



Yee Fow Center
for History, Culture, and Trade

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History Fact Sheet

California is home to the largest Asian population outside of Asia itself. The rich history, culture, and contributions of Asian Americans have played a large role in building this state. Because of this long history, California is a natural ally to most countries in Asia and a place of predilection for immigrants.

Beginning in the 1850's, the first Asian immigrants settled on the Sacramento riverbanks along I Street from Second to Sixth streets. The newcomers called Sacramento, "Yee Fow," Cantonese for second city.

The original Chinatown of Yee Fow was a mecca, a transportation hub to the first Asian Americas. The Chinese used the Depot District as their intermodal, moving back and forth throughout California. They came from the east, Dai Fow of San Francisco. Some went north to Marysville and beyond. Some went west to move mountains, laying the tracks of the Central Pacific or scouring the mines in search of gold. Some went south, pushing back the delta waters to build the levees, and then laying the foundation for California's world class agriculture. But these Chinese pioneers often returned to Yee Fow for their provisions, to their family associations, majestic theaters, and care facilities that they could not find in most of the smaller towns.

A Yee Fow Center will focus on the rich and unique Chinese American history in the Sacramento Valley, Yee Fow, and will expand upon the migration of the Chinese pioneers from Dai Fow to Yee Fow to Sam Fow and throughout California.

The Yee Fow Center exhibition of its unique Chinese-American history will add a new dimension to the concept of a transportation hub connecting the area's past with the future. Yee Fow Chinese American Center will provide value, adding transportation and culture in the migration of people.

Central to this history is:

- The Chinese that came through Yee Fow to work on the Central Pacific Railroad.
- The Chinese that came through Yee Fow and east to the Gold Rush.
- The Chinese that went south of Yee Fow to build the levees.
- Yee Fow was the supply and care center for the Chinese miner, railroad worker, and smaller Chinatowns throughout California.
- The role of the Chinese that went on in California's commerce, agriculture, fishing industry and businesses such as laundries, cigar factories, and latter the groceries.
- The 20,000 Chinese-Americans who served with pride during World War II
- The Chinese Exclusion Act and the fight by Chinese for the rights of all Americans