

DONGNIMMUN IN CALIFORNIA

Dongnimmun (The Independence Gate in Seoul) will be built in central California. The **Independence Gate** is a memorial gate located in Seoul, Korea. The gate was built to inspire a spirit of independence away from previous Korean arrangement as a Chinese protectorate. It was built in 1897.



The front view of Dongnimmun

A replica of Dongnimmun, in reduced scale, will be constructed at an intersection in the city of Reedley, California, about 15 miles southeast of Fresno. The Reedley-Dinuba area, as has been reported several times in the past on the pages of IEKAS and KASTN, is considered to be the 'Jamestown' for Korean-Americans, being the very first settlement of Korean-Americans in the mainland of America.

Previous reports on Reedley-Dinuba are found in

<http://www.duke.edu/~myhan/kaf0901.pdf>

<http://www.duke.edu/~myhan/kaf0907.pdf>

<http://www.duke.edu/~myhan/kaf0908.pdf>

An ambitious joint project to construct the memorial with the replica of Dongnimmun as its centerpiece (1/3 scale) was launched at the inaugural meeting in Reedley on September 25, 2009.

The meeting was attended by the representatives of the government of Korea, Korean Consul General of San Francisco, Mr. Bon-Woo Koo, Mayor Mary Fast of Reedley, Mayor Mark Wallace of Dinuba, the representatives of the Korean community in the area, and by officers of the Central California Korean Historical Society (CCKHS), headed by Professor Marn Cha of Fresno. Also a speech was given by Prof. Ellen Junn, newly appointed Associate Provost at the Cal State Fresno. Prof. Junn is a full blooded Korean of 2nd generation and she holds a Ph.D. in cognitive psychology from Princeton. [Both Chancellor Steve Kang of UC-Merced and Prof. Moo-Young Han, the Editor-in-Chief of SKAS, serve on the advisory board of CCKHS, but could not attend the meeting].

Consul General Koo Bon-woo from San Francisco delivered a check for \$90,000 from the Korean Ministry of Patriots and Veterans Affairs (Guka Bohun Cheo) to CCKHS to help construct the memorial. The memorial will include inscriptions honoring Ahn Chang-ho, Syngman Rhee, Kim Ho Charles, and Kim Hyeong sun (Harry). The two Kims, not related to each other, founded the Kim Brothers orchard and farm that became the first producer of Nectarines. The original office of the Kim Brothers is just across the street from where the memorial will be erected.

City of Reedley's in-kind contribution towards this project is valued at \$100,000 and contributions from the Korean community comes to \$30,000 so far with more fundraising to continue.

The program at the inaugural meeting included:

1. Welcoming Remark by Mayor Mary Fast, City of Reedley (introduction of participants from Reedley)
2. Welcoming Remark by Mayor Mark Wallace, City of Dinuba (introduction of his city staff)
3. Remark by Dr. Ellen Junn, Associate Provost for Academic Affairs, California State University, Fresno
4. Keynote Speech by Consul General Koo Bon-woo of the Korean Consulate in San Francisco, the Republic of Korea
5. Thanking remark by Marn J. Cha, CCKHS Chair followed by an introduction of participants from the Korean community

Below are two pictures, one is the artist's rendering of the memorial to be built and another is a photo of the surroundings of the Gate in Seoul today.



