

Launch Of The 200th Anniversary Of The Chinese In Hawai'i 200th Chinese Anniversary Committee

The year of 1989-90 was designated as the 200th Anniversary of the Chinese arrival in Hawai'i. Warren Luke, president of Hawai'i National Bank, was named as chairman of this project.

The beginnings of this important year were not auspicious. The Chinese communities were split into factions with varying ideas regarding how to celebrate the bicentennial. The committee leadership, lacking a united force, felt that a strong kick off event was absolutely essential. An initial high profile event was thus deemed critical not only for external reasons, but internally—a successful event would coalesce the Chinese community and galvanize support for the committee's leaders.



The timing for the kick-off could not have been worse: the weekend after New Year's. The initial idea was to hold a craft fair at a city park—a weak concept, given that many pre-Christmas craft fairs are held in Honolulu and people had been shopping and celebrating for two months. Support would not have been high for simply another fair.

Chairman of the kick-off event, Stuart Ho, had worked successfully with The Limtiaco Company in the past and approached them with this challenge. The answer: constructing the World's Longest Dancing Chinese Dragon and breaking the Guinness Book of World's Records. The dragon would "come to life" in Chinatown and proceed to Thomas Square—the site of the craft fair.

Intense print and television coverage of the construction of the dragon ensued. On the day of the event, thousands of Honolulu residents lined the streets and then followed the dragon into Thomas Square. They not only stayed for opening formalities but purchased all available food from the booths by 11:00 a.m.

The event was a rousing success with tremendous media coverage and Warren Luke's administration was firmly established.