



Museum of Riverside Board Memorandum

City of Arts & Innovation

TO: MUSEUM OF RIVERSIDE BOARD **DATE: APRIL 28, 2021**
FROM: MUSEUM COLLECTIONS COMMITTEE **WARDS: ALL**
SUBJECT: ACCESSION INTO THE PERMANENT COLLECTION OF THREE BROWNWARE OBJECTS FROM THE ARCHAEOLOGICAL SITE OF WONG HO LEUN, RIVERSIDE'S CHINATOWN, AND ONE LATER, RELATED CERAMIC ITEM

ISSUE:

To approve a recommendation to accession into the permanent collection three brownware objects from the archaeological site of Wong Ho Leun, Riverside's Chinatown, and one later, related ceramic item.

RECOMMENDATION:

That the Museum of Riverside Board recommend that the City Council approve accession into the permanent collection of three brownware objects from the archaeological site of Wong Ho Leun, Riverside's Chinatown, and one later, related ceramic item.

BACKGROUND:

Wong Ho Leun, an American Chinatown, was founded in the late nineteenth century to house a community of immigrant Chinese, generally men, who came to Riverside to build canals, roads, bridges, and railroad lines; plant, tend, and harvest crops; and provide goods and services to the growing community. From 1870-1886, Wong Ho Leun was located on Ninth Street between Main and Orange Streets, subsequently relocating to the Tequesquite Arroyo where it remained until 1974.

DISCUSSION:

In 1984 and 1985, the archaeological excavations of the Wong Ho Leun Riverside Chinatown site occurred. The project was headed by the Great Basin Foundation with a variety of funding sources. The bulk of the archaeological materials comprise glass or ceramic artifacts, most in fragmentary condition. The Museum of Riverside (Museum) assumed responsibility for the collection, which the Museum named the Riverside Chinatown Collection. The collection currently comprises 304 accessioned objects in addition to photographs, documents, objects not

yet individually documented, and many boxes of sherds. The objects include coins, household utensils, clothing, jars, bottles, pots, dishes, bowls, pipe, bones, ceramics, plates, teapots, vases, utilitarian stoneware, tea bowl, spoons, metal objects, leather fragments, inkwells, and soya pots.

Local Chinese American businessman David Chang was a major supporter of the Wong Ho Leun Riverside Chinatown archaeological project. Several years ago, Mr. Chang gave the then Riverside Municipal Museum three soya pots that he had received from the site. In spite of their apparent good condition, they are understood to have been excavated from the site. A twentieth-century ceramic whiskey bottle depicting a stereotypic Chinese laundryman was also included in Mr. Chang's donation. A decision was not made at the time regarding accession into the permanent collection, meaning that the objects remained unprocessed. This recommendation resolves the status of the gift from Mr. Chang.

Justification for the recommendation to accession into the Museum's Riverside permanent collection of Chinatown holdings hinges on the significance of any Riverside Chinatown-related material. The Museum's Riverside Chinatown collection is primarily archaeological and fragmentary, meaning that these complete artifacts contribute materially to the collection's interpretive and research potential.

FISCAL IMPACT:

There is no fiscal impact associated with this report.

Prepared by:	Robyn G. Peterson, Museum Director
Approved by:	Moises Lopez, Deputy City Manager

