



Cupertino Historical Society & Museum
presents

the Cornerstone

Winter 2016

Volume 26, Issue 2

THE HISTORY OF RED ENVELOPES FOR CHINESE NEW YEAR & BEYOND

By Crystal Tai

With the Year of the Monkey coming on Feb 8, countless red envelopes are on display at local Chinese supermarkets such as Marina Foods and Ranch 99. They may look familiar to most Cupertino residents, given the established presence of Chinese culture in the multicultural city. However, their history is not very widely known.

It may sound surprising to many that red envelopes did not originate as envelopes. Prior to the mass production of envelopes in China, Chinese adults used red paper to wrap red strings of coins and gave them to children during Lunar New Year. Although red envelopes have replaced those pieces of red paper since around 1900, Chinese children's New Year's greetings to adults stay the same. Instead of "Happy New Year," they say "Congratulations" while bowing to adults during Lunar New Year. Why?

That's because, according to legend, a monster used to come out on Lunar New Year's Eve. The monster is scared of nothing but fire, noise and the color red. For self-protection, Chinese people would use red decorations for their houses, stay home, and say congratulations to each other on New Year's Day for their survival. Saying congratulations gradually became a tradition, which remains today.

In the meantime, red is still considered the most auspicious color in Chinese culture. It's always the theme color of Lunar New Year.



During Lunar New Year, Chinese children are not the only ones getting red envelopes. Young adults may continue receiving them as long as they are single. In Chinese culture, marriage is regarded as a big step toward maturity.

Given Chinese culture's emphasis on filial piety, elderly people receive red envelopes from their adult children not only for Lunar New Year, but also for their birthdays. The red envelopes for an elderly person's birthday party may come with the printing of a special Chinese word, which means "longevity."

The use of red envelopes goes far beyond Lunar New Year. Chinese people think money is the most practical gift.

Red envelopes are the most common wedding gift in Chinese culture. The Chinese word for "double joy" is printed on red envelopes for weddings.

... continued on page 3



Cupertino Historical Society & Museum

Mission Statement

We preserve and illuminate Cupertino's past to inspire youth, strengthen the sense of community, and shape a better future by making Cupertino history relevant and available to all.

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The Cornerstone is published quarterly by the Cupertino Historical Society, a private, non-profit organization.

PRESIDENT'S CORNER

By Helene Davis, President



Happy 2016 and welcome to a new year of history projects.

Last fall I mentioned that the Cupertino Historical Society (CHS) looked forward to more collaboration with the Cupertino Parks and Recreation Department. To that end CHS held its first history walk through the Stevens Creek Corridor. Cupertino's unofficial historian and CHS board member,



Gail Hugger, led the walk. She took a group of about six along the Stevens Creek Trail despite the softly falling rain. The trail holds a microcosm of our area's history, from Native Americans through our 20th century agricultural roots. Our next history walk is scheduled for Saturday, April 23 from 1:00 PM to 2:30 PM. We will also be looking for docents to lead these walks in the future, so stay tuned.

We have also been working on an historical sites brochure and it should be ready to print by the beginning of March. It will include a map of historical sites, background on the sites, and "then and now" photos. We hope to distribute the brochure through the Quinlan Center, the Cupertino Library, City Hall and the Cupertino Chamber of Commerce. Please keep your eyes out for it!

We are hoping to bring an exhibit to the Quinlan Center sponsored by the Chinese Historical Society of America called The Chinese and the Iron Road, building the transcontinental. This would happen sometime in May or June.

We appreciate your continuing support. We are always looking for new members, volunteers, and board members so if you have any interest, please contact us at cuphistsociety@sbcglobal.net

Helene Davis

Helene Davis

WHAT IS IT?

By Sharon Bryan



Area 51 in New Mexico isn't the only place with mysteries.

While on a recent History Walk at McClellan Ranch Preserve, we found "ruins" we could not identify. They are in the creek, just past the entrance to the preserve. Although we hadn't realized they existed, it seems there are a number of stories floating around about what they are and how they got there. Here are a couple of them:

- In the middle part of the last century a contractor owned the property adjacent and brought his scrap and debris home from job sites to dispose of it down the side of the creek.

- A foot bridge across the creek that crumbled (or was demolished)
- Remnants of the pumping system originally installed by John Doyle for Las Palmas Winery (and later part of the Monta Vista Water System)

If you have been around these parts long enough, and can remember fishing and wading in Stevens Creek, perhaps you remember these bits of concrete when they were much bigger bits connected into one structure. Please call the Cupertino Historical Society or email us at cuphistsociety@sbcglobal.net if you can help us solve the mystery.

THE HISTORY OF RED ENVELOPES FOR CHINESE NEW YEAR & BEYOND ... CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

Once a married Chinese couple enters parenthood, they will host a party when their baby turns one month old. Then all the guests will bring money in red envelopes.

Besides personal relationships, red envelopes may work for the workplace as well. Chinese companies often give red envelopes to employees to show appreciation for their contribution.

Aren't red envelopes versatile?

For more images of red envelopes, please visit <https://youtu.be/osRWkP48uqM>



TRAVELS WITH TRUNKS

By Sharon Bryan

That sounds somewhat more romantic than reality, which is traveling with three suitcases on rolling wheels and a large portfolio of photographs for display. But honestly, once you get past that bit of romantic license, our Traveling Trunk Program is an adventure I am delighted to be on.

Inside our “trunks” we have a variety of items that represent life in Cupertino – actually life in most of the world – at the turn of the 20th century. Just common, everyday items everyone would have known back then. But, oh the wonder they hold for second and third graders! I hold up my cell phone and ask them what it does.

They all know the answer and think me silly to ask. Then I point to the barn lantern, the Kodak box camera, a few pre-fountain pen nibs and a candlestick telephone to show them how people used to shine light, take pictures, send messages and make calls. If we had a fourth suitcase (and the strength to move it) we could bring a Victrola and a set of Encyclopaedia Britannica to add music and Google to complete their lists. Out of that demonstration came one of the questions I love best: “How did people talk to other people back then?” We are challenged to make “old stuff” relevant and interesting to those too young to even have seen it in a movie, and we proudly send class after class out to show their mothers the flour sack towels for sale at Whole Foods. And by the way, did she know people used to make clothes and dolls out of flour sacks? Our grade-schoolers do!

It’s an entirely different experience when we take the presentation to the Senior Center. There we don’t have to explain much as we are gifted with memories and stories when each item is showcased. I won’t say I like those presentations best, because truly every group we speak to is unique and fun, but I come away from those presentations with a stronger connection to the past, and renewed appreciation for first hand recollections. The past is still in our present. We learn something new every time, and each memory shared with us becomes another treasure in those trunks. And the best part is memories take no more room and don’t weigh a thing.

The best trips are taken with friends who share your sense of adventure and can laugh when things don’t go quite as planned. Most certainly the Traveling Trunk team is the definition of jolly traveling companions. Sonja Cook ably heads up the program and gets us where we need to be when we need to be there. Gail Fretwell-Hugger and Shari Kerr never run out of stories, and they all hollered a sincere “Welcome Aboard” to me when Sean Sullivan became less frequently available with his new job. There’s room for more, so please get in touch with Sonja or the Society if you think this is the adventure for you.



IN MEMORIAM



Gino Joseph Benedetti
March 21, 1930 - September 13, 2015

A long time member and supporter of CHS Gino Benedetti passed away on September 13, 2015 after a long illness and a sudden decline. He is survived by his loving wife Diane, two devoted children; Michael and Marilyn. He is also survived by his three brothers; Edward of El Dorado Hills, Raymond of Hollister and James of Sunnyvale. His quiet strength will be missed by all of his family and friends.

A BREATH OF FRESH AIR


By Sharon Bryan

Love history? Love sunshine, trees and birds? Does the babble of a creek excite you? (After four years of drought, it should!). Then we have something else you are going to love – the Cupertino Historical Society is now collaborating with McClellan Ranch Preserve to bring history to all in a beautiful, open air setting.

If you've not been to McClellan Ranch Preserve lately, they have opened an outstanding education center where you can learn about local wildlife, wildflowers and other natural treasures. They also have original and recreated buildings such as you would see at working farms a hundred years ago, including a milk barn and a blacksmith's shop. The setting is beautiful, with trails that take you by groves of trees and meadows – and of course, that creek! The Audubon Society of Santa Clara Valley is headquartered there, and they have created a bird-rich environment to enjoy.

And what will we be bringing to the table? Our history walks will take you through an area rich with Cupertino history. We will be participating in programs at the preserve, bringing history to their camps and special events.

We invite everyone to join us for our next History Walk scheduled for April 23, from 1:00 -2:30 pm. Sign up is done through the Parks & Rec department, either online or by calling the Quinlan Center.



The Cupertino Historical Society & Museum
Sponsors

History Scholarship Award Contest

After school: Wednesday, March 30, 2016

CHS will provide an historical question for the period of 1880 to 1945 for the participating students to read and write an essay stating their hypothesis to the question using critical thinking in support of their hypothesis.

Time limit for essay writing: 50 minutes

**WINNER WILL RECEIVE
\$250 scholarship Award**

A panel of CHS judges will review the essays and name the winner in early May in time for the Annual Awards Night.

**Sign-up forms are available with your
Social Studies teacher on Friday, March 4, 2016**

Sign-up cutoff date: Friday, March 18, 2016

CUPERTINO HISTORICAL SOCIETY & MUSEUM MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION

NEW MEMBER

RENEWING MEMBER

INDIVIDUAL \$35

FAMILY \$50

PATRON \$125

SPONSOR \$250

DIRECTOR'S CIRCLE \$500

COLLECTOR'S CIRCLE \$1000

\$ _____ I'D LIKE TO DO MORE! ENCLOSED IS MY TAX DEDUCTIBLE DONATION

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Please make checks payable to
**The Cupertino
Historical Society & Museum**
10185 North Stelling Road,

If you would like to charge your membership fee to your credit card, please contact the museum at (408)973-1495 with your credit card information. We accept Master Card, VISA, American Express and Discover. The Cupertino Historical Society & Museum's Federal ID is 94 2694547



A big thank you to the following Annual Fund Drive donors

Jane Alvarado

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Kathy Nellis

Barbara Nunes

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Martin Sorensen

Kathy Stakey

Darryl and Dorothy Stow

Janet Trankle

LaNelle Wilkinson

Bill and Judy Wilson

CHS raised a total of \$4465 towards ensuring our mission to preserve and illuminate Cupertino's past.

Correction: in the article on the Environmental Education Center & Blacksmith Shop Dedication in the Fall 2015 Cornerstone, a visitor was misidentified as Charlie Baer's granddaughter. She is actually the granddaughter of Charlie Baer's brother.

MEMBERSHIP NEWS

WE NEED YOUR SUPPORT



I am Don Sun, VP of Membership development this year. Thank you for being here to support our organization. I am writing this letter to ask for your help to accomplish the following tasks:

- 1: Write two or three paragraphs on your thoughts about Cupertino, such as communities, friends, families, and landmarks, etc.
- 2: Bring your friends to our events this year.
- 3: Find a new person to ask to join our organization this year.

To show my appreciation for your help, I will give you a small gift - A Cupertino handkerchief.

MEMBERSHIP GIFTS

Memberships to the CHS&M provide a base of support for programs, services and general operating costs. We appreciate the support and generosity of new and renewing members. The benefits of being a member of the CHS&M are many:

- Store discounts
- Quarterly newsletter
- Special events invitation
- Access to museum library

A CALL FOR VOLUNTEERS

The time a volunteer spends at the CHS&M is often just as rewarding to him or her as it is to us. If you have a love for the community, please help show off Cupertino's past and present. Our volunteers help keep our museum open! If you are available to volunteer for a two-hour shift, **Wednesday through Saturday** between the hours of 10 a.m.- 4 p.m., please contact the Museum at 408-973-1495 or email us at cuphistsociety@sbcglobal.net.

THE TRAVELING TRUNK

The Traveling Trunk Educational Program offers a unique opportunity to share your love of Cupertino history with children and adults in schools and senior centers. Our show-and-tell program teaches the history of many items used in homes and orchards around 1900 to young audiences in local schools and adults in senior centers. Our presentations are always warmly received and it is so rewarding to open up that bygone era to a new generation. The children are amazed at what life was like before electricity and how dressy the clothes were. If you think you might like to volunteer with this program, please contact Ragini Sangameswara at the CHS office at cuphistsociety@sbcglobal.net for additional information. Feel free to "shadow" us to see if this is a good fit for you.



Thank you,

Don Sun,
VP Membership Development
408-202-1080
book.sun@gmail.com



Cupertino Historical Society & Museum

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BULLETIN BOARD

Museum Hours:
 Located in the Quinlan Community Center, the museum is open to the public **Wednesday through Saturday from 10 a.m. – 4 p.m.**
Admission is FREE.

BOD Meeting:
 Wednesday, February 17, 2016: 5:30 p.m. Cupertino Room, QCC
 Wednesday, March 16, 2016: 5:30 p.m. Cupertino Room, QCC

Holidays: QCC closed
 February 15, 2016, President's Day

WWW.CUPERTINOHISTORICALSOCIETY.ORG

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The Cornerstone

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