

Hong Kong and the Overseas Chinese Exhibition Series (October 2019)

Even though Chinese immigrants settled in California as early as the mid-19th century, most of the architecture, relics and historical documents related to their lives at the time are few and far between. The earthquake and subsequent fire that struck San Francisco in 1906 made matters worse, causing substantial damage to the city. The extensive construction of highways in California from the 1950s to the 1970s resulted in many towns being redeveloped, and some disappeared. Both natural and human factors led to the damage and disappearance of architectural clusters and historical records and relics of the early Chinese communities. Almost all of the few historical Chinese sites, relics and historical records that remain are in remote parts of California, as they were not damaged or lost during road construction or urban development. Two examples are Fiddletown and Hanford, from which we will reconstruct two period settings in the planned exhibition. The two large thematic settings are as follows:

1. Chew Kee Grocery Store in Fiddletown:

This was a typical Chinese shop in the United States during the late 19th to mid-20th century. Displayed in the grocery store will be food items, everyday goods, medicines and general merchandise consumed by Chinese compatriots in those days, along with relics like manifests, business transaction records, receipts for payment of goods and personal remittances, and correspondence. The everyday lives of Chinese compatriots and the business operations of Chinese merchants will be depicted through these physical objects.

2. The Kwan Ti Temple in China Alley in Hanford:

Almost every Chinese community in the United States had a temple. The Chinese communities practised folk religion, sought spiritual comfort and celebrated traditional festivities in the temples. The temples were generally built and managed by the native associations, with which the Chinese immigrants were intricately related. This will show how the Chinese in California maintained their folk religions and cultural traditions. These period settings will demonstrate how Hong Kong supported the overseas Chinese communities both in material and spiritual terms. Hong Kong was definitely more than a stop for Chinese emigrants to leave and enter their motherland. The influence of Hong Kong was felt in all aspects of life among the Chinese diaspora.



Exterior of the Chew Kee Grocery Store in Fiddletown



Interior of the Chew Kee Grocery Store in Fiddletown



Exterior of the Kwan Ti Temple in China Alley, Hanford



Interior of the Kwan Ti Temple in China Alley, Hanford