hub for the Chinese community. La Chinesca is unique in that it is the only Chinatown in the

world that has its own name. Additionally, underneath the neighborhood lies a network of tunnels described to provide relief from Mexicali's sweltering summer heat. Today, it has become a popular tourist attraction and a reminder of the resourcefulness of the early Chinese settlers.

One of the most exciting parts of Mexicali's story is how Chinese culture blended with local Mexican traditions. This mix is especially clear in the food. Mexicali has become famous for its Chinese cuisine, with a local twist. With over 300 Chinese restaurants in Mexicali, it's a food lover's destination to try their local fare. With about 15,000 people of Chinese origin, the city celebrates events like Chinese New Year and Día de China, where vibrant traditions bring people together to honor this shared heritage.

Our visit to Mexicali was an incredible chance to learn more about the Chinese community's journey and how it shaped the city. We're excited to bring these stories back to SDCHM, where we can share them with our visitors. This trip also opened the door for future collaborations, including a SDCHM exhibition documenting the Chinese diaspora in Baja California planned for 2026 that honors the resilience and contributions of Chinese immigrants on both sides of the border.

## COLLECTIONS UPDATES

JOSEPH AHLSTROM

This has been an extremely exciting 6 months for Collections. Upon completion of our IMLS grant, we have begun to turn our focus to the collection of documents donated to us by the family of Murray Lee, the museum's curator emeritus. Murray had a large collection of documents from his research regarding the Chinese community, and it has been a pleasure to look through and see all that he had saved over the years. His dedication to his research is ever-present in each document we review.



One of our volunteers, Lola, found some incredible resources among files donated from Murray's archive involving the veterans of World War II. Included among Murray's research files was a collection of documents pertaining to his own service in World War II, including his original draft card! This collection of documents also included his certificate of graduation from maritime service training and his honorable discharge papers. It gave us the opportunity to better understand this part of Murray's life.

SDCHM received a large donation of beautiful burial artifacts from new museum member Pauline Chu, in honor of Mitch Field. Our volunteer, Campbell has spent her time contextualizing these artifacts, and has found some incredible things about them. Of particular note are the two tomb guardians, large creatures with strange heads, which would have protected the tomb of a wealthy Chinese family. Several of these pieces, including one of the tomb guardians, are now on display in our Mission. Please stop by and check them out!

## FACILITY UPDATES

MU-TING HUANG

A huge thank you to County Supervisor Monica Montgomery Steppe for supporting us through the County's Neighborhood Reinvestment Program! With this funding, we tackled some much-needed updates to our historic Mission building.



We were able to say goodbye to the old, water-damaged carpet, restore the original concrete floors, and give them a polished red stain to match the building's interior. This update not only helps preserve our historic space but also makes it safer and more welcoming for everyone—especially the school kids who often sit on the floor during their visits!

I'd also like to extend my thanks to the Downtown San Diego Partnership for their dedication to enhancing the beauty and charm of the Asian Pacific Historic District. Their updates to the historic lights, including refurbishment and repainting this summer, have brought new life to the area. The addition of light strings along Third Avenue has created a vibrant and inviting atmosphere that will be cherished by the community and visitors alike.

We invite you to visit and check out our museum's refreshed look, both inside and out—and while you're here, take a stroll through the district to enjoy its refreshed and revitalized charm. We're so proud to be part of this amazing community!



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From December 2023 to November 2024

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