



Chinese American Citizens Alliance 52nd Biennial Convention 2013

RESOLUTION # 20 — Submitted by Portland Lodge

TITLE: Support for the Cultural Heritage Garden at Lone Fir in Portland, Oregon

WHEREAS, one of the Cardinal Principles upon which the Alliance was founded is to cultivate the mind through exchange of knowledge; and

WHEREAS, the Alliance's mission includes preservation of historical and cultural tradition; and

WHEREAS, Lone Fir Pioneer Cemetery located in Portland, OR is listed on the US Department of the Interior's National Register for Historic Places. It was established in 1855 and is one of the oldest of Portland's original cemeteries; and

WHEREAS, Lone Fir Pioneer Cemetery is a civic landmark and a treasured historic resource with an extraordinary, multicultural past. The cemetery sustains the memory of military veterans, firefighters and mental hospital patients and is a final resting place for people of diverse ethnicities and nationalities, including Chinese, Japanese, Russians, Ukrainians, Vietnamese and African-Americans.

WHEREAS, Lone Fir Cemetery is a timeless living history "park" that illuminates our past and our culture in unique and profound ways, and is woven into Portland's urban fabric; and

WHEREAS, early Chinese workers played an essential role in building the initial transportation infrastructure of the Pacific Northwest. Portland was the second largest Chinese community on the West coast by the 1890s, with 11 percent of its residents of Chinese origin; and

WHEREAS, due to rampant prejudice of the time, these pioneers were buried in a segregated part of Lone Fir Cemetery. That area was referred to as the Old Chinese Burial Ground and remained so for half a century; and

WHEREAS, the early Chinese faced severe discrimination and hardship, including being prevented by law from citizenship and owning land. As part of traditional Chinese culture, the bodies interred at Lone Fir were held only temporarily until their families could arrange to send their bones home to China to be buried with their ancestors. However, not all the bodies were disinterred; and

WHEREAS, for many of the Chinese pioneers who died in Portland, there was to be no reunion and their remains were permanently buried here. Many of these pioneers were interred in nameless graves and left unremembered by the area they worked so hard to build; and

WHEREAS, the local county had bulldozed the site where their graves lied, and erected a building on the land in the 1940s. The building slowly fell out of use and disrepair. In 2004, the County announced plans to auction off the site to the highest-bidding developer. Due to the outcry of community groups and discoveries of records showing that intact burials likely still existed at the location, a 2005 County-commissioned archaeological analysis confirmed these suspicions, and development plan were immediately halted.

WHEREAS, until recently, their stories have gone mostly forgotten and unnoticed by the larger community.

WHEREAS, the effort in recognizing the early Chinese immigrants, whose contributions to our nation are long overdue for recognition and celebration; and

WHEREAS, a Cultural Heritage Garden to the Chinese workers and asylum patients will be built to serve as an entrance plaza to welcome the public to the cemetery; and

WHEREAS, visitors will have a place to reflect and gain insight into the social climate of Oregon during the 19th century. The Chinese workers, although persecuted in both life and death, were instrumental in building the Pacific Northwest; and

WHEREAS, the Cultural Heritage Garden will offer long-overdue recognition to the Chinese pioneer communities who faced implacable racial segregation while they built this region from the ground up; and

WHEREAS, there is a need to raise a total of \$2.4 million to support construction; and

WHEREAS, the Chinese American Citizens Alliance has since 1895 fought to protect the civil rights of Chinese Americans and to support Chinese American communities and heritage.

NOW THEREFORE, the Chinese American Citizens Alliance hereby resolves:

1. To support the work of building the Cultural Heritage Garden at Lone Fir in Portland, Oregon.
2. To give \$2000.00 toward the funds to support its construction

Assigned: Finance

Action: <For Grand Council>

Date: <For Grand Council>