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## City's Chinese museum offers rich historical treasure trove

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by Johnny McDonald

09.02.10 - 02:46 pm



Step back in time to when Chinese immigrants migrated to San Diego and, living in ramshackle structures, developed a small town within the city.

The stories are told as part of the mission of the San Diego Chinese Historical Museum (SDCHM), which chronicles the history from inside an old, renovated church and adjoining

building with artifacts not only from here but also from China. The museum is located at 404 Third Ave.

Since opening in 1996, the museum has presented more than 47 exhibits highlighting the rich tradition of Chinese culture and history in San Diego and throughout the world. The museum also features a library of books on Chinese culture and a tranquil garden with a koi pond.

“I think we are a bit unique because we feature Chinese American as well as old China history,” said Alex Stewart, educational coordinator for SDCHSM.

Now known as the Asian Pacific District, the community is located between Market Street and K Street.

Executive director Dr. Alexander Chuang serves as a volunteer. However, he and his wife, Agnes, have been the primary benefactors.

“We also do walking tours of the district,” Stewart said.

As part of SDCHM’s mission, an education outreach program has operated since 2000. That program offers classroom exhibit presentations to students throughout San Diego and Imperial counties.

The museum also offers lectures. For example, Dr. William Tong, a San Diego State University professor, recently discussed how his noninvasive lasers are used for enhancing archeological discoveries.

Outside the museum extension is a statue of the First Emperor, Qin Shi Huang, known for standardizing China’s written language, currency and weights and measures. He was also responsible for building a major part of the Great Wall.

The permanent collection includes a bridal carriage, early hand-laundry equipment, a warlord’s bed, ancient Chinese currency, jade, pottery, paintings, models of early Chinese American settlements, and other items. The adjoining building is designed for rotating exhibits.

Chuang stressed exhibits from China because, he says, “Chinese American history has only 150 years, but Chinese history has 5,000 years.”

The San Diego Chinese Historical Museum is open Tuesdays through Saturdays from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m., and Sundays from noon to 4 p.m. For more information, call (619) 338-9888, or visit [www.sdchm.org](http://www.sdchm.org).

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