The Forgotten Contributions of Napa Valley Chinese Immigrants, 1870-1900

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A Thesis in the Field of History

for the Degree of Master of Liberal Arts in Extension Studies

Harvard University

May 2022

Abstract

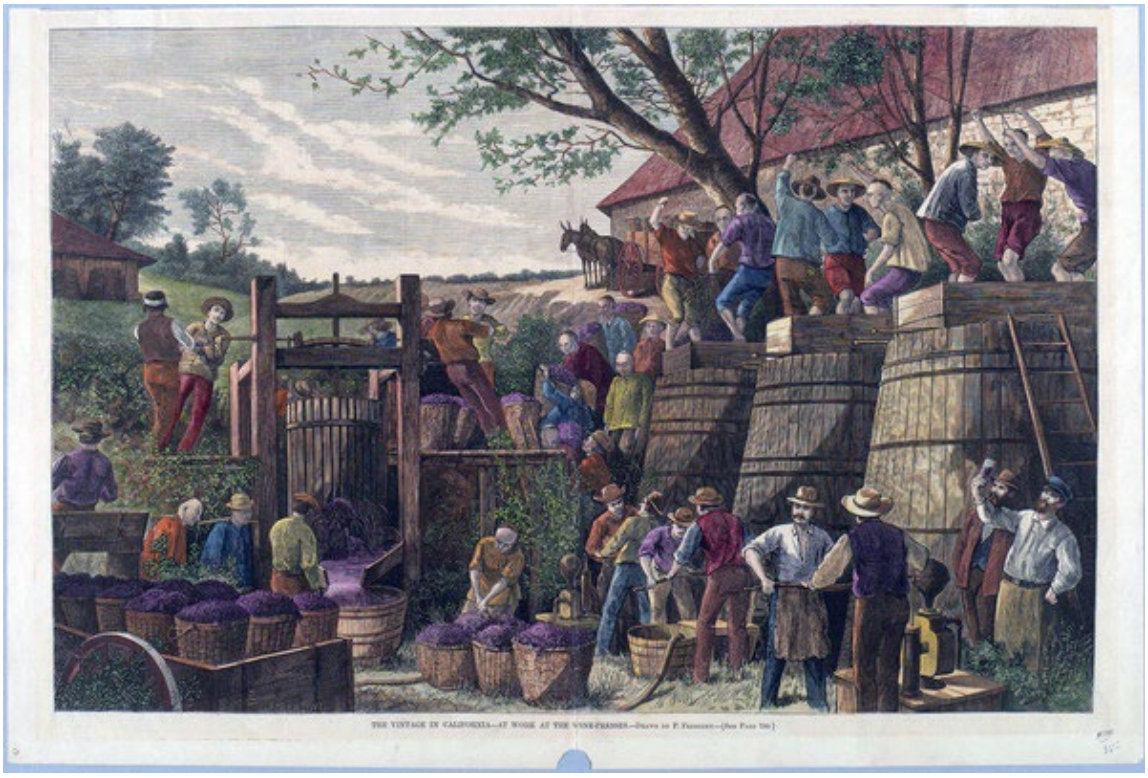
Between 1870 and 1900, Chinese workers contributed significantly to every major area of the Napa Valley economy. Inexpensive Chinese labor was critical to the success of diverse areas of the economy such as viticulture, hop growing, leather tanneries, quicksilver mining, road and bridge construction, farm labor, retail, railroad maintenance, laundries, domestic service, and cooks. Chinese workers were remarkably successful given the intense discrimination they faced socially, economically, and politically. They lived in every town in the Napa Valley, but they were not allowed to participate in common, everyday activities with the rest of the townspeople. Yet at the same time they were constantly disparaged for not assimilating.

They were not allowed to live among the people they worked for and had to reside in crowded ghettos and tenement housing. There was almost no opportunity for love, marriage, or a family of their own. They kept their cultural identity through religious observation in temples known as Joss Houses and through membership in organizations like the Chinese Free Masons that operated as stand-ins for the families left behind. They had to deal with a legal system that was both overtly and implicitly racist and refused, at almost every turn, to bring justice to aggrieved Chinese people.

They were eventually driven from the Napa Valley, not by violence or boycotts sponsored by various local Anti-Chinese Leagues, but by demographic trends brought by the 1882 Chinese Exclusion Act and subsequent legislation. Their contributions to the Napa Valley have been almost wholly forgotten, yet their assistance was uniquely critical

to the success of the entire region and provided the economic foundation for an area now known around the world for wine, food, and incredible beauty.

Frontispiece



Author's Biographical Sketch

I grew up in Napa and spent the first eighteen years of my life thinking that it was perfectly normal to have thousands of tourists descend on your hometown every weekend. After graduating from Vintage High School, I received an engineering degree from UC Berkeley and spent the next thirty years or so in the computer software field. I was able to retire from my tech career to pursue my growing interest in history. Getting a Masters' degree in history from Harvard has been a dream and it has been both an absolute pleasure and an amazing intellectual journey.

As a child in Napa schools, we learned about local history. We learned about the Native Americans that populated the Napa Valley for thousands of years before the coming of European immigrants. These included people that historians call the Wappo and Southern Patwin tribes, though they called themselves names like Mishewal, Mutistil, and Meyakama. As schoolchildren we would take field trips to Glass Mountain, a volcanic peak south of Howell Mountain near St. Helena to see the obsidian covering the mountainside and try to find arrowheads left by the Wappo. We learned about the California Missions founded by Franciscan priests and the arrival of the Spanish to claim land around Napa in the late 18th and early 19th centuries. We also learned about George Yount, for whom Yountville is named, who got one of the first land grants for a white European in the Napa Valley in 1836. From then on, local history was mostly about white Europeans settling and civilizing the area. At no time that I recall were Chinese ever mentioned. I had no idea they were a part of Napa Valley history nor how they were treated. Their contributions were ignored or lost in the overall narrative of Manifest Destiny, common at that time.

I have ancestors on both sides of my family tree that were among the earliest European settlers in the Napa Valley and a few of them appear in this thesis due to their dealings, some not so favorable, with local Chinese residents. John York, my great-great-great grandfather on my father's side, was born in Tennessee in 1820 and arrived in the Napa Valley in 1845, where he planted the first vineyard in Napa County.[1] He participated in the 1846 "Bear Flag Revolt" which was the first insurrection by Americans attempting to wrest control of California from Mexico. He carried the U.S. Flag from Sonoma to Sacramento, where it was raised for the first time.[2] By all accounts he was a tough, irascible, farmer - which may explain his coarse behavior toward a poor Chinese worker who was hired to cut some wood for him as recounted later in this work.

His grandson, Rodney McCormick, my great-great-uncle, documented an oral history of "Grandfather York." The oral history was published by Napa County Historical Society, which is why we have the story about the unfortunate Chinese laborer – one of the few first-hand accounts of a white farmer hiring (and then threatening and attacking) a Chinese worker in the late 1800s. Rodney, known as "Uncle Rod," also recounted his own experience terrorizing a group of Chinese vineyard laborers by pretending he was the devil, which I will present later when discussing Chinese residents and their religious beliefs.

On my mother's side, my great-great grandfather Lorenzo Carbone was the first Italian to settle in Napa in 1863. He presaged the wave of Italian immigrants that would

[1] "Mr John York," *St. Helena Star*, March 18, 1875, 3.

[2] *History of Napa and Lake Counties, California*. Slocum, Bowen, & Co, 1881, 596

eventually displace Chinese labor in many jobs in the Napa Valley around 1900, especially working in the vineyards. He and his two brothers, according to family lore, emigrated from Italy to escape a murder charge, which was later dropped. He was a farmer, not a winemaker, but his brother opened Antonio Carbone Wine Cellar and Italian Garden in Napa in 1870.[3] A potato field in Napa belonging to Lorenzo, or one of his brothers, was the site of the murder of Yeg Chum in 1894, which I will discuss when I examine violent crimes against Chinese immigrants.

I was unaware of any of these familial connections to the history of Chinese in the Napa Valley when beginning this thesis, but it makes this kind of history all the more personal and worth exploring.

[3] It is still operating as a winery today under the name Favia. "Favia Erickson Winegrowers – History," accessed October 24, 2021, https://www.faviawine.com/history.

Dedication

This work is dedicated to the two best editors a writer could ask for – my children Emily and Scott McCormick, who have spent countless hours throughout my entire Masters' program editing and providing tremendous feedback on many, many papers. Though they have their own careers in public health and software, they always found time to help make papers clearer and more eloquent. I would also like to dedicate this thesis to my wife, Colleen, who not only discovered the Harvard masters' program for me but also has been very supportive of my pursing this dream.

Finally, I would like to dedicate this thesis to the countless Chinese people who made the Napa Valley their home between 1870 and 1900. You worked so hard, and we should have treated you much better. We owe you a debt of gratitude and I hope this thesis and any subsequent publications help make your contributions known and appreciated.

Acknowledgments

I would like to acknowledge several people and organizations who contributed to this thesis. The local historical societies have been particularly helpful. My first exposure to this topic was an article by Mariam Hansen of the St. Helena Historical Society on their website about Chinese in St. Helena.[4] She provided me with some crucial early guidance on the topic and initial sources. I am also very thankful to the staff at the Napa County Historical Society, who provided access to the material in their archives relating to Chinese in the Napa Valley and were always available to answer questions. Both organizations are doing admirable work keeping the history of Napa Valley alive.

I am very appreciative of Hugh Davies, owner of Schramsberg Winery, and his marketing manager Matthew Levy who answered innumerable questions about the Chinese that worked on the property and provided an excellent "behind-the-scenes" tour of the wine caves and the Chinese bunkhouse on the property.

Finally, I would like to acknowledge and thank my Thesis Director, Professor Erez Manela. His class on the history of U.S./Chinese relations at Harvard was outstanding and inspired the original research paper which evolved into this thesis. He has been incredibly supportive of this endeavor.

[4] Mariam Hansen, "St. Helena's Chinese Heritage – St. Helena Historical Society," June 2011, https://shstory.org/st-helenaa-chinese-heritage/.

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Chapter I.

Introduction

California's Napa Valley is one of the most famous wine-growing regions in the world. Its 475 wineries typically draw almost four million visitors a year and contribute over $34 billion annually to the US economy.[5] The wine industry in this region from 1870 through 1900 was built predominantly using Chinese immigrant labor. These laborers were almost all illiterate men who were unable to become citizens and were mostly confined to local "Chinatowns" that were nothing but collections of shacks in undesirable parts of town. The Chinese powered a significant portion of the Napa Valley economy and worked not only in vineyards, but in quicksilver mines, on farms, for local railroads, as shopkeepers, as hired laborers, and as domestic help. Despite their essential role in Napa Valley society, the Chinese were hated, feared, and threatened by many locals, especially white men who felt well-paying jobs were taken away from them. Once the Chinese laborers were finally driven out of the region around 1900, their homes were razed and their contributions, even their very presence, was largely forgotten.

This thesis seeks to examine and document, for the first time, how this Chinese immigrant community in the Napa Valley survived and even prospered for over thirty years in the late 19th century given the intense level of discrimination at the national, state, and local levels. How did they interact with citizens and local law enforcement that

[5] "Travel Research & Statistics | Visit Napa Valley," accessed October 27, 2020, https://www.visitnapavalley.com/about-us/research/.

viewed them as illegitimate and unwanted yet necessary to the community's well-being? Did they try to assimilate into the broader community even though there was no path to citizenship for them? What broader immigration and demographic forces eventually forced them to leave and why were their contributions forgotten? How did they form a community for financial, social, and spiritual support? The Napa Valley Chinese were truly "impossible subjects," to use Mai Ngai's insightful phrase, that many felt should not be allowed to live in the same town as white citizens and or integrate into society, yet were critical to businesses and had to be dealt with on a daily basis by resentful locals.[6] My findings are that the Chinese workers contributed significantly to the economy through a variety of jobs in some of the largest industries in the Napa Valley and used as the Chinatowns of the various towns in the Napa Valley as their base for security and cultural solidarity. They had significant economic leverage and used it to their advantage to achieve a remarkable level of prosperity, despite the forces arrayed against them, until the demographic realities of the 1882 Chinese Exclusion Act and the arrival of a viable replacement labor force around 1900.

The treatment of the Chinese immigrants in the Napa Valley is indicative of their experience throughout late 19th century California. Chinese laborers were critical to the growth and success of California in agriculture, transportation, mining, and small-scale manufacturing from everything from textiles to cigars, yet in many cases they were reviled and despised by the very citizens they were making wealthier.[7] The Chinese

[6] Mae M. Ngai, *Impossible Subjects: Illegal Immigrants and the Making of Modern America*, New Paperback Edition (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2014).

[7] Ping Chiu, *Chinese Labor in California - An Economic Study*, Logmark Edition (Madison, Wisconsin: The Department of History, University of Wisconsin, 1967).

population were considered different, strange, and unassimilable by locals who themselves had arrived in the area only a few decades before. The Napa Valley experience is particularly interesting because the Chinese were there at the very beginning of the wine industry, as well as the early days of quicksilver mining, hop farming, and leather tanning, and they provided the only possible source of labor that could have made any of those industries successful in those crucial early decades. Yet xenophobic locals and anti-Chinese immigration policies at the state and federal levels, such as the 1879 California State Constitution that banned Chinese individuals from employment by any corporation or government and the 1882 Federal Chinese Exclusion Act, eventually drove the Chinese out in favor of other labor groups, such as the more acceptable white Italian working class.[8] Now these Chinese contributions are largely forgotten. For example, today there are numerous wineries with Italian names and roots, yet there are almost no wineries, places, or monuments acknowledging and explaining the significant Chinese presence or contributions.[9]

The story of Chinese immigrant labor in the Napa Valley is not covered in detail in academic or historical literature. Most academic publications dealing with Chinese immigrants in 19th century California tend to focus on specific topics like the Gold Rush, Chinatowns, discriminatory laws, or the Chinese role as agricultural laborers. This thesis is significant as it will present, for the first time, a comprehensive survey of the different aspects of the Chinese contributions and challenges they faced in the Napa Valley.

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[8] William Heintz, *California's Napa Valley - One Hundred Sixty Years of Wine Making* (San Francisco, CA: Scottwell Associates, 1999), 174-176.

[9] The city of Napa does have one small parklet and a couple of plaques on a downtown bridge that acknowledges the presence, but not the contributions, of their Chinese residents. I will discuss this more in Chapter VIII.

Furthermore, many publications focus on white Americans' reaction to and management of the Chinese rather than exploring the experience of the Chinese themselves.[10] This thesis will, whenever possible, seek to present the view from the Chinese themselves. The Napa Valley is a relatively small geographic area, yet in the years 1870 to 1900 it was dominated by a rapidly expanding viticulture economy that desperately needed the labor only the Chinese could provide. It also, distinctively, contained several mining camps, farmland, Chinatown areas in the three largest towns of the Napa Valley, several railroad depots, a large leather tannery, and served as the center of a significant anti-Chinese movement. This thesis will provide a unique opportunity to examine how these different aspects of Chinese immigrant life in the late 19th century California interacted in a way few, if any, publications have addressed.

Unfortunately, primary sources from the Chinese people themselves during this period are practically nonexistent. This is due to the high rates of illiteracy among the Chinese workers and a significant language barrier as most people who controlled access to printing services almost certainly did not speak Cantonese. There are contemporaneous accounts, however, that are quite enlightening and informative if read with a critical eye toward their anti-Chinese bias. Over the thirty-year period in question, local newspapers had well over one hundred articles, editorials, letters to the editor, and advertisements addressing Chinese laborers, their local Chinatowns, and the issues townspeople had with the local Chinese community. This was an area of intense local interest at the time.

[10] Mae M Ngai, "Chinese Gold Miners and the 'Chinese Question' in Nineteenth-Century California and Victoria," *The Journal of American History* 101, no. 4 (2015): 1082–1105, 1083. Ngai also discusses this approach as applied more generally to other racially marginalized immigrant groups in her book *Impossible Subjects.*

During the Gilded Age and the Progressive Era in U.S. history (1860s through the early 1900s), over 40 million immigrants came to America from Europe, Latin America, and Asia to help transform the U.S. into an economic powerhouse.[11] Yet it also brought intense and blatant racial discrimination from every level of government and throughout society. No group suffered as much from those anti-immigration forces than the Chinese, who were the first group to be denied immigration and citizenship in the United States solely based on their race.[12] The level of success the Chinese had in the Napa Valley is remarkable given these headwinds. Their story is one of a strong entrepreneurial spirit and tenacity that should not be forgotten. This thesis will tell a comprehensive story of how the Chinese helped, in their own way, transform a small rural community in California into an area of worldwide renown and economic dominance.

Topographic and Population Background

An illustrated history of Napa County, written in 1878, describes the Napa Valley an area bursting with beauty and opportunity, at least for white residents:

> The wheat fields and vineyards of Napa spread out in beautiful contrast on the landscape, and elegant and costly homes adorn eminences and pretty values. The vine and fig tree mark the settler's home. Curative waters are found in various localities. Not only the soil but the air administers to the wealth of the resident, Living streams flow in every direction. Neither blight nor failure visit Napa valley, but plenty, peace and prosperity seem to be the lot of the residents of this favored spot in California.
>
> The business of raising grapes and making them into wine is already a very great one in California, and Napa County now has the name of producing the best

[11] Dong Wang, *The United States and China. A History from the Eighteenth Century to the Present* (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2013). 89.

[12] Ngai, *Impossible Subjects*, 19. It is important to point out that other groups, notably African Americans, suffered unimaginable discrimination and depravation for years prior to the arrival of Chinese immigrants. The Chinese example here is only in relation to anti-immigration legislation.

> wines in the State. It has precisely the soil required for the different varieties. The gravelly valleys and plains, or the more elevated hillsides and warm slopes.[13]

There are three significant towns in the Napa Valley that I will focus on in this thesis: the largest town of Napa at the southern end, the agricultural town of St. Helena in the middle of the valley, and the resort town of Calistoga at the northern tip.[14] There are smaller towns of Yountville, Rutherford, and Oakville that fill in gaps between the larger towns.

[13] Clarence L Smith and Wallace W. Elliott, *Illustrations of Napa County, California: With Historical Sketch* (Oakland, CA.: Smith & Elliott, 1878), 5. Note that Napa County consists of the Napa Valley plus a smaller valley to the west, Pope Valley. I will refer to Napa Valley where possible, but sometimes I will need to discuss the entire Napa County as many statistics, such as the US Census figures, are compiled at the county level. Since the towns in Napa Valley constituted the vast majority of the population of the county and its economic output, the difference is negligible

[14] The relative sizes and characterizations of the towns pertain to how they were in the late 1800s, though it remains true today.

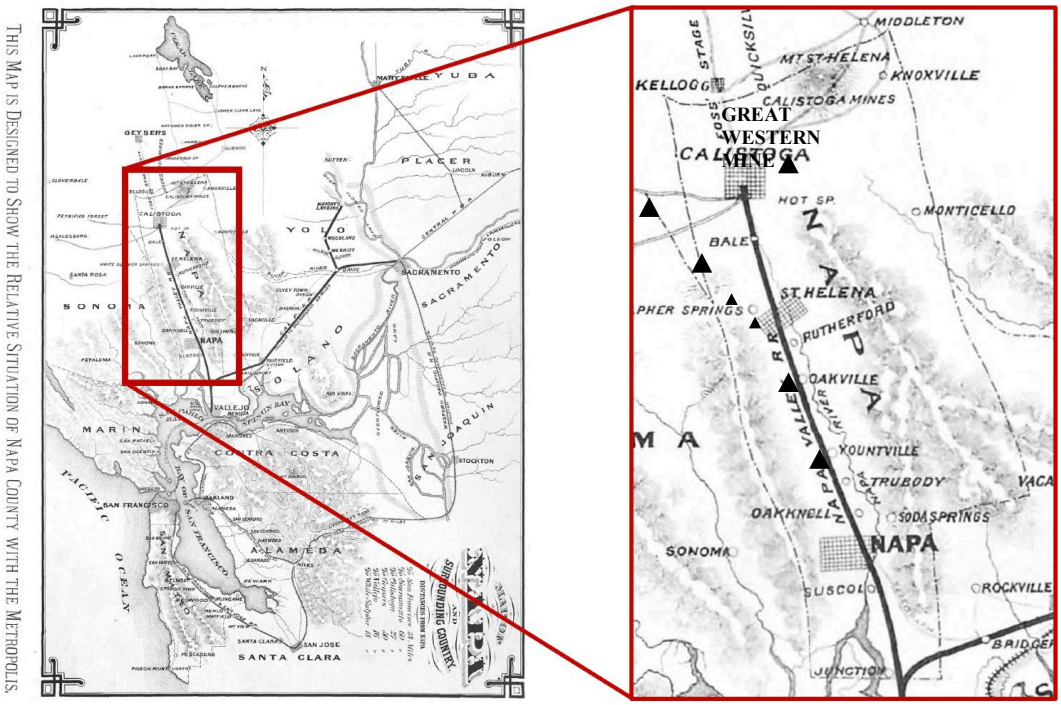

Figure 1. 1878 Map of the Napa Valley.

Picture on the left is the Napa Valley in relation to San Francisco and Pacific Ocean. The inset is the Napa Valley with the major towns and locations discussed in this thesis. Note the "Napa Valley RR" going up through the heart of the Valley – the railroad was the best and most efficient mode of transportation. The dotted line around the Valley shows the border of Napa County.[15]

The population of Napa County expanded rapidly between 1860 and 1890 before leveling off in 1900. As a proportion of the white population, the Chinese population increased by tenfold between 1860 and 1870 and then almost doubled again between 1870 and 1880. This rapid rise of the Chinese population in Napa County, both in absolute and relative terms, undoubtedly gave the white residents, many of whom were already prejudiced against Chinese people, anxiety. The Chinese population gradually

[15] Smith and Elliott, *Illustrations of Napa County*, 3.

declined from 1880 to 1900, which is unsurprising given the passage of the Federal 1882 Chinese Exclusion Act, which prohibited all immigration of laborers from China.

Table 1. Population Ratios of Chinese Residents in Napa County 1860-1900.

	1860	1870	1880	1890	1900
White	5,448	6,725	12,160	15,426	15,857
Chinese	17	263	907	875	541
Ratio	3	39	75	57	34
% Change		1,200%	92%	-24%	-40%

Ratio is the number of Chinese residents per 1,000 white residents. % change is the change in ratio from one decade to the next. Even at its height, the Chinese population of Napa County never exceeded seven percent of the total population.[16]

Historical Background

Opium Wars, the Taiping Rebellion, secret society uprisings, and clan warfare had devastating consequences for laborers and peasants in China in the latter half of the 1800s. Competition from foreign markets, increased taxes, growing population, land scarcity, and unrest due to local uprisings all contributed to a mass emigration movement. One estimate suggests that 2.5 million Chinese departed the mainland to other countries around the world between 1840 and 1900.[17] Some emigrants from China left voluntarily and some were taken against their will. Chinese people who left freely either paid for

[16] Sources: Values for 1860, 1870, and 1880: 1880 U.S. Census, Population by Race, Sex, and Nativity, p 382. Values for 1890 and 1900: 1910 U.S. Census, Bulletin 127, Chinese and Japanese in the United States 1910, table 58, page 36. The change in ratio is illustrative because while in absolute terms, the Chinese population never surpassed 10% of the white population in the county. However, the rapid growth of the Chinese population, especially between 1870 and 1880 must have been shocking to a population likely primed to be biased against Chinese people.

[17] Sucheng Chan, *This Bittersweet Soil: The Chinese in California Agriculture*, 1860-1910 (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1989), 16-25.

their tickets or got passage in exchange for payment when they reached their destinations. This group tended to go to California or Australia. Unfree "coolie" laborers, who were abducted, were shipped to places like Peru or Cuba to work plantations that no longer had the labor of African slaves.[18] Consequently, most California arrivals from China were highly motivated, entrepreneurial, and either able to pay for passage themselves or were confident of reimbursing passage once they arrived.

Anti-Chinese sentiment in California was present from the beginning of large-scale immigration from China. The major draw for Chinese immigrating to California was the prospect of gold. Between 1848 and 1867 over 70 percent of all Chinese immigration to the U.S. settled in California where mining dominated the California economy.[19] Even though gold was discovered in California in 1849, the first significant Chinese immigration wave of 20,000 did not arrive until 1852. Unfortunately for the Chinese, by that time the era of the individual gold miner striking it rich on easily accessed surface mines was ending. Through hard work and determination, they were able to eke out a living for much of the 1850s. The American and European miners resented even this modest success of the Chinese miners began one of the first sustained anti-Chinese labor movements in California.[20] Chinese immigrants continued to arrive in significant numbers to California. 16,000 arrived in 1854 and then between 2,000 and 8,000 arrived each year until 1868.[21]

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[18] Moon Ho Jung, *Coolies and Cane: Race, Labor, and Sugar in the Age of Emancipation* (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins Press, 2006).

[19] Wang, *The United States and China*, 75.

[20] Susan Lee Johnson, *Roaring Camp: The Social World of the California Gold Rush* (New York, NY: W.W. Norton & Company, 2000), 243-246.

[21] Chan, *This Bittersweet Soil*, 37-38.

Chinese work on railroad construction bridged the decline of the gold mining industry and the rise of large-scale agriculture employment in California. In the late 1860s, the introduction of regular steamship service between Hong Kong and California and active recruitment of Chinese laborers by the Central Pacific Railroad Company served to increase the number of Chinese immigrants. By 1866, an estimated four out of five workers involved in the construction of the transcontinental railroad in California were Chinese.[22] But once the railroad was completed in 1869, some Chinese workers on the railroads and the mines had no choice but to transition to agricultural work - some as individual farmers, but mostly within large labor gangs.[23] Other Chinese laborers, however, stayed working on the vast railroad network that was spreading throughout California in the 1870s and 1880s.[24]

Commercial agricultural work in California prior to the 1870s was performed primarily by Native Americans and then by cast-off gold miners known as "bindlemen." In the early 1800s, the Franciscan Padres that built missions up and down the California coast established teams of farmworkers made up mostly of Native Americans. These workers would either toil on large farms owned by the missions or work as contract laborers to other farms around California. They were ostensibly under the protection and

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[22] Lin Weber, *Old Napa Valley the History to 1900* (St. Helena, CA: Wine Ventures Publishing, 1998), 197.

[23] Chan, *This Bittersweet Soil*, 37-39.

[24] Chiu, *Chinese Labor in California - An Economic Study*, 50.

religious instruction of the Franciscans, but the native farmworkers were managed under a "rigid system of unremitting supervision" making them "worse than slaves."[25]

By the 1850s the Native American population declined precipitously due to various "Indian Wars" carried out by local governors, relocation to numerous reservations, and self-selecting out of the brutal work as an indentured farmworker.[26] In the 1850s and 1860s, many failed gold and silver miners had no choice but to turn to agricultural work. They were the first truly migrant farmworkers in California and were called "bindlemen" because they carried a "bindle," or bundle, consisting of a canvas blanket rolled tightly around their few possessions and slung over the shoulders as they moved from farm to farm. These bindlemen were mostly white Europeans, but also included Chilean peasants, among others, who came to California for the opportunity to strike it rich in the gold and silver mines.[27] Bindlemen were an independent and hardworking, yet hard-carousing, group. The arrival of Chinese laborers in the 1850s and 1860s, some of whom turned to farmworking, were a different kind of worker. They were known to be compliant and reliable. In a widely read article in the March 1869 issue of *Overland Monthly* titled "How Our Chinamen Are Employed," it stated:

> On many ranches all the laborers are people whose muscles were hardened on their little farms in China, and who there learned those lessons of industry, patience, and economy which render them of incalculable service for those who, in this country, see fit to employ them. With but little instruction they learn to

[25] Richard Steven Street, *Beasts of the Field: A Narrative History of California Farmworkers, 1769-1913* (Stanford, CA.: Stanford University Press, 2004), 38-40.

[26] Street, *Beasts of the Field*, 137-138.

[27] Street, *Beasts of the Field*, 164-165.

> manage the teams, to run the machinery, and to perform all the labor needed upon a farm.[28]

Chinese farmworkers were never a majority throughout the state, but they were a critical labor force, especially around the San Francisco Bay Area.[29]

Agriculture had been considered a big business enterprise in California as soon as it became a state in 1848 and white settlers arrived in large numbers in the 1850s. Farmers in California, geographically very distant from traditional sources of credit on the East Coast or Europe, paid a high price for access to capital as well as extremely high transportation and marketing costs. This confluence of large farms, large labor requirements, high capital costs, and high freight costs put enormous pressure on farmers throughout California to keep the cost of labor down.[30] Chinese laborers, who were willing to work for lower wages than any other group and legally unable to work in many traditional jobs in the state, such as the government or corporations, were a logical source of labor for many large landowners.

The labor needs of the vineyard owners in the Napa Valley made the 1870s a transformative decade for the Chinese workforce. The American Civil War in the 1860s had disrupted trade from the East Coast and Europe and gave a chance for the local wine industry to establish itself and grow through the early 1870s. The Chinese laborers would work for just $1 a day and provide their own food and cooking - significantly less than the $1.50 daily rate for white labor.[31] Vineyard work required large amounts of labor for

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[28] Rev A. W. Loomis, "How Our Chinamen Are Employed," *Overland Monthly* 2, no. 3 (March 1869): 231–239, 233.

[29] Street, *Beasts of the Field*, 242-243.

[30] Chiu, *Chinese Labor in California - An Economic Study*, 69-72.

[31] Heintz, *California's Napa Valley*, 82.

only a few critical months a year during planting and harvesting seasons. The Chinese workers were organized into labor gangs that could be called on at a moment's notice to meet this need. These gangs were headed by Chinese bosses who could speak some English and garnished a portion of the already meager wages of these workers. The Chinese immigrant labor force followed this labor-boss model when they worked on Transcontinental Railroad construction which had in turn followed a pattern many laborers were familiar with from China.[32] This approach was established early in the Napa Valley when Chinese laborers could be called up quickly from San Francisco to work the vineyard harvest.

As Napa Valley wine sales were starting to significantly increase in the late 1870s, a blight called phylloxera was decimating the vineyards of France, and the Napa Valley wine industry knew it had a golden opportunity. As reported in the *St. Helena Star* in late 1879, "the destruction of the French vineyards is a fixed fact. The eyes of the world will be turned to our valleys in tremendous hope and anticipation of good wine."[33] The vineyard owners went on a massive planning spree, further driving up demand for labor, which could only be satisfied by one group - the Chinese worker.[34] These Chinese immigrants benefited from the high demand for their labor, but they had to contend with the corresponding rise of anti-Chinese sentiment in the Napa Valley. They were relentlessly discriminated against and relegated to Chinatown ghettos, yet they were able

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[32] Street, *Beasts of the Field,* 258-260.

[33] "An Outside Opinion; A 'Post' Correspondent on St. Helena Wines," *St. Helena Star*, December 19, 1879, 1.

[34] Street, *Beasts of the Field*, 315.

to create a supportive community that remained a significant presence in the Valley for decades.

Historiography

Academic studies regarding Chinese in California during the 19th century have generally focused around three areas. The first involves Chinese immigrating to the United States and then participating in historic events like the California Gold Rush[35] and the construction of the Transcontinental Railroad.[36] The second area includes the examination of the socio-economic contributions of the Chinese in the early years of California agriculture and the corresponding rise of the anti-Chinese labor movement.[37] The third includes analyses of various anti-Chinese movements in California, including racially biased immigration laws[38] and the legal and political struggles of Chinese against discrimination once in California.[39] Until recently, most of these topical studies regarding Chinese in California mostly refer to white Americans' reaction to and management of the Chinese immigrants rather than exploring the experience of the Chinese people themselves.[40] Roger Daniels, in his book *Asian America: Chinese and Japanese in the United States since 1850,* makes a similar point when he claims that "for a significant

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[35] Johnson, *Roaring Camp: The Social World of the California Gold Rush*.

[36] Chiu, *Chinese Labor in California*, 60-67.

[37] Alexander Saxton, *The Indispensable Enemy: Labor and the Anti-Chinese Movement in California* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995).

[38] Wang, *The United States and China;* Ngai, *Impossible Subjects*.

[39] Charles J. McClain, *In Search of Equality - The Chinese Struggle against Discrimination in Nineteenth-Century Americ*a (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994).

[40] Mae M Ngai, "*Chinese Gold Miners and the 'Chinese Question'*," 1083.

part of their history in this country, Asians have been more celebrated for what has happened to them than for what they have accomplished."[41]

The study of Chinese immigrants in the Napa Valley is not covered in any detail in academic or historical literature, though existing scholarship around Chinese laborer's role in 19th century California agriculture and the anti-Chinese labor movement are the most relevant to this thesis. Almost all those publications focus on Chinese immigrant labor within the entire state of California, but some may have a small section on the Napa Valley or viticulture. There are also several books that focus on the history of Napa Valley, but they typically only mention Chinese immigrant laborers as a small part of their overall story. My research will weave together these disparate areas of Chinese immigrant history while focusing on a region of California that has mostly escaped academic study. This has been a lost opportunity. As Linda Heidenreich notes, the Napa Valley is "a location where trends important throughout California and the west can be studied in detail, where the impact of different waves of immigration on the west can be traced, and where national struggles over definitions of 'Americans' and 'citizens' seem particularly intense."[42] The examination of the varied labor, social, and cultural experiences of Chinese residents in late 19th century Napa Valley in this thesis bears this out.

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[41] Roger Daniels, *Asian America: Chinese and Japanese in the United States since 1850* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2011), 3.

[42] Linda Heidenreich, "Chapter 2: Elusive Citizenship: Education, the Press, and the Struggle over Representation in Napa, California 1848-1910," in *Immigrant Life in the US: Multi-Disciplinary Perspectives* (London: Routledge, 2004), 16.

Chinese Contributions to the California Economy

The early study of the Chinese impact on California agriculture was dominated by Corey McWilliams's indictment of large California agribusiness, *Factories in the Field* (1939).[43] McWilliams was a crusading labor journalist who exposed large agribusiness as antithetical to farmworker health, happiness, and success. He dedicated a chapter to the Chinese immigrant worker and argued that the large growers took advantage of them because the "Chinese, being a despised minority fighting for the mere right to exist in a hostile territory, could be employed at sub-subsistence wages. In other respects, moreover, they were ideal farm laborers. They had no families and, consequently, were satisfied with 'the cheapest, meanest quarters.'"[44] While it is unclear if the Chinese laborers were actually happy, the growers certainly were. As McWilliams quotes from an 1893 editorial in *The Rural Press*, "The Chinese are the mainstay of the orchardist and thus far it must be said, form the only supply of labor which he can depend upon."[45] McWilliams's book was hailed as a precursor to the emerging areas of study of racial and labor history and was a best-seller that came out two months after John Steinbeck's *Grapes of Wrath*. The two books, one fiction and one non-fiction, are considered by historians as companion pieces in exposing California's large agribusiness and their role in oppressing and exploiting minority farmworkers.[46]

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[43] Carey McWilliams, *Factories in the Field: The Story of Migratory Farm Labor in California* (Berkeley: Univ of California Press, 1939). This was mentioned by Chan, *This Bittersweet Soil*, 274.

[44] McWilliams, *Factories in the Field*, 70.

[45] McWilliams, *Factories in the Field*, 71.

[46] McWilliams, *Factories in the Field*, xvii. Part of the forward to the paperback edition released in 2000 by Douglas C. Slackman. Also echoed in a comment by Dan Cornford of San Jose State University published on the back of Street's *Beasts of the Field*.

While most large-scale Chinese labor analysis focused on agriculture, following McWilliams's lead, one of the only publications to take a comprehensive look at all aspects of Chinese economic life in 19th century California was Ping Chiu's 1967 *Chinese Labor in California, 1850-1880*. This book presented one of the most comprehensive analyses of all the different facets of the California economy impacted by Chinese immigrants. He discussed the commonly known areas of mining, railroad, and farming but he also documented Chinese contributions in the wool, textile, and clothing industries, as well as small-scale manufacturing in the shoe and cigar production. He began to set the narrative that the Chinese made a diverse contribution to California in the late 19th century.[47] While his work is cited frequently, his approach treated the Chinese as mostly passive players in the California economy.

That changed with Sucheng Chan's focus on the entrepreneurial nature of the Chinese immigrant workers. In 1989, Chan wrote *This Bittersweet Soil: The Chinese in California Agriculture, 1860-1910* partially in response to the prevailing perception of Chinese as docile farmworkers in California. One of her concerns with McWilliams's account was that it left the impression that Chinese were employed almost entirely as seasonal farm laborers just reacting to the whims of landowners.[48] She did groundbreaking, tedious research in county assessors' offices and discovered thousands of individual leases for farmland by Chinese people. One of her conclusions was that the Chinese were not just passive players in the California economy, but rather they were active entrepreneurs when given the chance. She documented the pioneering role Chinese

[47] Chiu, *Chinese Labor in California - An Economic Study*, 129.

[48] Chan, *This Bittersweet Soil*, xvi.

"truck gardeners" played in the 1860s and 1870s. These were workers who owned or were tenant farmers on small plots of land and sold their wares by transporting the produce to where the people were working.[49] We will see these laborers characterized as "vegetable peddlers" in the Napa Valley in Chapter III. When land prices continued to rise in California, many Chinese farmers had no choice but to shift to wage labor working on large agricultural sites.[50] They were managed by Chinese labor bosses who functioned like "Chinese compradors in China" who would search for fields that needed tending and work out a deal with farm owners who needed transient labor.[51] Chan argues these labor bosses were entrepreneurs in their own right and did well economically. Eventually Chinese agricultural labor disappeared in most areas of California due to the 1882 Chinese Exclusion Act restriction on unskilled immigration and lack of women in agricultural communities to raise families. They retreated to urban Chinatowns that provided social support and smaller-scale opportunities.[52] Chan's focus on the entrepreneurial spirit of the Chinese immigrants will be important in understanding their experiences and behavior in the Napa Valley.

Richard Steven Street's nine-hundred-page *Beasts of the Field: A Narrative History of California Farmworkers, 1769-1913* (2004) has a broader scope than Chan's in that he discusses different ethnic groups' contributions over time to California agriculture. Only a small subset of his book deals with viticulture, but we learn how

[49] Chan, *This Bittersweet Soil*, 106.

[50] Chan, *This Bittersweet Soil*, 272.

[51] Chan, *This Bittersweet Soil*, 346.

[52] Chan, *This Bittersweet Soil*, 402.

vineyard owners started with Native Americans and Mexican field hands and then transitioned to Chinese workers who dominated agricultural work after 1878.[53] Just as the Chinese displaced the Native American field hands, the Chinese were slowly being displaced by the Italians beginning as early as 1888.[54] His history provides one of the best narratives of the flow of different labor groups throughout the late 19th century California.

History of the Chinese in Napa Valley

There are very few academic books on the history of the Napa Valley. The subject is dominated by a local historian William F. Heintz (1933-2012). He specialized in historical study for different wineries across California, wrote almost ninety research reports, and conducted hundreds of oral history interviews.[55] Heintz wrote a history of viticulture in the Napa Valley in 1999, *California's Napa Valley - One Hundred Sixty Years of Wine Making.* He has some good information on Chinese laborers in the wine industry. Much of it, however, is from the perspective of the winery owners and how they viewed their Chinese workers. He says, for example, "The Chinese were the most dependable workers and easily available overnight from San Francisco or St. Helena agents. But growing numbers of vintners feared the consequences of hiring these

[53] Street, *Beasts of the Field*, 252, 314-319.

[54] Street, *Beasts of the Field*, 367.

[55] James Laube, "Napa Valley Wine Historian William Heintz Dies at 79," Wine Spectator, March 8, 2012, https://www.winespectator.com/articles/napa-valley-wine-historian-william-heintz-dies-at-79-46504. St. Helena's impressive wine library within the town's public library has an entire bookcase filled with copies of Heintz's research documents.

laborers."[56] His research is based on numerous newspaper articles documenting the agitation of the anti-coolie groups in towns like St. Helena and the pushback of the vineyard owners who were desperate for reliable labor. But even then, much of his focus is on the growth after 1900 as Chinese laborers merit only fourteen pages out of his 500-page book.

In addition to Heintz's contributions, Lin Weber, a local newspaper columnist, wrote a popular history of 19th century Napa Valley in her book titled *Old Napa Valley, the History to 1900* (1998) that contains several dozen anecdotes about Chinese residents distributed throughout her broader narrative. Her research primarily came from local newspapers of the time. She does provide considerable insight into the social structure of the Chinatowns in Napa Valley that appears nowhere else: "A well-defined class system existed within the communities, probably based on the status the pioneer's family enjoyed or suffered back in Canton. Most emigrants brought with them scripts delineating their lineage so that they could assume the correct position in California."[57] This is one of the only publications to provide any insight about the life of the Chinese in the Napa Valley during this time.

More recently, local historian Alexandria Brown wrote the *Hidden History of Napa Valley*, which reveals stories around several previously marginalized, or "hidden," groups in Napa, including Native Americans, Mexican rancho owners, Mexican bracero laborers, women, and Chinese immigrants. Her chapters on the Chinese are excellent, though her format, which covers over a dozen marginalized groups and underreported

[56] Heintz, *California's Napa Valley*, 129.

[57] Weber, *Old Napa Valley,* 200.

topics in less than one hundred and fifty pages, allows only a cursory examination of the Chinese experience in Napa and the surrounding area.[58]

The existing academic literature that either examines the contributions of Chinese immigrants to California agriculture broadly or their contributions as part of an overall study of Napa Valley history provides good background material and proper context setting for this thesis. However, no academic publication addresses to any level of depth how the Chinese immigrant community in the Napa Valley prospered for over thirty years in the late 19th century given the intense level of discrimination at the national, state, and local levels. They do not address how the Chinese might have tried to assimilate culturally or politically even though there was no path to citizenship for them nor how they interacted with citizens and local law enforcement that viewed them as illegitimate and unwanted but necessary to the community's well-being. The only way to answer these questions will be to investigate available contemporaneous sources of information, even if they did not come from the Chinese themselves, to appreciate more completely how the Chinese were as successful as they were and the challenges they faced.

Research Methods

The basis of my research is the newspapers of the three largest towns in the Napa Valley during this time: Napa, St. Helena, and Calistoga. The newspapers include *The Napa Register*, which began publishing in 1854; *The Napa County Reporter*, which began publishing in 1857; The *St. Helena Star*, which began publishing in 1874; and the

[58] Alexandria Brown, *Hidden History of Napa Valley* (Charleston, SC: The History Press, 2019).

Independent Calistogian, which began publishing in 1876. Over the thirty-year period in question, those newspapers had hundreds of articles, editorials, advertisements dealing with Chinese laborers, their local Chinatowns, crimes involving Chinese individuals, and the issues townspeople had with the local Chinese population. This was an area of intense local interest.

Newspaper-based research provides a tremendous opportunity to investigate the issues involving Chinese in these communities with an almost real-time perspective. The challenge with using newspapers is that they were in the business of selling papers as much as conveying the news and facts of the day, which can bring their reliability into question. Michael Schudson, in his classic analysis of the social history of newspapers, separates newspapers around the turn of the century into two different camps: ones that emphasize entertaining stories (exemplified by the *New York World*) and ones that emphasize information (*The New York Times*).[59] The local papers of interest here certainly had a point of view, which consisted of a significant anti-Chinese bias, but their tone and approach was much more information-oriented targeted toward the middle-class readership of the Napa Valley.

It is also important to consider the different types of material in the newspapers. These include editorials, letters to the editor, news articles, police reports, and advertisements that all provide their unique perspective of their respective authors and each needs to be read critically. The editorials clearly reflect the views of the newspaper owners, who were upper middle class white businessmen who supported local business

[59] Michael Schudson, *Discovering the News: A Social History of American Newspapers* (New York: Basic Books, 1981), 89

and tended to be anti-Chinese. News articles about Chinese residents, which tended to emphasize the white residents' perspective, do still typically provide some context for the Chinese views. Yet there are also letters to the editor defending the contributions of Chinese in the Napa Valley and articles about Chinese cultural events, like funerals and Lunar New Years' festivities, that can provide largely accurate portrayals of Chinese life in towns. Finally, there are advertisements from local Chinatown businesses that reflect direct input from Chinese business owners themselves. Consequently, with the right contextual understanding of the piece in question, I believe they can provide information that is valuable to this research.[60]

In addition, the Federal Census provides an interesting and valuable snapshot of the Chinese population of Napa Valley during this time period. We can get high-level counts of the number of Chinese in a given locality as well as their name, occupation, sex, age, and place of birth. Unfortunately, the information is of varying quality depending on the census edition. We do have an electronic summary of the 1870 Napa County census, which makes some tabulation possible, but no original source material.[61] On the other hand, we do have the original source material from the 1880 Napa County census sheets, but no electronic transcriptions or summaries.[62] Sadly, we have very little

[60] For a more detailed discussion of how local newspapers reported on and dealt with Chinese residents, please see Appendix 1.

[61] "1870 Federal Census - Napa County, CA," accessed July 18, 2021, http://us-census.org/pub/usgenweb/census/ca/napa/1870/.

[62] "1880 U.S. Federal Population Census Napa County Original Census Forms," accessed August 2, 2021, https://www.archives.com/imageviewer?dbId=6742&mediaId=4239981-00569&recordId=15775162:6742:886&recordType=Census.

detailed information from the 1890 Census as many of the originals were badly damaged by a fire in the Federal Commerce Department Building in 1921.[63]

I use these materials to examine the Chinese experience in the Napa Valley from several perspectives. First, I examine Chinese economic contributions in both the rural and urban parts of the Valley. Rural economics will encompass viticulture, working within wineries themselves, hop farming, quicksilver mining, and railroad construction. Urban economic analysis will include Chinese domestic servants, Chinatown shopkeepers, "wash house" owners, and small-scale factory workers. Second, I will look at the dynamics of the local Chinatowns throughout Napa Valley and how they served as a safe space for Chinese, were alternately tolerated and loathed by citizens, and were eventually demolished and forgotten. I will then look at the social organization and structure of Chinese living in the Valley, including labor bosses, class relations within Chinatowns, the Chinese Free Mason organization (which was unaffiliated with the Masonic organizations from Europe and North America), and the roles each played in Chinese daily life. This will include cultural and religious aspects like funerals, holiday festivities, weddings, and the centrality of temples known as Joss Houses to Chinese religious life. Then I will examine the role of women in the Chinese community, including love, marriage, and families. I will then explore vice and crime in the Chinese community, including opium dens, brothels, gambling, violence, murder, and the impact this had on the Chinese and relations with the broader community. Finally, I will look at

[63] US Census Bureau, "Availability of 1890 Census - History - U.S. Census Bureau," accessed August 2, 2021, https://www.census.gov/history/www/genealogy/decennial_census_records/availability_of_1890_census.html.

the anti-Chinese movements that sprung up in the different towns of the Napa Valley, their advocates and opponents, and how successful they were in eventually removing the Chinese from the Valley.

Research Limitations

The most significant limitation to my research is the lack of primary sources from the Chinese people themselves. This is due to the high rates of illiteracy of most of the Chinese immigrants during this period and the language barrier between the Chinese and the local townspeople. The one area where we tend to hear Chinese voices is when they interacted with the legal system or local law enforcement. Those records and articles in the newspapers can provide some insight if we consider their predisposition against Chinese residents.

The U.S. Census, though extremely valuable, needs to be viewed critically. One key consideration is that it is very doubtful that all Chinese residents of Napa County were included in the count. Not only were many living in communal situations that were radically different from traditional single-family homes that likely made tallying difficult, but there was a significant language barrier when the English-speaking census takers knocked on the door. The 1880 census counts, for example were taken in June, which would have been problematic for counting all Chinese vineyard workers as it occurred between the planting season of January and February and the harvest season of August and September. In urban areas, there were poll taxes, like the 1883 Napa Laundry Tax, that charged a fee per counted Chinese worker, which may have made some Chinese less

likely to want to be counted.[64] In addition, the occupation "Laborer" as reported by many Chinese residents is broad and can apply to a wide variety of tasks, including farm work, vineyard work, general construction, etc. The implication is that the numbers recorded in the Census are almost certainly an undercount, perhaps significant in some areas.[65] However, many Chinese residents were counted, and their demographic and occupational data does tell a valuable story about the Chinese that were living in the Napa Valley at this time. The information, though incomplete, can still help fill in the gaps about how Chinese lived and worked.

Another important limitation is the general lack of primary sources beyond the newspaper and periodicals of the day. I have discovered only a few diaries or oral histories of contemporaries in the Napa Valley and few interactions with the Chinese are described in any detail outside of newspaper accounts.

Finally, it is important to note that newspaper articles of the time used derogatory terms for Chinese people that are clearly offensive and unacceptable today. Almost every article that referred to Chinese residents used derisive terms like Chinaman, Chinamen, Coolies, Mongolians, Celestials, or Johns. I have included the text of these articles as written because it is important to hear and understand how Chinese people were called at the time. In every case, these terms are within quotes and their original source is referenced. This was not unique to the Napa Valley and was commonly used in

[64] "1883 Napa County Ordinance II Section VIII – Laundry Tax" (Napa County, CA, 1883).

[65] We have similar issues today with modern census takers, and there is clearly much better communication and intentional outreach to marginalized communities now than there was over one hundred years ago.

California and across the United States, but it doesn't make the terminology less excusable.

The Story of Jue Joe

Before commencing with the main chapters of this thesis, I would like to relate the story of Jue Joe, as written down by his descendants.[66] Jue Joe would be considered a remarkable man in any circumstance given his very humble origins and his subsequent accomplishments. But what makes Jue Joe particularly special, and even unique, is that he was a Chinese immigrant who worked as an agricultural laborer in the Napa Valley between 1878 and 1886, and we know a quite a bit of his life story. This is unfortunately a rarity as most of the Chinese immigrants to the Napa Valley were illiterate in their native language, Cantonese, much less English, and did not leave written or oral records. Other than their names, most of the details of their individual lives are unknown to us. Jue Joe's journey is notable for the hurdles he had to overcome in the Napa Valley and elsewhere.

Jue Joe (born into the Zhao clan) was born in China in 1856. His family was very poor, and they worked in a chicken coop in Guangzhou, Guangdong Province, China. Growing up, he vowed that his descendants would never suffer as he had. In 1874, at the age of 18, he sailed alone to California by working as a cabin boy and jumped ship in San

[66] This section is summarized from Jack Jue Jr., "Jue Joe Clan History: Finding Our Roots - A Beginning," *Jue Joe Clan History* (blog), June 7, 2010, https://juejoeclan.blogspot.com/2010/06/finding-our-roots-beginning.html and related pages within that website.

Francisco. His mother sent him off with sixteen pounds of rice – when he arrived in San Francisco, he had a quarter pound left.

Once in San Francisco, he sought out the Chinese Six Companies. They were an organization of Chinese associations that ran a large network of labor intermediaries between China and California. They held a near monopoly on placing new immigrant laborers from China into jobs.[67] The Chinese Six Companies sent him to work in the vineyards, first in Marysville (near Sacramento) from 1874 to 1878 and then in St. Helena in the Napa Valley from 1878 to 1886. His original wage was $0.50/day for his work in the vineyards.

Jue Joe preferred the simple life but had a streak of independence and liked to do things his own way. He always wore khaki shirt, khaki pants, and knee-high boots. When working on a ranch, he would walk around with a Colt .45 strapped to a holster, which he would fire once a year to clean it out. He slept with a knife under his pillow so he would be ready in case anything unexpected happened.

In 1882 or 1883 Jue Joe obtained his first certificate of identity in St. Helena in response to the 1882 Chinese Exclusion Act. This was an important step in the wake of that legislation if he were to go back to China and then return to the United States. There was a significant rise of anti-Chinese (called "Anti-Coolie" at the time) sentiment, organization, and even violence in the mid-1880s in St. Helena. Jue Joe suffered an injury in anti-Chinese riots. His later immigration papers noted a gash at the end of his right eyebrow and a crooked little finger on his left hand. Jue Joe told his son San Tong of attacks he had received at the hands of "nogooders" when he was a young man working

[67] Street, *Beasts of the Field*, 248.

the vineyards of Northern California. As a Chinese immigrant with very limited rights, he could not fight back. In 1886, he left St. Helena due to the rising anti-Chinese sentiment, the same year that an anti-Chinese mob marched to St. Helena's Chinatown and demanded that everyone vacate within ten days or face the consequences.

Jue Joe got work laying tracks for the Southern Pacific Railroad from a Chinese labor broker in Oakland's railroad yard. His wage was $1.00 a day. From 1887 to 1893 Jue Joe was employed as a laborer on the Railroad and eventually ended up in Los Angeles. In 1896 Jue Joe leased a farm and grew potatoes in Chatsworth, where he sold them at a produce market in Los Angeles and became quite successful. Six years later Jue Joe returned to China and left his business with his brother Jue Shee. Jue Joe married Leong Shee in an arranged marriage and built a house and began to farm in China.

Unfortunately, his brother suffered business losses in the United States and in 1906 Jue Joe decided to move back to Los Angeles to remake his fortune. He left Leong Shee in China with his two sons. Twelve years later, he sent for his wife and two sons, and they emigrated from China to the United States. This was only possible under the 1882 Chinese Exclusion Act restrictions because he was considered a successful merchant, not an unskilled laborer.

Figure 2. Jue Joe and His Family.

Jue Joe, his wife Leong Shee, his two sons who were born in China, and his two daughters who were born in the United States.[68]

In the 1920s Jue Joe and Leong Shee had two daughters and he continued to expand his farming operations in Southern California. By 1934, Jue Joe's asparagus farms became very successful, and he was hailed as the "Asparagus King" by the LA Times. In 1941 Jue Joe passed away and had to transfer all his family land holdings to his American-born daughters as native-born Chinese, like his sons, could not hold land in the U.S. at that time.

Jue Joe's story of discrimination, achievement, setbacks, perseverance, and eventual success is the embodiment of the American Dream. It started with travel to a

[68] Source: https://juejoeclan.blogspot.com/2010/07/details-jue-joe-in-st-helena.html.

better life in California and hard physical labor in the vineyards of Napa Valley. Many of the Chinese I will discuss persevered through equally challenging circumstances. While we may not know their individual stories, their contributions to the Napa Valley, California, and the United States should not be forgotten. It is remarkable they achieved as much as they did give the tremendous challenges men like Jue Joe had to overcome.

Chapter II.

Chinese at Work in Rural Napa Valley

Chinese workers provided the labor force that drove many of the emerging industries in the Napa Valley in the late 19th century. Not only were they an available labor pool, but they were also willing to work for cheaper wages than white laborers and work at jobs that were considered dangerous or "beneath the dignity" of white laborers. As Herbert Howe Bancroft wrote in 1890,

> For twenty years Chinese labor has acted as a protective tariff, enabling California to establish wealth-creating industries, which form the basis of her present and future greatness; and it would be about as sensible to drive out all steam-engines or other machinery as for this reason alone to drive out the Chinese.[69]

Table 2. Occupations of Chinese Workers in Napa County 1870.

Occupation	Napa	Yountville	St. Helena	Grand Total
Laborer	58		46	104
Domestic Servant	47	4	5	56
Works In Hop Yard			44	44
Laundry	33		10	43
Cook	2	3	5	10
At Home	1		1	2
Railroad			2	2
Works in Tannery	1			1
Grand Total	**142**	**7**	**113**	**262**

Source: 1870 U.S. Census for Napa County.[70] In the census, Yountville was recorded as Yount Township. St. Helena was recorded as Hot Springs.

[69] Hubert Howe Bancroft, *The Works of Hubert Howe Bancroft: Essays and Miscellany. 1890* (San Francisco: History Company, 1890), 241.

[70] "1870 Federal Census - Napa County, CA," accessed July 18, 2021, http://us-census.org/pub/usgenweb/census/ca/napa/1870/.

In this chapter, I will examine Chinese economic contributions in the rural areas of the Napa Valley. The general occupation "Laborer" was the most common profession self-reported by Chinese workers in both the 1870 and 1880 Federal Census (see tables 2 and 3). This could encompass a wide range of activities but likely referred to various outdoor manual labor jobs. Chinese workers were the dominant labor force in the vineyards, hop fields, and local railroad construction and maintenance. We also know they were heavily involved in quicksilver mining, general farming, and building roads and bridges.

In just the ten years between 1870 and 1880, we can see in detail both the increase in the Chinese population of the Napa Valley and the diversification of the jobs they performed (see Table 3). Some of the diversity may have been due to more accurate census recordkeeping, but this was a significant growth period for Napa Valley, so that is consistent with new and expanding kinds of jobs for everyone, including Chinese workers. Unfortunately, we don't have detailed records for 1890, but likely it would have been at least as diversified as in 1880 since the population levels were similar.[71]

[71] As discussed in Chapter 1, there are a variety of limitations using U.S. Census results from this period, but it still has value in understanding the kinds of occupations in which the Chinese were engaged. Even with an incomplete dataset, we can ascertain details and trends that can greatly aid in our understanding of the economic contributions the Chinese made to the Napa Valley.

Table 3. Occupations of Chinese Workers in Napa County, 1880.

Occupation	Napa	Yountville	St. Helena	Calistoga	Knox	Monticello	Total
Laborer	61	79	135			5	280
Cook	84	22	46	8	3	1	164
Railroad	98						98
Tannery	61						61
Laundry	44	2	2	5	1	1	55
Domestic Servant	28	1	14		2		45
Miner	0				42		42
Vineyard worker	0		24				24
Grocery/Merchant	6		16				22
Insane	19		2				21
Farm Laborer	21						21
Gardener	14		3				17
Farm Cook	11						11
N/A	7	1					8
Waiter	4			1			5
Wine Cellar	4		1				5
Dishwasher	2						2
Barber	0		2				2
Tailor	1						1
Doctor	0		1				1
Total	**465**	**105**	**246**	**14**	**48**	**7**	**885**

Source: 1880 U.S. Census for Napa County.[72] *Yountville was recorded as Yount Township. St. Helena was recorded as Hot Springs. Knox and Monticello refer to towns no longer present.*

[72] "1880 Federal Census - Napa County, CA," accessed July 18, 2021, https://www.archives.com/imageviewer?dbId=6742&mediaId=4239981-00568&recordId=15775162:6742:886&recordType=Census These tallies were manually compiled using the original handwritten census forms.

Viticulture

Robert Louis Stevenson wrote about the early days of the Napa Valley wine industry in his 1883 book, *Silverado Squatters*. His famous quote, "and the wine is bottled poetry," adorns the large welcome signs that greet visitors today when they visit the Napa Valley. The more complete quote accurately describes the speculative nature of viticulture in the Valley between 1870-1900. It was a hit-and-miss operation and economic success were in no way guaranteed. It is unsurprising that some vineyard owners would want to tightly control expenses, especially one of the highest cost items – labor. Stevenson's full quote:

> Wine in California is still in the experimental stage; and when you taste a vintage, grave economical questions are involved. The beginning of vine-planting is like the beginning of mining for the precious metals: the wine-grower also "Prospects." One corner of land after another is tried with one kind of grape after another. This is a failure; that is better; a third best. So, bit by bit, they grope about for their Clos Vougeot and Lafite. Those lodes and pockets of earth, more precious than the precious ores, that yield inimitable fragrance and soft fire; those virtuous Bonanzas, where the soil has sublimated under sun and stars to something finer, and the wine is bottled poetry [73]

Chinese laborers made up the vast majority of vineyard workers throughout the Napa Valley in the late 19th century and were indispensable in the development of the early wine industry. As early as 1873, Charles Menefee, who wrote about daily life in Napa County, said, "One of the most important questions presented to the agriculturist is that of labor. The farmers frequently find it impossible to get laborers to perform their work. A great portion of the labor employed during the vintage in picking and shipping

[73] Robert Louis Stevenson, *The Silverado Squatters* (London: Chatto and Windus, 1883), 16.

grapes is Chinese."[74] By the 1880s, they may have comprised up to 80% of the labor force working in vineyards.[75]

One distinguishing characteristic was their willingness to work – and work cheaply - compared with white labor alternatives. Charles Krug, owner of a large vineyard, said he paid Chinese workers $1 per day and did not feed or house them on site, while he had to pay white workers $1 a day in addition to room and board or $1.50 per day without room and board.[76] Each day during harvest season the Chinese picked an average of 1,500 pounds of grapes for their one dollar.[77] There was a cultural aversion to working in vineyards by some white laborers. In the early decades of vineyard planting, vines were planted such that the grapes grew about 18 inches off the ground. To properly harvest the grapes, laborers had to spend their days in the baking sun bent over at the waist. White laborers called this "stoop labor" and considered it demeaning. The willingness of the Chinese laborers to do this work was not understood as a superior work ethic, but rather portrayed in patronizing racial terms. The *San Francisco Wine Merchant* reported that "the best hand in the grape field by all odds is the little Chinaman. He grows close to the ground, so does not have to bend his back like a large, white man."[78] Thus

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[74] Campbell Augustus Menefee, *Historical and Descriptive Sketch Book of Napa, Sonoma, Lake and Mendocino, Comprising Sketches of Their Topography, Productions, History, Scenery, and Peculiar Attraction* (Napa City: Reporter Publishing House, 1873), 215.

[75] William Heintz, *Wine Country, A History of Napa Valley, The Early Years: 1838-1920* (Santa Barbara, CA: Capra Press, 1990), 131.

[76] "Winemaking in Napa; How the Work Is Done at Krug's Great Winery," *St. Helena Star*, October 19, 1883, 1.

[77] Arpad Haraszthy, "Wine-Making in California, Part II." *Overland Monthly* 8, no. 1 (January 1872): 41.

[78] Street, *Beasts of the Field*, 316.

the unwillingness to do hard manual labor for less money was justified by the white laborers based on racial superiority.

Owners of small vineyards who only needed a few extra laborers around harvest time had the option of using white labor. Owners of large vineyards, however, had no choice but turn to the Chinese labor bosses and the hundreds of laborers at their disposal. This had been an issue in the Napa Valley as early as 1872. At a meeting of principle agricultural owners, called the Farmers' Club, the men discussed what could be done about Chinese labor given the shortage of workers on their farms and fields. They questioned whether labor rates of Chinese workers should be regulated so they wouldn't undercut white labor rates or whether it should be left to the market to decide. Some argued that while the Chinese are supposed to be inferior, if "their knowledge and skill exceed ours – if their civilization is better than ours – then they deserve to win." One farmer suggested that if they could not hire enough white laborers, the "only remain'g [sic] remedy is to cultivate home industry – to make the labor of our children available." He had done this on his own farm and found it "more pleasant and more profitable." Despite their complaining, none of the vineyard owners likely believed that child labor would solve their problem, nor did they believe the Chinese deserved to win.

St. Helena's Krug, who even by 1872 had significant experience with Chinese workers on his vineyards, defended the use of Chinese workers. He said he would have preferred to use white labor but had no choice but to turn to Chinese labor. He said they "do pretty well – never too much raunch [sic]" and some of them have been in his employ for three to five years. Dr. B.K. Rule had a similar experience to Krug on his winery. He said he employed a "first-class" white man to supervise the Chinese workers

and then "threw all the responsibility on him." At the end of the meeting of the Farmers' Club in 1872, they all agreed that while white labor was preferable to Chinese labor, nothing could be done about it but pay the good Chinese workers the wages they wanted.[79]

This issue became increasingly problematic as the demand for labor skyrocketed due to the massive vineyard plantings in the 1880s. The demographics of the agricultural labor pool was changing rapidly. As the Farmers' Club members discussed, many vineyard owners still strongly preferred white laborers, and some worked on most vineyards in some capacity, but there were just not enough willing to do the work to meet the demand.[80] Menefee commented that the vineyard owners "are not favorably disposed to these Asiatics, but often find themselves reduced to the necessities of accepting these or none."[81]

The Chinese vineyard workers eventually realized their dominant labor position meant they had economic power relative to the owners that employed them. Chinese labor immigration was curtailed after 1882 due to the Chinese Exclusion Act. Alternate sources of labor were in short supply and vineyard acres under cultivation continued to grow. Between 1880 and 1886, the number of wineries grew from 48 to 175 and wine production grew from 2,910,700 gallons to 4,800,000 gallons.[82] By 1887, the *St. Helena Star* was regularly reporting on the shortage of labor across the Valley. White laborers

[79] "Farmer's Club," *The Napa Valley Register*, November 16, 1872, 1.

[80] Street, *Beasts of the Field*, 280.

[81] Menefee, *Historical and Descriptive Sketch Book of Napa*, 217.

[82] Heintz, *California's Napa Valley*, 121.

were getting $2 a day and Chinese laborers, who were getting $1.25 a day, went on strike at the end of September for an 20% increase to $1.50 a day.[83] This was a significant development and demonstrated a level of coordination and organization among the Chinese labor force. This reflected a broader trend of Chinese agricultural laborers going on strike for higher wages throughout the 1880s in different parts of California as they realized their domination of certain farming labor markets gave them leverage.[84] Though their political rights had not improved in the 1880s, the economic outlook of the Chinese laborers had improved considerably.

The Chinese may have been despised by the locals in town, but they were highly valued by the vineyard owners who employed them. One of the intractable labor problems in the Napa Valley in the 1870s, as it was throughout the state, was that the white laborers were considered unreliable. They had the reputation of abandoning their tools in the middle of a vineyard and heading to the California foothills whenever news of a new gold or silver strike reached town. Chinese workers rarely left the fields to join their fellow laborers in pursuit of riches, likely because there was safety in numbers where they were.[85] Vineyard owners praised Chinese workers for their general steadiness and for not drinking on the job.[86]

There was significant concern about what would happen to the wine industry if acres under cultivation continued to expand and there was not enough Chinese labor to

[83] "Rutherford Items," *St. Helena Star*, September 30, 1887, 3.

[84] Street, *Beasts of the Field*, 319-322.

[85] Heintz, *California's Napa Valley*, 87.

[86] Street, *Beasts of the Field*, 317.

work the vines. E. W. Hilgard, writing in the *Overland Monthly* in 1884, said that in addition to ensuring phylloxera did not overwhelm local vineyards, the other "threatening difficulty is that of a scarcity of labor, and for the immediate future it is certainly a serious one. The exclusion act is rapidly rendering Chinese labor unavailable, and no other as yet appears to take its place. The difficulty is especially serious in the case of the great vineyard enterprises covering thousands of acres." He drew an analogy that local vineyard owners were "in nearly the same predicament as were the cotton-planters of the South after the war, when they found themselves unable to command the negro labor that had previously run their thousand-acre plantations so smoothly."[87] While he wished for more Chinese laborers to be available in California because they were good workers, he was not being altruistic. He clearly did not see them as equals to white Americans, but rather similar to recently emancipated Black Americans. Other commentators would tout the Chinese work ethic in California while simultaneously denigrating them. As Francis Sheldon, writing in the *Overland Monthly*, argued in 1886,

> It is the insidiousness of the Chinese method that is its most dangerous feature. They come upon us so quietly, and so quickly appropriate places for themselves, that it is too late when we awake to the damage that is done. It matters not that their feeling is friendly toward us. The gist of the matter - that which makes their unlimited coming an invasion - lies in the fact that they have the ability within themselves to out-compete us in any and all branches of industry in which we engage.[88]

In other words, how can a white laborer possibly compete against someone who is friendly and works harder than they do?

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[87] E. W. Hilgard, "The Future of Grape-Growing in California," *Overland Monthly* 3, no. 1 (January 1884): 1–6, 4-5.

[88] Francis E. Sheldon, "The Chinese Immigration Discussion," *Overland Monthly* 7, no. 38 (February 1886): 113–19, 115-116.

Figure 3. Harpers Weekly 1878 Sketch of Chinese Vineyard Workers.

Title of the picture is "The Vintage in California – At Work at the Wine Presses" which was published along with an article introducing Napa Valley wines to the rest of the country in the October 5, 1878 issue of Harper's Weekly. It was ostensibly an accurate portrayal of life of winery workers, though the artist took extensive liberties to provide more visual interest. The creative license he took with the Chinese workers stomping on grapes in the upper right of the picture gave winery owners a significant public relations problem.

Even though the vineyard owners reluctantly admitted they needed Chinese labor to be successful, they went to great pains to hide the fact from the outside world. As Napa Valley wines began to gain a reputation for taste and quality, the vintners did not want anything damaging that idea. They worried that if it became common knowledge that Chinese laborers were working the vineyards, it would raise questions about cleanliness and the possibility of foreign diseases. In 1887 *Harper's Weekly* developed a lengthy

article titled "The Vintage in California" that focused on Napa Valley wines. As part of the article, they commissioned an artist, Paul Frenzeny, to do a pencil sketch of a winemaking scene (see Figure 3). He took artistic license and transformed a scene of Chinese in the field picking grapes to be one of them stomping grapes with their bare feet – a process the technologically advanced vintners had abandoned years prior. When the picture was printed in the October 5, 1878 issue alongside the article, it caused widespread dismay for local vineyard owners and, as they feared, brought out strong anti-Chinese sentiment from across the state and nation. Despite threats and even occasional violence against their property or the Chinese workers themselves, the vineyard owners persevered and kept employing the laborers. While the vineyard owners may have chosen to keep the Chinese working in the vineyard despite public pressure, it is worth noting this incident helped justify the anti-Chinese component in the 1880 California Constitution.[89]

One argument that was frequently put forth was that if Chinese labor was necessary for large vineyards to succeed, the answer might be to renounce large vineyards in favor of smaller ones that could use family and a few white laborers to bring in the crop. An article in the July 9, 1884 *St. Helena Star* argued that Napa Valley vintners should pay for immigrants from France, Germany, and Italy to come to work on the vineyards. If that did not work then, "in a nutshell this: Have smaller vineyards, more of them and do the work ourselves. A growing and valuable industry would be retarded,

[89] Street, *Beasts of the Field*, 317-319. Ironically while the treatment of Chinese in the Napa Valley may have led to the development of the section of the state Constitution establishing Anti-Chinese laws as a foundation of 1880 California, it was another Napa Valley business, a quicksilver mine, that challenged that section and had it stricken from the state constitution.

but it will live."[90] Despite this call to action, none of the vineyard owners showed any interest is deconstructing their profitable large vineyards in favor of poorer, racially homogenous, and smaller ones. Chinese vineyard workers were there to stay until labor demand shrank or until vineyard owners could find economically viable alternatives.

Spotlight on Schramsberg Vineyards

One of the few places in the Napa Valley that you can still see direct evidence of the labor of Chinese workers on a winery is at Schramsberg Vineyards. In 1862, Jacob Schram purchased a 200-acre property on the hillside of Mt. Diamond between present day St. Helena and Calistoga and began development of one of the first hillside vineyards in the Napa Valley. In 1870, the grapes were ready, and he decided to construct a set of wine caves dug back into the mountain itself to provide a constantly cool and environmentally stable location for the wine to age. Digging caves into the side of a mountain was labor intensive work. Chinese laborers were just coming off work on the Transcontinental Railroad and were available to do the backbreaking and dangerous work of excavating the caves. Many of the Chinese had experience with explosives during construction of the railroad when they had to blast a path through the Sierra Nevada Mountain range, but even with the aid of dynamite, it required hard work with picks and shovels to construct the caves.

The Chinese labor gangs worked quickly and took about a year to blast, dig, and shape the first set of caves. Overall, they dug a subterranean complex about one-quarter

[90] "Vineyard Labor; The Wages Demanded by Chinese Workers," *St. Helena Star*, June 9, 1884, 1.

mile in length into the mountainside. These caves, still in use today, are about seven feet tall and are roughly cylindrical in shape (see Figure 4).

Figure 4. Schramsberg Winery Wine Caves Dug by Chinese Laborers in 1870.

Wine is still aged in oaken barrels in the wine caves today. This initial set of caves consist of larger underground rooms for the barrels (on the left) and narrow tunnels connecting the areas together (on the right).[91]

After the caves were dug, Chinese laborers continued to work at the winery doing a wide variety of jobs. The winery is set back almost two miles from the main north-south travel route in the Valley, so the Chinese would have had no choice but to both live and work on the property. They likely harvested the grapes, did domestic chores about the winery and homestead, and worked as cooks for the Schrams.

[91] Photos by the author, taken September 30, 2021.

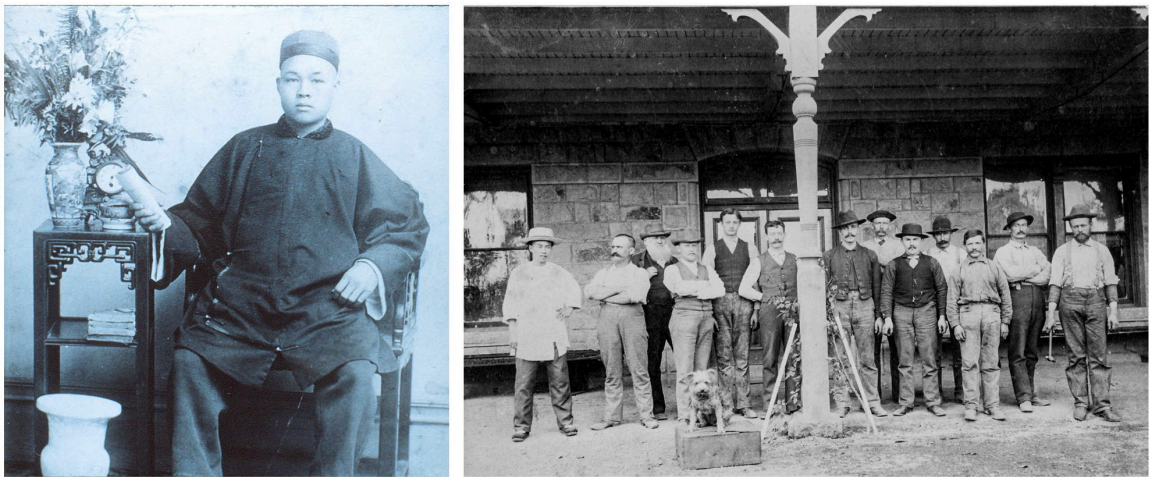

Figure 5. Schramsberg Chinese Workers.

The picture on the left is from the archives at Schramsberg Winery. On the back is a notation "Cook for Jacob Schram." Date unknown, but Schram died in 1905, so it was prior to that. The picture on the right is a set of winery employees posing in front of the Schram Mansion on the property. There is one Chinese worker on the far left dressed in a typical domestic worker uniform of a tunic over trousers. Notably, the Chinese worker is standing apart from the other workers, who are otherwise quite close together. The pose of the man next to him who is slightly turned toward him almost looks like he is glaring at the Chinese worker, but it is hard to tell for certain.

There is a building on the property known as the "Chinese Bunkhouse," and it was almost certainly where the Chinese laborers and domestic servants were housed on site. Inside the bunkhouse there are two rooms; each room has a door to the outside and there is an inside opening connecting the two rooms. The bigger room consists of a large fireplace that was used for both heating and cooking. The wooden rafters on the inside of the roof still are coated black from the frequent fires. The smaller room consists of storage shelves and may have been used as a sleeping area.[92]

[92] The bunkhouse is currently used for storage, so pictures of the inside are not indicative of how it would have looked in the 19th century. The outside appears unchanged from the late 1800s.

Figure 6. Schramsberg Chinese Bunkhouse.

The "Chinese Bunkhouse" that is still on the property at Schramsberg and is very likely unchanged from when it was used to house Chinese workers on the winery.[93]

By 1881, the winery was operating close to capacity, and it had produced 87,237 cases of wine since it first opened. Jacob Schram decided it was time to build a second set of tunnels to allow him to age and bottle more wine at one time. This set of tunnels was also constructed by Chinese laborers. The second set of caves is much larger than the first. Not only are they taller and wider than the initial set of caves - they are at least ten feet tall - but they are much longer and more complex. These caves took much longer to construct than the first set – well over a year – but since Schram already had one set of caves in operation, he was able to take more time with the new set of caves and ensure they were large enough to accommodate future winery operations. Today, the inside of

[93] Photos by the author, taken September 30, 2021.

the first set of caves has recently been sprayed with a concrete sealant to keep out moisture, but the second set of caves look much like it was when it was originally constructed. It is possible to still see the pick marks from the Chinese laborers where they dug out the caves, at least partially by hand (see Figure 7).[94]

Figure 7. Schramsberg Phase Two Wine Caves 1881.

The picture on the left shows the larger cave openings on the second phase of cave construction by the Chinese laborers. Instead of barrels, thousands of bottles are stored in this section – four or five rows deep. The picture on the left shows the pick marks left by the Chinese laborers during construction.[95]

Interestingly, Schramsberg sparkling wines have played a part in the more modern history between China and the United States as well. Richard Nixon visited China in 1972 in an historic trip to reestablish diplomatic relations between the United States and

[94] The description of the contributions of the Chinese laborers, pictures from the Schramsberg Archives, and pictures taken on-site at Schramsberg are courtesy of Hugh Davies, owner of Schramsberg Winery and Matthew Levy, Marketing Manager. Visit was on September 30, 2021.

[95] Photos by the author, taken September 30, 2021.

China. On February 25, 1972, in the middle of the trip, Richard Nixon gave a famous "Toast to Peace" at a state dinner hosted by Chinese Premier Zhou Enlai. As Barbara Walters reported, the toast was made with a 1969 vintage Schramsberg "Blanc de Blancs" sparkling wine. It was the first time a California wine was served on the international stage by a U.S. President.[96] No one at Schramsberg knows if the wine was included only because it was a California wine and Nixon, who was from California, wanted to highlight an export from his home state. Or was this wine chosen because of the contributions Chinese made to that same winery one hundred years earlier?

Hop Farming

Wine was not the only alcoholic beverage being manufactured in the Napa Valley. Hops, critical for brewing beer, was the second in crop yield behind only grapes. In addition to beer, hops were also used in baking and in the production of medicines. It was mostly grown for export, as England, in the late 19th century, consumed as many hops as the rest of the world combined. The fortunes of hop yards rose and fell considerably each year depending on the weather and worldwide supply and demand, especially from Europe. The hops were trained to grow up wooden poles and it required about 1,500 poles per acre that was fully planted. The cost for poles for a 15-acre hop yard was about $1,100, which was a significant investment. Picking of the hops "is done chiefly by Chinamen and it takes a force of fifty about a month to pick a 15-acre field."

[96] "Nixon and Zhou's 'Toast to Peace,'" *The Weekly Calistogian*, March 15, 2012.

In addition to the planting, growing, and picking hops, they had to be dried, cured, and baled. The high expense of growing hops made it a perilous business. [97]

Unlike vineyards, which were present up and down the valley, hops were only grown in St. Helena. The first hop field in Napa County was planted by Mr. A. Clock in 1868. By 1876, there were a total of four hop farms around St. Helena: Clock's, R. F. Montgomery, Charles A. Story, and James Dowdle. [98] At least three of those four (not including Montgomery's) were known to employ Chinese "hop-pickers" on their farms. Mr. Clark's hops were so well known he was awarded the title of champion hop-grower of the world at the 1876 Centennial Exposition in Philadelphia.[99]

[97] "Among Our Hop Growers," *St. Helena Star*, August 11, 1884, 3.

[98] "Hops. St. Helena's Product in That Line," *St. Helena Star*, September 29, 1876, 3.

[99] "Hops. The Yield in St. Helena," *St. Helena Star*, August 3, 1877, 3.

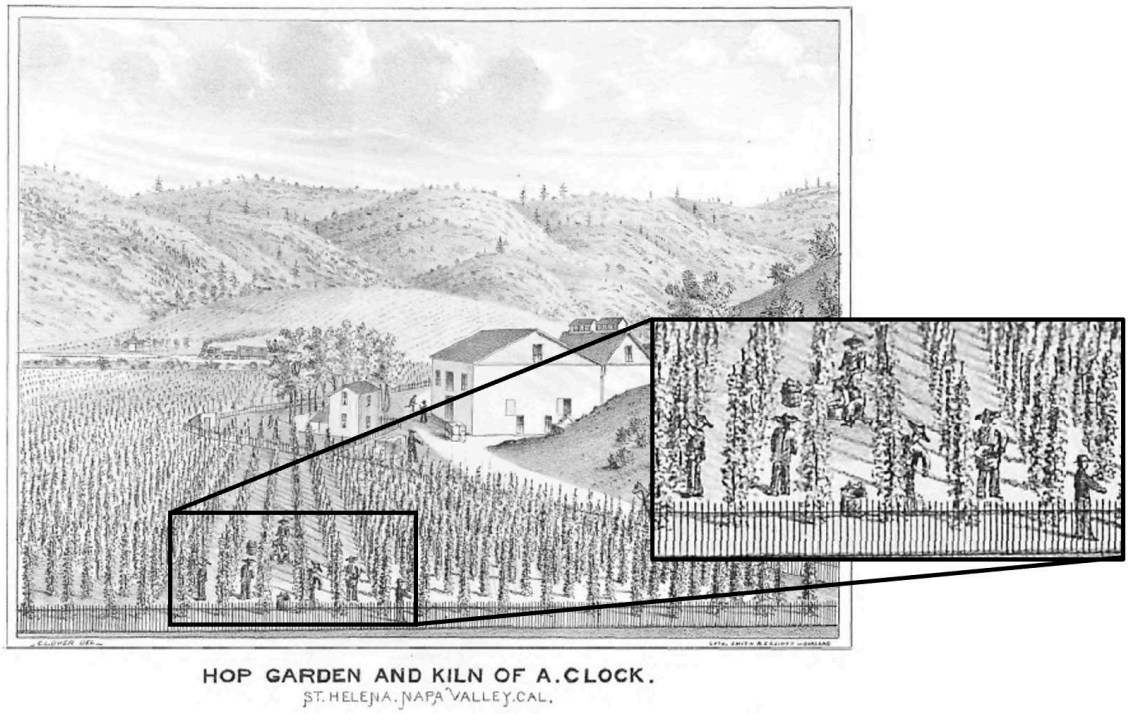

Figure 8. 1878 Sketch of Hop Farm with Chinese Laborers.

This sketch of A. Clock's Hop Garden shows approximately eight Chinese farm workers tending the hops. The drawing of the Chinese workers is distinctive with the wide-brimmed circular hat and there is one that appears to have a long hair braided behind his head in the style of a queue.[100]

In 1870, the single largest occupation of Chinese, other than the generic "laborer" occupation, was working in the hop fields. By 1880, 11,000 pounds of hops were harvested each year across the entire Napa County.[101] The *Napa County Reporter* said that hops were selling at seven or eight cents a pound in 1879 were selling at forty or fifty

[100] Smith and Elliott, *Illustrations of Napa County, California*, 49

[101] Wallace and Kanaga, *1880 History of Napa County*, 90.

cents a pound just three years later.[102] Hop farmers and vineyard owners had similar problems getting inexpensive, willing labor to work on their fields. In 1876, hop-yard owner Charles A. Storey employed a labor gang of sixty Chinese laborers to harvest the hops on his property.[103] Unlike vineyard workers, which consisted of both Chinese and white workers, hop picking in the Napa Valley was exclusively done by Chinese laborers. In 1884, the five hop farms in the county employed a total of 335 Chinese laborers to harvest the crop.[104]

The *St. Helena Star* grumbled that hop yards around the nearby town of Healdsburg in Sonoma County employed about 1,000 hop pickers and they were all white men, women, and children yet in the Napa Valley farmers only used Chinese labor.[105] The *Star* was so disgusted with the prevalence of Chinese laborers on the hop field that the following year, they reported that an agent was in nearby Sonoma and Mendocino counties arranging for African American laborers to be imported from the South to work in the hop fields there. They editorialized that importing African American laborers to the Napa Valley to work in the vineyards and hop yards would be a considerable improvement over the Chinese hop pickers.[106]

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[102] "Eastern advices of the 5th State That Hops Are up in That Market...," *Napa County Reporter*, August 11, 1882, 4.

[103] "Local," *St. Helena Star*, September 1, 1876, 2.

[104] "Hop Picking," *St. Helena Star*, September 11, 1884, 3.

[105] "The Healdsberg Flag Says That over 1000 Persons Are Employed...," *St. Helena Star*, September 15, 1884, 3.

[106] "An Agent Has Been through Sonoma and Mendocino Counties Arranging for the Employment...," *St. Helena Star*, March 9, 1885, 3.

Table 4. 1884 Chinese Workers at Hop Farms in Napa County.

Owner	Acreage	Chinese Hop-Pickers
Philip Eiting	14	44
Storey Brothers	41	75
James Dowdle	35	76
R. F. Lane	14	76
Cole & Simpson	30	100

Every hop farm in Napa County (all located around St. Helena) employed Chinese laborers exclusively for picking their harvest. The low cost was irresistible to the landowners.[107]

Chinese laborers were frequently required to camp out in the hop fields during harvest time. This turned ugly in 1882 when some of the Chinese hop pickers, working on James Dowdell's ranch in St. Helena, stole a buggy cover from J. H. Allison to use as a tent in the Chinese camp. Mr. Allison, and his two sons John and James, marched into the China camp to retrieve their buggy cover. There was a struggle over the cover and Mr. Allison shot one of the Chinese laborers, possibly fatally. Since J. H. Allison was a judge in St. Helena and his son James was a police officer, the *Napa Weekly Journal* was certain that they would be acquitted quickly.[108] As there was no further reporting on any punishment for any of the Allison family, it is almost certain that the *Weekly Journal* was correct, and they were not convicted of any crime.

Just as their vineyard worker counterparts had done, Chinese hop pickers went on strike demanding a raise in pay in 1887. They were getting $1 a day and they struck for $1.25 a day. This incensed local farmers who redoubled their efforts to recruit white

[107] "Hop Picking," *St. Helena Star*, September 11, 1884, 3.

[108] "St. Helena Notes," *Napa Weekly Journal*, September 24, 1885, 3.

laborers to work the fields. James Dowdell, the most vocal St. Helena hop farmer, noted that the nearby community of Healdsburg had recently swapped out Chinese labor for white laborers and it "worked well." He noted that since it was harvest time in the hop field, he could not switch out his Chinese laborers this season, but he was "willing to fix up temporary accommodations and give white labor a show if it can be obtained."[109] Apparently, he did not believe that white laborers would be willing to camp out in the fields at night during harvest, even though he forced his Chinese workers to do that every season.

Dowdell was unsuccessful with his plan for better accommodations to attract white labor, but that did not deter him. In 1892, he decided to involve the entire St. Helena community in his effort to recruit white laborers. He offered prizes to any and all townspeople, including married women and single boys and girls, to the ones that could pick the most hops, or alternatively, the cleanest hops. He had a large turnout and held a community supper and dance at Turner Hall in downtown St. Helena to announce the winners of the contest. In a speech at the event, Dowdell said this was a great "illustration of the triumph of white labor over Chinese." He thought it was a much more practical approach than just repeating "the Chinese must go" over and over, as was frequently done throughout town. He estimated that he paid his white laborers $1,000 to pick the hops in the season, which was kept in St. Helena, "which would otherwise have found its way to China." He also felt if he could continue this practice, he could "bring in a good class of immigrants" who would settle in town with their families.[110]

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[109] "Keep the Money at Home," *St. Helena Star*, September 2, 1887, 3.

[110] "Praise for Mr. Dowdell," *The Napa Register*, October 14, 1892, 6.

The *Napa Journal* reprinted a story from the Oakland Tribune accusing Chinese hop-pickers elsewhere in California of "mixing a large quantity of small pebbles and clods of dirt with the hops he picks." This would obviously make the bags of harvested hops weigh more, which would garner more pay if the hop-pickers were being paid by weight.[111] This was a typical tactic of the local newspapers. They would reprint anti-Chinese stories from around the state in their papers. In this way, they would not be specifically accusing local Chinese laborers of anything wrong, but it would constitute a warning of what could happen locally and leave a negative impression with their readers about the entire local Chinese community.

Despite the newspapers treating all Chinese laborers as one monolithic group, they did not always operate cooperatively. Despite his optimistic claims, Dowdell was still resorting to using Chinese laborers in his hop fields just two years later in 1894. During the harvest, there was a significant disagreement among the Chinese hop-pickers about wages and half the labor gang went on strike while the other half kept on working. Later that day, one of the strikers named Al Hop came back to the field and got into an argument with On Gee, a Chinese hop-picker who remained on the job. Gee picked up an iron pipe and hit Hop on the head several times, dazing him. Several fellow workers restrained Gee and attempted to subdue him when Hop staggered to his feet and fatally stabbed Gee.[112] Working in the hop fields may have been less dangerous than working in an environment like quicksilver mines, but there were hazards everywhere the Chinese worked.

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[111] "Chinese hop pickers are very slick individuals…," *Napa Journal*, August 30, 1893, 3.

[112] "A Bloody Battle," *Napa Register*, September 21, 1894, 1.

Quicksilver Mining

While the wine business was the fastest growing industry in late 19th century Napa Valley, it was by no means the only large industry in the area. There were gold, silver, iron, and coal in the mountains around the Napa Valley. Unfortunately for aspiring businessmen, the concentrations of minerals or ores was not large enough in most cases upon which to build a successful mining business. There was one exception that managed to be slightly profitable in the late 1800s – quicksilver mines.[113] Quicksilver, or liquid mercury, was used in thermometers and many drugs and chemicals popular in the late 19th century. From 1848 until 1882, all quicksilver mining in the United States came from California. Miners would dig up cinnabar ore and melt it to collect the liquid mercury that would evaporate and then condense in a furnace. The mercury would be collected and transferred to 75-pound iron flasks that would be shipped to various factories. Most quicksilver mines were relatively small but supply still frequently was higher than demand, so quicksilver never fetched a particularly high price. The high point of domestic production was in 1877 when quicksilver fetched $37.30 a flask and mines generated almost 75,000 flasks. By 1890 it was up to $52.50 a flask, but many mines were either exhausted or had a hard time turning a profit at even that price and domestic production had slipped to 22,000 flasks.[114] Yet around 1880 there were at least fifteen quicksilver mines operating in and around the Napa Valley.[115] The price of quicksilver

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[113] Wallace and Kanaga, *1901 History of Napa County*.110

[114] Frederick Leslie Ransome, "Our Mineral Supplies--Quicksilver," *USGS Bulletin*, 1919, https://doi.org/10.3133/b666FF, 210-217.

[115] Slocum, Bowen, & Co., *History of Napa and Lake Counties, California*, 158-179.

and the number of flasks produced by local quicksilver mines was published in the local newspaper and tracked closely by the public.[116]

Table 5. Largest Quicksilver Mines in Napa Valley w/Chinese Employment.

	Flasks Produced			
Quicksilver Mine	**1877**	**1878**	**1879**	**Used Chinese Miners?**
Sulphur Bank	10,903	9,240	9,249	Yes
Great Western	5,877	4,866	7,031	Yes
Redington	9,447	6,687	4,170	No
Napa Consolidated	2,137	3,049	3,605	Yes

Source for flasks produced: St. Helena Star, March 12, 1880. Three of the top four mines, which together account for over 80% of the flasks produced in 1879, relied heavily on Chinese labor.

Mining was hard and dangerous work, and due to the slim profit margins, many mine owners looked for sources of cheap labor to make their mines as successful as possible. The economics of Chinese labor was too attractive for some owners to ignore. Some mines would only hire white miners, while other mines would have a mix of Chinese and white miners to keep labor costs low. One example of a mixed mining crew was the Napa Consolidated Quicksilver Mine, also known as the Oat Hill Mine. It generated about 450 flasks per month in 1880 and employed 150 Chinese miners and 115 white miners.[117] By 1898 it still had about 150 Chinese miners on staff alongside 150 white miners. It was considered at that time one of the largest quicksilver mines in the world.[118]

[116] "Quicksilver," *St. Helena Star*, March 12, 1880, 2.

[117] Wallace and Kanaga, *History of Napa County*, 118.

[118] "A Fearful Explosion at the Oathill Quicksilver Mine in Chinatown," *The Weekly Calistogian*, April 22, 1898, 3.

The Sulphur Bank Mining Company apparently liked their Chinese miners so much they were reluctant to release them even after the 1879 California Constitution declared that Chinese laborers could not be employed by a California corporation. *The Napa Register* did not approve of keeping the Chinese miners on staff and stated, "The Sulphur Bank Mining Company, who have taken very little interest in the new Constitution and the Workingman's agitation, have concluded to go about as they please, at present at least, and continue at the mine with the aid of the Chinese, as heretofore."[119] By February 1880, the Sulphur Mine succumbed to legal and public pressure. The President of the Company, Tiburcio Parrott, had refused to fire the miners and was arrested. He had vowed to fight the clause in the new California Constitution but the superintendent at the mine told him that the public had become "so bitter against the company for its refusing to discharge its Chinese that it would be best to let them go, and they were accordingly discharged."[120] The following week the mine was advertising for white miners and offering between $1.75 and $3.00 per day.[121]

Even though they were hiring replacement laborers, Parrott and the Sulphur Bank Mining Company pursued its claim in U.S. Circuit Court that they should have the right to employ Chinese miners. The court heard the case and, on March 22, 1880, rendered a verdict in favor of Sulphur Bank declaring that the clause in the California Constitution was illegal because it contravened both the 14th Amendment to the U.S. Constitution and

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[119] "Up Valley News," *The Napa Valley Register*, February 27, 1880, 3.

[120] "Chinamen Discharged," *The Napa Valley Register*, February 27, 1880, 3.

[121] "The Sulphur Bank mine is discharging the Chinamen," *St. Helena Star*, March 12, 1880, 2.

Federal treaties with China. The opinion, read by Justice Hoffman, included the following:

> It is an attempt at an unconstitutional object, to drive the Chinese from the country by preventing them from obtaining a living. Corporations have the constitutional right to protect property by employing such labor as they please, subject only to such police regulations as may exist. The law is, as its title shows, directed against the Chinese. The purpose of the law is apparent, and in direct violation of the treaty.[122]

The verdict was greeted with great enthusiasm in the Sulphur Bank Mine and elsewhere. At the Great Western Mine, the "Chinese were, of course, very much elated over the decision, in consequence of which the mine to-day presents the appearance of a Chinese gala day, over which the whites are manifesting considerable enthusiasm."[123] Declaring that a portion of a state constitution was illegal and thus null and void was a significant legal precedent - and it was all due to the efforts of Napa Valley quicksilver mines to keep Chinese miners employed and on the job.

Some mines would not hire Chinese miners no matter the potential labor cost savings. The Reddington Quicksilver Mine, located in the northeast corner of Napa County, was founded in 1860, which made it one of the oldest mines in the area. They formed the center of a company town named Knoxville that had about 500 residents. In 1880, the price of quicksilver was low, and they had reduced their mining crew to about fifty miners. They proudly stated that those fifty are "all white men, there never having been a Chinaman employed about the premises by the present superintendent. The policy of the company is, at present, to employ barely enough men to pay the expense of

[122] "An Unconstitutional Anti-Chinese Law," *The Napa Valley Register*, March 23, 1880, 2.

[123] "Work Resumed," *The Napa Valley Register*, March 25, 1880, 3.

keeping up the mine, without exhausting the ore bodies at so trifling a profit."[124] The Reddington would not even consider having Chinese miners despite significant economic pressures that presumably could have resulted in the closure of the mine entirely.

On the other side of that economic calculus was the Great Western Mine. Based on the hillside of Mt. St. Helena, their mining crew were all Chinese. They employed between 200 and 250 Chinese miners continuously from the mid-1870s through the early 1900s. The miners lived and worked at the mine. Their living environment was split into two camps, Camp No. 1 and Brown China Camp.[125] Most of the miners that lived at Camp No. 1 were from the Canton area. There were two distinct classes within the Chinese mining community. The majority were illiterate who spoke little or no English and worked the backbreaking, dangerous mining jobs. There was a minority that were educated, spoke English, and who would manage the other miners' business affairs, hold the more important jobs at the mine site, or work in the Superintendent's house.[126] The wage discrepancy between Chinese and white laborers was considerable. The average wage for a Chinese miner in the 1890s was $1.25 per day vs $2.25 per day for a white miner. Senior mechanics (all white) could make as much as $4 per day.[127]

Another benefit of having a predominately Chinese labor force was the ability to rapidly shrink or grow numbers depending on the market rate for quicksilver and whether

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[124] Wallace and Kanaga, *History of Napa County*, 164.

[125] The names do not make any sense together, but apparently those were the names of the two camps, and both contained Chinese miners.

[126] Helen (Rocca) Goss, *The Life and Death of a Quicksilver Mine* (Los Angeles, CA: The Historical Society of Southern California, 1958), 65-66.

[127] Goss, *The Life and Death of a Quicksilver Mine*, 136.

the mine was producing well by working closely with Chinese labor bosses. The *St. Helena Star* reported in 1886 that "Several Chinese have been discharged from the Gt. Western Quicksilver Mine, and it has been reported that seventy-five in all will be sent away. This wholesale discharge of Mongols is made necessary by the small amount of cinnabar at present found at the mine." [128] Presumably they were recalled when the mine started producing again. Unlike the Sulphur Bank Mine, when the 1879 California Constitution was passed the Great Western temporarily closed the mines and did not even try to hire white replacement workers. They claimed "that they cannot employ white labor and pay expenses."[129] The entire economic model of the Great Western Mine, the second largest mine in the area, was predicated on using Chinese miners.

The camps where the Chinese miners at the Great Western lived were a jumble of poorly constructed shacks built by the miners themselves out of whatever materials they could get their hands on. They lacked basic sanitation, smelled horrible, and were surrounded by trash. There was no central eating hall, so each man cooked his own meal of rice with a small fire in front of his house. The miners wore "a dungaree costume similar to the work clothes of sailors" and their distinctive large straw hat.[130]

[128] "Calistoga," *St. Helena Star*, May 7, 1886, 1.

[129] "Local Briefs," *The Napa Valley Register*, February 19, 1880, 3.

[130] Goss, *The Life and Death of a Quicksilver Mine*, 66.

Figure 9. China Camp at The Great Western Mine.

One of the sites where Chinese miners lived in the late 1890s [131]

The camps followed the same labor-boss model that was used in the vineyards and during railroad construction. Each camp had a boss who would work with the mine superintendent to determine how much each miner was owed and then would be responsible to distributing the wages to the miners directly. Helen Goss, who grew up in the camp as a young daughter of the mine superintendent, tells of the labor boss of Brown China Camp named Ah Shee. He was well-educated, larger than most of the other miners, an excellent worker, and was trusted by the superintendent and his family. He made $1.50 a day and was the highest paid miner. He had his employer keep a savings account for him in San Francisco and when Ah Shee was ready to return to China he had accumulated nearly $6,000. The labor boss of Camp No. 1 was Ah Key, who was smaller

[131] Goss, *The Life and Death of a Quicksilver Mine*, 67.

than Ah Shee but was adept at keeping the peace among the men in the camps, which was a constant concern.

Violence occurred somewhat frequently within the camp. The most serious violent outbreak occurred in 1880. Andrew Rocca, the mine superintendent, wrote to his fiancée about a "bloody row" among the Chinese miners that involved both camps and about 125 men. Rocca said that four or five were "badly cut." The riot was quelled when he arrived in the middle of the camps with his rifle, which he never fired. He did say that had he "not been here there would have been thirty or forty of them killed."[132] There were individual quarrels as well. As reported by the *Independent Calistogian* in 1895:

> A fight took place at the Great Western mine on Tuesday between a couple of Chinamen, in which one of the participants beat his antagonist nearly to death. He was brought to this city and while being shipped to San Francisco Wednesday the injured Celestial died on the train and was taken off at Napa for burial. The murderer is a small Chinaman, about 4 feet 8 inches tall, and made good his escape from the mine, and up to this writing has not been captured.[133]

The name of the murderer was either unknown or not considered important enough to report.

In addition to sometimes violent quarrels within the camps, the work itself was quite dangerous. The mines were constructed by blasting and digging deep underground by miners with minimal safety equipment. The tunnels were supported by large timbers that could fall and crush unsuspecting miners. There were multiple furnaces cooking the cinnabar ore all the time to generate the quicksilver that caused the air in the mine shafts to become increasingly hot (and likely toxic). The Chinese laborers served as miners,

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[132] Goss, *The Life and Death of a Quicksilver Mine*, 67-70.

[133] "A fight took place at the Great Western mine on Tuesday," *Independent Calistogian*, August 31, 1895, 3.

furnace men, and the most dangerous job, a "sootman." The sootmen had to crawl into the hot furnace condensers and clean out the baked-on mercury. They would eventually succumb to mercury poisoning after long-term exposure to mercury vapors and turn into "shaking, toothless wrecks." One sootman at the mine was named Ah Cat. He was known to the superintendent's family because he liked coffee and would frequently go to the superintendent's house for a cup. The family noticed that eventually, "poor old Cat put his face to the cup on the back steps and then hardly be able to hold still enough to drink." [134] Ah Cat likely was suffering from mercury poisoning, including lack of muscle coordination and muscle weakness.[135]

[134] Goss, *The Life and Death of a Quicksilver Mine*, 73.

[135] OCSPP US EPA, "Health Effects of Exposures to Mercury," Overviews and Factsheets, September 3, 2015, https://www.epa.gov/mercury/health-effects-exposures-mercury.

Figure 10. Workers at the Great Western Mine.

The miners (all Chinese) and management/support staff (all white) at the Great Western Mine in 1879. This is one of the few pictures of Chinese miners, who refused to be photographed individually.[136]

There was also the constant threat of fires, from either the furnaces, forest fires, or from fires within the camps themselves. The *Weekly Calistogian* reported in 1898 that two Chinese miners were killed outright and twenty more were wounded in an explosion in China Camp No. 2 at the Napa Consolidated Quicksilver Mine. Apparently, some Chinese miners were setting off firecrackers in their cabin early in the morning before their shift began. The firecrackers set the cabin on fire, and the fire spread to an adjacent cabin where a large quantity of gunpowder and blasting caps were stored under the

[136] Goss, *The Life and Death of a Quicksilver Mine*, 13.

floorboards. The miners were not supposed to keep explosives in their cabins, but it could have been stored in anticipation of the upcoming Chinese New Year. Once the gunpowder got hot enough, the "house which concealed the powder was blown to smithereens, nothing whatever remaining on its site. Two of the Chinamen were instantly killed." A total of five buildings were destroyed."[137] Chinese miners could not even escape danger in their own homes.

General Construction and Farming

Much of the early physical infrastructure work in the Napa Valley was performed by Chinese laborers. In both the 1870 and the 1880 censuses, the "laborer" job classification was the largest category for Chinese residents. As early as 1873, the Napa Reporter said that "twenty-seven Chinamen and three white men" were building the first road between Calistoga and a quicksilver mine in nearby Pope Valley.[138] In 1875, a local vintner named John Lewelling hired Chinese to build fences around his vineyard. All did not go well as many fenceposts were destroyed, reportedly "due to the carelessness of a Chinaman who set fire to a pile of brush, without thinking the whole county was as dry as powder."[139] In 1877, Simpson Thompson cut the wages of white laborers who were building a road in Napa, and they promptly struck and left the worksite. Thompson was able to quickly replace them with Chinese laborers who were willing to work for the lesser wage. This economic tactic was successful as within a year the white laborers

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[137] "A Fearful Explosion at the Oathill Quicksilver Mine in Chinatown," *The Weekly Calistogian*, April 22, 1898, 3.

[138] Heintz, *California's Napa Valley - One Hundred Sixty Years of Wine Making*, 88.

[139] "Fire! Fire," *St. Helena Star*, July 29, 1875, 3.

returned to the construction project at the lower wage.[140] Stories like this may have made white employers happy but undoubtedly contributed to the resentment of Chinese workers by white workers who were either displaced or threatened with displacement.

Chinese laborers also worked on winery construction projects, which could be dangerous for workers. In 1877 Chinese laborers were digging a wine cellar for C. Lemme near St. Helena and a worker was killed due to a partial cave-in.[141] It could also be risky for the winery owners who hired Chinese laborers. Terrill Grigsby hired many Chinese laborers to help construct his winery in 1878. He also used Chinese workers around his farm to harvest wheat, cut hay, etc. His barn was destroyed by fire, which was possibly arson and he lost 400 sacks of barley and 50 tons of hay, among other items. He had been threatened by letter during the winery construction if he did not stop using Chinese labor, he would be "burned out." He believed the fire was in retribution for his reliance on Chinese workers.[142]

One of the earliest examples of winery construction were described by a reporter in 1863 of Chinese doing "inside work" at Buena Vista winery in neighboring Sonoma Valley as "On the same floor we found four Chinamen filling, corking, wiring, etc. Champagne bottles" and "There are now in progress three cellars, close to the press house. These are all being blasted and excavated by Chinese. They are to be twenty-six feet wide, thirteen feet in height, and three hundred feet long."[143] The Chinese were

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[140] "Chinese Wages," *St. Helena Star*, January 5, 1877, 2.

[141] "Local," *St. Helena Star*, June 8, 1877, 3.

[142] "Incendiarism," *St. Helena Star*, November 15, 1878, 3.

[143] *Daily Alta California Newspaper*, July 23, 1863, quoted in Chan, *This Bittersweet Soil*, 242.

doing work, some quite perilous, that no one else was willing to do. As an article in *Overland Monthly* magazine said in 1869, "Well, if white labor is as difficult to be obtained as is reported, and as indeed it must be, since wages are so high, what would these farmers do but for the Chinamen?"[144]

Chinese laborers were also hired out on an individual basis to do work on farms, but that work could be hazardous as well. One of the few accounts of how locals interacted with Chinese laborers comes from an oral history of John York. York was an early California pioneer who moved from Tennessee to the Napa Valley in 1845 at age 25 and lived in St. Helena from 1850 until his death in 1910. By some accounts, he had the first commercial vineyard in the Napa Valley. In the late 1880s he employed a Chinese laborer to help chop wood on his farm. When the task was complete, York and the Chinese hired hand disagreed on the number of cords of wood that had been chopped. The Chinese man called York a liar and for that offense, York "grabbed a two-foot stick of wood about 5-inches through, and just as the Chinaman turned to avoid the blow, he hit him on the back of the head. Down went the Chinaman." Amazingly, the hired hand was able to stagger to his feet and escape with his life – presumably without getting paid.[145] Clearly a white farmer had no fear of being charged with attempted murder of a Chinese man who was not a citizen and almost certainly would get no justice from local law enforcement.

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[144] Loomis, "*How Our Chinamen Are Employed*," 233.

[145] Rodney McCormick, *A Short History of Grandfather York*, A Sketch from the Archives of the Napa County Historical Society 10 (Napa, CA: Napa County Historical Society, 1938). 12-13. Author's note: John York is my great-great-great-grandfather.

The Railroad

Railroads were big business in the second half of the 1800s across the nation and within the Napa Valley as well. The Central Pacific Railroad and the Union Pacific Railroad companies were chosen to build the first transcontinental railroad in the United States in 1862. The Central Pacific was faced with a huge labor shortage during construction. They recruited 12,000 laborers from China, mostly from Hong Kong, to build the 690-mile railway through the Sierra Pacific mountains and across Nevada into Utah. The railroad was completed in 1869 with the joining of the eastbound and westbound tracks at Promontory Point, Utah.[146] The work of the Chinese on railroads continued for years after that. Chinese workers helped to build and maintain seventy-one other rail lines and train depots throughout the United States, including several in the Napa Valley.[147] The main railroad was the Napa Valley Railroad, which traversed the length of the Napa Valley, originating in East Napa and terminating in Calistoga.[148]

By 1880, ninety-eight Chinese laborers lived in Napa and were employed by the Central Pacific Railroad, which by that time owned the Napa Valley Railroad. This made the railroad company the single biggest employer of Chinese labor in the city of Napa and the third-largest source of employment in the entire Napa Valley. The Chinese appeared to live in two large communal living centers on the east end of town, presumably near the railroad tracks. One building had fifty-six residents and one had forty-two residents. Unsurprisingly due to the recruitment efforts by the Central Pacific,

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[146] Wang, *The United States and China. A History from the Eighteenth Century to the Present*, 75.

[147] Gordon H. Chang, et al., *The Chinese and the Iron Road: Building the Transcontinental Railroad*, Asian America (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2019), 280.

[148] Slocum, Bowen, & Co., *History of Napa and Lake Counties, California*, 74-80.

all the Chinese railroad employees were listed in the census as being from Hong Kong, while almost every other Chinese resident of the Napa Valley was said to be from Canton or, more broadly, "China."[149]

They worked a variety of hard and difficult jobs for the railroads. For example, in 1883 *The Napa Register* reported that a work crew of sixty or more men, including Chinese laborers, were grading and leveling the land for the Napa and Lake Railroad. They had completed seven miles of the project through mountainous terrain.[150] In early September 1886, 215 Chinese laborers were working on grading and constructing thirty miles of railroad track for the Rutherford and Clear Lake Railroad, which was scheduled to be operational the following year.[151] Three weeks later, forty additional Chinese laborers were sent up from San Francisco on the Napa Valley Railroad to assist on the Rutherford Railroad construction.[152] The work could be very dangerous. The *St. Helena Star* reported on a gas explosion during the digging of a tunnel for the South Pacific Coast Railroad that killed thirty Chinese railroad laborers and injured others. No white workers were killed and only two were injured.[153]

The Napa and Lake Railroads and the Rutherford and Clear Lake Railroads were smaller, narrow-gauge railroads that branched off the main line. Since many Chinese worked on those narrow-gauge railroads, some in the community told jokes at the

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[149] 1880 US Census for Napa, 358 and 368.

[150] *Napa Register*, October 23, 1883, 3.

[151] "There are 215 Chinamen employed on the Rutherford and Clear Lake Railroad," *St. Helena Star*, September 3, 1886, 5.

[152] "Napa City Reporter," *St. Helena Star*, September 24, 1886, 1.

[153] "Calistogian Items," *St. Helena Star*, November 21, 1879, 2.

Chinese workers' expense. During early construction of the Rutherford Railroad, an article in the *St. Helena Star* speculated where the railroad would eventually terminate. They joked that it might be destined for the moon, but others said, "that it is to be an underground line, narrow gage [sic] and bound for China, a sort of legal way of eluding the Chinese Restriction Act."[154]

The Chinese were instrumental in the construction of the railroads that allowed for the easier movement of people and goods up and down the valley and gave farmers, including vineyard owners, a reliable way to export their products. Vineyards were planted all along the railroad lines and are still there today. The assessed value of land in the Napa County increased dramatically after the arrival of the railroad. In 1864, the assessed property value of all lands in the county was $1.6M. In 1880 that value had increased to $9.1M, more than a five-fold increase. As an editorial in *The Napa Register* put it:

> A person would be an idiot should he deny that much of the increase of property in Napa Valley is due to the presence of the railroad. The railroad has stimulated the planting of vines, the building of costly and magnificent wine cellars, the growth of all the towns along its borders, and the increase of all the industries in the valley of Napa and contributed millions to the assessable value of the property of the county.[155]

The Napa Valley of 1880 would not have been successful without the railroads; the railroads would not have been there in 1880 without the labor of hundreds of Chinese workers.

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[154] "Inter-Valley Items," *St. Helena Star*, October 19, 1883, 1.

[155] "Railroad," *The Napa Valley Register*, October 25, 1880, 1.

Chapter III.

Chinese at Work in Urban Napa Valley

In this chapter, I will examine Chinese economic contributions in the towns and cities of the Napa Valley. In the more urban parts of the Valley, Chinese residents worked in the tannery industry and as domestic servants, cooks, shopkeepers, laundry owners, and truck gardeners. Living and working in urban areas provided a different set of challenges for the Chinese workers than those working in a more rural, outdoor setting. Some of them ended up living and working in very close contact with the white townspeople, many of whom undoubtedly resented the fact they were there at all. Yet the same economic drivers that made the Chinese labor contribution critical and successful in the countryside continued to be true in the cities as well. Chinese workers were willing to do jobs that many white townspeople did not want to do, or they were willing to do similar jobs for lower wages. For many businesses, employing cheap Chinese labor was the only way to stay in business or be profitable enough to expand. In other areas, like domestic service, inexpensive Chinese labor provided an element of luxury and privilege to townspeople they would not have had otherwise.

Shopkeepers

Most Chinese workers in the Napa Valley were employed by someone else – either directly for a white townsperson or for a Chinese labor boss who was in turn contracting with a white businessman. Being a shopkeeper and owning your own business, on the other hand, was considered a socially upward position for a Chinese resident. In response to the 1882 Chinese Exclusion Act, an editorial in the *St. Helena*

Star expressed indignation that Chinese servants would aspire to the lofty position of shopkeeper:

> Chinamen are getting high-toned with the exclusiveness of the Restriction Act, and not only demand higher wages, but also the privileges of white men, as for instance to be boarded where they work. Many servants, even the best paid ones, have struck for more pay – and they get it, too, as far as we can learn. One lately asked as to where he was working now, replied: "Oh, me no work any more; me keep store."[156]

We can forgive that servant for thinking that they were not working any more once they ran a store, which undoubtedly required a great deal of effort. The important distinction was that it was labor on their own terms - not just at the behest of their white employer. Many Chinese shopkeepers not only sold goods and foods from China, but they also brokered the services of Chinese laborers as a "labor boss." In many cases, shopkeeper and labor boss titles were interchangeable.

As early as 1875, powerful Chinese labor bosses in St. Helena also ran their own "China Stores" where they sold Chinese goods. Many of these stores ran advertisements in local papers and this provides us one of the few glimpses of Chinese directly speaking to the larger community. Wah Chung, a "high-toned" Chinaman, according to the *St. Helena Star*, said he had three hundred laborers ready to work the fields. He printed out papers "American style, which advertise him to furnish help of every kind."[157]

He had competition from Quong Goon Loong, who in 1876 opened a rival hiring hall within his own store in St. Helena. His store contained a variety of goods from China, presumably to sell both to local Chinese and curious white townspeople. Why else

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[156] "Chinamen are getting high-toned with the exclusiveness of the Restriction Act*," St. Helena Star*, October 19, 1883, 3.

[157] "Odds," *St. Helena Star*, May 20, 1875, 2.

would he advertise in an English-language newspaper when almost all Chinese in town could not read English? He also could furnish labor to vineyard owners and farmers who needed it (see Figure 11). His location near Sulphur Spring Creek meant it was in the heart of St. Helena's Chinatown.


NEW ADVERTISEMENTS.

QUONG GOON LOONG,

STORE NEAR SPRING CREEK, ACROSS THE BRIDGE, ST. HELENA, CAL.

—DEALER IN—

CHINA GOODS.

China Hats, Slippers, Tea, Sugar, Rice, Etc.

China labor Furnished. n31

Figure 11. Quong Goon Lung Advertisement

The earliest advertisement for Quong Goon Loong's China Goods Store in the April 22, 1876 edition of the St. Helena Star.

"Ginger" owned and ran Ginger's China Store for over twenty-five years, on and off, in St. Helena and was a constant fixture in Chinatown. In 1877, he was called by the *St. Helena Star* "the leading Chinese businessman" in St. Helena.[158] Unfortunately a year later his business failed with debts of $1,000.[159] He was replaced at his China Store by Fook Lee by the end of 1878 who expanded his offerings of China goods and labor to

[158] "Local," *St. Helena Star*, February 8, 1878, 3.

[159] "Ginger, the Chinese Merchant, of this place, has failed to the tune of $1,000," *St. Helena Star*, August 30, 1878, 3.

include a boarding house and an "intelligence office," which was a term for an employment office where people who needed to hire labor for a job would go to get workers.[160] Most intelligence offices in the Napa Valley were run by Chinese shopkeepers, which may explain why in 1883, Napa County passed an ordinance assessing a twenty dollar annual license fee on every intelligence office.[161] Ironically, Napa's Anti-Chinese League three years later wanted to open their own Intelligence Office to make it easier for employers to find white workers to hire. They petitioned the county to rescind the original license fee put in place to penalize the Chinese shop owners because now they would have to pay the license fee as well.[162]

Figure 12. Fook Lee Advertisement.

Fook Lee's first advertisement after replacing Ginger at the China Store in the St. Helena Star, December 13, 1878.

[160] *The Napa Register* reprinted a joke from Life Magazine in its July 22, 1892 edition, "He: I'm looking for a girl who can bake a cake, a loaf of bread, or cook a meal; one who isn't afraid to sew a button on, or soil her hands in a little housework. She: I should strongly advise you to try an intelligence office."

[161] "Ordinance Number Two," *Napa County Reporter*, May 25, 1883, 3.

[162] "Board of Trustees," *Napa County Reporter*, April 23, 1886, 3.

Ginger apparently recovered from his bankruptcy by 1880 as he co-sponsored the annual Chinese New Years' fireworks display with Quong Loon.[163] A year later he was solely credited in the Star for the fireworks display, which called him "the representative Chinaman of St. Helena" and said he "always does the honors handsomely on these occasions."[164]

We don't know exactly what these stores contained, but a fire in St. Helena's Chinatown in 1884 gives us some indication of the value of the merchandise they carried. The fire, which eventually destroyed half of Chinatown, raced through the poorly constructed wooden shacks and four stores lost contents valued at $300, $500, $500, and $1,500. The buildings themselves, owned by a St. Helena real estate developer named John Gillam, were valued at $1,000.[165] Gillam just a week later declared he was rebuilding the burned stores as soon as possible and the displaced Chinese merchants were already negotiating the lease price to move back in. This episode gives us an insight into how prosperous some of the Chinese merchants were. The range of the $300 to $1,500 in merchandise lost by each of the shopkeepers in 1884 is equivalent to approximately $8,000 to $41,000 today. The fact they were able to quickly reestablish operations demonstrates a certain level of business success.

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[163] "New Advertisements," *St. Helena Star*, February 13, 1880, 3.

[164] "China New Years was duly celebrated here, ending with a grand firing of crackers and bombs," *St. Helena Star*, February 11, 1881, 1.

[165] "A Big Blaze," *St. Helena Star*, August 14, 1884, 3.

The Tannery

Chinese workers were involved in small-scale manufacturing throughout California. They were significant elements of the workforce in the manufacturing of woolen textiles, clothing, shoes, and cigars in San Francisco and beyond.[166] In Napa, the industry that had a significant Chinese labor presence was leather manufacturing in tanneries. In the late 19th century, Napa was nearly as famous as a center of leather production as it was for its wine production. Just like in the wine industry, inexpensive and reliable Chinese labor was critical in the formative period of tanneries as well. Napa leather was used for a variety of products like baseballs, baseball gloves, patent leather shoes, and outerwear. The term "Nappa Leather," still in use today to indicate ultra-luxury leather, was derived from the process developed at Sawyer Tannery in Napa and patented in 1875.[167]

The Sawyer Tannery Company was founded by F. A. Sawyer in 1869.[168] The leather manufacturing company started small and was reliant on Chinese workers from the very beginning. In 1870, they employed one white laborer and four Chinese laborers. They could process up to one hundred twenty-five sheepskins per day. By the mid-1870s, they increased their workforce to include twelve white laborers and seventy Chinese

[166] Chiu, *Chinese Labor in California - An Economic Study*, 89-128.

[167] True Nappa leather is typically only offered on high-end models of car brands like BMW, Porsche, and Rolls-Royce, "What Is Nappa Leather?," accessed November 6, 2021, https://www.cars.com/articles/what-is-nappa-leather-432078/.

[168] "The History Behind Napa Valley's Tanning Industry," accessed July 27, 2021, https://www.hidehouse.com/content/napa-tannery-history.asp.

laborers. By 1880, they had electrified the plant, expanded buildings, and processed two thousand sheepskins a day.[169]

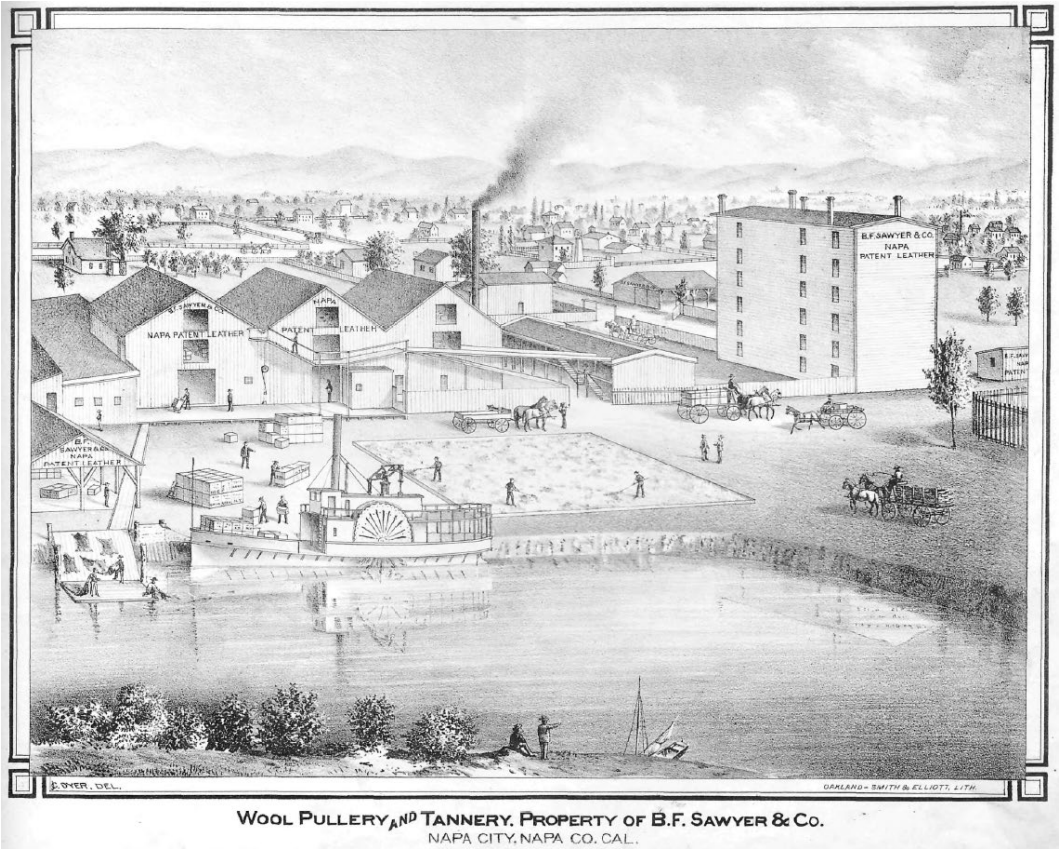

Figure 13. Drawing of the Sawyer Tannery, circa 1878.

Sketch of the Sawyer Tannery and surrounding area along the Napa River. It is difficult to see any detail of the workers in the picture. Given that approximately 80% of their workforce was Chinese at this time, the tasks indicated in the picture, including drying skins, unloading and loading boats, and tending to the fields outside the tannery, were likely all done by the Chinese workers.[170]

[169] Slocum, Bowen, & Co., *History of Napa and Lake Counties, California*, 279-280.

[170] Smith and Elliott, *Illustrations of Napa County, California,* 15.

The 1880 Federal Census shows that there were sixty-three Chinese people living in a communal living situation on Grant Street in Napa with an occupation of "Tannery." This was the second largest group of Chinese living together in Napa, just behind Chinatown. They were all men from the Canton region and ranged in age from 22-year-old Hong Sing to 47-year-old Ah Lee.[171] They served as the backbone of the tannery workforce.

Figure 14. Sawyer Tannery Employees – 1881.

Picture of some tannery employees in 1881. Caption on the back of the photograph indicated "Chinamen looking out the windows." Unknown if the Chinese workers at the tannery were excluded from the picture intentionally or they did not want to be photographed. Source: Napa Historical Society.[172]

[171] US Census Record, Napa CA, 289-290.

[172] "2000.29.48 - Tannery Employees, 1881," accessed July 27, 2021, Object ID 2000.29.48, https://napahistory.pastperfectonline.com/photo/CA1122C5-E4D2-4000-88FF-900153327968.

Up until 1885, the Sawyer Tannery was the single largest private employer of Chinese workers in Napa Valley, according to the *Napa County Reporter*. This changed in 1886 with the inauguration of the first formal Anti-Chinese movement in Napa (see Chapter VII). The Tannery was an early and eager participant in that movement and terminated fifty Chinese workers in January of 1886 and replaced them with white workers. The *Reporter* extolled their "progress" in this area and said, "They will continue in this good work until their employes [sic] are all white people if such a thing is possible." [173] The Sawyer Tannery, which was heavily reliant on its predominantly Chinese workforce at its inception, bowed to anti-Chinese pressure as soon as they felt they could replace their Chinese workers.

Domestic Servants & Cooks

Perhaps the largest occupation across all Chinese working in the Napa Valley was working within a home under job titles of domestic servant and cook. Both these occupations show up frequently in the census data. The number of Chinese workers engaged in work as domestic servants is one of the few occupations that saw a decrease between 1870 and 1880 (see Table 1 and Table 2) from fifty-six to forty-four. But the number of cooks rose from ten to one hundred fifty-one - together those professions comprised a significant percentage of Chinese employment. Presumably all "domestic servants" worked within people's homes, but "cooks" described Chinese workers that were likely cooks within people's homes as servants, but also could refer to Chinese that

[173] "The Anti-Chinese Movement," *Napa County Reporter*, February 5, 1886, 2.

worked as cooks on farms or in hotels. In reviewing the detailed census data, it appears that at least half the Chinese cooks worked, and lived in, white townspeople's homes. Of all the different jobs performed by Chinese laborers, being a domestic servant or cook brought Chinese men in close, almost intimate contact with the white middle and upper classes. Since we have access to the original handwritten 1880 census forms and not just a summary of the data, we can gain an interesting insight given the order of the census data as recorded when census takers went door-to-door counting people and the occasional notes written in the margins.

Most of the jobs in which Chinese people worked at were at a significant physical distance from the white middle and upper classes. The Chinese laborers worked in the vineyards and fields, the railroad yards, the tanneries, or the mines – all places the typical Napa Valley white resident did not spend much time. Other jobs, like laundryman or shopkeeper, were physically located in Chinatowns or in commercial areas within town. Consequently, most townspeople would not casually meet any of these workers when going about their day-to-day tasks. The one exception was when the Chinese workers, as domestic servants and cooks, were doing their job right within townspeople's homes. We know from the census record that these domestic servants were living in the homes in which they worked. Unsurprisingly, many of the domestic servant occupations were clustered in some of the more well-to-do areas of Napa and St. Helena where the townspeople could afford to hire a servant. One can imagine that people in those neighborhoods would see Chinese workers every day and it would have become a commonplace experience.

Almost all of these domestic servants and cooks were men, and they were frequently referred as "China Boys," Robert Louis Stevenson wrote about seeking out a Chinese domestic servant to help him and his family as they spent the summer in Calistoga: "We had found what an amount of labour it cost to support life in our red canyon; and it was the dearest desire of our hearts to get a China-boy to go along with us when we returned."[174]

Traditionally, young unmarried white women would serve as servants in a household, but it could be problematic to find and keep a good servant.

> The Chinese servant, as a rule, was more willing to do what was required of him that a white woman who was likely to offer objections at every turn, insisting on superior accommodations and inconvenient privileges. He was no more a natural cook than he was a natural gold digger. But he was always willing to work in any station, and he accommodated himself to the service of the kitchen and dining room.[175]

Chinese servants, despite language and cultural barriers, provided a good substitute.

We can use a representative set of pages of the 1880 census data to examine a two-block section of Napa to help understand what kind of families were employing Chinese servants. These blocks are on Third Street in downtown Napa, which still has many of the charming Victorian houses on tree-lined streets that were present back in 1880.

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[174] Stevenson, *The Silverado Squatters*, 74.

[175] Alexander McLeod, *Pigtails and Gold Dust* (Caldwell, Id.: The Caxton printers, ltd., 1947), 100.

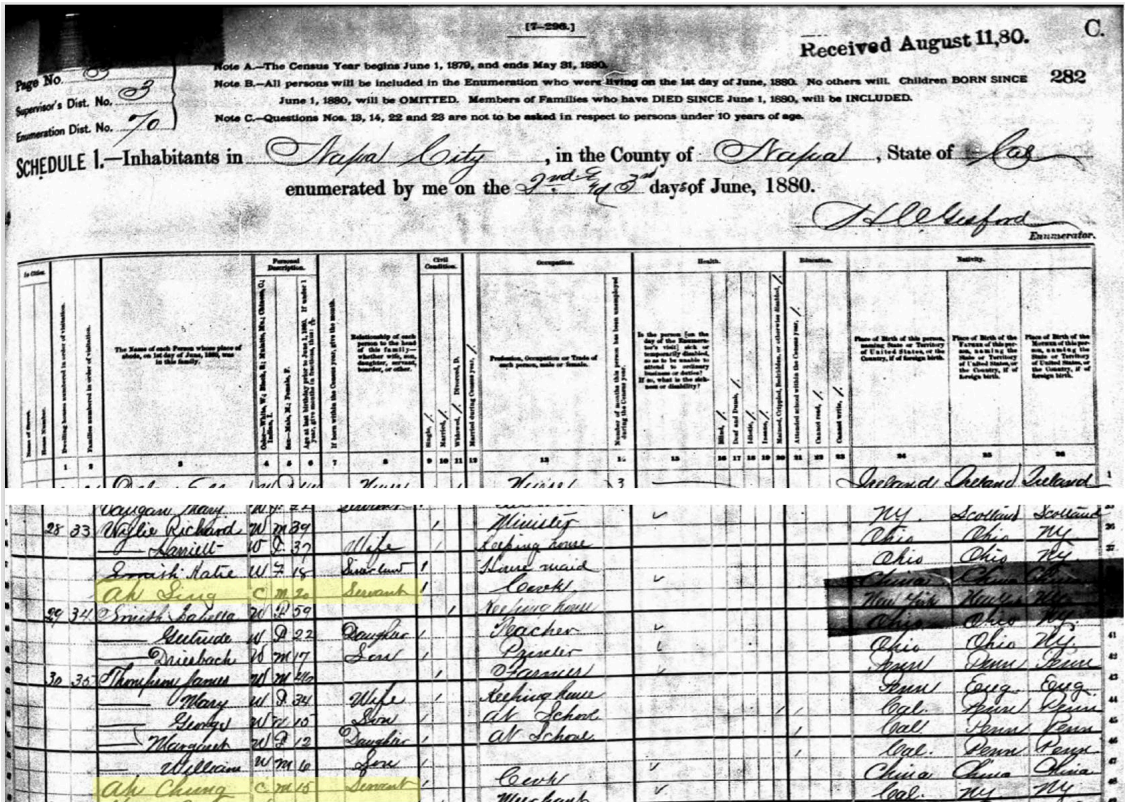

Figure 15. Original 1880 US Census tally page for Napa.

This page documents two Chinese residents, Ah Sing, age 20, and Ah Chung, age 15, who were domestic servants in two nearby houses on Third Street in downtown Napa. The "C" in the column next to the name indicates their race, which in this case would be "Chinese." Subsequent columns indicate gender, age, and relationship to the head of household.[176]

We can start with Richard Wylie, who in 1880 was a 39-year-old minister, originally from Ohio, who lived with his wife Harriett, 37. In their house was Hatie Smith, age 18, and their Chinese servant Ah Sing, age 20. Even though they did not have young children at home, his job as a minister likely required entertaining families from his congregation frequently and he presumably made frequent use of Ah Sing's services.

[176] 1880 US Census Sheet, Schedule I Inhabitants in Napa City, in the County of Napa, State of California. Page No. 4, Supervisor's District No. 3, Enumeration District No. 70.

Richard also preached at the Chinese Chapel in downtown Napa, so he was very comfortable with Chinese people of all occupations.

Two doors down lived James Thompson, age 46, who had a farm on the outskirts of town and lived with his 34-year-old wife Mary. They were both from Pennsylvania. They had three children: 15-year-old George, 12-year-old Margaret, and 6-year-old William. They also had a Chinese cook, a 15-year-old named Ah Chung. It is interesting to consider what sort of relationship the 15-year-old George had with the Chinese house servant of exactly his same age.

Seven doors down from them lived the Spensers. Dennis Spenser was a 35-year-old attorney, originally from Missouri, who lived with his wife, Helen, 27, and their two young children, 4-year-old Lloyd and 2-year-old Ruthie. As an attorney, he was likely financially well-off and could afford a live-in servant. They employed Ah Chang, a 19-year-old, to help them out around the house. Four doors down from the Spensers was a boarding house or apartment where four Chinese men lived, all of whom worked in a laundry in town. The laundry was managed by 21-year-old Ah Que and he had three employees that also lived there: 19 year old Ah Ching Soy (who could not read or write), 29 year old Ching Toon, and 36 year old Quang Moon.

These census records tell us that on this one section of Third Street, many white residents not only lived in the same household as their Chinese servants, but just walking around and going about their business, they would have likely encountered other servants and Chinese laborers who lived in nearby houses. This level of integration, caused by the intimate kind of work that domestic servants provided, may have made downtown Napa feel fairly integrated and may have helped to make Napa a slightly more welcoming place

than St. Helena for many Chinese residents, as I will discuss during Chapter 4, Chinatowns.

Chinese Laundries

Chinese workers were employed in many different occupations in Napa Valley towns, but perhaps nothing matched the controversy and vitriol surrounding the laundry industry. According to the US Census figures (see Tables 1 and 2,) about forty-three Chinese worked in the laundry business in 1870 and fifty-five Chinese worked in that business in 1880. It was the fourth-most popular occupation for Chinese in 1870 and had dropped to fifth-most popular in 1880. It is impossible to know how many laundries, or "wash houses," were actually owned by Chinese, but it does seem that as a group, the Chinese had a monopoly on this business, which caused great consternation among some white townspeople and business leaders.[177]

Throughout the 1870s, the Chinese wash house owners were allowed to perform their laundry services in Napa, St. Helena, and Calistoga with relatively little controversy. The earliest mention of Chinese laundries in the local papers was in a brief news article in the *St. Helena Star* on August 18, 1876, which, though brief, foreshadowed troubles to come: "In this small pox season citizens will do well to avoid Chinese laundries, that race being the proverbial habitat of the dreadful scourge. Patronize white institutions." This simple article managed to both denigrate the hygiene of Chinese workers and accuse

[177] The occupations listed in the census regarding laundry work were vague. The descriptions included terms like: "works in laundry," "laundryman," and "laundry" and they seemed to be used interchangeably to describe employment in this area.

them of spreading a deadly disease. It was also a call to arms of sorts to not patronize Chinese-owned businesses, but rather patronize white-owned businesses.

While white-owned laundries were occasionally started, it was inevitable that one of their main value propositions was that they were run by non-Chinese owners. There also was a pervasive cultural idea that white women could or should be running laundry businesses because it was in their domestic sphere, and not Chinese men. In 1882, the *Napa County Reporter* ran an article about the incorporation of the Women's Protective League whose purpose was to encourage the "introduction of women in various branches of domestic industry."[178] This aligns with an ad placed in the *Napa Valley Register* two years earlier for a laundry that explicitly contrasted a white-woman-owned business with a Chinese-owned one, "give your laundering to a deserving white woman in preference to Chinese" (see Figure 16).[179]

Figure 16. 1880 Laundry Ad.

Laundry advertisement from 1880 St. Helena Star with an explicit racial call to action.

[178] "Women's Protective League," *Napa County Reporter*, July 14, 1882, 4.

[179] "French Laundry," *Napa Valley Register*, June 14, 1880, 3.

Concerns about Chinese-owned laundry businesses must have been rising throughout Napa County because in 1883 the county passed an ordinance that specifically targeted the Chinese-male dominated industry and did not impact any woman-owned laundries. According to the ordinance, "Every male person carrying on the laundry business, and every proprietor of a laundry where male persons are employed shall obtain a license from the license tax collector and pay therefore three dollars ($3.00) per quarter."[180] Assuming the Chinese had a monopoly or near-monopoly on the laundry business in the county, a $12 annual tax assessed on each Chinese person working in the laundry had just one purpose: make it harder for Chinese owners to stay in the laundry business. It seems the Chinese owners were able to absorb the tax and still maintain their competitive price advantage such that they retained their monopoly status.

In the mid 1880s, the anti-Chinese laundry forces, spearheaded by local newspapers, took a new tack. They put forth a concerted effort in multiple towns in the Napa Valley to solicit and encourage white-owned laundry facilities. *The Napa Register* and the *St. Helena Star* both called for "white laundries" in their cities. The *Star* put out an editorial in early 1885, that said "St. Helena cries out for the clear-headed, enterprising individual who will establish a white laundry within her boundaries."[181] The *Star* happily reported a few months later to its readers about the upcoming opening of a white-owned laundry that would "rescue them from the thralldom of the filthy Chinese laundries." The new owner, Mr. Henry Lange, has "already engaged a number of competent white

[180] 1883 Napa County Ordinance II Section VIII – Laundry Tax.

[181] "St. Helena cries loudly for the clear-headed, enterprising individually," *St. Helena Star*, January 22, 1885, 2.

laundrymen, and will, under no circumstances, employ Chinese." The readers were assured that the prices "will not amount to much more than present Chinese rates."[182]

In late 1885, the *Register* editorialized that "The Chinese wash-house must go. Public sentiment and the establishment of white laundries in towns the size of Napa say so."[183] In early 1886, the *Register* bemoaned the fact that the Calistoga White Laundry had to shut down, not because of "want of patronage," but "it will close because the amount that people in general are willing to pay for their washing will not compensate white laborers for their services." It was a shame, they declared, because a successful, white-run laundry would have finally rid the town of "one or two Chinese wash-houses and their objectionable tenants."[184]

The conclusion of the *Register* was that white laborers could not compete economically with laundries that used Chinese laborers unless they had a technological advantage. In February of 1886, the paper announced that three businessmen were considering opening up a "first class steam laundry in our town. When it is once in running order they will be able to compete in prices and excel in quality of work any Mongolian wash-house in our city."[185] Apparently this was not a moment too soon because a month later the paper had to announce that a traditional non-steam white-owned laundry in Napa had to close because the furnace was damaged and "with hand labor we could not begin to compete with the Chinese." Ironically, in that same issue

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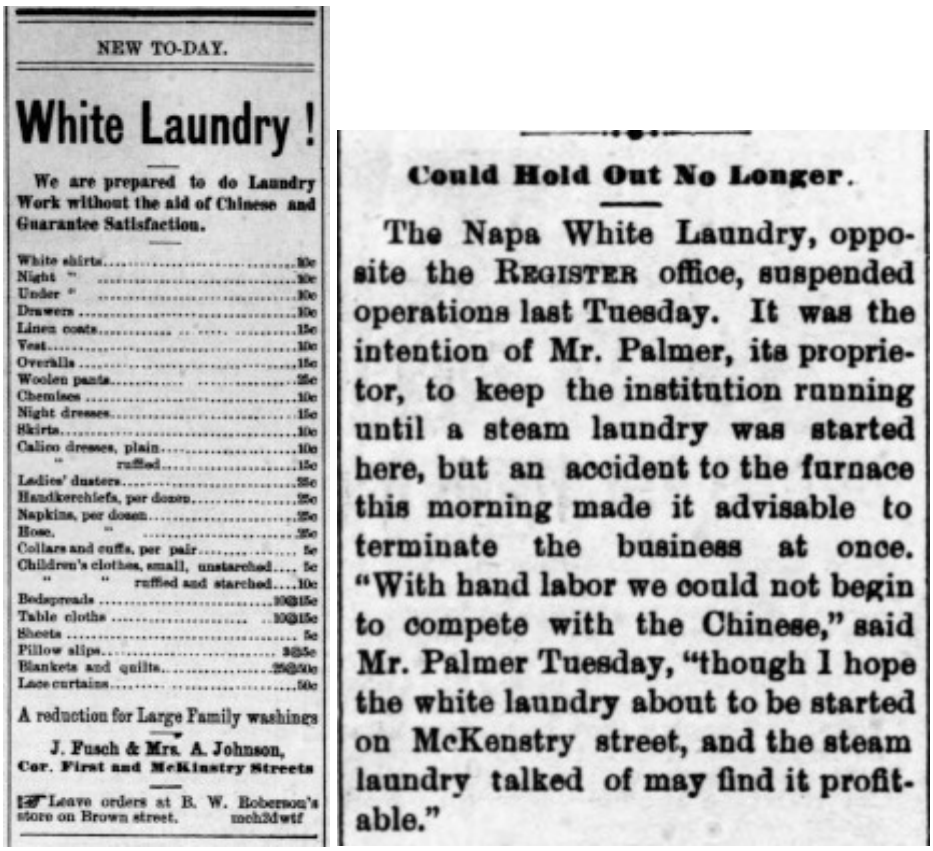
[182] "The White Laundry," *St. Helena Star*, March 12, 1885, 3.

[183] "Napa Steam Laundry," *The Napa Register*, November 6, 1885, 3.

[184] "The White Laundry," *The Napa Register*, January 29, 1886, 1.

[185] "An Excellent Project," *Napa County Reporter* February 5, 1886, 1.

where they reported on the closing of the white-owned laundry service, that same service was running an ad for that laundry touting they could do the wash "without the aid of the Chinese."[186]



NEW TO-DAY.

White Laundry !

We are prepared to do Laundry Work without the aid of Chinese and Guarantee Satisfaction.

White shirts	10c
Night "	10c
Under "	10c
Drawers	10c
Linen coats	15c
Vest	10c
Overalls	15c
Woolen pants	25c
Chemises	10c
Night dresses	15c
Skirts	10c
Calico dresses, plain	10c
" ruffled	15c
Ladies' dusters	25c
Handkerchiefs, per dozen	25c
Napkins, per dozen	25c
Hose, "	25c
Collars and cuffs, per pair	5c
Children's clothes, small, unstarched	5c
" " ruffled and starched	10c
Bedspreads	10@15c
Table cloths	10@15c
Sheets	5c
Pillow slips	3@5c
Blankets and quilts	25@50c
Lace curtains	50c

A reduction for Large Family washings

J. Fusch & Mrs. A. Johnson,
Cor. First and McKinstry Streets

☞ Leave orders at B. W. Roberson's store on Brown street. mch3dwtf

Could Hold Out No Longer.

The Napa White Laundry, opposite the REGISTER office, suspended operations last Tuesday. It was the intention of Mr. Palmer, its proprietor, to keep the institution running until a steam laundry was started here, but an accident to the furnace this morning made it advisable to terminate the business at once. "With hand labor we could not begin to compete with the Chinese," said Mr. Palmer Tuesday, "though I hope the white laundry about to be started on McKenstry street, and the steam laundry talked of may find it profitable."

Figure 17. White Laundry Ad and Article, 1886.

The same issue of the Register included both an advertisement for a white-owned laundry service that touted that they did not need the "aid of the Chinese" and an article declaring the closure of that laundry service because "they could not begin to compete with the Chinese" on equal footing.[187]

[186] "White Laundry!," *The Napa Register,* March 5, 1886, 2.

[187] "Could Hold Out No Longer," *The Napa Register*, March 5, 1886, 3.

The most famous incident involving a Chinese laundry in Napa involved a Chinese wash house owner named Sam Kee, who had established his laundry in 1879. In 1881, he was advertising in the local newspaper to drum up business. By 1885, he was setting off $50 worth of firecrackers in front of his shop to celebrate the Chinese New Year, much to the delight of several hundred spectators.[188] Sam Kee was establishing himself as a respected businessman in Napa.

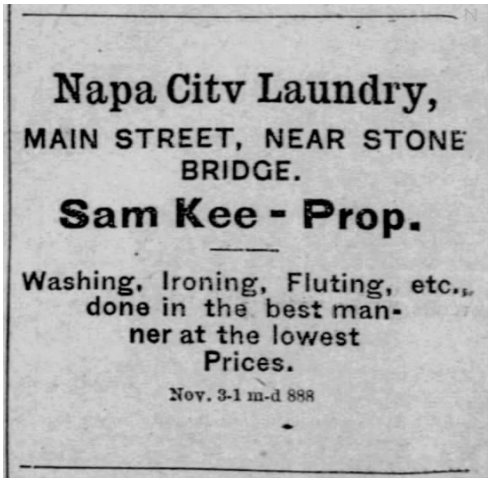


Figure 18. Advertisement for Sam Kee Laundry.

Sam Kee placed this ad in the Napa County Reporter just after his laundry opened to generate business from townspeople in Napa.[189]

[188] "Quong He Fat Choy!" *Napa County Reporter*, February 20, 1885, 4.

[189] "Napa City Laundry," *Napa County Reporter*, September 2, 1881, 2.

However, the city of Napa continued to pass ordinances in an attempt to push Chinese laundries out of business. By 1887, the city had enacted Napa City Ordinance No. 146, which contained the following key sections:

> Section 1. It shall be unlawful for any person or persons to establish, maintain, or carry on the business of a public laundry or wash-house, where articles are cleansed for hire, within the following prescribed limits in the city of Napa: Commencing at the south-easterly corner…
>
> Section 2. Any public laundry or wash-house, established, maintained, or carried on in violation of this ordinance, is hereby declared to be a nuisance.
>
> Section 8. Any person violating any provision of this ordinance shall, upon conviction thereof, before any court having jurisdiction to try the offense, be punished by a fine not exceeding one hundred dollars, and an alternate judgment may be given requiring such person to be imprisoned until said fine is paid, not to exceed one day for each dollar of the fine.

Clearly this ordinance was put in place to specifically target Chinese laundries as it had a geographic limit that included Chinatown and various Chinese businesses in town. On April 8, 1887, a warrant was issued for the arrest of Sam Kee and two others for violating the laundry ordinance. He was charged with a "misdemeanor by maintaining and carrying on a public laundry, where articles are washed and cleansed for hire, at a house situated on Main street, between First and Pearl streets in the city of Napa, contrary to ordinance 146 of said city of Napa; prohibiting the establishment, carrying on, or maintaining of public laundries or wash-houses in certain limits." [190] By April 21, 1887 the case had been heard and Sam Kee was convicted of violating the laundry ordinance and sent to jail.[191] He vowed to appeal and the very next day he posted $100 bail and appealed his case to the U. S. District Court in San Francisco challenging the legality of

[190] "In Re Sam Kee, 31 F. 680 (1887) | Caselaw Access Project," accessed August 18, 2021, https://cite.case.law/f/31/680/.

[191] "Superior Court," *Napa Weekly Journal*, April 21, 1887, 3.

the ordinance. The District Court agreed to hear the case on May 2nd and District Judge Sawyer overturned the Napa guilty verdict in favor of Sam Kee. Sawyer wrote:

> The case clearly falls within the decision of this court in Re Tie Loy, arising under a similar ordinance of the city of Stockton, (26 Fed. Rep. 611,) and within the principles authoritatively established by the supreme court of the United States in Yick Wo v. Hopkins, 118 U. S. 356, 6 Sup. Ct. Rep. 1064.
>
> The laundry business has been carried on by the petitioner and his predecessors, at the location occupied by him, for 20 years, and by the petitioner himself 8 years. There is nothing tending in the slightest degree to show that this laundry is, in fact, a nuisance, and the uncontradicted allegations of the petition are that it is not. So far as appears, it is only made a nuisance by the arbitrary declaration of the ordinance; and it is beyond the power of the common council, by its simple fiat to make that a nuisance which is not so in fact. Yates v. Milwaukee, 10 Wall. 505. To make an occupation, indispensable to the health and comfort of civilized man, and the use of the property necessary to carry it out, a nuisance, by a more arbitrary declaration in a city ordinance, and suppress it as such, is simply to confiscate the property, and deprive its owner of it without due process of law. It also abridges the liberty of the owner to select his own occupation and his own methods in the pursuit of happiness, and thereby prevents him from enjoying his rights, privileges, and immunities, and deprives him of equal protection of the laws secured to every person by the constitution of the United States.
>
> On the authority of the eases cited, without repeating the arguments so elaborately presented therein, the ordinance is held to be void, as being in contravention of the constitution of the United States. The prisoner is entitled to be discharged. Let him be discharged.[192]

This was a significant victory against local anti-Chinese discrimination ordinances and this case was cited over twenty times over the next two decades across the country from California to Oklahoma in cases challenging local ordinances.[193] How did a local Napa laundry owner pay $100 bail and challenge the case so quickly? He was represented in court by San Francisco Attorney Thomas Riordan, who had represented Chinese litigants in San Francisco before. One theory is that the San Francisco Laundry

[192] "The Laundry Ordinance Declared Unconstitutional," *Napa Weekly Journal*, May 5, 1887, 3.

[193] "Citations to In Re Sam Kee, 31 F. 680 (1887) | Caselaw Access Project," accessed August 18, 2021, https://cite.case.law/citations/?q=3761404.

Guild or the Six Companies was supporting the case financially, likely to establish the precedent for other Chinese laundries in the Bay Area and beyond.[194] If this was the case, the strategy worked.

The City of Napa was not done with Sam Kee. Perhaps in retribution for the nullification of City Ordinance No. 146, the city arrested Sam Kee again, in addition to six of his employees, on June 15, 1887 for violating City Ordinance No. 158, which forbade work in a public laundry on Sundays. Again, Sam Kee vowed to challenge the ordinance.[195] This time, Sam Kee had allies in unexpected places. Reverend Richard Wylie of the First Presbyterian Church in Napa and a sponsor of the Chinese Chapel, a church in downtown Napa dedicated to Christianizing its Chinese residents, argued in a sermon the following week that the arrest of Sam Kee and his employees for working on a Sunday in a laundry was arbitrary. Wylie sermonized, "Houses of ill-fame may blot and blight by their presence and be undisturbed. There may be assaults upon life and no searching investigation as to their cause. But the Chinaman who works on Sunday must be made an example of."[196] Regardless of the help from the pulpit, on July 6th Sam Kee and his partner Ah Hay were fined $11 each for working on a Sunday and ended up not appealing the verdict.[197]

By the end of the 1800s, Sam Kee had become somewhat famous. He was featured in a 1901 history book about Napa with the following article that described his business dealings, but did not mention his legal challenges:

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[194] McClain, *In Search of Equality*, 331-332.

[195] "City Marshall Deweese yesterday arrested Sam Kee," *Napa Weekly Journal*, June 16, 1887, 3.

[196] "Pulpit Paragraphs," *The Napa Register*, June 24, 1887, 1.

[197] "Local Briefs," *The Napa Register*, July 8, 1887, 3.

LAUNDRY OF SAM KEE

> He was born in China; came to Napa about twenty years ago, and has been in the laundry business ever since. His laundry is situated on N. Main street, No 58, next to Kyser's furniture store.
>
> Sam Kee has the oldest established laundry in Napa county, and ever has given the greatest satisfaction to his patrons. Sam Kee is married, having a wife and one child in China.
>
> He gives employment to six other Chinamen in his laundry. The time is now rapidly approaching when Sam Kee will be able to sell out his business and return to China with enough American dollars to enable him to life the life of a nobleman in his own land and at last lay his bones down in the sacred soil of the Celestial Kingdom.[198]

Sam is the only Chinese person mentioned by name in a book that is almost 500 pages long. The article was in error in that Sam was not on the verge of moving back to China to live the life of a nobleman. Sam Kee was still in the laundry business in 1907 when he moved from his laundry on Main Street down the road a few blocks to the "Brown building on N. Main street, formerly occupied by Cook & Rojas' paint shop."[199] A laundry business under the name "Sam Kee Laundry" operated in downtown Napa until the 1970s.

[198] Wallace and Kanaga, *1901 History of Napa County*, 201.

[199] "Chinese Laundry Removed," *The Napa Journal*, October 25, 1907, 3

Figure 19. Sam Kee Laundry in 1968.

Photograph of Sam Kee Laundry building taken in 1968. Sam Kee moved his laundry business to this building in the 1920s. The building itself was constructed in 1875 and is considered the oldest surviving commercial building in Napa. Source: Napa County Historical Society.

Truck Gardeners

Chinese truck gardeners, or vegetable peddlers, were an important part of the agricultural food chain throughout California in the late 1800s. They typically grew their vegetables on their own plots of land and then brought their produce to cities and towns where it was sold on carts or other modes of transportation. This occupation started in the mining counties of California to help feed miners but the 1870s it had spread throughout California, including Napa County. As Sucheng Chan noted in *This Bittersweet Soil*,

"They played a far more important social and economic role than either the value of their products or their numbers would imply, for they combined production with merchandising. Peripatetic Chinese vendors functioned as California's earliest group of retail distributors of fresh produce."[200] The 1880 census documents three Chinese farmers in the Napa Valley: Ah Jim and Ah Yen within Napa and How Fung & Co in St. Helena. Ah Jim had eighteen acres under cultivation, Ah Yen had four acres, and Ah Yen had six acres. They each estimated the value of their products produced that year at around $1,000.[201]

The City of Napa strongly discouraged Chinese vegetable peddlers. In 1880, it passed City Ordinance No. 50 for Fixing and Regulating Peddler's License Tax. It said, in part:

> Sec. 2. Every person engaged in the itinerate vending, hawking, or peddling of fruits, vegetables or other agricultural productions; soda, beer, ale, wines or liquors, shall pay for a license tax to do the same, the sum of twenty dollars per month, provided, that no license shall be required for the vending of fruits, vegetables, or other agricultural productions which shall have been grown or produced by the parties vending the same.[202]

There may have been three Chinese farmers in 1880, but there were likely many more vegetable peddlers that did not own their farms but looked to make a living by selling other farmers' produce throughout town. A twenty-dollar monthly license tax would have certainly dissuaded many Chinese peddlers. St. Helena had a similar ordinance, and the town finance committee denied the renewal of a vegetable peddler license to a Chinese

[200] Chan, *This Bittersweet Soil*, 86.

[201] Chan, *This Bittersweet Soil*, 142.

[202] "Ordinance No. 50," *The Napa Valley Register* Newspaper, May 13, 1880, 1.

man because he failed to produce an affidavit that he was the one who grew the produce he had been selling.[203]

Regardless, Chinese vegetable peddlers seemed to be quite popular. In fact, on Saturday, March 20, 1886, the Napa Anti-Chinese League met and passed a resolution demanding that white residents stop patronizing Chinese vegetable peddlers or face repercussions. Part of the resolution reads, "*Resolved*, That the members of the League who are so patronizing Chinese vegetable peddlers be requested to immediately stop such patronage, and in case they refuse, their names be read in open meeting, and that they remaining members of the League proceed to boycott them strictly and with determination."[204] In Calistoga, the local newspaper declared that "No more is the Mongolian vegetable peddler seen upon our streets. They have been driven out by boycott." They seemed to realize that the peddlers were providing a service that should be filled as they followed this statement with, "An opportunity now presents itself for some white man, with a team, to peddle from door to door."[205] In 1884, the ladies of the Silver Spray Chapter, Order of the Eastern Star threw a masquerade ball and 175 of Napa's finest ladies and gentlemen showed up, mostly in costume. Mr. R.W. Little of Napa chose to dress up as a Chinese Vegetable Peddler, much to everyone's delight. Clearly this was a well-known occupation and trope around town.[206]

An editorial in the *Napa County Reporter* in 1890 declared that there were 300 Chinese vegetable peddlers in Los Angeles, and it was part of a conspiracy to "freeze"

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[203] "Town Trustees Meet," *St. Helena Star*, February 18, 1898, 3.

[204] "The Anti-Chinese League," *The Napa Register*, March 26, 1886, 1.

[205] "Up Valley Items," *The Napa Register*, March 5, 1886, 2.

[206] "The Masquerade," *Napa County Reporter*, November 28, 1884, 3.

the white farmer out of the business and maintain a monopoly on the vegetable peddler trade.[207] Unsurprisingly, the ugly talk around Chinese vegetable peddlers resulted in anger against them and even violence. Mr. H. Cavagnaro attacked and struck a Chinese peddler several times in front of his Napa hotel in 1885 because he did not like the prices the Chinese peddler was asking.[208] In St. Helena later that same year, a white laborer was cutting across a melon patch owned by Ah Sing when he was confronted by Sing for trespassing. The laborer pulled out a pocketknife and "cut the owner of the garden in the right side inflicting a dangerous wound." The attacker left for the Rutherford train station and escaped to San Francisco, where he remained at large.[209] All was not always negative for Chinese vegetable peddlers, however. The *St. Helena Star* in 1887 reported that Chan Ah Lai, a Napa peddler, "has recently taken unto himself a bride, having married Miss Ling Lee of San Francisco."[210]

While it is tempting to focus on the impact Chinese workers had on the early wine industry in the Napa Valley because it is such an economic success story today, Chinese workers were deeply involved in many industries in the Napa Valley as either the dominant labor contingent or comprising a substantial proportion of the labor force. The Chinese were the main labor force in viticulture, hop farming, railroad construction, domestic servants, cooks, and the laundry business in the late 19th century. They also comprised a significant portion of the general farm and construction laborers, tannery

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[207] "It is estimated there are 300 Chinese vegetable peddlers in Los Angeles," *Napa County Reporter*, April 18, 1890, 6.

[208] "Local Briefs," *The Napa Register*, April 24, 1885, 1.

[209] "Cutting Scrape Near St. Helena," *Napa County Reporter*, August 28, 1885, 3.

[210] "Chan Ah Lai, a Chinese vegetable peddler of Napa," *St. Helena Star*, May 27, 1887, 5.

workers, and quicksilver miners in the Valley. The success of the entire economic ecosystem of everyone in the Napa Valley was quite dependent on the Chinese worker, who, in turn, was mostly shunned from polite, white, society and forced to live apart in Chinatown ghettos.

Chapter IV.

Chinatowns

Napa Valley Chinatowns are critical to understanding, as much as we can, the Chinese experience and how they interacted with local residents. The presence of a Chinatown was a constant reminder to white townspeople of the "foreigners" in their midst. Every town in the Napa Valley had a region called Chinatown, but the character and relationship of a Chinatown to its surrounding town varied widely even within this relatively small area. The more urban town of Napa had a reasonably positive relationship with its Chinatown much of the time, even though it was wholly contained with Napa city limits. Yet more rural St. Helena's Chinatown, which was on the outskirts of town, was a constant source of aggravation to many townspeople. Yountville, Rutherford, Oakville, and Calistoga all had areas that were denoted as Chinatowns by residents, yet they seemed to coexist within those smaller towns with little or no protest.

In this chapter I will examine, compare, and contrast the two largest Chinatowns in the Napa Valley, Napa and St. Helena, to help understand both the day-to-day life of Chinese people living in these areas and how the Chinatowns were used as a lens by which townspeople interacted with the Chinese residents in their midst. Understanding each of the Chinatowns and their socio-economic relationships with their towns is indispensable to a broader understanding of the Valley's Chinese residents and the attitudes the townspeople had toward the Chinese. I will close with a brief examination of the Chinatowns in Calistoga and Rutherford.

Napa

There were several significant Chinese communities within Napa. They were all within a mile or so of a single central area called Chinatown, so there was likely considerable interaction between the different population centers. Chinatown itself was on a small peninsula that was formed at the intersection of Napa Creek as it flowed into Napa River. Winter rains sometimes flooded the riverbanks, and the overflow would flow into Napa Creek, making Chinatown a temporary island. The 1880 census refers to Chinatown by the term “Chinese Island,” though it is doubtful that it was actually an island on June 19, 1880, when the census was taken, but rather isolated on two of its sides by water. Maps of the time refer to it as Chinatown.

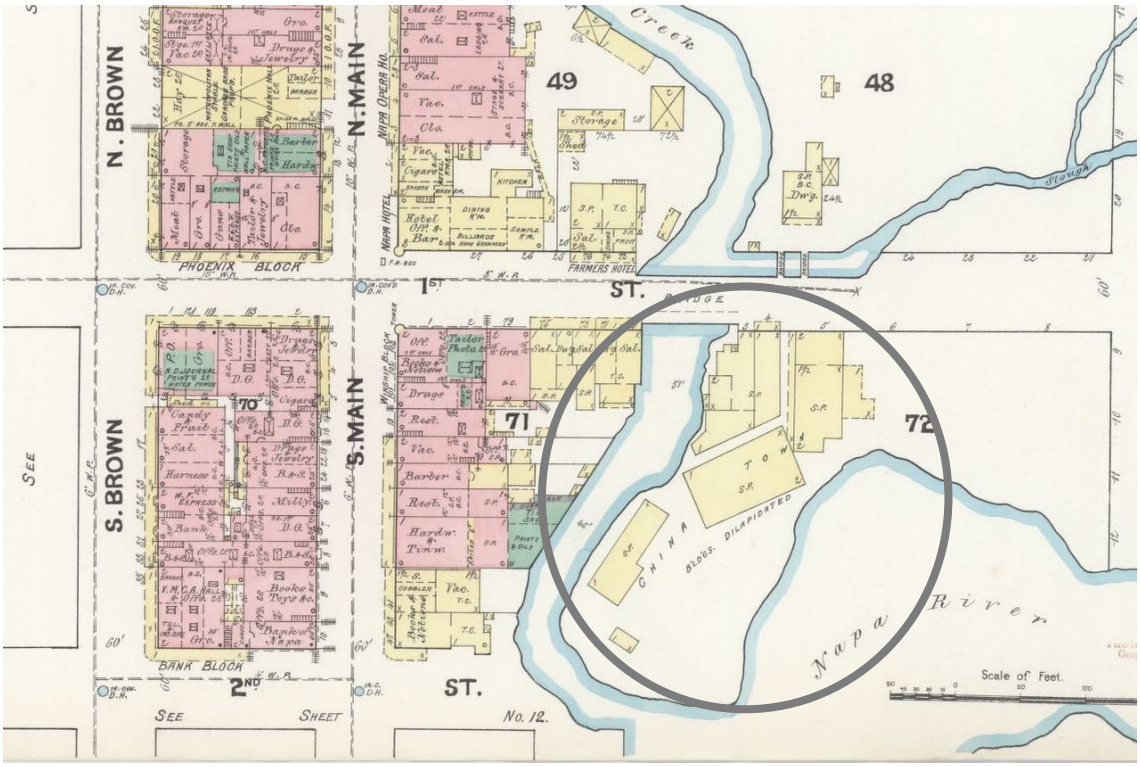

Figure 20. 1891 Map of Napa, Including Chinatown.

Sanborn Fire Insurance Map of downtown Napa in 1891 showing the location of downtown Chinatown between Napa River and Napa Creek.[211]

The 1880 census enumerates sixty Chinese residents of Chinatown, or "Chinese Island."[212] Yet it was not even the largest concentration of Chinese people in Napa. There were sixty-five Chinese people in the boarding house on Grant Avenue next to Sawyer's Tannery.[213] Twenty-seven Chinese people lived in a boarding house of some sort off Second Street that the Census designated as "China Alley." There were ninety-eight

[211] "Image 1 of Sanborn Fire Insurance Map from Napa, Napa County, California.," image, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C. 20540 USA, January 1891, https://www.loc.gov/resource/g4364nm.g4364nm_g007071891/?sp=1.

[212] 1880 US Census sheet. Napa City in the County of Napa, 323 and 324.

[213] 1880 US Census sheet. Napa City in the County of Napa, 293 and 296. 63 were counted as working in the Tannery and 2 were counted as cooks.

Chinese workers living in a dormitory (or some other communal living situation) sponsored by the Central Pacific Railroad. There were even twenty-one Chinese people classified as "insane" residing at the Napa State Hospital. Given there were 455 Chinese people in Napa, this left 184, or 40% of the entire Chinese population, dispersed throughout Napa, either living on their own or within white townspeople's houses as servants or cooks.

Table 6. Chinese Population Centers in 1880 Napa.

Location	Population	Percentage of Total
Railroad House	98	22%
Tannery House	65	14%
Chinatown (Chinese Island)	60	13%
Chinese Alley	27	6%
State Hospital	21	5%
Other	184	40%
Total	455	100%

Source: US Census Forms for City of Napa, Napa County, 1880.

The area upon which Napa's Chinatown was located was called Cornwell's Addition. That area was owned by George Cornwell, a city supervisor and state assemblyman.[214] The Chinese could not own property, but they leased the land from him starting in 1852. Early records mention a general store, barber shop, gambling house, and opium den. Chan Wah Jack, born in 1848 in China, arrived in America in 1860 and joined his older brothers in running one of the first stores in Chinatown, called Sang

[214] Slocum, Bowen, & Co., *History of Napa and Lake Counties*, 235

Lung.[215] Many of the buildings were built on stilts due to the frequent flooding. White townspeople frequented the stores in Chinatown or to try their luck at the various gambling houses.[216]

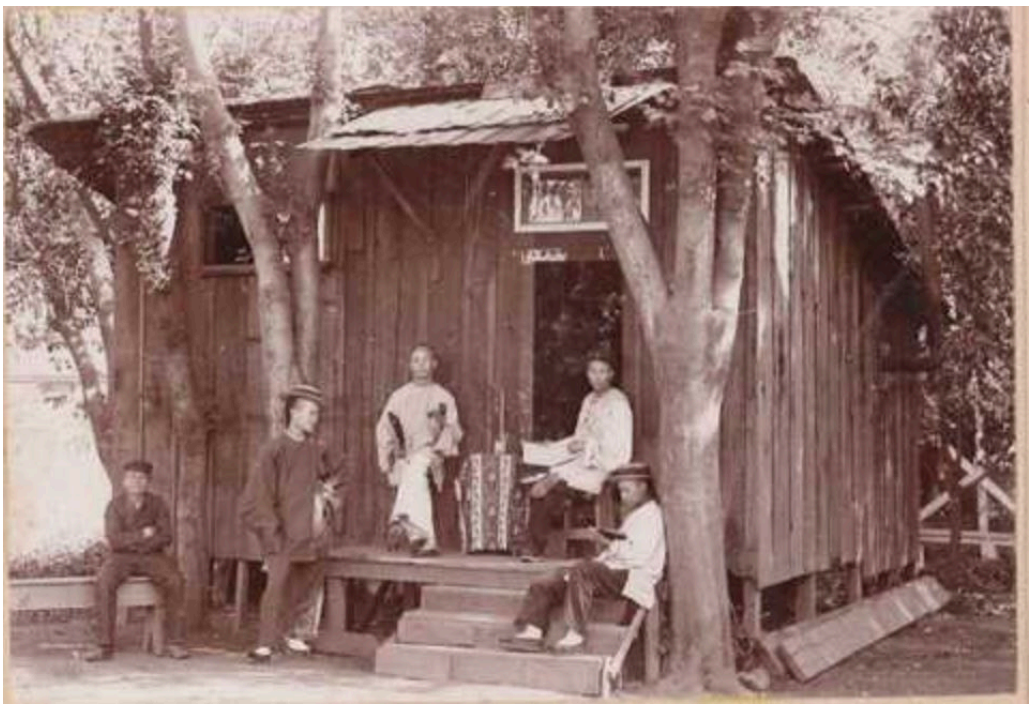

Figure 21. Young Chinese Men in Napa's Chinatown.

Picture of Chinatown shack in Napa. Source: Napa Historical Society, date unknown.[217]

[215] H. K. Wong, *Gum Sahn Yun (Gold Mountain Men)* (Brisbane, CA: Fong Brothers Printing, Inc, 1987), 143

[216] "Chinatown - Sam Brannan E Clampus Vitus Chapter 1004" (Napa, CA, August 18, 1979). A newsletter documenting a ceremony honoring Shuck Chan, son of one of the earliest residents of Napa's Chinatown, Chan Wah Jack.

[217] M. H. Strong, *Young Chinese Men in Napa's Chinatown, n.d.*, Photograph, n.d., 2012.2.99, Napa County Historical Society.

Later Chan Wah Jack opened "Lai Hing Co," a Chinese herbal medicine dispensary specializing in Chinese delicacies. Suey Ping, one of Chan Wah Jack's daughters, recalled how Lai Hing Co. was a favorite of townspeople throughout Napa.

> The Lai Hing store was well patronized by white customers who found among the merchandise offered many attractive articles of Oriental design. Chinese candies and nuts and a specially processed delicacy – dried abalone which some of us mistakenly called China clam – were favored items.

She recalled Chinatown had a population of close to five hundred, but that seems unlikely given the relatively small area of Chinatown and a census tally in 1880 of sixty, even accounting for a census undercount. Regardless, Chinatown seems to have been bustling with activity from Chinese and white townspeople during the day and likely swelled with shoppers and visitors. It was even described as "humble though picturesque" as it looked out over the Napa River.[218]

[218] "Story of a Distinguished Napa Family," *Napa Register*, June 21, 1961, 3.

Figure 22. Sketch of Napa's Chinatown.

Pencil sketch of Napa's Chinatown along the Napa River in 1927. This is later than the time period we are examining, but it is one of the only known pictures. Source: Napa Historical Society.

Napa's Chinatown was mostly peaceful and generally had a positive relationship with the broader city. Even an attempted expose by *The Napa Register* in 1884 was relatively mild. In a page one article titled "CHINATOWN Scenes by Day – How the Night is Spent – Gambling and Opium Smoking," the *Register* sent a reporter to describe what goes on in Chinatown during a typical twenty-four hour period. The daytime in Chinatown was quiet and peaceful, the article said, except for the noise from the Chinese laundries. It stated that "here and there small retail shopkeepers offer for sale diminutive pieces of cocoanut [sic], sweetmeats, prepared after China fashion and other edibles. Their sales are not large. From different rooms comes the sound of the highly enjoyable native fiddling." Nighttime was supposed to be a different story. However, one of the

first complaints was that the laundries were still noisy with Chinese laundrymen working until midnight ironing and cleaning clothes. This round-the-clock work ethic may have a contributing reason that Chinese-owned laundries kept outperforming their white-owned counterparts as discussed in Chapter 3.

The article did mention that walking down a darkened alley at night would make you "wonder if you would not be assassinated at the next corner." It also noted that gambling was a central activity in nighttime Chinatown and opium was available everywhere. Other than that, the only other suspicious activity they could note was that a foreign religion seemed to be practiced everywhere in Chinatown, "in every room, be it store, opium den, or gambling nook, there as in secluded corners inscriptions in large Chinese characters, before which are continually burning tapes, to propitiate evil spirits or to bring good luck."[219] If that was the biggest danger to the community, townspeople in 1884 Napa probably did not have much to fear from their Chinatown.

Fires, however, were a constant source of danger to the wood-framed Chinatown buildings. A devasting fire in 1902 destroyed "nearly all the buildings in Chinatown." Only a few small buildings near the creek and the temple, known as a Joss House,[220] were saved from burning. Mrs. Cornwell, George's widow, still owned the land and two of the buildings in Chinatown, but Chinese proprietors owned all the other buildings. The value of the Chinese-owned buildings was valued at $4,000 and they vowed to rebuild.[221]

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[219] "Chinatown," *The Napa Register*, February 29, 1884, 1.

[220] See the discussion of religion in Chapter IV for a more complete description of Joss Houses.

[221] "Chinatown Burns," *Napa Journal*, January 30, 1902, 3.

Though by that point, the Chinese population was declining (see Table 10) and by 1927 the site was razed to make way for a yacht harbor, which was never constructed.

Despite – or because of - the mildly scandalous nightlife noted by *The Napa Register*, Napa's Chinatown was an integral part of a colorful Napa downtown. White and Chinese townspeople frequented the shops and there seemed to be very little agitation directed toward Chinatown. The peaceful coexistence is probably due to the comparatively small Chinese population relative to the larger town of Napa and the fact that Chinatown was tucked behind Napa River and Napa Creek and out of sight if locals did not want to venture in. The situation was very different in St. Helena, just twenty miles north of Napa. The antagonism between Chinese and white townspeople was intense, largely *because of* St. Helena's Chinatown.

St. Helena

Chinese workers in St. Helena settled in an area south of town, yet outside of town limits, as early as 1868. However, as more Chinese moved into the Valley and the town of St. Helena expanded, the physical distance between locals and the Chinese shrank and tensions increased.[222] John Gillam, a local property developer, bought the land where Chinatown resided in the late 1860s. It was a near a gravel pit owned by the railroads where many Chinese laborers worked. He began constructing houses for the Chinese laborers on the land because it seemed convenient for the Chinese and the townspeople. Eventually he added more homes and businesses. Gillam recalled that everyone "was well pleased with the idea of having the Chinatown located in such a

[222] Street, *Beasts of the Field*, 345.

favorable place – out of town and away from everyone, and yet close enough so that all could go and see them about work."[223] Eventually, as Chinatown expanded and became something of an eyesore, townspeople began to object that it was the first thing visitors traveling north would see as they came into town. Exact numbers of Chinese residents are impossible to know, but one estimate is around 600, which given the total population of St. Helena at less than 2,000, was a substantial percentage.[224] Like all Chinese residents across California, Chinatown residents were not allowed to own property, so they had no choice but to lease Gillam's buildings. By 1870, there was a store and a restaurant. By 1884, there was a hotel, multiple stores, an employment office, and a temple. There was significant growth, but infrastructure was still rudimentary with open sewers and animal slaughtering between the shacks.[225]

[223] "Mr. Gillam's Letter – A Property Owner in His Own Defence – A Bit of History Regarding Chinatown," *St. Helena Star,* February 12, 1886, 2.

[224] Weber, *Old Napa Valley the History to 1900*, 198.

[225] "Anti-Chinese - St. Helena's Protest Against the Chinamen," *St. Helena Star*, December 4, 1885, 3.

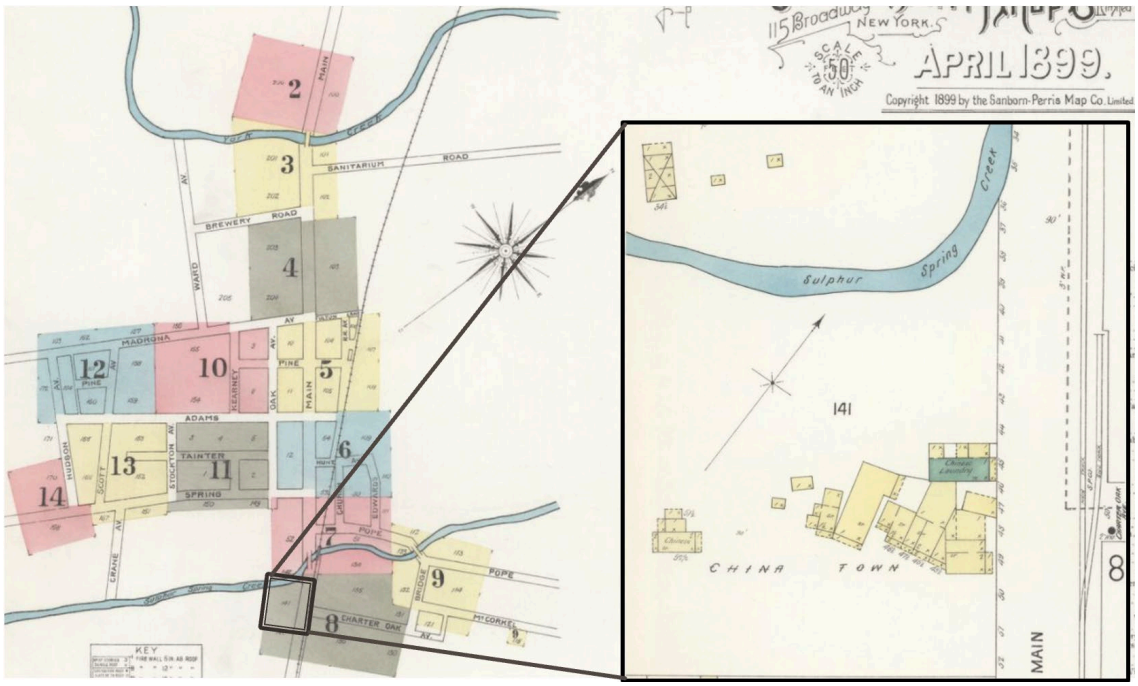

Figure 23. 1899 Map of St. Helena's Chinatown.

Sanborn Fire Insurance Map of St. Helena in 1899 showing the location of downtown Chinatown at the southern entrance to the town with an expanded view of Chinatown buildings.[226]

Many St. Helena townspeople hated Chinatown on their southern boundary. They called it the "dingy border of the city" and complained that it tempted the boys and men in town with opportunities for gambling and opium.[227] The three forms of gambling most popular in Chinatown were fantan games (similar to roulette), dice games, and a daily lottery.[228] Between the gambling, the highly addictive opium dens, and the generally poor

[226] Composite map images. Primary image is "Image 1 of Sanborn Fire Insurance Map from Saint Helena, Napa County, California.," image, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C. 20540 USA, April 1899, loc.gov/resource/g4364sm.g4364sm_g008001899/?sp=1&r=-0.164,0.181,1.106,0.632,0. Inlay image is Image 8 from the same collection.

[227] "Opium Fiends," *St. Helena Star*, December 18, 1885, 2.

[228] Weber, *Old Napa Valley the History to 1900*, 200.

wages of many of the laborers which had to be shared with the labor bosses, many in Chinatown lived in extreme poverty. St. Helena townspeople were getting increasingly agitated at the state of Chinatown, and by extension, its landowner. Gillam defended himself that he had done St. Helena a favor by refusing to lease any other of his properties in St. Helena to Chinese except for places in Chinatown. He said that the land and buildings in Chinatown represented a large portion of his net worth, and he could not just kick all Chinese out of their homes, despite having "plenty of enemies in St. Helena simply on account of Chinatown."[229] In 1881, townspeople petitioned the town trustees to remove Chinatown because it was "a nuisance, and dangerous to the public health." The city agreed to form a Board of Health to investigate Chinatown.[230] It took almost three years, but finally the Board of Health was incorporated and did a formal investigation. They reported that they:

> found some very foul cess-pools, closets, and drains in the very heart of the town and will recommend stringent measures for their cleaning. Chinatown, as may be surmised, was found to be reeking with filth and bad smells, though the officers state that they were really surprised at the comparative cleanliness of many of these [opium] dens. Tenement houses and pig pens are built side by side and the inhabitants of both are gloriously "mixed."

The Board promised to work with some property owners (presumably this just meant John Gillam) to "the best means of abating certain nuisances." [231] While this was progress, it clearly was not what the citizens that petitioned for Chinatown to be torn down had in mind.

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[229] "Mr. Gillam's Letter – A Property Owner in His Own Defence – A Bit of History Regarding Chinatown," *St. Helena Star,* February 12, 1886, 2.

[230] "Town Trustees," *St. Helena Star*, January 21, 1881, 3.

[231] "Board of Health," *St. Helena Star*, May 8, 1884, 3.

Figure 24. Part of St. Helena's Chinatown.

Rare picture of Chinatown in St. Helena, date unknown. Photo courtesy of Napa County Historical Society

In 1884, a large fire destroyed half of St. Helena's Chinatown. It was not set by a disgruntled white resident, as might be expected, but by a cooking fire left unattended by a Chinese vagrant named Wong Gin. The fire raced through the poorly constructed wooden shacks that made up Chinatown and four stores lost contents valued at $300, $500, $500, and $1,500. The buildings themselves, owned by Gillam, were valued at $1,000.[232] If residents thought that would be the end of Chinatown, they were mistaken. Gillam just a week later declared he was rebuilding the burned stores as soon as possible

[232] "A Big Blaze," *St. Helena Star*, August 14, 1884, 3.

and the displaced Chinese merchants were already negotiating the lease price to move back in.

The Chinese residents themselves highly valued their Chinatown neighborhood and withstood tremendous pressure to leave, as demonstrated by a twenty-five-year legal struggle to evict them. In February of 1886, the simmering tensions between townspeople in St. Helena and Chinatown reached a breaking point. On February 2nd, two or three hundred "Anti-Coolieites" marched into Chinatown and demanded the Chinese vacate within ten days. The Chinese residents locked themselves in their stores and homes and refused to confront the demonstrators. An editorial in the *St. Helena Star* stated that "Chinatown, particularly in its present location, to be an eye-sore to the town and detrimental to health and good morals and we favor locating it outside the town limits." John Gillam replied that he would be willing to "sell the place at a reasonable figure." [233]

[233] "Mr. Gillam's Letter – A Property Owner in His Own Defence – A Bit of History Regarding Chinatown," *St. Helena Star,* February 12, 1886, 2.

Figure 25. Chinese Man in St. Helena.

Picture taken at the corner of Main and Charter Oak, just north of Chinatown, date unknown. Photo courtesy of St. Helena Historical Society.

On February 19, 1886, John Gillam sold the land Chinatown was on to the Anti-Coolie group in town even though the Chinese Six Companies out of San Francisco had offered $500 more for the property. The *St. Helena Star* happily announced that Chinatown was sold and "Its Moon-eyed denizens must find other quarters."[234] Yet the Chinese refused to leave. The Anti-Coolie buyers of the land complained the Chinese not only would not vacate but took them to court to enforce longer-term leases signed by Gillam, including some that went on indefinitely.[235] This legal battle carried on for years and the Chinese never did vacate their Chinatown neighborhood voluntarily nor did many of them even pay rent during the proceedings. However, by the late 1890s their

[234] "Chinatown Sold," *St. Helena Star*, February 19, 1886, 3.

[235] "To the Citizens of St. Helena," *St. Helena Star*, April 9, 1886, 2.

population dwindled considerably. When a fire consumed the remaining eight buildings in 1911, the Anti-Coolie league finally achieved their goal of removing the Chinese from Chinatown, twenty-five years after purchasing the property.[236] The Chinese residents demonstrated remarkable organization, tenacity, and apparent knowledge of the legal system for many years to resist eviction.

Rutherford

Several other towns in the Napa Valley had their own Chinatowns, but none of them had the relationship with their towns like the positive experience of Napa's Chinatown or the negative experience of St. Helena's Chinatown. It could be because these Chinatown areas in smaller towns were more transitory in nature than the permanent settlements in Napa and St. Helena. Or it could be that the other towns were so small they did not have the critical mass to object to their own Chinatowns. Two that are worth examining in some detail were in Rutherford and Calistoga.

Rutherford was (and still is) a small town about at the midpoint along the north-south axis of the Napa Valley. An early settler there named Florentine (Frank) Kellogg set up a series of spaced wells and watering troughs in order to encourage riders and stagecoaches to stop on the way up the valley. In 1871, it got its own train depot and became, for a while, the end-of-track location for the Napa Valley Railroad. It became a focal point for transporting grain and grapes from surrounding areas to more populated areas to the south. Several farms and vineyards were built around Rutherford and a Chinatown sprung up to house the Chinese agricultural laborers working those

[236] "Chinatown Destroyed," *St. Helena Star*, October 20, 1911, 5.

businesses. By 1881, Ah Gen had set up a Chinese-run laundry that also served as a hiring hall for Chinese farm laborers. In September, he skipped town leaving behind many unpaid debts.[237] A new manager named Yung Him took over and opened a China Store and a grocery store alongside the hiring hall and laundry. He was ambitious, and by 1884 he decided to advertise in the *St. Helena Star*, which turned the normally anti-Chinese *Star* into an advocate, at least as long as the advertising dollars kept flowing. It editorialized, "Yung Him, of Rutherford, is an enterprising celestial and advertises his establishment in today's STAR. Such a masterly stroke of business policy is deserving of success."[238] Later that year he advertised he could furnish Chinese "grape pickers" for $1.15 a day.[239]

There was very little reporting on the social or economic life of Rutherford's Chinatown. In 1889, *The Napa Register* did report on the investigation into the murder of a Chinese resident of Rutherford named Ah Quan who was about 35 years old. He died from a gunshot wound, but the perpetrator was never found.[240] Rutherford's Chinatown reached a maximum size of about 150 by the end of the 1880s, but it started to shrink soon thereafter. It was razed in 1895 by Thomas Mark, who purchased the land that Chinatown sat on and stated he would remove all the buildings and build a large and convenient cooper (barrel making) shop.[241]

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[237] "Rutherford Items," *St. Helena Star*, September 9, 1881, 3.

[238] "Yung Him, of Rutherford, is an enterprising Celestial," *St. Helena Star*, July 3, 1884, 3.

[239] "Yung Him, proprietor of the Rutherford employment office, *St. Helena Star*, September 4, 1884, 3.

[240] "Inquest," *The Napa Register*, August 16, 1899, 2.

[241] "Thomas Mark, the enterprising Rutherford cooper," *St. Helena Star*, April 12, 1895, 3.

Calistoga

Calistoga's Chinatown was located literally on the wrong side of the tracks from the rest of the town. It was a collection of shacks with low overhanging roofs that provided shelter from the afternoon sun. It was located alongside the Southern Pacific Railroad Depot. Many of the Chinese people who lived there worked as section crews for the railroad. Leila Crouch, the daughter of Charlie Crouch, who worked for the water company in early 1900s Calistoga, recalls the "heavy aroma of incense, which seemed to be burning constantly.[242] One of the most important Chinese-owned businesses in town was Kong Sam Kee's Chinese Laundry and Employment shop. It opened in 1875 and Kong Sam Kee was immortalized in Robert Louis Stevenson's travelogue called "Silverado Squatters." Stevenson was recovering from a chronic respiratory illness and spent a summer in 1880 Calistoga with his family to take in the mountain air. He met Kong Sam Kee because Stevenson was trying to hire a "China-boy" to help with transporting luggage.[243] Kong Sam Kee was a fixture in Calistoga for years.

[242] Kay Archuleta, *Early Calistoga the Brannen Saga* (Calistoga, CA: Illuminations Press, 1977), 67-68.

[243] Stevenson, *The Silverado Squatters*, 74-75.

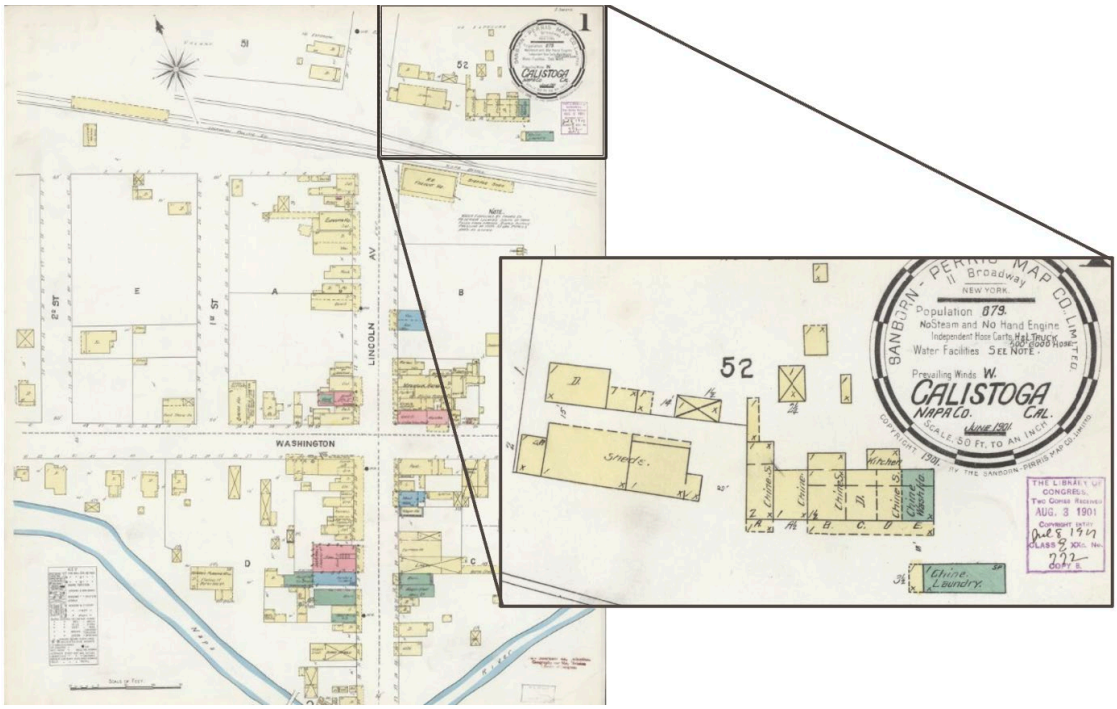


Figure 26. Map of Calistoga Chinatown 1901.

Sanborn Fire Insurance Map of Calistoga in 1901 showing the location of Chinatown at the northeastern side of Calistoga at the edge of town next to the railroad tracks.[244]

Calistoga's Chinatown area was the result of a purchase of three acres by S. W. Collins and W. N. Harley in 1883 right beside the Calistoga train depot. They paid $100 per acre with the "intention to give the Chinamen around the country an opportunity to locate there and make an exclusive home for themselves."[245] We don't know the exact motivation for the transaction, whether it was just financial or truly altruistic, but their statement upon the purchase of the land appears more enlightened than we can find for any other Chinatown in the Napa Valley. I have discovered a letter written from Harley to

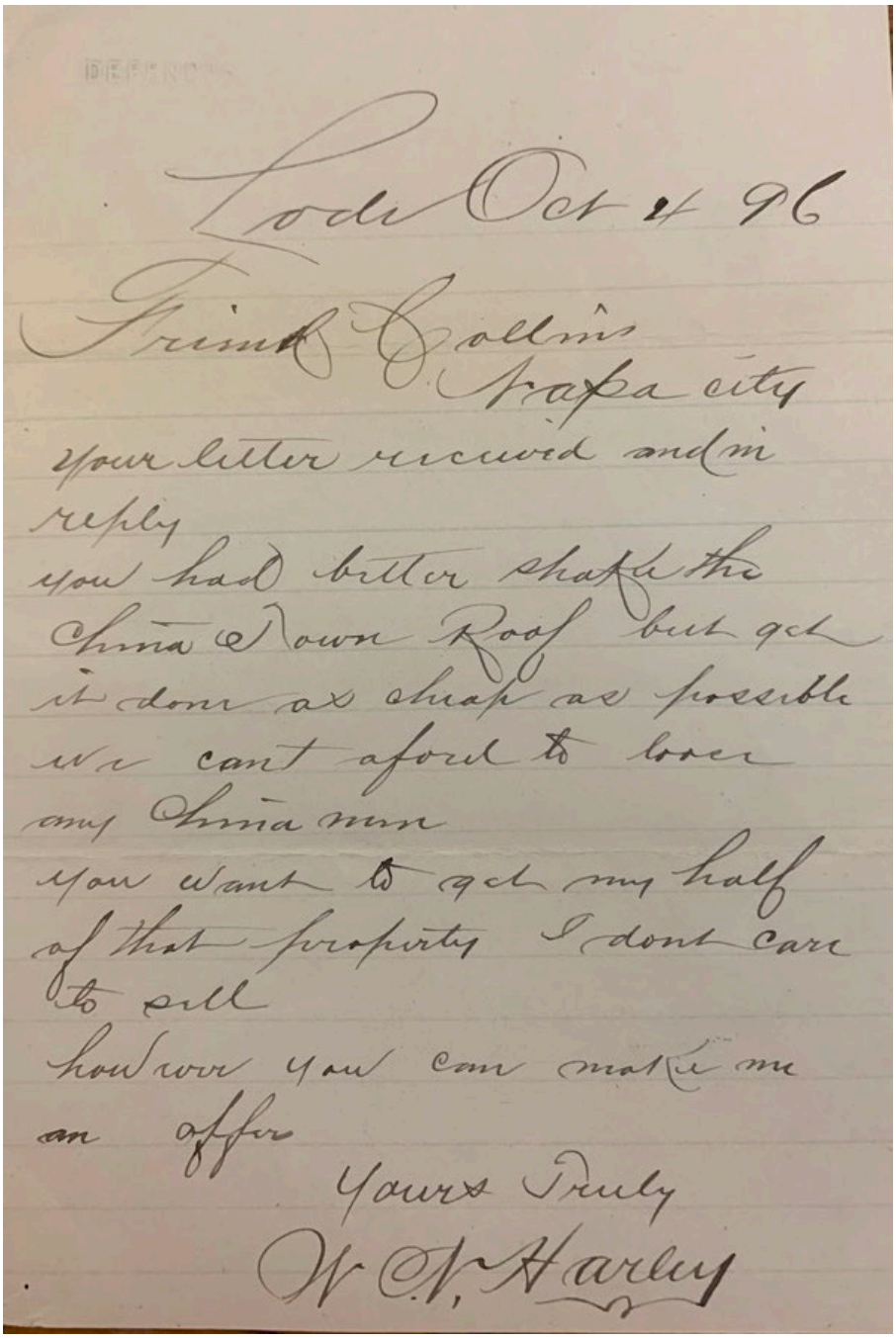
[244] "Image 1 of Sanborn Fire Insurance Map from Calistoga, Napa County, California.," image, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C. 20540 USA, April 1899, https://www.loc.gov/resource/g4364cm.g4364cm_g004421901/?sp=1.

[245] "Up Valley Items," *The Napa Register*, March 30, 1883, 3.

Collins dated October 4, 1896 where they discuss their Chinatown property, which they still jointly owned. In the letter, Harley writes that Collins needed to fix "the China Town Roof but get it done as cheap as possible. We can't aford [sic] to lose any China men." In addition, it seems there was a bit of a falling out between the two partners as Harley follows up with "you want to get my half of that property I don't care to sell however you can make me an offer."[246]

Another document from the same general period shows a tabulation sheet of income via rents and expenses for Chinatown during the first part of 1894. Income included rents ranging from $4.00 to $58.00. We don't know if the rents were for individual rooms or entire buildings that were then further sublet, nor do we know when the period started. The total income was $208. Expenses included a $4.75 and a $7.55 allowance back to some tenants for repairs they made themselves and then other expenses for painting ($2.50), white washing ($2.50), and assorted supplies, including $0.25 for the very receipt book that was being used. The net income for the period was $189.55, which was split evenly between Harley and a Mrs. Collins. We can reach some conclusions from the financial information and the letter we do have. First, Harley and Collins did spend some (though minimal) money maintaining the properties and they were at least somewhat motivated to keep their Chinese tenants happy enough to stay. Second, the profit margins on the properties do look healthy since they pocketed over 90% of the income for the period we know about.

[246] W.N. Harley, "Letter from W.N. Harley to S.W. Collins," October 4, 1896.



Lodi Oct 4 96

Friend Collins
Napa city

your letter received and in reply
you had better shake the China Down Roof but get it done as cheap as possible we cant afford to loose any China mon
you want to get my half of that property I dont care to sell
how ever you can make me an offer

Yours Truly
W. N. Harley

Figure 27. 1896 Chinatown Letter from Harley to Collins.

October 4,' 1896 letter from W. N. Harley to C. W. Collins discussing the maintenance of Chinatown buildings in Calistoga. Courtesy Napa Historical Society.

Figure 28. Model of Calistoga's Chinatown.

The Sharpsteen Museum in Calistoga has an expansive model of Calistoga as it appeared in the early 1900s. Tucked away from the main model is a small display showing what Chinatown may have looked like next to the railroad tracks and across from the Southern Pacific train depot. Photo by author.

There was some bad blood between residents of St. Helena's Chinatown and Calistoga's Chinatown. Two rival Chinese labor gangs, one from Calistoga and one from St. Helena, were cutting wood on land owned by local resident Charley Loebor. The two gangs had been feuding for a while on the job site. On June 8, 1890, two Chinese labor bosses from Calistoga, Sam Lee and Ah Quey, traveled to St. Helena's Chinatown and entered Ah Kong's store. They saw Quong Mug, the rival St. Helena labor boss, in the back and opened fire with pistols. Quong Mug returned fire and at least six shots were

exchanged. Unfortunately, the only person injured was Ah See, a shopper who just happened to be standing near Sam Lee when the shooting started, who took a bullet to the knee.[247]

Calistoga's Chinatown did not have a robust commercial area. By 1901, Chinatown had a couple of laundries and about ten buildings that likely served as housing, gambling establishments, or opium dens. However, as with the other Chinatowns in the Napa Valley, Calistoga's could not withstand the demographic changes of the exodus of Chinese residents. In 1914, C. E. Butler, a city labor contractor, purchased the property. The newspaper article describing the sale was almost wistful in documenting the demise of Calistoga's Chinatown:

> Chinatown in Calistoga will soon be a thing of the past. C. E. Butler has control of the property and is engaged in tearing most of the houses down. The only buildings that have been occupied lately are a store and a laundry. There was a time, about twenty years ago, when Chinatown was a lovely place, but of late years it has been practically deserted.[248]

About nine months later, he was almost done clearing the property. As he was tearing down the last few structures, he found a "complete opium smoking outfit" but no opium.[249] Thus the last of Calistoga's Chinatown was finally erased.

Every town in the Napa Valley had its own version of a Chinatown.[250] While they shared some commonalities, such as they all were on land owned by white townspeople

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[247] "Chinese at War," *The Napa County Reporter*, June 9, 1890, 2.

[248] "Calistoga Happenings," *The Napa Journal*, June 14, 1914, 8.

[249] "Calistoga Happenings," *The Napa Journal*, March 28, 1915, 8.

[250] The only mention of Yountville's Chinese residents is a passing remark that "On Hopper Creek stood what there was of a Chinatown in old Yountville: a laundry, tenement, and employment office for day laborers, called the China house." in Richard Dillon, *Napa Valley Heyday* (San Francisco: The Book Club of California, 2004), 183.

who decided, for their own reasons, to allow Chinese people to live and work there, they had significant differences. Napa's Chinatown was vibrant and seemed to be an integral part of downtown. Both Chinese and white residents of Napa seem to have very fond memories of the "humble though picturesque Chinatown" in their midst.[251] Calistoga and Rutherford both had good relationships with their Chinatowns, but in both cases their Chinatowns were relatively small and mostly residential. They did not seem to cause much anxiety for the townspeople. St. Helena had a very adversarial relationship with its Chinatown due to three important factors. First, it was situated at the entrance to town where it was the first thing that greeted visitors and returning residents alike. In Napa, Chinatown was tucked behind Napa River and Napa Creek and was not in townspeople's normal view if they did not want to see it. In Calistoga, Chinatown was located at the far end of town, next to the railroad tracks, away from residents. Second, St. Helena was a relatively small town with a population around 2,000 people. Chinatown had up to 600 residents, so it was quite large relative to the town population, and thus likely appeared more threatening. Finally, St. Helena's economy was not as diversified as Napa's, and many of the Chinatown residents worked as vineyard labor, farm workers, or miners – all work that St. Helena's white residents presumably could be doing. Thus, through proximity, population, and as potential replacement labor, St. Helena's Chinatown post a threat – real or perceived – to white townspeople that other towns in Napa Valley did not experience.

[251] "Chinatown in a Colorful Area," *The Napa Valley Register*, March 30, 1963, 78.

The Story of Chan Wah Jack, Napa Chinatown Entrepreneur

Chan Wah Jack was born in a Chinese village called Hong Hay Li in 1848. He arrived in Napa in 1860 at the age of twelve to work with his older brothers, who already owned and operated a Chinese store named Sang Lung. In 1879, he married a woman named Lum from Weaverville, California, and they had two sons, Quock Horn and Wing.[252] Wah Jack remained in Napa until 1883 when he decided to return to China and raise his family, like Jue Joe had done. The rising Anti-Chinese sentiment encouraged by the 1882 Chinese Exclusion Act may have contributed to his desire to raise his family in China. He and his growing family remained in China for fifteen years and added two more sons and one daughter. The youngest son, Shuck, was born in 1895.

In 1898, he decided to return to Napa with his family and continue his career as a merchant. It was undoubtedly difficult getting back into the United States given the significant anti-Chinese sentiment and immigration restrictions at that time, but the actual passage itself was perilous as well. On the voyage back to America in the Pacific Ocean, his ship caught fire and all the passengers, including three-year-old Shuck, had to evacuate to lifeboats to see if their ship would sink. Fortunately for the Chan family, the ship was spared major damage and they were able to continue their voyage.

He took over running his brothers' Sang Lung Chinese store in 1898. That store was considered an oasis for homesick Chinese workers who were toiling in the vineyards, tanneries, and quicksilver mines. They would visit Wah Jack's place to feel like they were back home. Shuck recalled that they would do deliveries via horse and wagon to up and down the Napa Valley and would see Chinese laborers building rock walls, fences,

[252] This was his second marriage. His first wife, known only by her family name, Lee, died shortly after they married.

and bridges. The rocks weighed as much as 500 pounds each and had to be wrestled into place by hand. He also remembers Chinese workers visiting Napa's Chinatown on the weekends to drink, gamble, and occasionally visit "Gaai Nuey" (prostitutes.)

The Sung Lung store was destroyed in a 1900 fire that raced through Chinatown, but in 1902, Chan Wah Jack opened a new store called Lai Hing that was not only operated as a general store for Chinese food and merchandise, but also functioned as a kind of bank for Chinese workers. The workers were trying to save money to send back home to China. When they deposited at the store, Shuck remembers, they "would remove the temptation of gambling it all away." In addition to banking services, Lai Hing also functioned as a yok choy po (herb shop) where workers could get herbal medicines.[253]

Not everything was easy for Wah Jack. He was assaulted in 1904 by a local man named Julius Banchero in front of his Lai Hing store. Banchero was arrested and eventually sentenced to ninety days in jail, but as was common, the judge suspended the sentence if Banchero promised to be on his best behavior. The judge warned that he "would be shown no mercy if he was caught in such a case again."[254] We will see this was a common practice for people caught assaulting Chinese residents in our discussion of Crime and Punishment in Chapter VI.

Chan Wah Jack's longevity as a Chinatown merchant and his large and prosperous family led him to be well-respected throughout Napa. He and his wife eventually had fourteen children, many of whom went on to have successful careers in the United States, which was a significant accomplishment given the extensive anti-

[253] Wong, *Gum Sahn Yun (Gold Mountain Men)*, 143-148.

[254] "The Battery Case," *The Napa Journal*, May 14, 1904, 3.

Chinese sentiment at the time.[255] Wing, the eldest son, was the first Chinese person to be admitted to the California Bar and was a lawyer.[256] Quock Horn, the second son, married a woman from China who was part of the extended Chinese "royal family." When they had a baby girl in Napa in 1909, it was celebrated throughout Napa's Chinatown as she was the first "Chinese child born in this city of an American-born parent."[257] Shuck was invested in restaurants across the United States, Moe had a government job in Alameda, California and Suey Ping, the one daughter, was an honors graduate from both Napa High School and the University of California and worked in higher education in both Napa and China.[258]

Chan Wah Jack was called the "Mayor of the local celestial quarter" by the *Napa Journal* and was considered a "well-known pioneer Chinese merchant" throughout town.[259] When he died in 1922, people acknowledged his accomplishments and reputation enhanced the relationship between the townspeople of Napa and its Chinatown. The ability and freedom of a merchant who owned his own store, and thus not subject to anti-Chinese action by his employers, certainly helped his longevity and his ability to make a good living. His circumstance was also unusual in that he was able to find and marry a Chinese woman and raise a family, which undoubtedly helped ingratiate

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[255] "Mrs. Chan Wah Jack Sacrifices Home for Napa's Welfare," *The Napa Journal*, April 8, 1930, 1.

[256] "Napa Chinese Now Lawyer," *The Napa Journal*, May 19, 1919, 5.

[257] "Big Event, Arrival of Blue Blooded Chinese Baby Causes Much Ado in Celestial Quarter," *The Napa Journal*, March 24, 1909, 2.

[258] Louise Ezettie, "Looking into Napa's Past and Present," *The Napa Valley Register*, September 4, 1982.

[259] "Shuck Hing Buys Café in Boston," *The Napa Journal*, September 4, 1919, 5; "Back from China," *The Napa Weekly Journal*, January 29, 1909, 2.

himself with the broader community. Unfortunately, this option was not available to most Chinese laborers in town.

Chapter V.

Social and Cultural Life

Given linguistic, racial, cultural, political, and legal barriers, it is doubtful that many Chinese and non-Chinese residents interacted with each other outside of work environments where there was a strict hierarchy. The one exception may have been in Napa's Chinatown while shopping, gambling, or visiting. Since the Chinese were mostly ostracized from white society, it is not surprising that they would seek company of fellow Chinese residents and would form various social organizations to provide emotional, social, and even financial support. These various communal groups would provide a social safety net that would allow the Chinese to remain and be successful in the Napa Valley.

In this chapter I will look at two very different social organizations to which many Chinese people living in the Valley belonged – labor gangs and the Chinese Free Masons. Each organization, one compulsory and one voluntary, played an important role in a Chinese worker's life. I will then explore cultural and religious aspects of Chinese life in Napa Valley through events like funerals, New Year's festivities, and the centrality of religious temples known as Joss Houses. The funeral processions, in particular, through town tie into the economic prosperity of Chinese businessmen as some of these processions were quite lavish. Finally, I will examine the role of women in the Chinese community, the few weddings that occurred, Chinese families, and any lasting impact they had.

Labor Bosses and The Chinese Six Companies

One of the most significant relationships that most Chinese laborers who worked in groups had was with their foreman, or labor boss, on the worksite. The worksite could be in the vineyard, in the tannery, on the hop yard, in the mine, or on the railroad. The labor boss, who spoke some English, would typically deal with the white owner/manager and then recruit or gather the workers needed for the job. The owner/manager would then pay the labor boss the wages for his entire work crew and the labor boss would dole out wages to the workers while skimming off a bit from the top as a commission from every laborer's wage. The labor boss presumably had the ability to bring additional workers onto the work gang as needed and dismiss workers from the gang when they weren't needed or due to disciplinary reasons.

We saw examples of these relationships when we discussed the Great Western Quicksilver Mine and the vineyard work in Chapter II and the advertisements that Chinese labor bosses/shopkeepers put in St. Helena newspapers in Chapter IV. Clearly the role of intermediary between white businessmen and Chinese laborers was good for the labor bosses, as they made money off every laborer in their charge. It benefitted the worker as well, since they typically had limited English language proficiency and would likely have had difficulty securing jobs and even understanding what needed to be done. Some of these relationships seemed voluntary, or at-will, as we saw through Jue Joe's life story. Yet other relationships were more-or-less compulsory and bordered on indentured servitude, as when the Chinese Six Companies got deeply involved.

The Chinese Six Companies based in San Francisco had a large influence over many laborers in the Napa Valley.[260] The trip from China to San Francisco was too expensive for many poor Chinese to afford, so the Chinese Six Companies would work out a "credit-ticket" system where they would pay for the immigrant's passage to San Francisco. The Chinese Six Companies would then house them temporarily in San Francisco, get them any needed medical care, and then ship them off to work in the Napa Valley or elsewhere. In return, the Six Companies would get a portion of their wages until the cost of transportation was paid off, which could take anywhere from two to five years.[261] Even laborers that did not borrow from the Chinese Six Companies for transportation, like Jue Joe, still used the Six Companies to get oriented in California and find work, as he did first in Marysville, and then in St. Helena. Ezekiel B. Vreeland, U.S. Deputy Commissioner of Immigration from 1873 to 1876, estimated that 80% of all Chinese immigrants to California were brought in by The Chinese Six Companies and there is no reason to assume the Napa Valley Chinese workers did not follow the same pattern.[262]

While the Chinese Six Companies could not legally force Chinese laborers to work where they told them and garnish some of their wages, they used a variety of tactics

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[260] The Chinese Six Companies were also known as the Chung Wai Wui Koon, the Chinese Consolidated Benevolent Association, or simply Six Companies. It was composed of six (later eight) powerful organizations each representing a home district or clan of powerful Chinese-American elites. Street, *Beasts of the Field*, 293.

[261] Patricia Cloud and David W Galenson, "Chinese Immigration and Contract Labor in the Late Nineteenth Century," *Explorations in Economic History* 24, no. 1 (January 1, 1987): 22–42, 26-27. According to the article, the average monthly wage of a Chinese worker in China was $3-$5 per month and the cost of trans-Pacific passage was $40-$50. Since vineyard workers could make $1-$1.50 per day in Napa and miners even more, the economic tradeoff was compelling for these workers.

[262] Cloud and Galenson, "Chinese Immigration and Contract Labor in the Late Nineteenth Century," 28.

to achieve that goal. One way was to provide services to Chinese laborers they could not get anywhere else, like they did with Jue Joe by finding him employment. Another method was through the monopoly they held on return voyages to China. They would not allow passage of a laborer who hadn't paid their transportation debt in full. Most Chinese wanted to return to China with their savings to have a better life, as we saw Jue Joe and Chan Wah Jack both do, and holding that incentive of not allowing passage home unless their debt was paid was undoubtedly very powerful.[263]

We cannot know how many of boss/labor relationships among the Chinese in the Napa Valley were voluntary and how many were coercive, but the result was that large groups of Chinese workers, under a labor boss, labored together in a group in a coordinated effort. This collective group organization was put into practice in many of the different kinds of occupations the Chinese workers had, as we discussed in Chapter II, including vineyard workers, general construction, railroad workers, and tannery workers. A contemporaneous quote from an 1877 U.S. Senate investigation by George Robert, owner of a land reclamation company, who employed Chinese laborers did a good job describing the process:

> The special advantage of Chinese labor in work of that kind is owing to the contract system. They form little communities among themselves, forty or fifty or a hundred, and they are jointly interested in that contract. We could not get white men to do that. They would not be harmonious and agree among themselves, but the Chinese form little families of their own, do their own cooking, live in little camps together, and the work is staked off for them separately. We first give a large contract to one or two Chinamen, probably, and they sublet it in smaller contracts to the Chinamen; that is the general system. White labor could not be worked in that way at all.[264]

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[263] Cloud and Galenson, "Chinese Immigration and Contract Labor in the Late Nineteenth Century," 32

[264] United States Congress Joint Special Committee to Investigate Chinese Immigration, *Report of the Joint Special Committee to Investigate Chinese Immigration: February 27, 1877,* 437.

This labor organization model, unique to the Chinese laborers among all workers in the Napa Valley, was clearly a competitive advantage for them as a group. It allowed them to be indispensable to the success of many of the largest industries in the Valley. Yet it also made that relationship between the worker, their labor gang, and the labor boss even more important and fundamental to their lives. Many of those laborers likely had limited flexibility to change jobs, challenge dangerous work environments, or protect themselves from abuse. They may be able to walk off one job, but they would have had to join another labor group, under a labor boss, to get similar employment elsewhere.

Chinese Free Masons

Unlike the labor gang, which many Chinese workers had to join to get employment, joining the Chinese Free Masons was voluntary - though very beneficial. Many Chinese men in the Napa Valley were active in the "Chinese local lodge of Free Masons," also known as the Chinese Masonic Lodge, Chinese Freemasons, or Zhigongtang (Chih-kung t'ang). The Zhigongtang, which means "Active Justice Society," was a secret society established in 1674 in the Guangdong and Fujian provinces in China. They were founded in opposition to the Manchu Qing Dynasty, which ruled China from 1644-1912. In response to the anti-Manchu Taiping Rebellion from 1850-1864, many Taiping supporters fled overseas and started Zhigongtang secret societies, including one in San Francisco in 1853. Newspapers in San Francisco investigated the Zhigongtang and, even though they sought to overthrow the Qing Dynasty in China, they found nothing objectionable in its presence in the United States and said it was like the

Masonic or Odd Fellow's fraternal organizations. Zhigongtang leaders liked that association and called themselves Chinese Free Masons to align themselves in the public's mind with the European/American Free Mason organization of George Washington and Benjamin Franklin. Between the 1870s and 1890s, almost every major Chinese American community had a Chinese Free Mason branch, including the communities in the Napa Valley.[265]

The organization tailored itself to local environments, but generally embraced a self-supporting fraternal brotherhood ethos. All initiates into the Chinese Free Masons had to agree to thirty-six oaths, including loyalty to the other "brothers" in the organization, to not inform on their new brothers, to share one's wealth with brothers, to not steal from a brother, to live in harmony, and to not share secrets of the organization with outsiders. They had to help each other, whether they were rich or poor.[266] In 1884, thirteen Chinese men were initiated as Free Masons in St. Helena's local courtroom as no hall in Chinatown was big enough to host the dignitaries that attended the ceremony, including forty Chinese Masons from San Francisco. There were celebrations in St. Helena's Chinatown of firecrackers, gongs, and a huge feast to commemorate the occasion.[267] The fact they were allowed to use the local courthouse for the ceremony demonstrates a level of civic engagement not seen elsewhere. Later in 1884, the *Napa Reporter* wrote that there was an initiation of new members in the Napa chapter of the

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[265] Sue Fawn Chung, "Between Two Worlds: The Zhigongtang and Chinese American Funerary Rituals," in *The Chinese in America: A History from Gold Mountain to the New Millennium* (Lanham, MD: Rowman Altamira, 2002), 217–38. 218-219

[266] Chung, "Between Two Worlds," 235.

[267] "Chinese Free Masonry," *St. Helena Star*, March 13, 1884, 1.

Chinese Masonic Lodge, which was organized recently by Chinese residents in Chinatown. The *Reporter* told their readers that "the form of initiation was more grotesque and fantastical than impressive or inspiring."[268]

The Chinese Free Mason organization grew throughout the late 19th century and was wealthy enough to build impressive local lodges. The construction of the lodges was a significant milestone in the maturation of a Chinese community and was celebrated by surrounding Free Mason groups. Each lodge followed a similar architectural plan. The first floor had recreational, lodging, and cooking facilities and served as a boarding house for travelers. The second floor featured the main meeting room with an elaborate altar, silk banners, and a statue of the god of war, Guan Gong, and other deities. Since it had an altar, the lodges qualified for tax-free religious status and each was called a temple or a "Joss House," either because of the incense that always burned in the lodge or perhaps from the Portuguese word "dios" which meant God.[269] In 1890, the Joss House in Napa during a Chinese New Year's celebration was described as follows, "The public Joss-house, nicely fitted up, with an open side, fronts on the river. Before the image of the Joss are offerings of rice, meats, oranges, candy, cocoanuts [sic] and other Chinese delicacies. The floor is covered with matting and rugs and the walls in the house are papered."[270]

The first report of plans for a Joss House in St. Helena's Chinatown came in June 1884 and was accompanied by an insightful and prescient comment by the editor of the *St. Helena Star*, "This looks like the heathen have come to stay."[271] The establishment of

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[268] "Brevities," *The Napa Reporter*, November 28, 1884, 3.

[269] Chung, "Between Two Worlds," 220.

[270] "John's New Year," *The Napa Register*, January 24, 1890, 3.

[271] "Petty Larceny," *St. Helena Star*, June 16, 1884, 3.

a Joss House did indicate a putting down of roots in the community. It took a long time for the St. Helena Joss House be completed, but it seems to have been done in a more official manner than most of the shacks in Chinatown, which were constructed with little foresight. Plans for the Joss House were drawn up by John Gillam, the owner of the Chinatown land. Seven years later, the construction was undertaken by Mixon & Son construction.[272] The St. Helena Joss House was completed in October of 1891 and resulted in a week-long celebration in Chinatown. The Master of Ceremonies for the opening event was Sam Sing Lung, who was a high-ranking official in the St. Helena Chinese Free Masons. A Chinese band was brought up from Napa to play at the ceremony. On the altar in the Joss House was a "gold-mounted idol in the shape of a dragon" and four bronzed vases and burning incense. The idol and vases cost the Free Masons $100. The cost of the entire building and furnishings was $5,000, which demonstrates both the wealth of the Chinese Free Mason organization and how important the Joss House was to the community.

Sam explained the membership process to the Free Masons, "Those desiring to join the lodge," he said, "had to send in their names and remain on probation for three months, at the end of which time they were admitted to membership, if they were found to bear a good character, otherwise they were excluded." The initiation fee was scaled to meet the income level of the new member. In 1891, there were between 500 and 600 Chinese Free Masons in Napa County, which would have represented over half the

[272] "Mixon & Son have just completed a joss house," *St. Helena Star*, June 5, 1891, 3.

Chinese residents in the county.[273] The Free Mason organization was very likely the most powerful, wealthy, and influential formal organization that most of the Chinese men in the county interacted with on an ongoing basis.

Funerals, Burials, and the Afterlife

One of the important functions the Chinese Free Masons performed in the Napa Valley was funerals and burials. Back in China, funerals were handled by family members. But since the vast majority of the Chinese in the Napa Valley were without family, the Free Masons provided this necessary and important service. Part of the annual dues paid to the Free Mason organization was a "death insurance fee." Very specific Funeral rites and rituals had been important to Chinese culture for centuries. One of the key oaths of the Zhigongtang back in China was oath #23, "Everyone should wear mourning for his parents or relative for three years. During this period he should not behave improperly. Those who break this law will be sentenced to die at Shao Yang Mountain." The funeral process in China involved extended family members performing duties like preparing the body for burial and dressing it in the deceased's finest clothes, being part of the funeral processional, and standing at the graveside wishing the deceased best wishes as he traveled to the afterlife.[274]

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[273] "Happy Celestials," *St. Helena Star*, October 2, 1891, 3. The claim of the percentage of Chinese members of the Free Masons is based on a reported Chinese population of 875 in the 1890 census. Since the overall census numbers were likely undercounted and the self-reported Free Mason membership could have certainly been exaggerated, the exact percentage of Chinese residents that were Free Masons is likely impossible to determine. Regardless, it was a significant percentage of the Chinese population.

[274] Chung, "Between Two Worlds," 222-223.

This process could not be followed by the Chinese laborers in California and the Napa Valley because they almost never had family around. The Free Masons assumed the role of family and made other adjustments to account for the reality of being in a foreign land, like advising that proper mourning behavior be followed for at least three months, not three years. Important aspects of the process that remained unchanged were the public procession through town to the gravesite and the constant presence of music. Loud noises and scattered paper with holes were thought to scare off any evil spirits that might follow the procession. If Chinese musicians could not be found, American musicians would be hired to play American music.[275] In the Napa Valley this was not an issue as there were Chinese bands in Napa and nearby San Francisco, so Chinese music was played, much to the consternation of observing townspeople.[276] The public nature of Chinese funerals gave locals a chance to observe and interact with Chinese residents in a way that the two groups, mostly segregated, did not experience often.

In 1884, a wealthy St. Helena Chinese businessman had died of consumption and a long funeral procession wound through town led by a carriage containing a Chinese band of "three cymbals, a horn and a drum, upon which the heathen musicians kept up an infernal din." This was followed by the hearse, fifty to seventy-five Chinese marching two abreast, and finally followed by a carriage containing four of the leading merchants of Chinatown.[277] Though locals may have disliked Chinese funeral music, this story

[275] Chung, "Between Two Worlds," 224.

[276] Almost every newspaper article about a Chinese funeral procession complained about the volume (too loud) and quality (very low) of the Chinese band that accompanied the mourners. Unfortunately, we have no way of objectively determining if the Chinese band played their music well or not. It clearly did not match the taste of Napa Valley white residents at the time.

[277] "Chinese Funeral," *St. Helena Star*, April 7, 1884, 3.

demonstrates that there were successful Chinese merchants in town and could afford a lavish funeral procession and it was important to share the experience with the larger community.

In 1899, Wong Chow Tuck's funeral was considered the "greatest Chinese funeral ever held" in Napa. Every carriage in town was seemingly employed in the funeral procession as it wound its way from Tuck's house on Pearl Street past Chinatown and onto the cemetery. Two professional mourners were brought in to augment the service and Kong Sow, a San Francisco Confucian priest, officiated the ceremony.[278]

A St. Helena resident named Lea Hau, aged 53, was working in Rutherford with five other Chinese workers cutting down trees when he slipped trying to run away from a falling eucalyptus and was crushed to death. His funeral was put on by the Chinese Free Masons two days later in St. Helena's Chinatown. The funeral procession from Chinatown to the gravesite wound through town. It consisted of a Chinese band at the start of the procession right after the hearse and a wagon full of food for the ceremony and was followed by fifty Chinese marchers, ten vehicles, and another Chinese band bringing up the rear. The modified graveside ritual put on by Free Masons was reported by the *St. Helena Star* the following day and included the following:

> Matting was placed along side the grave and on this the edibles were spread. Two of the order stepped forward, bowed three times, sank on their knees, bowed three times again, took up small vessels filled with gin, spilled it on the grade and rose with bows, making room for the next. About five or six couples went through this performance, when it seemed to occur to them it would be quicker to get a large number, so about twenty went through the ritual at once. Then the High Priest, with basket in hand, held a short oration joined in with a chorus from all the Chinese present. After gathering up the edibles they left for Chinatown where we presume the mourners feasted.

[278] "A Chinese Funeral," *Napa Journal*, February 15, 1899, 3.

> During all this time a number of Chinese lighted many candles and other incense, and were kind enough to distribute some on each grave. They kept a good fire of papers covered with Chinese characters while the grave was being filled by the sexton. Taking all in all a Chinese funeral is quite an interesting affair.[279]

The reporting from the normally anti-Chinese *St. Helena Star* about the process was surprisingly muted and respectful. Many of the Chinese who immigrated to the Napa Valley during this period were worried about receiving a proper funeral and thus wanted to return to China to be appropriately buried. Some were exhumed and returned, but many, with the aid of the Free Masons-directed proper funerary rites, could rest easy knowing they were given a proper burial in their adopted country.[280]

The goal of many Chinese immigrants who were buried in the United States was to eventually be disinterred and re-buried in China. Tulocay Cemetery was founded in Napa in 1859 and served as the town's main cemetery.[281] Nearly one hundred Chinese residents of Napa were buried in Tulocay in the late 1800s and the early 1900s. Between 1884 and 1902, eighteen Chinese graves were removed and shipped back to China, thus most of the Chinese residents of Napa buried in Tulocay made it their final destination.[282] There is an area of the cemetery known as the "County Section" where many deceased Chinese were buried. In this section, only seven stone markers put up by wealthier Chinese residents still remain. Less prosperous Chinese had wooden markers which have

[279] "Killed by a Falling Tree," *St. Helena Star*, January 12, 1894, 3.

[280] Chung, "Between Two Worlds," 218.

[281] "Cemetery Tours," https://www.tulocaycemetery.org/cemetery-tours.

[282] Nancy S Brennan, "Dead Men and Women Do Tell Tales: Chinese Families at Napa's Tulocay Cemetery," *The Napa Valley Register*, July 5, 2018.

long since burned or decayed. Since the specific location of those graves is now unknown, no further burials are allowed in that section.

Figure 29. Chinese Gravestones at Tulocay Cemetery, Napa.

Three of the seven remaining headstones at the "Count Section" in the Napa Cemetery. Two of the visible headstones have English in addition to Chinese indicating the deceased buried here were Frank V. Chan (1892-1915) and Chan Sing Pung (1879-1919). The third gravestone has only Chinese writing. Photos of headstones by the author.

The marble headstones are interesting for what they choose to tell us as presumably the deceased, or close relative, authored the text on the marble. While it is important not to draw too many conclusions about general practices across all Chinese residents of Napa, since only elite Chinese had the financial wherewithal to afford a marble headstone, we can learn a bit about these people and what they valued. Presumably what they, or their family, paid to be etched on a tombstone was important to them. Six of the seven headstones have both English and Chinese writing on them, but

they weren't word-for-word translations. The English terms were limited to the person's Anglicized name and English birth and death dates. The Chinese letters not only included Chinese equivalent dates with a reference to an emperor but also provided context on the village or area the person was from in China. For unknown reasons these seven were wealthy enough to provide for marble tombstones but did not or could not pay for the body to be exhumed and transferred back to China.

Table 7. Chinese Headstones and Text in Tulocay Cemetery.

Tombstone	English	Chinese
	CHAN SING PUNG 1879-1918	Mr. CHAN SING PUNG of Chenchong Village, Sunwui County Born on 17th July, in the 6th Year of the Reign of Guangxu Emperor Died on 18th February, in the 7th year of the Republic of China[283]
	FRANK Y. CHAN 1892-1915	Mr. CHAN JIU YIU (FRANK Y. CHAN) of Tangxi Village, Chenchong Township, Sunwui County, Guangdong Province Died on 12th September 1915

[283] Translator Notes: Sunwui County is modern day Xinhui District in Guangdong, 6th Year of the Reign of Guangxu Emperor is actually 1880.

Tombstone	English	Chinese
	CHAN KAY TOY 1850-1902	Mr. CHAN KAY TOY of Tangxi Village, Chenchong Township, Sunwui County, Guangdong Province Born on [illegible], in the 30th Year of the Reign of Daoguang Emperor Died on [illegible] September, in the 28th year of the Reign of Guangxu Emperor
	WO SOO LOON 1868-1900	MADAM WO SOO LOON OF FAMILY CHAN, Tangxi Village, Chenchong Township, Sunwui County, Guangdong Province Born on 12th February, in the 7th Year of the Reign of Tongzhi Emperor Died on 23rd December, in the 26th year of the Reign of Guangxu Emperor
	LUM TONG	Mr. LUM TONG, Resident of Zhongshan 25th August in the 11th year of the Republic of China
	<none>	Kai Yi Wong Dak Yan of Huangwu Village

The tombstones for the seven remaining Chinese graves are of different sizes and quality, but all called out the residence of the deceased in China.[284] *Photos by author.*

The Chinese funerary practices served multiple goals in bringing together the Chinese community in the Napa Valley. First, it was an event that brought together Chinese people from throughout the town or the entire region if the deceased was well known or prosperous. It allowed them to participate in a ritual, though modified, from their homeland culture. Second, it potentially removed some anxiety about dying in a foreign land without the proper rituals being performed, especially if they could not afford to have their bodies shipped back to China. Third, it strengthened the position of the Chinese Free Masons in the broader Chinese community. They were one of the very few groups who had the experience, funds, and credibility to execute a Chinese funeral with broad acceptance. Finally, as demonstrated by the tone of the article in the *St. Helena Star*, it gave the townspeople a rare inside look at a Chinese ritual that, though different from a traditional Anglo-American service, was clearly recognizable. It would have helped to both humanize Chinese and non-Chinese residents of the towns in the Napa Valley with a common frame of reference.

Religion and the Devil

The three primary religious belief systems of the Chinese that came to California in the 1800s were Confucianism, Taoism, and Buddhism. Joss Houses, the clearest manifestation of the Chinese religion in the Napa Valley, were almost always described

[284] Translation done by team at translated.com on October 4, 2021.

as Taoist temples. It is possible that the Chinese that worshipped in them blended different systems to come up with something that worked for the community. Temples throughout California contained pictures of many different deities. Some were believed to be wrathful and some benevolent and caring. Good spirits were to be thanked but not feared. Evil spirits, on the other hand, must be supplicated and kept in good humor by presents and attention. This likely explained the constant presence of incense and offerings in Joss Houses throughout the Napa Valley.[285]

Not all temples were constructed in such a grand fashion as the one in St. Helena. In 1884, Chan Wah Jack and several other Chinese residents decided that Napa's Chinatown needed a Joss House. They completed it in 1886, and it was named the Temple of the Northern Realm, based on a Taoist sect. The Free Masons were involved in the building, however, and donated funds for the construction of the temple and for an ornate altar, which was decorated with elaborate carvings and covered with gold leaf. The temple was subsequently used as a meeting hall for the Chinese Free Masons.[286] When Napa's Chinatown was razed in 1929 for a proposed yacht harbor (which was never built), Shuck Chan, Chan Wah Jack's son, rescued the altar from the Joss House before it was destroyed and stored it in a warehouse he owned. In 1964, he donated the altar to the Chinese Historical Society of America in San Francisco, where it remains today.

[285] McLeod, *Pigtails and Gold Dust*, 294.

[286] "A continued look at Chinatown," *The Napa Valley Register*, January 28, 1996, 22.

Figure 30. Altar from Joss House in Napa's Chinatown

The Altar was moved from the Chinatown Joss House before Napa's Chinatown was destroyed and eventually donated to the Chinese Historical Society of America in 1964.[287]

One of the best descriptions we have about Chinese religious behavior in and around the Napa Valley is from Helen Goss when she was recounting the Joss House the

[287] Lauren Coodley, *Lost Napa Valley* (Charleston, SC: The History Press, 2021), 57.

miners set up at the Great Western Mine. This was not something grand funded by the Chinese Free Masons. Rather, it was built by the miners themselves for their own use. Her description of the Chinese belief system is interesting as well:

> The Joss House, which stood on a hill above and a short distance from the larger Chinese Camp, served as both a social hall and chapel for the Chinese. It was a square, barn-like building with large pictures on the walls of various Chinese rulers and deities, as well as of the devil, in front of which punks were kept burning. The religion of the men seemed to be based more on fear of the devil than on worship of any one god.[288]

If there was a fatality in the mines, the Chinese miners would refuse to go back underground until the mining supervisor went town and performed a ceremony known as "driving out the devils." Many of the Chinese miners refused to have their individual photographs taken because they believed the devil could snatch their souls through the picture. This became an issue after the passage of the 1882 Chinese Exclusion Act when federal officers went up to the mine to photograph the miners for their ID cards.[289]

There was a large egg-shaped rock a short distance below the mining camp that was known as "Devil's Gate." When the Chinese miners heard this name being used, they became convinced the devil did live there and would take wide detours going up and down the mountain to avoid getting too close to the rock, even if it meant a great inconvenience. This fear of the devil seems to be a pattern with the Chinese residents and the white townspeople knew it and many, especially young boys and men, used it to their advantage to frighten unsuspecting Chinese people. Goss tells a story where her brothers put a live frog in a rubber boot of a Chinese miner named Ah Fun (pronounced "Foon").

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[288] Goss, *The Life and Death of a Quicksilver Mine*, 81.

[289] Goss, *The Life and Death of a Quicksilver Mine*, 84.

When Ah Fun put on the rubber boots right before going underground he was terrified that the "devil was after him." She goes on to say that "The poor man was almost speechless with fright."[290]

There is a similar story recalled by Rodney McCormick, who was born in St. Helena in 1871. In 1890, his uncle, Charles York, was the superintendent of the George Chevalier Vineyard where he employed five Chinese laborers in addition to Rodney to clear land to enable the digging a new wine cellar. Rodney recalled that those Chinese workers were "faithful, industrious laborers. You who know the Chinese coolie of early days realize that they did not have much use for the Devil." Rodney, age 19, was arriving to work at 7AM from an all-night masquerade ball and still had his mask from the ball. The Chinese were already working and, as Rodney tells it, he:

> put on the horrible false mask I had used at the ball, crawled up to about 20 feet of the Chinaman, who was industriously picking down rocks and dirt, raised my head a little over a log, and: "Woofed, woofed."
>
> The Chinaman looked down the hill quickly and yelled: "Debilo". I jerked my head back, forgot about the seven o'clock time table, and rested until the Chinaman when back to picking the dirt down. He kept muttering to himself and I could occasionally hear the word, "Debilo, Debilo."
>
> I put on the mask again, raised my head up and let out a big "Woof". The Chinaman turned, saw the horrible false face coming up over the log, screamed at the top of his voice, dropped the pick and made for the barn door. I was close behind hollering, "Woof, Woof." Through the barn door and down to the China house went the Chinaman screaming in terror. I quickly hid the mask, ran into the stall and commenced throwing the harness on the horses.
>
> Four other Chinamen were hoeing up in the vineyard. Down the hill they poured, pell mell, yelling at the top of their voices. I looked out the barn window and saw Uncle Charles and Aunt Emma running down to the China cabin. They must have

[290] Goss, *The Life and Death of a Quicksilver Mine*, 85.

had a great conference. Five Chinamen yelling the Devil was after them, and dear old Uncle trying to understand what it was all about.[291]

Apparently, the Chinese did no more work on the vineyard that day. Putting aside the casual unkindness of terrorizing a Chinese miner or Chinese laborers, the two anecdotes do confirm that there was a cultural aversion to "the devil" or other evil spirits that was not only shared by many Chinese workers but was known to the white townspeople as well.

Some in Napa's Christian community that were interested in converting the "heathen" Chinese. In 1883, the Board of Foreign Missions raised $400 to purchase an old brick church in downtown Napa on Franklin Street that was formally a Baptist Church. It was about four blocks from Chinatown. They spent an additional $200 to have it re-roofed and repainted inside and outside and named it the Chinese Mission Chapel. After it was dedicated by the Reverend A. J. Kerr of The Chinese Mission in San Francisco, it was turned over to the First Presbyterian Church in downtown Napa for ongoing operations. *The Napa Register* thanked the church leaders for "the success that has attended his efforts in this line of Christian warfare."[292]

Not everyone in town liked the addition of a religious building dedicated to converting Chinese to Christianity. Two weeks after it opened a gang of between thirty and forty boys and young men, led by a 24-year-old named A. Littleton marched through town to the front door of the Chapel. When the door was opened, the group threw rocks and other small projectiles at the building and the people inside. The group was

[291] Rodney McCormick, "A Collection of Short Stories" (1938), Napa County Historical Society. Chapter 2, "Chinese Devil," 1. Author's Note: Rodney McCormick is my great-great uncle.

[292] "Chinese Chapel," *The Napa Register*, February 10, 1883, 1.

eventually frightened off and, because disturbing a religious program was a misdemeanor, law enforcement got involved and fifteen of the gang were arrested and punished with fines ranging from $3 to $15.[293]

The organizers and supporters of the Chapel were not deterred, and a year later it hosted a Chinese New Year celebration that contained songs in both English and Chinese that was accompanied by a Chinese organist, Wah Lee. The sermon was given by Mr. Ling in Chinese and then by Reverend Richard Wylie and Professor D.W. Hanna in English.[294] Later in 1884, the Sunday School run out of the Chinese Mission Chapel was averaging twenty students a week.[295] In 1889, it was the scene of a Chinese New Year's celebration that was "crowded almost to suffocation." It featured Chinese students who sang songs, spoke, and served refreshments to all those assembled.[296] The fact that many Chinese would choose to spend even part of New Year's celebration in the Chinese Chapel demonstrates the inroads it had made into the Chinese community.

Chinese New Year Celebrations

The annual Chinese New Year's celebrations were a cause for excitement and merriment for every town in the Napa Valley. Beginning as early as 1878 the annual fireworks demonstrations became known as an event to which everyone looked forward. In St. Helena on February 13, 1880, "Ginger" took out an ad in the *St. Helena Star* that

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[293] "Sunday evening a crowd of boys and young men," *The Napa County Reporter*, February 23, 1883, 4.

[294] *The Napa Register*, February 1, 1884, 3. Note this is the same Richard Wylie discussed in Chapter 3 regarding Chinatowns. He and his wife had a Chinese servant that lived with them.

[295] "The Chinese Sunday School," *The Napa County Reporter*, October 24, 1884, 3.

[296] "The Chinese New Year," *The Napa Register*, February 8, 1889, 1.

invited the whole town of St. Helena to view "Fire-Crackers" that would be burned in front of his shop in Chinatown in honor of Chinese New Year.[297]

NEW ADVERTISEMENTS.

Chinese

NEW YEAR!

Will be celebrated by a Grand Discharge of Fire-Crackers at the Store of the Quong Loon High Company, Chinatown, next SUNDAY, at FOUR P. M. Citizens generally are invited to witness it. "GINGER."

Figure 31. 1880 Advertisement for Chinese New Year's Celebration.

Ginger would make this an annual event by advertising in the St. Helena Star to invite its readers to his shop to celebrate Chinese New Year.

Not everyone in town was pleased about the celebration. A "Captain Gluyas" complained to local authorities in late January 1884 that two dozen of his finest chickens had been stolen on Saturday night and he was sure they were plundered by the Chinese getting ready for their New Year's festivities. This apparently was a mildly scandalous tradition in town.[298] On February 1, 1889, the *St. Helena Star* commented that Chinese

[297] "Chinese New Year," *St. Helena Star*, February 13, 1880, 3.

[298] "Although Chinese New Year is passing off quietly," *St. Helena Star*, January 31, 1884, 3.

New Year's festivities had commenced on Monday of that week and that "Chinatown is now arrayed in holiday attire, and the celestials are enjoying themselves firing crackers and eating China delicacies."[299]

In Calistoga's Chinatown, Kong Sam Kee – of Robert Louis Stevenson's Silverado Squatters - won a friendly competition with a fellow Chinese laundryman to see who had the best fireworks to celebrate Chinese New Year in 1884. The *St. Helena Star* reported that Kong Sam Kee "closed his new year festivities with a grand explosion of fire-crackers Saturday evening, his idea being to outdo Sam Sing Lung's recent effort. The K.S.K. man made the most noise and was therefore No. 1."[300] During the 1882 Chinese New Year's celebration in Rutherford, the Chinese laundry, called the Rutherford Washing Company, hosted an open house and invited the public – Chinese and white residents – to partake of cold chicken, brandy, cigars, and Chinese delicacies.[301]

The coverage of Chinese New Years' celebrations by the local newspapers reflected the general attitude toward the Chinese in their midst. *The Napa Register*, slightly more friendly to its Chinese residents than the *St. Helena Star*, ran a front-page story on February 8, 1889 that provided background on the celebration and how much it meant to the Chinese residents of Napa. Its opening, while very descriptive, could not resist a little taunt at the smells coming from Chinatown:

> A visit to Chinatown is, at this season of the year, full of interest to any one. The Chinese New Year began last Tuesday night and will close next Monday. All the

[299] "Chinese New Year commenced Monday," *St. Helena Star*, February 1, 1889, 3.

[300] "County News," *St. Helena Star*, February 11, 1884, 1.

[301] "Rutherford Items," *St. Helena Star*, February 17, 1882, 3.

> principal stores are decorated with Chinese lilies, paper flowers, lanterns and various ornaments made from brightly colored paper, bearing Chinese characters. During both day and night, for the Celestial sleeps very little during New Year's week, immense lots of fire-crackers are exploded, filling the air with sulphureous smoke, which is, however, quite palatable after the various odors emanated in Chinatown.[302]

New Year's was the one time each year when the Chinese community explicitly reached out to the entire town to include them in the celebration. In another relatively expansive article by *The Napa Register* in 1880, it stated:

> Eating, drinking, gambling and smoking occupy the time of each of the one or two hundred Chinamen thus crowded together. Business is for the time suspended, and gifts are freely bestowed, many American families being the recipients of costly presents from their Chinese servants.[303]

Clearly, they were trying to paint a picture of an inclusive festival but embedded in the text are the not-so-subtle reminders that Chinese are not Americans, and the relationship is one of master-servant.

Chinese New Year was even celebrated at the Great Western Mine by the Chinese miners and became a cross-cultural holiday. The white families of the supervisory and support staff "had so large a share in this festival that they came to think of it as one of their own holidays." A diary entry at the time recalls:

> The Chinamen celebrated their New Years about a week ago. We were well remembered, receiving from different ones about a doz. silk handkerchiefs, a doz. live chickens and a big turkey, with any quantity of oranges, candy, nuts, preserved fruits, American cakes and Old Bourbon & Cigars. They are very generous at such times.

Families would come from as far away as Middletown in the next valley over to share the festivities with the miners and the other staff at the mine, but because the roads were so

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[302] "The Chinese New Year," *The Napa Register*, February 8, 1889, 1.

[303] "Chinese Festivities," *The Napa Register*, February 10, 1880, 3.

treacherous getting up to the mine, the fireworks were set off in the middle of the day so people to travel back home while it was still light out. [304]

Women, Marriage, and Families

There were very few Chinese women in the Napa Valley between 1870 and 1900. The census records list less than ten Chinese women in both 1870 and 1880 compared with 255 men in 1870 and 846 men in 1880. Many of the Chinese men in the Valley were married, but their wives lived in China. Very few "decent" married Chinese women emigrated to the United States in the 19th century because Chinese culture dictated they should remain home to care for children and serve their mothers-in-law. Chinese men with families who were poor enough to need to emigrate to the United States to make money were expected to return to China and their families at some point. [305] Both Jue Joe and Chan Wah Jack followed this pattern after making their initial wealth in California.

In a patriarchal society like 19th century China, it was common for a Chinese man about to emigrate to marry before he left to ensure a wife would be waiting at home and, with luck, give birth to a male descendent while he was gone.[306] The man's relatives back home would closely watch over the wife to ensure she remained faithful. In exchange, the man was expected to regularly send back home a portion of his earnings. Whenever

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[304] Goss, *The Life and Death of a Quicksilver Mine*, 81-82.

[305] Chan, *This Bittersweet Soil*, 386-391. Prostitution was an allowable occupation to put on U.S. Census forms in 1880. Chan's calculations show that in the entire San Francisco Bay Area (seven counties, including Napa) in 1880, out of a total of 157 Chinese women 36% were married and another 23% were prostitutes. By 1900, the total was 159 Chinese women but 46.5% were married and only 14.5% were prostitutes. He doesn't have statistics at the individual county level, but Napa County was probably in line with the rest of the Bay Area.

[306] Presumably less than nine months after the husband emigrated from China.

possible, the man would return to China to sire more male descendants. Chinese culture did not hinder the emigration of unmarried Chinese women who were not from "decent" families, but they would need to have marketable skills to make the cost of transportation worthwhile, which means many of them were prostitutes, laundresses, or seamstresses. Many of the women who were prostitutes were either lured to come to America with inflated promises of riches and rewards, under contract, or were simply kidnapped and transported to California against their will. Some operated as independent workers, but most were part of a brothel or even served as concubines to wealthy Chinese men in places like San Francisco.[307]

No Chinese women were ever employed by the Great Western Mine, but there were two Chinese women from San Francisco who resided in Brown China Camp for a time. According to Helen Goss's family recollection, the women, who were not seen often, were daintily dressed in Chinese style and were "quiet, modest, lady-like, and were known as wives, although it is fairly certain that *bona fide* wives had long since been left behind in China."[308] There was concern about Chinese prostitutes residing in Chinatowns. The *St. Helena Star* in 1876 reported that in Antioch, a nearby city, "burned out a large portion of the Chinese quarter" in that town because they were worried about "its boys and young men catching vile diseases from Chinese prostitutes."[309]

In Calistoga's Chinatown in 1887, the "taking of a Chinese woman from one of the Chinese ends in town a few nights ago was not a serious affair. The woman evidently

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[307] Lucie Cheng Hirata, "Free, Indentured, Enslaved: Chinese Prostitutes in Nineteenth-Century America," *Signs* 5, no. 1 (1979): 3–29.

[308] Goss, *The Life and Death of a Quicksilver Mine*, 77.

[309] "Antioch has become excited," *St. Helena Star*, May 6, 1876, 2.

wanted to go with the heathen who took her away. The pigtail with whom she stopped here says they took over $500 from him. Nothing is being done about the matter."[310] Chinese prostitutes were members of three classes that were intensely discriminated against: women, Chinese, and sex workers, so it is unsurprising that not much would be done by authorities to aid her. Though there was likely prostitution happening the various Chinatowns in the Napa Valley, it was kept low-key and out of the press for the most part.

Despite the few women who immigrated to California from China, there were occasionally Chinese weddings in the Napa Valley that drew attention from locals. The first that occurred in Napa's Chinatown was in 1885 and involved a "petite Chinese damsel all bundled up." It was of intense interest to many white townspeople, who gathered around to watch.

> The groom, who is Ah Joe, the Chinese cook on the steamer Caroline, stood ready to receive his blushing, prospective bride, and with much ceremony she was conducted into a room where a short and exceedingly puzzling ceremony was performed. The bride's name we could not learn but the name of her father is Si Bo Hi, a doctor by profession. Ah Joe, it is said, paid $1,000 for his bride who was a resident of San Francisco. Today the "happy couple" will give a banquet in Chinatown. [311]

While that wedding was newsworthy because of its cultural incongruity, there was a double wedding in St. Helena just a few months later between two Chinese couples that was celebrated as an act of assimilation. There are no details about the names of the couples, only that they "had become sufficiently Americanized to adopt the white man's mode of marriage" outside the courthouse in St. Helena. There was also some humor at

[310] "Local Sandwich," *Independent Calistogian*, November 2, 1887, 3.

[311] "Chinese Wedding," *Napa County Reporter*, September 25, 1885, 3.

the women's expense as there was said "to have been quite a scramble among county officials to determine who should first kiss the brides."[312]

A lavish Chinese wedding ceremony in Rutherford a few years later was noteworthy because of the level of prosperity it demonstrated. The bride was the daughter of the "boss" of the China House in Oakville, and she was marrying a Chinese man from Rutherford.[313] The father had a special closed carriage brought up from Napa and the bride sat alone in the carriage "completely covered by a costly garment of red silk" as she was transported from Oakville to her new home in Rutherford. Her father had also hired a Chinese band from San Francisco to play at the ceremony. It was well attended, with "every Chinaman in the surrounding country" there. The ceremony was breathlessly described in the press:

> Two Chinamen appeared with peculiar instruments in their hands and chased one another around the back pell-mell through the crowd three times, then the groom appeared dressed in all the customary fantastic colors of the Celestial costume, struck the hack door with his forehead, turned to the west and made three elaborate bows nearly to the ground with his arms spread out, gave a grunt and dashed back to the house. The grunt seemed to be the signal for the bride to descend from the carriage, for the hack door was thrown open and the bride clambered out as best she could, blindfolded as she was, being assisted by two Chinese ladies who led her through the throng and into her cottage like a cat in a bag. Then the fire-crackers were touched off, the band commenced another tune, or the same louder than before.
>
> For a few moments the noise was deafening, but finally the fire-crackers expended their force, the musicians became tired and stopped and the ceremony was over.
>
> It is said that the bride had never seen her husband prior to the marriage. "Suppose she don't like him when she sees him?" asked a lady of a Chinaman who spoke good English and seemed to be the master of ceremonies. "Oh she got to like him, she can't help herself," replied the Mongolian. "But suppose she does

[312] "Two Chinese Couple," *St. Helena Star*, December 11, 1885, 3.

[313] This is one of the very few mentions of any sort of Chinatown or Chinese presence in Oakville.

> not help herself and won't like him anyhow?" persisted the lady. "Oh she get a rope and hang herself then," answered the philosophic Celestial.[314]

The article predictably accentuated the opulence of the Chinese ceremony, the differences between more traditional local weddings, and, like the previous article, a quip at the end at the expense of the bride.

Through successful weddings and infrequent immigration of entire families, Chinese children slowly began to appear in the Napa Valley. Between 1870 and 1900, their population of children peaked around 1883, dropped precipitously, and then settled into a slowly increasing pattern through 1900 (see Table 8). It is difficult to tell exactly when Chinese boys and girls were allowed to attend public schools, but prior to 1890 in a regular status update by the school district, the numbers of white children of school age (ages five to seventeen) and not yet school age (below five) were announced in the paper, but the number of Chinese children was given as one number, regardless of age, and were specifically noted as not being part of the school system. Starting in 1890, that report listed white, Chinese, and Black children in school-age and non-school age buckets, indicating the school-aged Chinese students were likely attending public schools.

[314] "Wedding in Rutherford," *The Napa Register*, December 19, 1890, 3.

Table 8. Population of Chinese Children in Napa County, 1881 – 1899.

	1881	1883	1887	1890	1893	1896	1898	1899
Girls (ages 5-17)				1	1	2	2	2
Boys (ages 5-17)					3	5	3	7
Girls and Boys (under 5)				5	3	2	4	6
Girls and Boys (under 17)	4	23	12					
Total	4	23	12	6	7	9	10	15

Prior to 1890, Chinese children were not allowed to attend public schools and were not distinguished by ages between school-age and non-school age. Sources: various Napa County newspapers. [315]

Figure 32. Chinese Children in Napa's Chinatown.

Black and white photograph of youth on Chinese New Year's at the Buddhist Temple in Napa's Chinatown. Photograph taken February 19, 1896 by Elmer Bickford. Border on

[315] 1881 Figures: "School Census Marshal's Report," *Napa County Reporter*, June 3, 1881, 3. 1883 Figures: "School Statistics of Napa County," *Napa County Reporter*, July 13, 1883, 3. 1887 Figures: "The School Census," *Napa Weekly Journal*, June 30, 1887, 3. 1890 Figures: "School Census, Some Interesting Figures Concerning Our School Population," *Napa Journal*, June 13, 1890, 3. 1893 Figures: "A Good Showing, Is Made by the School Census Marshall of this District," *The Napa Register*, May 26, 1893, 3. 1896 Figures: "Increase of Population, In Napa School District Census Marshall's Report," *The Napa Register*, May 8, 1896, 1. 1898 Figures: "County School Census," *Napa Journal*, June 29, 1898, 3. 1899 Figures: "County School Census," *St. Helena Star*, June 23, 1899, 2.

picture states: "California Products / Native Sons of the Golden West Napa 2/19/96." [316] *Subsequent captions on this picture when reprinted in later books said they were Chan Wah Jack's children, but there is no proof of that.*

Education of Napa Valley Chinese immigrants began not with the public schools but with the churches. The Christian Missionary Society in China sent Ah Set Fon to Napa to teach English and religious doctrines to the Chinese residents. He was recalled back to China in 1882.[317] He was replaced and the Chinese Chapel in downtown Napa, reconstructed and rededicated in 1883, served as a de facto school for Chinese children where they were taught how to read and write, much to the consternation of some in town. Those townspeople believed that "the same amount of interest displayed in looking after the welfare of white boys would accomplish more good than is now resulting from the time and money being spent enlightening the Chinese."[318] It is unclear, however, if any white townspeople's taxes were being spent teaching Chinese children. The Chinese Sunday School, held in the Chapel, had an average attendance of twenty students and the parishioners had contributed $25.25 toward the school during the first ten months of 1884 alone.[319]

By 1890, the school at the Chinese Chapel had matured enough to put on a demonstration to family and friends, both Chinese and white, as part of the Chinese New Year Celebration. The program highlighted the skills the Chinese had learned in reading

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[316] Elmer Bickford, *Chinese Youth at Chinese New Year*, February 19, 1896, Photograph, 1979.27.1b, Napa County Historical Society.

[317] "Ah Set Fon, who has been teaching English," *St. Helena Star*, April 14, 1882, 2.

[318] "Our Man About Town," *Napa County Reporter*, March 21, 1884, 1.

[319] "Town and Country," *Napa County Reporter*, October 24, 1884, 3.

and singing and was modeled after a sermon. It consisted of six featured speakers and included:

- Opening address by Wah Lee
- Reading of Romans 12 by Ah Him
- Recitation of "Somebody's Mother" by Ah Wing
- Song - "Pictures in the Clouds" by Wah Lee
- Reading of 23rd Psalm by Louie
- Song – "Whiter than Snow" by the entire class
- Recitation of "A Cause for Thanksgiving" by Sam Wee
- Reading of Psalm 117 by Lee Wing
- Song – "Behold" by Ah Wing, Sam Wee, and Wah Lee
- Recitation of "A Welsh Classic" by Wah Lee
- Closing address by Wah Lee
- Hymn in Chinese by the entire class.[320]

The program was a remarkable accomplishment for the class that demonstrated at minimum the students had good command of reading and speaking English. Perhaps not to be outdone, St. Helena had its own Chinese Mission School that had at least seven students, all boys, by 1886. It was sponsored by Mrs. Spencer, the wife of Rev. William C. Spencer. The students presented Mrs. Spencer with a $70 nickel-plated sewing machine as a thank you for all she had done with the school.[321] Thus at least in the two

[320] "How They Celebrated," *The Napa Register*, January 31, 1890, 1.

[321] "Chinese Mission School," *St. Helena Star*, October 29, 1886, 5.

largest towns in the Napa Valley by the 1880s Chinese children were being provided a basic education, either by churches or, eventually, the public school system.

The Chinese residents of the Napa Valley maintained their cultural identity by joining organizations like the Chinese Free Masons, worshipping at various Joss House Taoist temples around the area, and celebrating homeland events like New Years and funerary rites. Except for a lucky few, Chinese immigrants, who were almost all men, did not have access to a family. They embraced alternatives, like the Free Masons or even their work gangs, to provide a sense of belonging. Presumably all the Chinese immigrant workers wanted to return to China at some point, but we know that many did not, and they did their best to make the Napa Valley feel like something familiar and comforting – like home.

Chapter VI.

Crime and Punishment

In this chapter I will examine vice and crime in the Chinese community, including opium dens, brothels, gambling, violence, and murder and the impact this had on the Chinese and relations with the broader community. I will then explore how reporting on these issues within the Chinese community were communicated by the local newspapers and how that could have shaped public opinion. Sometimes economic arguments against Chinese workers were not sustainable, as when there was obviously no white replacement workforce available or when townspeople clearly preferred the less expensive Chinese laundry service. But moral arguments that cast Chinese residents as not only immoral themselves but as a group they could corrupt an entire town were harder to outright dismiss. I will also discuss how law enforcement and the judicial system dealt with Chinese criminals and victims that fell within their jurisdictions. Sometimes Chinese residents were well served by the justice system, especially when it came to high-level constitutional issues or challenging town ordinances. They were not accorded the same level of representation or accommodation when dealing with petty or violent crimes either perpetrated on or by Chinese residents. The local newspapers seemed to delight in salacious details about crimes perpetrated by Chinese criminals against white townspeople and Chinese-on-Chinese violence, yet at the same time they could not even be bothered to report the name of Chinese victims involved in crimes. Despite this uneven playing field, Chinese people in the Napa Valley frequently stood up for their rights and used the courts aggressively to achieve justice in some form wherever possible.

Unequal Before the Law

Prior to 1870, Chinese individuals were not allowed to testify in a California court and consequently were especially vulnerable to crimes of all sorts.[322] As California Chief Justice Lorenzo Sawyer said in 1867, the Chinese were put in a position of perpetual victimhood:

> In the nature of things, it would seem, that the very fact of the existence in our midst of a large class of people, upon whom crimes can be committed without fear of detection or conviction, and, therefore, with impunity, must tend to encourage the commission of crimes upon that class [323]

This began to change with the passage of the Federal Civil Rights Act of 1870, which codified into law the language of the 15th Amendment to the Constitution which gave African Americans the right to vote. Section 16 of the Civil Rights Act included language that extended basic civil rights, including the right to give evidence in court to all persons, not just citizens, within the United States.[324] Section 16 was inserted into the Act specifically to help the Chinese residing in, but not citizens of, the United States. Unfortunately, many California courts continued to prevent Chinese from testifying until the California civil code was finally changed in 1872 to comply with the federal mandates.[325]

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[322] Gabriel Chin, "'A Chinaman's Chance' in Court: Asian Pacific Americans and Racial Rules of Evidence," *UC Irvine Law Review* 3, no. 4 (December 1, 2013): 965–90, 969.

[323] People v. Jones, 31 Cal. 566, 574 (1867) as quoted in Chin, "'A Chinaman's Chance' in Court," 969.

[324] McClain, *In Search of Equality*, 38. Interestingly, the addition of this section was driven almost exclusively by Senator William Stewart of Nevada, who had spent considerable time in the mining districts of California and saw the level of discrimination Chinese faced there on a daily basis. There was no requirement in the text of the 15th Amendment to extend civil rights protection to the Chinese.

[325] McClain, *In Search of Equality*, 41.

After 1872, Chinese testimony may have been allowed, but it was not taken nearly as seriously as testimony from white citizens in many local courts of law. An 1887 *Napa County Reporter* editorial claimed that one thing state courts have learned "to their chagrin and sorrow, it is the utter untrustworthiness of Chinese testimony in criminal cases."[326] As late as 1896, the California Supreme Court had no issue with a prosecutor's argument that "in substance, that the jury should disregard the testimony of all the Chinese witnesses in support of an alibi, as against the testimony of the white witnesses for the prosecution."[327] Against that backdrop of unequal treatment before the law, Chinese people in the Napa Valley had to deal with violence and property crimes from other Chinese as well as from other people in the community the best they could.

An illustrative example of the lopsided treatment many Chinese victims received in court occurred in 1887. Justice Smith of Napa was sentencing five young men, who were given the appealing moniker of the "Browns Valley Boys" by the local press, for lying in wait and then stoning and beating two Chinese men named Ah Jim and Ah Sing. Everyone in the courtroom agreed Ah Jim and Ah Sing did nothing wrong but walk down the wrong road at the wrong time. They were deeply bruised and "severely beaten" and according to the judge it was a just blind luck that either Chinese man was not killed. Yet during the sentencing, the judge said:

> I will say to you young men, that what your motive could have been for this brutal and cowardly conduct, I am not able to comprehend. Surely you have no personal grudge against these peaceable men. To be sure they are Chinamen. I am one of those who wish there was not a Chinaman in the land. But that is not the question.

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[326] "If there is one thing remarks an exchange," *Napa County Reporter*, February 25, 1887, 2.

[327] People v. Foo, 44 P. 453, 455–56 (Cal. 1896) as quoted in Chin, "'A Chinaman's Chance' in Court." 971.

> These men are under the protection of the Laws of our country. God made them as he also did us. If they were brute animals, say dogs, you would have no right to chase them down as you have done.

But right after that declaration, the Judge dismissed the charges of robbery and assault with a deadly weapon, which would have carried a prison sentence. Instead, he gave them a stern lecture that included, "considering your youth and in the hope that this experience will teach you that the laws of your country must be obeyed" and he vowed to make the sentences as light as possible. Each man was fined $25.[328] It is hard to believe they would have gotten off so easy if, in fact, they had tormented and beaten two dogs instead of Ah Jim and Ah Sing.

Race was clearly one of the determining factors in severity of punishment. While it was possible to be subject to a $25 fine for attacking and seriously wounding a Chinese man if the perpetrator was a white "Browns Valley Boy," the magnitude for a Chinese perpetrator for any crime was much higher. Ah Lee was arrested for stealing two ducks belonging to Mrs. Rohlwing of St Helena. The ducks were found alive and well in Chinatown, which lead to Lee's conviction. For this offense, Ah Lee was sentenced to twenty-five days in jail.[329] It is not hard to imagine the penalty would have been even harsher if the ducks had been killed and eaten. Even so, Ah Lee was forced to go without employment or his freedom for almost a month for an offense that would have been worthy of a minor fine, if anything, if he had been white.

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[328] "For Assaulting Chinamen," *The Napa Register*, May 6, 1887, 3.

[329] "Petty Larceny," *St. Helena Star*, June 16, 1884, 3.

Opium

There was probably no vice so closely associated with Chinese in the United States than opium. In an 1874 editorial railing against Chinese attending school at night to learn English, the *St. Helena Star* characterized its Chinese residents as "punk scented, opium smoking, liver colors infidels, who are not and never will become citizens."[330] Opium was a primary characteristic associated with Chinese immigrants in the United States and was intensely derogatory. Many Americans believed that smoking opium, as one did in an opium den, directly threatened middle-class values. The behavioral side effects of opium smoking, according to experts at the time, included loss of religious conviction, insanity, and moral degeneration. It did not matter that it was possible, even easy, to get medicinal opium from your local doctor. The fact that smoking-grade opium was only available in Chinatowns linked it directly with already-suspicious Chinese living in town and was something to be feared and detested, along with the Chinese providers of the drug.[331]

The intense feelings against the Chinese regarding opium was the moral equivalent of the economic argument against Chinese immigration that was constantly undercutting white labor. Anti-Chinese crusaders made the argument that Chinese opium was threatening economic prosperity, morality, and civilization itself. Many anti-Chinese advocates linked the scourge of opium addiction to the presence of Chinese people in their midst and if they could be expelled, the opium problem would go away.[332] Most of

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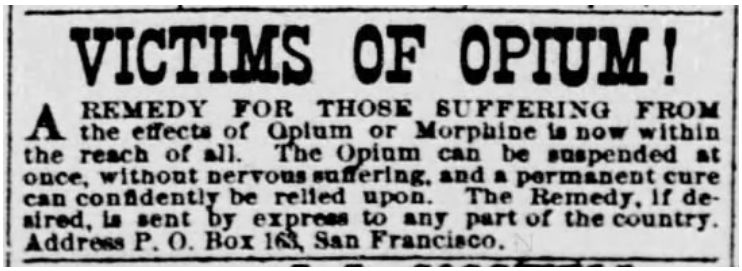
[330] "Not Acceptable," *St. Helena Star*, November 26, 1874, 2.

[331] Diana L. Ahmad, *The Opium Debate and Chinese Exclusion Laws in the Nineteenth-Century American West* (Reno: University of Nevada Press, 2007), 2-3.

[332] Ahmad, *The Opium Debate*, 77.

the Chinese residents eventually fled the Napa Valley. The opium problem did not go away.


VICTIMS OF OPIUM!

A REMEDY FOR THOSE SUFFERING FROM the effects of Opium or Morphine is now within the reach of all. The Opium can be suspended at once, without nervous suffering, and a permanent cure can confidently be relied upon. The Remedy, if desired, is sent by express to any part of the country. Address P. O. Box 163, San Francisco.

Figure 33. Ad for an Opium Addition Cure

Newspaper advertisement in the December 9, 1875 issue of the St. Helena Star indicating that opium addition was a widespread and common problem.

Local newspapers tried to warn their unsuspecting white readers about this dangerous drug that was so closely tied to the Chinese residents in their midst. In 1880, *The Napa Valley Register* called for a decisive action against opium because "The vile and vicious habit of opium smoking is indulged in by boys of respectable parentage, who visit Chinese haunts for that purpose. Such an evil calls for prompt and vigorous treatment on the part of parents, and for a stringent city ordinance or general statute."[333] The *Napa Reporter* shared a scary and threatening tidbit just a year later, "Educated Chinamen claim that in fifty years Americans will be a nation of opium smokers."[334] In 1882, the *Reporter* decided they needed to be even more direct in a front-page story:

> The opium habit has its victims, and the smoking of the drug – the practice being introduced into this country by the Chinese – has extended into the white population to an alarming degree. In small villages like Napa there are many who

[333] "The vile and vicious habit of opium," *The Napa Valley Register*, March 11, 1880, 3.

[334] "Editorial Notes," *Napa County Reporter*, January 14, 1881, 2.

> have become inoculated with the seductive poison, and its dreadful influence has so disorganized their physical systems as to leave them without the power of will to discontinue smoking the opium pipe.[335]

The paper went on to characterize opium smoking as a gateway to injecting morphine. Their readership needed to be fearful of this Chinese import.

The city of Napa passed Ordinance No. 98 in December 1880 which prohibited "persons from keeping or visiting any place, house, or room where opium is smoked."[336] The way the ordinance was worded would theoretically apply to both Chinese operators of opium dens and its Chinese and white patrons. The reality was that, despite the lack of racial qualification within the text of the law, application and enforcement was skewed heavily toward the Chinese. Just a few months after the passage of Ordinance No. 98 in early 1881, the Napa police conducted a raid in Chinatown "for the purposes of 'hauling in' anyone who might be found indulging in the proscribed luxury of opium smoking." Unsurprisingly, despite the newspapers' claims of the number of white men and boys that frequent Chinese opium dens, only Chinese opium smokers were rounded up during the raid. The police raided three opium dens and arrested nine people. Six of them were released with fines of six dollars each, one served three days in jail because he could not pay the fine, and one went to trial and found not guilty. The ninth was charged with running the opium den and faced significantly higher penalties.[337]

In June 1882, Charley Baxter was in an opium den run by Ah Louie in Chinatown. Baxter pulled out a gun and shot at a woman in the den but missed. He was

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[335] "Morphomania," *Napa County Reporter*, February 17, 1882, 1.

[336] "Ordinance No. 98," *Napa County Reporter*, January 7, 1881, 4.

[337] "Raid on the Opium Dens," *Napa County Reporter*, May 20, 1881, 3.

arrested and charged with assault with attempt to commit murder.[338] He was found guilty of attempted murder and sentenced to sixty days in the county jail. Ah Louie was also arrested and convicted of keeping a place where opium is smoked, in violation of Ordinance No. 98. He received a sentence of 150 days in county jail – two and a half times longer than the white Charlie Baxter who tried to kill someone. Ah Louie complained after the verdict that the judge must not have liked him very much, though he likely knew there was nothing he could do about it.[339]

Later that year, a white opium den owner named Steve Brugehetta was arrested for smoking opium, running an opium den, and vagrancy. Brugehetta pled guilty and, unlike Ah Louie who spent five months in jail, Brugehetta was fined $90 and was set free. A white woman named Mrs. Sassanett was also convicted earlier that day for operating a different opium den and living in a house of prostitution. She had to pay a fine of $40 before she was set free.[340] Both sentences that resulted in modest monetary fines were at a different magnitude than the five months in jail imposed on Ah Louie for ostensibly the same offense.

St. Helena passed an ordinance in 1885 that was supposed to shut down opium dens in its Chinatown. The following year, Constable James Allison of St. Helena arrested Hoe Chin, Och Lee, and Ah Charlie for smoking opium in the city limits and

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[338] "Superior Court – Wallace, Judge," *Napa County Reporter*, June 30, 1882, 1.

[339] *Napa County Reporter*, July 7, 1882, 1. While Ah Louie was quoted in the paper, the quote, as was typical of the time, was rendered in a mocking English prose that was supposed to phonetically mimic a Chinese accent. Ah Louie's quote was rendered as "Ah, ya, me no sabe, Glidley he no like Chinaman" (referring to Judge Gridley, who presided over the proceeding).

[340] "Opium Smokers Take Warning," *Napa County Reporter*, November 24, 1882, 3.

were sentenced to twenty days in jail each.[341] Calistoga, which was an unincorporated city at that time, could not pass its own laws and their newspaper bemoaned the fact that they would continue "to see four or five opium dens in full blast, with their attendant destabilizing influences, as they are patronized by more whites than people in general are aware of."[342]

While the local papers tended to emphasize how much opium was harming white residents, opium was the bane of many in the Chinese community. Lem Ah Sing, a Chinese resident of Napa, was found dead in the Napa River behind Chinatown early on a May morning in 1888, just a few hours after he was seen leaving an opium den in Chinatown. The coroner ruled the death a suicide, by virtue of the fact he drowned as a result of his own deliberate act, caused by "sickness and despondency."[343]

Ironically after the passage of the 1882 Chinese Exclusion Act, which stopped most Chinese immigration and caused the subsequent decline of Chinese population in California and the Napa Valley, the opium "problem" did not get better – it got worse. By 1882, many white Americans were addicted, and the legal importation of smoking-opium increased dramatically from 859,889 pounds in the 1880s to 924,908 in the 1890s and then 1,481,686 in the first decade of the 1900s. Law enforcement continued to raid opium dens and publish names of people operating them, but that approach had little effect on opium consumption, which continued to be a managed as a legal problem instead of a public health problem that affected people regardless of country of origin. Chinese

[341] "Mongolian Opium Smokers," *Napa County Reporter*, March 26, 1886, 1.

[342] "Good for St. Helena," *St. Helena Star*, October 30, 1885, 1.

[343] "A Chinaman Suicides," *The Napa Register*, June 1, 1888, 3.

residents may have mostly left the Napa Valley by 1900, but the problem of addictive drugs remained long afterward.[344]

Gambling

Gambling closely followed opium as the vice most closely associated with the Chinese residents of Napa Valley. Gambling of various forms was popular among peasants in China, and it spread to California and the Napa Valley along with the influx of Chinese immigrants. These men were mostly poor, single, illiterate, and paid in cash on a regular basis. While the Chinese professional gamblers became wealthier, the vast majority of the Chinese men who played the games became poorer. This cycle depleted any savings they may have accumulated and extended their stay in the Napa Valley in order to earn more to send back home or return themselves. Which unfortunately provided yet more opportunities to gamble their earnings away.[345] One of the initial platforms of the Napa Anti-Chinese League in 1886 was "That our police officers be required to act more vigilantly suppressing opium dens and Chinese gambling games."[346] The local papers made Chinese addiction to gambling a special, even dangerous, kind of vice. They reprinted a story saying that gambling debts incurred by the Chinese were prioritized above everything else a Chinese person owned and they would sell their

[344] Ahmad, *The Opium Debate*, 77-83.

[345] Stewart Culin, *The Gambling Games of the Chinese in America* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1891). 15-16.

[346] "A Large Meeting, Resolutions Adopted and an Anti-Chinese Club Organized," *The Napa Register*, February 12, 1886, 3. See Chapter VII for a more extensive discussion of the Napa Anti-Chinese League.

children to pay off a gambling debt, while ordinary debts, like to a tradesman, would go unpaid.[347]

There was a close linkage between gambling and religion within the Chinese community. Many Chinese gamblers, like many gamblers everywhere, were superstitious. They would visit the shrine of Kwan Ti, the god of war, in the local Joss House temple. After performing the customary rites, they would seek guidance on what lottery numbers to play, for example. If the gambler was successful, he would contribute generously back to the temple in gratitude.[348]

Three of the most popular games played by Chinese gamblers were fan-tan (*fán t'án*), a daily lottery (*pák kóp piú*), and dice games.[349] Fan-tan is a game played on a mat-covered table where a quantity of Chinese coins were covered by a cup. Players guess the remainder when the pile is divided by four and bet on the result. The player had a 25% chance of winning and the payout was 4:1, but the "house" always took a small commission from each person's winnings, so over time the house would win, and the players would lose.[350] The daily lottery was considered slightly more respectable. It was based on the first eighty Chinese characters in a book called the Thousand Character Classic, which contains one thousand characters, none of which repeat. Twenty of those characters from the pool of eighty are drawn each night. Players purchased tickets of ten or more characters drawn from the pool of eighty. Winnings ranged from $2 to $3,000 for

[347] "Chinese Gambling," *Napa Journal*, February 21, 1894, 4.

[348] Culin, *The Gambling Games of the Chinese in America*, 17.

[349] Weber, *Old Napa Valley the History to 1900*, 200.

[350] Culin, *The Gambling Games of the Chinese in America*, 1-2.

matching between 5 and 10 of the numbers on the ticket. The "house" always took 5% from the winnings.[351] Dice games were played with Chinese bone dice (known as *shik tsai* in Cantonese) which have six sides numbered one through six. One of the most popular dice games among Chinese laborers in the United States in the late 19th century was *sei ng luk* (which means "four, five, six") which is played with three dice and follows a group of players around a table trying to get progressively better throws of the dice.[352]

Gambling was present whenever Chinese laborers had money. At the Great Western Quicksilver Mine, professional "sleek, dainty-handed, city-looking, foppish, Chinese gamblers" would show up regularly right after the miners were paid. The sound of fan-tan games would ring out for hours in the evenings while the miners still had money to gamble. The superintendent of the mine, Frank Rocca, would get so incensed that the miners were gambling that he would occasionally march down to China Camp No. 1 or Brown China Camp brandishing his cane in a futile attempt to drive the professional gamblers out. On May 24, 1891, he confiscated $115 from one gambler. There was so much interest in gambling, however, that the professional would typically slink back into camp to continue the game once Rocca had left.[353]

Gambling was an even bigger issue in the cities. The Napa Board of Trustees passed Ordinance No. 23 in 1880 titled "An ordinance relating to the preservation of the peace, quiet, and good order of the City of Napa." While it opened with prohibitions on

[351] Culin, *The Gambling Games of the Chinese in America*, 8-9.

[352] Stewart Culin, *Chinese Games with Dice* (Philadelphia, PA: Franklin Printing Co., 1889), 6-7.

[353] Goss, *The Life and Death of a Quicksilver Mine*, 78-79.

prostitution, indecent exposure, and dressing in the clothes of the opposite gender, it included the following section:

> Section 6. No person shall keep or maintain or become an inmate of, or visitor to, or shall in any way contribute by patronage or otherwise to the support of any disorderly house or house of ill-fame or place for the practice of gambling within the limits of the City of Napa.[354]

This ordinance provided the instrument by which the city could roust and close Chinese gambling houses.

Just a few months later, the police enthusiastically sought to enforce the order prohibiting gambling and thirteen Chinese men were arrested and brought to trial for "visiting gambling tables." Two of the accused plead guilty and were sentenced. However, the others demanded a jury trial and were acquitted because of an administrative oversight that the Trustees had never published the ordinances in the local newspaper.[355] This was rectified four weeks later with the publication of the ordinance.

Like the opium laws, anti-gambling laws were almost exclusively applied to Chinese gambling halls and then only to Chinese patrons within those establishments, despite clear evidence of gambling by white townspeople. It became so one-sided that *The Napa Register* editorialized on the disproportionate application of the law. In February 1885, two Deputy Sheriffs and two citizen assistants raided a fan-tan house and arrested seventeen Chinese gamblers and confiscated the house pot of fifty dollars. Five were deemed "cripples" or "sick" and were released. The other twelve were arrested and

[354] "Ordinance No. 23," *The Napa Valley Register*, May 4, 1880, 4.

[355] "The Chinese Gambling Cases," *The Napa Valley Register*, April 8, 1880, 3.

sentenced by the County Court. The *Register* questioned whether this unbalanced application of justice actually helped stop gambling within Napa. They wondered,

> Are there not habitual violators of the gambling ordinances, in this city, of Caucasian extraction? If there are such, would it not be more in keeping with the dignity of this great American Republic to set an example for the heathen within the gates of our city by jerking up these white malefactors. If we havn't [sic] the "sand" to make a white man respect the law, we will add but little to our fame by crowding defenseless Chinamen.[356]

Their editorial fell short of fully endorsing equality before the law or challenging the law as a thinly veiled attack on just Chinese gambling, but it is noteworthy that they called out the city on their uneven application of the ordinance.

Occasionally the rivalry between Chinese companies that ran competing gambling houses escalated into public view. In 1891, Napa police made two raids in Chinatown on the same night. The first raid was on a lottery game where they arrested two Chinese men who were operating the lottery, Wong Ah Sam and Ling Ching. One of the Chinese that was arrested approached one of the policemen, Thomas Brown, and said that the company that ran the lottery game would pay him five dollars a month to look the other way and "allow it to run unmolested." This attempt at bribery apparently failed. After the two Chinese men were booked in the county jail, the police raided a fan-tan game and arrested four Chinese gamblers but twenty were able to escape. The fan-tan game was run by a Chinese company represented by a Chinese man named Kay Toy, who posted bail for the four arrested at their hall. The two arrested at the lottery game initially suspected Kay Toy of orchestrating the first raid and vowed to kill him. Once they were told that Kay's establishment was raided as well, they withdrew their threats.[357]

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[356] "Chinese 'Tan' Players Arrested," *The Napa Register*, February 20, 1885, 1.

[357] "Lottery Raided," *The Napa Register*, February 27, 1891, 1.

The presence of gambling was a frequent criticism of St. Helena's Chinatown by townspeople who claimed to be worried about the morality of the town's youth. As part of the formation of the town's Anti-Chinese League, the group claimed that "In gambling dens and opium joints, which are ever in secret operation, despite the vigilance of law officers, are hell holes that must necessarily lead the your of our town into vice to a greater or less extent."[358] St. Helena passed a formal anti-gambling ordinance in 1883 whose goal was to "prohibit and suppress gaming and gambling houses and visiting gambling houses and to prohibit and suppress games of chance in public places, etc. and to prevent immorality."[359]

Less than six weeks later, the police raided a gambling house on Main Street operated by Hop Hung.[360] The police were suspicious because that house was shrouded and dark, while all the surrounding buildings were brightly lit. Two police officers plus a "large posse of citizens" raided the establishment while the games were being played. As many as fifty of the gamblers were able to escape up the stairs and onto the roof, but thirteen were arrested and marched to the county jail, escorted by over a hundred white townspeople. $95.65 was seized from Ah Shuey, who was the dealer and represented the "house." Other than $41.10 confiscated from one other person arrested, Ah Hoy, the remaining eleven had less than $10 between them.[361] The seizure demonstrates both how

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[358] "Anti-Chinese, St. Helena's Protest Against the Chinamen," *St. Helena Star*, December 4, 1885, 3.

[359] "Ordinance No. 47.," *St. Helena Star*, June 22, 1883, 2.

[360] Interestingly, this location is not in Chinatown proper, but downtown St. Helena, possibly to make it easier for white townspeople to visit.

[361] "Another Gambling Raid on the Chinese," *St. Helena Star*, August 3, 1883, 3.

popular gambling was if at least sixty men were present in one gambling house and the large economic disparity between the house and the gamblers.

The 1883 St. Helena ordinance may have been intended to reduce immorality by shutting down gambling establishments, but they were still going strong six years later. Unsurprisingly, violence often occurred in the intense atmosphere of the gambling den. In July 1889, one Chinese gambler shot two other Chinese gamblers in Chinatown. One of the Chinese victims, a miner who worked at the White Sulphur Springs Quicksilver Mine, was shot seriously in the left thigh and could not be treated immediately due to all the swelling. The other Chinese victim apparently had been on a bit of a winning streak as the bullet struck his purse that was full of coins and bounced off leaving only a deep bruise.[362] Unfortunately, most Chinese gamblers were not that lucky.

Violent Crimes

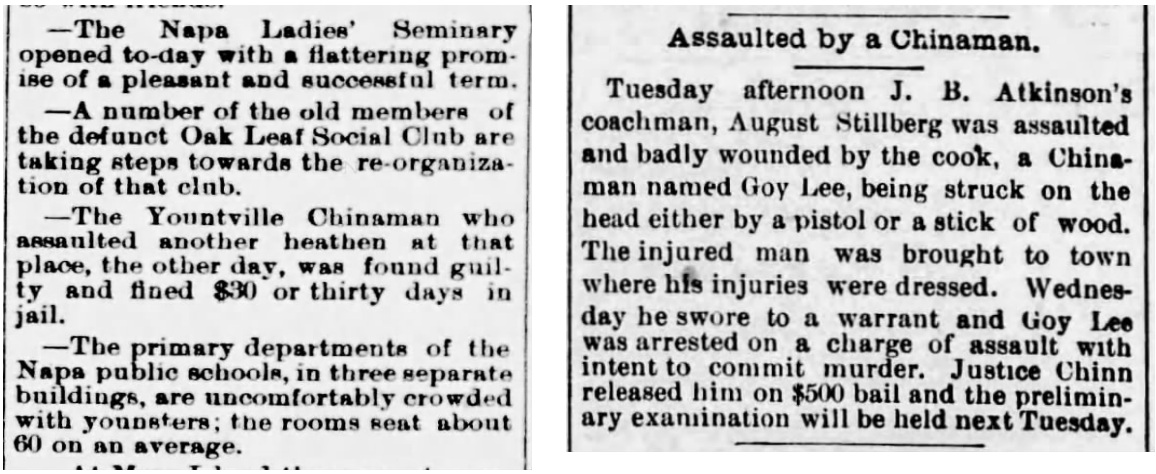
Overall, the Chinese laborers had more to fear from injuries and deaths sustained during dangerous working conditions than as a result of criminal activity, but there were Chinese victims of violent crimes by both white townspeople as well as other Chinese residents. One of the earliest mentions we have of a Chinese victim of a violent crime was in 1875 involving Ah Yung, who was shot to death by his labor boss, a fellow Chinese worker named Ike. Ike worked for John Gillam, the owner of the land on which St. Helena's Chinatown was built. Ike and his crew did some work for Gillam and, as was customary, Gillam paid the labor boss who was supposed to dole it out as appropriate to his crew. Apparently, Ike hadn't paid his crew and Ah Yung confronted Ike, who

[362] "Shooting Affray," *St. Helena Star*, July 12, 1889, 3.

proceeded to shoot him twice with a revolver, killing him. Ike escaped and was never brought to justice.[363] The story of the killer of a Chinese man escaping and not ever being brought to justice was a common refrain across many of the violent crimes committed against Chinese victims.

Local newspapers typically downplayed (or ignored) Chinese-on-Chinese crime but sensationalized Chinese-on-white crime. A Chinese resident of Yountville assaulted another Chinese man in 1885 and was found guilty and fined $30 or thirty days in jail. No names were provided, and the article was printed in the newspaper in just one sentence after a story of the reorganization of the Oak Leaf Social Club and before a new snippet about overcrowded schools. In 1897, a Chinese cook named Goy Lee assaulted a white coachman named August Stillberg and that story received a separate article with its own headline and included every available detail. Punishments were similarly based on the race of the victim. Goy Lee by attacking a white man, had to post a $500 bail vs just pay a $30 fine if he had attacked a fellow Chinese man. The manner in which the two crimes were reported in the newspapers demonstrated that Chinese-on-Chinese crime was so expected and common that you did not even need the names of the people involved in the fight. But Chinese on white crime needed to be called out to warn the local citizenry (see Figure 34).

[363] "Killed," *St. Helena Star*, January 21, 1875, 3.



—The Napa Ladies' Seminary opened to-day with a flattering promise of a pleasant and successful term.

—A number of the old members of the defunct Oak Leaf Social Club are taking steps towards the re-organization of that club.

—The Yountville Chinaman who assaulted another heathen at that place, the other day, was found guilty and fined $30 or thirty days in jail.

—The primary departments of the Napa public schools, in three separate buildings, are uncomfortably crowded with younsters; the rooms seat about 60 on an average.

Assaulted by a Chinaman.

Tuesday afternoon J. B. Atkinson's coachman, August Stillberg was assaulted and badly wounded by the cook, a Chinaman named Goy Lee, being struck on the head either by a pistol or a stick of wood. The injured man was brought to town where his injuries were dressed. Wednesday he swore to a warrant and Goy Lee was arrested on a charge of assault with intent to commit murder. Justice Chinn released him on $500 bail and the preliminary examination will be held next Tuesday.

Figure 34. Comparison Between Two Newspaper Articles Describing Chinese Crime.

The left article from the January 16, 1885 Napa Register spent one sentence in a list of other minor local happenings to describe a Chinese on Chinese assault. The right article is from the May 28, 1897 St. Helena Star where Chinese on white assault required a dedicated article including significant details. Ironically, Goy Lee was acquitted of assault, but that fact was barely mentioned in the following week's paper.

One of the most notorious episodes of a Chinese murder victim was an 1894 killing of a Chinese farm laborer by a white transient. It was covered extensively by the local papers. On October 30, 1894, two white transients named Joe Talbert and Charles Weston were walking across a field when they came upon fifteen Chinese laborers working on Lorenzo Carbone's potato field in Napa. Talbert and Weston came up to the Chinese workers, asked for a match, and when refused, continued to pester the Chinese workers. One of the workers, Yeg Chum, told the men to leave. The men, in turn, saw Yeg's coat on the ground, grabbed it, and left. Yeg ran after them to retrieve his coat and Talbert struck Yeg in the face and Weston fatally stabbed him with a knife. Talbert tried to escape but were pursued and captured by Napa police after violently resisting arrest. When asked why he had stabbed the man, Talbert complained that "the people were

hiring Chinese while white men have to walk the roads."[364] Weston escaped and made his way to Salt Lake City, Utah, but was detained there on the murder charge and brought back to Napa to stand trial.

The case drew widespread attention throughout Napa and the trial had to be moved to a larger courtroom to accommodate the crowds.[365] At his trial for murder, the Chinese witnesses had to speak through an interpreter. Weston continued to deny the murder, despite his knife being the one that killed Yeg Chum and the fact he fled to Salt Lake City immediately after the crime. During deliberations, the jury initially polled seven to five in favor of acquittal, then eleven to one in favor, then finally all twelve men agreed to let Charles Weston go free.[366] This verdict was reached despite fourteen witnesses to the crime (all Chinese) and the accused escaping all the way to Utah to avoid trial. The only thing tilting the case in the white transient's favor was his race and the race of his victim. But it was enough.

There are common themes that run through much of the reporting about crimes committed against Chinese residents. It seems that law enforcement responded to crimes quickly enough, but in many cases, if the victim was Chinese, there was not much of an attempt to capture the perpetrator if he was not apprehended on the spot. The Yeg Chum killing is an exception to that rule in that the police went all the way to Salt Lake City to bring the accused back to Napa. It may have been due to the intense publicity surrounding the case. Another common theme is that punishments for similar crimes

[364] "Murder," *The Napa Journal*, October 31, 1894, 3.

[365] "Local Briefs," *The Napa Journal*, January 19, 1895, 3.

[366] "Out Twelve Hours," *The Napa Register*, January 25, 1895, 1.

were not the same based on the race of the accused. Goy, a Chinese man who attacked a white man, needed to raise $500 just for bail money vs a penalty of just $30 for the Chinese man who assaulted a fellow Chinese man earlier. And once the criminal was brought into the justice system, it was very difficult for a Chinese victim to get a fair hearing requiring the agreement of a jury of twelve white men.[367] By the end of the 19th century, Chinese people could testify in court, but they still could not serve on juries. But just testifying in court could not guarantee they would be given the same credibility as testimony from a white defendant or witness. Finally, the reporting of the crimes was different depending on the racial makeup of the attacker and victim. In many cases, the name of the Chinese people involved in the crimes was omitted and it was just "a Chinaman." A Chinese person attacking a white person was much more newsworthy than Chinese-on-Chinese crime, which was treated as an expected result from an "uncivilized" race.

[367] Women were not allowed to serve on a California jury until 1917.

Chapter VII.

Napa Valley Anti-Chinese Movements

Prior to 1885, opposition to Chinese residents of the Napa Valley was intense but relatively unorganized. Explicit "Anti-Coolie" leagues, as they were called, did not form in St. Helena until 1885 and in Napa until 1886. The California anti-Chinese movement was only sporadically effective but always very vocal and persistent. They provided a foundation for local groups to form in the mid-1880s although local organizations were relatively short-lived; Napa Valley's organizations were no exception.

Early opposition to Chinese immigration in California was spearheaded by labor groups who saw the expanding pool of cheap Chinese labor as a tool of large capital-intensive companies like steamships and railroads.[368] California had, by a wide margin, the largest population of Chinese immigrants of any state in the U.S. and anti-Chinese forces from California were the most vocal and intense in the country.

[368] Elmer Clarence Sandmeyer, *The Anti-Chinese Movement in California* (University of Illinois Press, 1991). 15. Originally published in 1939.

Table 9. Chinese Population in California Relative to the United States.

	1860	1870	1880	1890	1900
Chinese in United States	-	63,199	105,465	107,480	89,863
Chinese in California	34,933	49,277	75,132	72,472	45,753
Percentage in California	-	78%	71%	67%	51%

Until 1900, California contained more residents from China than all other states combined. [369]

Statewide, opposition to Chinese immigrants from 1860 onwards focused on economic competition of Chinese labor vs. white labor, "immoral" practices like opium smoking and gambling, and their unwillingness to assimilate to the Anglo-American culture of California.[370] These objections, as we have seen, were very similar to the local objections of Napa Valley townspeople. The difference at the statewide level was the unique position of labor in the 1860s-1880s California political landscape. California labor groups, such as the Workingman's Party of California, the State Federation of Labor, and the Knights of Labor, were some of the few statewide interest groups that were tightly organized and focused largely on a single topic – opposition to Chinese immigration. California's political parties were roughly equal in strength, and no party was able to elect their candidate to governor more than twice in succession, often by very slim margins. Thus, the organized labor groups, though relatively small in membership, held enormous power in the state as each party took on more and more extreme "Anti-Chinese" positions to win the labor vote, regardless of how intensely they personally felt

[369] Figures from 1860 and 1870: Sandmeyer, *The Anti-Chinese Movement in California*, 17. Figures from 1880, 1890, 1900: 1910 U.S. Census, Bulletin 127, Chinese and Japanese in the United States 1910, table 53, 25.

[370] Sandmeyer, *The Anti-Chinese Movement in California*, 25-39.

about California's Chinese population. It was virtually impossible to win statewide without labor's endorsement.[371]

Many statewide Anti-Chinese laws and taxes, implemented by politicians in the pocket of labor, were thrown out as unconstitutional by the courts. Anti-Chinese labor groups, led by Dennis Kearny and the Workingman's Party, decided to take a different approach and were instrumental in the construction and passage of the 1879 California Constitution that had an entire Article dedicated to the prohibition of Chinese employment in California. Among the provisions in Article XIX, titled simply "Chinese" were:

> SEC. 2. No corporation now existing or hereafter formed under the laws of this State, shall, after the adoption of this Constitution, employ directly or indirectly, in any capacity, any Chinese or Mongolian. The Legislature shall pass such laws as may be necessary to enforce this provision.
>
> SEC. 3. No Chinese shall be employed on any State, county, municipal, or other public work, except in punishment for crime.
>
> SEC. 4. The presence of foreigners ineligible to become citizens of the United States is declared to be dangerous to the well-being of the State, and the Legislature shall discourage their immigration by all the means within its power.

As with other statewide measures, Article XIX was declared unconstitutional a year later based on the court challenge by Napa Valley's Sulphur Bank Mine. California politicians then turned to the national political stage and were instrumental gaining the passage of the Federal 1882 Chinese Exclusion Act, which effectively forbid further immigration by Chinese laborers.

[371] Sandmeyer, *The Anti-Chinese Movement in California*, 41.

By this time, California labor organizations began to lose power and status beginning in 1880.[372] The agitation at the state level was largely unorganized during the first part of the 1880s. In February 1886, The California Non-Partisan Anti-Chinese Association was created during a statewide anti-Chinese convention in San Jose, California. C. F. McGlashan of Truckee was elected Chairman of the organization and the Reverend N. F. Ravlin was chosen as State Organizer. [373] A month later, another statewide convention was held in Sacramento where a resolution was passed, among great debate, to employ a boycott against local businesses or people that employed Chinese employees.[374] McGlashen and Ravlin would be frequent visitors to the Napa Valley throughout 1886, speaking at local anti-Chinese clubs and helping to educate and rally the local population to get rid of its Chinese inhabitants.

St. Helena

The first formal "Anti-Chinese League" in the Napa Valley was formed in St. Helena on November 27, 1885. An estimated 300 to 400 "tax-payers" attended the first regularly scheduled meeting on November 30th. The core committee organizing the league included John Mavity, a real estate broker and director of the local Seventh Day Adventist Church; Phil O'Donnell, owner of the largest dry goods store in town; John Marquette, a leader of the United Workmen Lodge; E. Heymann, owner of the Railroad House, a local bar and billiard hall as well as a vineyard owner; George Osborn, trustee

[372] Sandmeyer, *The Anti-Chinese Movement in California*, 75.

[373] "Anti-Chinese; The State Convention in San Jose," *The Santa Cruz Sentinel*, February 6, 1886, 5.

[374] "The Boycott; The Bone of Contention at the State Convention," *The San Francisco Examiner*, March 12, 1886, 2.

of the Workingmen's club, vineyard owner, and farmer; Charles Howard, town trustee and farmer, and F. Sciaroni, vineyard owner and owner of a dance and dining hall. These men were some of the leading merchants, vineyard owners, and politically connected citizens in town.[375]

The arguments against Chinese immigrants fell into the familiar patterns used by the statewide Anti-Chinese leagues organized by labor groups: the presence of Chinese residents led to moral degradation of the youth, unfair labor competition, and they were unable or unwilling to assimilate. The group passed the following resolution at their first meeting:

> WHEREAS, It is common knowledge that the existence among us of Chinese denizens tends to corrupt the youth of our community, by forcing them into competition with a degraded race, or into idleness, and by bringing them into familiar contact with scenes and habits of unthrift, filth and vice, and by giving force to the vicious conviction that labor such as Chinese paper form is degrading to our youth and populace; and
>
> WHEREAS, It is true that the employment of Chinese in this vicinity is preventing many of our people for obtaining labor at once honorable and necessary for the moral and physical support and growth of themselves and their families; and
>
> WHEREAS, It appears that the Chinese are becoming more numerous in our midst and probably in her state, and that they are by practicing religion opposed to our habits and customs, into our National and State laws, and local ordinances, and refuse to adopt or be governed by them, either in trade, in policy of action, or in that common cleanliness which materially avoids and prevents the spread of disease, and makes habitation tolerable; therefore
>
> *Resolved*, That we proceed to organize a protective Anti-Chinese League.
>
> That the chief objective of such League shall be to effect the entire exclusion of the Chinese from the corporate limits have St. Helena and its vicinity by *any* and *every* lawful means.
>
> That in furtherance of said object the Secretary of this meeting shall immediately receive the signature of all persons desirous of pledging themselves to support the

[375] "Anti-Chinese; St. Helena's Protest Against the Chinaman," *St. Helena Star*, December 4, 1885, 3.

> object of said League, and that at a subsequent meeting of the persons so pledging themselves a permanent organization of said league shall be affected.

One hundred and sixty citizens of St. Helena signed this resolution. The *St. Helena Star* newspaper, frequently a critic of the Chinese residents in town, applauded the formation of the League. It specifically called out the local Chinatown, "with its filthy and diseased heathens, its dens of infamy, and its reeking cess-pools," which was the first thing visitors to town saw when they arrived from the south when traveling up valley.

The *Star* did provide a notable caveat to its endorsement of the League. While it wholeheartedly agreed with tearing down Chinatown, it worried if they actually convinced Chinese laborers to leave the Napa Valley, "it would be impossible to get help at the proper time to gather and care for the grape crop." Once a suitable replacement labor force was found for the Chinese worker, then the paper would agree with the sentiment that "the Chinese must go."[376]

On Saturday, January 30, 1886, flyers went up throughout St. Helena announcing a gathering the following Monday at the Town Hall where the townspeople would determine the best way to expel the Chinese residents from town. Monday's meeting was well attended, and everyone agreed that members of the St. Helena Anti-Chinese League should meet the very next day to begin the expulsion. By 4:00 pm on Tuesday, a group of two to three hundred members of the Anti-Chinese League met in front of the Town Hall to the ringing of bells and the blowing of whistles. They were formed into a line by W.T. Simmons, a Justice of the Peace and a leading Republican party man, who cautioned the crowd to be orderly. They lined up and marched to Chinatown

[376] "Anti-Chinese; St. Helena's Protest Against the Chinaman," *St. Helena Star*, December 4, 1885, 3.

accompanied by a militaristic drum cadence to demand that all Chinese residents leave town within ten days. The Chinese people living in Chinatown heard the commotion and boarded up all the doors and windows and refused to come out and meet the mob. The police were present and persuaded a few of the Chinese labor bosses to come out to at least hear the demands of the crowd. Once the message was delivered that the Chinese had to leave, the mostly peaceful crowd dispersed.[377]

Given this highly charged and potentially dangerous environment, it is unsurprising that it was during this year, 1886, that Jue Joe decided to leave St. Helena and his vineyard labor job behind and take a job with the Southern Pacific Railroad that took him, eventually, to Southern California. Other than Jue Joe's exodus, we don't know how many Chinese laborers decided to leave St. Helena or the Napa Valley based on this outpouring of discrimination and hate from the townspeople, but it is likely that quite a few, if they had the means and weren't tied to the community, may have decided it was time to leave.

Although it may have seemed like everyone in town marched to Chinatown to demand the Chinese leave, the townspeople of St. Helena were not unified in their desire to immediately drive out the Chinese residents. In fact, it was a surprise to many of the influential and wealthy landowners in town. Later that week on Saturday, February 6th, many vineyard owners and wine merchants met at the Turner Hall in downtown St. Helena to discuss the Anti-Chinese group's demand that the Chinese leave. They were worried about the labor needed to harvest their vineyards and the legality of the crowd's actions on February 2nd. They rejected the violent overtones of the Anti-Chinese group

[377] "Anti-Coolieites; They Visit Chinatown in a Body," *St. Helena Star* Newspaper, February 5, 1886, 3.

and their demands that the Chinese immediately leave.[378] One of the vineyard owners said they were willing "to replace the Chinamen with white labor as fast as possible, but we cannot afford to allow our interests to suffer as they necessarily will if the Chinese are forced to leave before reliable white labor can be secured." He went on, "There is another reason why we object to the course being pursued by the anti-Chinese organization and that is, their acts are unlawful. Our people have no right to force the Chinamen to pick up and leave their property, and thus cause them serious pecuniary loss." The vineyard owners, a very powerful and influential group in town, were worried that if the Anti-Chinese group ended up getting violent with the Chinese and forcibly evicted them, the town of St. Helena – and by extension the wealthier taxpayers - would eventually have to pay damages and reparations.

The argument between the two sides got heated and almost came to blows. The pastor of the Presbyterian Church in town, Rev. James Mitchell, addressed both sides of the debate when the discussion threatened to turn violent. He said he, "was glad to see the two interests, capital and labor, represented in this meeting" and he called for a peaceful resolution. He called on capital, the vineyard owners and wine merchants, to reach out to labor to see if there was a solution. He also called on labor not to resort to violence to get its way. Both sides seemed mollified by Mitchell's remarks and the meeting soon broke up peacefully.[379]

The split between labor and capital on how to handle their "Chinese problem" did not get resolved. Despite the governance of leading citizens in town and the large crowds

[378] "The Chinese Problem; As Discussed by Leading Vineyardists," *St. Helena Star*, February 12, 1886, 3.

[379] "The Chinese in St. Helena," *The Napa Weekly Journal*, February 11, 1886, 3.

at the initial meetings, the St. Helena Anti-Chinese League appears to have had a short life and produced few tangible results beyond their initial resolution and the march on Chinatown. They could not find a way to expel the Chinese from town without resorting to intimidation and violence. Powerful landowners could not be without the Chinese labor that was so critical to the success of the agricultural interests of St. Helena. Napa's Anti-Chinese League, on the other hand, was more united, much longer lived, and took more decisive actions.

Napa

By many measures, the city of Napa was more accepting of its Chinese population than St. Helena. Chinatown was adjacent to downtown Napa and did not seem to provoke much agitation or outrage among its citizens. Many white Napa residents visited and shopped in Chinatown, which happened seldom, if at all, in St. Helena, outside of its gambling halls and opium dens. Chinese residents of Napa were spread around several different sections of the city and central Napa was much more integrated than St. Helena. While the main newspaper in town, *The Napa Register*, had plenty of negative things to say about Napa's Chinese residents, it rarely adopted the vitriolic language and attitudes of the *St. Helena Star*. Napa's Anti-Chinese League, on the other hand, formed just two months after St. Helena's, was much more organized and effective. From the beginning it had a plan, based on a coordinated boycott, for ridding the Chinese from the city.

Napa's Anti-Chinese League was formed on February 11, 1886, in the downtown Opera House to an "overflowing" crowd. Like the St. Helena organization, it was founded by leading citizens of the town, including Chairman F. L. Jackson, who worked in real estate and insurance; President H. C. Gesford, Esq., a lawyer in town and member

of the Board of Education; and G. M. Francis, who was active in Republican state politics. Unlike the St. Helena organization who advocated for a swift, yet lawful, expulsion of the Chinese from town without providing specifics, the Napa Anti-Chinese League provided a very precise action plan right from their first meeting:

> Resolved, That we, the people at Napa, in public meeting assembled, deprecate all violence or commands emanating from any source that may result in violence.
>
> Resolved, That we urge Congress, with all the emphasis words can convey, to pass such laws as shall effectually do away with the present return certification system, by which Chinaman may either return or gain unlawful entry into this country.
>
> Resolved, That we hereby pledge ourselves, at the earliest possible period, to desist from employing Chinese labor in any capacity whatsoever, or purchasing goods manufactured or produced by Chinese in this country.
>
> Resolved, That our City Trustees be requested to look into the sanitary conditions of the Chinese quarters and then pass and strictly enforce such ordinances as are necessary to make the Chinaman live like white people and observe the white man's laws of health.
>
> Resolved, That our police officers be required to act more vigilantly in suppressing opium dens and Chinese gambling games.
>
> Resolved, that we hereby organize ourselves into an association to be known as the "Anti-Chinese League of the City of Napa," having for its object the ends set forth in the foregoing resolutions.

The Napa Anti-Chinese league also integrated itself into a broader movement by electing a slate to represent Napa County at the statewide Anti-Chinese Convention being held in Sacramento the following month. W.T. Simmons, the man who led the St. Helena mob through downtown to confront the Chinese in Chinatown, was one of the members of the slate. [380] The announcement of a statewide Anti-Chinese Convention was first

[380] "Anti-Chinese Meeting," *The Napa Weekly Journal*, February 11, 1886, 3.

reported by local papers on January 29, 1886 and may have been the impetus for the formation of Napa's group so they could be formally represented.[381]

The organizational acumen of Napa's Anti-Chinese League was immediately apparent. They created an Executive Committee to drive the agenda of subsequent meetings, an Enrollment Committee to support recruiting new members to the group, a committee to find a permanent meeting place, a committee on Chinese vegetable peddlers, and a committee to address the one business area that the Chinese business owners continually out-competed white business owners – the laundry.

On March 6, 1886, the Committee on Steam Laundry formed a joint stock company with the purpose of establishing a white-owned laundry in Napa. The Committee decided that providing a "good steam laundry in Napa where washing can be done at reasonable prices, will prove a more effective way of getting rid of the Chinese than black-listing people to refuse to join the league."[382] Within one week, they had secured subscriptions to one half of the initial public offering. Remarkably, they had to turn down existing shareholders who wanted to buy more shares in order to allow more people to participate in the venture.[383] This approach of trying to entice customers away from Chinese-owned businesses with a competing venture was a considerably different

[381] "The citizens of Sacramento and the Anti-Chinese League of San Jose," *The Napa County Reporter* Newspaper, January 29, 1886, 2. There were competing statewide anti-Chinese conventions being organized in early 1886. There was one in early February organized by the San Jose Anti-Chinese League which was based on aggregating local Anti-Chinese League groups from around the state. The Sacramento one being held in March focused on representation from each county, regardless of whether they had a formal Anti-Chinese league or not.

[382] "A Good Move," *The Napa Weekly Journal*, March 11, 1886, 3.

[383] "The League Meeting," *The Napa Register*, March 19, 1886, 1.

approach than that of the St. Helena group to march to Chinatown and demand they leave within ten days.

The Enrollment Committee created a pledge based on the original set of resolutions put forth by the Anti-Chinese League that prospective members must sign to become supporters:

> We, the undersigned citizens of Napa County hereby organize ourselves into an association to be known as the "Anti-Chinese League of the City of Napa" having for its object the expulsion of the Chinese from our midst, and we hereby pledge ourselves to vigorously adopt all legal, peaceable methods to secure that end.
>
> We and each of us further pledge ourselves at the earliest possible period to be determined by this League to desist from employing Chinese labor in any capacity whatsoever, or purchasing goods manufactured or produced by Chinese labor in America, and renting lands or houses to them.[384]

The League adopted the pledge and instructed members of the Committee to go around the city and recruit people by having them sign the pledge. Within one week, the Committee had 400 names on the list.[385] There was debate about whether the names of men who refused to sign the pledge should be read aloud at subsequent meetings. The *Napa County Reporter* and *The Napa Register* both editorialized that this would be a bad idea. While the *Reporter* agreed with the aims of the Anti-Chinese League, it said that publicly shaming men who did not sign would "needlessly antagonize all those who do not believe just as they do." It also was concerned that judges and other public officials who ostensibly are supposed to be impartial should not sign the list. "What good therefore," the editorial continued, "can come from reading of a black list? In this fight against the Chinamen the white people should be as united as possible."[386]

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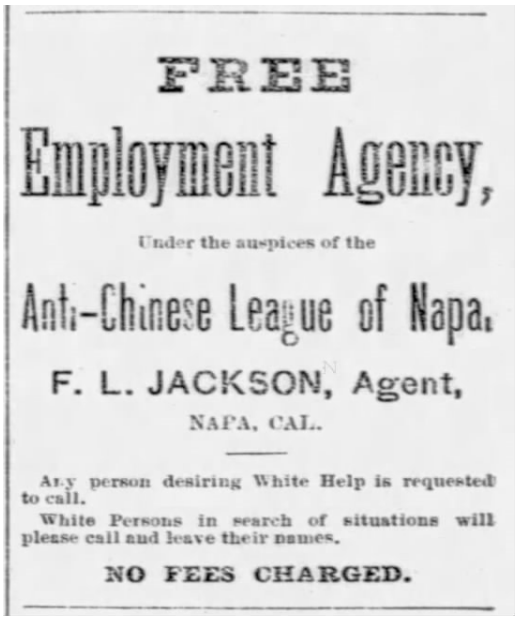
[384] "Anti-Chinese League," *The Napa County Reporter*, February 26, 1886, 3.

[385] "Anti-Chinese League," *The Napa Weekly Journal*, March 4, 1886, 3.

[386] "Not a Wise Move," *The Napa County Reporter*, March 12, 1886, 2.



FREE

Employment Agency,

Under the auspices of the

Anti-Chinese League of Napa.

F. L. JACKSON, Agent,

NAPA, CAL.

Any person desiring White Help is requested to call.

White Persons in search of situations will please call and leave their names.

NO FEES CHARGED.

Figure 35. 1886 Ad for Whites-Only Employment Agency.[387]

The Anti-Chinese League opened an employment office for white laborers. F. L. Jackson of the League served as the agent. Any farmers or other employers who needed laborers should let him know and he would connect them with white men looking for work.[388]

The pledge to avoid purchasing items manufactured by Chinese labor proved difficult for some local businessmen. Frank Wright, who sold boots and shoes in Napa, said he fully supported the goals of the Anti-Chinese League, but he could not find any slippers manufactured anywhere on the West Coast that were not produced by Chinese labor. He asked the League if he would be in violation of his pledge if he went ahead and stocked Chinese-made slippers in his store. After some discussion, the Executive

[387] "Free Employment Agency," *The Napa County Reporter*, April 2, 1886, 2.

[388] "The Napa Anti-Chinese League has established a free employment office," *The Napa County Reporter*, March 26, 1886, 3.

Committee decreed that if there was not a white labor alternative, then he was allowed to purchase Chinese slippers this one time only for display, but if he persisted in stocking Chinese goods in his store, "he would do so at his peril."[389]

Discussions of whether to shun businesses that sold Chinese goods or used Chinese labor was a hot topic of conversation. "Do you favor boycotting?" was a familiar question around town. *The Napa Register* was worried about what an organized boycott of specific Napa businesses would do to the economic health of the city. They tried to walk a fine line saying the individuals had a right to buy from whatever business they wanted, but a group action that coordinated a boycott and shamed people into not patronizing certain businesses would be unfair to the business community and could escalate quickly. They worried a simple boycott "which means the withdrawal of all patronage from the Chinese and when people voluntarily pledge themselves to do this thing they are taking a long stride toward a better era in the history of our State." But they worried that a boycott could spin out of control and could take "for its badge the skull and cross bones, law and order ends and violence begins."

Furthermore, the *Register* charged that the statewide coordinators of such boycotts, like Reverend N. F. Ravlin, who made $150 a month, were touting slogans like people should boycott "until the employers of Chinese do one of two things – discharge their Mongolians or die." They reprinted a letter that a Marysville, near Sacramento, business owner received because of a local boycott there: "Get rid of your Chiney help as quick as possible being a true friend of yours I do not which to see you come to Some untimely end all on account of a cussid mongolian whom you can replace with a few cts

[389] "The League Meeting," *The Napa Register*, March 19, 1886, 1.

more by white Labor." The *Register* implored the Napa townspeople to patronize white-owned laundries, not buy from Chinese vegetable peddlers, and employ white labor whenever possible. But it cautioned against boycotting any local businesses just because someone told them to.[390]

The League eventually decided to make boycotting Chinese goods a central tenant of their organization. On April 17, 1886, the League passed a resolution requiring "that members of the League hereafter refuse to patronize all Chinese goods."[391] Some were worried about the practical effects of such a boycott. *The Napa Register* wrote an editorial a week later cautioning the League:

> They will say to the people: "You must not sell to or deal with Chinamen, their patrons, or employers." How many members of the Napa Anti-Chinese League are ready to put such preaching into practice? How many of them still patronize Chinese laundries? And with what consistency can those who do ask fruit men and manufacturers to discharge their Chinamen? If the man whose name is on the League roll still patronizes the Chinese laundryman because he cannot afford to pay white persons 50 to 200 per cent more for the same work, why should he not accord the same method of reasoning to his neighbor who has land to till and crops to save as well as soiled linen to cleanse? Consistency is a charming thing to have and we commend it to all boycotters who still have their washing down by Ah Sing.[392]

The following month, the League, in a meeting attended by about two hundred people, decided to ratchet up the intensity of the boycott.[393] In addition to not purchasing goods made or produced by Chinese labor, it voted to "boycott all persons employing or in any manner patronizing Chinamen." They debated further whether to publish the

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[390] "The Boycott," *The Napa Register*, March 26, 1886, 2.

[391] "At the meeting of the Anti-Chinese League Saturday evening," *The Napa Weekly Journal*, April 22, 1886, 3.

[392] "Do Unto Others, etc.," *The Napa Register*, April 23, 1886, 2.

[393] "Will It Work?," *The Napa Register*, May 28, 1886, 1.

names of all people being boycotted for this transgression in the local newspapers so they could be blacklisted by the broader community. The *Napa Weekly Journal* newspaper joined *The Napa Register* in advocating against this course of action. The *Jounal* made no secret that they wished to be rid of the "Chinese curse." But they viewed the aggressive boycotting and blacklisting as a "two-edged sword" that would create bitter animosity among townspeople toward one another, destroy businesses, and cause a series of reciprocal boycotts that would eventually lead to distrust and lawsuits. It would undo the "good work" that had been done by the Napa League, including driving Chinese laborers from the tannery and the woolen mills.[394]

The *Napa County Reporter* joined in the debate and said they would refuse to publish any blacklisted names in its paper. *The Napa Register*, whose editor was one of the founders of the Anti-Chinese League, said it disagreed with the idea of publishing blacklisted names, but said they would do it if the League took out a paid-for advertisement in the paper.[395] In fact, the *Register* proclaimed it would "publish as an advertisement and at reduced rates, the names to be boycotted, if a faithful list of the boycotters (i.e. those members of the League who favored such action) is presented for publication at the same time. We need both lists in order to make a fair and complete showing. How could we be more generous than that?"[396]

While the initial reporting and the debate among the papers treated the publication of the blacklist as unanimously agreed to by the League, the League started backpedaling

[394] "A Two-Edged Plaything," *The Napa Weekly Journal*, May 27, 1886, 2.

[395] "Will Do It For Pay," *The Napa County Reporter*, May 28, 1886, 2.

[396] "The Blighted Boycott," *The Napa Register*, May 28, 1886, 2.

almost immediately. Despite personal accounts of the passage of the blacklist proposal at the meeting, it began to be positioned as something that was discussed but not passed. It is impossible to know if this is true, or if the League was surprised by the vehement objections to the publication of the blacklisted names and tried to rewrite their position. Gesford, the president of the League, put out a statement that only the boycott itself was in effect, not publishing of the names of those to be boycotted. Those names, however, would still be read aloud at League meetings.[397] This distinction seems to be somewhat of a compromise, since presumably any of the hundreds of people who typically had been attending the meetings could have spread the word about which companies should be avoided. But if the whole goal of the boycott and blacklist was to drive business down for transgressing businesses, it is hard to imagine why the League wouldn't want to try to publicly shame the offenders.

On June 12, 1886, the Reverend N. F. Ravlin, who coordinated Anti-Chinese Leagues at the state level, spoke to "a large audience" at a meeting of the Napa League. While his speech was both "conservative" and "strongly anti-Chinese," he said that a boycott should only be used as a last resort.[398] He cautioned the group about instituting boycotts of businesses that employed Chinese labor unless and until sufficient white labor was available. Only if stable, hardworking white labor was available and a business refused to fire their Chinese employees to hire the white laborer should they be boycotted. The business did not have to hire "unreliable, drunken white laborers" if that was all that was available.

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[397] "Local Briefs," *The Napa Register*, May 28, 1886, 3.

[398] "There was quite a large audience at Phoenix Hall," *The Napa County Reporter*, June 18, 1886, 1.

Notably, three weeks after the League's boycott resolution was introduced, no one had turned in a single business for employing Chinese labor unnecessarily.[399] The idea of a boycott, so enthusiastically pursued and debated through the spring and summer, never materialized into anything substantial. The *San Francisco Examiner* in November of 1886 reported that the statewide anti-Chinese boycott was "now in effect dead."[400] The pushback of most newspapers in town, the reluctance of many townspeople to turn against local businesses, and the lack of available replacement labor made a boycott impractical for many.

Yountville

The small town of Yountville, eight miles north of Napa, did not have a significant Chinese population, but it had its own anti-Chinese group, at least for a meeting. Nearly two hundred and fifty people gathered in McGillis Hall in Yountville on February 19, 1886 to "express their views and take action in the matter of Chinese immigration." Unlike organizations in St. Helena and Napa, which were led by businessmen, the Yountville group was led by its District Attorney, Mr. Hogan, who spoke for almost an hour. His speech was followed by H.C. Gesford of the Napa Anti-Chinese League, who provided an update on the events in Napa. Both Hogan and Gesford expressed strong anti-Chinese sentiment but cautioned the assembled group to be lawful

[399] "The Anti-Chinese League," *The Napa Weekly Journal*, June 17, 1886, 3.

[400] "The Anti-Chinese War," *The San Francisco Chronicle*, November 9, 1886.

and careful.[401] The group did not have any subsequent meetings, and likely was absorbed into the St. Helena or Napa groups which were in larger towns and were better organized.

Opposing the Anti-Chinese Movement

Very few local people or organizations publicly opposed the Anti-Chinese movements that were prevalent during the 1880s and 1890s. The Chinese Six Companies out of San Francisco would provide legal assistance to fight specific instances of discrimination, as they did in the first Sam Kee laundry case, but they had limited influence in the Napa Valley.

Occasionally there were reports of specific people challenging anti-Chinese statutes, like Reverend Richard Wylie, who spoke from the pulpit in defense of specific laws unfairly targeting Chinese businessmen like Sam Kee in the community. More frequently were the silent protests against anti-Chinese policies, like when no member of the Napa Anti-Chinese league referred a single business to be boycotted after weeks and months of threats, even though clearly many businesses were still employing Chinese labor. There were also the many citizens that would shop in Chinese stores, take their laundry to Chinese laundries, and hire Chinese laborers to do work around their homes and farms. These people never publicly announced their positive (or at least neutral) position on the "Chinese question," likely because it went against prevailing public opinion and would have served no purpose except to call attention to themselves. They did, however, express their opinions with their pocketbooks, where they shopped, and who they hired.

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[401] "Anti-Chinese League," *The Napa County Reporter*, February 26, 1886, 3.

The one group that did formally, publicly, and repeatedly stand up against the worst aspects of anti-Chinese sentiment were, unsurprisingly, the leading employers of Chinese workers in towns – the vineyard owners, farmers, and other business owners. In St. Helena, they collectively put a stop to the attempted forced expulsion of Chinese residents from Chinatown. In Napa, they argued forcefully against boycotting businesses that employed Chinese labor. Leonard Coates, the owner of Napa Valley Nurseries[402], wrote an impassioned public letter in the heat of the Anti-Chinese movements in *The Napa Register* in 1886 asking to represent the "'other side' on this Anti-Chinese agitation."

The *Register* printed the letter on the front page to ensure everyone had a chance to read his opinion. His letter started with the standard disclaimers that his "side" was not necessarily in favor of Chinese immigration or opposed to the federal Chinese Restriction laws. He did assert that as fruit growers, grape growers, and other businessmen they had a right to run their businesses, which required a large capital investment, as efficiently as they are able. He did not stress that the Chinese workers were the best low-cost labor option, rather he emphasized the unique skills that the Chinese agricultural workers brought to the business that made them the best choice, period.

> The farmer in California has for years depended very largely upon Chinese laborers to pick and pack his fruit, to dry the fruit, prepare it for the cannery, gather the grapes for the wine maker, make raisins, do the budding, grafting, pruning, and almost all the routine of work, skilled and unskilled of the horticulturist. As a result we have now a large force of competent, skilled laborer, who have been patiently instructed in their business for the last 15 or 20 years and longer.

[402] "Fruit growers should inspect the trees at Napa Valley Nurseries," *Napa Journal,* February 19, 1893, 3.

He also challenged the racial element of the Anti-Chinese leagues in very plain language:

> Would these same citizens dare – we use the term advisedly – to intimidate or persecute foreigners from any European country who may be here? Then why this unreasoning, unmanly, unjust crusade against the Chinese? Attack your legislators, your government, if you will, for opening the Golden Gate to these people, for offering inducements to come, for receiving them kindly and giving them constant employment. *The law* will prevent you from doing any harm to such. Where, we say, is the right, or the justice in resorting to intimidation, persecution, or "boycotting?"

He closed his letter with re-asserting the rights of the businesses to conduct business the best way they could. The terminology and tone are certainly paternalistic and focused on their businesses, not the well-being of the Chinese laborer, but in this case, they were both parts of the same solution.

> We recognize no right by which you dictate to us what we shall do; we recognize no right by which you shall seek to intimidate our laborers into leaving us, thus ruining our crops; we will protect our properties, our laborers, ourselves. Time alone can work this change; it cannot be done in one or in two years, without enormous sacrifice and ruination, and without infringing upon the rights of the individual, and incurring a lasting shame, not only upon this State, but upon the whole country.[403]

We cannot know how many people shared his view, but we do know the boycott he opposed ended up a dismal failure.

Differing Approaches

St. Helena and Napa Anti-Chinese Leagues followed very different paths to try to push Chinese residents out of their towns. The St. Helena League was formed first, before any of the guiding principles were set forth by the state-level conventions. Many St. Helena townspeople were blinded with their hatred and disgust with the Chinatown on

[403] "A Voice from 'The Other Side'," *The Napa Register,* February 12, 1886, 1.

their southern border. As soon as a large group of vocal anti-Chinese citizens got together, they could not help themselves but to march down to Chinatown to terrorize the Chinese residents. In addition to disregarding the convention goals of slow and steady legal pressure built on a boycott of Chinese businesses, they did not account for the economic and political clout of the vineyard and landowning class who needed the Chinese workers to make their enterprises successful. Their formal Anti-Chinese League, though it attracted hundreds to its first few meetings, dissolved almost immediately in the face of opposition by the wealthier citizens in town.

The Napa League followed the model put forth at the statewide Anti-Chinese convention, but the final result was not much different. They took an organized, prudent, and legalistic approach that prioritized the boycotting of local businesses that employed Chinese labor as the convention had directed. They ran into perhaps unexpected resistance from most of the local papers when the exercise of a boycott was contemplated to its logical conclusion. Eventually, the Napa organization ran into the same issue the St. Helena organization did – there just was no substitute for Chinese labor for most businesses that employed them. However, both Leagues were just a bit too early as demographic changes brought on by the eventual result of the 1882 Chinese Exclusion Act and the arrival of an acceptable alternative labor force – the Italians.

Chapter VIII.

Conclusion

The Chinese population in the late 19th and early 20th centuries peaked in the early 1880s and then began a slow downward trend through 1900, 1910, and 1920 (see Table 9). There are two main factors that contribute to the decline. First, Chinese labor immigration into the United States dropped dramatically after the passage of the 1882 Chinese Exclusion Act. The decline was aggravated given the lack of families or children of Chinese workers in the Napa Valley. Second, the need for Chinese labor, especially in the vineyard and agricultural areas, diminished greatly due to a slump in demand for wine, technological innovations, and the introduction of a replacement labor class, Italian immigrants. There is no indication that a significant number of Chinese workers were driven from the Napa Valley due to Anti-Chinese sentiment or violence. The peak of Anti-Chinese sentiment coincided with the peak of Chinese population around the 1880s. In fact, it could have been the slow but inexorable population decline of the Chinese in the late 1880s and 1890s that reduced the intensity of anti-Chinese activism.

Table 10. Chinese and Italian Population Trends in Napa County 1870-1920.

	1870	1880	1890	1900	1910	1920
Total	7,163	13,235	16,411	16,451	19,800	20,678
White	6,725	12,160	15,426	15,857	14,154	15,930
Chinese	263	907	875	541	205	126
Italian	25	71	320	401	1,017	1,084

There was a significant decline in the Chinese population at the same time the Italian population was growing between 1890 and 1910. The population of Italian and Chinese residents of Napa County was roughly equal somewhere around 1902. [404]

Chinese Exclusion Acts and the Dwindling Chinese Population

The *St. Helena Star* called for August 4, 1882 to be made a holiday because it was the day that the 1882 Chinese Exclusion Act would officially go into effect.[405] Despite the wishes of the *Star*, the Chinese population were not immediately excluded or removed from St. Helena. The 1882 Exclusion Act barred immigration for ten years by unskilled and skilled Chinese laborers from China and declared that no Chinese person was eligible for U.S. citizenship. The Act was the first federal law to bar immigration of a particular racial group into the United States. It had the unintended side effect of dramatically increasing Chinese immigration in the early 1880s. Since the Act was several years in the making, any Chinese laborer who was considering immigrating to America knew they had to make the decision to go before the law took effect.

[404] Sources: Chinese Values for 1870, and 1880: 1880 U.S. Census, Population by Race, Sex, and Nativity, p 382. Values for 1890 and 1900: 1910 U.S. Census, Bulletin 127, Chinese and Japanese in the United States 1910, table 58, page 36. Italian values for 1870, 1890, 1900, 1910 – Hans Christian Palmer, "Italian Immigration and the Development of California Agriculture" (Ph.D., United States -- California, University of California, Berkeley), Table XXXVII. 1920: 1920 U.S. Census, Volume III Population, p 124.; Source for Italian population of Napa County 1880 – author manual compilation.

[405] "Friday, August 4, being the day on which the Anti-Chinese law takes effect," *St. Helena Star*, August 4, 1882, 2.

Consequently, there was a significant increase in immigration from China in the years leading up to 1882. The year 1882 saw the immigration of almost 40,000 Chinese into the United States, almost twice the number of any previous year. There were loopholes, like whether a Chinese laborer could immigrate to America from a country other than China that allowed another 8,000 immigrants in 1883. That loophole was closed in 1884, when there were just 279 Chinese immigrants into the United States. The restriction on Chinese immigration was further strengthened by an 1888 law that tightened restrictions on the immigration of laborers for the next twenty years and further laws were passed in 1892 and 1904 that effectively shut down all new immigration from China.[406] It was still possible to emigrate from China, as Jue Joe did in 1906 when he re-entered the United States as a returning successful merchant, but he could not have done so as new immigrant laborer.

Thus, even though the influx of Chinese labor was curtailed starting in 1882, the Chinese already in California and the Napa Valley could still work and the demand for their labor continued to be very high. For several years during the second half of the 1880s, the Chinese experienced the peak of their economic power, as demonstrated by their successful strikes for more wages working both in the vineyards and hop yards in 1887 (as discussed in Chapter II). By 1890, however, the demographic realities were too significant to ignore. The vast majority of Chinese in the Napa Valley were single men. While there were some marriages and some families, the number of Chinese children in the Valley prior to 1900 never exceeded twenty-five (see Table 7) and those numbers could not replace Chinese laborers that returned to China, left the Napa Valley for safer

[406] Wang, *The United States and China. A History from the Eighteenth Century to the Present*, 78-82.

environments in places like San Francisco, or died due to illness, old age, workplace injury, or violence.

There was more flexibility and longevity in the urban areas. Some of Napa's Chinese families still made a living in Chinatown and surrounding areas for years after 1900. Yip Fong, who was born in Napa in 1919 and was raised in Chinatown, remembered Chinese men visiting the Joss House temple when she was a little girl, though by that time the population of Chinatown had dwindled to about thirty-five. Fong, granddaughter of Chan Wah Jack, lived with her parents and her uncles in the back of Wah Jack's Lai Hing Company.[407] Yet by 1930, there were only seventeen people living in Chinatown – and ten of them were part of Fong's family. They were all moved out of Chinatown in April 1930 at the city's expense to clean up the polluted Napa River and eventually make way for a yacht harbor, which was never built.[408]

The Arrival of the Italians

The Napa Register was very enthusiastic about the possibility that Italian immigrants could replace Chinese workers as early as 1880:

> A LARGE NUMBER OF ITALIANS find employment in the vineyards in town and vicinity. Chinamen need never apply – that is hardly ever – at this very busy season of the year. Although they quickly learn to do most every kind of work, they cannot be made to understand the philosophy of pruning. "I have never yet seen a Chinaman who could prune," said a grape grower of large experience.
>
> As for the Italians they are a very industrious, sober and trustworthy class of workmen. Natives of a wine country, they are perfectly at home in vineyards and in the wine cellars.[409]

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[407] "Old Chinatown," *The Napa Valley Register*, April 1988, 4.

[408] "Napa Organizes For Drive to Clean Up Riverfront," *The Napa Journal*, April 8, 1930, 1.

[409] "Wayside Notes," *The Napa Velley Register*, April 29, 1880, 3.

The Napa Register article may have been premature in thinking that Italian labor would rescue local vineyard owners from the "curse" of the low-paid, hardworking Chinese vineyard workers, but their overall prediction ultimately proved true. Italians were some of the earliest European immigrants into the Napa Valley, but they did not reach sufficient numbers to become a dominant labor class until 1890, about the time when the Chinese population started its rapid decline. Napa County's first Italian immigrant was Lorenzo Carbone in 1863 from Genoa, Italy.[410] In 1867, Lorenzo and his brothers Nicola and Antonio Carbone established the first Italian produce garden on Coombsville Road. This may have been the same field that Yeg Chum was murdered in during 1894 (see Chapter VI).[411]

The Napa Valley wine industry followed global wine trends and went into a decline in the 1890s due to several factors. Demand for wine slowly declined starting in the late 1880s due to the early phases of the anti-alcohol Prohibition movement, which would eventually culminate in the passage of the 18th Amendment in 1919. An 1890 California report on the state's viticulture industry stated that overall wine production had not increased since 1887 and nor "is there any reason to anticipate any great increase within the next three or four years." Consequently, prices for wine grapes were also at an all-time low, due to lack of demand.

At the same time, the phylloxera insect blight that had so affected France in the 1870s and had provided an opening for Napa Valley wines to gain worldwide recognition

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[410] "Lorenzo Carbone – Old and Highly Esteemed Pioneer Answers Death's Call," *Napa Journal*, January 31, 1908, 1. Author's Note: Lorenzo Carbone was my great-great grandfather. According to family lore, the three Carbone brothers left Genoa to escape a murder charge, which was later dropped.

began to devastate local vineyards as well. Thousands of acres were affected and the only solution in much of the Napa Valley was to graft older, disease-resistant vines onto existing plants – a time consuming and expensive proposition.[412] E. C. Priber, the Viticultural Commissioner for the Napa District, published a report in August of 1890 that outlined the extent of the problem. "Only about 10 per cent of the fifteen thousand acres are planted in resistant vines. The experience with resistant vines in France, where the production is now rapidly increasing, in consequence of the replanting of those vineyards which were destroyed by the phylloxera, should teach us a lesson."[413]

The combination of falling demand, the phylloxera plague, and an economic depression in 1893 caused many businesses and banks to fold. This meant that many wineries and vineyards were sold or abandoned. Many of the Italian immigrant families, as the *Register* noted, were experienced with winemaking as it was a popular occupation in Italy. Plenty of vineyard and winery owners sold their businesses to the incoming Italians, who were able to both run the businesses and work as field hands, negating the need for Chinese labor.[414] Thus the foundational mythos of Italian winemakers in Napa Valley began.

The constant lack of labor available to the vineyard owners, which caused Chinese labor to be in great demand and eventually allowed them to successfully strike for higher wages, eventually led vineyard owners to optimize their crops for fewer and fewer laborers. They planted vineyards in wide enough rows to allow for the use of a

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[412] California Board of State Viticultural Commissioners, "Annual Report of the Board of State Viticultural Commissioners for 1889-1890" (Sacramento, California, 1890), 15-16.

[413] California Viticultural Commissioners, "Annual Report 1889-1890," 48.

[414] Heintz, *California's Napa Valley - One Hundred Sixty Years of Wine Making*, 170-174.

wider plow that required fewer men and horses to till the soil. They took advantage of newer mechanized cultivation tools that required less manpower to operate. By 1900, a single laborer could tend a cultivated vineyard as large as twenty acres, with additional labor only required during the month-long harvest.[415]

Finally, the phylloxera spread caused many vineyard owners to have to replant their vines. By that time, the Board of Viticultural Commissioners was recommending that vines be planted such that they could be harvested about three feet off the ground. This removed the dreaded "stoop labor" that had previously been required and made it more acceptable for Italian and other white laborers to work in the vineyards during harvest.[416]

The Forgotten Chinese

The Chinese contributions to the Napa Valley have been only sporadically acknowledged or celebrated. There are no monuments, plaques, or any other physical recognition of the Chinese who lived, worked, and died in Calistoga, St. Helena, Rutherford, or Oakville. Napa has two plaques and a small parklet that provide a modest commemoration to the Chinese contribution.

Napa's Chinatown was razed in 1930. Almost fifty years later, E Clampus Vitus, an organization dedicated to "dedicated to the study and preservation of the heritage of the American West"[417] sponsored the installation of two plaques on Napa's First Street

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[415] James Simpson, *Creating Wine: The Emergence of a World Industry, 1840-1914*, 1st edition (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2011), 199-200.

[416] Heintz, *California's Napa Valley - One Hundred Sixty Years of Wine Making*, 176.

[417] "What Is E Clampus Vitus," September 26, 2021, https://www.clamper.com/.

Bridge at a spot overlooking the former location of Chinatown. One plaque described Chinatown itself and the other honored Shuck Chan, son of Chan Wah Jack and "the sole surviving member of Napa's once-flourishing Chinatown business community." The city dedicated Sunday, August 19, 1979, as "Shuck Chan Day" in honor of the occasion.[418]

The Chinatown dedication plaque was oddly clinical in its description and not entirely correct. There were still Chinese people living in Chinatown in 1929, but the city moved them out in 1930 to make way for a flood control project and a yacht harbor that never materialized. Notably absent in the dedication is the lack of any context of the contributions that Chinese citizens made to Napa or even the special place that Chinatown held for both Chinese and white townspeople during its heyday.

Chinatown

> Napa's Chinatown was situated on both sides of First Street from this point west to Napa Creek. It occupied the area south of First to the Napa River where the Joss House stood near the juncture of Napa Creek off a narrow wagon road. East of the road were several wood framed houses on stilts and the Lai Hing Co. Additional Chinese houses and the Quong Shew Chong laundry were on the north side of First. The area was abandoned in 1929.

The plaque dedicated to Shuck Chan was slightly more enthusiastic, but still was mostly a dry, factual representation:

Shuck Chan

> To honor a leading citizen of Napa. He came here from China in 1989 at the age of three. The owner of Lai Hing Co. He and his wife Lee Kum were the last merchants of Chinatown.

[418] "Chinatown Ceremonies Honor Chan," *The Napa Valley Register*, August 20, 1979, 2.

Figure 36. 1979 Plaque commemorating Napa Chinatown and Shuck Chan.

The plaque commemorating Chinatown and Shuck Chen was originally installed in 1979 on the First Street Bridge facing north, away from the site of Chinatown. When the bridge was rebuilt in 2005, the plaque was reset in the new bridge (pictured above) and oriented correctly.[419]

In 2017, Napa installed a parklet at the base of the First Street bridge called "China Point Overlook" that consists of a large twelve-foot-tall sculpture called a moon gate. Unfortunately, the city ran short of funds during construction, so many elements were removed, including, presumably, any sort of description of what the sculpture or parklet might be commemorating.

[419] Loren Wilson, "Napa's China Town / Shuck Chan," *The Historical Marker Database* (blog), April 16, 2012, https://www.hmdb.org/m.asp?m=54550.

Figure 37. Moon Gate Sculpture in Napa's China Point Overlook Parklet.

The downtown Napa parklet overlooks where Chinatown once stood, but other than a stone tablet stating the name of the parklet, "China Point Overlook," there is no description or context of what the sculpture means or anything about Chinatown or the Chinese contribution.

Venerating the Italians

Napa likes to market its Italian heritage where one "can only imagine the pleasure with which Italian immigrants first discovered this region in the mid-nineteenth century, such familiar territory to the rolling hills and vineyards they left behind."[420] Italians were instrumental in providing a replacement labor force when Chinese labor became increasingly unavailable as the Chinese population declined after 1890. In addition, many

[420] "Acqua Panna Win a Trip to Napa Valley," accessed September 24, 2021, https://www.visitnapavalley.com/acquapannawinatrip/.

of the Italian immigrants had experience working on vineyards. They also had the option, as the Chinese did not, of owning property, vineyards, and even wineries.

In a recent advertising campaign for visiting the Napa Valley, the ad copy extoled its Italian heritage by listing five Italian wineries: Mondavi, Martini, Nichelini, Sattui, and Coppola. Nichelini and Sattui were founded in the mid-1880s, but Martini was not founded until 1933, Mondavi until 1966, and Coppola as recently as 2010. This is not to denigrate or diminish the contributions Italians made to the Napa Valley. Given the labor crisis facing vineyards around 1900 due to the increasing lack of available Chinese labor to work the vineyards coupled with the ability of some Italian families to found excellent wineries still operating today, the Italians provided critical help to the overall Napa Valley economy when it was needed. Though presumably more Chinese workers would have been available in Napa, even with overall falling population levels, if the workers had been treated better.

In addition, Italian immigrants faced their own level of discrimination as they arrived in the United States. In 1907, the U.S. Congress established an Immigration Commission headed by William P. Dillingham, a Republican Senator from Vermont to understand the causes and impacts of increased immigration from Europe. In 1911, the Commission produced a detailed report, known as the Dillingham Report, that immigration, especially from southern Europe, was dangerous. Italians were the featured group in a chapter titled "Emigration of the Criminal Classes." It began:

> An alarming feature of the Italian immigration movement to the United States is the fact that it admittedly includes many individuals belonging to the criminal classes, particularly of southern Italy and Sicily. Moreover, the prevailing alarm is this respect is not occasionally by the fact that a good many actual criminals come to the United States from Italy, but also by the not unfounded believe that certain kinds of criminality are inherent in the Italian race. In the popular mind, crimes of

> personal violence, robbery, blackmail, and extortion are peculiar to the people of Italy, and it can not be denied that the number of such offences committed among Italians in this country warrants the prevalence of such a belief.[421]

Both Chinese and Italian immigrants faced discrimination as they emigrated from their home countries and both groups were critical in the success of viticulture in the Napa Valley. The Italian contribution is celebrated, rightly so, even to this day. The Chinese contribution is not.

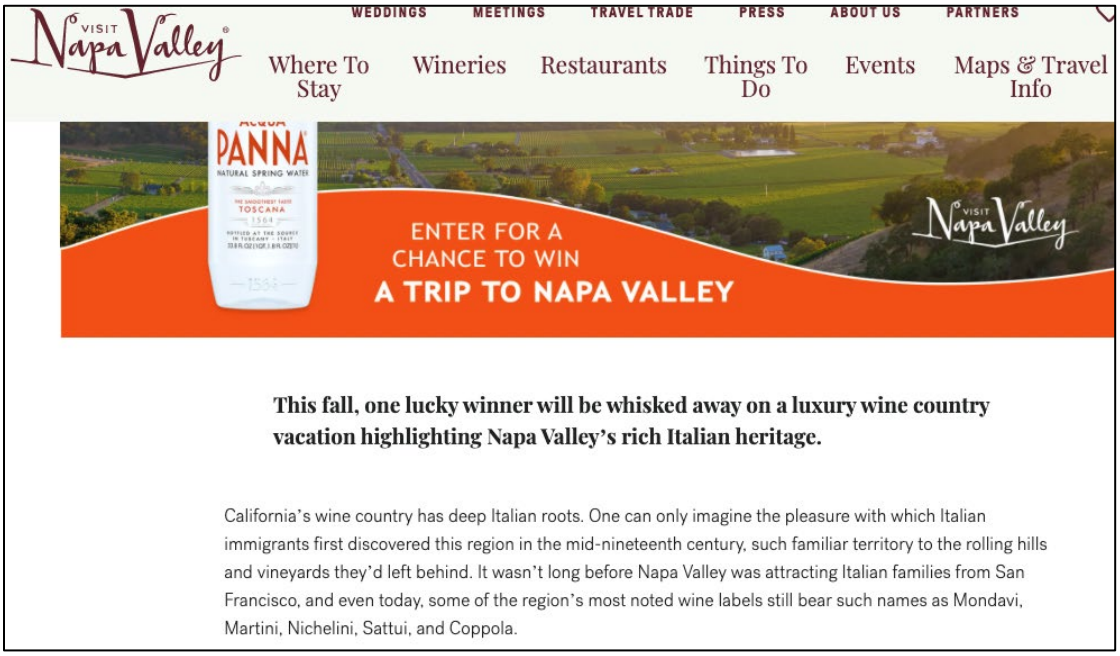

Figure 38. Current Napa Tourism Website Touting Italian Roots.

VisitNapaValley.com[422] *seeking to link the Italian reputation for food and wine to the Napa Valley. Unclear how many Italian immigrants in the "mid-nineteenth century" there were since there was only 25 Italians in 1870 (and only 71 in 1880) across the entire Napa County, compared to 907 Chinese in 1880.*

[421] William P Dillingham, *Reports of the Immigration Commission*, vol. 4 (U.S. Government Printing Office, 1911). 209.

[422] "Acqua Panna Win a Trip to Napa Valley," accessed September 24, 2021, https://www.visitnapavalley.com/acquapannawinatrip/.

The Unique Importance of the Chinese Contribution

The Chinese contribution to the success of Napa Valley industry between 1870 and 1900 was felt across every major area of commerce in the region. Inexpensive Chinese labor was critical to the economic success of diverse areas of economic activities such as viticulture, hop picking, tanneries, quicksilver mining, road and bridge construction, farm labor, store owners, merchants, railroad maintenance, laundries, vegetable peddlers, waiters, domestic servants, and cooks. The fact that Chinese workers were as successful as they were given the intense discrimination they faced socially, economically, and politically is nothing short of remarkable. They were simultaneously not allowed to be a part of the mainstream culture of the Napa Valley and disparaged for not assimilating to that culture.

For the most part, they were not allowed to live among the people they worked for and had to sleep and live in crowded ghettos and tenement housing. They were not allowed to bring their families to the United States to be with them. For the vast majority of the Chinese workers, there was no opportunity for love, marriage, or having a family of their own. The Chinese who lived in the Napa Valley during this period were not angels. They undoubtedly gambled too much, were too violent with each other, and did not save nearly as much money as they intended to when they departed China. Much as other despised racial groups in the United States like African Americans, Mexican Americans, Japanese Americans, and others, they contributed much more to the economy and culture of their adopted land than they received. And, uniquely across all racial groups in this time period, the Chinese were expressly forbidden to ever become citizens of the United States, even if they wanted to.

They kept their cultural identity through religious observation in Joss Houses and through membership in organizations like the Chinese Free Masons which operated as stand-ins for the families left behind. They had to deal with a legal system that was both overtly and implicitly racist and refused, at almost every turn, to bring justice to aggrieved Chinese people or ensure townspeople that attacked or murdered them served even a portion of their sentence. Yet the Chinese continued, despite their repeated losses in courts, to try to use the American legal system to receive justice. Sometimes they were successful, as they were able to remain in St. Helena's Chinatown for years despite overt attempts to overturn their leases. Yet every day they walked down the street of a town in the Napa Valley, they had to know they were despised by most of the people they saw and if they were attacked, taken advantage of, or simply discriminated against, there was very little they could do.

There were a few Chinese immigrants that were able to achieve economic success despite all the obstacles placed in front of them. Jue Joe, after working in St. Helena vineyards, became a successful farmer and a wealthy man with an extended family. Chan Wah Jack was considered a pioneer and leading businessman in Napa and his son's name sits on a plaque in downtown Napa today. Yet they were the small exception that proves the rule – almost all the Chinese workers, who were mostly illiterate, provincial, and never spoke English with any alacrity, worked very hard in the Napa Valley and had very little to show for it. They were victimized by professional gamblers, the lure of opium dens, and a legal system that harshly punished them for the slightest indiscretion. We don't even know the names of most of the immigrants and don't know, once most of them left the Napa Valley, if they returned to a large urban town like San Francisco,

moved to a large agricultural area like California's Central Valley, went to another state, traveled back to China, or died here.

Their legacy is they helped build a vibrant economy in a small county in Northern California that today is known around the world for its climate, scenic vistas, and its wine. They gave much to the Napa Valley – the Napa Valley should do more to acknowledge their work, reflect on their poor treatment, and sincerely thank them for their service to the community.

Appendix 1.

Local Newspapers

The business of local newspapers in the Napa Valley was alive and thriving between 1870 and 1900. Some of them published weekly (like the *Napa Weekly Journal, Napa Register, Napa County Reporter,* and *Independent Calistogian*), some published twice a week (like the *St. Helena Star*), and some published daily (like the *Napa Daily Register* and *Napa Journal*). During this period most of the newspapers were four pages in length, but were densely packed with local, regional, state, national, and world news, along with many advertisements from local businesses. The local items reported on varied from "traditional" newsworthy events like fires, murders, and local government happenings to social news and random bits of gossip like who was traveling to San Francisco, who was feeling ill, and who had letters waiting for them at the post office.

During our time period in question, there was never more than 17,000 people in the Napa Valley (see Table 10) so there was a limited amount of local news that a newspaper had to work with on a daily or weekly basis. Consequently, there was a lot of wholesale copying of articles from one paper to another, though they seemed to be always properly attributed. There was also a low bar for what was considered "newsworthy." The newspapers were all owned and published by local businessmen, who presumably were successful and respected in the community. Reflecting their white, middle-class readership, they all shared a discomfort or disdain of the Chinese in their midst and lobbied for townspeople to patronize white businesses and employ white workers whenever possible. Even then, the *St. Helena Star* stood out for its virulent anti-Chinese stance in articles and editorials. This either reflected their owner's views, the

more strident anti-Chinese views of St. Helena residents generally, or a combination of both. Occasionally Chinese businessmen themselves would advertise in a local paper. As long as the advertisement was running, the paper would have a decidedly less belligerent tone toward Chinese businesses. They would even sneak in positive comments in local news roundups about what a good businessman a particular advertiser was. Once the advertisements stopped, as they invariably did, the editorial anti-Chinese trends would start up again.

Given the newspaper owners were successful businessmen, they likely traveled in the same socio-economic circles as other prosperous citizens, such as vineyard owners, winery owners, large-scale farmers, and factory owners. Thus, while they may have had staunchly anti-Chinese views, they rarely advocated for the wholesale eviction of Chinese labor from the Napa Valley because they were keenly aware than many of the largest businesses in the Napa Valley would shut down immediately without Chinese workers.

The way that the local Chinese were reported on was similar across all local papers. Almost every article that referred to Chinese residents used derisive terms as Chinaman, Chinamen, Coolies, Mongolians, Celestials, or Johns. In many cases, the names of Chinese people referred to in an article are omitted and the generic term like "a Chinaman" was used. When a news story involving Chinese residents was carried over several days or weeks and the names of the Chinese people in question were used, they would frequently get altered between editions, likely because they did not care all than much about being accurate the first time and had to correct it later. When they would occasionally quote a Chinese person for a story, they always would transcribe the quote phonetically while exaggerating the person's accent. This ensured the reader always

knew the person was foreign – and maybe not too bright because they could not speak English properly. Presumably, almost none of the newspaper's readers could have spoken a word of Cantonese, but that was irrelevant.

Finally, in the standard four-page newspaper of the time, stories involving Chinese residents almost always appeared on page three. This was likely because this is where local items of lower importance were relegated, as most routine articles about Chinese people were almost certainly considered less important than other stories. While this trend is distasteful, it does help gauge how important a story involving Chinese was to the community. If such a story actually made it to page two or even the front page, we can infer that it was of above average importance to the local readership. Also, during this time period, the names of the individual reporter is never associated with a specific newspaper article, so we do not know specifically who wrote any of the stories used.

Appendix 2.

Referenced Newspaper Articles

As stated in Chapter 1, newspapers are the primary source of information we have about Napa Valley Chinese residents in this time period, even though the stories are undoubtedly biased. Despite their many faults, we are fortunate that we have the information we do, likely because there were so many newspapers in such a small area and there was so much newsprint that had to be filled with news of any kind. In order to not clutter the bibliography with every individual article referenced in this paper, I have only listed the names of the newspapers themselves. However, it may be worthwhile to see a single complete list of all referenced articles in one place. Here is that list, broken down by newspaper title and the years we have for each paper. Note that if there was no headline to reference, the first sentence, or part of the first sentence, is used as the title.

Independent Calistogian, 1887-1900+

"A Fight Took Place at the Great Western Mine on Tuesday." *The Independent Calistogian*. August 31, 1895.

"Local Sandwich." *Independent Calistogian*. November 2, 1887.

Napa County Reporter, 1881-1890

"An Excellent Project." *Napa County Reporter*. February 5, 1886.

"Anti-Chinese League." *Napa County Reporter*. February 26, 1886.

"Anti-Chinese Movement." *Napa County Reporter*. February 5, 1886.

"Board of Trustees," Napa County Reporter, April 23, 1886, 3.

"Brevities." *Napa County Reporter*. November 28, 1884.

"Chinese at War." *Napa County Reporter*. June 9, 1890.

"Chinese Wedding." *Napa County Reporter*. September 25, 1885.

"Cutting Scrape Near St. Helena." *Napa County Reporter*. August 28, 1885.

"Eastern Advices of the 5th State That Hops Are up in That Market..." *Napa County Reporter*. August 11, 1882.

"Editorial Notes." *Napa County Reporter*. January 14, 1881.

"Free Employment Agency Ad." *Napa County Reporter*. April 2, 1886.

"If There Is One Thing Remarks an Exchange." *Napa County Reporter*. February 25, 1887.

"It Is Estimated There Are 300 Chinese Vegetable Peddlers in Los Angeles." *Napa County Reporter*. April 18, 1890.

"Mongolian Opium Smokers." *Napa County Reporter*. March 26, 1886.

"Morphomania." *Napa County Reporter*. February 17, 1882.

"Napa City Laundry." *Napa County Reporter*. September 2, 1881.

"Not a Wise Move." *Napa County Reporter*. March 12, 1886.

"Opium Smokers Take Warning." *Napa County Reporter*. November 24, 1882.

"Ordinance No, 98." *Napa County Reporter*. January 7, 1881.

"Ordinance Number Two," Napa County Reporter, May 25, 1883, 3.

"Our Man About Town." *Napa County Reporter*. March 21, 1884.

"Quong He Fat Choy!" *Napa County Reporter*. February 20, 1885.

"Raid on the Opium Dens." *Napa County Reporter*. May 20, 1881.

"Sunday Evening a Crowd of Boys and Young Men." *Napa County Reporter*. February 23, 1883.

"The Chinese Sunday School." *Napa County Reporter*. October 24, 1884.

"The Citizens of Sacramento and the Anti-Chinese League of San Jose." *Napa County Reporter*. January 29, 1886.

"The Masquerade." *Napa County Reporter*. November 28, 1884.

"The Napa Anti-Chinese League Has Established a Free Employment Office." *Napa County Reporter*. March 26, 1886.

"There Was Quite a Large Audience at Phoenix Hall." *Napa County Reporter*. June 18, 1886.

"Town and Country." *Napa County Reporter*. October 24, 1884.

"Will Do It For Pay." *Napa County Reporter*. May 28, 1886.

"Women's Protective League." *Napa County Reporter*. July 14, 1882.

Napa Daily Register, 1872-1874, 1878-1880

"An Unconstitutional Anti-Chinese Law." *The Napa Daily Register*. March 23, 1880.

"Chinese Festivities." *The Napa Daily Register*. February 10, 1880.

"Farmer's Club." *The Napa Daily Register*. November 16, 1872.

"French Laundry." *The Napa Daily Register*. June 14, 1880.

"Local Briefs." *The Napa Daily Register*. February 19, 1880.

"Ordinance No. 23." *The Napa Daily Register*. May 4, 1880.

"Ordinance No. 50." *The Napa Daily Register*. May 13, 1880.

"Railroad." *The Napa Daily Register*. October 25, 1880.

"The Chinese Gambling Cases." *The Napa Daily Register*. April 8, 1880.

"The Vile and Vicious Habit of Opium." *The Napa Daily Register*. March 11, 1880.

"Wayside Notes." *The Napa Daily Register*. April 29, 1880.

"Work Resumed." *The Napa Daily Register*. March 25, 1880.

Napa Journal, 1890-1900+

"A Chinese Funeral." *The Napa Journal*. February 15, 1899.

"Big Event, Arrival of Blue Blooded Chinese Baby Causes Much Ado in Celestial Quarter." *The Napa Journal*. March 24, 1909.

"Calistoga Happenings." *The Napa Journal*. June 14, 1914.

"Calistoga Happenings." *The Napa Journal*. March 28, 1915.

"Chinatown Burns." *The Napa Journal*. January 30, 1902.

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