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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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CELEBRATION SET TO KICK OFF FIRST PHASE OF \$600,000 REHAB OF ISLETON'S HISTORIC BING KONG TONG BUILDING

Sacramento, CA | Officials from Sacramento County, Sacramento Housing and Redevelopment Agency (SHRA), California Cultural Historical Endowment (CCHE) and Isleton Brannan-Andrus Historical Society (IBAHS) will celebrate the official start of a \$600,000 rehabilitation project to stabilize the historic Bing Kong Tong building at 29 Main Street in Isleton on Monday, March 3 at 11 a.m.

Designated a historic structure rebuilt after a fire in 1926, the Bing Kong Tong building represents a significant example of Chinese American architecture, as well as a tangible connection to the town's cultural heritage.

"The restoration of the Bing Kong Tong building is an important milestone in the ongoing efforts to highlight and preserve for future generations the historical, cultural and architectural contributions of the early Chinese settlers in the Sacramento River Delta," said Sacramento County Supervisor Don Nottoli.

The "tong" or meeting hall served as a community center organized under a benevolent society which operated a Chinese language school and offered the local Chinese Americans social services and a place to gather. Eventually displaced by Federal immigration laws that excluded Chinese from entering the United States, the town's Chinese population dwindled from 1,500 to a very small number of residents today. Vacant since the 1940's, the building is in a severe state of disrepair, though it is thought to be the only building of its type in the nation constructed of a tin sheathing that covers the frame structure.

The building will be eventually used as a museum and community space for the City of Isleton. This phase of the rehabilitation will preserve the structure and restore its exterior to enhance the cultural significance of both the architecture and the city's historic district.

"The work that we are beginning here will do much more than just stabilize a building, replace the roof and windows and clean up some environmental remnants," said SHRA Executive Director La Shelle Dozier. "We are breathing new life into a dormant chapter in the life and times of Chinese and Chinese Americans who settled in Isleton so that the local community and visitors can learn and appreciate their valuable contributions to the Sacramento region."

"IBAHS received their first grant from CCHE in 2011 for \$140,800. There were matching funds from Isleton's Redevelopment funds of \$41,000. These funds were taken back by the state. Since that time, 5th District Supervisor, Don Nottoli, set things in action. He introduced us to SHRA and their staff worked hard to get IBAHS underway on this historical project," said Chuck Hasz, IBAHS President.