

Temples and Museums: Managing and Interpreting Historic Cultural Assets

Date: March 12-13, 2016

Place: Yuba County Library, Second Street, Marysville, California

Organized by

Marysville Chinese Community/Bok Kai Temple
Chinese American Museum of Northern California, Marysville
Chinese-American Museum of Chicago – Raymond B. & Jean T. Lee Center
Chinese in Northwest America Research Committee, Bainbridge Island, WA

The four organizations above are organizing a two-day conference in Marysville, California, to be held during the well-known Bok Kai Festival of that city. While we feel the many new Chinese-American museums do an excellent job of preserving and studying the history of Chinese immigrants in America, we also believe that Chinese temples, as the oldest and most visually impressive Chinese-American cultural objects, can play an especially important role in reaching the same goal. The fact that most Chinese temples in America have now become museums or been incorporated into museums shows a close connection between the two types of cultural-social entities

We chose to hold the conference in connection with Marysville's Bok Kai Temple because we feel that such temples are crucially important in understanding how traditional religion supported the lives and eventual success of Chinese North American immigrants. They were at one time community centers, social service agencies, art galleries, and religious houses combined.

Similar temples once were numerous but now are mostly gone. The one in Marysville is the oldest Chinese temple in North America to be still an active center of worship, having remained such continuously for the past 136 years. Knowledge of how it has remained independent and alive, and what place it still occupies in modern communities, is essential for those interested in preserving and interpreting the cultural heritage of all persons of Chinese descent.

We feel there is much to be learned by asking broad questions about Chinese religion, temples, and museums. Have the temples that are converted into museums done well in terms of attendance, such as those in Oroville and San Jose? What about established museums that have absorbed temple components, such as those in Merced and Nevada City? Have those components been well received? Have they been interpreted sensitively and interestingly? What are the reasons that some museums have retired Chinese American religious objects into storage? Are other museums reinstalling shrines in their galleries mainly for reasons of visual appeal or are they trying to tell a more culturally relevant story? Is Marysville's Bok Kai Temple at risk of losing its primary religious function, and becoming a museum as well? Are religious exhibits in newer cultural entities such as Chinese-American museums moving in the direction of becoming active shrines? Can those exhibits be freer in interpreting the Chinese religious past while being sensitive to concerns of Christians and Muslims viewers and museum workers? What challenges do temples share with museums? How do they stay relevant to fast-changing ethnic populations and newer generations of attendees?

Day 1: 3/12/2016 (Saturday)

Panel A. 1:45-3:20

Active Temples: Their management, preservation, and promotion

Chair: **Chuimei Ho** (Chinese in Northwest America Research Committee, Bainbridge Island, WA)

Speakers:

Richard Lim (Marysville Chinese Community/Bok Kai Temple, Marysville, CA).

“TBA”

Eugene Moy (Chinese Historical Society of Southern California, Los Angeles, CA).

“Kong Chow Temple of Los Angeles: Preserving the spirit of the homeland and the spirit of the pioneers of Chinatown”

Susan Woon (Tin How Temple, San Francisco, CA).

“I have served Tianhou for two Decades, for Myself and Chinese Traditions”

John Adams (Discover The Past, Victoria, B.C. Canada).

“The Tam Kung Temple in Victoria, B.C.”

Commentators:

Victor Yue (Chinese Temple & Taoist Heritage Studies, Singapore)

Gordon Tom (Marysville Chinese Community/Bok Kai Temple)

Panel B. 3:50- 5:10

Inactive Temples: Preservation and touristic potential

Chair: **Brian Tom** (Chinese American Museum of Northern California, Marysville)

Speakers:

Jack Frost (Won Lim Temple, Weaverville, CA)

Lorna Fandrich (Kumsheen Rafting Resort, Lytton, B.C.)

“Re-constructing a Chinese Temple in Lytton British Columbia”

Commentators:

Gerrye Wong (Chinese Historical & Cultural Project, History/san jose, San Jose, CA)

Briana Struckmeyer (Yuba-Sutter Chamber of Commerce & Visit Yuba-Sutter Yuba Chamber of Commerce)

Reception: 6:30-8:30 pm

Chinese American Museum of Northern California, Marysville

Forum **“Where do we go from here? – brainstorming and networking”**

Co-chair: **Brian Tom** (CAMNC-Marysville); **CAMOC-Chicago**

Day 2. 3/13/2016 (Sunday)

Panel C. 9:00- 10:15

Museums: Preservation and touristic potential of significant temple heritage collections

Chair: **TBA**

Speakers:

Lyle Wirtanen (Nez Perce County Historical Society, Lewiston, ID):

“Chinese Temple Heritage Collections in Lewiston: Their preservation and Tourism Potential”

Ruth Lang (Operations & Collections Manager, Fresno Historical Society, Fresno, CA)

“Saved, Preserved, and Hidden: Fresno’s Chinese Altars”

Sarah Lim (Director, Merced County Court House Museum, Merced, CA).

“Chinese Temple Exhibit at the Courthouse Museum: Benefits and Challenges”

Liisa Penner (Archivist, Clatsop County Historical Society, Astoria, OR)

“Significance of the Bo On Tong Altar to the Exhibits of the Clatsop County Historical Society”

Commentators:

Wallace Hagaman (The Nevada County Historical Society-Fire House No. 1 Museum, CA);

John Adams (Discover The Past, Victoria, B.C.)

Panel D. 10:45- 12:00

Chinese-American Museums: Roles, funding, and interpretation of religious collections.

Chair: **Sarah Lim** (Director, Merced County Court House Museum, Merced, CA)

Speakers:

Christian Jochim & Allan Low (Chinese Historical & Cultural Project, San Jose, CA)

“Role of Chinese American Historical Museum (CAHM, aka Ng Shiug Gung, “Temple of the Five Deities”)

Eugene Moy (Chinese Historical Society of Southern California, Los Angeles, CA)

“Los Angeles Chinatown as a living history museum, and the role of the Kong Chow Temple and its collections in Chinatown’s future”

Anita Luk (Chinese-American Museum of Chicago – Raymond B. & Jean T. Lee Center, Chicago, IL)

“TBA”

Brian Tom (Chinese-American Museum of Northern California, Marysville, CA).

“The Role of Chinese American Museums and Chinese Temples and Religion”

Commentator:

Bennet Bronson (CINARC, Bainbridge Island, WA)

Concluding Remarks:

Lyle Wirtanen (Nez Perce County Historical Society, Lewiston, ID)

Richard Lim (Marysville Chinese Community/Bok Kai Temple, Marysville, CA)

Dinner: 6:30-8:30

Optional Events:

3/12. 11:00-12:00 Bok Kai Temple Parade. Downtown Marysville.

3/12-13. Tour 1 – Bok Kai Temple, Marysville, opens 10-5. Self-guided tour.

3/12. Tour 2 – 5:10- 5:50 pm. Chinese American Museum of Northern California, Marysville.

3/12. Forum – 6:30-8:30 pm (by invitation). Chinese American Museum of Northern California, Marysville

3/13. Tour 3 – 12:50-3:50. Oroville Chinese Temple.

3/13. Tour 4 – 2:30-3:10 pm Chinese American Museum of Northern California, Marysville

3/13. 4:00-5:00. Bomb Contest Viewing. First Street/C Street.

3/13. 6:30-8:30 Dinner.

REGISTRATION

Temples and Museums:

Managing and Interpreting Historic Cultural Assets

Place: Yuba County Library, Second Street, Marysville, California

Date: March 12-13, 2016

Inquiries: anita.luk@ccamuseum.org, Tel: 312-949-1000, www.cinarc.org.

Surname _____ Personal Name _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ ZIP _____

Tel: _____ Email _____

Affiliation _____

I wish to receive a registration confirmation.

SYMPOSIUM FEE (Per Person)

	Fees	Your choice
Registration both days	\$ 85.00	\$ _____
Registration 1 day only – circle one day (3/12; 3/13)	\$ 55.00	\$ _____
Lunch 3/13	\$ 10.00	\$ _____
Dinner 3/13	\$ 25.00	\$ _____
Tour 2 – 3/12. Chinese American Museum, Marysville.	\$ 3.00	\$ _____
Tour 3 – 3/13. Oroville Chinese Temple.		
Admission	\$ 3.00	\$ _____
Transportation	\$ 10.00	\$ _____
Tour 4 - 3/13. Chinese American Museum, Marysville	\$ 3.00	\$ _____
	Total	\$ _____

Your signature

Date

Payment:

- Either send registration and your check in USD payable to Chinatown Museum Foundation, 238 W 23rd Street, Chicago, IL 60616. Mark “Marysville Conference”.