

Chef Chu's: Serving History, Celebrating 50 Years

The American Dream became a reality for Lawrence C.C. Chu, an immigrant from China, when, in 1970, he opened a restaurant in a converted laundromat on San Antonio Road in Los Altos offering Chinese meals-to-go, a novelty in a sit-down eatery. Together with Ruth, his fiancée at the time, they pursued their dream—working side-by-side, he in the kitchen, she taking orders and serving guests. They were committed to their vision of delivering an inviting, family experience and providing healthy, delicious meals, and they succeeded.

It's a Silicon Valley startup story—following a dream, working hard, and innovation. Chef Chu was an innovator with Chinese dishes that he interpreted for local taste, his “open kitchen” design, cooking classes that ran at capacity for 35 years, and guest chef appearances on television.

Chef Chu is much more than a successful restaurateur. He has generously given his time and talent to the community by providing meals for school lunches and walkathons, helping booster clubs, working with the Rotary, the Chamber and the Museum—truly 50 years of serving the community. In recognition of his good work, he was the 1994 Los Altos of the Year, the first recipient of the award.

The 50 year milestone of Chef Chu's will be celebrated with a special dinner, a banquet with dishes created for the evening. Chef Chu generously selected the Museum to be the beneficiary of all the proceeds, because the event is about celebrating history and giving back to the community. He appreciates that the Museum is the community gathering spot to experience the “Los Altos Story.” It is where the next generation comes to learn about those who built and contributed to the town, engenders pride and a sense of community, and helps motivate active participation in its future.

The Museum and its members are very pleased to celebrate this wonderful milestone with Chef Chu.

~ Diane Holcomb and Kristen Fuller



Chef Chu, Oct. 2019. Chu family collection.

Gallery 9 Arrives and Survives

“One of the most fascinating new galleries on the peninsula is a cooperative showcase for the works of nine area artists, most of whom concentrate on the nude body, male and female.” That was how a Menlo Park paper introduced the gallery in 1970. The nine artists, all women, were meeting regularly to draw, and learning of a space available in Menlo Park, they spruced it up and it became Gallery 9, named for the nine founders. The Gallery grew and in 1973 moved to 143 Main Street in Los Altos, where it now numbers 30 artists and is celebrating 50 years of exhibiting original art for the community.

One founding member, Roberta Loach, commented, “I was very young at the time. Men weren't interested in

joining, and most of us just took care of our children” while doing their art. Men eventually did become members, and all of the artists pursued their art seriously. According to Roberta, “We feel our drawings are affirmative statements of humanity and individuality.”

The Gallery fosters a supportive atmosphere which has allowed and encouraged the artists to explore new artistic expression. Joanna Despres, another founder, had a solo show at the Bechtel International Center at Stanford, and in 1972 the Gallery members did their first community show at the Bechtel Center. Gallery members have increased their

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President's Pen

Where were you on October 17, 1989? Perhaps you were settling in with friends to watch game 3 of the "Battle of the Bay" World Series. Perhaps you were driving home from work or, like me, still at work. I was in a meeting and at first, we were blasé. After all, it's the Bay Area, there are earthquakes. But as the clock ticked and the shaking continued we all got up and stood in doorways, looking at each other, unsure what to do.



Our community reacted quickly, assessing damage and helping those in need. In the next months, as things returned to normal, there was lots of information about what to have on hand and how to stay prepared. But that was 30 years ago and I have to admit that I've again grown blasé about being prepared.

That's why I'm so excited about our newly opened exhibit, *Our Community Prepares*. We're not only looking back at how the community has been affected by previous acts of nature, we're focusing on how to ensure you and your family remain safe no matter what mother nature sends our way.

If you attended our opening you would have seen historic fire trucks and rescue vehicles and had the opportunity to speak with our community's first responders. We have also had programs about water safety, being prepared to take care of your pet in an emergency, and how to stay safe during the holidays. If you weren't around in 1989, or if you just want a thrill, join us January 11 to take a ride on an earthquake simulator.

It's hard to believe that it's been 30 years since the Loma Prieta earthquake. We hope our exhibit inspires you to take steps to prepare for any emergency. It allows us to gather stories about recent history. We are always actively working to preserve our unfolding history. Please come see the exhibits, shop at the store, and attend an event.

I look forward to seeing you at the Museum!

~ Julia Lovin

Staff

Dr. Elisabeth Ward, *Executive Director*

Dr. Amy Noel Ellison, *Exhibition Curator*

Diane Holcomb, *Outreach Coordinator*

Dianne Shen, *Collections Strategist*

Mark Perry, *Facility & Rentals Manager*

Faustino Carrillo, *Gardener*

LOS ALTOS HISTORY MUSEUM "UNDER THE OAKS"

Gary Hedden, *Editor* Judi Eichler, *Graphic Design*

A publication of interest to citizens of Los Altos, Los Altos Hills, and neighboring communities, produced by the Association of the Los Altos Historical Museum. A special thanks to the newsletter mailing team!

History in the News

An important priority for the Los Altos Historical Commission is preservation of our historical treasures. The effort to save the Halsey House in Redwood Grove Nature Preserve took a step forward in October with a draft report finding historical significance due to association with the Halsey family, early Los Altos residents, and as a good example of the Spanish Revival style of architecture. Designated a local historic resource and City Landmark in 1981, the house functioned as a nature center for many years, serving summer camps and school groups. It was also used as a community meeting center. Allowed to fall into disrepair, the City closed the house to public use in 2008. Lacey Bubnash with the Architectural Resources Group, author of the report, told the Commissioners that the first task should be protecting the house from further deterioration. After that, she explained, the next steps and costs depend on the future use. The Commissioners discussed options, including adaptive restoration in partnership with the Parks Commission.



Divya and Daniil Reouk, two weeks after moving into their newly restored home, Oct. 2019.

Very good news on the Craftsman-era house at 1365 Grant Ave. Built by Oliver Holt in 1913, the house reflects the Craftsman style of the early 20th century with a gable roof, exposed rafters and eaves, wood shingles and brick and river rock foundation. Sold by the Holt family in 2015, the current owners, Daniil and Divya Reouk, worked with the Historical Commission and the City to complete a beautiful restoration that retains the exterior character while updating the interior to modern standards. The attention to detail included saving the cobblestones and reapplying them to a brick foundation, now supported by concrete and steel. They even matched the yellow color of the original grout. The project took over three years, but the Reouk family is proud of their accomplishment. We, and generations to come, thank them for their determined and thoughtful generosity.

~ Gary Hedden

Gallery 9 Arrives and Survives

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visibility through lectures, demonstrations, and publicity, including regular coverage in the Los Altos Town Crier.

Gallery 9 is managed in a relaxed democratic model as an artist cooperative. Other cooperatives are Viewpoints Gallery in Los Altos; Gallery House in Palo Alto; and farther afield, the Carmel Art Association, one of the oldest artist cooperatives in the country. Members do various jobs to keep the Gallery functioning, such as Treasurer, Publicity, Staffing, and Hanging. Carol Hake called herself the "Hanging Tsarina" when she was supervising the hanging of the monthly shows. The Gallery is staffed by the artists, which gives the public an opportunity of engaging with artists when they visit. Each month, the art work changes, with the front of the Gallery devoted to a Featured Artist.



Gallery 9 artists outside the Gallery, September 2019. Photo credit Bill Scull.



The Gallery 9 art includes paintings, photography, and drawings as well as jewelry, ceramics, and even wood turning! Every month one artist is featured. Photo credit Cecilia Mases.

To join the Gallery, artists must be juried in: They present 5 pieces and the members vote their approval, thus ensuring the quality of the art exhibited. Individual memories of this experience reflect the importance of the process:

Carol Hake (1973): "After the move to Los Altos, Joanna Despres suggested that I submit work for the next jurying. I was sure that I would be turned down and I was. I had brought in 5 diverse works framed haphazardly. It looked totally unprofessional. A few months later there was another chance and this time I submitted 5 properly matted and framed drawings of French chateau country. Soon after I took my three children downtown to look through the Gallery window. They were so proud of me. Later I realized I had a gallery key in my purse and we could have gone in. I was no longer an outsider, I had been accepted as an Artist!"

Judi Keyani (1997): "Soon after Gallery 9 appeared on Main Street, I began stopping by quite regularly to enjoy the varied art work. I particularly liked Penny Sevison's pastels, since I was beginning to work with pastels myself.

It was a nice break from managing household affairs and small children. I had also seen Carol Hake's work and envied the artists who could exhibit their work. After two decades of art classes and studying various mediums, I returned to artwork and was invited to apply. I was very excited to be accepted and am still a member after 22 years!"

Cecilia Mases (2017): "I was invited to apply, but I wasn't sure I was good enough or even if it was a good fit for me, but I took the chance and submitted my paintings. When I got the call letting me know I was NOT accepted I was very disappointed and realized I really, really wanted this. I got the chance to resubmit and I had to wait a couple of weeks before the call came. I was in the car with the whole family, including my family visiting from Sweden. I had been accepted! The whole car cheered and that night we opened a bottle of champagne!"



Gallery 9 is a cooperative gallery with over 30 members who manage the Gallery and show new art each month. Judi Keyani and Jan Meyer hanging art, December 2017. Photo credit Cecilia Mases.

In that spirit, we salute Gallery 9 and the artists who have made it endure and thrive. With the community's interest and support, we look forward to the next 50 years!

~ Judi Keyani

The Museum is happy to be participating in the 50th anniversary of Gallery 9 with a special exhibition, opening January 30, through March 8. Don't miss it!

Our Police Department Over The Years

Los Altos was incorporated in 1952 and one of the first jobs was forming a police department. The first Police Chief, Joseph McClelland, hired four officers and that was the start. We don't have McClelland's oral history to tell us about the early days, but former officer Lee Lera was with the department from 1974 to 1990, and he recalls the switch from old-style car radios to handheld radios, from manual sirens with hand cranks to electronic sirens, and even the first cellphones, "They were held in a little suitcase and we would carry them...but rarely use them because it was quite expensive."



Christina Cheng with Lee Lera at the Police Department, Oct. 2019. Photo credit Kathy Lera.

Since Lera's retirement, the department has grown to over 30 sworn officers and made great strides in technology. "Los Altos is an extremely safe community," notes current Police Chief Andy Galea, "...very engaged and tech savvy."

The best thing we could do 40 years ago would be call a news station and have them do a report on the radio and hopefully somebody was listening." Now the department is active on Twitter and NextDoor and can send out electronic alerts. The department has also joined with other agencies to improve communication and help during emergencies. Captain Scott McCrossin, the longest serving officer at the department, noted that during the shooting at the Gilroy Garlic Festival, "We actually went down there and assisted them with portions of the recovery process."

There are still challenges. The department has seen a rise in homelessness, mental health issues and cybercrimes. "It is now the wild, wild West, the new crimes... early in my career it would be theft, burglary, assaults and now it is identity theft," according to Galea. Another big change is the cost of housing. Lee Lera points out that many officers live in the Central Valley or Gilroy or Morgan Hill. Before, "if something happened, like the '89 earthquake...everybody was here, even if it wasn't their shift, we all came in and we worked as a great team. There was a lot of camaraderie."

Overall though, the department has changed for the better. "We do things that we never did decades ago, ... more professional and more responsive to the community and what they need," said Chief Galea. "We're here, and we're ready to help."

~ Christina Cheng

Membership

Welcome to our new members:

Kim Marinucci Acker	Lisa Lo and Gregory Long
Kristin Blaschke and Kevin Muller	Katherine Magee
Kevin Bock and Annie Ma	Suzanne Maguire-Negus
Thomas M. Brunner	Ernest Marquez and Athaly Ramos
Matthew Burrows	Anne Maraie McCloskey
Melissa Chao and Tyler Bamberg	Cristina Ocampo
Shelli Ching	Poonita Prabhakar
Sarita Gralin	John and Kathy Radford
Jennie Hersh and Dor Carpel	Jessica Roeder and Ben Mooneyham
Mariann Hu and Daniel Chuang	Sara Michele Stamm
Ellen Kramer	Alfred Tobias and Nam Thi
Roer Linn	Mary Valentine

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Nan Geschke received the Historical Preservation Award in recognition of her tireless leadership in fostering civic pride in the history of Los Altos. She produced the acclaimed Los Altos History Show, and served on the Historical Commission and the History Museum Board. She and her husband, Chuck Geschke, restored the beautiful Frank Marini House and are major supporters of the Museum, including the very popular 3rd and 4th grade school tours. Thank you, Nan.

History House Book Club

Margaret Hill Smith, who married J. Gilbert Smith in 1931, grew up in a home full of books. Her father—a lawyer, newspaper editor, and historian—collected classic works of literature by Plutarch, Shakespeare, Nathaniel Hawthorne, among others. The Hills' library was vast and eclectic, and included books on topics ranging from the history of Mexico to evolutionary biology to the world's most famous speeches. It's easy to imagine Margaret, who received her degree from the College of Social Sciences at the University of California, Berkeley in 1901, curling up on the sofa with one of these books. She inherited at least a portion of the Hill family's collection and eventually the books found a new home in the Smith House.

While living in Los Altos, Margaret met Roger and Peggy Bagnall, both local high school teachers. Peggy taught high school English and loved to read. Knowing the family's passion for books, Margaret generously gave them over 175 volumes, cherished by the Bagnalls for many years. After Peggy passed away earlier this year, her children donated the books to the History Museum so they could return to the Smith House.



Margaret Hill Smith, ~ 1968. LAHM Collection.

Inspired by this story and the power of books to bring people together, the Museum is launching the History House Book Club. Free of charge and open to all Museum members, the book club is a way to get to know each other better through a shared love of reading. Every other month, we'll choose a work of history or historical fiction to read and chat about.

The first meeting of the Book Club will take place January 14 with *The Guernsey Literary and Potato Peel Pie Society*, by Mary Ann Shaffer and Ann Barrows. Come enjoy an evening in the Smith House discussing a great book with new friends!

~ Amy Ellison

Please contact the Museum for more information and to sign up.

Director's Corner

"Lots to Look Forward to in 2020!"

It is hard to believe this is already our fourth newsletter of the year – winter issue! When the next one hits your doorstep, it will be 2020.

I am so grateful for all the support, patience, and goodwill the membership has extended to me and the staff during 2019. We said goodbye to some old favorites, like Crab Feed, and to some valuable staff, like Heather and Deepti. But we also said hello to some new staff, like Amy, and to some new events, like the AutoVino Fundraiser.

Change is always challenging, but the Museum is an incredibly resilient organization. We are truly more than the sum of our parts. New volunteers come to us, ready to give generously of their time and ideas; long-serving members stand up to take on new projects and responsibilities; the community responds to our new initiatives enthusiastically. And our membership continues to grow. All of this bodes well for the health of this organization, and ensures that our efforts will be a gift to the community long into the future. People recognize that the Museum is an asset, and want it to continue to evolve and take on new opportunities and challenges.

I believe this is why Lawrence Chu decided to honor the Museum with a special gift to celebrate his 50th year operating a world famous restaurant, and why Gallery 9 reached out, asking if we could help them celebrate their 50th.

The Museum is the community's gathering place in more than a physical sense. We store the memories, artifacts, and stories that represent all that this community has been and can become, and our exhibits gather the community together. In 2020, we are looking forward to unveiling our completed Outdoor Agricultural Exhibition, capped by a repaired and renovated Tank House, a combined effort supported by our members during Crab Feed 2018, by a grant from the County of Santa Clara, and by a gift of the Garden Club of Los Altos. We are also looking forward to a new exhibition about the Women's Suffrage movement, an effort led by Dr. Amy Ellison with a wonderful group of volunteers sharing stories and doing research on this ambitious subject, the 100 year anniversary of women's right to vote.

We look forward to continuing to be a gathering place for you and yours in 2020. Thank you for being a part of Los Altos History Museum in 2019!

With best wishes,

~ Elisabeth Ward



Photo Gallery



The future of food with SV Eats brought us cooking with radiant heat, and burgers without meat, Aug. 2019.



If Cars Could Talk at Auto Vino in Menlo Park, with Ted and Marcia Adams, Linda Eckols, and Janis and Rick Ahmadjian-Baer, Oct. 2019. Photo credit Elisabeth Ward.



Ann Hepenstal, Emergency Preparedness Coordinator, City of Los Altos and exhibit co-curator, at the opening reception of Our Community Prepares, Oct. 2019. Photo credit Amy Ellison.



Dr. Amy Ellison on the 30th anniversary of the Loma Prieta earthquake, with Mara Bronstone and Bridget Morgan, who remember that day very well. Photo credit Elisabeth Ward.



Roasting marshmallows at the Historic Apricot Orchard—over a gas stove, not a campfire! It was a spare-the-air day, Oct. 2019.



Betty Ward and Jean Gillette of the Garden Club of Los Altos presenting the Museum with a generous gift for hosting their 90th Anniversary. We thank the Garden Club! Photo credit Priscilla Sturm.

Photo Gallery



The annual GreenTown Los Altos bike tour of Historic Homes in September always starts and ends at the History Museum.



The Los Altos Parent Preschool closed after 65 years. Rowena Chiu, Jean Gasperini and Keiko Hayashi look at an old scrapbook they donated to the Museum collection and reminisce, Sept. 2019.



Farewell lunch with Deepti Devanagondi at Fiesta Vallarta. Next stop for Deepti, bookkeeping for a Los Gatos private school. We wish her well.



Rose Hau with the oral history of her father, Hau Beiren, standing by his artwork at the Museum. Photo credit Elisabeth Ward.



Three-year old Huxley at the opening weekend of Our Community Prepares, "My favorite part? The lights!" Photo credit Autumn Looijen.



Our fearless leader at the wheel of the historic 1929 Los Altos fire truck. Photo credit Amy Ellison.



UNDER THE OAKS

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Museum and Store Hours

Thursday to Sunday, Noon–4 pm

We are closed New Year's Day, Easter,
Fourth of July, Thanksgiving Day,
Christmas Eve, and Christmas Day.

General Inquiries

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(650) 948-9427 x11
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Event Rentals

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Mission Statement *The Los Altos History Museum gathers and presents compelling stories and artifacts that bridge the past and the present by fostering the creative energy of staff and volunteers to challenge established narratives and produce engaging educational programs and exhibits for the community.*

On The Calendar

Holiday Safety Workshop, Wednesday, Dec. 11, 7-8:30pm, at the Museum.

Ham for the Holidays: Amateur Radio Operators, Then and Now, open through Jan. 5, at the Smith House.

Be Prepared for the Big One, Saturday, Jan. 11, 10am-3pm, at the Museum.

History House Book Club, Tuesday, Jan. 14, 4-5:30pm, at the Smith House.

Photography of J. Gilbert Smith, opens Thursday, Jan. 16, at the Smith House.

Our Community Prepares: Act of Nature, Then and Now, closes Sunday, Jan. 19.

Gallery 9: Celebrating 50 Years of Art in Los Altos, opens Jan. 30. Opening Reception Sunday, Feb. 2, 2-5pm.

Chef Chu's Celebration Banquet, Sunday, Feb. 9, at Chef Chu's. Tickets required.

International Language Day, Friday, Feb. 21, 5-7pm, at the Museum.

In the Fields of the North, opens March 19.



Karen Quero, an intern from Foothill College working in the Collections Department, dressed for Halloween. Trick or Treat!

More events are in the works – watch for your monthly member email updates!

Board Meetings, First Wednesday each month, 4 pm, everyone welcome
Teen Docent Tours, Saturday and Sunday, 2pm