

- 紐森促趙悅明辭職再度碰釘 (B2)
- 專題報導：沈劍虹愛女憶父 (B4)
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●1857年的Sutter Lake，也稱「中國沼澤」(China Slough)。



●1850年代的沙加緬度「二埠」。

沙加緬度華人百年滄桑史

●加州首府Sacramento的中文譯名有好幾個版本，主要是要看你是從哪個地方來的。最常見的大概是「沙加緬度」。這個譯名之來源，不易考證，大約是早期移民所翻譯的吧。另一譯名「二埠」，也是早期老僑時常使用之名稱。但在中國地區，最常用的名稱卻是「薩克拉門度」。

二埠·聖城·沙加緬度

這麼多譯名似乎夠了吧？倒也不見得；也見過有人將這座加州首府稱之為「聖城」。使用這個名稱者，解釋的理由是因為Sacramento是聖潔之意，所以稱其為「聖城」也並非沒有來由。

舊金山的中國城(華埠)聞名全世界，但有多少人知道首府沙加緬度及附近地區美國華人歷史呢？談到華人對美國歷史的貢獻，大概沒有哪個美國城市或地區能與這個城市相比。

但這麼一個重要的城市，卻一直沒有引起華人注意、仔細研究，約有下面幾點因素：它似乎多年來被舊金山「大埠」之盛名所遮蓋，而永遠屈居老二，難以抬頭；「二埠」的風景區不多，既沒有金門大橋，也沒有漁人碼頭等觀光勝地；「二埠」多年來風氣保守、老實而不善於自我標榜。

華人新移民多為教育水準高、經濟狀況好人士。來州府所在地者，除經商或辦企業外，幾乎都在州府機構找到穩定、理想的工作，在首府安心定居。而對於自己住的地區之名稱，不計較也不認為重要。

淘金熱 華人蜂擁而至

沙加緬度所在地理位置非常重要。縱貫南北加州的五號公路，橫跨東西的80號公路，都必須經過此地。五號公路南起墨西哥，北至加拿大；80號公路東到大西洋港口的紐約，而西到太平洋門戶舊金山。不管南來北往，或是東西旅行，沙加緬度都是必經之路。

1848年的淘金熱潮，很快傳到中國，風聞美國加利福尼亞州有黃金可掘，一年之間，來自廣東的華人成千上萬。許多人一窩蜂成群結伴地來到沙加緬度山腳，從普萊西山谷(Placeville)向上，一直到達賽拉高地山脈(High Sierra)。

中國來的礦工，與其他地區湧來的淘金客，同樣有著淘金夢。他們背離離井，非非是希望掘金，早日致富並衣錦還鄉。在短短幾個月內，沙加緬度那本是寧靜蒼涼的山谷，滿山遍野到處都是淘金客及其搭起的臨時帳篷。

1849年，是淘金熱最興旺一年。當時加州成為全美最矚目、嚮往之地。因此被讚以黃金州之美譽，而華人則稱之為「金山」，至今這個光榮代號仍歷久不衰。

幾年之間，華人來美求發展之速度突飛猛進，1855年時，美國華人已經超過兩萬人。

好景不長，在眾人瘋狂搶著挖掘下，很快就無金可挖，到了1860年間，終於出現金礦前途未卜之慘淡狀況。華工淘金夢破碎，只得重新背起行囊，到別處另謀發展。

金礦枯竭了 農業興起

一部分未淘到金的華人在「二埠」留了下來，另謀發展。當時中國以農業為主，很多華人具有農耕知識，對後來加州農場及至整個美國農業的發展，作出巨大貢獻。目前在加州以至美國各地的堅果產品(nuts)，絕大部來自華人農場。

19世紀的地面與路況，不如今天有這麼多平坦大道，到處是積水、沼澤、低窪地帶。為了改進這個情況，政府大事興建堤防工程(Levee Project)。當時華人聽說「二埠」近郊的三角洲(Delta)地帶有很多工作機會，幾天之間就從大埠趕來大批華人，參加修築堤防。今天在加州看到的堤防，幾乎每一條都有華人留下的血與汗。



▲當年華人先民參與建造了橫貫美國新大陸的太平洋鐵路。(加州歷史博物館提供)



▲沙加緬度鐵路廣場前新建造的聯邦大樓大廳裡，展示早期華人移民走過的艱辛歷史足跡。(記者崔以開攝)

太平洋鐵路 華人血汗

而華人參加美國鐵路的建造，更寫下可歌可泣的一段歷史。

大約1862年間，沙加緬度四大家族(Big Four)，包括經營雜貨商業的史丹福(Leland Stanford)、兩位五金商杭庭頓(C. P. Huntington)與霍普金斯(Mark Hopkins)及乾貨商人克爾(Charles Crocker)等，聯合成立太平洋中央鐵路公司(Central Pacific Railroad)，由史丹福擔任總裁，杭庭頓為副總裁，霍普金斯掌財務，克爾處理運務工作。

1863年初，史丹福用鐵錐在沙加緬度K街南面開闢的土地上，鑄下第一塊泥土，正式宣布太平洋中央鐵路工程計畫開始。由愛爾蘭裔工程師林拿鐵路工程開工後，立刻大事徵求鐵路工人。

這項美國歷史上重大工程計畫，改變了全國的經濟與交通情況。當時鐵路工程尚未普遍，交通工具除水上輪船外，只有靠馬車。這項將全美連結起來的橫斷新大陸的鐵路計畫，不但引起全國重視，還受到林肯總統的大力支持，並由聯邦政府給予多方補助與津貼。

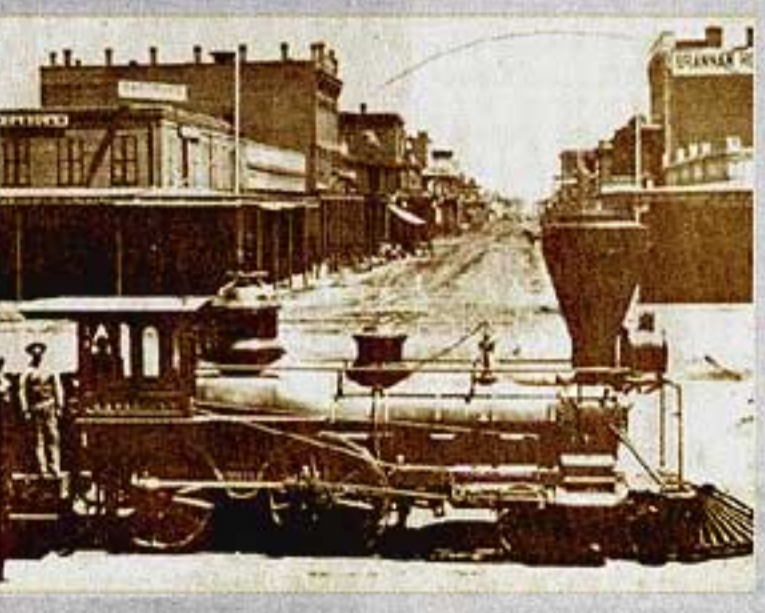
鐵路工程計畫龐大，需要財力、物力，更需要大批工人。建造鐵路工作艱苦且工作時間長，當時白人願意做這種工作者不多，他們更要求高工資。克爾在各地努力，積極尋找鐵路工人。他從舊金山找了約兩千名志願者，立刻開始培訓計畫，希望短期內上工。誰知，不到幾天工夫，這些工人幾乎全部離去，只剩下了不到百人。

克爾得知，那幾年間從金礦下來大批急著找尋出路的華人，於是率先去僱用大約五十名華工。但是其他人卻不同意克爾僱用看起來體弱、矮小又梳著長辮子的東方人，對他們的能力有所懷疑。不知是否能勝任造鐵路的艱苦工作。

眼光獨到的克爾挺身而出，力排眾議。他表示，這些華人是當年築造世界上最艱難的工程萬里長城的後裔，怎能說他們不勝任建造鐵路的工程呢？

那五十個被美國人稱之為苦力(coolie)的華工，不讓老闆失望，在一個星期中，完成了交代下來的任務。主事者看到這些人交出來的成績單又快又好，皆大歡喜，立刻通知頭頭說，趕快再送些華工來沙加緬度。

天性能吃苦耐勞的華人，每天一早就上工，很晚才收工。他們雖工資微薄，但勤快工作，從不抱怨。他們居住在營地，飲食簡單，只吃些米飯、蔬菜、魚蝦與鹹茶。



▲十九世紀之鐵路工程起點，今日之沙加緬度老城(Old Sacramento)。(加州歷史博物館提供)



▲為建造華人博物館熱心奔走的社區人士尹集成(右)、郭仕榮(中)拜會世界日報社長宋品宜，請求協助與支持。(記者崔以開攝)

山越嶺穿過賽拉山脈，直達內華達州，再由折延伸到猶他州，與起始自東岸的聯合中央鐵路(Union Pacific Railroad)接軌，以完成橫貫美國新大陸的鐵路工程。

幾年間，經過華工辛苦奮鬥，終於完成賽拉山脈那段翻山越嶺、艱辛無比之工程。接下去的是較平坦的陸地，1868年那一年成果豐碩，一年中完成鋪軌364哩業績，創下一天一哩鋪軌工程紀錄。

1869年初，在東西鐵路接軌的最後緊要關頭，雙方盡全力並加速趕工，希望自己鋪軌速度高過對方。

太平洋中央鐵路的工人，除了少數愛爾蘭工頭及工程師外，其餘全為華人。兩家鐵路公司都努力爭取第一，而積極加班。聯合鐵路工人一天完成六哩鋪軌，中央鐵路則以七哩半成績秀給對方看。

在最初幾年中，克爾早已看出華人的無窮潛力，對他們的表現滿意並信心十足，決定向聯合鐵路挑戰、打賭。他跨下海口表示，他的工人可以達到一天中完成鋪軌一哩的超級業績，如果不成功，將輸給對方一萬元；當時的一萬元是天文數字，立刻引起聯合公司主管的興趣，他們欣然接受挑戰。

太平洋中央鐵路公司在達成協議後加倍努力。除增加五千人外，更傾全力以快速運輸鋪軌材料與工具。他們天不亮就出工，天黑也不收工，以至於放棄休息時間而埋頭苦幹。1869年4月28日下午7時，當他放下鋪軌鎚頭，鐵錐、鎚刀等工具結束一天工作時，竟創造了一天鋪10哩又200尺的佳績。

他們在一年中所達成的工作，是前三年中累計工作量的一半。

1869年工程結束時，在全國各地趕來的媒體、民眾、觀光客以及政府官員等的見證及注視下，太平洋中央鐵路在猶他州與東部聯合鐵路接軌，終於完成美國橫貫新大陸的浩大鐵路工程計畫。

但是，在猶他州龐托托普舉行的歷史性接軌大典慶典上，那些曾經為鋪路流汗流淚、流血獻身的華工，竟無一人獲邀參加。那一節節的鐵軌下，不知留下了多少與鄉斷腸華人的白骨。

記者崔以開專題報導

應該學習華人歷史，但經過郭氏宗親郭錦兆之影響，開始對這塊曾有華人先民生活過的土地的歷史產生興趣，並加以探討、深究。

華人博物館 永懷先民

郭仕榮與另一位華裔聯合執筆，以各種角度陳述華人當年建造美國橫貫新大陸鐵路的事蹟，及受到的不平等待遇。他們以強有力的證據、照片配合充滿感情的言詞，將當年華人歷盡滄桑建造鐵路的故事公諸於世，希望引起大眾回響，支持在那無數華人斷魂土地上建造紀念博物館，以追憶那些華人先民。

2007年3月4日，首府的「沙加緬度蜂報」(Sacramento Bee)以兩整頁版面，發表了郭仕榮這篇「挖掘過去歷史」(Digging Up the Past)圖文並茂的文章，對沙市華人的歷史，作了詳盡的報導。

文章刊出後，同步上網刊登，得到全美各地讀者響應，包括加州南北各地、芝加哥、亞特蘭大、紐約及加拿大等地讀者，都有回響。

在加州教育廳教科書部門工作的郭仕榮，自此到處參加集會，為建造華人博物館而演講，舉行說明會。他自資印製了數千份圖文註解的手冊到處贈送，希望引起各界共鳴及支持。這是一股被他人忽略、但卻是與加州的重要歷史，理應被列入教科書，讓下一代瞭解曾經對加州作出巨大貢獻的華人建造美國鐵路的精神。

經過不懈努力，在鐵路廣場興建華人博物館的計畫得到廣泛支持及鼓勵。郭仕榮與另一位熱心社區事務的華裔尹集成，並前往美西世界日報會見宋品宜社長，得到宋社長的大力支持，同意協助推廣此意義重大的華人博物館計畫。

當地社團組織紛紛表示支持，從市、縣政府到州政府的民選官員，在聆聽有關華人對加州貢獻的淒涼感人故事，均十分感動並同意協助。首位華裔州參議員余鳳良並在該會場的空檔，於6月28日在州議會舉辦華人博物館計畫說明會及公聽會。公聽會上，多名研究加州亞裔歷史的學者與會支持及登台作證。全部經過已由州府新聞室當場錄影存證。

這種支持建造華人博物館的熱情，從美國跨洋過海遠達東南亞、中國及加拿大。來自山東的齊魯電視台一行，曾於今年5月來採訪有關博物館計畫。上海的企業家、上海誠美國際公司董事長王振平，在聽取郭仕榮詳細說明及報告後，認為應該極力加強策劃這個展現美國華人歷史、意義空前重大的計畫。他返華後，不但積極推廣這個計畫，還努力設法籌款，以便順利推行此項活動。

此外，經過王振平的引介，郭仕榮等得以認識加拿大的華裔電影製片家王水泊。他多年來參與多部影片製作工作，經驗豐富，所製紀錄片曾獲得好萊塢佳評。他同樣對於這個華人故事感到濃厚興趣。目前在亞洲策劃製作有關安東尼傳奇故事的劇本，時常與郭仕榮交談聯繫，探尋建造鐵路華人後裔的資料，商討製作影片計畫等。

最新來自中國的消息透露，王振平除積極為此計畫籌款外，更與中國中央電視台聯絡，使該台也對此重大華人歷史故事表示興趣。王水泊也希望盡快來加州首府，實地考察、商議製作事宜。

目前，經過郭仕榮的積極努力，及各方人士的協助，華人博物館的籌備機構已申請到非牟利機構的許可證，希望有心人士出錢出力，共襄盛舉，以慰當年為建造鐵路獻身之先民。有關博物館計畫所有資料及詳情請上網閱讀：www.yeeffowmuseum.org。

如願意捐獻支持，請致函 Gifts to Share/YFM Gifts to Share, Inc./o Department of Parks and Recreation, 915 I Street, 5th Floor, Sacramento, CA 95814。非牟利機構的報稅號碼為(ID#): 94-2985546。

Sacramento Chinese People’s Hundred Year Life History

Special Feature by Vicki Beaton

The translation to Chinese of California’s capital, Sacramento, had several versions, mainly depending on the area you came from. The most common is probably “Sha Jia Men Du”. The source of this transliteration is difficult to validate, perhaps it was the early immigrants’ rendition. Another translation, “Yee Fow” (meaning “Second City”), was commonly used among the early immigrants. But in China, the most commonly used translation is “Sac Carla Men Du”.

Yee Fow, Holy City, Sacramento

It would seem that so many translations are not necessary but I have seen people refer to the California capital as “the holy city”. For those that use this name, the reason for this translation is because “sacrament” connotes a sense of sacredness, thus, referring it as “the holy city” seems sensible.

San Francisco’s Chinatown is indeed well-known around the world, but how many people know the capital, Sacramento, and the adjacent areas have a rich history of Chinese Americans? Speaking of the Chinese contributions to American history, to say boldly, there is not another American city or area that is comparable with Sacramento.

Yet, such an important city has not captured the attention of the Chinese, and careful examination reveals the following factors: It seems to have been overshadowed by the illustrious reputation of San Francisco’s “Da Fow” (Literally meaning “First City”, common name for San Francisco’s Chinatown.), resulting in difficulty rising above the “Second City” ranking; Yee Fow’s scenery is limited, lacking popular sightseeing attractions such as the Golden Gate Bridge and Fisherman’s Wharf; and Yee Fow for many years has been conservative and modest.

The majority of new Chinese immigrants have a higher education level and better financial circumstances. Those that come to the capital, aside from businessmen or entrepreneurs, are able to find an ideal stable job in the various state agencies and settle down with peace of mind. As to the name of their new hometown, little concern or significance is placed on it.

Gold Fever--Swarm of Chinese Flooded In

Sacramento’s geographical location is central. Regardless of whether you are heading toward Southern or Northern California on Highway 5 or Eastern or Western California on Highway 80, Sacramento is a definite pass through city. Highway 5 reaches Mexico in the South and Canada in the North; Highway 80 reaches the New York harbor of the Atlantic Ocean in the East and the San Francisco harbor of the Pacific Ocean in the West. No matter if you are coming from the South or heading to the North, or traveling East or West, Sacramento is a necessary transverse route.

In 1848, the gold fever news quickly spread to China, carrying the message that California state has gold for the digging, resulting in an influx of tens of thousands of Chinese from Guangdong Province (Canton). Like a swarm of bees, many Chinese came in groups to settle in the foothills of Sacramento, from Placerville all the way to the High Sierra.

The miners from China and those gold rush immigrants from all other parts of the country all shared the same gold dream. They left behind their homeland all in hope of digging gold and returning home with riches and honors. In just a few short months, Sacramento’s serene and green valley transformed into a landscape of erected tents everywhere as temporary dwelling for the gold miners.

In 1849, the gold rush was at its most prosperous year. At the time, California became the focus of the country and the most appealing place to be. As a result, California was praised with the reputation of the Golden State; the Chinese call it “Gum San” (meaning “Gold Mountain”) and this glorious nickname is still active. In honor of that fruitful year, the “49er” label was visible throughout Northern California regions, with the most well-known being San Francisco 49ers American football team.

Within several years, the number of Chinese immigrating to America increased leaps and bounds. By 1855, the Chinese population in the United States had surpassed 20,000 people.

The prosperous time did not last long; amidst the madness of the gold rush, soon there was not any gold left to be dug. By 1860, sights of the dismal conditions of the gold miners were presented. The overseas Chinese miners’ dream of panning gold was shattered, picking up their bags once again, they moved elsewhere to seek a new beginning.

Gold Mines Exhausted, Farming Upsurged

Some of the unsuccessful gold miners settled in Yee Fow, seeking other living means. Back in those days, agriculture was the economic backbone of China and many Chinese were equipped with farming knowledge, which contributed to the later development of California’s and the whole of America’s agriculture development and agriculture achievement. Presently, many of the various nut products in California and across the country nearly all come from Chinese-owned farms.

The 19th century road surface and streets with their water potholes, swamps, and low-lying regions were far from today’s wide flat pavements. To improve this situation, the government began the Levee Project construction. During that time, the Chinese heard about the many job opportunities around the Delta areas in Yee Fow and within days, a large group of Chinese arrived from San Francisco, taking part in the embankment project. Today, the dikes in Northern California nearly all carried the blood and sweat of the Chinese that left them behind. Furthermore, the Chinese contribution to the construction of the railroad made another epic chapter in the American history.

Pacific Railroad: Chinese Blood and Sweat

About 1862, four of Sacramento’s respected family (known as the Big Four), which included: sundry shop owner, Leland Stanford; two hardware businessmen, C.P. Huntington and Mark Hopkins; and grocery businessman, Charles Crocker came together in a joint effort. They established the Central Pacific Railroad Company, with Stanford as President, Huntington as Vice President, Hopkins as Treasurer, and Crocker as the Chief Executive Officer.

Early in 1863, Stanford drove a shovel into the undeveloped land on K Street in Sacramento, dug up the first scoop of soil, and officially announced the initiation of the Central Pacific Railroad project. After the development of the Irish engineers’ blueprints, immediate recruitment was underway to employ railroad construction workers.

This most historic engineering project in American history revolutionized the whole country’s economy and transportation system. Back in those days, the railway was not yet widespread. Common means of transportation included waterway vessels and wagon trains. This Transcontinental Railroad project, that united the whole country, not only captured the attention of every citizen, but also gained President Lincoln’s strong support and the federal government provided much support and subsidy.

The construction of the railroad was a monumental task, requiring financial resources, material resources, and especially a large force of manpower. Railroad construction work was labor-intensive and the hours were long, thus, not many Caucasians were willing to do this type of work. Additionally, they requested higher wages. Crocker was actively seeking railway workers. From San Francisco, he found about 2,000 candidates and provided them training immediately in hope that they could start work in a short period of time. Unexpectedly, in less than a few days of work, almost all the workers left, with only less than 100 people remained.

Crocker then learned about the large group of Chinese who stepped down from gold mining in recent years and were actively seeking a way out of their desperate situation. Making a calling on his own, Crocker employed 50 Chinese laborers. However, other people disagreed with Crocker’s decision in employing what seemed to be a group of short, frail, Oriental individuals with long braided pigtail, and expressed doubts of their capabil-

ity and whether they could undertake the intensive labor of railroad construction.

Crocker, guided by his keen mind, quickly confronted the protestors and stated: “These Chinese people were those that build the world’s most challenging engineering project, the Great Wall, so how are they not capable of building the railroad?”

And so the 50 Chinese laborers (referred to as coolies by the Americans) did not disappoint their boss and completed their assigned task within a week. Upon inspection, the higher authority was very satisfied with the speed and quality of the Chinese’s performance, and instantly notified the foreman to quickly send more coolies to Sacramento.

The naturally diligent Chinese people started work early in the morning and labored through late in the evening. Despite their measly wage, they worked silently and never complained. They lived in their tents, had a simple diet—eating only rice, vegetables, fish, and shrimp—and drinking tea.

The population of Chinese railroad workers at its highest was approximated from ten to twenty thousands. The facts had proved that Chinese are industrious and efficient workers. But despite their dedication to their work and demonstration of their positive performance, the Chinese laborers did not receive fair treatment that construction workers were entitled to. Under the white supremacy regime of the time, more than 20,000 railroad construction laborers were never mentioned in the railroad history. All had become unsung heroes, and one can only leave a sigh.

Skeleton Accumulated Everywhere, Yet Discrimination Continues

The historical record of the United States transcontinental railroad project documented the most dangerous and arduous part of the project, where no one was willing to participate, was in the construction section that stretched from the Sacramento foothills, across the Sierra Nevada mountains, and several hundreds miles into Nevada.

Few people would be willing to risk their life to undertake such a terror-stricken and heart-chilling job, drilling holes in the rock face of the mountain cliffs and tunneling through mountain summits. Even generous compensation might not be able to attract any brave soul. But at a time when the Chinese were adrift in a foreign land, with a boundless future in front, and no road to turn back, they could only hurtle forward. They formed into groups, always carried out the most dangerous tasks, and wrote down the most precious chapter of the American railroad construction history.

Those extremely hazardous and hair-raising work conditions are hard to imagine today. They used wood, bamboo and rattan to construct baskets that could accommodate three to four people inside, which would be attached to rope that suspended from the edge of the cliff. The workers at the top would follow signals from the laborers in the basket and pull them up and down along the cliff that was thousands of feet above the abyss, supporting them and their lives while they bored holes in the granite rocks with their bare hands and simple tools. Added to their already risky working condition was the use of explosives. They would position the explosive inside the hole along the cliff, ignite it and quickly signal the workers at the top to pull them up to avoid death by explosion. Exactly how many people could safely leave the danger zone in time, how many people accidentally fell into the abyss, there is no way to find out and no one is willing to investigate.

According to historic record, someone kept track of Irish workers’ injuries and fatalities. Yet, of the total railroad workers, 90% of them are Chinese and their casualties, as if not worthy of mentioning, no records were kept.

The Central Pacific Railroad Project planned route crossed through the mountains, stretched through the cliffs, passed through Sierra Mountain and extended all the way to Nevada, then wound through Utah, and joined with the rails that started from the east (Union Pacific Railroad), thus, completing the American Transcontinental Railroad.

In just a few years, with the Chinese workers’ struggling effort and hard work, they completed the Sierra Mountain range, the most challenging feat of the whole project.

What remained to tackle was relatively flat land. The year 1868 marked a productive year, completely laying down 364 miles of tracks in a year, setting a railway track laying record of a mile per day.

In the beginning of 1869, when the linking of the East-West railway reached its critical moment of closing in, both sides put in extra effort to accelerate their speed, hoping to surpass the other team’s track laying record.

The Central Pacific railway workforce, aside from a few Irish foremen and engineers, consisted mostly of Chinese. Both railroad companies tenaciously strived to be the number one enterprise by increasing overtime work. When the Union Pacific Railroad workers lay down 6 miles of railway tracks, the Central Pacific Railroad workers would answer with 7 1/2 miles.

In the early few years, Crocker realized the Chinese’s infinite potential and was satisfied with their performance. With complete confidence in them, Crocker decided to challenge the Union Pacific enterprise and laid down a bet. Crocker boasted that his laborers would be able to accomplish 10 miles of track in a day, and that the losing team would give the other \$10,000. Back in those days, \$10,000 was an astronomical figure. This straightaway captured the attention of Thomas C. Durant, Vice President of the Union Pacific company, who accepted the wager resolutely.

With the bet on, Central Pacific doubled its effort. Beside from adding 5,000 more workers, they exerted all their effort to speed up the transport of railway materials and tools. The workers began work early in the morning when the sky was still dark and labored through late in the evening, and even gave up their break time to continue working diligently. At 7:00pm on April 28, 1869, when the workers put down their hoes, shovels, hammer, and other tools at the end of their day of work, they set a record of laying down 10 miles and 200 feet of tracks.

The amount of work that they achieved in this year was equivalent to half of the previous three years work combined.

When the railroad construction project ended in 1869, people from all over the country including media, citizens, tourists, and government officials came to witness the joining of the Central Pacific Railroad and Union Pacific Railroad in Utah, finally completing the massive engineering venture, the United States Transcontinental Railroad.

But, at Promontory, Utah, where the convergence of the railroads took place in a historic ceremony (“Golden Spike”), and those Chinese laborers who had paved the tracks with their sweat, tears, and blood, and even sacrificed their lives, none were invited to participate in the grand celebration. Under each rail track, how many heart-broken foreign Chinese bones were left behind.

Sacramento Railyards Project Begins

Once many Chinese participated in the work of the Sacramento railyard, and after over a century of neglect, it suddenly draws interest from all parties to develop into good use. Initially, the American basketball team (Sacramento Kings) planned to convert this piece of treasured land into a new sports stadium. But the team requested the reconstruction cost be subsidized by tax dollars. This request was rejected by the voters.

In 2005, the city government and all parties concerned, once again, planned to develop this piece of golden land. In response, different parties participated in the bidding competition. A land development company from Atlanta, Thomas Enterprise, won the tender. Soon afterward, representatives came to the state capital to set up a branch office, officially launching the Railyards project.

Old Sacramento Built on Swamp

In the 19th Century, this location was known as Sutter Lake, and it was also referred as China Slough. Back then, Caucasians paid no heed to the

marsh land because it was considered a health hazard. Since the Chinese were willing to have it, they were allowed to inhabit and perish there. In no time, the Chinese persevered and not only was their health not adversely affected, but they managed to develop that region to be more and more prosperous, puzzling the White folks.

The Chinese called that developed region Chinatown and the Cantonese referred to it as Yee Fow, which was the central gathering place for the Chinese back then. The main streets of that region included today’s I, J, and K Street and 2nd, 3rd, 4th, and 5th Street. At its heyday, there were over a dozen grocery stores, pharmacies, cigar shops, and more than ten barber shops, restaurants, and laundry shops.

When Chinese first started opening laundry shops, it sparked much unexpected controversy. Issues included criticism of the Chinese’s less attention to environmental sanitation, operation of a business in an untidy and unventilated area, and utilization of a shocking ironing method in which water was sprayed from the mouth on to the clothing to be ironed. After repeated official stopovers this practice was abolished.

The Chinese population of Yee Fow grew rapidly, from more than 600 in 1852 to nearly 2,000 in a decade. Because of the needs at the time, Chinatown rapidly expanded into various business types. In a radius of several miles, in addition to those business entities mentioned above, there was a theater that presented Canton opera, Canton music, and puppet shadow show among others. Additionally, there were also gambling houses, opium halls and brothels; all that one expected to find.

Over the years, after multiple natural disasters and man-made calamities, including several large unknown fires, the Chinese had no choice but to move out and seek a new environment. The once splendid Chinatown gradually waned and vanished.

The Railyards development plan started in the beginning of 2007, drawing attention from all quarters. Locally born Chinese Steve Yee barely knew anything about the Chinese people’s history and had never felt he should study it. But after the influence of Sam Ong, member of the Ong Ko Met Association, Yee began to develop interest in this historic piece of land that once was home to the Chinese ancestors, and began to explore and investigate.

Chinese Museum Commemorates Ancestors

Yee and Community Activist Vicki Beaton jointly wrote an article by employing different perspectives on the Chinese participation in the history of the Transcontinental Railroad and the unfair treatments upon them. They presented powerful evidence and pictures along with their heart-touching account of the Chinese laborers’ enduring life story in the history of railroad construction to the public’s attention, hoping to elicit support in advocating the need to build a Chinese museum on the ground where countless Chinese sacrificed their lives, thus, to commemorate those Chinese ancestors.

On March 4, 2007, the Sacramento Bee printed Yee and Beaton’s article titled, “Digging Up the Past,” in two full pages along with photos, detailing Sacramento’s Chinese history.

The article was simultaneously published online and readers have responded nationwide, including readers from Northern and Southern California, Chicago, Atlanta, New York and Canada.

Yee, who works in the California Department of Education Curriculum Frameworks and Instructional Resources Division, began to participate in community meetings and spoke on behalf of the development of the Chinese museum. He personally produced thousands of copies of relevant reports containing texts and graphics to distribute freely to the public, hoping to resonate understanding and support from all walks of life. This is a neglected chapter but an important part of California history, which should have been included in textbook, allowing the next generation to understand the enormous contribution of Chinese to the railroad construction and their history of struggles.

After months of persistent effort, the concept of a Chinese Museum as part of the Railyards project received common support and encouragement. Steve Yee along with another Chinese community activist, C.C. Yin, went to the World Journal Headquarters to meet with Executive Director Ginny Soong, and received Director Soong’s full support in assisting to promote the development of such noteworthy and meaningful Chinese museum.

Upon listening to the stories of the Chinese struggling and contribution to California, local community organizations along with elected city, county, and state officials were all moved to help. The first Chinese State Senator, Leland Yee, despite his busy agenda, hosted a public hearing at the State Assembly on June 28, 2007 about the Chinese museum development plan. At the public hearing, many California Asian history scholars appeared to testify. The state press videotaped the whole hearing for record keeping.

Waves of enthusiastic support of the construction of the Chinese museum spread from the U.S. borders and into Southeast Asia, China, and Canada. In May of 2007, the Shandong Province Qilu TV Network personnel came to America to report about the Chinese museum development plan and interviewed the related participants. The entrepreneurs from Shanghai and Chairman Zhenping Wang of a Shanghai based company, Faith International Inc., upon listening to Steve Yee’s elaborate report, articulated the need to intensify the planning effort of commemorating Chinese American history in such an unprecedented project. After he returned to China, not only is he actively promoting the museum project, but he also makes every effort to raise funds to ease the smooth implementation of the project.

On top of that, Zhenping Wang introduced Canada’s Chinese filmmaker Shui-Bo Wang to Yee and others. Shui-Bo Wang had worked on several productions over the years. An experienced and distinguished filmmaker, as well as an Oscar nominee, he won several awards for his documentary films. He also expressed strong interest in the Chinese American history. Currently, Shui-Bo Wang is in Asia working on the production planning of the tragic stories of military “Comfort Women” and at the same time maintaining regular email communication with Yee to gather the Chinese railroad workers’ descendants’ data, and to discuss production strategies of a documentary film.

According to the latest news from China, Zhengping Wang, aside from active involvement in fund-raising for this project, also contacts the Shanghai CCTV to get this station interested in such significant Chinese history. Shui-Bo Wang also hopes to come to California capital for field visits and to discuss production details as soon as possible.

At present, as a result of Yee’s diligent effort and the assistance of all parties, the Chinese museum has successfully obtained 501(C)(3) non-profit status. The hope is that all interested individuals are willing to contribute money or effort, and together take part in making history in honor of those ancestors that contributed to the railroad construction. For more detailed information about the construction of the museum, please visit the website: www.yeefowmuseum.org.

If interested in sending a donation, please mail to: Gifts to Share/YFM Gifts to Share, Inc. c/o Department of Parks and Recreation, 915 I Street, 5th Floor, Sacramento, CA 95814. Non-profit tax ID #: 94-2985546.

Picture Captions: Top Left: 1857 Sutter Lake, also nicknamed “China Slough” (Courtesy of City fire brigade data files) Top Right: 1850 Sacramento (Yee Fow) (California National Museum of History) Middle Left: Back then, Chinese ancestors participated in the construction of the Central Pacific Railroad, part of the Transcontinental Railroad (Courtesy of California History Museum) Middle Right: 19th Century railway project starting point, today’s Old Sacramento (Courtesy of California History Museum) Bottom Left: Sacramento Railway Plaza’s newly constructed federal building hall exhibits artifacts of early Chinese immigrants’ struggling history. (Courtesy of Vicki Beaton) Bottom Right: The Chinese museum development activist, Steve Yee (middle), and C.C. Yin (right) went to visit and request the assistance of World Journal Executive Director Ginny Song (left) (Courtesy of Vicki Beaton)