

# Sacramento River Delta Historical Society

## NEWSLETTER

“For what is the present, after all, but a growth out of the past.” – Walt Whitman

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NEWSLETTER

VOLUME 31, NUMBER 2

DECEMBER 2011

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### President's Notes

Well, December came quickly this year. Happy holidays to all. I believe we are on our 35<sup>th</sup> year as a society bringing Delta history to a part of our lives. Our historical society wants to thank all of you who in the past and present have made and kept this society very active and an important part of the Delta history and culture. One of the most important parts of our society is the resources that many of you have donated to the society. Many of you in the past have been a part of making this possible and it is never ending as history is happening today as we move forward. The society wants to thank all of you who in the past 35 years have donated either your time or given historic resources to make the collection possible in our center. A thank you to all who have collected oral histories, given programs published a newsletter and served on our board over the years.

Our program in September was on the Sacramento Streetcars by Bill Burg. For those who missed it you missed an excellent program on how and where the streetcars of Sacramento played an important role in Sacramento's history. Bill works for the California State Office of Preservation of which many homes, places and towns have historic status. In November Nicky Suard presented a program on the history of Steamboat Slough, Snug Harbor and the surrounding water ways. She also presented many old historic maps and photos of the area which she has compiled on a web site, ([http://snugharbor.net/historic\\_steamboat\\_slough.htm](http://snugharbor.net/historic_steamboat_slough.htm)).

Again those of you who missed it she gave an excellent presentation. We have tried to present our programs on

local historic happenings on the Delta area as well as covering other local surrounding areas. If you have or know of anyone who can present a program for us please contact our society.

Our resource center is still moving forward with Bobbie Collier and Esther Koopman donating many hours of their time to run it. We are in need of volunteers to help. The day and time the center is open is on Tuesdays from 10 AM until around late noonish. Even if you can only give one day a month of your time please come (Check before coming). Also any old Delta photos, Delta Books, old Delta history, newspapers and article relating to the Delta would be greatly appreciated to be entered into our resource files in Jean Harvie Center. We do make copies there and you can keep your original if desired. Our calendar sales are moving forward. We still have a lot to sell. Please if you know of someone that wants one or want to give them as gifts, please contact our society. We did sell them at the Pear Fair, Sacramento Mid-Town Fair, and Sacramento County Library Pear label program. This year we are going to actively participate in the Courtland Pear Fair historic display again. This is an important part of the fair as our history is displayed there. The friends of the Clarksburg Library have graciously allowed use of the old photo plates for display. A many thanks to them for this resource. Please try and make our January 17th Potluck annual program. Thanks for all your support.

Tom Herzog  
President

Sacramento River Delta Historical Society

JANUARY GENERAL MEETING & ANNUAL POTLUCK

Tuesday, January 17, 2012 at 6:00 pm

**Jean Harvie community Center** 14273 River Road, Walnut Grove

Please bring food for 10: A—G Salad H—M Dessert N—Z Hot Dish

Please call Tom Herzog 916-871-4060 if you have any questions

## Lee Bing

By Kathleen Graham Hutchinson

*"Failure is not a setback.  
You only fail when you give up."*

Lee Bing was born in 1873 in the village of Nam-tong, Chungshan District, Guandong Province, South China. He was the sixth of eight children, 3 boys and 5 girls. His family is a member of the Kan clan who migrated to Guandong Province from Fujian Province some 100 years ago. Fujian Province is across the Formosa (Taiwan) Straight from the island of Formosa (Taiwan).

His father was a peasant who became a merchant. He left in 1855 to participate in the Australian Gold Rush to return to China broke. The eldest son became a Catholic and painted alters in California, Oregon and Washington. He followed by owning a restaurant and fell in to alcoholism. The second son Lee Bing paid his debts.

Lee Bing left motherless at seven attended school until he was ten after which he spent considerable time with local shepherders who entertained him with stories and where he dreamed about what was beyond the hills. During this time he met monks who taught him Kung fu.

About 1893 he signed on with a labor contractor for the Columbia Exposition in Chicago. He borrowed funds and bought passage for America. He and a shipload of others sailed to San Francisco. Some were lost to sickness at sea and some were too feeble to continue and remained in San Francisco. Those who were healthy were herded onto a train to Chicago. The contractor called the roll. He didn't know one name from another nor one face from another. They were locked in a Chicago hotel room, fed rice and tea. Needing only a portion of the men, those left were returned to San Francisco. Of course, the contractor was only too happy to be paid for the full number who had arrived in Chicago. Lee Bing was a returnee.

Back in San Francisco Lee Bing met Mr. Leong, a San Francisco/Hong Kong merchant. Leong taught him merchandising and how to handle money. While working at the job one day Leong sent him on a delivery to a brothel. As he delivered the package two men jumped him, pinned his arms to his side, held his queue and threatened him with a knife. He rid himself of the thugs using Kung fu.

After hearing about the Delta farms Lee Bing decided it would be the place for him to prosper. He worked at the Point Ranch on Andrus Island (then the Bloom Ranch), now a part of the Kay-Dix Ranch at Walnut Grove. He decided it was imperative to become literate so he taught himself to read and write Cantonese and learned both the Chungshan and Choy-san dialects. In the meantime he took English lessons from several "elderly" Walnut Grove women.

After farming for a year he wanted to do something else. He heard that Alex Brown was looking for a cook's assistant at his Walnut Grove Hotel. Mr. Leong then introduced him to his friend Alex Brown. Hired, he made \$20.00 per month and washed dishes, lit the kitchen stoves at 4 a.m., scrubbed floors, and brought water from the river if the pump wasn't operating. Getting to know the old cook, Lee Bing found that he was planning to return to China but had jumped ship and didn't have papers to prove he'd been born in China. The Manchu did not allow returns if Chinese birth was not proven. Lee Bing nudged the old cook to return. Lee had his papers so they switched. Lee Bing whose family name was Kan took the last name Lee and the old cook returned to China and Lee Bing inherited his job at \$60.00 per hour. He stayed at the job a little over a year before moving on to Walnut Grove Chinatown.



He first purchased a partnership in a restaurant. His partner from San Francisco, Mr. Chan, taught him the fine art of Chinese cooking. In time he also owned a hardware store, herb shop and Chinese Grocery as well as the Shand Loy Gambling Hall.

In 1900 he returned to China for a year to see his father and to select a bride. His bride Lin Bo-Ying was the second daughter of a wealthy man. They were married and as tradition required, she stayed behind to care for her aged father-in-law. Lee Bing didn't see his wife for ten years until his father died and never met his oldest child, a daughter, who died at two. With immigration laws slightly eased and her duty completed Bo-Ying finally arrived in San



Lee Bing and his wife Bo-ying

Francisco. After about four days detention on Angel Island she was reunited with her husband. With her she brought her jade jewelry which had been in her family six generations. Her sons Ping born 1917 and On born 1918 were born Americans.



Around this time Lee Bing on a visit to San Francisco met Dr. Sun Yat-sen who tirelessly campaigned for a China free of the Manchu. In 1912 the Republic of China was established. Lee Bing and thousands more showed their independence from the Manchu by cutting off their queues.

In 1916 after the disastrous and calamitous fire destroyed the Walnut Grove Chinatown, he collected what was left of his possessions (a chair and table) and moved his wife to a rooming house in what would be the new town of Locke, of which he was to be a founding partner. During the fire he returned to salvage what he could, his wife's jade jewelry plus two buckets (\$4,000 then) worth of coins. He left the coins with a Deputy Sheriff and returned to the smoldering ruin. When he returned the coins had been stolen. The deputy alibied that he left them with another who absconded. Lee Bing's friends never believed the Sheriff and when he died three months later they said "see".

The Walnut Grove Chinese spoke two dialects: Chung-san and Choy-san and were troubled understanding each other. The Chung-san decided to move the half mile to the settlement at the Southern Pacific wharf and packing house. Alex Brown was very upset and called on his former cook and Chung-san leader Lee Bing and brought Lee Bing and Lin Bo-Ying back to Walnut Grove and offered him acreage southeast of the ferry (later bridge). Lee Bing's answer was "no" that the Chung-san wanted to be apart.

In the end George Locke and brothers offered nine acres and pear tree removal. Lee Bing withdrew his money – money he had in safe keeping at Mr. Leong's import Co. in Hong Kong and with it he built the first six buildings in Locke. This was money he had saved to return with his family to China. He wanted the buildings spread further apart than they had been in Walnut Grove. He feared crowding had contributed to the fire. In the end, he had to compromise.

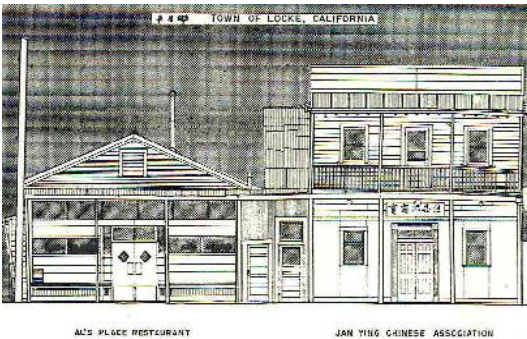
When the California Alien Land Law was loosened a

bit in 1917 Lee Bing bought a 130 acre ranch in Grass Valley. He hoped to find gold but instead he found raising pears more profitable.

In 1919 he purchased a small meat market, The Main Market, at 3<sup>rd</sup> Street near the Southern Pacific Shops in Sacramento. He also found it more lucrative to raise his own market chickens on the outskirts of Sacramento. Business was so brisk that he went from one to seven butchers. Across the street from the Main Market was a large vacant lot on which he persuaded the owner to build a large meat market with a 40 foot by 40 foot walk in ice box. To stock the market he bought meat directly from the slaughterhouse, thus eliminating the middle man. To chill the ice box he built an ice plant on top of the building. He followed by opening 3 more meat markets in the other 3 corners of Sacramento.

Feeling prosperous he bought a Buick and drove home only knowing a limited amount about all the gadgets on the dash, etc. Locke remained his business headquarters. It has been said that the gambling business in Locke was renamed Yoi Ling Sing. In 1930 the business was split into two named: Dai Loy and Hing Yick. The family lived above the restaurant/hardware/herb shop. They also took in borders. Lee Bing had to leave Locke for a time and from about 1924-34 the family lived in Grass Valley, Placer County. He then returned to Locke to live and to direct his businesses (on which he had kept careful tabs from Grass Valley) and in time became known as the unofficial mayor of Locke.

In other business ventures beginning in 1925, he and partners bought a large acreage in the Brack Tract (San Joaquin Delta) intending to grow asparagus. When the depression hit he lost \$80,000. When he couldn't collect from his partners, he also lost the Grass Valley Ranch on which he borrowed to invest in the Brack Tract. But true to his motto he opened a restaurant in Grass Valley and had as a "hui" member (HUI is a Chinese style syndicate) many other start-ups in Northern California among them a restaurant and card room in Weed, Shasta County, a card room in Susanville, Lassen County. After prohibition he opened a large bar, card room and dance hall in Chester, Lassen County and there were others. In 1933 he went into partnership with Al Adami of Rio Vista in a Chinese restaurant in Isleton. The partnership eventually relocated to Locke and became Al's Place otherwise known as "Al the Wop's" or "Al's" well-known for New York steaks, its after dinner drink the



family to China. He sold all but two gambling halls in Locke and all but two meat markets in Sacramento. He sent his elder son, Ping, to check things out. Ping after visiting for a while in Guandong went to visit an uncle in Shanghai and realized that the Communists were moving rapidly to take over and he left as quickly as possible.

In 1960 Lin Bo-Ying died. Lee Bing died March 6, 1970. He was 97. His funeral was on television – a celebrity.

Sources:

- Various recollections*
- Ping Lee*
- Darwin Kan*
- Pacific Historian article, University of the Pacific*

**Gambling Games played in Locke**

**Fan-Tan** - Fan-tan was very popular among the Chinese and is said to be the gambling game with the fairest odds. It was played at the two square tables. Two dealers operated each table. One dealer handled the counters (buttons) and the other dealer paid and collected the bets.

At the beginning of each game, a brass cup was dipped into a bowl of counters and an undetermined number of counters collected. The players bet on how many counters would remain in the cup after four counters at a time were cut out from the cup with a bamboo wand by one of the dealers. The player who correctly guessed the number of counters left was the winner. The dealer spun extemporaneous stories as he cut four counters a time from the cup. Although the stories were never duplicated per se, each story basically included a tale of “four buttons for this” and “four buttons for that”. In the center of the table were placed colored beads (chips were introduced later) and metal strips. These items were used to place bets. A

“Dickson Special” and its own take on American cuisine.

After World War II he decided to return his

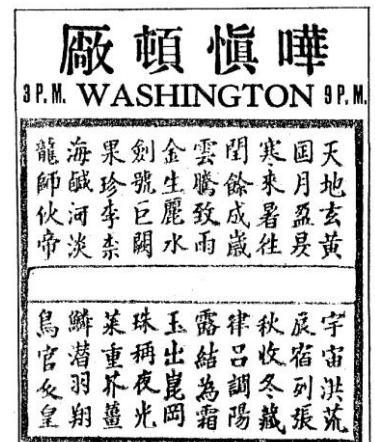
white bead (or white chip) represented a \$1.00 bet; a black bead (or a red chip) represented a \$5.00 bet; a Chinese coin (or a blue chip) represented a \$10.00 bet. A player indicated the number of counters he guessed which remained in the cup after all possible fours had been withdrawn, by placing his bet on either side one, two, three, or four of the table. If the player placed his bet at a corner of the table, he bet odds or even he would win. A metal strip placed on top of a chip represented a 2 for 1 bet; underneath the chip represented a 3 for 1 bet. The dealer could always tell at a glance, the number guessed and bet of each player.



**Dominoes** – Chinese dominoes was played with 32 bone men which were a little larger than the common domino dice. It was played with two games against the house.

**Unmarked Lottery Ticket**

**The Lottery** - Six different companies operated the lottery at the Dai Loy. Each company put up \$5,000 to \$10,000 to make up the winnings. And, each company had its own distinctive ticket on which a player selected, using a brush dipped in black ink, 10 to 20 numbers, depending on the game.



Unmarked Lottery Ticket

A player bought a ticket of a particular denomination (i.e. \$1,000; \$5,000) which determined how many numbers had to match for a win. For the \$1,000 prize, all ten numbers had to match and the bet was .25 cents; 9 numbers for .50 cents; 8 numbers for \$1.00, etc. and double your money back with five numbers. After the player marked his ticket and paid for it, he received a copy marked "paid" and then waited for the drawing. At the Dal Loy, the drawings were held at one and three in the afternoon and attracted large crowds.

The first lottery at the Dai Loy, used Chinese characters (chart found in the Lottery Room) instead of numbers. Eighty characters, each drawn on two by two inch paper and folded into a cube to avoid exposure, were stirred in a large basket or basin and then divided

**SRDHS 2012 SCHEDULE**

January 17.....General Meeting/Annual Potluck  
 February 21.....Board Meeting  
 March 20.....General Meeting  
 April 17.....Board Meeting  
 May 15.....General Meeting  
 June 19.....Board Meeting  
                     June Newsletter  
 July/August.....Summer Break  
 September 18.....General Meeting  
 October 16.....Board Meeting  
 November 20.....General Meeting  
 December.....Board Meeting  
                     December Newsletter

**RESOURCE CENTER NEWS**

Many thanks to Yvonne Pylman for donating a laptop computer to SRDHS. It will be used by the Resource Center and for Program at our general meetings. The donation is greatly appreciated.

**WELCOME NEW MEMBERS**

Chuck Baker's Ranch from Courtland  
 Bogle Vineyards, Inc. from Clarksburg  
 Boon-Dox Liquors from Walnut Grove  
 David Elliot & Son from Courtland  
 Greene & Hemly from Courtland  
 Intake Screens, Inc. from Sacramento  
 Don & Lorna Kruse from Pleasanton  
 Jerome Marek from Walnut Grove  
 Oto's Car Care from Freeport  
 Tracy & Vonnie Powell from Clarksburg  
 Sarah Simpson from Hood  
 Walnut Grove Auto, LLC from Walnut Grove  
 George Wilson from Clarksburg

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**MEMORIAL CONTRIBUTIONS**

We would like to thank all those who made memorial contributions to the Sacramento River Delta Historical Society.

**DO YOU WANT TO CONTINUE TO RECEIVE THIS GREAT PUBLICATION???**

*Then make sure you pay your 2012 dues – Use this form or one of our handy dues envelopes*

Name: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Address: \_\_\_\_\_  
 City, State, Zip: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Phone: \_\_\_\_\_  
 E-Mail: \_\_\_\_\_

I'm paying Annual dues for the following year(s):  
      2012                       Other \_\_\_\_\_  
     \$25.00 a year for Annual Membership

I've enclosed \$150 to become a Lifetime Member

I'd like to register as an Honorary Member – Free to members 80 years and older

Please mail this form with a check payable to SRDHS to:

SRDHS Membership  
 P.O. Box 293, Walnut Grove, CA 95690

**INFORMATION**

Sacramento River Delta Historical Society web site is [srdhs.org](http://srdhs.org). Please view and enjoy the information. If you wish to email the resource center, the email address is [srdhs@riverdeltawireless.com](mailto:srdhs@riverdeltawireless.com).

**NEWSLETTER STAFF**

Editor.....Kathleen Hutchinson  
 Design/Layout.....Esther Koopman

\*The Sacramento River Delta Historical Society publishes the Sacramento River Delta Society Newsletter twice a year.

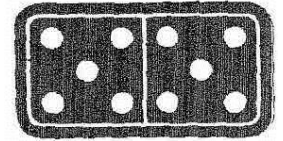
into four lots and placed in four numbered jars. A player chose one of the jars, and from that jar, ten or twenty winning characters were drawn. As each paper drawn was unwrapped, the operator sang a song about the object named, such as a bird, dragon, fruit, etc. A proof sheet was then glued on a board so that the players could check their marked tickets against the numbers drawn.

This method was time consuming and different ways were sought to speed the game and increase the profits. Ping-Pong balls were introduced with Chinese characters painted on the balls. The balls were tumbled in a revolving wire basket cranked by hand (replaced tossing squares of paper in the basket/basin). The first ten or twenty balls, depending on the game, which rolled out of the cage and into a trough, were called. The first ball which rolled into the trough had its character called, the second in line and so on. Those balls were then placed in line (as called) in the wooden rack and those were the winning characters used in that particular game (replaced selecting one of four jars). Later, the game was further westernized by painting numbers instead of characters on the balls which opened play to other ethnic groups. The operator called out the characters/numbers from the selected row on the rack, while his assistant punched a master ticket. The player then placed his ticket over the master ticket to determine his winnings, if any. If a player had seven numbers showing through from the master ticket he got his money back. If all the numbers showed through on his ticket, he won the Big Prize.

**Dow Ngow** - This is a domino game and one of two played at the Del Loy Gambling House. The other game was Pai Ngow. Both games were played at the round tables. There were 32 very large bone tiles and the dots were marked: white, red, or a combination of white and red. Additionally, specially colored tiles functioned as “wild” as do “wild cards” in poker.

In Dow Ngow (“Battling Bulls”) a roll of the dice determines which player draws his dominoes first. Players drew three tiles and arranged them into one hand. The three dominoes on the left had to add to 10, 20, 30, etc. The total of the excess on the right is the point (from 1 to 10). The dealer played too, and rolled dice instead of choosing and arranging dominoes. The value of the dice was considered to be exactly the same as the dominoes. The high man won and each player played against the house (dealer).

**Pai Ngow** - Psi Ngow is roughly the same as the other domino game described above (Dow Ngow). The exception, it is a two-handed game and played with six tiles instead of three. After the shake of the dice determined which player drew first, each player drew six and arranged them into two hands. As with Dow Ngow, the player played against the house, and had to beat the dealer to win.

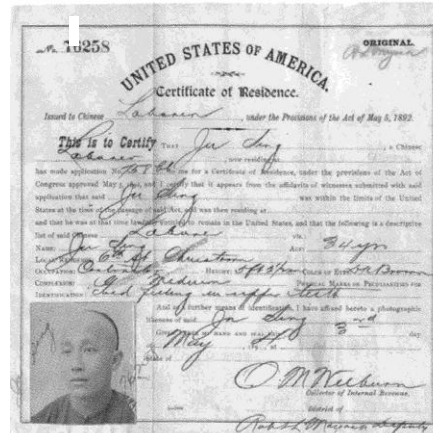


## An Interesting Article from the Library and Archives of the California Historical Society:

### Certificate of Residence

Last year the California Historical Society received a small but special gift: 17 certificates of residence for Chinese laborers, dated between the years 1894 and 1897. The collection was donated to CHS in the name of the late Mr. Frank V. Piraro, who discovered the cache in his cousin's shed in downtown San Jose.

Now a rich source of historical and genealogical significance, these certificates represented the codification of nineteenth century sinophobia: under the provisions of the 1892 Geary Act, which amended the Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882, all Chinese and Chinese Americans in the United



States were required to apply for, obtain, and carry a government-issued certificate of residence proving their legal presence in the United States. Any person of Chinese ethnicity discovered without such identification risked arrest and deportation. In other words, Chinese Americans were presumed guilty of an immigration offense - based solely on their ethnicity, as perceived by non-Chinese authorities - until proven innocent.

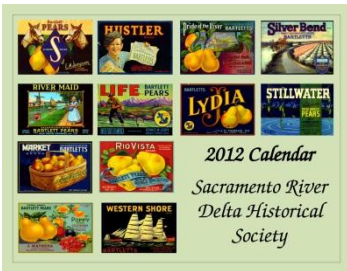
Each certificate includes the laborer's name, local residence, and occupation; information about his height, eye color, complexion, and physical marks or peculiarities; and a photographic print. Reproduced here is the certificate for Ju Sing, contractor, age 34 years, of San Jose:

One hopes that these certificates will contribute to a greater understanding of the humanity, struggles, and contributions of Mr. Sing and other Chinese American workers in nineteenth-century California. A complete inventory of the collection can be found on the Online Archive of California:

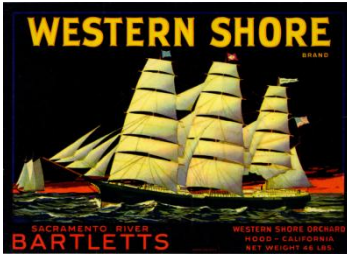
<http://www.oac.cdlib.org/findaid/ark:/13030/kt858038qp/>

- Marie Silva,  
Archivist & Manuscripts Librarian

## 2012 SACRAMENTO RIVER DELTA HISTORICAL SOCIETY CALENDAR

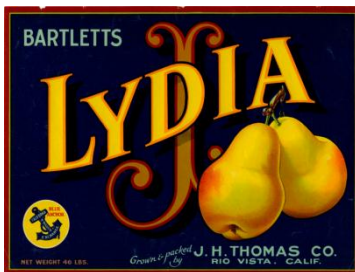


Have you seen the delightful 2012 Calendar representing Pear Labels from Jim Dahlberg's Collection? Each month represents a different Pear Label and there is one page explaining each label. Here are some further notes of interest provided by Kathleen Hutchinson about two of the labels:



August 2012

The "Western Shore" is reputedly the last Clipper ship built in America. She floundered and was lost on Duxbury Reef off of Point Bonita, Marin County, very near the Golden Gate.



October 2012

Lydia J was Fess H. Thomas's wife. She was the daughter of Nelson and Sarah Bump of Merritt Island. The Bump house still stands across the river from Courtland.

The Sacramento River Delta Historical Society's "Pear Label" Calendar for 2012 may be purchased at the Resource Center or at the Society Meetings. You may also purchase the calendar by filling out the form below and mailing it with your check to:

SRDHS  
P O Box 293  
Walnut Grove, CA 95695

The price for each calendar is \$15.00

If you wish to have the calendar(s) mailed please add the following postage:

1 Calendar \$15 plus \$2 postage

2 or more calendars \$15 each plus \$2.50 postage for media mail (7-12 day delivery)

Or

2 or more calendars \$15 each plus \$5.00 for priority mail (2 to 3 day delivery)

### Sacramento River Delta Historical Society Calendar Order Form

Please send \_\_\_\_\_ calendars @ \$15 per calendar

Enclosed is payment in the amount of \$\_\_\_\_\_

Name\_\_\_\_\_

Address\_\_\_\_\_

City\_\_\_\_\_State\_\_\_\_Zip\_\_\_\_\_