



UTILITAS • FIRMITAS • VENUSTAS

Northern California Chapter
Society of Architectural Historians

The Newsletter

Volume 12, Number 1
April 2009

THE SAN JOAQUIN DELTA AND THE TOWN OF LOCKE May 9th, 2009

Join the NCCSAH May 9th for a river tour of the Sacramento San Joaquin Delta followed by a walking tour of the town of Locke. Jeff Hart of Hartland nursery will offer a unique view of the landscape of the Sacramento river and the Delta from his boat, the *Tule Queen*.

The Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta covers 738,000 acres of inland waterways and estuaries formed at the western edge of the Central Valley by the confluence of the Sacramento and San Joaquin Rivers and lies east of where the rivers meet the Suisun Bay. Much of the Delta is below sea level and relies on more than 1,000 miles of levees for protection against flooding. The land and waterways support communities, agriculture, and recreation, and provide essential habitat for fish and wildlife. Prior to reclamation, the Delta was a marsh at sea level with two major waterways crossing it. Tules and reeds covered the area with few trees located along the channel ways and the elevated alluvial deposits. The daily tides and annual flooding of the marshland limited encroachment of brackish water except during late summer in years of drought. After reclamation, the decomposed tule and reeds (*continued p. 2*).



Top and bottom: town of Locke (photograph courtesy of Architectural Resources Group).

UPCOMING EVENTS & NEWS

California Preservation Foundation

Annual Conference Spring 2009
Palm Springs, CA
www.californiapreservation.org
April 16 - April 19, 2009

San Mateo Highlands

Eichler Home Tour 2009: Green Innovations
San Mateo, CA
<http://eichlerhometour.com/>
April 24 - April 25, 2009

National Preservation Institute

Identification and Evaluation of Mid-20th-Century Buildings
Sacramento, CA
www.npi.org
April 27-28, 2009

Commonwealth Club

Stephen Bauer
If Walls Could Talk
San Francisco, CA
<http://tickets.commonwealthclub.org/>
April 28, 2009

Berkeley Heritage Spring House Tour & Garden Reception

Hillside Houses of the Early- and Mid-20th Century
Berkeley, CA
<http://berkeleyheritage.com/>
May 3, 2009

National Preservation Institute

Section 106: An Introduction
Sacramento, CA
www.npi.org
May 12-14, 2009

Oakland Heritage Alliance

Partners in Preservation Awards Event
Oakland, CA
<http://oaklandheritage.tumblr.com>
May 12-14, 2009

National Preservation Institute

Cultural and Natural Resources: An Integrated Management Strategy
San Francisco, CA
www.npi.org
June 2-4, 2009

Oakland Heritage Alliance/AIA

Pierluigi Serraino discusses his book *NorCalMod: Icons of Northern California Modernist Architecture*
Oakland, CA
www.aiaeb
June 11, 2009

Vernacular Architecture Forum

Butte, MT
Spring 2009
www.vafweb.org
June 11-13, 2009

National Preservation Institute

Section 106: An Introduction
San Francisco, CA
www.npi.org
September 21-23, 2009

National Preservation Institute

NAGPRA and ARPA: Applications and Requirements
San Francisco, CA
www.npi.org
September 24-25, 2009

National Trust for Historic Preservation

Annual Conference 2009
Nashville, 2009
www.preservationnation.org
October 13 - October 17, 2009

APTI

(Association of Preservation Technology)
Annual Conference 2009
Los Angeles
www.apti.org
November 2-6, 2009

National Preservation Institute

Conflict Resolution and Negotiation Tools for Cultural and Natural Resource Projects
San Francisco, CA
www.npi.org
December 8-10, 2009



The Locke Chinese School was originally built in 1915 as a meeting house. It was used as a school from 1926 to the mid 1980s (photograph courtesy of Architectural Resources Group).

THE SAN JOAQUIN DELTA AND THE TOWN OF LOCKE *continued*

mixed with deposits of silt to form rich agricultural soils.

The development of present day Sacramento San Joaquin Delta began in late 1850 when the Swamp and Overflow Land Act conveyed ownership of all swamp and overflow land, including Delta marshes, from the federal government to the State of California. Proceeds from the sale of swampland by the State were to go toward reclaiming the managed land by a state commission. Soon authority (*continued p. 5*)

THE SAN JOAQUIN DELTA AND THE TOWN OF LOCKE, May 9th, 2009



Registration for May 9th:
[please print]

Name: _____

Affiliation: _____

Address: _____

City/State/Zip: _____

Email address: _____

Total Enclosed: _____



Registration \$40 members/ \$50 nonmembers
Please make checks payable to "Northern California Chapter of the Society of Architectural Historians" (NCCSAH) and mail to:

Richard Sucre
Page and Turnbull
NCCSAH Tours
724 Pine Street
San Francisco, CA 94108

Payment must be received by April 27, 2009

For more information please contact Amanda Blosser at ablosser@energy.state.ca.us.

TOUR ITINERARY

- 9:30 to 10am Meet at Hartland Nursery for coffee and tea
- 10am to 12 Boat tour of Sacramento River with Jeff Hart
- 12-1pm Lunch at Chinese Garden, Main Street, Locke
- 1-3 pm Walking tour of Locke
- 3-3:30pm Presentation about the restoration of the Locke Boarding House by Katherine Petrin and Kitty Vieth, Architectural Resources Group



Hartland Nursery is 2.7 miles north of the intersection of Hwy. 220 and Grand Island Rd. OR 3.7 miles south of the intersection of Hwy. 160 and Grand Island Rd at 13737 Grand Island Rd. Contact numbers are (916) 775-4021 nursery and (916) 775-4545 ecotours. Detailed driving directions and map can be found at <http://www.hartlandnursery.com>. **Please allow plenty of time to find the nursery and note that cell phone reception is unreliable in the Delta.**

Top: Locke is characterized by narrow walkways. Middle: Locke Main Street looking north. Bottom: One of several buildings in Locke connected by a bridge to River Road (photographs courtesy of Architectural Resources Group.)



**THE LOCKE BOARDING HOUSE:
Boarding House to Interpretive Center**

The NCCSAH tour will visit the recently restored Locke Boarding House with architectural historian Katherine Petrin and architect Kitty Vieth from Architectural Resources Group. The firm prepared a Historic Structure Report in 2005 and directed the subsequent rehabilitation of the historic building, restoring the severely deteriorated wood-frame building but retaining distinctive materials, features, and spaces.

Pre-dating most of Locke's Main Street buildings, the Boarding House was probably constructed in the early 1910s as purpose-built lodging for laborers. Due to the building's orientation and proximity to both the Southern Pacific track, the warehouse/packing shed along the river, and the pear orchards, it would have been built to house laborers in need of accommodations.

Unlike other lodgings in Locke, the Boarding House has not, historically, been associated with Chinese or Chinese-American users, but has been home to people of many different ethnicities.

Built at an approximate cost of \$1200, the original owner and builder remain unknown. The earliest confirmed date of the existence of the Locke Boarding House is 1921, the year that the Kuramoto family took over operation of the boarding

house naming the place Sam's Rooms. Consistent with Locke's Main Street buildings in terms of scale, typology, approximate age, and early 20th century construction techniques and materials, the Boarding House contributes favorably to the architectural idiom of Locke. Built as a utilitarian, residential structure for a rural setting, its architectural expression is derived from its spare, minimal quality, emphasizing utility and economy. As a former

boarding house, it retains a residential feeling due to the welcoming porches, gabled roof, setting, and overall scale. Architecturally, the building exhibits regional influences and it falls within the larger pattern of 2-story, wood-frame buildings connected to the levee along the Sacramento River. From the time of its construction through the 1980s, the Locke Boarding House retained its original residential use.

The town of Locke is a National Historical Landmark (NHL) district, interesting because of its historical significance, agricultural origins, architectural cohesion, and authenticity.

In October 2009 the former boarding house was rededicated as an interpretive center and museum for the town.



Top: Image of west elevation, 1930. Bottom: Kuramoto family (photographs courtesy of the Kuramoto family).

THE SAN JOAQUIN DELTA AND THE TOWN OF LOCKE *continued*

of reclamation lands was transferred to the local level and the acreage limit was removed, putting most of these lands in private ownership by the turn of the century. After World War I, the number of operating dredges decreased greatly, as nearly all Delta marshland had been reclaimed. By this time, the Delta had been transformed from a large tidal marsh to the series of improved channels and levee islands we know today. Jeff Hart will discuss Delta history, including early plant and animal life and the reclamation effects on the Delta during the morning tour.

The afternoon tour will start in Locke. Established in 1915, Locke is the largest and most intact surviving example of an historic rural Chinese-American community in the United States, including more than 50 commercial and residential frame buildings and covering approximately 14 acres along the east bank of the Sacramento River, south of the city of Sacramento. Locke is the only such community remaining in the Sacramento-San Joaquin River Delta, which was a particularly important area of rural Chinese settlement.



Locke Main Street (photograph courtesy of Architectural Resources Group)



Locke buildings typically had commercial uses on the first floor and residential uses on the second floor (photograph courtesy of Architectural Resources Group).

Merchants and laborers from the Chungshan district, in Kwangtung Province, founded the small town of Locke after a fire destroyed their community in Walnut Grove. The Chungshan constituted a small minority of Chinese who immigrated to the US and the group secured a verbal lease of 9 acres of land owned by the George Locke family, since the 1913 State's Alien Act prevented the Chinese from actually purchasing land. In its early years, the structures in Locke served the largely transient labor force. Originally Chinese workers came to the Delta under contract as labor for levee construction. When machinery replaced human labor in the construction of levees, the newly reclaimed land provided a new source of employment as farm labor and tenant farmers. The creation of large speculative farms, a shift to fruit and vegetable cultivation, and cheap labor were critical to the success of the farms. The percentage of Chinese in the Delta remained high although the Chinese population in the United States dropped. Clusters of one and two roomed shanties sprung up along the Delta and with an occasional Chinatown between Sacramento and Antioch.

Please send your ideas or comments concerning The Newsletter to:
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email: jody@argsf.com

Remember you do not have to be a member of the National SAH to become a member of NCCSAH

Join or Renew Now!!

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Richard Sucre, Treasurer - NCCSAH

Page and Turnbull

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San Francisco, CA 94108

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The mission of the NCCSAH is to further the objectives of the Society of Architectural Historians of which the Northern California Chapter is an official affiliate; promote the study and discussion of our region's architectural history and its related fields; visit significant works of architecture; and increase public awareness and appreciation of our architectural heritage. Membership is open to anyone interested in architectural history and its related fields who agrees to pay the annual dues and subscribe to the by-laws of the organization.