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Press Release

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Celebrate Southern Oregon's Chinese Heritage

Innovative Exhibit Retells the Story of Local Chinese

Medford, Oregon (January 11, 2016) - The Southern Oregon Historical Society proudly announces *Courage in the Golden Valley: Chinese History in Southern Oregon*, the Society's third annual exhibit. The exhibit tells the history of the Chinese in Southern Oregon through their own voices. Conveniently located at the Rogue Valley Mall, 1600 N Riverside Ave, the exhibit runs from February 6 through April 17, 2016.

Timed to coincide with the Chinese New Year celebration in Jacksonville, this exhibit draws on new research, including local archaeology, to retell the story of a much misunderstood group of people. Historians Bennet Bronson and Chuimei Ho note: "...we find ourselves tiring of victim narratives and think that Chinese-American historiography is not greatly in need of more." Instead the exhibit highlights the lives and accomplishments of Chinese individuals in an historic context, using interactives to encourage a personal connection to history.

"It's not enough to only look at the history of the Chinese community," says Debra Lee, President of the Southern Oregon Chinese Cultural Association. "This SOHS exhibit, *Courage in the Golden Valley*, helps us appreciate the bounty that the Valley now enjoys because of Chinese labor. They planted fields and built the railroads we use today and developed new efficiencies to reclaim gold from waste tailings."

The Chinese were among the first settlers to arrive in Southern Oregon, which is the location of the first Chinese community in the Pacific Northwest. Initially drawn by the 1850s gold rush, the work of the Chinese often left a visible impact on the landscape. They could make enough money working in the U.S. to cover all their own expenses and still send \$10 a month back to their families in China. In addition to mining they also worked on the railroad, in laundries, as domestic servants, and owned businesses. Their daily lives shaped the region as it grew into the unique and complex community we participate in today.

Digging Jacksonville, the Society's January 23, 2015 *Tales from the Collection* event, and *Underground Jacksonville*, the first in a new series of historian-led hikes sponsored by SOHS and the Ashland YMCA, will feature archaeologist Chelsea Rose whose groundbreaking research has revealed new information on the Chinese community of Jacksonville, Oregon.

For more information on *Courage in the Golden Valley* and other SOHS Chinese heritage events this spring, please contact Amy Drake, Director of Exhibitions and Community Engagement at 541-773-6536 x206 and amy@sohs.org or visit the Society's website at www.SOHS.org.