

United States Department of the Interior National Park Service

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National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

DIVISION OF NATIONAL REGISTER PROGRAMS NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations of eligibility for individual properties or districts. See instructions in Guidelines for Completing National Register Forms (National Register Bulletin 16). Complete each item by marking "x" in the appropriate box or by entering the requested information. If an item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, styles, materials, and areas of significance, enter only the categories and subcategories listed in the instructions. For additional space use continuation sheets (Form 10-900a). Type all entries.

1. Name of Property

historic name Walnut Grove Chinese American Historic District other names/site number Walnut Grove Chinatown

2. Location

street & number Bound by River Road, Tyler, C. and Bridge Streets city, town Walnut Grove state California code CA county Sacramento code 067 zip code 95690

3. Classification

Ownership of Property: [x] private, [ ] public-local, [ ] public-State, [ ] public-Federal. Category of Property: [ ] building(s), [x] district, [ ] site, [ ] structure, [ ] object. Number of Resources within Property: Contributing (21), Noncontributing (8 buildings, 0 sites, 0 structures, 0 objects, Total 8). Name of related multiple property listing: NA. Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register: 0.

4. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, as amended, I hereby certify that this [ ] nomination [ ] request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60. In my opinion, the property [x] meets [ ] does not meet the National Register criteria. [ ] See continuation sheet. Signature of certifying official: Kathryn Guatteri Date: 2-13-90

In my opinion, the property [ ] meets [ ] does not meet the National Register criteria. [ ] See continuation sheet. Signature of commenting or other official: Date: State or Federal agency and bureau:

5. National Park Service Certification

I, hereby, certify that this property is: [x] entered in the National Register. [ ] See continuation sheet. [ ] determined eligible for the National Register. [ ] See continuation sheet. [ ] determined not eligible for the National Register. [ ] removed from the National Register. [ ] other, (explain:). Entered in the National Register. Signature of the Keeper: Date of Action: 3/22/90

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**6. Function or Use**

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Historic Functions (enter categories from instructions)

COMMERCE/RestaurantCOMMERCE/Specialty StoresCOMMERCE/Department StoreSOCIAL/Meeting HallDOMESTIC/Single Dwelling/Hotel

Current Functions (enter categories from instructions)

COMMERCE/RestaurantCOMMERCE/Specialty StoreDOMESTIC/Single DwellingLANDSCAPE/Vacant Lots; Gardens

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**7. Description**

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Architectural Classification

(enter categories from instructions)

MODERN MOVEMENT/ModerneLATE 19th/EARLY 20th CENTURY AMERICANMOVEMENTS/Commercial Style

Materials (enter categories from instructions)

foundation CONCRETEwalls STUCCOWOOD/Weatherboardroof ASPHALTother CERAMIC TILES/Storefronts

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Describe present and historic physical appearance.

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**SUMMARY**

The Chinese American Historic District of Walnut Grove encompasses approximately four acres on the east side of the Sacramento River, Sacramento County, California. It is composed of buildings constructed after a major fire in 1937 destroyed the earlier community that was built after an initial fire in 1915. The district extends from Market Street eastward to Tyler Street and from C Street in the north to E Street, an area of three square blocks. The majority of the buildings were constructed during the years 1937 and 1940 by an Anglo architect for the Chinese American businessmen and residents. Built in an Art Moderne/Modernistic style of stucco with ceramic tiled fronts and false front facades, the buildings also possess architectural embellishments and features that are typically Chinese in character and style. The 29 buildings in the district retain a remarkable degree of integrity, reflect the last period of Delta history when separate Chinese American commercial districts were constructed in agriculturally-oriented rural Delta towns, and convey a strong sense of time and place. Subsurface archaeological deposits under all the streets of the district were deposited immediately after the 1915 fire and include a variety of domestic goods destroyed in the fire.

**ARCHITECTURAL OVERVIEW**

Walnut Grove's Chinatown is culturally significant as an example of the type of construction employed by the Chinese American occupants working in context with an Anglo builder and architect. These buildings were built shortly after the fire of 1937 devastated the wood-frame structures that were constructed after a previous fire in 1915. In an interesting partnership, the commercial buildings were designed by Mitch Landis, an architect employed by William Schauer, owner of the local Noah Adams lumber yard. Mr. Schauer acted as general contractor for the rebuilding of the community in the Modernistic or Art Moderne style popular at the time.

All of the buildings have flat roofs and smooth stucco wall surfaces. The stucco surfaces have various elements of horizontal and vertical grooves, zigzags, chevrons, and other stylized geometric motifs as decorative elements on the facade. Some of the buildings have angled or curved corners and one has vertical projections. Some of the rooflines are parapeted and others are curved. A few of the one-story buildings have stucco facades and stucco sides at the front while the rear and side rear walls are corrugated metal.

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Much of the storefront wainscoting is decorated with ceramic tile in bright colors. Most of the storefront entryways are recessed, some with tile floors. Many of the buildings have marquees above the first floor, supported by a series of chains. A few of the buildings have metal railings above the marquees for porches. The two-story buildings were constructed to house commercial establishments of the first floors while the second stories were usually reserved for residential use. In a few of the buildings, residential quarters were in the rear of the first floor and both stories housed commercial enterprises.

Although basically Art Moderne or Modernistic in style, many of the buildings within the district have distinctive Chinese elements, including the use of exterior light bulbs, the architectural design of the gambling parlors, and the prevalent use of the buildings as commercial establishments on the lower floors with residential units above. The present structures were built on the sites of similarly occupied buildings which burned in the fire of 1937. Thus, the Chinese Free Masons Hall was constructed on the site of the original Chinese Temple and Benevolent Society, the gambling establishments and groceries and dry goods stores were rebuilt on the same locations as they had occupied previously and represent an important link with the Chinatown of the 1920s and early 1930s.

The buildings in the Chinese American section of Walnut Grove maintain historical and ethnic associations. They were constructed within a brief time period after 1937 by a known individual and in a cohesive architectural style throughout the district. It is architecturally consistent and contains many Art Moderne elements in the building facades. As such, the district is an important enclave of circa 1937 to 1940 commercial architecture in Walnut Grove. Although many of the structures are vacant today, they retain their basic configuration and architectural character as when originally built and have cohesive design elements, workmanship, materials, and associations.

Initially, small community gardens, consisting primarily of flowers, herbs, and vegetables were planted along the railroad levee and in any vacant spot of ground in the district. Although the railroad levee was removed in 1984, community gardens have developed on vacant lots throughout the district, contributing to the sense of time and place.

Archaeological remains located under the streets of the town during a 1984 improvement project, date from the beginning of the Chinese community in town, around 1870, to the devastating fire of 1915, a blaze that destroyed a three-block square area. Material recovered from the 50 features found under the streets consists of a variety of artifacts reflective of the everyday lives of the businessmen and residents of the Asian community (Costello and Maniery 1988).

**ARCHITECTURAL DETAIL**

The Chinese American Historic District contains 29 buildings, two of them garages. Eight of the buildings are non-contributors due to extensive facade alterations or late construction dates. All others within the area are contributors to the district (see sketch map).

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1. Ike's Cafe/Stage Depot - 14132 Market Street. This is one of two structures within the district that survived the 1937 fire. It was constructed in 1916 following the first fire in town, from circa 1916 until around 1928, a saloon operated in the building. From 1928 until World War II, Isaac (Ike) Hanlon operated a restaurant and stage depot in the building. When the fire broke out in 1937, Hanlon dismantled his entire restaurant and moved everything out of the building. He reassembled his cafe after the fire ended and his building was saved.

This is a two-story building with a false-fronted commercial structure. Originally wood, the structure was covered with corrugated metal siding as a fire prevention measure following the 1937 blaze. It faces River Road with a parapeted false front and a porch. The false front and the porch have been replaced in recent times with new horizontal siding, large, multi-paned windows, and a smaller porch. The windows on the sides and rear are of single-pane sash. The roof is gabled and the lower story is recessed on the south side.

Although Ike's Cafe predates 1937, it represents a link between the old Chinese American community and the existing buildings. In addition, it was an important part of the historic fabric of the district during the period of significance and, as such, contributes to the importance of the district. The building is not, however, individually eligible for the National Register.

2. The Pumphouse - 14134 Market Street. Originally, the site housed a gambling establishment on the lower floor and a hardware store on the upper. This use was transferred to this building following its construction in 1938. This two-story structure has a flat roof and frontages on both River Road and Market Street. The Market Street facade has three single-pane sash windows across the upper story above a marquee supported by three chains. The building facade is outlined by horizontal and vertical stucco detailing with corner blocks and geometric patterns. The wainscoting is of green, blue, and maroon tile. The River Road facade has maroon, black, and red tile wainscoting. A marquee is also present along the front of the structure and is supported by three chains. The doorway is recessed and the decorative stucco work on the front is the same as on the lower story. The building has significantly more decorative stucco work on both facades than many of the other buildings in the district, a reflection of its function.

3. Bing Kong Tong Building - 14136 Market Street. This building housed the Bing Kong Tong Benevolent Association and served as the social center for Chinatown. The building site has always been important to the Chinese community and was the location of the district temple and benevolent association from the initial occupation of the district by the Asian group.

Constructed soon after the 1937 fire, this Modernistic stucco, flat roofed building is the most reflective of the Chinese influence in the district, as is common in public buildings. The upper story of the Market Street facade has two arched windows flanking double glass-and-panel doors with arched windows above. The lower floor has a recessed wood-and-glass door flanked by store front windows. The upper story has a porch with iron railing which acts as a marquee. Ceramic tiles cover the front lower story facade beneath and around the windows. Star-shaped light bulb holders appear around the upper windows and there are light bulbs below the porch across the front of the building, both reflective of the ethnic use of the structure.

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The River Road facade is decorated with traditional Chinese elements. A sloped tile roof, turned up at the corners, covers the upper portion of the facade, while yellow tile with lavender tile diamond patterns covers the lower. The entry doors are painted red and have oval windows with brass push bars. A marble facing with Chinese characters surrounds the entry doors. Two brass bracket lamps are present on either side of the entry and five lamps hang from the tile roof which is supported by traditional Chinese brackets.

4. Lim Kee Store/Suen Building - 14138 Market Street. This is the location of the historic Lim Kee Dry Goods store and grocery. Kee operated his store on this site throughout the 1920s and 1930s and built a new store on the site soon after the 1937 fire. For many years following World War II the store was operated by the Suen family. Currently, the upper story of this building serves as the Suen residence while the lower story houses a business.

This building is actually two structures, one built shortly after the other in the late 1930s. It is a two-story stucco building fronting both Market Street and River Road. The Market Street facade has three large windows on the south and two storefront windows flanking recessed double glass-and-wood doors with a transom on the north portion. The wainscoting is of lavender ceramic tile. The upper story has a porch with a metal railing immediately above several small panes of glass which run across the building. The north portion of the River Road facade has recessed double wood-and-glass doors flanked by store front windows. A metal marquee supported by two chains runs above the windows. Ceramic tile wainscoting is also present on this facade.

5. Alma's Cafe/Grove Electric - 14144 Market Street. This two-story Modernistic stucco building has new aluminum windows, a new marquee, new horizontal frame siding, altered Market Street facade, and new store windows. It is a non-contributor to the district.

6. Chris Lee's - 14148 Market Street. This two-story stucco building was constructed circa 1948, has been covered with asphalt composition and vertical rough boards, and has new windows. It is a non-contributor to the district.

7. Tony's Restaurant - 14157 Market Street. The building site has always been used for a restaurant and saloon. The current building was constructed by the local lumber yard circa 1938. This structure is composed of two buildings recently linked together. The building has a flat roof and parapets on the corners. The west side has four windows on the upper story and two large ones of the first story, while the south side has three windows on the upper story with one large one below. The facade has newer siding of brick below the board and bat. It was originally covered with stucco. The smaller one-story building to the north has a stucco facade, now covered with brick and board and bat siding. The original top of the other building has a curved parapet.

8. Mar Barber shop - 14153 Market Street. This building originally housed a barbershop operated by a member of the Mar family, who owned the restaurant next door. It is one of many that replaced the original buildings of Chinatown after the fire of 1937. The Mar family came to Walnut Grove in the 1920s and still reside in town.

This one-story rectangular building has an angled roof and parapeted front. The front-end portion of the side is covered with stucco, while the remainder is of corrugated metal. There are horizontal design elements beneath the stepped parapeted front. The

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lower portion of the building is faced with composition tile. The central front door has two panels and glass with a transom above. It is flanked by windows with smaller panes above the larger.

9. Star Fountain - 14151 Market Street. The building is owned by the Sun Chan family, who have operated it as a "Chop Suey" house for many years. Built in 1937, it replaced another restaurant that was lost in the fire. As with most of the structures in this district, the upper story was and is used for residential purposes and the street level is used for business. The structure was designed by Mitch Landis and built by William Schauer, both of the local Noah Adams lumber yard.

This large stucco building has two stories in the front portion and three in the rear. It is extremely plain, with no architectural design elements. The central front door is recessed and is glass and oak with a transom. It is flanked by frame sash windows. Extremely simple in design, it is a contributor to the architectural purity of this street and an important reminder of the Chinatown of Walnut Grove.

10. Mar Grocery Store - 14147 Market Street. This building was built shortly after the 1937 fire for George Mar, a man who ran a grocery store on the lower floor and lived in the second floor with this family. Mar's original store was lost in the 1937 fire and he rebuilt on the same location. It is one of the few buildings in the district with electric light bulbs outlining its facade, a reminder of its ethnic association.

This Modernistic/Art Moderne building is a two-story stucco commercial building with residential unit above. It has a flat roof above the central multi-paned door flanked by two large windows. Between the first and second floor a metal marquee with porch railing of crossed wooden members runs across the front of the buildings. A row of light bulbs outlines the marquee and the upper story. The lower story has recessed front double doors on the north side with a large storefront window of the remainder. The wainscoting is of green maroon, and blue ceramic tile.

11. Sam's Bar/Porthole Saloon - 14141 Market Street. This one-story rectangular building has new oval windows flanking the front doors, is stuccoed, and has composition tile, a curved parapet, and single sash windows. Due to the exterior changes, it is not a contributor to the district. It has always been a bar and was owned and constructed by a Portuguese family in the late 1930s.

12. Gambling Parlor - 14135 Market Street. This building was constructed shortly after the 1937 fire by the local lumber yard by the owner of a gambling hall that was lost in the fire. It retains many of those features unique to gambling establishments, such as the double-door entry, lack of windows on the lower stories, and barred windows on the doors. Of the many gambling enterprises in Walnut Grove, this is the only building which retains those unusual architectural elements. It provides an important link with the Chinatown of Walnut Grove as it appeared in the late 1930s into the 1950s, when the halls were shut down.

This two-story stucco building is a fairly elaborate structure compared to many of the others in the district. The main recessed entry has doors on either side. The south side door leads into a small room with another door leading into the buildings, said to be used to scrutinize patrons of the gambling establishment before allowing entry to the main room.

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The entryway is a small, barred window in diamond shape which leads into the tongue and groove lined small room. The walls in the entry area are covered with linoleum. The wainscoting on the building originally had ceramic tile; this has been removed, leaving a composition material front. There is a metal marquee between the first and second stories. There are no windows on the sides along the lower floors.

13. Lee Market/Weiss Bookkeeping - 14133 Market Street. Built originally as a grocery store after the 1937 fire, this building retains much of its original integrity. Its original owner, Mr. Lee, catered to the Filipino population of town that moved into the area in force in the 1920s to replace the dwindling Chinese labor force. The Lee's lived in the upper half of the building and ran the store at the street level. Currently, the building houses a Caltrans office and a bookkeeping business.

This building, built on a corner lot, contains Modernistic and Art Moderne architectural elements on two sides. There are two bays on each side with two single-pane sash windows in each on the second story. The north lower story has three storefront windows and one door, while the west side has one large window and one small window with two doors. The lower portion of the building has been covered with board and bat wainscoting in recent times. The main entry to the building is through a pair of double doors with glass panels which site on the diagonal of the corner. A marquee supported by eight chains runs between the first and second stores. The building is covered with stucco and has a flat roof, although there are vertical projections at the corner and along the sides.

14. Delta Beauty - 1260 C Street. Now used as a boarding house for Filipino laborers, this building served as the local beauty parlor in the 1970s and early 1980s. It was build following the 1937 fire by employees of the local Noah Adams Lumber Yard.

This two-story stucco building has some minimal Art Moderne elements. The roof is flat and the top coping has vertical projections of the corners. There are horizontal grooves above the upper story windows. The rear of the buildings is covered with corrugated metal. There are windows on the upper story and doors and storefront windows on the lower story. New plywood siding is evident on the lower story on the Dye Street side of the building and many of the windows have been replaced with aluminum sash.

15. Residence - 14140 Dye Street. The building is two-story in Moderne style and has a stucco facade and corrugated metal sides and rear and was built shortly after the 1937 fire. This structure has a low-pitched gable roof. There are three windows with single-pane sash on the upper front story. The lower story has a recessed entryway and a glass door with a transom. The storefront windows flanking the entry have double panes above a single pane. A wooden five-panel door is located on the south front facade and leads to a stairway to the second story.

16. Barbershop/Residence - 14142 Dye Street. A barbershop was located on this site in the 1920s and moved into the building soon after its construction in 1938. It has been used as a residence for many years.

This is a one-story Moderne building with stucco facade and corrugated metal sides and rear walls. The building has a gable roof with a stepped-parapet false front. There is

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a louvre in the center of the false front and a canopy supported by chains extends across the building above the entryway. The entry door is glass and panel and is recessed. It is flanked by single-pane sash windows.

17. Residence - 14144 Dye Street. This is a non-conforming stucco building with a modern second story addition of plywood siding and aluminum sash.

18. Residence - 14148 Dye Street. This non-contributor is one-story and has asphalt siding.

19. Residence - 14162 Dye Street. Prior to 1937 a rooming house was situated at this site. The 1937 fire began in the house and spread rapidly throughout the Chinese American district. Today, a small, Moderne one-story house with a low-pitched gable roof of corrugated metal is located at this site. It is rectangular in shape and has channelled siding. The windows are of aluminum sash and the house is extremely plain.

20. Garage - 14161 Dye Street. This contributing structure is a double garage with concrete stucco sides and a corrugated metal rear wall. The building has a low-pitched gable roof with a concrete stucco false front. The two garage doors are wooden. It was built in 1938-1939 during the rebuilding efforts of the town following the 1937 fire.

21. Residence - 14157 Dye Street. A Modernistic residence, this is one-story in the front and two-stories in the rear. The entire rectangular-shaped building is covered with corrugated metal roofing. The roof is gabled and there is a false front on the Dye Street side. A canopy covers the entrance on the Tyler Street rear. The original windows were three panes over two, but some have been replaced with aluminum sash. The building was constructed following the 1937 fire and was completed before 1940.

22. Garage - 14145 Dye Street. This non-contributing garage is covered with aluminum siding.

23. Residence - 14139 Dye Street. New plywood siding and aluminum sash characterize this non-contributing house.

24. Boarding House/Residence - 14137 Dye Street. Prior to the 1937 fire a boarding house was located on this site. The current structure was built soon after the blaze and was also used as a boarding house by farm laborers.

This two-story stucco-facade building has some Art Moderne elements. It has a flat roof, but there is coping with vertical projections at each end. Beneath the coping are three horizontal grooves directly above three single-pane sash windows. The central entry on the lower story is flanked by a window on one side and a five-panel door on the other. Corrugated metal siding covers the side and rear walls of the building.

25. Residence - 14135 Dye Street. This is a non-contributing residence with asphalt siding, new aluminum sash windows, and a rear addition.

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26. Residence - 14137 Tyler Street. This one-story residence predates most of the other buildings in the Chinese District, evidently surviving the 1937 fire. It is not depicted on a 1921 map of the area, but appears on a 1927 map labeled as a dwelling, indicating a mid-1920s construction date (Sanborn 1921, 1927).

It has a gable roof with boxed eaves and a false front. The siding is channelled. The windows on the sides of the building are multi-paned above a large pane, while those on the front are single-pane sash. The front facade has a central door, now boarded over, flanked by two windows.

Although the building predates the period of significance, it was part of the historic fabric of the district between 1937 and 1940 and, as such, contribute to the importance of the district. It is not individually eligible for the National Register.

27. Residence - 14143 Tyler Street. This non-conforming residence is now covered with asphalt shingles.

28. Residence - 14161 Tyler Street. This small, one-story cottage has a recessed front porch with a triple-arch plywood overhang. The sides of the house are parapeted and the building is covered with asphalt siding. The central front entry has a glass door. The house was built during rebuilding efforts following the 1937 fire.

29. East Indian Store/Filipino Church - 14161 Tyler Street. Built following the 1937 fire, this structure housed an East Indian store that catered to the East Indian laborers working in the area and wintering within the limits of the Chinese American district. Today it is used as a residence and serves as the social and religious center for the Filipino population in town.

The structure is a two-story frame building with a front-gabled roof. The upper story has a five-panel door, flanked by new aluminum windows, which opens onto a porch with a railing. A religious message appears across the upper story facade. The lower story has a panel and glass door flanked by newer large windows. The original windows remain on the sides of the building and are double-pane sash. There is three-in-one board siding on the upper story and channel siding on the lower.

**8. Statement of Significance**

Certifying official has considered the significance of this property in relation to other properties:

nationally     statewide     locally

Applicable National Register Criteria     A     B     C     D

Criteria Considerations (Exceptions)     A     B     C     D     E     F     G

Areas of Significance (enter categories from instructions)

ETHNIC HERITAGE/Asian

ARCHITECTURE

Period of Significance

1937-1940

Significant Dates

NA

Cultural Affiliation

NA

Significant Person

NA

Architect/Builder

Landis, Mitchell (Architect)

Schauer, William (Builder)

State significance of property, and justify criteria, criteria considerations, and areas and periods of significance noted above.

**SUMMARY**

The Walnut Grove Historic District is eligible for the National Register of Historic Places under Criteria A and C. Under Criterion A, the district served as the commercial and social center from 1937 through 1940 for both the Asian residents and for Chinese American laborers working on nearby farms and ranches who would come into town on their days off or live in boarding houses during the off-season. While other Chinese American communities existed in the Delta during this period (e.g., Locke, Isleton), they served men who originated from the Chungshan district of China. Walnut Grove was established by and served those from Sze Yup province. As the last Chinese American commercial district constructed in an agricultural community in the Delta, it was also the last in a series of Chinatowns built on the same site since the 1870s and was a cultural, recreational, and commercial center for the farm laborers both in earlier times and between 1937 and 1940. As such, it represents the final cohesively constructed enclave of the Chinese Americans in the region. The district is also significant under Criterion C because, as the last established Chinatown in the Delta, the architectural style is unique both to other Chinese American communities in the region and within the town of Walnut Grove. Although constructed by an Anglo architect as a cohesive unit in the then-popular Art Moderne/Modernistic style, the buildings embody architectural elements particular to Chinese construction. The district is characteristic of many Asian communities, in that the public building (Bing Kong Tong) reflects a predominately Asian style, while the remainder of the buildings have simple additions, such as the use of decorative lightbulbs, to reflect a Chinese American motif. A high degree of integrity is present in this district, one that embodies a strong sense of time and place of those final years before the Chinese were dispersed into the mainstream of economic life in California.

**HISTORICAL CONTEXT**

Established as a steamer stop in 1851 by John W. Sharp, Walnut Grove sits on the east side of the Sacramento River next to Georgiana Slough. It is surrounded by Grand, Tyler, Andrus, and Victoria Islands. Reclamation projects began on Grand Island in 1852 and rapidly spread up and down the Delta. In the late 1860s, hundreds of Chinese laborers laid

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off from railroad construction or leaving the gold mines, went to work building levees and farming the reclaimed land (Chinn 1969; Chu 1970:21-22; US Bureau of the Census 1870).

The first documentation for Chinese Americans in town is found in the 1882 Personal Property Assessment Rolls for Sacramento County (earlier assessment books are not available and Chinese were probably established in town by 1875 [Lee 1989]). In this year the May Soon Company was listed as owning property in town. The Asian population increased in 1885, when residents of a Chinese settlement located on the North Fork of the Mokelumne River, about one-half mile south, relocated to Walnut Grove after a fire leveled their town (Arreola 1975; Lee 1989). By 1887, eight Chinese owned property in the town (not real estate); this figure increased to 101 by 1916 (Sacramento County 1887, 1916).

On land rented from local owners Sperry and Dye, an Asian community was established which served hundreds of local workers. Although laborers were generally boarded in barracks near their job sites, they would typically visit towns on their one day off, making use of the business enterprises. Through 1915 this community was composed of both people from Chungshan and Sze Yup provinces in southern China (Chu 1970; Leung 1984). Businesses operating in town included dry goods and grocery stores, shoe stores, fish and meat markets, saloons, gambling halls, boarding houses, herbal shops, a temple, barber shops and baths, and other businesses (US Bureau of the Census 1900, 1910). This community was situated between Bridge Street on the south and C Street on the north and between the Sacramento River to the west and the Southern Pacific Railroad Levee (built in 1910).

In 1915 a major fire broke out in the Chinatown, leveling 80 buildings in the three-block area. This fire resulted in radical changes in the makeup of the community. First, the Japanese people, then residing within the Chinese American community, took the opportunity to physically separate themselves by establishing their own "Japantown" one block north of the Chinese district. Second, those businessmen originating from the Chungshan province moved one mile north of Walnut Grove, joining three of their fellow Chungshan countrymen who had already established businesses on the land to serve laborers in a nearby cannery. Augmented by the Walnut Grove Chungshan population, this small settlement became the thriving Chinese town of Locke. Finally, the Sze Yup people remained on the site of the destroyed Chinatown, rebuilding their former community as a replica of the town that had been destroyed in the fire (Chu 1970:21-37; Leung 1984:16-18).

Walnut Grove continued to prosper following the 1915 fire. During the 1920s the Chinese American community had a reputation as being "wide open" with gambling, opium dens, and brothels. It must be kept in mind, however, that the Chinese American community consisted primarily of bachelors or married men whose families were in China. There were very few family groups in the community prior to World War II (Lee 1989).

Sanborn Maps dated 1921, 1927, and 1933 document the rapid growth of the Chinatown. Aided by the influx of Filipino labors during the 1920s, the three-block section contained over 60 buildings and had nine gambling halls, six grocery stores, four restaurants, and three barbershops. Other businesses included fish, shoe, plumbing, laundry, and tailer shops, hardware, dry goods, and general merchandise stores, a Chinese

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school, temple, and benevolent society headquarters (Sanborn 1927). In addition to the businesses, there were 28 houses used to board laborers who came into town to live during the winter season.

Although the transient farm laborer population declined somewhat during the Depression era, the permanent Asian population of Walnut Grove prospered in the early 1930s. In 1926 the Isleton Chinatown burned down, destroying all buildings and personal property. While the town rebuilt, some of the residents moved into Walnut Grove. Courtland's Chinese American community also suffered from fire in 1930. Unlike Isleton, the people from Courtland were unable to rent land to rebuild their community and the majority moved into Walnut Grove, adding to the population spurt of the early 1930s (Leung 1984:16-18).

In 1937 a second fire broke out in the Chinese American section of Walnut Grove, decimating the community, and again destroying over 80 buildings within a three-block area. This conflagration killed four laborers and left over 500 people homeless (Sacramento Bee, November 10, 1937:1; Sacramento Union November 10 1937:1).

Rebuilding efforts began immediately in the district, however, some lots remained vacant. Three of the gambling halls were rebuilt and remained in operation until the mid-1950s, and some people reestablished their businesses on the old sites. By rebuilding their community between 1937 to 1940, Walnut Grove became the last Chinatown established in the Delta after nearly 70 years of Chinese American residency. In addition, it was the only Chinese American community to use stucco and Art Moderne/Modernistic architectural styles, adapted through the use of lighting, geometric patterning, and Chinese elements, to reflect specific Asian preferences.

Of particular importance to the Chinese American communities throughout the Delta during the period of significance (1937-1940) was Walnut Grove's Bing Kong Tong branch office (Chinese Freemasons Hall). The Bing Kong Tong established a branch in Walnut Grove by the 1910s to regulate gambling and other businesses, to manage general employer-employee relations, and to aid the men to find work. The group also performed important functions, such as sending the bones of deceased back to China for burial, helping indigent Chinese return to their native land, and acting as a mail service and bank for the laborers.

The Bing Kong Tong also mediated quarrels between members of the Chinese community and helped secure the repayment of debts. According to Leung (1984:24), it was Chinatown's most important social organization. At its height, Walnut Grove's branch had over 400 active members from throughout the Delta. Although Isleton and Courtland also had branches, these were forced to close due to declining memberships or fire by 1930; the rebuilding of the Bing Kong Tong Delta headquarters following the fire was an important step in maintaining the continuity of Chinese American social life in the Delta (Leung 1984). The ornate, distinctive architecture of the building also attests to the important role the association played in the daily lives of the community.



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**National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet**

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12. Parcel # 146-360-083  
William/Evette Smith  
PO Box 601  
Rio Vista, CA 94571
13. Parcel # 146-360-082  
Walnut Grove Homeowners Association  
PO Box 844  
Walnut Grove, CA 95690
14. Parcel # 146-360-079  
Walnut Grove Homeowners Association  
PO Box 844  
Walnut Grove, CA 95690
15. Parcel # 146-360-078  
Candy Myers  
PO Box 1125  
Walnut Grove, CA 95690
16. Parcel # 146-360-077  
Donald/Evelyn Lee  
PO Box 335  
Walnut Grove, CA 95690
17. Parcel # 146-360-076  
Alfredo/Lillian Batoon  
PO Box 1236  
Walnut Grove, CA 95690
18. Parcel # 146-360-074  
Walnut Grove Homeowners Association  
PO Box 844  
Walnut Grove, CA 95690
19. Parcel # 146-360-072  
Walnut Grove Homeowners Association  
PO Box 844  
Walnut Grove, CA 95690
20. Parcel # 146-360-069  
Sun/Jan Chan  
PO Box 306  
Walnut Grove, CA 95690

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National Park Service**

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21. Parcel # 146-360-068  
Ernesto/Lilia Reyes  
PO Box 784  
Walnut Grove, CA 95690
  
22. Parcel # 146-360-065  
Louise/Cynthia Suen                      and                      Donald/Evelyn Lee  
PO Box 438    PO Box 335  
Walnut Grove, CA 95690    Walnut Grove, CA 95690
  
23. Parcel # 146-360-064  
Walnut Grove Homeowners Association  
PO Box 844  
Walnut Grove, CA 95690
  
24. Parcel # 146-360-063  
Phil/Stacey Benson  
PO Box 43  
Walnut Grove, CA 95690
  
25. Parcel # 146-360-062  
Mike/Josephine Ventura  
PO Box 1012  
Walnut Grove, CA 95690
  
26. Parcel # 146-360-059  
Ernesto/Lilia Reyes  
PO Box 784  
Walnut Grove, CA 95690
  
27. Parcel # 146-360-058  
Ernesto/Lilia Reyes  
PO Box 784  
Walnut Grove, CA 95690
  
28. Parcel # 146-360-055  
Adela/Valentine Luza  
2178 Rosedale Avenue  
Oakland, CA 94601
  
29. Parcel # 146-360-055  
Adela/Valentine Luza  
2178 Rosedale Avenue  
Oakland, CA 94601

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- Chu, George  
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See continuation sheet

Previous documentation on file (NPS):

- preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested
- previously listed in the National Register
- previously determined eligible by the National Register
- designated a National Historic Landmark
- recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey # \_\_\_\_\_
- recorded by Historic American Engineering Record # \_\_\_\_\_

Primary location of additional data:

- State historic preservation office
- Other State agency
- Federal agency
- Local government
- University
- Other

Specify repository: \_\_\_\_\_

**10. Geographical Data**

Acreage of property 4.0

UTM References

A 

1	0	6	3	0	1	4	0	4	2	3	3	5	4	0
Zone			Easting				Northing							

C 

Zone			Easting				Northing							

B 

Zone			Easting				Northing							

D 

Zone			Easting				Northing							

See continuation sheet

Verbal Boundary Description

The Chinese American district extends from the Sacramento River on the west to the old Southern Pacific Railroad levee on the east and includes Market, Dye, and Tyler Streets. From north to south, the district encompasses all buildings between C Street and Bridge Street (historic E Street).

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Boundary Justification

The district boundaries include the three block area historically associated with the Chinese. Boundaries correspond to the area labeled as "Chinatown" as depicted on 1912, 1921, 1927, and 1933 maps of the town and correspond to limits noted in oral interviews.

See continuation sheet

**11. Form Prepared By**

name/title Mary L. Maniery/Historian with Judith Cunningham/Architectural Historian

organization PAR ENVIRONMENTAL SERVICES, INC. date January 8, 1990

street & number 2116 T Street, P.O. Box 160756 telephone (916) 739-8356

city or town Sacramento state California zip code 95816

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

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Lee, Ping

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1933 Update of 1927 Map of Walnut Grove, California. On file, Library of Congress, Washington D.C.

Southern Pacific Railroad Company

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United States Bureau of the Census

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1900 Twelfth Population Census of the United States of America.

1910 Thirteenth Population Census of the United States of America.