

# Citizens' Memories of Moon Lake

By Gou Wen

Since its excavation in AD 636, Ningbo's Moon Lake (Yuehu) has been a quintessential landmark and the epitome of the city's cultural vibe. As the saying goes, "half of Ningbo's history took place on the shores of Moon Lake."

What is Moon Lake like in citizens' hearts? We spoke to three citizens who each has a poignant personal story about their love for the beautiful Lake.

## Shen Yiming: In 1997, I took thousands of photos around Moon Lake

My name is Shen Yiming. I am in my seventies. I am the honorary chairman of the Ningbo Photographers Association.

I was born and raised in Ningbo. My childhood home was near Chenghuangmiao (the City God Temple), within sight of Lingqiao Bridge and Tianfeng Tower. Although my home was not far from Moon Lake, I did not go there often when I was a student, except for one spring trip in middle school when we all went boating on the Lake. At that time, the rivers and streams crisscrossing the city were still interconnected, and the water was very clean.

It wasn't until the 1990s that I began exploring the areas around Moon Lake in earnest, this time with camera in hand. In those years, the old downtown area of Ningbo was undergoing renewal. Many residents had to move out of their old dwellings to newer neighborhoods. I wanted to use photography to capture



Aerial view of Moon Lake.

[Photo by Xin Zhicheng]

the most authentic lifestyles in the old urban centers of eastern Zhejiang.

In 1997, I rode my bike up and down Yanyue Street, Hui-zheng Lane, and other alleyways near Moon Lake whenever I had spare time, taking thousands of pictures of ordinary residents going about their day.

People and their ways of life always feature most prominently in my photos, much more than the buildings they live in. In summer evenings, residents would set up rattan chairs and

bamboo beds out on the street, in the cool open air. Children would gather around old people, listening to their stories. Now, these scenes are part of our fond memories of how the area used to be.

## Xu Jufen: My "Personal Lakeside Garden"

I am Xu Jufen, and my home is on Yunshi Street, just 150 meters east of Moon Lake.

I was born here in November 1954 and grew up on the banks of Moon Lake. Then, I moved when I got married...to a man who lived on the north shore of Moon Lake!

For more than 60 years, my entire life, I have been close to Moon Lake.

So many of my childhood memories were formed here. In the summer, I would go to the Lake with my brother, who would jump into the water and splash around with the other boys. There were many rock gardens and bamboos groves

around the Lake, where we often played hide and seek.

In those days, people took their bedsheets and other large items to the waterfront stone landings and washed them in the Lake. In winter, every family made preserved vegetables. Bundles of fresh vegetables were sun-dried, then carried to the waterside to be rinsed.

In my heart, Moon Lake will always be a part of my home, almost like a private garden. Every time the landscaping around the Lake is renewed, I feel as if my home is being re-decorated. I hope the Moon Lake continues to maintain its cultural significance and stays beautiful forevermore.

## Feng Yong: Two Generations' Memories

I am Feng Yong, a Ningbo native. I grew up in Haishu District and went to Haishu Central Primary School, not far from Moon Lake. Moon Lake is deeply etched in my childhood

memory, because there used to be a children's amusement park near the Lake, where we would go every year on Children's Day.

In the 1990s, my parents moved to a housing complex very close to Moon Lake. We witnessed the demolition of old homes along Zhenming Road to make space for a new lakeside park. Some years later, my daughter was born. She grew up in my parents' home and spent her entire childhood playing in the park on the south side of the Lake. She knows the park as well as the back of her hand. She and her friends would run around in the flower bushes, fly kites, fish, and have snowball fights as we adults sat around on the lawn chatting, only going home when the sun had set.

Moon Lake holds childhood memories for myself and for my daughter. Starting in April 2019, I spent nine months taking pictures around the Lake and wrote twelve essays about the Lake's notable sights. It is both a memoir and my love letter to Moon Lake.



Lakeside residents, 1997.

[Photo by Shen Yiming]

## 双语汇 Different Tongues

# 南塘老街：特色街区，江南古韵

By Xu Zhuowei

Nantang Old Street is a commercial block where Ningbo's unique history and culture has been preserved. Consisting of South Street and North Street, the block is crisscrossed by 300 meters of lanes and alleyways lined with traditional residential buildings, shops, and ancestral worship halls.

南塘老街是展现宁波城市特征的历史文化特色商业街区，分为南、北两街。街区保留了三百多米的传统街巷，现存居住院落、商铺、祠堂等。

Most of the architecture at Nantang Old Street are residential homes built in the Ming and Qing dynasties. Their courtyards

and gardens are tastefully adorned with traditional-style opera stages, decorative pavilions, and covered walkways.

老街建筑主要以明清的江南民居风格为主，建有戏台、八角亭、风雨长廊等传统建筑。

In 2012, Nantang Old Street was reopened after renewal, which preserved the historical and cultural legacy of the original architecture. Together, the shops, flagstone paths, crow-stepped gables, and waterfront docks form a charming portrait of a classic southern China water town.

2012年，南塘老街修缮重新开放，保留并体现原有街区的历史风貌和人文风情。老街石板路、马头墙、河埠头等组成的江南水乡风貌令人流连忘返。



Nantang Old Street. /南塘老街。

[Photo by Tang Yan] 唐严摄

## SPOTLIGHT

### A Special Exhibition Celebrating Ningbo's 1,200<sup>th</sup> Anniversary

By Dong Na

The special exhibition *Convergence—Special Exhibition for the 1,200<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of Ningbo's Founding* will open at Ningbo Museum, showcasing the origin and development of Ningbo through millennium-old artefacts and giving the public a fresh perspective into the city's 1,200-year history.

He Yufeng, curator of the exhibition department of Ningbo Museum, said that the exhibition brings together 487 artefacts from the Museum itself as well as the Ningbo Cultural Heritage Management Institute, Tianyige Museum, and many other organizations. Many items are being displayed publicly for the very first time.

The exhibition mirrors the layout of Ningbo's earliest downtown area; the partitions represent the city's old inner perimeter walls. To the southeast, there is Tianfeng Tower, even older than the city walls; in the northeast, there is the Heyi Avenue Port; in the northwest, there is the Confucius Temple in Zhongshan Square; and in the southwest, there are the historical sites around Moon Lake.

The 487 artefacts include archeological documents, building parts from historical architecture, porcelain items, religious objects, and cultural relics. These artefacts are the result of more than 40 archaeological excavations in the past 50 years. In addition, there are also over 200 historical photos on display.

Many of the porcelain items were meant to be exported to other countries via the ancient Maritime Silk Road. They prove that not only was Ningbo a center of sophisticated porcelain production, it was also a portal through which porcelain made across China were shipped to the rest of the world.

Also of note are relics excavated from Tianfeng Tower's underground palace. Tianfeng Tower was the tallest building in Ningbo in ancient times. On the lowest level of the Tower's underground palace, a large number of precious Buddhist cultural relics from the Song and Yuan dynasties were found.

Due to its strategic location, for centuries, Ningbo has been a gateway for trade and cultural exchanges between China and the other East Asian countries. Buddhist practices, widely practiced in China, also spread to Japan and Korea. The Baoyun Temple and Yanqing Temple mentioned in the exhibition are testaments to those historical international ties.

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