

ANNUAL REPORT

Making History Every Day!



FRESNO CITY & COUNTY
HISTORICAL SOCIETY

FISCAL YEAR 2025/26



Dear Members, Donors, and Friends,

As we reflect on Fiscal Year 2025–2026, I am filled with gratitude, pride, and optimism for all we have accomplished together. This year saw remarkable progress and renewed momentum as the Fresno City & County Historical Society continued its mission of preserving, sharing, and celebrating the rich history of Fresno County and the San Joaquin Valley.

For more than 107 years, our organization has served as a steward of the stories, artifacts, photographs, documents, and memories that define our community. Throughout decades of growth and change, we have remained committed to ensuring that the people, places, and events that shaped our region are preserved for future generations. This year, we strengthened our mission by adding the task of “capturing the present” in ways that will allow our materials and Oral Histories to be known as factual from the people that were actually living the experiences – no place for fake news here!

Among our most significant achievements was the continued advancement of The Archive on Kern. What began as an ambitious vision has become a transformational project that will redefine how local history is preserved, studied, and experienced in the Central Valley.

During the year, we advanced planning, strengthened strategic partnerships, refined architectural and operational concepts, and expanded community support for what will become a world-class research, preservation, and engagement center. More than a building, The Archive on Kern represents our commitment to safeguarding our collective memory while creating new opportunities for education, research, public programming, and community collaboration.

Our archival work also reached new milestones. Through partnerships with California Revealed and other preservation organizations, we expanded cataloging and digitization efforts, initiated the re-accessioning of important collections, and implemented new standards that improve accessibility and long-term preservation. As we modernize our archives, we remain mindful that every photograph, document, map, and artifact represents a human story. Preserving history means protecting the memories and voices that connect generations, ensuring they remain accessible for decades to come. Imagine having 175 years of history that can finally come into the digital age to be shared! We have some serious work to do for a long time to come.

We also expanded our commitment to inclusive storytelling through the Sharing Our Heritage Oral History Project. By recording the experiences and memories of residents from diverse backgrounds and generations, we are creating a more complete and representative record of our region's history while preserving stories that might otherwise be lost. Education and public engagement remained central to our mission.

Thousands of visitors attended our exhibitions, tours, lectures, workshops, History Happy Hours, neighborhood walking tours, cultural heritage experiences, and community conversations that made local history engaging and accessible.

Whether a student discovering local history for the first time, a family researching its roots, or a longtime resident sharing memories of a changing neighborhood, these experiences demonstrate that history is a living resource that helps us better understand our community and our future. Our signature events continued to inspire enthusiasm and generate vital support for our mission.

None of these accomplishments would have been possible without the dedication of our volunteers, staff, Board of Trustees, donors, sponsors, and community partners. Their generosity, expertise, and advocacy continue to strengthen our organization and expand our impact. On behalf of the Board of Trustees, thank you for your unwavering support. The Historical Society thrives because of a community that believes history has the power to educate, inspire, and connect us all.

Warm Regards,



FCCHS President

The years leading up to Fiscal Year 2025–26 marked one of the most significant periods of transformation in the history of the Fresno City and County Historical Society. Guided by a new strategic vision, the Society expanded its public presence, diversified revenue sources, increased educational programming, and strengthened its role as Fresno County's leading historical organization.

2019 – CENTENNIAL YEAR

As the Society celebrated its 100th anniversary, the Board of Directors authorized the completion of a comprehensive Strategic Plan and Seven-Point Vision for Success. Community feedback identified several priorities: increasing public visibility, expanding access to collections, improving visitor services, strengthening membership value, and creating more engaging programs and exhibits. These goals became the foundation for the organization's next phase of growth.

Holiday programming also expanded significantly, with *Christmas at Kearney* growing into one of the Society's signature annual traditions featuring themed décor, community designers, holiday teas, member receptions, and visits with Santa. Staff offices were relocated to create dedicated gallery space, allowing the Society to begin presenting rotating exhibits from its collections.

2020–2021 – COVID YEARS

When COVID-19 disrupted traditional operations, the Society quickly adapted by shifting from reliance on a single annual fundraiser to a more diverse funding model that included grants, contracted services, educational programming, and virtual events.

A redesigned website expanded public access to collections while introducing online ticketing, membership services, and retail sales. New virtual offerings—including the *Time Travelers' Education Program*, online tours of Kearney Mansion, virtual member events, and digital presentations from the Oral History Collection—kept the community connected during a challenging time.

One of the most important events during this time was the acquisition of the complete *Fresno Bee* Newspaper Morgue; an irreplaceable collection of history and journalism dating from the 1870s through 2017.

2022–2023 – GROWTH YEARS

With in-person programming restored, the Society expanded its educational and community offerings. New initiatives included the *Fields of Fresno Ag Tours*, immersive *Time Travelers' Education Days* for students, the History Happy Hour lecture series, and popular mystery dinner events.

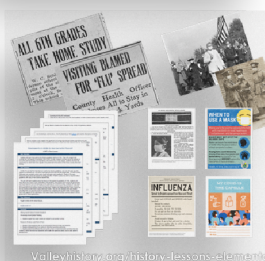
In **OCTOBER 2023**, the Society completed the acquisition of the original 1919 **Fresno Morning Republican** Printery Building to house the Society's Archive and host future exhibits and educational programming in the now-renamed **ARCHIVE ON KERN**.

2024–2025 – EXPANSION YEARS

By 2025, the Society was operating two National Register of Historic Places properties: The Archive on Kern and the Kearney Mansion Museum & Gallery. Together, these facilities expanded opportunities for preservation, research, exhibitions, educational programming, and community events while improving access to the Society's growing collections.

Over six years, the Fresno City and County Historical Society evolved from an organization primarily focused on preserving history into an active, community-centered institution dedicated to sharing Fresno County's stories through education, exhibitions, public programs, and historic preservation.

This transformation established a strong foundation for continued growth and the accomplishments highlighted in this Fiscal Year 2025–26 Annual Report.





The Fresno City & County Historical Society's Tour Program experienced significant growth this year, expanding opportunities for residents and visitors to connect with our region's history, culture, and agricultural heritage through a variety of engaging experiences.

Guided tours of **Kearney Mansion Museum and Gallery** remained the Society's flagship public offering. Presented every Friday, Saturday, and Sunday, these tours continue to be among the organization's most popular educational programs, introducing visitors to the life and legacy of M. Theo Kearney, while highlighting the agricultural foundations and practices that helped shape the San Joaquin Valley.

In July 2025, the Society introduced **Twilight Tours** of Kearney Mansion, providing guests with a unique opportunity to experience the three-story home during evening hours. Offered weekly on Thursday evenings, the program quickly attracted both first-time visitors and returning guests seeking a new perspective on the Mansion and its mysteries.



When Kearney Mansion temporarily closed for winter restoration work, the Society ensured continued public access to local history by launching guided tours at **The Archive on Kern** in February 2026. These tours invite visitors to explore archival collections, exhibits, and the grand printing press while gaining a deeper understanding of Fresno's past. Building on this momentum, the Society introduced **Courthouse Park Walking Tours** in April 2026. These guided experiences explore the monuments, landmarks, and civic history of one of downtown Fresno's most significant public spaces.

The Society also expanded its popular **Fields of Fresno Ag Tours** program with a new season of immersive agricultural experiences. These tours provide participants with behind-the-scenes access to working farms, ranches, and agricultural facilities, offering opportunities to meet growers, learn about production processes, and gain firsthand insight into the innovation and stewardship that drive Fresno County's world-renowned agricultural industry. The program continues to strengthen connections between urban and rural communities, while showcasing and celebrating the region's vital role in feeding the nation and the world.



Educational programming remained central to the Society's mission. **Time Travelers' Educational Days** once again provided hands-on learning experiences that bring our local past to life through demonstrations, activities, and guided exploration of Kearney Mansion. Traditional **school tours** also continued to grow in popularity, reflecting strong demand for place-based learning opportunities among educators and students. All school tours include pre-and-post visit curriculum available free of charge online at valleyhistory.org.

Together, these initiatives brought nearly 1,800 children to Kearney Mansion during the fiscal year. Through expanded public tours, innovative visitor experiences, agricultural programming, and impactful educational offerings, the Society has broadened our reach and strengthened our role as a leading provider of historical interpretation, heritage tourism, and community education throughout Fresno County.

This year we were especially encouraged to learn that the Society's **Time Travelers' Curriculum** has been incorporated into the Clovis Unified 9th Grade Ethnic and Cultural Studies lesson plans across the district.

August 1, 2025
August 10, 2025

Rotary Day at the Archive on Kern
From China to Fresno: A 150-Year Cultural Journey
Exhibit Opening*

August 15 & 16, 2025
August 30, 2026
September 5, 2025
October 1, 2025
October 23 to 26, 2025
November 5, 2025
November 15 to
December 15, 2025

Super Sale at the Archive on Kern
Fields of Fresno Ag Tour - Los Gatos Tomatoes
Private Ag Tour
Time Travelers' Education Day
Mystery at Kearney Mansion Events
Time Travelers' Education Day
30 DAY HOLIDAY Bid Bash



**November 21, 2025
to January 4, 2026**

**Christmas at Kearney:
Delivering Holiday Magic**

December 3, 2026
December 6, 2026
December 6 & 7, 2025
December 13, 2025
January 14, 2026
January 17, 2026
January 24, 2026

Kearney Council Dinner
Members' Holiday Reception
Santa Meet & Greet with Christmas Market
Holiday Tea Party at Kearney Mansion
Time Travelers' Education Day
Private Event at The Archive on Kern
**The Stories We Carry,
Oral History Screening & Panel Discussion***

February 7, 2026
February 11, 2026
February 18, 2026

Moonlight Mahjong*
Time Travelers' Education Day
Central Valley Community Foundation's
60th Anniversary Kick-Off

February 19, 2026
February 21, 2026

McClatchy Foundation Annual Board Meeting
Black History Month Education Day
at Fresno Chaffee Zoo

March 21, 2026

Ag Day at Fresno Chaffee Zoo

March 27, 2026

Stayin' Alive - A '70s Celebration Gala

April 14, 2026
April 16, 2026
April 25, 2026

Amy Tan Meet & Greet with Town Hall*
Time Travelers' Education Day
Fields of Fresno Ag Tour -
Blueberries, Roots and Rows

April 30, 2026
April 30, 2026

Fresno City College History Walking Tour
**Heritage In Action
Screening and Discussion***

May 6, 2026
May 7, 2026
May 9, 2026
June 12, 2026

Time Travelers' Education Day
Historic Preservation Month Kick-Off
Mother's Day Tea Party
Fields of Fresno Ag Tour -
Spice of the Valley

June 19, 2026

**Heritage in Action
Juneteenth Celebration***

June 26, 2026

Succulent Social at Kearney Mansion



FCCHS BY THE NUMBERS

TOURS & VISITORS

163 days of public tours
1390 online tour bookings
1498 walk-up tour guests

293 guests on private tours from **15** different organizations
43 group tour bookings (average three bookings per month)

6 Time Travelers' Education Days Students on field trip **1733**

EVENTS & COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

39 events
(average three per month)
4200+ event attendees

ARCHIVES & COLLECTIONS

400 objects accessioned into the archives

50 research requests completed

100+ oral histories and personal narratives collected

DIGITAL REACH

10,184
Grapevine subscribers

54 eblasts
(12 issues of *The Grapevine*)

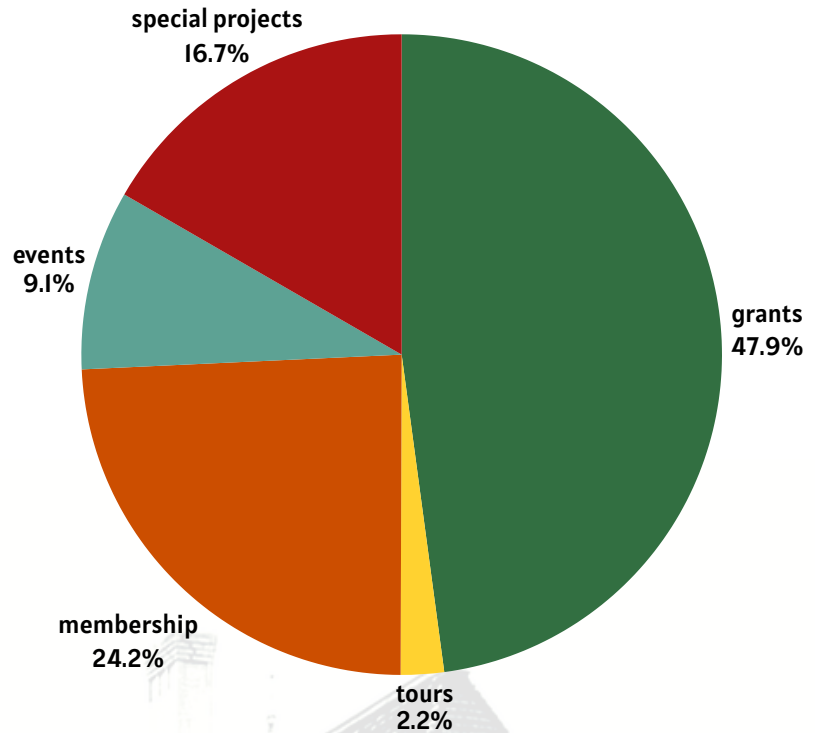
Website Traffic
80,000+ site sessions

Instagram
Followers: **3,891**
30-Day Reach: **5.6K**

Facebook
Followers: **14,926**
30-Days of Views: **39.2K**

FINANCE REPORT

REVENUE
\$1,749,529



INDIVIDUAL
GIVING

300

members & supporters

CORPORATE
SUPPORT

41

business and
organizational
partners

CAPITAL
CAMPAIGN
SUPPORT

FY 25/26 only

\$380,000

Over the past year, the Society strengthened community engagement through partnerships with more than 20 organizations across the county.

These collaborations expanded educational programs, cultural events, and public history initiatives, connecting residents with Fresno County's rich heritage. Highlights included supporting the Clovis Veterans Memorial District as it brought **The Wall That Heals** to the community and co-hosting a **Juneteenth Celebration** with Heritage in Action.



The following highlights four of these partner programs:

250 VOICES: ONE AMERICA, ONE FRESNO

As part of Fresno's preparations for the nation's 250th anniversary, the Society is partnering with the Mayor's Office on planning and executing commemorative activities. A key project, **250 Voices: One America, One Fresno**, is collecting 250 short interviews from community members between Memorial Day and Veterans Day, capturing diverse perspectives on Fresno and the nation. The recordings will be edited into a commemorative video to be preserved in a digital vault to be played in 2076 at our nation's Tricentennial, providing a unique snapshot of community identity and shared history in 2026.



CENTRAL VALLEY COMMUNITY FOUNDATION 60 STORIES THAT MATTER



The Fresno City and County Historical Society has been honored to partner with the Central Valley Community Foundation on its 60th anniversary and their thoughtful **"60 Stories That Matter"** initiative. Drawing on our local history expertise, the Society helped shape story selection, provide historical context, and contributed archival images. The series highlights the people, organizations, and communities that have shaped the Central Valley since the philanthropic Fresno Regional Foundation, now CVCF, was formed in 1966. Together, these stories celebrate six decades of impact and the rich, diverse history of the region.

2025/26 PROJECT PARTNERS

250 Voices: One America, One Fresno
BlackSNO

Catrina Project

Central Valley Community Foundation

Chinese American Museum Project

The City of Fresno and the Mayor's Office

Clovis Veterans Memorial District

Cornerstone Church/Wilson Theatre

Fresno Chaffee Zoo

Fresno City College

Fresno City Fire Department

Fresno County Historical Museum

Fresno County Sheriff's Department

Fresno Veterans Memorial Museum

Heritage in Action

Hmong Photographic Archive Project

KJWL Radio

KMJ Radio

KSEE24 - "On The Map" and "Central Valley Today"

San Joaquin Valley Town Hall

VALLEY LEGENDS...THE LEGACIES CONTINUE



A major and exciting project that kicked off in May was three years in the making! The launch of **Valley Legends...the Legacies Continue**, a renewed partnership between the Fresno City & County Historical Society, KMJ News Talk 580 AM/105.9 FM and KMJNow.com.

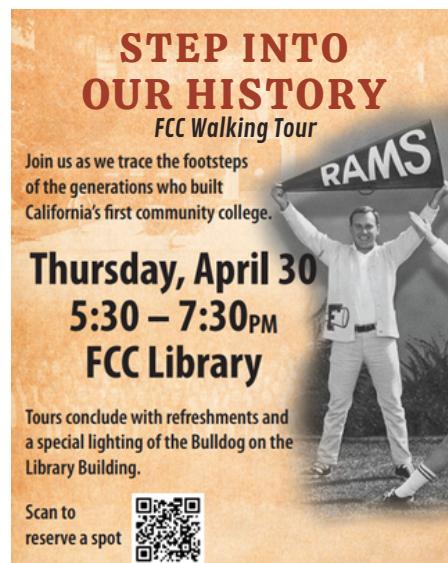
The series expands on **Legends and Legacies** while including a wider range of stories and bringing a modern-day thread that includes features on local athletes, agriculture, entertainers as well as photographs.

By utilizing our vast McClatchy Archive, we are even able to tell unique tales from the first days of our county. In keeping with modern-day technologies, the program's reach is being shared on digital platforms, social media, with archival images from the Historical Society's collections added to turn listeners into viewers.

Written and researched by Historical Society President Elizabeth Laval and narrated by Mark Standriff, the program airs twice daily, at 8:30am and 5:55pm and features three new stories each week.



FRESNO CITY COLLEGE HISTORICAL WALKING TOUR



The Fresno City and County Historical Society researched, developed, and authored a new Fresno City College campus history walking tour highlighting key sites, stories, and milestones in the college's development. Society staff also trained campus ambassadors and faculty to ensure a consistent interpretive experience.

Launched as a public tour on April 30th, in partnership with the FCC President's Office, the tour began at the campus library and crisscrossed the 115-year-old campus, home to the oldest Junior College in California. The evening concluded with a special lighting of the revered Bulldog head on the Library Building, recognizing the Fresno State era.

THE ARCHIVES

THE FCCHS ARCHIVES HOLD PERSONAL DIARIES, RECORDED ORAL HISTORIES, THOUSANDS OF PHOTOGRAPHS, AND A WEALTH OF WISDOM GAINED BY THE GENERATIONS THAT CAME BEFORE US. THESE TREASURES TELL US WHO WE ARE AS A COMMUNITY.



Back in 2019, during the Society's Centennial year, the organization's Board of Trustees and newly installed president, Elizabeth Laval, determined a separate building in downtown Fresno was necessary, expeditiously, in order to better share the treasures of the vast archive that deserved to be displayed.

Once **The Archive on Kern**, formerly the infamous Downtown Club, was secured, plans were painstakingly drawn up to convert this special place, listed on the National Register, into a county archive that would benefit the community for decades to come. Due to the reduction of available grant funds on the national and state level, progress has been slower than ideal, yet The Archives has experienced a productive and transformative time over this fiscal year, particularly exhibiting significant progress in collections stewardship, policy development, community engagement, and organizational collaboration.

During this period, a comprehensive overhaul of archival documentation and procedures was undertaken. Key documents, such as accession and deaccession forms, photograph use agreements, and other collection-related records, were updated to reflect contemporary archival standards and best practices. In addition, a detailed Collections Management Policy was developed to provide clear guidance on how, when, and what materials will be accepted into the Archive. This policy establishes a strong foundation for responsible collection growth and stewardship, ensuring that future generations of archival staff have a universally understood roadmap for managing our holdings.

Since 2025, the Archives has welcomed numerous significant donations, including photographs, documents, ephemera, and artifacts that assure the preservation of Fresno County history. The Archives has also responded to a wide range of research inquiries. **One particularly meaningful request helped a family uncover information about their Japanese American ancestors from Fresno and locate their final resting places.**

Among the most significant and newsworthy accomplishments this past year was identification of the provenance of the enigmatic **Belmont Lanterns**, uncovered by the archeologists of High-Speed Rail, and their eventual rehousing within the FCCHS Archive. All 82 of them!

The Archive is also host to numerous meetings and educational convenings. In May 2025, the Society partnered with *California Revealed* to host a workshop focused on digitization and collections management. The workshop provided local historical organizations with practical training on digitization methods, accessioning procedures, and the fundamentals of Collection Management Systems.

Additionally, the Archives has worked closely with the Fresno County Historical Museum and the Big Fresno Fair Museum to modernize their collections management practices, improve documentation standards, and assist with the digitization of the Fair Museum's holdings. These partnerships strengthen the preservation of Fresno County's shared heritage and reinforce the Society's role as a leader in local historical preservation.

EXHIBIT CASES AT CITY HALL

The Fresno City & County Historical Society curates four exhibit cases at Fresno City Hall. Installed on June 11th by the Museum Services team and the Society's Archivist, the new exhibits—part of **250: One America, One Fresno**—highlight Fresno's contributions during World Wars I and II and the local history of the Red Cross. Featured stories include a dedicated Red Cross nurse and an Army Air Forces pilot who gave his life in World War II, connecting Fresno's legacy of service and sacrifice to the nation's history.



FISCAL YEAR 2025/26 ACCESSIONED ITEMS AND COLLECTIONS (PARTIAL LIST)



July 2025

- 2025.7.1-5 Lion Headed Furniture - **Dave Herb**
- 2025.8.1-2 California Magazines - **Chuck Pansaros**
- 2025.9.1-30 Olivia King Family Collection - **Olivia King/ Bill W. King**
- 2025.10.1-93 Edison Gold Moulded Cylinders and Graphophone - **Linda Fischer**
- 2025.11.1-29 Fresno State Antique School Books - **Fresno State University Library**

August 2025

- 2025.12.1 Chinese Decorative Mask - **Jean Chaffee (Karen Westersund)**
- 2025.13.1 German Cross Church Class Photo - **Brad and Linda Fischer**

October 2025

- 2025.14.1-9 Downtown Trolley Rail Clip and Spikes - **Dale E. Claes**
- 2025.15.1-3 Fresno County Books - **William Eaton**

January 2026

- 2026.1-5 Fresno High Yearbook(74-76) & Graduation Cap Tassels - **Seth Garrison**

February 2026

- 2026.2 Pinedale Signal Corps Sweetheart Pillow Case - **Tamara Kuka**

April 2026

- 2026.3.1-100~ KSEE Photo Collection - **Colleen Pendergrass**

May 2026

- 2026.4.1-120 Eaton/Einstein Family Collection - **Joan Eaton & Paul Gibson**

June 2026

- 2026.5 Courthouse Marble Floor Tile - **Rachel Noia**





Through collaborative programming, educational outreach, and accessible public events, we continue to expand our reach while reinforcing the Society's role as a steward of Fresno County's collective memory.

The Society became a fiscal sponsor and mentor organization to four EAAC Project Grant Programs this fiscal year.

Hmong Photographic History & Culture Archive

From 2004 through 2012, Photographer Joel Pickford and a support team of scholars, social workers and interpreters captured more than 40,000 digital images of the Hmong Diaspora in California's Central Valley and in the homeland of Northern Laos.

This research collection comprises approximately 2,500 selected photographs organized into 90 subject folders. Every picture is captioned and each subject folder includes a narrative text.

Through the EAAC a website was launched to make this collection widely available to the public and help to foster understanding of and connection with our Hmong neighbors and to share their stories with the greater community.



Catrina Project: Seeds of Change

Recognizing the multicultural, often segregated yet vibrant communities west of the railroad tracks, this West Fresno Project focuses on the Mexican American experience as a vital thread in the area's history. Through the theme Seeds of Change, the project explores the social, political, economic, and cultural forces that shaped a transformative generation during the mid-twentieth century.

This was a pivotal era when the Mexican generation evolved into the Mexican American generation—one that expanded beyond traditional neighborhood boundaries and helped lay the foundation for the emerging Chicano movement. By highlighting community businesses, organizations, civic leaders, and cultural traditions, the project honors the individuals whose vision and perseverance fostered lasting change. Their stories, brought to life through oral histories, photographs, archival materials, and the music of the era, serve as a tribute to these pioneers who planted the seeds of change for future generations.

Heritage in Action: Black History Shaping Fresno's Future

Heritage in Action was a collaborative cultural initiative that culminated in a spectacular, multi-faceted Juneteenth celebration this past June 2026 at The Archives. This project brought together educators, historians, artists, and community leaders to celebrate and preserve the legacy of Fresno's African American community. Through grant funding received from the Expanded Access to Arts and Culture Cycle 2, the project featured an educational exhibit that explored the history, resilience, and contributions of Fresno's Black residents, along with panel discussions highlighting eight community leaders who reflected on the past, present, and future of the community. The project also included artists, performers, and cultural traditions. A major component of the project is an oral history initiative that has captured community members' personal and family histories.

These materials have been preserved for families while also contributing to the Society's archival collections and will form the foundation for a documentary film that will premiere in 2027, further expanding access history.



Chinese American Museum Project

The Chinese American Museum Project (CAMP) continues to grow as an important cultural heritage initiative for the Society. Developed in partnership with the Chinese Consolidated Benevolent Association, this project focuses on preserving and sharing the stories of Fresno's Chinese American community.

A major milestone for the project was the opening of the ***From China to Fresno: A 150-Year Cultural Journey*** exhibit at The Archive On Kern which created a dedicated educational space where visitors engage with artifacts, photographs, and historical narratives documenting the Chinese American experience in Fresno and the Central Valley.

CAMP programming has also included a number of public cultural programs, including Chinese Mahjong evenings exploring the history and traditions of the game and an evening lecture from author Amy Tan, reflecting on immigration and identity. Upcoming events include a traditional Chinese tea ceremony that celebrates the traditions and cultural elements of this revered ceremony, and a community Calligraphy workshop that introduces participants to the cultural and philosophical traditions associated with this ancient writing style. These programs provide meaningful opportunities for cultural exchange and have helped expand community participation in the Society's programming.



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