



唐府

TANG
FU

Issue No. 12 / Spring 2026



On January 30, 1993, the official museum groundbreaking ceremony took place at its future site at 404 Third Avenue.

FEATURED CHARACTER

calligraphed by

Yan Zhenqing

(顏真卿, 709 -785)



安 [Ān] safe, secure
平安 [Píng'ān] peace
安排 [Ānpái] arrange
安居樂業 [Ānjūlèyè] live in peace and contentment



[Wikipedia.org/wiki/Yan_Zhenqing](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Yan_Zhenqing)

COVER CALLIGRAPHER

Yan Zhenqing (顏真卿; 709–785) was a Chinese calligrapher, military general, and politician from the Tang dynasty. He is one of the greatest Chinese calligraphers in history. He specialized in the regular (kaishu 楷書) and cursive (caoshu 草書) scripts, though he mastered multiple styles. His style of regular script, often called Yan script (Yanti 顏體), brought Chinese calligraphy to a new realm, emphasizing strength, boldness, and grandness. Like most of the master calligraphers, Yan Zhenqing learned his skill from various calligraphers before developing his own style.

In 752, he wrote one of his best-known pieces, Duobao Pagoda Stele (多寶塔碑). The stele has over 2,000 characters written for Emperor Xuanzong, who was a pious Buddhist. The cover character came from this Stele.

Table of Contents

3. Letters
4. Upcoming Exhibitions:
Shanghai, Homeland Once Upon A Time - Jewish Refugees in Shanghai
6. Current exhibitions
CBI Victory!
7. The Cheng Chinese American Experience & Beyond Lecture Series
11. Education Corner
12. Recent Events at the SDCHM
14. Feature Article:
Lady Lotus and Soaring Dragon
15. Facilities/Collections Updates
16. Learning & Impact
17. Staff Highlights
18. Acknowledgments

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
Saturday - Sunday
12 pm to 4 pm
Second Sundays Free

Interim Director's Letter:



Dear SDCHM Family and Friends,

Lately, we accomplished several projects and are in the process of a few more to look forward to 2026. To start celebrating the Museum's 30th anniversary, our 2026 calendar using the permanent collection photos was

published and mailed to museum active members and long time friends. Our kitchen renovation was finished with an added storage space under the stairs. Many succulent plants were added to the garden with a revived sprinkler system.

One major project in the gallery is the tri-lingual labels embedded in the QR codes for the permanent collections. Most Mission Building physical labels have been reprinted with QR codes that visitors can scan and get translations in Spanish and Chinese. Although some contents are still being updated, it is a big step to have QR codes in the gallery. We also cleaned and repaired a Chinese sail boat (junk boat) which is now displayed in the gallery with its own flexiglass cover, taking a prominent spot in the Chinese American San Diegan timeline, highlighting the Fishing Business in the late 19th century.

A new project was kicked off in August after we hired our new education coordinator Grace deVega. We received a grant to improve the knowledge of our Asian Pacific Historical District walking tour by including diverse histories from different ethnic groups, and advance racial healings across our community. Grace is leading the effort to invite community leaders to join our monthly Zoom meeting and share resources and data they have. We have over 10 community leaders representing Chinese, Japanese, Filipino and African Americans. It is our hope to create a few versions of the walking tour that can encompass more stories and have more docents representing different ethnic groups for the walking tours.

All in all, we are making steady progress and thanks to all who have contributed to help us align with our mission.

Lily Tou Birmingham
Interim Director

Message from Our Chairperson:



Dear supporters and friends of the SDCHM,

Greetings! Another holiday season has come and gone. I remain hopeful for a better future for all of us. Again, I want to take this opportunity to express my deepest appreciation to each and everyone of you

for being so kind and generous in donating your time, talents and treasures in support of the San Diego Chinese Historical Museum.

We welcome Grace deVega, a graduate from San Diego State University and University of Illinois Chicago, to join the staff and take on the challenges of education and outreach programs for the SDCHM. In addition, we welcome Stephanie Garth who has been able to spend time at the SDCHM. We wish Elizabeth Chaney the best as she took on her new ventures at the San Diego History Center. Our former graphic designer Juliana Chang had also contributed a great deal to the overall communication efforts of the museum. We continue to pray for the well-being of Jacinta Wong. Best of luck to them!

It is hard to imagine that the museum broke ground more than 30 years ago. It seemed like yesterday when we were breaking ground on the museum site. We have continued to provide our monthly zoom lectures and hundreds of people around the globe have joined the Cheng Chinese American Experience and Beyond lecture series.

I also want to express my deepest appreciation to Lily Birmingham for serving as the Interim Director. She has done a yeoman's job and pulled heavy weight for the museum. She decided to step down and temporarily Bob Stein and I will serve as the interim co-directors.

As you know, we will be celebrating our 30th anniversary in 2026. To celebrate this very important occasion, we are planning to build a brick donor wall. Your support for this historical project will be deeply appreciated. May our next 30 years be filled with joy and pride.

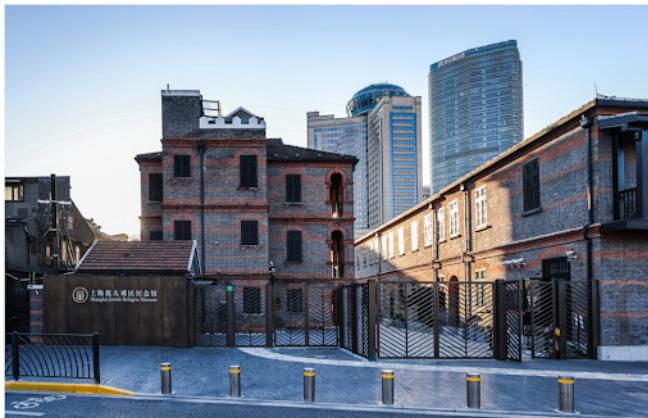
Lilly Cheng
Board Chairperson

Shanghai, Homeland Once Upon A Time - Jewish Refugees and Shanghai

March to September 2026

LILY TOU BIRMINGHAM

The Shanghai Jewish Refugees Museum (SJRM) was initially established in 2007 to better preserve the history of Jewish refugees during WWII. In 2020, the museum underwent an expansion, with the exhibition area expanding tenfold, allowing more stories of Jewish refugees to be told. This exhibition is on loan from the New York exhibition at Fosan Plaza in 2023.



Shanghai Jewish Refugees Museum

SJRM who curated for the exhibition has six sections to tell the stories of 20,000 Jewish refugees, and are summarized here.

1. Fleeing to Shanghai:

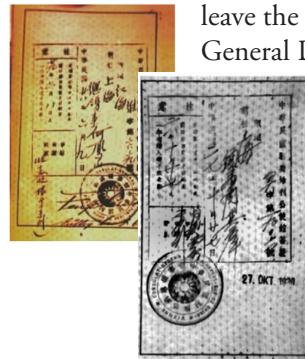
In March 1938, Germany annexed Austria. As a result, about 180,000 Jews in Austria were faced with imminent Nazi persecution, and the only way to survive was to



Feng-Shan Ho, Chinese Consul-General in Vienna 1938-1940



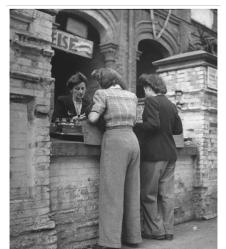
Jews waited outside the police station hoping to obtain exit permits



leave the country. The Chinese Council-General Dr. Ho Feng-Shan and his colleague Zhou Qixing issued numerous visas to the Jews in a short time for them to escape. They took the land route or sea route to Shanghai.

Visas issued by Feng-Shan Ho and His colleague Zhou Qi-xiang

2. Starting a new life: Once in Shanghai, they found ways to reestablish the life they knew in an extremely limited space and resources. But they created a place that became their haven. They created Jewish



publications, started schools, continued Torah studies, and added music and social events.

3. Bitter-sweet memory: There were many personal stories between the Jews and the Chinese in all ages.



Up : Keeping a promise for seven decades
Left : A Chinese boy and a Jewish girl playing together

4.

After the war: Jews left Shanghai gradually after the war. Some of them lived in Shanghai for over 10 years before they found a new place to reside.



Jewish refugees left Shanghai for new life

5. Special bonds and feelings for China: Many Jews are descendants of Shanghai Refugees. They searched for their roots and often found part of their family stories in Shanghai.



"I will donate all the old items my parents kept. It's time for them to come back to China."



Horacio Schaefer's Search for His Roots

We are soliciting 3D objects from the period. Hopefully, the descendants locally can help us enrich this exhibition.



The Wall of Names of Jewish Refugees in Shanghai during the 1930s – 1940s

CBI VICTORY! The 80th Anniversary Retrospective (1945-2025) of the WWII China-Burma-India Theater

Present to February 2026

LILY TOU BIRMINGHAM

This retrospective exhibition is very popular and the exhibition period has been extended through the Holidays. Visitors will learn the overview of the 2nd Sino-Japanese war, which started in 1937, and more events about the China-Burma-India Theater from 1941 to 1945. In addition to the rarely told stories about the contribution of the Chinese Americans and the WWII impact on them, there are some favorite stories in the display cases showing artifacts from private collector Montgomery Hom's collections.

A "blood chit" was issued to the American Volunteer Group "Flying Tigers". The Chinese characters read: "This foreigner has come to China to help in the war effort. Soldiers and civilians, one and all, should rescue and protect him". Every flying tigers member sewed this blood chit on the back of his jacket. When they were parachuted down to the ground due to battle damage, they were recognized and rescued by the local people and sent to safety. This saved many of them who did not speak Chinese. The blood chit is on display along with the flying tiger model airplane and their uniforms.



Soong Mei-ling or Madame Chiang (1898-2003) played a prominent role in Chinese politics and foreign relations in the first half of the 20th century. She graduated from Wellesley college and spoke excellent English, which connected her with the American audience. She made several tours to the United States to lobby support for the Nationalists' war effort. On February 18, 1943, she became the first Chinese national and the second woman to address both houses of



the US Congress. She drew crowds as large as 30,000 people and in 1943 made the cover of Time magazine for a third time. In the exhibition, we have a copy of the program from one of her galas. Along with her fundraising effort, there are many donation record books in the exhibition that came from the collection of the San Diego Chinese Historical Museum. Chinese Americans were gathered to raise money to help the mother land.

During World War II, Chiang Kai-shek served as the leader of the Republic of China, fighting against the Japanese invasion. With military education, Chiang was the leader of the Nationalist Chinese government (Kuomintang). Despite internal conflict with the Chinese Communist Party (CCP), Chiang formed a temporary alliance domestically to fight against the Japanese. The doll of Chiang Kai-shek was a souvenir for people who donated a high level at the fundraising gala to support the war in China.

Twenty five years ago, our collector Monty Hom happened to see it hiding in the back in an antique shop, where all the Bobby Dolls were. Passionate about veteran's stories, he noticed the military uniform worn by that doll. He asked the owner to bring it out for him and recognized what it was right away. He offered to buy it and got a deal. This is the only known historical Chiang Kai-shek doll in perfect condition from over 80 years ago. You can guess the value it is worth now. Our two flags from Amazon fit the scale perfectly in the display case.

Joseph Stilwell, from the West Point Academy, was an Army General who headed both U.S. and Chinese forces in the CBI Theater. He was fluent in Chinese, after serving as a military attaché in China for many years. At the outbreak of World War II, Stilwell became Chiang Kai-shek's chief of staff, and was in command of the Chinese armies in Burma. The field manual bearing the name Stilwell was his personal copy during the war. When he was relieved due to conflict with Chiang Kai-shek, he left in October 1944, and was appointed commander of the U.S. Tenth Army in the Pacific Theater. He gave his field manual to a staff member. It came to our collector eventually.



The Lost Weekend

May Fung Yee Pang

Love Story of May Pang and John Lennon

"Lost Weekend"

LILLY CHENG

The Beatles were a legendary rock band from England. Founded in Liverpool in 1962 by John Lennon, Paul McCartney, George Harrison, and Ringo Starr. John Lennon was not only the soul of The Beatles but also a symbol of contemporary music and the peace movement. Unfortunately, on December 8, 1980, Lennon was shot and killed outside his residence, the Dakota apartment building in Manhattan, New York.

During his brief yet brilliant stay on earth, he was accompanied by a handful of important women. Cynthia Powell was Lennon's first wife.. John's second wife was Yoko Ono, a Japanese artist known for her avant-garde art. However, few knew of Lennon's affection for May Pang, a lesser-known Chinese lady who was very meaningful to Lennon.

★ MAY FUNG YEE PANG 龐鳳儀

May Fung Yee Pang (龐鳳儀), was born on October 24th, 1950. Her parents were first generation Chinese immigrants, who resided in Manhattan. She studied at Saint Michael's Academy and at New York City Community College and later she went on to work at Apple Records/ABKCO Industries. She met John Lennon during that time. According to Pang's memoir, it was Ono who approached her and asked her to take care of Lennon since he would be seeing other people. Ono suggested that Pang begin a romantic relationship with Lennon. Pang initially declined this idea but Ono persisted. Only after Lennon himself pursued her, Pang began a loving and complicated relationship with Lennon with genuine affection.



Movie "The Lost Weekend: A Love Story" A love story that took 50 years to tell, "The Lost Weekend: A Love Story" explores the 18-month romantic relationship between John Lennon and his Chinese-American assistant May Pang.



The Cheng Chinese American Experience & Beyond Lectures

In June 1973, Pang became John Lennon's girlfriend. As time passed, the two of them grew from a mere professional relationship into a loving and close couple. This period, later referred to by Lennon as the "Lost Weekend," served as a testament to his spiritual and mental recovery in his relationships, as well as inspiring great accomplishments in his professional life, forever a complicated and entangled part of his life's story.



John Lennon & May Pang
/ © May Pang.

During this time, Lennon composed and published many songs and albums, including *Mind Games*, *Walls and Bridges*, and an album of cover songs called *Rock 'n' Roll*.

The Lennon family, repairing damaged relationships

Beyond his successes in composition, this period also marked improvements in Lennon's relationship with his son Julian. During this time, he started to spend time with him (whom he had neglected for over three years at that time) and reestablished a healthy father and son relationship.

End of the relationship, continued as friendship

In March 1974, Ono had asked McCartney to relay a message to Lennon that she wanted to get back together. Lennon replied, "No, I'm with May now but Yoko and I will always be friends" and the conversation ended.

It wasn't until February 1975, when Ono called Lennon to tell him she found a "cure" for his cigarette smoking habit. Lennon had noticed a shortness of breath while singing so reluctantly agreed at the last minute, against Pang's wishes. After three days of not hearing from Lennon (who was expected to return in a couple of hours), he told Pang that he was returning to Ono at her suggestion that it would be beneficial in his immigration battle with the U.S. government.

Though the relationship came to an end on the surface, the two of them still remained in touch until December 8th, 1980, when fate ended their relationship.

★ LIFE BEYOND JOHN LENNON

During her time with Lennon, Pang had worked with many legendary figures in the music industry, such as Elton John, David Bowie, Harry Nilsson, Mick Jagger, and Ringo Starr. After their separation, Pang continued her career in the music

industry, working as a professional manager for United Artists Music Publishing and Famous Music. Later, she was assistant to the president of Island Records, and participated in the making of Robert Palmer and Bob Marley's albums.

In June 1973, Pang became John Lennon's girlfriend. As time passed, the two of them grew from a mere professional relationship into a loving and close couple. This period, later referred to by Lennon as the "Lost Weekend," served as a testament to his spiritual and mental recovery in his relationships, as well as inspiring great accomplishments in his professional life, forever a complicated and entangled part of his life's story.

In 1983, May Pang published her memoir *Loving John*, which detailed her love story with Lennon. In 2008, Pang published her personal photography collection *Instamatic Karma: Photographs of John Lennon*, which included many historic moments of her and Lennon during the "Lost Weekend". Through her lens, Pang captured Lennon's peacefulness and humanity, as well as a sense of warmth during that time period. These photographs are currently in a pop-up exhibition in galleries across the United States called *The Lost Weekend – The Photography of May Pang*.

The 2022 documentary *The Lost Weekend: A Love Story* captured the depth and complexities of Pang and Lennon's relationship. May Pang is currently living in New York City. A best-selling author, renowned photographer, Pang is also a feng-shui jewelry designer, featuring Chinese characters depicting lifestyle elements. She is also committed to social welfare, the Amazon Conservation Team (ACT), and continues to inspire the younger generation through her work and life story.

Tell us about your childhood, parents and family

My parents and siblings left China and I was the first American-born in my family. Rather than settle for familiarity in New York's Chinatown, my parents went straight to Harlem and then Spanish Harlem. I was a minority among minorities. I grew up feeling alone and not connecting to anything. Until Rock 'N' Roll hit the scene. Of course, I was a Beatle fan from the moment I heard them. My favorite was Ringo.

Who are your mentors? What have they taught you?

(Uncle) Harold Seider, John Lennon's personal lawyer and a true friend of ours. He always said, "Get all the liars in the room" which is very sound advice.

The Cheng Chinese American Experience & Beyond Lectures

In June 1973, Pang became John Lennon's girlfriend. As time passed, the two of them grew from a mere professional relationship into a loving and close couple. This period, later referred to by Lennon as the "Lost Weekend", served as a testament to his spiritual and mental recovery in his relationships, as well as inspiring great accomplishments in his professional life, forever a complicated and entangled part of his life's story.

What are the most memorable things in your life so far?

Why?

My photos of John Lennon. They keep him alive. They show a John who was happy, fit and productive. Touring the United States with an exhibition of my photos of him with his son and "brothers." When people tell me he looked good and healthy it makes me very happy. I'm also honored when a professional photographer tells me that I have a "good eye." Then there's the documentary about my life with one of the most famous men in history. Of course, and as a proud mom, my two wonderful children.

Tell us about your film project "The Lost Weekend: A Love Story"

I always thought about it, but it never felt right. 50 years later, it finally felt like the time was right for an in-depth documentary of my life with John. It took five years (due in part to Covid-19). It's a balanced, candid reflection that shows both the high and low points.

Why is it important to tell your story?

So many people -- most of whom I've never met and others who I thought were friends, have 'told my story' -- with lies, distortion, omissions and agendas. It was hurtful. I realized I needed to tell my own story since I was the one there!

May Pang's story of her as a ChineseAmerican woman, who, despite having often been neglected, is of great influence to the world of rock music beyond her relationship with Lennon, a showcase of an entire missing link in rock n roll history. Her story deserves recognition, and is also a point to help us reflect upon the role of Chinese influence on cross-cultural music history.



Cynthia and Julian Lennon with May at the opening gala for their White Feather Foundation and exhibition in Liverpool
/ © May Pang.

TCAE&B Lecture Series Schedule

January 17, 2026
"Tyrus Wong"
Karen Fang

February 21, 2026
"Chinese Woodblock print"
Lily Birmingham

March 21, 2026
"Dr. Sun-Yat Sen"
Robert Stein

April 18, 2026
"Cooking to the President's Taste"
Adrian Miller & Deborah Chang

May 23, 2026
Topic : TBD
Susan Zhou

June 20, 2026
"Vietnam war"
Montgomery Hom

The Cheng Chinese American Experience & Beyond Lectures

ROBERT STEIN, Interim Co-Director

What Will the New Year Bring to The Cheng Chinese American Experience and Beyond?

One of the great, unexpected joys of my life has been serving as moderator for the monthly Zoom lecture series sponsored by San Diego State University, the Chinese Cultural Center, and the San Diego Chinese Historical Museum: The Cheng Chinese American Experience and Beyond. Born during the isolation of the Covid lockdown and lovingly sustained ever since, the series has become a celebration of the astonishing breadth of the Chinese experience around the world—often with an American connection, and sometimes rooted entirely in Chinese American history.

Our past programs still linger vividly in memory. Who can forget Hilda Yoder's exploration of the Dutch role in Chinese trade, or Lilly Cheng's mesmerizing series on Chinese ceramics and the Maritime Silk Road? We were transported by Keira Li, speaking to us live from the Shanghai Jewish Refugee Museum, and moved by the many attendees who shared their own family stories of growing up as refugees welcomed by the people of Shanghai. And of course, May Pang's candid reflections on her 18 months as John Lennon's partner—complete with the revelation that his favorite Chinese dishes were hot and sour soup and curried beef—kept us all enthralled.

The year ahead promises to be just as rich, surprising, and thoughtprovoking. In 2026, we will spotlight the artistry of Tyrus Wong, whose brush shaped the visual world of Disney's Bambi. We'll hear from Monty Hom on the contributions of Chinese Americans to the Vietnam War effort. Our annual tribute to Dr. Sun Yat-sen will feature his greatgrandson, Leland Sun. And we will explore the remarkable journeys of Russian Jewish refugees who found new lives in Harbin and Shanghai after the 1917 Bolshevik Revolution.

You won't want to miss a single program. To our loyal viewers, thank you for your continued enthusiasm. And to newcomers—welcome. There is always room for more curious minds in our community.



Bob Stein (M.D., Thomas Jefferson University, Jefferson Medical College) is an experienced museum docent, who graduated from the SDMA Docent Training Program in 2016. He joined the SDCHM as a member of our Board of Directors in 2020 and is serving as Interim Director.

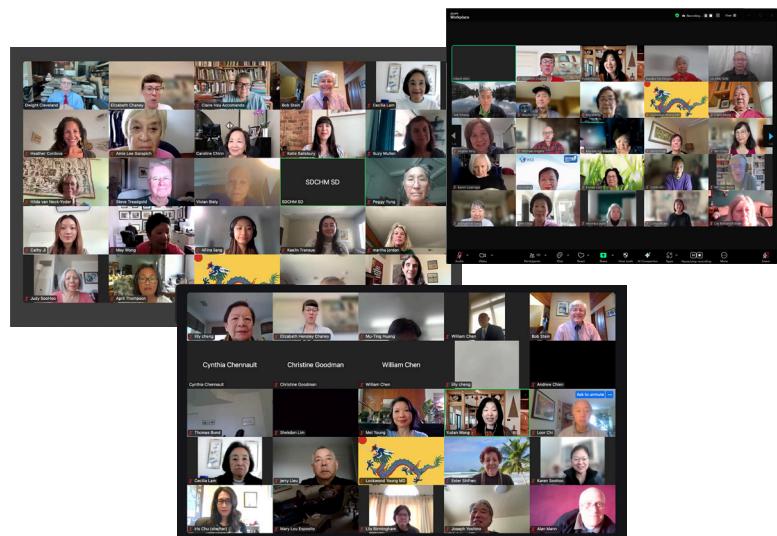
LILY CHENG

Global Voices, Shared Histories: The Cheng Chinese American Experience and Beyond

As our moderator, Bob, observed, the Cheng Chinese American Experience and Beyond Lecture Series was conceived during the profound isolation of the COVID-19 lockdown. What began as a response to an unprecedented moment has since grown into a vibrant and truly global intellectual forum. Over time, the series has examined a remarkable range of subjects, from the Maritime Silk Road to the history of Jewish communities in China, while amplifying voices from across the world, including distinguished speakers from the United Arab Emirates such as Kis y Qi, Kim Rudolph Krisko, and Nayla Al Khaja.

We have been deeply honored to host an extraordinary array of speakers, including Leland Sun, the great-grandson of Dr. Sun Yat-sen, the founding father of the Republic of China, and Dr. Su Kim Lee, a Nyonya scholar from Malaysia. More recently, I had the pleasure of meeting May Pang, our November speaker, in New York City, where she graciously shared further reflections on her experiences with John Lennon.

We remain steadfast in our mission to present speakers and topics that not only expand historical knowledge but also foster a deeper appreciation of the richness, diversity, and global significance of Chinese history and culture.



GRACE DEVEGA

We've had a variety of school and community education events since I began serving as education coordinator! We have hosted several field trips since July, with visitors spanning Kindergarten students to senior citizen social groups. Through the support of our incredible docents, volunteers, and staff, we have been able to provide these groups with an array of tours, craft activities, and workshops.



Docent Karen Soohoo educates a group of students on the history of the Woo Chee Chong General Store.

- In addition to our field trip opportunities, we participated in Kids Free October alongside our fellow museums in San Diego by offering our free Garden Arts and Crafts program every Sunday in October! Those young and young-at-heart visited our garden and enjoyed a free craft related to Chinese and Chinese American history. Our free Garden Arts and Crafts program also served as the launch for two new craft opportunities:

Abalone Shell Making and Dragon

Boat Making! These crafts join the activities we already offer, including scavenger hunts, paper cutting, zodiac puppet making, calligraphy practice, lantern and fan making, and zhezhi (paper folding).



Students engage in a lantern making activity.



A group of continuing education students learn calligraphy from docent Jack Meng.



Students from The Preuss School of UCSD learn the art of Chinese Paper Folding.

Lastly, I have had the pleasure of working on a new project to revitalize our current walking tour of the Asian Pacific Historic District. In collaboration with community leaders and historians across San Diego, we will be telling new stories from communities throughout the district as a way of reflecting a more inclusive understanding of our shared history. Our goal is to provide a more diverse, engaging, and accessible walking tour experience to our visitors that more fully recognizes the communities who built and lived in our wonderful city. We had our first group meeting in October and will continue to have them through the end of next year. I will continue to provide updates on this project in future issues of Tang Fu!



Docent Diego Garth leads a group of students through our CBI VICTORY! exhibition.

Recent Events at the SDCHM

BY SDCHM STAFF

GARDEN MURAL DEDICATION CEREMONY

On Sunday, September 14th, we welcomed the students of Canyon Crest Academy to a special recognition ceremony for their incredible work in creating their mural “Wheeling Through Time” for our garden. The mural features several important aspects of early Chinese settlement in San Diego, including Chinese junks and the wheelbarrow found in our museum. To create the art piece, the team of students spent several months researching and designing the mural to meet the dimensions of our large outdoor window space. Their work was part of a larger initiative at Canyon Crest Academy called “Envision Conservatory for the Humanities.”



Canyon Crest Academy students stand next to their mural.

During the ceremony, student Saihan Hailtuud spoke on the value of telling stories about early Chinese American history, as well as how creating this mural has been a source of inspiration in her own life. Students enjoyed refreshments and received a certificate of recognition for their time and dedication.

Thank you again to the wonderful students of Canyon Crest Academy for creating this beautiful mural for our museum!



Certificates of recognition for the Canyon Crest Academy students.

MOCHI ICE CREAM SOCIAL & MID-AUTUMN MOON FESTIVAL CELEBRATION

On Saturday, October 4th, we hosted a joint Mochi Ice Cream Social & Mid-Autumn Moon Festival Celebration with our friends from the Japanese American Citizens League. The event, organized by our staff and SDCHM Young Professionals Advisory Council, was a wonderful opportunity to celebrate the fall season. Visitors enjoyed boba, mochi ice cream, and mooncakes donated by Sunmerry Bakery. We hope everyone had a “sweet” time!



People chat over boba and mooncakes.



Up : YPAC members work hard at work passing out mooncakes!

Down : Dr. Mistuo Tomita of the Japanese American Citizens League gives a speech.



Recent Events at the SDCHM

CHINESE GHOST STORIES : A HALLOWEEN HAUNT

Also in October, the museum collaborated with Storytellers of San Diego to share traditional Chinese stories in our garden! Storytellers of San Diego is an organization that celebrates the art of oral storytelling through events, performances, and open mic opportunities. At our event, they told Chinese stories related to ghosts, transforming creatures, and spirits and covered themes including danger, love, death, and retribution.

This event is part of a larger storytelling series that will be hosted at the museum alongside Storytellers of San Diego. Stay tuned for our next storytelling in February 2026, focusing on Chinese Love Stories!



Storytellers of San Diego share traditional Chinese stories with museum visitors in our garden!



The SDCHM hosts walking tours of the Asian Pacific Historic District on the first Sunday of each month at 11:00 a.m.. Check out our website calendar to sign up (pre-registration is required).

25th ANNUAL FALL BACK FAIR WITH THE GASLAMP MUSEUM AT THE DAVIS-HORTON HOUSE

On November 2nd, we participated in the 25th annual Fall Back Fair, hosted by the Gaslamp Museum. The event takes place the weekend of daylight savings, and we have been a collaborator for the past several years. Our younger participants enjoyed making Zodiac Puppet crafts, and several visitors won free passes to the museum. Members of the Falcon History Club at Torrey Pines High School also volunteered for the event!



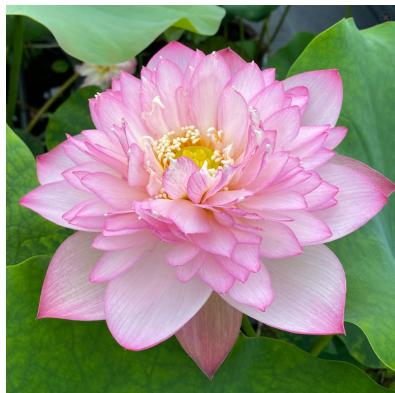
Falcon History Club members helping out at our booth.

Brick Fundraising

As part of the museum's 30th anniversary celebration, we plan to do bricks fundraising to increase the museum fund for sustainability. The Mission Building requires constant maintenance and the museum operation requires the presence of paid staff. The plan is to install donors' bricks on the wall in the Chuang Garden as shown in the mockup photo. The proposed text will be the donor's name or "In Memory of " a person's or a couple's name.

Donors will have options for the size and number of bricks, as well as font size and color. Donor bricks will start in \$1K increments, with larger amounts spreadable over 5 years.





Lady Lotus and Soaring Dragon

- A Wonderful Journey

Dr. HOWARD MEYER



Our friendship began about a 12-year lunar cycle ago in early summer of 2012 when I attended Vena Chen's solo Chinese Brush Painting exhibition. The event was held at the Irvine Fine Arts Center in California where she remarkably held numerous exhibitions of her artwork and taught Chinese Brush Painting.

Vena's knowledge and extraordinary teaching of Chinese brush painting for more than thirty years has put her in a class by herself. She studied under masters Nien-Tsu Hu and Ling-Jia Li and calligraphers Yi-Ling Wang and Chi-Pang An. Her masterful artwork brought her acclaim as well as many teaching opportunities. Her book *Loving Chinese Brush Painting* details the basics of her courses.

Now, the moment that most romantics of Chinese brush painting long for, Vena took my arm and I accompanied her on a one to one stroll around the gallery. Little did we know then that this first step would put us on a journey to a magnificent friendship. Being guided by a master artist, she shared the highlights of her life and dedication to Chinese brush painting and teaching. I truly savored this opportunity, because I gained a greater insight into Vena's life. It was her character, individuality, spirituality and sense of humor that helped form an artistic foundation that is so beautifully embodied in each of her works.



A fan painting by Vena Chen from her website

Recently, Vena celebrated her birthday in January as an exclusive nonagenarian member who vigorously paints and teaches Chinese brush painting. I too am a proud member

of an exclusive group as I have a Vena Chen's Fan Painting titled: "*The wind in the Pine trees and healthy people.*"

Her calligraphic inscription translates to: "Pine trees have long life and hopefully we could live as long as a Pine tree." Remarkably, she has indeed reached this milestone.



A fan painting by Vena Chen from her website

Being curious, I investigated how compatible people born under the lunar signs of the Rooster (Vena) and the Dragon (Howard) would exist in a personal relationship. I read that the animal that rules the year of your birth is said to exercise a profound influence over your life. Hence, the Chinese have coined the saying, "This is the animal that hides in your heart." According to Chinese zodiac compatibility, people born under these lunar signs are considered to be quite compatible; they are often identified as a good match with a strong potential for an enviable positive relationship, with the Rooster being a secret friend to the Dragon.

Some key characteristics of our friendship include: Mutual admiration: Roosters appreciate the Dragon's charisma and confidence, while the Dragon values the Rooster's practicality and hard-working nature. Complementary traits: The Rooster's attention to detail can balance out the Dragon's tendency to be impulsive, while the Dragon's leadership qualities can inspire the Rooster to reach greater heights.

All through the years I loved the calm way she spoke to me, taught me when I didn't realize it and listened to me when we traveled to Chinese art and cultural events. I am grateful for her patience in answering my thousand and one questions and for her clear interpretations and valuable resources. Vena's mentoring and friendship made me feel honored and privileged to be a fellow traveler with her along the path of enlightenment in life and art.

Although we now live 2800 miles apart, we've never stopped making memories. Two beloved friends, Lotus Lady and Soaring Dragon, on a journey through the seasons of life to paint songs of nature and write poems with a visionary spirit and imagination.

In Chinese art, lotus flowers and the dragon are often depicted together to symbolize power, purity and good fortune. In my painting of the lotus flower I was delighted that Shantien Tom Chow added a calligraphic inscription: "The flower of life with inspiration to continue striving." The lotus is the Chinese emblem of summer and fruitfulness. It epitomizes purity because it grows out of the mud but remains undefiled. Vena said, "A beautiful goddess rises from the pond."



Howard is a member of the American Artists of Chinese Brush Painting - Lung Hsiang Chapter and the Chinese Brush Painting Society of San Diego.

He is also a member of the San Diego Chinese Historical Society and Museum. Howard has been recognized for his Chinese Brush Paintings and his articles on Chinese Art and Culture.

COLLECTIONS UPDATES

JOSEPH AHLSTROM

Lots is happening at the SDCHM and I would love to share some exciting news with you all about changes to our permanent exhibition. We are pleased to finally have a permanent location for one of our Chinese junk models. We are all aware of the immensely important role that Chinese fishing played in the early days of San Diego and with the new mural on our nearby intersection, lots of attention is being drawn to it.

This new display will be sure to make your experience all the more immersive, showing the intricate craftsmanship of Chinese boats. Be sure to try the scannable QR code beside our display!



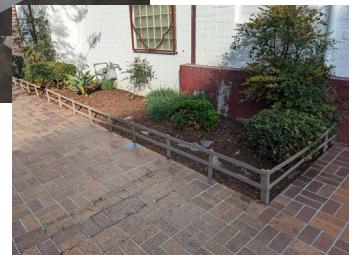
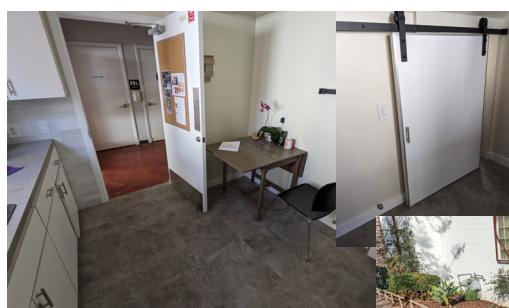
FACILITIES UPDATES

MU-TING HUANG

We're excited to share recent improvements that enhance both our museum's facilities and educational offerings!

Special thanks to Jean Cheng for dedicating her time and effort to renovating the museum's kitchen and install new fencing around the plant area outside. The kitchen has been

completely remodeled with new flooring and countertops.



COLLECTIONS/ FACILITY UPDATES and LEARNING & IMPACT

The historic Woo Chee Chong safe has been carefully relocated to the exhibit room near the J Street side door, allowing visitors to view and learn about this important artifact from our local Chinese American history. The safe is a tangible link to the stories of early Chinese immigrants and their contributions to our community, offering a unique opportunity for visitors to connect with the past. This relocation also opens up the area beneath the staircase leading to the office for improved storage.



significance. These displays provide a hands-on way to understand how herbal medicine was used in daily life and its role in Chinese health practices over generations.

These updates reflect our ongoing commitment to making the museum a dynamic space for learning, discovery, and cultural appreciation. We encourage visitors to explore these new additions, ask questions, and deepen their understanding of the rich history and traditions preserved in our museum.

LEARNING & IMPACT

STEPHANIE GARTH

I firmly believe that every day is an opportunity for learning and individual and collective growth. The need to honor my cultural identity led me on a journey of self-discovery, a journey that began alone, knowing that I wouldn't be able to continue without the support of a community.

That's how I found an atmosphere of friendship and familiarity at SDCHM, where I was invited to participate as a docent and member of the Musing Dragons team, proudly representing SDCHM at this year's Dragon Boat Festival. As you may have read in the previous issue of Tang Fu, our team won first place in our category, but we didn't just win a trophy and a medal that day of triumph amidst cloudy and rather cold weather. We also gained the intangible fruit that nourishes the spirit with resilience and the energy to persevere despite difficulties; we gained the satisfaction of fighting for the team and not for individual achievement.

As a result of this and many other experiences at SDCHM, I have learned valuable lessons from my colleagues. Their invitations to diverse cultural activities have brought joy to my life. They have impacted me positively and profoundly.

Learning and impact are the cornerstones of the plans I am currently working on in my role as program coordinator for SDCHM. It is my desire to provide a space where members of different ages and communities can enjoy a book club, Mahjong games, a gardening club, painting and embroidery workshops, to name just a few of the many possibilities that can be explored in the safe and serene space of The Chuang Garden.

If our esteemed readers would like to participate in these activities, or if you would like to suggest other projects, please contact me at the following email address: stephanie.garth@sdchm.org.



Photographs: Courtesy of
Masaki KOMORI, Associate
Professor, Department of British
and American Studies, Musashi
University, SDCHM Visitor.

GRACE DEVEGA

Hello! My name is Grace deVega (she/her), and I am thrilled to be the new Education Coordinator for the SDCHM! Since joining the team in August, I have learned so much about the importance of sharing Chinese and Chinese American stories with our community, especially students.

I recently received my Master's degree in Museum and Exhibition Studies from the University of Illinois Chicago, where I developed a strong passion for working with community museums. My work included curating an exhibition for the Filipino American Historical Society of Chicago and developing community-driven collections management recommendations for cultural organizations. Before my time in Chicago, I attended San Diego State University and received my Bachelor's degree in History and Political Science. I thoroughly enjoyed my time at SDSU and was heavily involved in their student government, residential education, and concert band programs.

MU-TING HUANG

My name is Mu-Ting Huang, and I currently work as a financial analyst.

At the museum, my role involves assisting with financial analysis and monthly financial data reporting, as well as maintaining databases to track and monitor both prospective and existing assets. I also help manage our Neon CRM database, including querying, cleaning, formatting, and structuring data for analysis.

In addition, I assist with invoice processing, accounts receivable and payable, and collaborate with our CPA on monthly balance sheets. My work also includes financial modeling to assess the financial or capital impact of transactions, and supporting fundraising and collection management efforts.

In my free time, I enjoy outdoor activities such as camping and hiking, and I love exploring new trails and national parks. Spending time with family and friends, reading, and staying active are other ways I like to relax and recharge.

STEPHANIE GARTH

My name is Stephanie Garth, I'm grateful to share with you my background. I earned my B.A. in Business Administration, Cum Laude, from Universidad Autónoma de Baja California, receiving a CENEVAL Excellence Award in 2016. I completed a Hospitality Compliance training at the Royal Decameron, a brand that operates a network of all-inclusive resorts across the Caribbean and Latin America, and the i-CORE Optimization of Emotional Processing seminar by Bioalkymia Consulting in 2020.

Certified as a Vinyasa Yoga Teacher in 2023 through FIT Athletic Yoga Training, I also graduated as a Kitchenista from Olivewood Gardens and Learning Center last summer.

After a decade in administration, I reconnected with my Wixárika, P'urhépecha, and Ancestral Puebloan indigenous heritage, devoting myself to cultural preservation as a museum educator and curatorial assistant. My journey began as a volunteer at the San Diego Chinese Historical Museum, and as a docent ambassador at Mingei International Museum. Now a staff member at the SDCHM, I embrace the connection between Chinese and Mexican traditions, reflecting my maternal Cantonese ancestry leading them to Coahuila; Mexico in the early 20th century. My deep interest in cultural anthropology fuels my mission to foster collective growth and cross-cultural understanding.

JOSEPH AHLSTROM

My name is Joseph Ahlstrom, the collection manager at the San Diego Chinese Historical Museum. I graduated with a bachelor's degree in history from Point Loma Nazarene University, where I discovered a deep interest in Chinese American History. At the museum, I ensure all our collection items are properly cared for and looked after, as well as helping to assemble our exhibition displays.

When not at the museum, I enjoy reading, spending time with friends, and building Lego. I have also recently begun attending trivia, which is extremely fun.

THANK YOU TO OUR DONORS!

From January 2025 to November 2025

Hang Level (\$10,000+)

Lily Birmingham

Joseph Wong

Tang Level (\$5,000+)

Claire Reiss

Emily Schell

Gordon Cheng

Jenny Benson

Linda DiBenedetto

Matt Savant

Robert Stein

Tom Hom

Song Level (\$2,000+)

Arnold Garcia

Jack Meng

Lynn Chou

Li-Rong Lilly Cheng

Sheldon Lou

Yuan Level (\$1,000+)

Hsien-Ning Tou

James Decker

John Leewong

Joseph Wong

Kyra Seay

Winifred Wong Chase

Ming Level (\$500+)

Allen Chan

Chun Lee

San Diego Chinese Art
& Cultural Society

Qing Level (\$100+)

Alice Hing

Brittany Barnes

Chang Exemption
Trust UTD

Corey Fayman

Dustin Wong

Edward Tung

Gil Ontai

Hisashi Matsumoto

Hwaju Hsieh

Jaime Cheng

James and Laurie Wen

Rev Trust

Janice Muller

Jay Chin

Jerry Carlos

Julia Chow

Leah Bentley

Leon Embry

Michael Seidel

Paul Yu

Ron Roberts

Stephen Weidenholtz

Tania Li

Ve-Na Chen

Virginia Dematatis

Terra Cotta Level (\$50+)

Milton Low

Howard Meyer

Joseph Cross

Nancy Lo

In-Kind Donation

Allen Chan

Jacinta Wong

Jean Cheng

Lily Birmingham

Li-Rong Lilly Cheng

Lynn Chou

Mandy Wong

Peter Kao

Robert Stein

Sandy Barstow

Thanh Do

INTRODUCING OUR NEW MEMBERS

Fangyuan Liu
Irene Woo Hurlbert
Janet Lunn
Jennifer Cheung
Louise Merrithew
Patricia Lin
Shanshan Chen
Taylor Zhou

RENEWING MEMBERS

Adrian Reyna	Natalie Zhang
Arthur and Mary Jeanne	Pat Dolbeck
Dicker	Robert Wong
Diane Carlos	Sandy Barstow
Eva Leonard	Sharlene Thompson
Heather Rose Cordova	Skip Faulkner
Howard P. Meyer	Susan Fratamico
James Hook	Tony Chen
Jerry Carlos	Virginia Olsen
Joseph Cross	Vivian Biely
Judy SooHoo	Woon-Wah Siu
Martha Jordan	

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Li-Rong Lilly Cheng,
Chairperson
Sheldon Lou, Vice
Chairperson
Lily Tou Birmingham,
Treasurer
Lynn Chou
Catherine Jones
Jack Meng
Emily Schell
Robert Stein

MUSEUM FOUNDERS

Sally Wong-Avery
Dorothy Hom

YOUNG PERSON'S ADVISORY COMMITTEE

Lillian Chu
Kevin Lee
Fiona Leung
Lu Liu
Jane Pechman
Stanley Quach
Kristy Totten
Peng Zhang

DIRECTOR EMERITUS

Dr. Alexander Chuang

CURATOR EMERITUS OF CHINESE AMERICAN HISTORY

Murray Lee

ADVISORY BOARD

Dr. Niyi Coker, Director of the School of Theatre, Television, and Film, San Diego State University
Chris Chan, Director of San Diego City Council Communications
Matthew Crisci, Author and Marketing Executive
Woon-Wah Siu, Attorney at Law (retired)
Sandra A. Wawrytko, Professor in the Department of Philosophy at San Diego State University

VOLUNTEERS

Luis Ayala Castillo
Bryan Bai
Campbell Barnes
Lily Tou Birmingham
Arthur Chang
Julianna Chang
Jemmifer Cheung
Lynn Chou
Chase Clabo
Soren Crutchfield
Nguyen Dao
Linda DiBenedetto
Amie Lee Garapich
Joshua Holtzman
Adam Gleichmann
Christopher Kam
Eli Davdovich
Catherine Jones
Carmen Lee
Kristianne Navarro
Jack Meng
Virginia Olsen
Nayalin Reyes
Yat-Long Sam Poon
Chia-Hui Shih
Karen Soohoo
Robert Stein
Brian Wong
Aries Lee Rong
Zichen Yang
Michael Yee

MUSEUM STAFF



Mu-Ting Huang
Financial Analyst



Joseph Ahlstrom
Collections Manager



Stephanie Garth
Program coordinator



Grace deVaga
Education coordinator

NEWSLETTER EDITORS

Lilly Cheng
Lily Tou Birmingham

LAYOUT DESIGN

Mu-Ting Huang



SAN DIEGO CHINESE HISTORICAL MUSEUM
404 THIRD AVENUE
SAN DIEGO, CA 92101

(619) 338-9888

sdchm.org
info@sdchm.org
@thesdchm

NON-PROFIT
U.S. POSTAGE
PAID
SAN DIEGO, CA
PERMIT NO. 1298

PARTNERS



SUPPORTERS



JWDA