

LOCAL EXTRA

SECTION



FRIDAY
APRIL 12, 2013



FILE PHOTO

Lin Lu, 10, of Riverside, wipes the headstone of a Chinese immigrant during a 2012 Ching Ming observance at Olivewood Cemetery.

Ceremony to honor Chinese pioneers

CONTRIBUTED CONTENT

The fifth annual Ching Ming observance in Riverside is set for Saturday, April 13, at the cemetery where many of Riverside's Chinese pioneers are buried.

The 4 p.m. event is at Olivewood Cemetery, 3300 Central Ave. Participants and observers will gather in an older area of the cemetery with many Chinese graves. It is on the south side of Central Avenue, near the railroad tracks.

Many ethnic or religious commu-

nities have a time of year to remember and honor those who have died. Such remembrances can be in a church, at a temple or at the cemetery. The Chinese commemoration is Ching Ming, the "Grave Sweeping Day," or "Day of Purity and Brightness." On this day, families go to the gravesites, clean them and have a small offering and prayer ceremony.

In Riverside's Chinese community from the 1880s until the 1940s, it

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became the community's responsibility to take care of the Ching Ming ceremonies. Families, who normally performed the rituals, were home in China, because of discriminatory laws. Also, most of male residents of Riverside Chinatown never married because of laws prohibiting women from coming to California to become part of a family.

For about 60 years, no Ching Ming ceremony was held in Riverside, because there were few descendants of the original Riverside Chinatown residents to perform the ceremonies.

Saturday's event is open to the public. Activities will include a literal cleaning of the gravestones with scrub brushes and water, offerings of tiny cups of wine and flowers, prayers accompanied with the burning of incense, the offering of "celestial

money," and a small meal of remembrance, eaten at the cemetery. Participants may bring whatever supplies they would like to contribute, or may just observe.

A private ceremony for George Wong, the last resident of Riverside's Chinatown, will be held earlier in the day at Evergreen Cemetery, where he is buried.

Information: the Save Our Chinatown website, <http://saveourchinatown.org>