

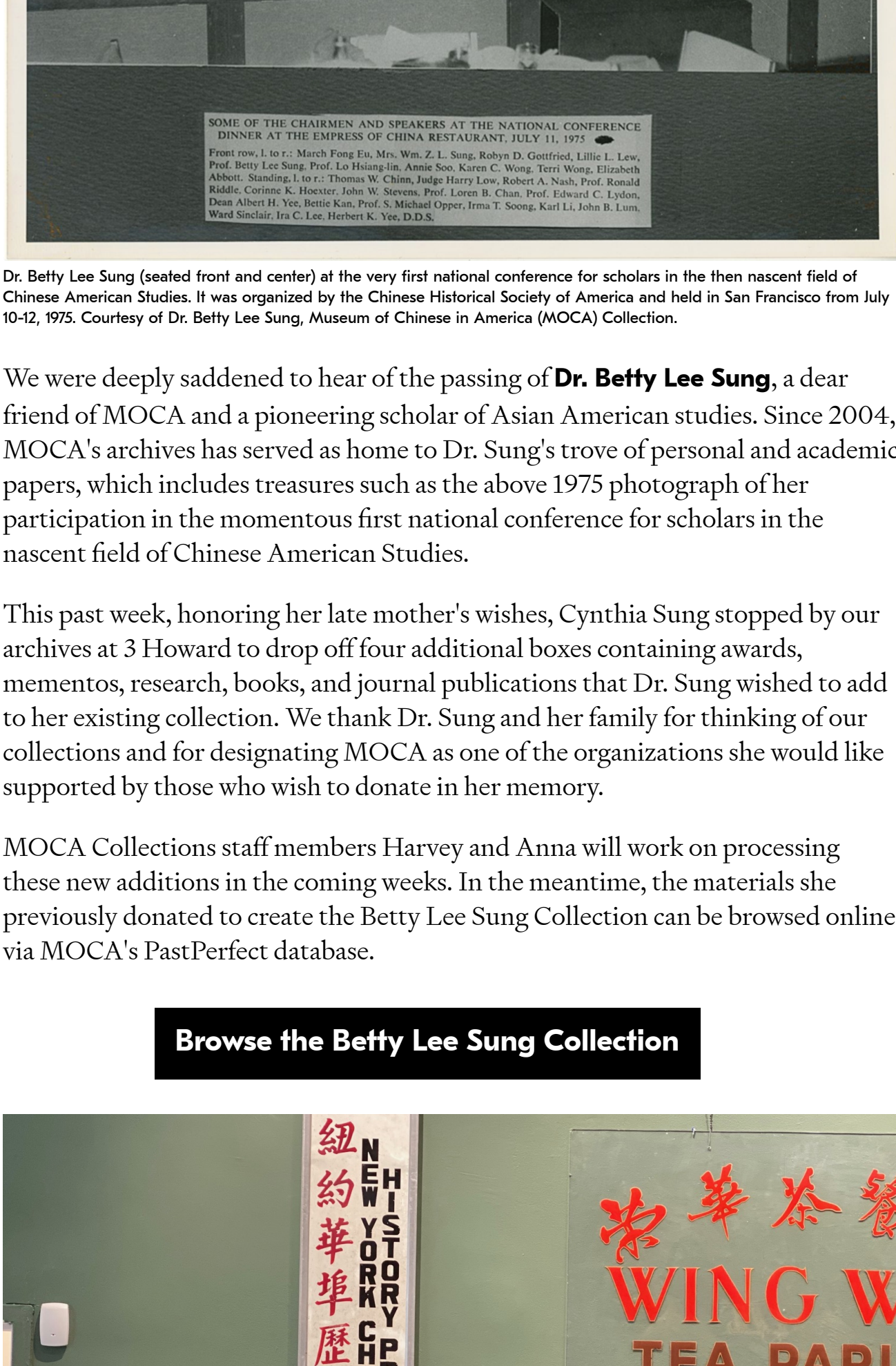
MOCA Collections

Newsletter

A monthly update on archival initiatives, work, and news by MOCA's Research and Collections Center

March 2023

New Additions to Dr. Betty Lee Sung Collection



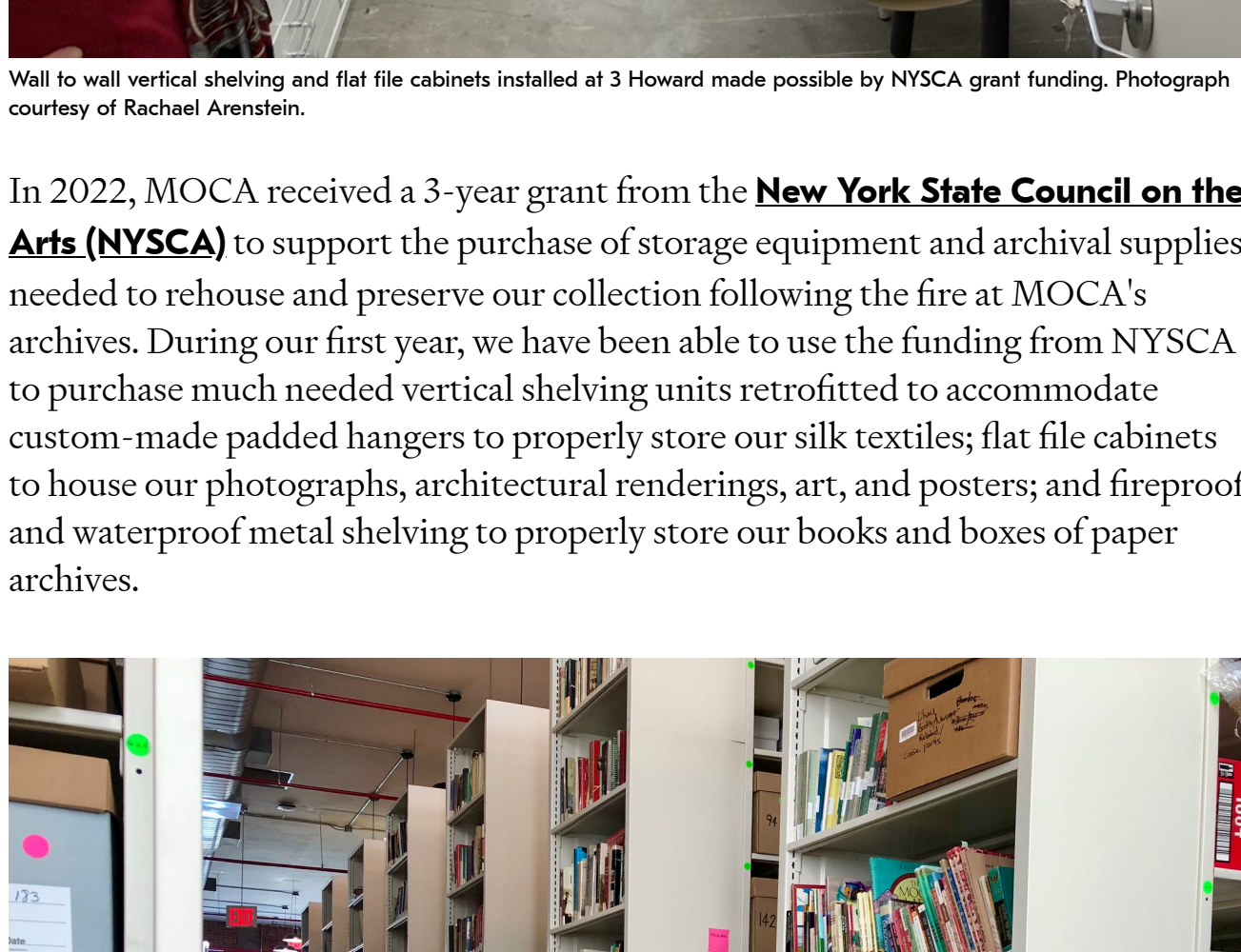
Dr. Betty Lee Sung (seated front and center) at the very first national conference for scholars in the then nascent field of Chinese American Studies. It was organized by the Chinese Historical Society of America and held in San Francisco from July 10-12, 1975. Courtesy of Dr. Betty Lee Sung, Museum of Chinese in America (MOCA) Collection.

We were deeply saddened to hear of the passing of **Dr. Betty Lee Sung**, a dear friend of MOCA and a pioneering scholar of Asian American studies. Since 2004, MOCA's archives has served as home to Dr. Sung's trove of personal and academic papers, which includes treasures such as the above 1975 photograph of her participation in the momentous first national conference for scholars in the nascent field of Chinese American Studies.

This past week, honoring her late mother's wishes, Cynthia Sung stopped by our archives at 3 Howard to drop off four additional boxes containing awards, mementos, research, books, and journal publications that Dr. Sung wished to add to her existing collection. We thank Dr. Sung and her family for thinking of our collections and for designating MOCA as one of the organizations she would like supported by those who wish to donate in her memory.

MOCA Collections staff members Harvey and Anna will work on processing these new additions in the coming weeks. In the meantime, the materials she previously donated to create the Betty Lee Sung Collection can be browsed online via MOCA's PastPerfect database.

[Browse the Betty Lee Sung Collection](#)



MOCA Curator Herb Tam and Director of Collections and Research Yue Ma with Cynthia Sung, daughter of Dr. Betty Lee Sung.

[Donate in Memory of Dr. Betty Lee Sung](#)

NYSCA Grant Update



Wall to wall vertical shelving and flat file cabinets installed at 3 Howard made possible by NYSCA grant funding. Photograph courtesy of Rachael Arenstein.

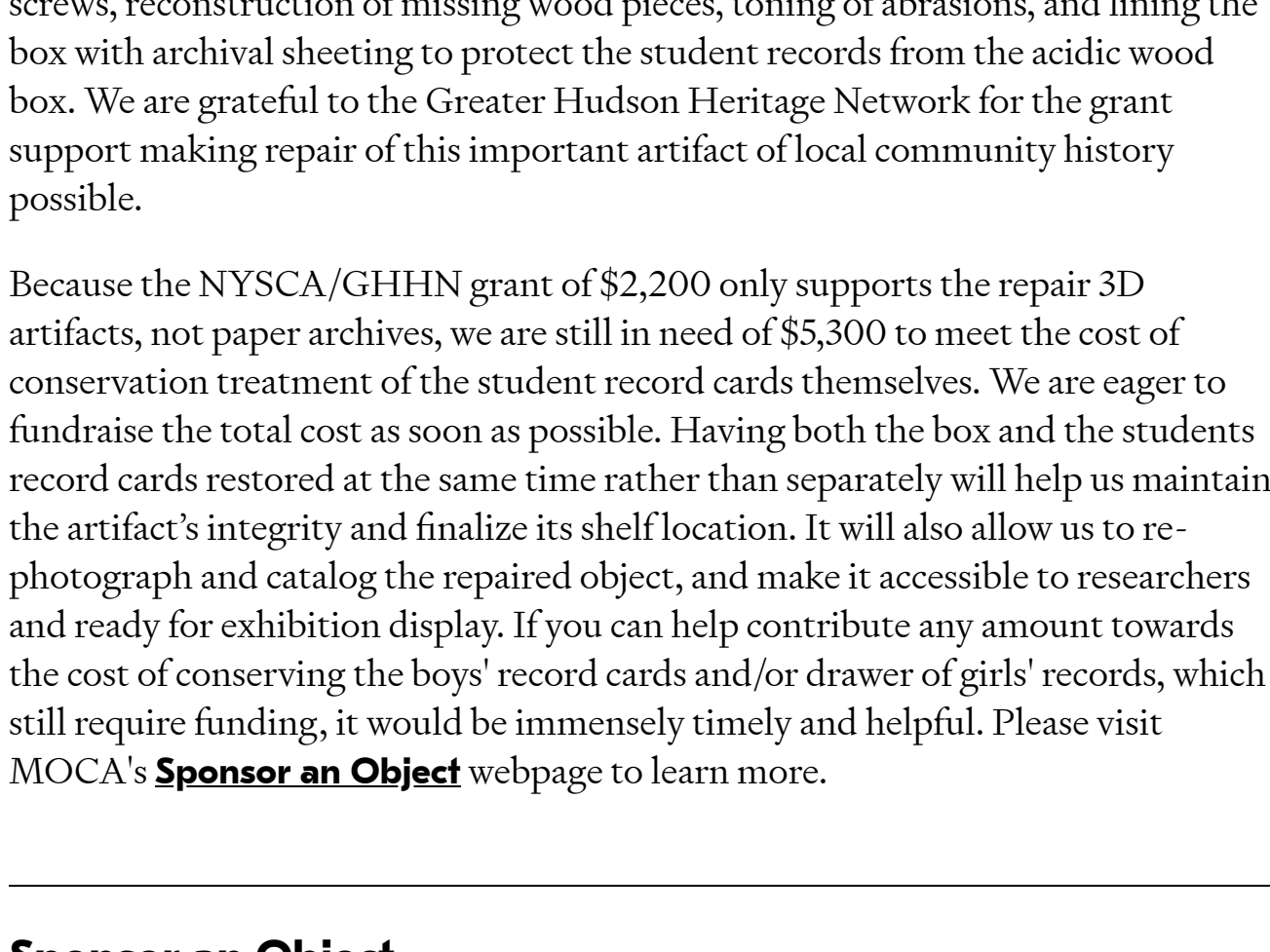
In 2022, MOCA received a 3-year grant from the **New York State Council on the Arts (NYSCA)** to support the purchase of storage equipment and archival supplies needed to rehouse and preserve our collection following the fire at MOCA's archives. During our first year, we have been able to use the funding from NYSCA to purchase much needed vertical shelving units retrofitted to accommodate custom-made padded hangers to properly store our silk textiles; flat file cabinets to house our photographs, architectural renderings, art, and posters; and fireproof and waterproof metal shelving to properly store our books and boxes of paper archives.



Library and shelf storage system made possible by NYSCA grant funding. Photograph taken by Anna Ng.

We gratefully acknowledge NYSCA for their generous multi-year support, which helps us meet our massive ongoing supply needs as we continue to rehouse and restore organization to the 85,000+ objects in our collection. MOCA's fire recovery work is made possible by the New York State Council on the Arts with the support of the Office of the Governor and the New York State Legislature.

MOCA Awarded NYSCA/GHHN Conservation Treatment Grant



Wooden drawer used to store Public School 23 (P.S. 23) student records, which will receive conservation treatment funded by the NYSCA/GHHN Grant.

We are excited to announce that MOCA is a recipient of a 2023 NYSCA/GHHN Conservation Treatment Grant! Awarded by the **Greater Hudson Heritage Network**, this grant will fund the repair of one of two wooden drawers used to hold academic and physical examination records of P.S. 23 students, some of which date as far back as the 1880s. One of the drawers holds the boys' records while the other was used to store the girls' records. The drawer which has been selected for funding was used to store the boys' records.



Exterior of P.S. 23 school building at 70 Mulberry viewed from Columbus Park. After the school closed in 1976, the building was repurposed into community organization space and became MOCA's home in 1984, shortly after it was founded. Even after the museum opened its new gallery space at 215 Centre Street, 70 Mulberry continued to house MOCA's archives until the devastating fire in January of 2020. Courtesy of Thomas Lee Jr., Museum of Chinese in America (MOCA) Collection.

The drawers of records are significant in that they help document the history of a community institution which adapted its education to meaningfully serve the needs of the immigrant and working-class community in which it was rooted. Recognizing that every member's labor was often needed to help families make ends meet, P.S. 23 in this era began to offer evening classes and accepted entire working families into their night school. Grandmothers attended English classes and mothers learned dressmaking, millinery, and other skills to earn extra income for their families.

Over later decades, the bounds of Chinatown gradually expanded to encompass P.S. 23 at 70 Mulberry, and by 1920, about 50 percent of students were Chinese. By 1950, they became almost entirely Chinese and Chinese American.

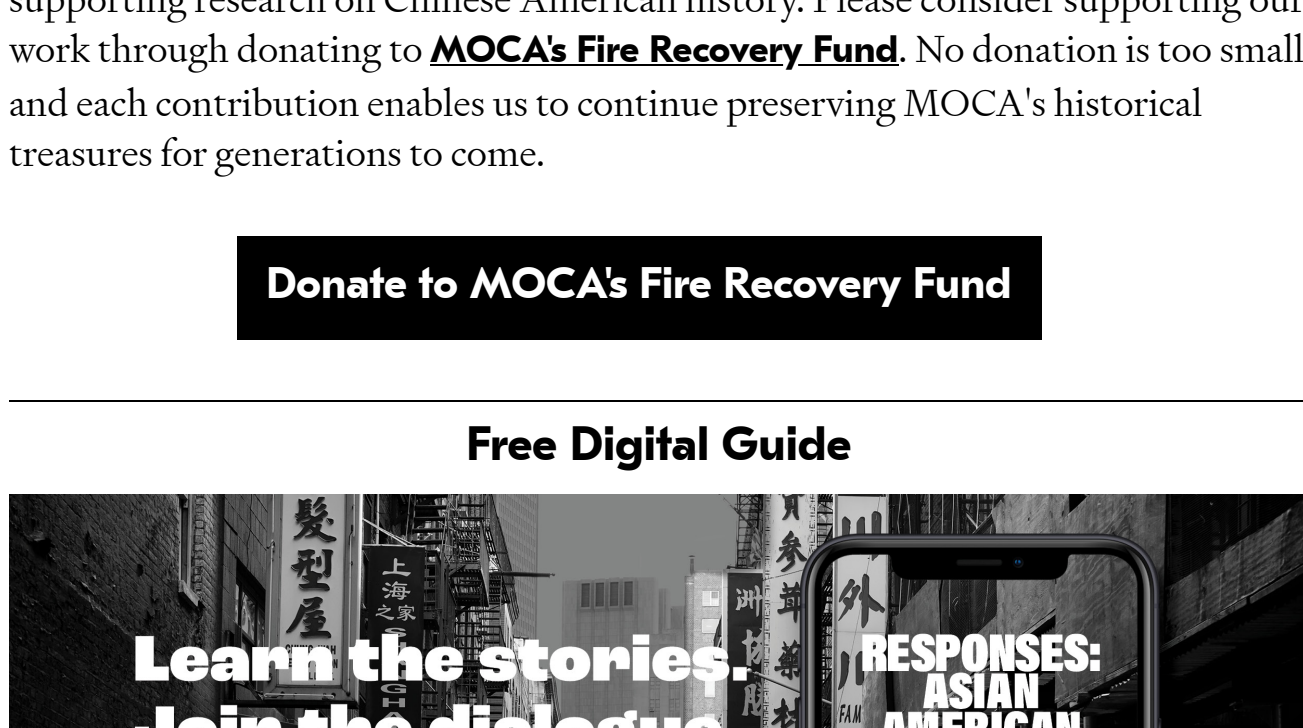


These photographs, taken ca. 1940, capture a P.S. 23 student body that by that time had become primarily Chinese and Chinese American. The second photograph is of a male student attending a woodworking class, and the third photograph shows older adult students attending the practical evening classes offered by the school. Museum of Chinese in America (MOCA) P.S. 23 Collection.

The grant will fund the conservation of the boys' record wooden drawer, whose damage includes abrasions to the wood, loose nails and screws, and loose wood planks with missing pieces and splintering edges. Treatment would entail a thorough dry and wet cleaning, degreasing of all metals, stabilization of the loose horizontal board and cracked and splintered wood, securing of loose nails and screws, reconstruction of missing wood pieces, toning of abrasions, and lining the box with archival sheeting to protect the student records from the acidic wood box. We are grateful to the Greater Hudson Heritage Network for the grant support making repair of this important artifact of local community history possible.

Because the NYSCA/GHHN grant of \$2,200 only supports the repair 3D artifacts, not paper archives, we are still in need of \$5,300 to meet the cost of conservation treatment of the student record cards themselves. We are eager to fundraise the total cost as soon as possible. Having both the box and the students record cards restored at the same time rather than separately will help us maintain the artifact's integrity and finalize its shelf location. It will also allow us to re-photograph and catalog the repaired object, and make it accessible to researchers and ready for exhibition display. If you can help contribute any amount towards the cost of conserving the boys' record cards and/or drawer of girls' records, which still require funding, it would be immensely timely and helpful. Please visit MOCA's [Sponsor an Object](#) webpage to learn more.

Sponsor an Object



In this New Year of the Rabbit, consider supporting MOCA's fire recovery conservation efforts by sponsoring an object! Sponsoring an object entails contributing any amount—large or small—to help fund the repair of a treasured piece of Chinese American history that was damaged during the fire.

On Fridays, we post a profile for a new object needing sponsorship on MOCA's Facebook, Instagram, and Sponsor an Object webpage. Each object is selected based on exhibition and conservation priorities, and each profile features research into the object's history and significance, an assessment and photo documentation detailing its damage, and a proposed course of conservation treatment.

MOCA offers **Chinese-language translations** for all of our Single an Object webpages. Readers can easily navigate from English to Chinese pages by clicking the **"En / 中"** icon on the menu bar at the top of MOCA's webpages.

To thank sponsors who donate at specified levels, we include acknowledgement of sponsorship in the object's catalog record, on an official certificate of sponsorship, and/or on exhibition display labels, depending on level of contribution. If you can support our conservation efforts by contributing any amount towards the repair of an object, please visit our [Sponsor an Object](#) page.

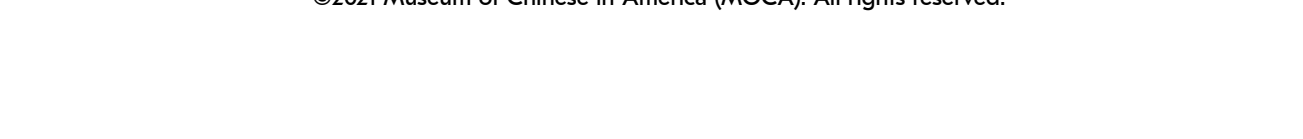
Please click on an icon above to learn more about **objects that still need additional sponsorship** to reach the total conservation cost goal.

[Sponsor an Object from MOCA's Collection](#)

Collection Stories

On Tuesdays, MOCA Collections publishes a new object story highlighting hidden gems within MOCA's collections. To read these engaging snapshots of Chinese American history, visit MOCA's [Collection Stories](#) page or follow [@mocanyc](#) on Facebook and Instagram. Stories on MOCA's website are published in both English and Chinese, and readers can easily switch between languages by clicking the **"En / 中"** icon on the menu bar at the top of MOCA's webpages.

Click on an icon below to navigate to one of our most recent object stories:



New Acquisition Highlights

MOCA continues to acquire new objects into our vast 85,000-object collection through a new formal committee process. Our monthly acquisition meetings convene staff from MOCA's Exhibition, Education, and Collections Departments, along with distinguished scholars, board members, and collectors to make informed determinations regarding proposed donations and acquisitions.

We have recently begun featuring objects newly acquired into the collection in bilingual story posts published Mondays on MOCA's website and social media. To switch from English to Chinese on MOCA's website, click the **"En / 中"** icon on the far right of the menu bar at the top of the page.

Please visit our [New Acquisitions](#) page to read more, or click on an icon below to navigate to our latest highlights:

Consider Supporting the Work of MOCA Collections

The small staff at MOCA's Collections and Research Center do vital work to care for and offer access to an extensive collection of 85,000+ objects documenting and supporting research on Chinese American history. Please consider supporting our work through donating to [MOCA's Fire Recovery Fund](#). No donation is too small and each contribution enables us to continue preserving MOCA's historical treasures for generations to come.

[Donate to MOCA's Fire Recovery Fund](#)

Free Digital Guide

Discover more about the Museum in our bilingual digital guide on [Bloomberg Connects](#), the free arts and culture app. Explore our permanent collection, get a behind-the-scenes look at our [Response](#) exhibition, and more with exclusive audio content and commentary. Download the app here.

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Google Arts & Culture

In 2021, MOCA launched a partnership with Google to make hundreds of digitized images of objects, sculptures, letters, photos, and videos from MOCA's collections available for free on the Google Arts & Culture digital platform.

MOCA's special virtual exhibition titled [Trial by Fire: The Race to Save 200 Years of Chinese American History](#), available exclusively on the platform, tells the story of the Museum's race against the clock to retrieve, rescue, and repair its archives. [Trial by Fire](#) is an original MOCA exhibition written, researched, and compiled from the Museum's daily social media posts, and primary sources such as videos and images, public records, and news reports that documented the first critical weeks of the fire, its aftermath, and recovery effort afterward.

In addition, over 200 digitized high-resolution images from MOCA's collections are available for the first time on the platform, as well as digital exhibits of [With a Single Step: Stories in the Making of America](#), MOCA's permanent exhibition, and the [My MOCA Story](#) video project, a crowdsourced social-media storytelling project launched by MOCA at the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic.

[Explore Google Arts & Culture](#)

MUSEUM OF CHINESE IN AMERICA

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