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BAY & CALIFORNIA

Chinese Pioneers

Social
Notes

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Following the “Golden Rivers” is an experience every young person or new Californian should participate in, as the California Historical Society tells the real story of the challenges that early Chinese pioneers faced in changing California’s raw land into the Golden State it is today.

The Chinese pioneers of 150-plus years ago fought against unspeakable odds, hatred and discrimination to make their homes in America. Their stories are a triumph over incredible adversities.

While over 130 Chinese camps or settlements along the West Coast have disappeared, burned down or become ghost towns, four enduring early settlements — Locke, Old Town Sacramento, Marysville and Oroville in Northern California — were revisited and relived by curious modern-day tourists.

Led by knowledgeable guides Gary Holloway

and **Dr. Steve Yee**, background information was provided by Locke historians **Connie King** and **Clarence Chu** and longtime Sacramentan and descendant of Fiddletown’s Yee family, **Dr. Herbert Yee**.

Marysville Chinatown and **Bok Kai Temple** was narrated by **Brian Tom**, and the **Chinese American Museum of Northern California** and Oroville’s **Confucian Temple** was introduced by the **Dr. Gaing Chan** family.

Places such as the long-shut Sacramento Railroad Yards were brought to life, thanks to Dr. Steve Yee and Thomas Enterprises.

As a descendant from Locke and Sacramento, I can still recall the noisy trains with locomotives that were as big and fearsome as movie monsters, all sitting in a rail yard as large as the Chicago stockyards or large football fields. It was truly awesome, but it is all buried and gone like the **China Slough**, which is just a memory for the Chinese today. In revisiting Locke, I was thrilled to see the **Chinese School House**, built right

Right: California Railroad Museum honored the Chinese laborers who built the Transcontinental Railroad; Far right: Locke historian Connie King



From left: California Historical Society guides Dr. Herbert Yee, Lisa Erikson, Dr. Steve Yee and Ron Wong

next to my uncle **Ping Lee**’s and his parents’ home, the **Lee Bings**’ house.

The theater where sexy entertainers performed is still there, quiet and shuttered. Only one gambling house out of five is still open, so that visitors can peruse the style of gambling in the early days.

Very charming was

historian Connie King’s hobby of gardening and her collection of toilets turned into colorful plant holders in the residential part of Locke.

Adding to the atmosphere and frontier feel of Locke were the 300 shiny Harley-Davidsons, whose guys and gals roared into town, did a chili cook-off and drank the bars empty, while we

enjoyed a tame lunch at “Al, the Wops” Lunch Room. It was definitely a frontier town-feel for the visitors with the California Historical Society members who went on to “Old Sacramento,” enjoying the delightful upscale Chinese cuisine at “Fat City’s” Dining Room with water cascading just like the river of gold.