

Sacramento River Delta Historical Society

NEWSLETTER

*"For what is the present, after all,
but a growth out of the past."
— Walt Whitman*

NEWSLETTER

Vol. 17, No. 1

JUNE 1997

SOCIETY NOTES

The floods of 1997 subsided long enough for us to have a wonderful Potluck dinner on January 20th. The new President, Terry Alcorn, introduced the Historical Society Board for the coming year: C.J. Jensen, Vice President; Fran Bates, Recording Secretary; Carol Watson, Corresponding Secretary; Joanne Carr, Treasurer; Cathy Hemly, Past President; and the Directors: Robert James, Tom Herzog, Gene Wiseman, Helen Town, Marshall Pylman, Jim Tracy, Maryn Whitney, June Werhan and Leonard Souza.

There must be a relationship between history and food as our dinners are delicious—everyone wants at least one recipe. Over 100 people attended the dinner to hear Lincoln Chan speak on "Chinese History of the Delta." (See article p. 4.)

Our sincere THANKS to the stalwart people who coordinate, decorate, layout and clean up after the annual dinner. Joanne Wiseman has chaired the dinner for several years and deserves credit for the successes. Gene Wiseman always helps and so do Mary Fulster, Leonard and Lillian Souza, Cathy and Warren Merwin, Jim and Barbara Dahlberg, Joan Wilcox, Fran and Jim Bates, and Jerry and Robert James.

MERCI BEAU COUP!!

Miraculously three of the missing Courtland High class pictures have resurfaced. Our thanks to whoever put the classes of 1920, 1928 and 1931 in the Resource Center. This leaves the 1955 to 1960 classes and 1964 still missing. Perhaps they will show up too! We would like to put up the class of 1957 at Pear Fair. Each year we hang the classes for each 10 years. This year it will be 1927, 1937, 1947 and 1967. you can always borrow them back for reunions, etc.

The March 17 meeting was a combination of celebrating St. Patrick's Day and viewing a video of the California Missions. It was excellent—covered all 21 missions very nicely in one hour. The video is available from the State Library if you want to make up for missing the meeting or to show a fourth grader who is undoubtedly studying missions. After viewing the tape, we had an interesting discussion of the missions. Our group was most knowledgeable. We are grateful to Jim and Barbara Dahlberg for the loan of a TV set and to those who provided delicious refreshments: the Alcorns, Dahlbergs and C.J. Jensen.

The May meeting was an entertainingly done exposé of "Tony's" restaurant in Walnut Grove. Joe Enos, a long-time partner (until about 20 years ago), told us the history of this family treasure. (More in a future issue.)

We will need help at the Historical exhibit at the PEAR FAIR. Please volunteer to help by calling Tom Herzog.

Remember the Historic Houses book is available. Send \$12.50 to the Historical Society and you will receive a copy in the mail. Perhaps they will be on sale at the Pear Fair like those marvelous pictures.

MAY MEETING

We spent an entertaining evening with Joe Enos as he described the development of "Tony's" and some of the history of Walnut Grove. In 1908, Antonio Enos came to the Delta from the Portuguese Island of Madeira. His wife was born in this country and they had three sons, Joe, Moe and Tony. He came by way of New York, San Francisco, Nevada and finally Tyler Island, where he farmed on the Brown and Durbin land. He left farming to buy into a hotel restaurant which he ran with a partner until he bought it in 1937. The town, until it burnt, was rather open with prostitution and gambling. After the fire, Antonio Enos got money from his friends, no bank loans, and built the "Bungalow Cafe." When his sons returned from military service after World War II the family bought the building where "Tony's" is now. It was built after the fire. The Enos family restaurant was a restaurant only. People were afraid at first but good food finally won out. Pete Budnik and Jack Mello were bodyguards for Enos Senior. Charlie Jensen brought in lots of customers. Tony's customers came from the friendly outgoing father who always said, "I was here before you came." He spoke to everyone and loaned money. Constables Walt Goodman, Joe Simoni and others kept the peace. The father created the beans, beef stew, roast beef and the crop of the day as dinner. There were stories such as the time someone shot the cigarette out of the Hindu's mouth. Guests have included a wide variety of news people, Betty Vasquez, Antony Quinn, and sports figures—local and national.

(See MAY MEETING pg. 6)



PEAR FAIR 25TH
JULY 27, 1997 • COURTLAND, CA
YEAR

HL Y017 #001

ANDRUS ISLAND *(continued from December 1996)*

The earliest settlers homesteaded near the old bank of the Sacramento River by the head of Georgiana Slough. As mentioned George Andrus settled on upper Andrus in 1852. Andrus married Amelia Runyon Pratt, the widowed eldest sister of Solomon Runyon of Onisbo (Courtland). Andrew C. Bloom, whose family settled near Richland, also lived near the point of Andrus. His barn still survives. His sister, Adeline, married Solomon Runyon. Their mother was Delilah Dye, a sister of Sperry (the first) and Troy (the notorious) Dye. Among other early settlers were George A. Knott, a member of the local Grange, Justice of the Peace and Notary Public; Hugh Davis, who lived just north of the present Isleton bridge and whose son, Charles K. Davis, was sheriff and tax collector. During the big flood of '07 the Davis family home was saved by chaining it to an oak tree. A.R. Jackson also owned property. In 1880 Charles C. Perkins established his ranch, "Shore Acres," just north of Isleton. Perkins was a commission agent for Lorenzo Scatina & Son of San Francisco. A.P. Giannini, Scatina's stepson, often stayed at "Shore Acres" when on commodity buying trips to the Delta. Giannini is best known for founding the Bank of America. Among other Andrus families were Figg, whose house burned and was not replaced, and Joseph Smith, whose house at the crossroad is now derelict. Following these earlier families were the Mealers, Jensen, Dickey, Westgate, Crump, Lind, Hodapp, etc.

Chinese agricultural laborers built a town on the bank of Jackson Slough. It was swept by fire in 1916. A new "Chinatown" grew up around north Main Street in Isleton, but it also burned, in 1926. Trap doors and tunnels laced the new Chinatown. Clyde Bishop recalled installing a new telephone pole which disappeared into a labyrinth.

The "father of Isleton" Dr. Josiah Poole, M.D., settled on Andrus in 1854. During the Civil War he was a 1st Lt. in the Walnut Grove Union Guard. In 1874, he bought "Poole Ranch" and the Riverview Creamery (est. 1869). In 1875 he traded the Creamery for land on which he established Isleton. He built a wharf in partnership with John Brocas and named the town. Poole was the first postmaster (before the post office was commissioned) and in 1876 built the ill-fated sugar mill. The Sacramento Union reported in 1876 that "Isleton was a thriving new community." In 1878 and 1881 floods were financial disasters for Poole. He abandoned his California Sugar Manufacturing Co. after the '76 flood wiped out the sugar beet crop and after the '81 flood he was in default to the Pacific Mutual Life Insurance Co. Poole left Isleton in 1881 "retiring" to Tucson, Arizona, where he died in 1902. Isleton's other early prominent citizen, New Jerseyite Philip Hogate Gardiner, followed Poole to Isleton in 1872 and married Dr. Poole's daughter Ida. Gardiner had arrived in San Francisco in 1868, stayed briefly on a farm in Contra Costa County and subsequently spent 2 years mining gold in White Pine County, Nevada, south of Elko. Afterwards the Delta must have looked like paradise. Gardiner founded Isleton's most memorable business, the Gardiner Improvement Company, and built a substantial building to house it where he operated a mercantile establishment with his sons Wilbur and Lester. Above was the I.O.O.F. (International Order of Forester's) hall. He was the

first postmaster after commissioning in 1879. His daughter Lucretia "Crete" Gardiner deBack succeeded him. He was also agent for the California Transportation Co. riverboats between 1865-87 and Wells Fargo agent.

Isleton prospered and grew to a population of 1000 in 1924. It was the headquarters for the Georgiana Grange #122 "Patrons of Husbandry," the headquarters for the California Pickle Growers association, "Asparagus Capitol of the World," "Little Paris of the West," etc. The history of Isleton is a many storied article of its own. Today, Isleton is the smallest of three incorporated cities in Sacramento County. It hosts an annual Crayfish Festival and has an active historical society which is gradually restoring its old "Chinatown."

The majority of the island was and still is devoted to farming. Pear orchards, asparagus and various field crops were farmed. In 1923 R.R. Huntley of Isleton advertised that his shop manufactured asparagus discs. Tomatoes were also important and in the 1920s, Andrus was among the Delta lands which grew 95% of the tomatoes for the U.S. market. The island was also the location of three well-known dairies/creameries and of numerous canneries. The principal dairies were Riverview (est. 1869), Gold State of Isleton and the Isleton Creamery. The Creamery, established in 1906, was housed on the levee near the wharf and burned in 1921. It produced the famous "Isleton Butter," cheese and milk.

The largest commercial enterprise was canning. At Isleton were some of the biggest commercial operations in California. Between 1900 and the late 1940s 95% of all commercial "grass" in the United States was grown in the Delta: 82,000 acres - both green and the prized white asparagus. Through the years, north of town were National, Bayside, Pratt-Low, Ensher, Alexander and Barsoom, Sun Garden, Isleton, Libby McNeil, and Libby #1 was 3/4 mile north of the post office and Golden State on the Mokolumne River east of Isleton. Bayside and National canneries were owned by Chinese syndicates in the 1920s after which they were bought by Alexander Ensher and Barsoom. The canneries were big operations and in different combinations consisted of office, receiving platform, sheds, pumps, workers' cottages, superintendent's house. Chinese boarding house, baths, auto garages, box, shook and mailing shed, wharf and shipping sheds, coolers, storage warehouse, and dining hall. Bayside brand names were "Bayside," "Bohemian" and "Snow Peak." Golden State canned asparagus and other vegetables under the brands of "El Primero," "Golden State," "El Rio," "Warranty," "Rio Vista" and "El Dorado." Golden State headquarters were in San Francisco. During the peak of the asparagus season, the trimmed butts (ends) floated in the river and moved to and fro with the tide. The Byron Times 1926 Development Edition tells of the "Golden State Asparagus Company's modern cannery located on Andrus Island at the junction of the Mokolumne River and Georgiana Slough. The company ships asparagus and other vegetables all over the world. The organization owns 1460 acres on Andrus Island devoted to asparagus, celery, beans, pears and peaches. They also own 320 acres on Sherman Island."

Other processing plants were the pickle plant beginning in the 1920s operated by Heinz 57 and Pioneer Fruit Company, in a vat and packing room

leased from Gardiner Improvement Co. and a slaughterhouse on Jackson Slough, (about at Delta and 3rd Avenue), Isleton Cattle from Grand Island were driven to the ferry and thence to slaughter. On crossing the river the cattle routinely bolted overboard and escaped. Did they know? The California Manufacturing Co. was established, as mentioned, by Dr. Poole in 1876. It was a beet sugar plant with a ground story constructed of brick and above constructed of wood frame. It cost \$24,000 for land, building and machinery, which was manufactured in Sacramento and Europe. Abandoned after the 1878 flood it was sold to H.M. Ames who unsuccessfully tried to refine watermelon sugar. The plant was eventually sold to the Isleton Creamery.

Transportation was vital to agriculture on Andrus. River boats called regularly at the ranchers' private landings and at the Isleton Wharf and canneries. Local packets, launches and freighters called daily. Through freight traffic was also a common occurrence. On October 1, 1969 bound from Sacramento to San Quentin, the schooner "Robbie Hunter" struck a snag in the river a few miles below Walnut Grove. She was loaded with door panels and scrap iron. The "Sacramento Union" reported that Captain Johnson left for San Francisco to secure the use of vessels to lighten and assist raising her.

Andrus was linked to the world by the riverine system. The earliest commercial ferry venture was operated by Sperry Dye who transported passengers via rowboat from Andrus and Tyler to Walnut Grove. In 1900 the Georgiana Slough Bridge was built (probably replacing a more sophisticated ferry service than Sperry Dyes' early rudimentary rowboat service). It was a swing bridge, 16 feet wide with an 80-foot draw on the west side only. In 1962 it, too, was replaced. It was also a swing bridge, but electrically operated, and a single west draw. It was voted by the American Institute of Steel Construction its 1962 award for "Most Beautiful Movable Steel Bridge." It averages about 1400 openings a year. The Isleton ferry crossed to Grand Island. It was hand cranked by George Fisher and Sam Dorsey. It operated day and night except during high water. It was replaced by the "Isleton Bridge" October 27, 1923. A Strauss Bascule Bridge, its 113 foot leaves can be operated separately. Concrete bowstring arches span to the east, the channel being on the west. During its first few years of operation it opened between 3000-5000 times yearly. After the Deep Water Channel went into operation to the west of Ryer Island openings dramatically dropped to around 600 yearly. Tyler Island bridge is Andrus's other auto bridge link. Lower down the slough it spans Georgiana Slough to Tyler Island. It is a steel truss swing bridge. One swing is 17 feet longer than the other. Affectionately called "Eddie's Bridge" for the bridge tender Eddie Peterson who tended it for 48 years, it replaced a small ferry in 1940.

Andrus was also crossed by the Sacramento Southern Railroad, Walnut Grove Branch Line, a Southern Pacific arm. The tracks crossed Georgiana Slough from Tyler to Andrus on a Scherzer bascule span, a 125-foot single leaf which was maintained in the open position so as not to interfere with water traffic per U.S. Coast Guard instructions. Built in 1929 and visible for several miles around, it was a local landmark. A Nickeen self-propelled car made a daily round trip Isleton/Sacramento carrying freight

midsection and passengers in the rear. Otherwise, the line carried only freight to Sacramento and beyond. The branch line was part of a proposed mainline to San Francisco. The proposed extension beyond Isleton was abandoned due to unstable peat soil, bridging the San Joaquin River and the sale of the railroad by the Harriman interests. In 1972 the line was abandoned and in 1982 the tracks removed and the bridge dismantled.

There were three school districts established on Andrus Island. The Georgiana district was created in 1866 and included all of Georgiana Township not in the Walnut Grove School District. The school house was located on the Sacramento River about halfway between Walnut Grove and Isleton. Hugh Davis, George Kott, Josiah Poole, C.C. Perkins and Ed Turner were some of the Clerks of the School Board. Attendance varied from 20 to 50 pupils until 1921 when Georgiana School District joined Isleton Union School District. The Isleton School District was formed in 1878. The District included the town of Isleton and land across the river on Grand Island. The school was located on what is now de Jacks (Save-a-Lot Store). Attendance ranged from 15 to 70. Sanford Dickey served as a trustee and those who served as clerk of the Board included P.H. Gardiner, Josiah Poole, Hart F. Smith, Wm. H. Hutton, and H.E. Crew. In the early 1900s Mable Rodgers remembers a two-room school house. Grades 1, 2, 3 in one room and 4, 5, 6 in the other. When she was in third grade the students were moved to the Brannan Island School while a larger school was built. The Isleton School District continued until 1921 when the Isleton Union District was created. In 1897 the Andrus Island School District was formed on the back of the island on Georgiana Slough. It was named after the Island's first settler and located near the canneries. Charles Watson, I.M. Limbaugh, Vorman Dubois (of Bouldin Island) and J.F. Schmitt were some of the Clerks of the Board. Attendance started with 22 pupils, reached a low of 7 in 1901 and maintained 20 to 30 pupils most of the time until 1921 when the District was joined with Isleton Union. In the late 1920s and early 1930s the enrollment in this area was very volatile and sometimes ranged from 50 to 100. Some of the children came from San Joaquin County and the canneries attracted many families. In Isleton the "cannery kids" marched down the levee each morning to their school which was located on the present site of the park and liquor store. The Isleton Oriental school was established by state law in 1916. The Sacramento County Invitational Track and Field meet for Delta schools was annually held in Isleton.

Andrus Island is the locale of the local airstrip established by the late Vic Spezia on the Russell Graham property and the island is also the locale of Baldwin's Beach, now Koket Landing, a resort on a wide sandy berm on the east side of a long island of the Sacramento River. As Isleton slowly declined after World War II and canneries closed, marinas opened. In the 1960s and 1970s marinas developed on the southeastern perimeter of the island. Mobile house parks and restaurants followed and recreation joined agriculture as a major contributor to the economy of the island. A colorful picture of growing up and living on Andrus Island in the early 1900s is available by reading Josephine B. Korth's well written autobiography "Wind Chimes in my Apple Tree."

JANUARY MEETING

Lincoln Chan spoke to an audience of over 100 people at the January History Society meeting. He was generous enough to send us a copy of the notes he used for his talk. We are printing them as he wrote them, with many thanks. (Ed. note)

CHINESE HISTORY OF THE DELTA

Good evening ladies and gentlemen. It is indeed an honor and a privilege to be invited to come before you to talk about China, my family and the Chinese contribution to the Sacramento River Delta.

I am sure all of you know my family so I don't need to elaborate too much. I have a wife, Minnie, of 57 years, three sons, Wally, Doug and Dennis. Wally and Doug are engaged in farming in the Delta, while Dennis is General Manager of a soil amendment products plant in east Sacramento called Redi-Gro. We are both very proud of our 7 granddaughters and 2 grandsons, whom many of you know as well. Minnie and I also raised my young nephew, Dr. Henry Go, from the time he was a young boy. He grew up here in the Delta and eventually took over the medical practice Dr. Primasing had established. It is interesting to note that it was Dr. Primasing who delivered Dr. Go as well as many of us here in this room tonight.

As for my involvement in the Delta, I am a member of Tri Valley Growers, Member/Director of Blue Anchor, Co-owner of Scott's Valley Packing Company in Lakeport and a Director of ASCS Lower Cosumnes District Office. I belong to the Franklin Lodge #143 in Courtland, a member of the Sacramento Capitol Club and one of the original members of the Courtland Volunteer Fire Department. (I am the only one left.) I am affiliated with numerous Chinese organizations in Sacramento, San Francisco and Los Angeles as well.

I have been fortunate to have traveled to China 14 times since my first visit in 1980. Because I have been able to share bits and pieces of what I know and love best—agriculture—I was appointed as a Foreign Agricultural Advisor of several provinces as well as the city of Jinan, on my most recent trip this last September.

My family's business was started by my father, Chong Chan, who was a refugee of the April 1906 San Francisco earthquake. After the "great quake," my father decided to move on. He sold what was left of his grocery store to a friend and jumped on the riverboat heading upstream into the Delta. He had an uncle who was farming on the old Meyer ranch along Steamboat Slough. We know it nowadays as McDowell Farms. By the way, this uncle was the grandfather of John Lee, who farmed the Aldrich Ranch down near Ryde, for many years. My father worked for this uncle for about three years, when he learned that Mrs. Sol Runyon was looking for a foreman. He went to work for her until 1911 or thereabouts, when he had an opportunity to buy a grocery store in Courtland. While operating that store, he was able to help many other Chinese find their own farming opportunities in our area.

My father was an honest, kind and hard-working man. His mission seemed to be to help people—whether they were Chinese or not. In fact, during the depression years, many Chinese tenant farmers

could not afford to stay in farming themselves, so they went to work for their landlords. In some cases the landlords were so hard-pressed for money themselves that they couldn't afford to pay their Chinese workers. In many of those cases, those landlords would approach my father for credit so that these workers could buy groceries. I have a lot of respect for those people—and in a few cases, I am farming there to this day. The practice was to extend credit on an annual basis. If it was a bad year, credit was carried over for another year. In some cases there is still an outstanding credit balance! In fact, at the time of his death, my dad had over \$80,000 outstanding! Oh, if only the American way was like the Chinese way where debts followed families, generation to generation. Just think of the finance charges! I'd like to think that all those doctors, lawyers, accountants and other professionals whose roots are here in the Delta realize just how far those roots extend and how tangled they are!

Unfortunately, some of the landlords treated their tenants very poorly in the old days. At years end, the Chinese tenant farmers would ask their landlords for an accounting and were tossed a Bull Durham bag with gold pieces inside—that was it. No questions asked.

After he had his store in Courtland established for a few years, my father went back to China and returned with a wife and his brother. I was born in 1919—you do the math and figure out how old I am! I was an only child. My mother and father had been married before he came to America to find his fortune. She was a housewife and mother for the most part, although she did help out in the store and during pear season would go across the river to Pacific Fruit Farms or the Metson Ranch packing sheds and was a fruit cleaner. They would use rags or gloves to polish each and every one of the pears by hand.

Around 1925, my dad got himself established in the pear business, with the help of Mr. Edgar A. Boyles, Sr., who was, I believe at the time, the manager of the Sacramento River Association. He ended up managing various properties such as the Hollenbeck and Thomas Ranches on Ryer Island, Merritt Island Peaches on Holland Land, Johnston Orchards in Elk Grove and the Snook Ranch just above Hood. He farmed the Metson Ranch and the Reid Ranches in East and West Sacramento. It was a sad season when after hail hit, blight set in and the entire Reid Ranch had to be removed.

By 1939, I had taken over a great deal of the farming operation from my father. I also diversified into row crops here and there when and where it became appropriate.

Back in 1931, we had taken over the management of the Bishop Ranch in San Ramon. That was a tough assignment. Where those 175 acres were originally producing 650 tons, by 1940 those same 175 acres produced 3500 tons! The increased production was a direct result of different cultural practices and the drilling of three wells for irrigation. In 1944, the owner approached my father and I and informed us that his superintendent (who was managing the other 3300 acres of the ranch) could take over the orchard again. It was agreed that that

would be the case, but that we could come back in if necessary—in other words, if production dropped. It did. In two years' time, they were back to 1000 tons and the owner contacted us again. Unfortunately we couldn't agree on the terms and conditions of the relationship, so we never did go back. It's interesting to note that by 1948, the superintendent was in jail for fraud and mismanagement, and just a few years later, the property was sold to its present owner, Standard Oil.

So, who was minding the store all these years? Well, my father was a pretty good time manager himself, so he was able to keep three or four employees in the store in Courtland while he was out in the field managing his ranch help.

During the late 1900's through the 1930's, there were thousands of Chinese working on the farms along the Delta. From Rio Vista up through Courtland and on to Freeport. Those were the good old days. As you drive along the Delta levees today, one can see big old pear trees that are now between 80 and 100 years old. They were planted by Chinese laborers and are still producing heavily. They came in from the gold mines, and were also instrumental in building the railroads, and also helped build the levees we rely on today. They reclaimed the land in the Holland tract and Ryer Island.

I can remember where just about every Chinese tenant worked from Rio Vista up through Freeport. In fact, does anyone in the audience recall that there was a pear orchard located on an island just south of the Rio Vista "wooden" bridge?

During World War II, the Chinese population in our area began to dwindle. Many got old and died, or returned to family elsewhere. The youngest generation went to war and never returned to the small towns of their youth. As one young Chinese man said to me years ago, "only the dumb and stupid people stay on the ranch and work like dogs." I see those "smart" ones from time to time and can't help but wonder if they are satisfied with their lives and contributions to mankind as I, a dumb and stupid farmer, am?

I have been told that a man named Tang Wing was one of the first to go onto what we call Holland Land to clear tules and start planting potatoes. Some of you may remember Tang Wing. He was the fellow farming the Vollman Ranch, using it as his headquarters and farming tomatoes there as well.

Chinese people in the Delta were successful at farming asparagus and celery around Bouldin Island and other nearby tracts of peat land. The Fong family from Sacramento comes to mind. The asparagus root digger was invented by local Chinese brothers Lee Chong and Lucke Chong of Ryde.

Chinese also had a large holding of potatoes in the islands near and around Stockton. The Yip family was known as the "Potato Kings," and some of them still live in the Stockton area today.

Also during the Gold Rush days, many Chinese worked in the "gold mines" down the valley. A big Chinese colony migrated to towns called Armona and Hanford. The town of Armona was the oldest Chinese colony west of the Mississippi and is still around with a temple still there. How about Weaverville, Yuba City, Marysville, Ione, Jackson? These are all old gold mining towns with big Chinese colonies. Then they moved to Sacramento and down the Delta region establishing Isleton, Walnut Grove, Courtland, and Locke, which is the youngest Chinatown of all.

Among the Delta Chinese communities that burned down included Isleton—which burned twice; Walnut Grove's Chinatown burned down twice as well. Tin Sin Chan asked Mr. Clay Locke for permission to build a house on his property. His was the first home in what we now know as Locke Chinatown. The second home was built across the street from the New Locke Garden Restaurant and was built by the Owyong family.

Courtland's Chinatown was established in the 1860's. The first site was on the riverbank by the Elliott Ranch. Then they moved to Paintersville. It burned down, so they moved back upriver a bit to its present location. In 1927 a fire started as a result of an accident with an elderly gentleman cooking rice over a kerosene stove. Half the town burned down. In 1944, another fire of unknown origin took only four buildings, thanks to the efforts of the Isleton, Walnut Grove and our very own Courtland Volunteer Fire Departments.

On Sundays, these little towns were full of people coming in from all the ranches to buy supplies, gamble and visit with friends. These people came all the way from Ryer Island, Holland Land and Grand Island. My father would feed them before they left to WALK back to their ranches.

(See JANUARY MEETING pg 6.)

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ASK A FRIEND TO JOIN

Do you know someone, family or friend, who would enjoy hearing about and supporting the Sacramento River Delta Historical Society? It's fun to be part of preserving and sharing our local history.

- Regular \$10.00
- Family/Business \$25.00
- Patron \$50.00
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Make check payable to: SRDHS
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JANUARY MEETING *(continued from page 5)*

It's no secret that discrimination was prevalent in the old days—among and between every ethnic group. To my knowledge, the three river towns of Isleton, Walnut Grove and Courtland were the only areas where there were Oriental and White Schools at the elementary level. Then when a student got to high school, it was integrated. 4th and 5th grade Chinese students in Courtland went to school in a converted barn. The flooring and siding was made from 1x12's with no strips. During the winter months, the children and the teachers had to bundle up in overcoats and in the springtime, grass grew under their feet through the floorboards! Chinese children were not allowed to play on the white area of the playground, even though they played with the white children after school!

There were Chinese schools in every town. Courtland had the largest attendance with over 120 pupils and 3 teachers. We'd go to school from 8 to 5, and then from 9 to 12 on Saturdays as well.

I can tell you something about Courtland's long association with China. When Dr. Sun Yat Sen became the first president of China, he came to America in 1910 to gain support to overthrow the Ching dynasty and establish the Republic of China. When he arrived in San Francisco, he came to the Delta looking for financial support. Dr. Sen was from the Chung Shan district in China and most, if not all, of the Delta Chinese were from the same district. Those were tough times, but people were very cooperative and raised a great deal of money for him. They bought 20 airplanes and stored them near Hood until they were ready to ship to China. Before they could be shipped, however, they were sabotaged. The airplanes and the entire wharf burned to ashes. More money was raised and more planes were successfully shipped to China—they were shipped straight via San Francisco. How many of you knew that Chinese pilots were trained in our area? They had a training field where the Jonson Ranch on Lambert Road now is.

Another important Chinese military man came to Courtland in 1934. He was General Tse Ting Kai, of the Chinese 19th Route Army. To honor the general, the townspeople erected a building to accommodate the ceremony at which he spoke.

I personally never went to China until 1980 when Bob Moore from Orchard Supply and Al Greilich (the Mortician) and four other couples from Oregon

and Washington decided to go. My wife and I were reluctant to go—Minnie hadn't been there since she left as a teenager—but our good friend Bob kept insisting, so away we went. To our surprise, the people—old and young—were all very neatly dressed and there were no beggars in the streets. We had a very memorable trip.

The next year, the Chinese Consulate invited a group of six people from different types of business and I was asked to represent agriculture. I have been very fortunate to go back in that capacity many times since.

Are there any questions? [Mr. Chan had to admit, in response to one question that he had unfortunately built his son's house in the spot where Dr. Sun Yat Sen had stayed.]

Our thanks again to Mr. Lincoln Chan for a very entertaining and enlightening evening.

MAY MEETING *(continued from page 1)*

Antonio was loathe to give up his authority but finally recognized his sons' ability, although he never fully retired. They bought the Chinese restaurant next door and turned it into the present dining room. They gave away liquor in the morning then became a bar restaurant in the afternoon. Jack Oda's store provided rib eye steaks. When the dining room opened, Tony's catered parties. Smoky Dryden became the chef at \$1 a meal and his wife, Louise, was waitress. This arrangement continues today. Joe worked with his brother Tony for 20 years and then left the restaurant to become involved in bridge tending (Georgiana Slough), gas station work, Baldwins Beach, fighting cocks and finally real estate. Tony has been there 45 years. The steaks are now New York and the menus is rice, steak, salad, potatoes and beans with chicken and veal cutlets added. Tony's has always supported the sports programs at the local high schools and other community projects. Just another one of our marvelous local watering holes.

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