Guide to the China Camp State Park Photographic Collection

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Collection number: Consult repository

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McClellan, California 95652

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Date Completed:
2016

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Descriptive Summary
Title: China Camp State Park Photographic Collection
Dates: 1888-2009
Collection number: Consult repository
Creator: California State Parks
Collector: California State Parks
Collection Size: 599 images
Repository: Photographic Archives.
California State Parks
McClellan, CA 92262

Abstract: The China Camp State Park Photographic Collection contains 599 images that date from 1888 through 2009. Images depict the property as an operational shrimping village and, later, a state park.

Physical location: For current information on the physical location of these materials, please consult the Guide to the California State Parks Photographic Archives, available online.

Languages: Languages represented in the collection: English

Access
Collection is open for research by appointment.

Publication Rights
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Preferred Citation
[Identification of item including photographer and date when available], China Camp State Park Photographic Collection, [Catalog number], California State Parks Photographic Archives, McClellan, California

Acquisition Information
Images donated by private parties, generated by California State Parks, and transferred from China Camp State Park at various times.

Accruals
Further accruals are expected.

Park History
China Camp State Park contains roughly 1,514 acres of natural, cultural, and historical resources. Located in Marin County, the park occupies the southwestern shore of San Pablo Bay and is roughly three miles northeast of the city of San Rafael. It is accessible by car via San Pedro Road.

Prior to European contact, the area containing the present-day park was home to the Coast Miwok for thousands of years. Living in small groups, the tribe hunted deer and small animals and gathered acorns, marsh plants, and shellfish for
The Chinese shrimpers in San Pablo and San Francisco bays processed almost three million pounds of shrimp per year, exporting roughly 80 percent of that to China. White fishermen and their elected officials were livid. In addition to the federal Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882, Euro Americans in California exerted tremendous anti-Chinese legal pressure at the state level. Pressured by white fishermen who claimed that Chinese bag nets killed the salmon’s foraging supply, in 1886 the State Board of Fish Commissioners recommended barring the nets, a motion ultimately passed by the State Legislature in 1910. In 1897, the State Board additionally recommended a closed shrimping season between April and October, the most productive time of year. This recommendation was later enacted in 1912. In 1905, state authorities banned the international exportation of shrimp, a move that severely hampered China Camp’s distribution. Although these restrictive measures compelled most Chinese shrimpers to leave, some shrimping businesses like the Quan Brothers stayed.

In the 1890s, Quan Hung Quock, like many Chinese immigrants pressured out of San Francisco, moved to Marin County. He established Yick Yuen Chinese Store in China Camp. Soon after, his two sons Henry and George Quan established the Quan Brothers Shrimping Company. In the 1910s, while netting restrictions reduced the area’s Chinese shrimpers, the Quans employed motorized western boats, as well as trawl nets introduced by local fisherman Frank Spenger, in order to stay in business through the 1950s, at which point the shrimping village began to decline in earnest. Though pollution stemming from local post-war development has severely retarded San Pablo Bay’s shrimp populations, Frank Quan, son of Henry and Grace Quan, lived in his family’s wooden shack at China Camp, where he occasionally shrimped, shared local history with park visitors, and ran the park’s concessions until he passed away in August 2016.

In 1955, the McNear family sold the area containing the present-day park to Stegge Development Corporation. That company then sold it to Latipac Corporation, which transferred the land to the New York California Industrial Corporation in 1967. Although these companies had set their sights on residential development, concerned citizens in Marin County began to petition to preserve the property. In 1976, the California State Parks Foundation purchased the bayside land and conveyed it to the State of California, which classified it a state park two years later.

California State Parks, coordinating with the Marin State Parks Association and the Friends of China Camp, preserves and interprets natural, cultural, and historical resources at China Camp State Park. In addition to the restored 39-acre China Camp village, listed on the National Register of Historic Places in 1979, the park also includes a lush expanse of coastal marshland, oak woodland, chaparral, and grassland habitats. Recreational activities include kayaking, windsurfing, nature-watching, hiking, horseback riding, biking, camping, and fishing. The park also offers summertime Campfire and Junior Ranger programs as well as the annual Heritage Day celebration of Chinese culture.

Scope and Content of Collection
The China Camp State Park Photographic Collection spans the years 1888-2009, with the bulk of the collection covering the years 1888-1897, 1910-1993, 2001, and 2009. There is a total of 599 cataloged images including 365 photographic prints, scans, and negatives, 104 35mm slides, and 130 born-digital images. Photographs originated from various sources including the Quan family and California State Parks staff.

The collection primarily depicts the historic China Camp shrimping village. Images include: landscape views of the camp with buildings, piers, coastlines, and beaches; Chinese fishing junks, sampans, sail boats, and row boats, both docked and at sea; fish-drying platforms at Point San Pedro and Hunter’s Point; Rat Rock Cove, an island in San Pablo Bay; and China Camp’s main road, often congested with automobiles.

Also included are numerous historic photographs donated by Frank Quan. Images mainly depict several individual and group portraits of the Quan family, including Grace, Alice, Henry, George, Georgette, Genevieve, Bertha, and Milton Quan.
as well as Quan Hung Quock, Ye See Quan, and Frank Quan himself. The Frank Quan Collection also contains other historic images including: Quan Hung Quock's Yick Yuen Chinese Store; Frank Quan's restaurant; local fishermen posed with recently caught sturgeon; and images from the set of Blood Alley, the 1955 action-adventure film shot on location at China Camp.

The collection also includes more contemporary documentation of China Camp primarily captured by California State Parks staff in the course of daily park business. These images include: the China Camp shrimping village with buildings both in ruins and later restored; San Pablo Bay with cliffs, piers, boats, and fishermen; picnic areas, campgrounds, hiking and biking trails, and other recreational features; cyclists and kayakers; the China Camp house museum exhibit, including various fishing-related objects, exhibit panels, photographs, maps, banners, and diagrams; aerial views of the park, including tidal mud flats, trees, mountains, piers, beaches, bridges, roads, buildings, and boats; and the reproduced historic Chinese fishing junk, Grace Quan, built by San Francisco Maritime National Historic Park volunteers in 2003.

Indexing Terms
The following terms have been used to index the description of this collection in the library's online public access catalog.
California. Department of Parks and Recreation
Chinese--California--History
Cultural resources
Marin County (Calif.)
Miwok Indians
National Register of Historic Places
Natural resources
San Pablo Bay (Calif.)
San Rafael (Calif.)
Related Material at California State Parks
China Camp State Park Collection
Related Material at Other Repositories
The Chinese in California Virtual Collection, UC Berkeley: Bancroft Library
Guide to the China Camp State Park Photographic Collection with Images and Catalog Subject Search Terms