The Chinese in Sonoma County, California, 1900-1930:

The Aftermath of Exclusion

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ABSTRACT

Purpose of the Study: This thesis examines the transformation of the Sonoma County Chinese from the beginning of their transition from a sojourner mentality to a transnational community in the middle thirty years (1900-1930) of the sixty-year exclusion era. This paper examines the Chinese and their demographic, economic, and social challenges, the process of acculturation, the maintenance of their traditions, and their changing relationship with the Sonoma County Euro-American community during this era.

Procedure: This study was hampered by the absence of any Chinese primary documents, and relies on the evaluation of the United States Census, contemporary news reports, a variety of contemporary government documents, Chinese partnership case files from the National Archives, arrest records, and secondary sources relating to Chinese in agriculture and studies in Chinese transnationalism.

Findings: The Chinese gradually developed a trans-Pacific mentality during the period of the study, 1900-1930. One consequence was a redirection of their sojourner mentality to becoming settlers in Sonoma County. Their intent to remain in the county is evidenced by an increasing number of marriages with American-born Chinese women (rather than wives from China), siring an increasing number of children, bestowing English names on their children, adopting Western sartorial fashions, and the ability of women to assume some traditionally male roles. Meanwhile, the Chinese maintained their ethnicity by observing their traditions and rituals, while supporting China financially and through investments.

There is evidence to support the hypothesis that the principal reason for the disastrous decline in the Chinese population in Sonoma County during the three decades 1900-1930 was principally internal urban migration to large urban areas, not exclusion There is evidence to support the further hypotheses that the principal effect of exclusion during the period was to prevent the regeneration of the labor force, which lead to the aging of the population.

An aging population and a rapid increase in the number of children combined to create an unemployed population of one-half of the Sonoma County Chinese community by 1930, resulting in a community that was either impoverished or had no excess funds to establish community facilities.

The study found that Chinese acculturation and westernization, an aspect of the transpacific mentality, was eased as the Anglo-European community retreated from its

egregious nineteenth century anti-Chinese attitudes and stereotypes to a more accommodating stereotype that often emulated Chinese culture. A variety of interactions between the communities also reduced the frictions between the races.

Conclusions: The investigation of the rural Chinese during the exclusion era is an important and necessary element in Chinese American history. Rural Chinese faced an entirely different set of problems from their urban counterparts, and even among the rural Chinese differences in geography, size of population, degree of industrial development, social organization of the community, and the wealth of the community evoked or limited different responses.

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Signature

MA Program: History

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When Professor Michelle Jolly accepted the role of mentor and overseer of this thesis, neither she nor I thought the project would be either as enduring as it was or as difficult. Throughout, she exhibited an abundance of patience and gave me thoughtful and helpful comments and direction. If truth be told, this paper could not have been written without her assistance. Any errors are solely mine.

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Table of Contents

List of Tables ix

Chapter 1 Introduction 1

The Need for a Study of Rural Sonoma County in this Time Period 2

Defining Terms: Transnationalism Described 7

Resources Used and the Scope of this Study 11

Chapter 2 The Zenith Of The Anti-Chinese Movement In Sonoma: The Sonoma Boycott Of 1886 and its Aftermath 20

Racial Animus, the Anti-Chinese Movement, and the Boycott 20

Opposing the Boycott 31

The Boycott: Its Effects and Failure 34

Some Speculation 41

Chapter 3 Twentieth Century Challenges to the Sonoma Chinese, and Their Effects 45

Migration to the Cities 45

Japanese and Italian Competition 51

An Aging Population 57

Chapter 4 The Chinese Remain Chinese: The Persistence of Tradition 60

Chinese Associations, Tong Violence, and Crime 61

Death Rituals, Worship, and Celebrations 70

The Importance of the Jinshanzhuang 77

Herbalists 78

Vice 80

Resolving Disputes 84

Loss of Local Chinatowns; Recognition of Change 85

Chapter 5 The Sonoma Chinese Become Transnationals: The Elements of Transition 90

The Impact of Political Changes in China 91

Chinese American Brides, Family Formation, and Settlement 95

Impoverishment of a Community: The results of Exclusion 100

Intermarriage 102

Independent Chinese Women 104

Chinese Women Constrained 108

Chinese Christians 110

Supporting China, Becoming American 112

Chapter 6 Sonoma County Becomes More Tolerant of the Chinese During the First Three Decades of the Twentieth Century 117
Fewer Chinese Equals Fewer Problems? 117
More Interactions, Less Hostility 120
Inter-ethnic Interactions 126
Formation of a New Stereotype; Ethnic Stasis 129
Chapter 7 Conclusion 135
Bibliography, Sources 140
Bibliography 140
Journals, Theses, and Magazines 146
Government Documents 150
Internet Sources 151
Newspaper Databases 152

List of Tables

Table 1. Chinese Population for the United States, California, Northern California Counties, Northern California Urban Areas and Sonoma County, 1890-1930 47

Table 2. Chinese, Japanese, and Italian Population: Sonoma County, 1890-1930 52

Table 3. Total Improved Acres, Sonoma County: 1890-1920: Chinese and Japanese as a Percentage of the Total Improved Acreage of the County 53

Table 4. Age Distribution as a Percentage of the Total Chinese Population 58

Table 5. Family Formation, Sonoma County: 1900-1930, Number of Families, Children, and Place of Birth.. 98

Chapter 1

Introduction

During the first decades of the twentieth century, the Chinese of Sonoma County faced a complex set of economic, demographic, and socio-cultural problems. The population dropped as a result of internal migration patterns to urban areas. Exclusionary legislation barred the entry of Chinese laborers, though it permitted the entry of merchants, students, travelers, and diplomats.[1] This prohibition, as well as other exclusionary legislation, blocked the replacement of workers from an earlier era who had aged and were no longer able to work; many were infirm, while others were too poor to return to China. Those still able to work the fields were slowly being replaced by new Japanese and Italian immigrants. Meanwhile, Sonoma was gradually becoming more tolerant of the Chinese, although racial prejudice was still pervasive, and harassment not entirely in the past. The flashpoint continued to be those occasions when the white community perceived the Chinese entering the sanctified area of white labor. In 1930 the total Chinese population of Sonoma County was 190, down from the highpoint of 1,145 in 1890, a precipitous 83 percent decline during that forty-year period. Sonoma County's Chinese population would continue to dissipate for at least another generation.[2]

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[1] When the term "exclusionary legislation" is used, unless it directly refers to a specific legislative act, I mean all legislation affecting Chinese immigration, including, but not limited to the Page Act of 1875, Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882, and its extensions, the Scott Act of 1888 and the Immigration Act of 1924. For a brief summary of the Act and its effects, see The Exclusion Act (1882), accessed May 15, 2010, http://www.ourdocuments.gov/doc.php?flash=true&doc=47.

[2] Sonoma County's Chinese population decreased to 149 (105 males, 44 females) in 1940. By that time the native born outnumbered the foreign born 93 to 56. U.S. Bureau of the Census, 1940, Vol. II, Population: California, Table 25 (Washington: United States Printing Office. 1943), http://www/census.gov/prod/decennial.html. Even though the exclusion laws were repealed in 1943, World War II and the subsequent Chinese Revolution of 1949 effectively barred immigration from the Chinese mainland.

This thesis examines how the Chinese in Sonoma County confronted multiple challenges of exclusion, internal migration, competition from newly arrived Italian and Japanese immigrants, and racial prejudice at a pivotal point in their history. I argue they were able to maintain a foothold in the county because they gradually transformed from sojourners, whose expectations were to make their fortunes and return to China, to transnationals, a trans-Pacific people, having one foot in America, making a living and raising families, and the other in China, maintaining strong cultural, political, economic and kinship relations. Their transition was made easier by a more tolerant host society that no longer held its nineteenth century "Chinese Must Go" mentality, so that an ethnic equilibrium existed between the two races.

The Need for a Study of Rural Sonoma County in this Time Period

Until recently, Chinese-American historiography has ignored the exclusion era (1882-1943). Stanford Lyman complained in 1974 that "surprisingly less is known about the Chinese in the United States between 1910 and 1945 than in any other periods that precede or follow from that point." Sucheng Chan earlier shared Lyman's lament, once claiming that "… the six decades of exclusion are the 'dark age' of Chinese American historiography," but she now boasts that "some of the best work in Chinese American history published in the late 1990s and the early 2000s deals with the exclusion era."[3] These more recent studies have focused on urban Chinese with their larger populations and more diverse institutions.[4]

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[3] Stanford Lyman, *Chinese Americans* (New York: Random House, 1974), 89; Sucheng Chan, in *Chinese American Transnationalism: The Flow of People, Resources, and Ideas between China and America during the Exclusion Era,* ed. Sucheng Chan (Philadelphia, PA: Temple University Press, 2006), x (introduction).
[4] For example, see Yong Chen, *Chinese San Francisco, 1850-1943: A Transpacific Community* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2000); Shehong Chen, *Being Chinese, Becoming American* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2002); Chan, ed., *Chinese American Transnationalism.*

The unique circumstances of rural Chinese during this period remain largely unexplored. The majority of the Chinese in California lived in rural agricultural or mining areas during the nineteenth century. It was not until the twentieth century that the Chinese became urban dwellers. There can be no complete history of Chinese Americans until those who so often lived tenuously in rural areas during the exclusion era are studied. Little has been written of their daily existence and how they coped with the political, socio-cultural, economic, demographic, and racial hurdles they faced during the early years of the twentieth century.

While the transitional trajectory of the Chinese in rural California may have followed those of their urban counterparts, the state of industrialization, the rate of decline of the population, the availability of women, the relative rate of family formation, and the tolerance of the host community would affect the extent that their transformation echoed that of their urban brethren. The mosaic of the quotidian existence of these Chinese makes the enterprise worth undertaking, not only to complete the history of exclusion, but to recognize that those who were important to the economies in which they lived overcame significant challenges to survive. In addition, the story of the Sonoma Chinese may provide some insight into the adaptation of "unwanted" immigrants in a hostile host society.

Sonoma County farmers became dependent on Chinese labor after Agoston Haraszthy's successful use of Chinese workers for clearing, planting, constructing, maintaining, and harvesting his crops in establishing his Buena Vista winery in 1858, outside the town of Sonoma. As Haraszthy out hired his field-hands to other growers in the area, the Chinese established a reputation for skill, availability, reliability, and low

cost. Until Haraszthy, Sonoma's primary crop was cereal.[5] As this shifted to viticulture and horticulture, a far more labor-intensive agriculture, the need for additional workers increased. Moreover, Sonoma agriculture was not subsistence farming, but industrial agriculture. The large size of Sonoma County farms could not be maintained or harvested solely by a family and a hired hand, and the short harvest system for grapes dictated the need for cheap, skilled labor and the appropriate number of workers at precisely the right time. The Chinese fit the bill. The performance of Chinese labor established "an almost unattainable norm," and it was in Sonoma County where "Chinese laborers did so much to influence California's modern agricultural landscape."[6]

To date the Sonoma County Chinese have not been ignored, but neither have they been the central focus of historical inquiry. They have been the subject of museum exhibitions and occasional columns in local newspapers recalling their treatment during the anti-Chinese movement and during exclusion. Local historians have not ignored the Chinese, but they are generally incidental to the over-arching narrative of Sonoma County history. The exception is journalist Gaye LeBaron's oral history of Song Wong Bourbeau.[7] Born in 1909, Song Wong's oral history provides the only testimony of life in the Santa Rosa's Chinatown in the early twentieth century and the subtle prejudices toward the Chinese in Santa Rosa that continued to fester even into the late twentieth century.[8] The artifacts that she donated to the Sonoma County Museum provide

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[5] C. A. Menafee, *Historical and Descriptive Sketchbook of Napa, Sonoma, Lake and Mendocino* (Napa City: Reporter Publishing House, 1873), 278, books.google.com/books?id=Gm8UAAAAYAAJ.
[6] Richard Steven Street, *Beasts of the Field: A Narrative History of California Farm Workers 1769-1913* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2004), 254.
[7] Here I refer to Song Wong Borbeau, her married name. Throughout the rest of this thesis I refer to her as Song Wong, her family name, because the majority of references to her occur before her marriage to Charles Borbeau. In doing so, no disrespect is intended to Song Wong, her family, or to the Borbeaus.
[8] Sue Doherty, "Sonoma Stories and the Song Wong Borbeau Collection: A Model for an Exhibition and a Public Outreach Program" (master's thesis, Sonoma State University, 2005), Appendix C (typed transcript

remarkable insight into the transnational nature of her family. Song Wong Bourbeau is the sole Chinese voice of the exclusion-era Chinese of Sonoma County.

With that notable exception, the Chinese have been largely incidental to the white narrative of Sonoma County history. As a partial corrective, I am writing this history – to the extent possible from non-Chinese sources – from a Chinese perspective, treating them not as victims of racial injustice (though that is present), nor as a quiescent society, but one undergoing considerable demographic, social, and cultural changes. In my discussion of the dominant white society, I hope to avoid the sin of viewing the situation from a modern perspective, and instead explore the actions of the white residents of Sonoma County in the context of their times.

"The first decade of the twentieth century," according to Yong Chen, "began a new phase in Chinese American history."[9] This was one of several reasons that I selected the first three decades of the twentieth century for this study. First, these three decades truly were a turning point in the history of the Chinese American community. Second, this period in the history of the Sonoma Chinese remains largely unexamined. Third, when this thesis was commenced the 1930 census was the latest available, limiting the scope of the inquiry. Finally, the period enables me to follow the trajectory of social change within the Chinese community from its approximate inception through the middle thirty years of exclusion's sixty-one-year span.[10]

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of Gaye LeBaron's oral history of Song Wong Borbeau); Song Wong Bourbeau Interviewed by Gaye LeBaron, YouTube, accessed November 12, 2013, http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZAcKwSewwFw.

[9] Yong Chen, *Chinese San Francisco*, 145.

[10] I am mindful that these types of changes do not occur during a specific year and may have their genesis before a marked calendar date. For example, Gunther Barth considered the Chinese acculturating in the 1860s as a result of the work of the missionaries and the interaction of Chinese restaurant owners, artists, physicians, and personal acquaintance with Americans. In any event, the period witnessed nothing as dramatic as the changes that I describe herein that began during the 1900s. Gunther Barth, *Bitter Strength:*

The genesis of the transformation of the Chinese American community did not lie in the heart of San Francisco's Chinatown, but rather in a series of political events that took place in China. The aid and assistance rendered by the Chinese government to California Chinese struggling in the aftermath of the 1906 San Francisco Earthquake and the 1905 Chinese boycott of American goods resulted in a new trans-Pacific relationship. This gave rise to a new nationalism that established a closer relationship between the Chinese American community and their overseas compatriots. The Chinese Revolution of 1911 aroused hope within the Chinese American community that a stronger China would come to their defense in America, and sparked an intensified interest in China that heightened nationalistic feelings among the American Chinese, together with an active participation in Chinese politics and an interest in the modernization of the country.[11]

China recognized the necessity to modernize its government, and to examine its customs, traditions, industries, and infrastructure in undertaking a program of modernization. Women were given an important role in the development of the state. Traditional constraints were loosened. They were now granted equal rights with men. These changes resonated in San Francisco's Chinatown, as well as in Chinatowns throughout the United States. The American Chinese now began to examine their own customs and traditions, as well as the role of women. Chinatown and the Chinese began to change, becoming more westernized, building Chinese institutions, and expanding the

A History of the Chinese in the United States, 1850-1870 (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1964), 182.

[11] See Yong Chen, *Chinese San Francisco;* Judy Yung, *Unbound Feet: A Social History of Chinese Women in San Francisco* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995), 162-185.

rights of women. [12] Later on, I will examine the extent that these changes took root in Sonoma.

The first immigrants were sojourners. They harbored no intention of remaining in the United States, but demanded only to work, save some money, and return to China and retire as wealthy men. Some women remained at home in China because of cultural restraints, others because the cost of transport and maintenance would reduce the husband's savings and the remittances home. Still others remained in China because of the stringent enforcement of the Exclusion Act and Page Act, the latter considering Chinese women immigrants as prostitutes. Harsh and humiliating conditions for women during their processing in the immigration center on Angel Island discouraged many from emigrating. Some simply were afraid to face an unfamiliar country. But family structure was designed to support the immigrant.[13] During their sojourn, men continued to assert authority within the household and continued to maintain their connection to their homeland by wearing their queue and conforming to Chinese sartorial standards. Over time, this attitude changed.

Defining Terms: Transnationalism Described

I use Paul C. P. Siu's definition of sojourner as "one who clings to the cultural heritage of his own ethnic group and tends to live in isolation, hindering his assimilation

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[12] Yong Chen, *Chinese San Francisco,* 186-216.
[13] Madeline Yuan-yin Hsu, *Dreaming of Gold, Dreaming of Home: Transnationalism and Migration Between the United States and South China, 1882-1943* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2000); Evelyn Nakano Glenn, "Split Household, Small Producer and Dual Wage Earner: An Analysis of ChineseAmerican Family Strategies," *Journal of Marriage and Family,* 45, no. 1 (February 1983): 35-46; George Anthony Peffer, *If They Don't Bring Their Women Here: Chinese Female Immigration Before Exclusion.* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1999).

to the society in which he resides, often for many years. The sojourn is conceived by the sojourner as a 'job' which is to be finished in the shortest possible time. As an alternative to that end he travels back and forth to his homeland every few years."[14] By contrast, Chinese immigrants began a process of acculturation – becoming transnationals rather than sojourners – when they began marrying and raising families, cutting their queues, wearing Western clothes, and sending their children to public schools where they would learn English and accepted Western customs.

Though historians have used other definitions to describe transnationals or transmigrants, the most complete description, and the one I use in this thesis, is offered by Nina Glick Schiller, Linda Basch, and Cristine Blanc: "...immigrants whose daily lives depend on multiple and constant interconnections across international borders and whose public identities are configured in relationship to more than one nation state. They are not sojourners because they settle and become incorporated in the economy and political institutions, localities and patterns of daily life of the country in which they reside. However, at the very same time they are engaged elsewhere in the sense that they maintain connections, build institutions, conduct transactions, and influence local and national events in the countries from which they emigrated."[15]

Transnationalism offered a way by which immigrants could successfully acculturate to American society while, at the same time, retaining their close ties with family and native place. By shedding their sojourner attitudes, they were committing to their new country; it would be here they would put down roots and raise their families. They would retain both communal cohesion and connection with the place of their birth

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[14] Paul C. P. Siu, "The Sojourner," *The American Journal of Sociology,* 58, no. 1 (July 1952): 33-54.
[15] Nina Glick Schiller, Linda Basch, and Cristine Blanc, "From Immigrant to Transmigrant: Theorizing Transnational Migration," *Anthropological Quarterly,* 68, No. 1 (January 1996), 48.

by the celebration of traditional holidays and rituals, but would publicly become more westernized in dress and personal adornment, increased use of the English language, and the use of Western names. Stanford K Lyman described the weight of time on acculturation: "… the longer he and his family remained abroad the stronger their roots in the immigrant country would be implanted. Should his children be born and reared in the host country, his stake there was even more firmly established."[16] As the Chinese immigrant children went to public schools, their parent's homeland was likely more foreign to them than the place of their birth .

In this early phase of their acculturation, the Chinese in Sonoma County were beginning to be more accepted by the Euro-American community than in the past, but they were not welcomed outright. Sonoma County's dominant society had retreated from its virulent nineteenth century anti-Chinese stance and, while still harboring racist attitudes, at least reached equilibrium with its Chinese community. Although the Chinese had begun putting down roots, assimilation was an unheard of notion in the dominant community during this period: the Chinese were *in* the community, but not *part* of the dominant community.

During this time, the Chinese in Sonoma County continued to send remittances back to their families in China, because familial obligations and ties to native place remained strong. The Sonoma County Chinese were influenced as much as their San Francisco neighbors by the transformation attempted by the Chinese government. Certainly, they were influenced by the actions they knew were occurring within San Francisco's Chinatown. San Francisco was easily accessible from Petaluma by boat, and

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[16] Stanford K. Lyman, "Marriage and the Family among Chinese Immigrants to America, 1850-1960," *Phylon,* (1960-), 29, no. 4, (4th Qtr. 1968), 322.

Chinatown visits were not a rare occurrence. San Francisco's Chinatown was where they could exchange opinions at a tea house, at the Six Companies (Zhongguo Huiguan) or other district associations, or tong meeting halls. That Sonoma County Chinese were frequent visitors to San Francisco is verified by the many news accounts about local Chinese that reference a trip to that city.

In addition, the Santa Rosa and Petaluma English-language papers reported major events in China, such as the Chinese Boycott of 1905-1906 and the Revolution of 1911. San Francisco Chinese newspapers would be posted for all to read or be available for purchase. It's highly likely that a group of men would gather at a local Chinese merchant's store, where one of their members would translate the English news items about events in China to an attentive audience. There is no reason to believe the field hand, laundryman, waiter, dishwasher, or household servant was not abreast of developments in China.

However, conditions of the Sonoma County Chinese were also vastly different from those of San Francisco. San Francisco was an urban enclave, densely populated within the confines of its Chinatown. Because of its industrial base, economic opportunities were more varied than in Sonoma County. The Chinese in San Francisco were more highly organized, and their significantly larger population was able to mobilize greater financial resources for civic improvements. Sonoma County was far less industrially developed and significantly less populated, and the financial base of this community shrank as its population decreased. As a result, they lacked the capital to emulate the institution-building of Chinese San Francisco. Sonoma County's lack of industrialization, especially Chinese industries, also limited women's wage-earning

opportunities. The industrial base of the county, its population, its wealth, the attitude of the host society, as well as other factors, played important roles in the development of the Sonoma County Chinese community during the first three decades of the twentieth century. Thus, the Sonoma Chinese followed the same trajectory of becoming settlers with a transnational mentality, but because of their unique circumstances were far more limited in their communal responses.

Resources Used and the Scope of this Study

This study relies heavily on recent research examining the trans-Pacific transition of the urban Chinese. The development of the San Francisco Chinese to a trans-Pacific community is the focus of Yong Chen's *Chinese San Francisco, 1850-1943: A Transpacific Community.* Shehong Chen's *Being Chinese, Becoming Chinese America* applies the same paradigm to a broader swath of urban Chinese, examining different aspects of the transformation. Madeline Yuan-yin Hsu's *Dreaming of Gold, Dreaming of Home: Transnationalism and Migration Between the United States and South China, 1882-1943* provides a trans-Pacific view of immigration, explaining the supportive kinship structure and reciprocal family obligations, and the importance of the jinshangzhuan and magazines in maintaining the connection of the immigrant with kin and native place. These works by Chinese American historians have the advantage of using Chinese language resources both in America and China, and present a point of view unavailable to historians without Chinese language fluency.[17]

[17] Yong Chen, *Chinese San Francisco*; Hsu, *Dreaming of Gold*; Shehong Chen, *Being Chinese.*

The collection of essays edited by Sucheng Chan in *Chinese American Transnationalism: The Flow of People, Resources, and Ideas between China and America during the Exclusion Era* provides an invaluable resource on a variety of subject matter.[18] Judy Yung's *Unbound Feet: A Social History of Chinese Women in San Francisco* explores gender and the changing role of Chinese women in San Francisco during exclusion.[19] Yung's work explicates the effect of a changing China on San Francisco's Chinatown and on the liberties of its women in depicting a gradually changing and expanding role of Chinese women in San Francisco.

Two works exploring the role of the Chinese in California agriculture were invaluable resources. Sucheng Chan's *Bittersweet Soil: The Chinese in California Agriculture, 1850-1900* relies on quantitative data extracted from public records to examine contributions of Chinese farmers and agricultural labor to the development of California agriculture. Chan's many charts and graphs provide a wealth of information for any student examining the Chinese farming and field laborers in the nineteenth and early twentieth century. Richard Steven Street's *Beasts of the Field: A Narrative History of California Farm Workers, 1769-1913* can be considered a companion volume and is extremely useful for any student of the Chinese in California agriculture. His chapters on Chinese farm workers may be the best and most complete narrative written of the nineteenth century Chinese farm worker. In his highly detailed narrative, Street describes the harsh conditions under which the Chinese worked, their desirability and effectiveness as farm laborers, and the anti-Chinese movement in rural areas; he also dispels the common notion of the Chinese as docile, cheap workers, and offers explanations for their

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[18] Chan, ed., *Chinese American Transnationalism.*

[19] Yung, *Unbound Feet*; Judy Yung, *Unbound Voices: A Documentary History of Chinese History of Chinese Women in San Francisco* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999).

migration to the cities. Both authors focus on the nineteenth century, but conclude their works in the early 1900s.[20]

There is a plethora of scholarly examination of the nineteenth century anti-Chinese movement and its effect on the Chinese, labor, politics, racial prejudice, economics, and law. The anti-Chinese movement ended by the twentieth century, but a knowledge of the movement and the dialectic of Chinese and American responses is essential to an understanding of the Chinese condition in the twentieth century. This thesis was informed by the following works. Mary Roberts Coolidge's publication of *Chinese Immigration* in 1909 was the first scholarly study of American Chinese, claiming the nationwide anti-Chinese movement had its roots in California politics and was a California phenomenon [21] Andrey Gyory's *Closing the Gate* makes the claim that anti-Chinese views were present throughout the United States, contending that the "agency of exclusion" was neither labor nor racism, but an emotion manipulated by national politicians seeking votes.[22] Clarence Elmer Sandmeyer's *The Anti-Chinese Movement in California* acknowledges that labor's fear of the Chinese had some legitimacy and unions were the "most conspicuous group" propelling the anti-Chinese movement. Still, the animating force was anti-Chinese prejudice that united labor and the workingman, and provided the impetus for the movement.[23] Historian Lucille Eaves' *A History of California Labor Legislation* examines the role of labor in enacting a host of local and state anti-Chinese legislation that failed in the courts. Ira Cross' *A History of the Labor*

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[20] Sucheng Chan, *This Bittersweet Soil: The Chinese in California Agriculture, 1860-1910* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1986); Richard Steven Street, *Beasts of the Field: A Narrative History of California Farm Workers, 1769-1913* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2004).
[21] Mary Roberts Coolidge, *The Chinese Immigration* (reprint, New York: Arno Press, 1967).
[22] Arndrew Gyory, *Closing the Gate: Race, Politics and the Chinese Exclusion Act* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1998).
[23] Clarence Elmer Sandmeyer, *The Anti-Chinese Movement in California, 1888-1973* (reprint, Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1973).

Movement in California provides an economic hypothesis that the fears engendered by cheap Chinese labor – the reduction in white wages and a lower standard of living – resulted in the fierce opposition of labor against further Chinese immigration. This opposition in turn fueled Denis Kearney's Workingmen's Party. Under Kearney's slogan "The Chinese Must Go," anti-Chinese feeling was aroused in California and throughout the country, and became so vocal that congress was convinced to enact the Exclusion Act of 1882.[24] In *The Indispensable Enemy,* Alexander Saxton considered the anti-Chinese movement based on both ideology and pragmatism. Workers were imbued with the Jacksonian ideology of achieving a better life through the worth and equality of the labor and used anti-Chinese sentiment to encourage and maintain solidarity within labor's ranks.[25]

There are excellent books and monographs that explore subjects in nineteenth century agricultural or mining regions. Silvia Sun Minnick's *Samtow: The San Joaquin Chinese Legacy* presents an excellent narrative of the Chinese in Stockton and the surrounding agricultural San Joaquin Valley within the larger context of the white community.[26] Sandy Lyon's investigation of Monterey fishing villages in *Chinese Gold: The Chinese in the Monterey Region* dispels the notion that Chinese lacked entrepreneurial spirit and were destined to be field hands.[27] More modest Chinese-related

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[24] Andrew Gyory, *Closing the Gate: Race, Politics and the Chinese Exclusion Act* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1998) argues that anti-Chinese sentiment was nationwide and not just a California phenomenon.

[25] Lucille Eaves, *A History of California Labor Legislation* (New York: Johnson Reprint Company, reprint 1966); Ira Cross, *A History of the Labor Movement in California* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1935); Alexander Saxton, *The Indispensable Enemy: Labor and the Anti-Chinese Movement in California* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995).

[26] Sylvia Sun Minnick, *Samtow: The San Joaquin Chinese Legacy* (Fresno, CA: Panorama West Pub., 1988);

[27] Sandy Lyon, *Chinese Gold: The Chinese in the Monterey Region* (Capitola, CA: Capitola Book Co., 1985);

regional histories provide additional insight into geographical differences. Michelle Shover's "Chico Women: Nemesis of a Rural Town's Anti-Chinese Campaigns and Fighting Back" examines the ability of women to influence employment decisions regarding the Chinese within the household, contrary to the attitudes held in the public sphere where the women held little sway.[28] David Beesley explores the westernization of nineteenth-century Chinese women in a small northern California mining community in "From Chinese to Chinese American, Chinese Women and Families in a Sierra Nevada Town."[29] The studies by Minnick, Lyon, Shover, and Beesley, provide a background from which to compare the responses of Chinese within different rural communities during the nineteenth century[30] Nevertheless, the exploration of the rural Chinese during the early twentieth century continues to remain a backwater of Chinese-American historiography.

Autobiographies and memoirs, even though not of rural inhabitants, provide insight into the internal family conflicts and the struggle with Western values that cannot be obtained by historians or census data. Louise Leung Larson's *Sweet Bamboo* tells the story of growing up in the family of a prominent Los Angeles herbalists, attending USC, and the difficulties of a Chinese girl's social life while the family was integrating into Western society. Jade Wong Snow's *Fifth Chinese Daughter* is the story of a Chinese

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[28] Michele Shover, "Chico Women: Nemesis of a Rural Town's Anti-Chinese Campaigns, 1876-1888" *California History*, 67, no. 4 (December 1988), 228-243, JStor Article DOI: 10.2307/25158493, stable URL: http://0-www.JStor.org.iii.sonoma.edu/stable/25158493.
[29] David Beesley,"From Chinese to Chinese American, Chinese Women and Families in a Sierra Nevada Town" *California History*, 67 (September 1988): 168-179, JStor Article DOI 10.2307/25158476, stable URL: http://0-www.JStor.org.iii.sonoma.edu/stable/25158476.
[30] Dorothy Bear and David Houghton, *The Chinese of Mendocino County* (Mendocino, CA: Mendocino Historical Research, Inc., 1990).

girl's conflict in asserting her independence within the confines of her traditional family.[31]

Failure to study rural Chinese may not have been from lack of interest, but from lack of primary material. The complaint of most historians is that the lack of Chinese diaries, letters, memoirs, ephemera, or newspapers or magazines published by rural Chinese is an impediment to any substantive research of exclusion-era Chinese. My research encountered the same lack of Chinese-sourced materials.[32] The Sonoma Chinese apparently left no memoirs, diaries, letters, or ephemera. No local Chinese newspapers were published. Except for Gaye LeBaron's oral history of Song Wong Bourbeau and the artifacts Song Wong donated to the Sonoma County Museum, plus photographs in the files of the Sonoma County Library, there are no remnants of the Chinese in Sonoma County during the first three decades of the twentieth century. [33]

One pillar of this study is contemporary reports from local newspapers. While these do present the bias of the dominant community, one can also infer the changing stereotypes of the Euro-American community toward the Chinese and Chinese culture by the manner in which Chinese are depicted; the acceptance of Chinese culture as a legitimate form of entertainment; the reporting and description of the nodes of interaction between the dominant community and the Chinese; and the effect of the diminished population on the Chinese community. Moreover, these newspaper reports are the only contemporary local source available. The other pillar is the United States census, which

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[31] Louise Leung Larson, *Sweet Bamboo: A Memoir of a Chinese American Family* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2001); Jade Wong Snow, *Fifth Chinese Daughter* (New York: Harper, 1950).
[32] On two occasions the Redwood Empire Chinese Association sent out a notice in its newsletter requesting that any member having knowledge of any relative who lived in Sonoma County during the 1910s and 1920s or in possession of any diaries or other artifacts contact me. There were no responses. The Association is the largest Chinese organization in the County. The passage of time is too great to harbor any hope that original Chinese material from the period will be found.

provided the basis of my calculations of the number of families and number of family members, the birthplaces of wives and children, the ages of family members, the occupations of the Chinese men and women, the birthplace of wives, and the age cohorts of the community. The numbers are too small to be of statistical significance in some cases, and calculations should be considered nothing more than trends. Errors occur in my calculations because some census pages were often marred by ink blots, faded pages, undecipherable handwriting, and duplicate pages in the online site I used. Nonetheless, when the opportunity arose to compare my calculations with census data, my calculations were within two percent of known figures. I do not believe that any errors affected the conclusions drawn from the data, and I believe the trends are clear.

The National Archives in San Bruno contains immigration files pertaining to the Chinese during the Exclusion Era: Immigration Arrival Investigation case files, 1884-1944, Return Certificate Application Case Files, 1912-1943, and Immigration Chinese Business Partnership Investigation Case File, ca 1894-1944 provided material on Chinese partnerships, merchants families, and locations of Chinese business establishments. Photographs showed the transition from Chinese to Western dress. Partnership records showed the constantly shifting membership in each of the organizations.

For the Sonoma County Chinese, the first three decades of the twentieth century set the tone and patterns for the remainder of the exclusion era. Still a dysfunctional bachelor society because of the shortage of females, and saddled with restrictive employment opportunities, they began to plant the seeds of permanency by adopting many Western values that reduced the psychic distance between the races and by marrying American-born Chinese women and rearing children. The constant intersections

between the white community (who saw less of a threat from the Chinese) and the Chinese (who were becoming settlers) softened, but did not eliminate, the underlying racial discrimination.

In this study, Chapter 2 addresses the cause, effect, and extent of the 1886 Sonoma boycott – the attempt by whites to drive the Chinese from the county by boycotting Chinese goods, labor, and employers of Chinese labor – and its effects on both the Chinese and the local labor market. This chapter will serve as counterpoint to the less hostile conditions, but more difficult challenges, faced by the Chinese in the early years of the twentieth century. Chapter 3 will analyze the scope, depth, and nature of exclusion and emigration on Sonoma County's Chinese population, while they were retreating from working the fields where Japanese and Italians were replacing them. Chapter 4 addresses the traditions and practices observed by the Chinese community as they were adopting a set of Western values. The chapter will explore for the first time what little is known of the presence and effect of the tong organizations in the county. Chapter 5 examines the shift from the sojourner mentality of the nineteenth century to a trans-Pacific mentality, and the Chinese acculturation to Western values and the factors that indicate their intention to settle in Sonoma. Chapter 6 presents illustrations of a more tolerant host community that shed the stereotypes of Chinese and Chinese culture that prevailed in nineteenth century Sonoma County, and how the white and Chinese communities had reached social equilibrium.

This study of the evolution from sojourners to transnationals by the Chinese in Sonoma County during the early twentieth century provides a glimpse into the unique

circumstances of rural Chinese during the heart of the exclusion era, and how they adapted.

Chapter 2

The Zenith Of The Anti-Chinese Movement In Sonoma: The Sonoma Boycott Of 1886 and its Aftermath

To understand the conditions the Chinese faced in Sonoma County from 1900 to 1930, it is important to first review the events they experienced before that time period. A key factor was the anti-Chinese movement and boycott, which had a strong impact but did not achieve its goal of driving the Chinese out of Sonoma County. Racial prejudice existed throughout the state and Sonoma County, and the perceived failure of the Exclusion Act provided the excuse to try to drive the Chinese from the county through a boycott of Chinese labor and products. The Chinese were fired from their jobs, harassed, were the victims of violence, and were ordered out of many cities, and many lived near starvation. Yet, the boycott never achieved its purpose of forcing all Chinese residents to flee the county. This chapter will examine the existential forces that threatened the Chinese community in Sonoma County in contradistinction to an arguably more serious, less violent set of demographic challenges, some of which the Chinese initiated, that would begin around the turn of the century,

Racial Animus, the Anti-Chinese Movement, and the Boycott

Beginning in the 1860s, racial animus was endemic, not only in Sonoma County but throughout California and the United States, and provided fertile soil to support whatever arguments might be used to bolster the drive to remove the Chinese population. The depth of anti-Chinese feeling throughout the state was revealed in the results of a referendum held on September 3, 1879 on whether continued Chinese immigration

should be permitted. Of the 161,405 votes cast, 154,638 opposed further admission of the Chinese, 883 favored continued admission, and 5,884 failed to vote on the proposition.[1] An editorial in the *Daily Democrat* reprinted with approval a report from the House Committee on Immigration and Labor, which summed up their views and attitudes toward the Chinese and immigration. The Chinese, the report complained, had "personal and moral habits that made them undesirable members of society, neatness and pestilential vapors, threatening disease and death." They were "preeminently wretched," they believed in too many ludicrous superstitions, they were products of a defective educational system, their civilization was "effete and decaying," their lax morals "render them undesirable members of society," and, of prime importance, they could not assimilate into American society. These arguments were repeated time and again, either in letters to the newspapers or in editorials.[2]

Although there were exceptions, Sonomans generally considered the Chinese and Chinese culture disgusting and vile. Sonoma's anti-Chinese attitude was expressed as early as 1861 when the press described the Chinese "[l]yke as ye locusts be overruneth ye country" and "equal to a donkey."[3] The influx of Chinese immigrants raised the fear of debasing American society by "reducing the moral and social status of the wealth producing masses..." [4] In 1869, an editorial expressed concern that the system of Chinese labor was "worse in all its features than African slavery" and they are "the material out of

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[1] Lucille Eaves, *A History of California Labor Legislation* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1910), 158.
[2] "The Chinese Question," *The Daily Democrat,* March 9, 1879. See also, for example, "Influx of White Labor," *Daily Democrat,* April 20, 1886, which says the "presence of Chinese is a curse"; and "Chinese Immigration," *Daily Democrat,* February 15, 1878, claiming the marriage relationship is ignored, children and wives are sold into slavery, female infanticide is common, cleanliness is unknown, and paganism is their only religion.
[3] "Ye Chinamen," *Daily Democrat*, March 21, 1861.
[4] "Fear Mongolian Debasement," *Daily Democrat*, August 28, 1869.

which slaves are made," a race of "cowardice, deceit and treachery," their moral condition influenced by their "pagan education and habits," inuring them to "vice and prostitution," and "paying little or no taxes" to support local government.[5] The long history of racial prejudice was carried forward in a drumbeat of editorials, letters, and speeches that constantly proclaimed the moral and hygienic inferiority of the Chinese, their lack of economic support for the community, their inability to assimilate, and, perhaps most importantly, their competition with white workers who thought their wages would be depressed and their quality of life impaired, and who objected to working side-by-side with the Chinese.

Exclusionary employment practices continued to be a fact of life in Sonoma County. In 1873, Mandel & Co, a cigar manufacturer, discharged its Chinese employees in favor of girls.[6] Neither Howe's shoe factory, the German cigar makers in Guerneville, nor J.K. Kurlander's Santa Rosa cigar store employed Chinese.[7] With pride, many local industries bragged they employed no Chinese. It was not uncommon for a local laundry, restaurant, or other business to announce in an advertisement that "No Chinese are employed" by the establishment. This was an attempt at warning readers to support businesses that employ only whites, thus keeping the payrolls circulating in the local economy rather than patronizing Chinese who would remit the money back to China.

There is evidence that prior to the anti-Chinese movement of the 1880's anti-Chinese sentiments were neither as strong or nor as universal as the attitudes that flared during the boycott movement. Healdsburg resident William Shipley noted in his memoirs

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[5] "Chinese Labor and the Interests of California," *Daily Democrat,* May 1, 1869; "China and the Chinese," *Daily Democrat,* July 24, 1869.

[6] "Pacific Coast News," *Daily Democrat*, May 17, 1873.

[7] "Shoe Factory," *Daily Democrat*, November 23, 1878; "Cigar Makers," *Daily Democrat*, November 27, 1880; advertisement, *Daily Democrat*, August 14, 1875.

that, in 1875, "the Chinese were our friends." Shipley's recollections suggest that the anti-Chinese movement swept before it the heretofore friendly feelings toward the Chinese. Shipley described local Chinese laundrymen as the focal point of much of the hostility. Those who continued to patronize the Chinese were "hooted." Once it was determined that "the Chinese must go," rocks were thrown at local Chinese laundrymen delivering clothes to their customers, or a Chinese person might be the target of rotten eggs or "some other obnoxious substance" thrown by a youth. A laundryman answering a night-time knock on the door might be pelted with thrown garbage. Mutual trust and confidence soon disappeared.[8]

However, John Hill, a Glen Ellen grower, described a different attitude in the Sonoma Valley in his testimony before the United States Congress in 1877. In trying to persuade the United States Congress not to limit Chinese immigration, he explained that Sonoma Valley grape growers depended on the 500 Chinese laborers employed in his "neighborhood." Hill claimed there was little resentment against the Chinese, noting that his son, also an employer of Chinese labor, could not have been elected to the state legislature had the public harbored strong objections against anyone employing Chinese workers.[9] Hill's observations about the relative lack of anti-Chinese sentiment in Glen Ellen may have been true or an attempt to persuade the committee of the value and acceptance of Chinese labor, but it does provide an insight into the extent that Chinese labor was used in the Sonoma Valley.

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[8] William C. Shipley, *Tales of Sonoma County,* Edward H. Conner, ed. (Santa Rosa: Sonoma Historical Society), 55-57.
[9] U.S. Congress, *Joint Special Committee to Investigate Chinese Immigration*, 44th Cong. (Washington, D.C: Government Printing Office, 1877), 796-797.

The genesis of the boycott occurred when a group of "business men, mechanics and laborers" held two meetings in Sacramento in December 1885 and formed the Citizens Anti-Chinese Association of Sacramento. The sentiment among them "favoring boycotting employers of Chinese was cheered to the echo," and a committee was appointed to go among the businesses of the city to discourage the direct or indirect handling of Chinese-made goods or the employment of Chinese in their businesses.[10] When news of the decision to boycott Chinese employment and products reached Santa Rosa, the *Sonoma Democrat* responded immediately, raising the fear that Santa Rosa would be inundated by displaced Chinese. The paper noted the movement was becoming "widespread and it was time that Santa Rosa was considering what is due to her own interests in the matter. We do not want the expelled Chinese population of other cities or any part of it, to come here. We have too many of this class already. The natural result of the movement in Sacramento and other places will be to cause those people to go to localities where their countrymen are not objected to and are unmolested... Santa Rosa may reasonably expect to get its full share."[11] Soon the citizenry was aroused and the first meetings to boycott the Chinese were announced in Santa Rosa. Shortly thereafter the *Sonoma Democrat* further fanned the flames of prejudice by reporting on the success of the people of Sacramento in "their determination to get rid of the Chinese" and that the "agitation against these people continues to extend" to other localities in Sacramento County.[12]

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[10] "Anti-Chinese; An Organization Formed – Movement to Boycott the Mongolians," *San Francisco Bulletin* published as *Evening Bulletin,* December 11, 1885, California's Historical Newspapers; "What Shall Santa Rosa Do?" *Sonoma Democrat,* December 26, 1885.
[11] "What Shall Santa Rosa Do?" *Sonoma Democrat,* December 26, 1885.
[12] "After the Chinese," *Sonoma Democrat,* January 1, 1886.

January 1886 was a period of rapid formation of anti-Chinese leagues throughout Sonoma County. By the time the Santa Rosa Anti-Chinese League met in late January, anti-Chinese leagues were forming in Petaluma, Cloverdale, Healdsburg and elsewhere throughout the county.[13] The *Daily Democrat* appealed simultaneously to both the patriotism and the racial prejudice of the community in rallying support for the boycott. Their editorial preached "it is a high American privilege to boycott the Chinamen themselves," while observing "nineteen men out of twenty...believe that the presence of the Chinese is a curse."[14]

The murder of a well-respected Sonoma County couple further incensed an already inflamed public and spurred the formation of the Santa Rosa Anti-Chinese League. In late January 1886, Captain Jesse Wickersham and his wife were murdered on their ranch outside of Cloverdale in northwest Sonoma County. The lone suspect was their Chinese cook, Ah Tai (then Ah Duck).[15] Ah Tai escaped, boarding a ship for China, but his trip was interrupted when he was apprehended in Yokohama and jailed in Hong Kong, where he hanged himself in his jail cell. Ah Tai confessed his guilt to the Chinese quartermaster of the ship from Yokahama.[16] The grisly murders fanned the flames of white Sonoma's racial prejudice. The effect on the community and the anti-Chinese movement was immediate. The *Daily Democrat* opined that "the Chinese also hold human life no higher than we hold that of a dog,"[17] and warned that response to the killings would "intensify the feeling against the Chinese, and many, in their indignation,

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[13] "The Anti-Chinese Meeting," *Daily Democrat,* January 28, 1886.
[14] "Influx of White Labor," *Daily Democrat,* January 20, 1886.
[15] "Boycott Them," *Daily Democrat*, January 26, 1886; Gaye LeBaron, "Wickersham Ranch," accessed March 15, 2012, http://www.wickershamranch.com/GayeL.htm.
[16] LeBaron, "Wickersham Ranch." See also Simone Wilson, *Prime Suspect,* Albion Monitor/Features, accessed March 15, 2013, www.monitor.net/monitor/9608a/sw-mystery.html.
[17] "Notes and Comments," *Daily Democrat*, January 29, 1886.

would resort to stern measures to get rid of them," and "the feeling now intensified would lead to the organization of societies in every town in the county."[18] The first meeting of the Sonoma Anti-Chinese League occurred within days of the murder.[19] While these murders were not the cause of the boycott, the effect was to produce a sense of solidarity for the cause within the community and a sense of urgency in its implementation.

The announced reason for the boycott was the government's failure to adequately implement exclusion or defects in the legislation that still permitted too many Chinese into the country. The complaint was that current "enforcement was in the hands of those who had more sympathy for the Chinese than for us, and they proceeded at once to nullify its provisions, and succeeded in making it practically worthless. The present agitation is due to this fact. Had the Restriction Act been enforced there would have been no further trouble."[20] The *Daily Republican* complained that "the laws which Congress has passed are so lacking and incomplete that either the high officials of the Government have so interpreted and administered them as to ignore and defeat the manifest object of legislation, or the Federal Courts have so expounded them as to render them of little effect."[21] The newspaper suggested the solution to the problem was the enactment by Congress of a law that could be neither misinterpreted or evaded.[22] Editorials urged united community action to aid Sonoma County's congressional delegation in "securing

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[18] "Boycott Them," *Daily Democrat,* January 26, 1886.
[19] "Boycott Them," *Daily Democrat,* January 26, 1886; "Notes and Comments," *Daily Democrat,* January 29, 1886, noting that the Wickersham murders brought to mind a similar event in Marin County in 1879 or 1880.
[20] "The Anti-Chinese Meeting," *Daily Democrat,* January 28, 1886.
[21] "The Chinese Movement," *Daily Democrat,* January 25, 1886; and "Geary Act," Wikipedia, accessed January 10, 2013, http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Geary_Act. The 1882 act was made permanent by the Geary Act in 1902 and required Chinese to carry identification papers. Congressman Geary was a congressman from Sonoma County. The Exclusion Act was repealed in 1943.
[22] "The Chinese Movement, "*Daily Republican,* January 1, 1886.

amendments to the Restriction Act which shall make it effective."[23] White Sonomans expected that the Exclusion Act would result in the gradual elimination of the Chinese by causing some to return permanently to China, while others would remain, age, and eventually die.

Dissatisfaction with the Exclusion Law and its implementation became the match that lit the fuse of racial prejudice, which erupted into a county-wide boycott of the Chinese.[24] The boycott would not only send a message to their congressional delegation, but would drive the Chinese from the county because "something should be done to get rid of them." The boycott, opined the *Daily Democrat,* was the "simple and easy and effectual way of...[r]efusing to patronize them. They can be starved out by this process in a short time, because they have no means of earning a living except through the patronage of the whites."[25] Sonomans saw the Act more as a sieve than a barrier. The boycott was the method through which legislative change could be initiated to halt future immigration and rid the county of the Chinese.[26]

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[23] "The Anti-Chinese Meeting," *Daily Democrat,* January 28, 1886.
[24] Ibid.
[25] Ibid.
[26] Some consideration might be given to another factor, whether the long held view of agrarianism among the population unable to afford land (owned by large agricultural interests) may have played a role in the boycott. Many held the view that cheap Chinese labor enabled the large agricultural estates to remain intact, making small parcels unavailable for family farms. The *Petaluma Weekly Argus* obliquely raised the issue when it complained that Los Angeles, without the geographic and climatic amenities of Sonoma county, was outstripping it in wealth, and focused the blame on "[l]large landowners instead of offering to sell land in small subdivisions have generally evinced a disposition to reach out and buy more themselves. This is unfortunate...so long as this system prevails we need not expect any advance movement." Also, "How it Was Done," *Petaluma Weekly Argus,* February 27, 1886. Because Chinese labor was so inexpensive, it was argued there was no need for owners of large farms to subdivide their farms to make smaller plots available. The Chinese were seen as an impediment to a more democratic agriculture by preventing the formation of smaller, more affordable farms. If urban agitators tended to regard Chinese exclusion as an end in itself, agrarians viewed it only as an important first step toward the eventual dismantling of California's large-scale agricultural industry. The existence of a single article is not, of course, evidence that agrarianism was an unspoken motivation for the boycott, but it does acknowledge that agrarian feelings did exist in the county. Alexandra Kindrell seems to suggest such an agrarian impulse in California's quest for white immigration that would make California a "land of promise," which meant a more rural, agricultural California where rural communities would be a haven for small farmers, and "harbor the morals and good

Whether newspapers reflect the sentiments of the community or attempt to form public opinion by the nature of their editorials and reporting is a matter of debate. The *Sonoma Democrat* gave the most column inches to the meetings of the anti-Chinese Leagues and published vociferous editorials in support of the boycott. Its "Local Brevities" column advised the community from time to time of the condition of the Chinese, the number leaving the community, and which businesses had discharged their Chinese employees. The boycott was of such preeminence in the community that all newspapers reported on its activities. The *Petaluma Courier*, the *Petaluma Argus*, the *Sebastopol Times*, the *Santa Rosa Daily Republican,* and the *Healdsburg Enterprise*, as well as the *Daily Democrat*, kept their readers informed of the meetings of the Anti-Chinese League, the development and effect of the boycott, news of Chinese difficulties and departures, and a constant series of editorials supporting the boycott. Whether the papers led community opinion or reflected local sentiments is impossible to determine. Certainly the editorials found a receptive readership, and a symbiotic relationship developed among the newspapers, the local leagues, and the general readership in support of the boycott.

The intention to drive out the Chinese was clear and public. In Santa Rosa, the theme of the boycott was emblazoned on a sign across the main thoroughfare urging "The Chinese Must Go." The "enthusiastic" citizens of Sebastopol mounted two banners across their main street warning the local Chinese that "We Mean Business."[27] These signs served as an ever-present reminder to the local Chinese that they were unwanted

behavior guaranteed by neighbor keeping an eye on one another." Alexandra Kindrell, "Settling the Sunset Land: California and its Family Farmers" (PhD diss., Iowa State University, 2006), 45-129.

[27] "Local Brevities," *Daily Democrat,* February 10, 1886.

outsiders and were an anathema to the whites with whom they had had daily contact in their business and employment.

The anti-Chinese movement sought to avoid the violence of an earlier day that alarmed the Easterners and delayed enactment of the 1882 Exclusion Act. The memories of the difficulties and debates in enacting that law were fresh in their minds of Sonomans (and all Californians), and now the organizers of the local anti-Chinese leagues were careful to urge their members to avoid violence for fear that would antagonize pro-Chinese Easterners and would "impair our cause and cripple their [the congressional delegation] efforts to secure amendments to the Restriction Act which shall make it effective..." To this end, the anti-Chinese League impressed upon its members and the community that only peaceful means would be used to expel the Chinese. Leaders constantly admonished their members that violence was to be avoided as antithetical to the cause.[28] It was compliance with that principle which persuaded the Bloomfield committee to voluntarily disband after several of its members blew up a house occupied by Chinese – described as "playful acts" – after the white owner of the property refused to comply with an order from the organization to oust them.[29]

Although the boycott was conceived as a peaceful method of ridding the county of its Chinese by removing their sources of income, some towns upped the intensity and

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[28] "Cause of the Present Agitation," *Daily Democrat*, February 6, 1888, warned that earlier debates of exclusion legislation in congress were poisoned by violence that alienated Easterners, acknowledging that "great harm had been done in the older [Eastern] states whose people were not affected as ours were by contact with the Chinese, and who were slow to realize and appreciate the evils resulting therefrom," and "made them rather our enemies than friends." The *Daily Republican* adopted a similar tone, noting that "the principal actors of this movement [those denouncing the anti-Chinese movement] do not expect much help or encouragement from the people on this coast, but look to the East for support and sympathy." "The Chinese Question," *The Daily Republican*, January 8, 1886. Thus, non-violence was a placebo to the East in order to facilitate an amendment to the Exclusion Act of 1882.
[29] "Agitation at Bloomfield," *Petaluma Weekly Argus*, March 20, 1886.

issued notices for the Chinese to vacate. [30] In spite of the pledge of no-violence against the Chinese, these notices were pregnant with threats of violence should they fail to heed the injunction. Cloverdale gave forty-eight hours' notice, on January 26, for its Chinese residents to leave town, and by January 30 it was reported that "there is not one Chinaman left in Cloverdale."[31] Cloverdale emphasized its determination by refusing to celebrate Chinese New Year.[32] Duncan Mills at first had difficulty in finding someone to lead the local anti-Chinese League for fear of Chinese retaliation, but when it was determined that there was no Chinese retaliation, Duncan Mills gave their Chinese thirty days to leave town. [33] Guerneville joined the boycott by giving its Chinese population two weeks vacate the town.[34] Not all towns gave an "or else" notice to vacate the city. Petaluma, for example, did not consider a notice to vacate, but engaged in a debate to consider the best method to eliminate the Chinese from the city, arguing against "mobbing" but instead to "do something that will starve them out."[35] There were, however, acts of violence in Sonoma County. One incident occurred in Santa Rosa, described with approval in the *Daily Democrat* which reported, with a modicum of pride, "the mature deliberation" of a group of young boys that pelted a Chinese with rotten eggs as he was exiting his boarding house.[36]

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[30] "The Anti-Chinese Meeting," *Daily Democrat,* January 28, 1886.
[31] "The Chinese Must Go," *Daily Republican,* January 26, 1886; "Local Brevities," *Daily Democrat,* January 30, 1886; "Anti-Chinese Meeting at Guerneville," *Daily Democrat,* January 30, 1886.
[32] "Daily Intelligence," *Daily Republican,* February 9, 1886.
[33] "From Duncan's Mill," *Weekly Argus,* February 20, 1886.
[34] John C. Schubert, *Guerneville Early Days: A History of the Lower Russian River.* (Guerneville, CA: J.C. Shubert, 2005), 157.
[35] "The Chinese Must Go," *Daily Democrat*, January 26, 1886; "From Duncan's Mills," *Petaluma Argus,* February 20, 1896.
[36] "The Festive Hoodlum," *Sonoma Democrat*, March 30, 1886.

Opposing the Boycott

There were indications of both Chinese and white resistance to the boycott movement and the expulsion of the Chinese from the county. When a group of forty to fifty citizens made the rounds of Chinese-owned businesses to determine when they would leave or if they would have to issue a stern warning, some Chinese expressed a determination to "stay and weather [the boycott] out."[37] A visit to a Santa Rosa Chinese laundry reportedly "showed the occupants not entirely discouraged by the boycotting," with the laundrymen appearing "quite cheerful." Whether the Chinese were expressing their true feelings, demonstrating false bravado, stoicism, or optimism, or just appearing "quite cheerful," the white citizens most likely considered this conduct as resistance to the boycott. Noting these expressions and the Chinese refusal to remove themselves, as well as the continued patronage of some whites, the article warned that by March 1 the Chinese would not be "so festive."[38] A committee of Santa Rosa's anti-Chinese League did, in fact, visit the Chinese laundries and ordered them to leave the city by March 1.[39] It would appear the Chinese were divided as to the best course of action. While one hundred fifty were preparing to leave the city by March 1, others were resolved to resist the boycott and remain.[40]

Some in the Euro-American community protested or resisted the boycott. In Petaluma, a group of angry group of farmers met in Petaluma, claiming that the boycott made many people "restive under boycott threats." Contending the boycott was never contemplated when the anti-Chinese League was first organized, a new organization, the

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[37] "Anti-Chinese Meeting," *Daily Democrat,* February 10, 1886; "Going," *Daily Democrat,* February 18, 1886.
[38] "Anti-Chinese Meeting," *Daily Democrat,* February 18, 1886.
[39] "Notice Given to the Chinamen," *Daily Democrat*, February 10, 1886.
[40] "Anti-Chinese Meeting," *Daily Democrat,* February 10, 1886; "Going," *Daily Democrat.* February 18, 1886.

Boycotters League of Petaluma, was formed to promote the boycott. Angrily responding to the boycott, the group adopted a resolution denouncing the boycott.[41] The *Petaluma Argus*, while anti-Chinese in outlook, opposed the boycott on grounds of economic liberty, asserting that business owners should be free to hire whomever they pleased.[42] Many did not vocally protest the boycott, but nonetheless registered either their need for Chinese labor and products, or their disagreement by backsliding and breaking their pledge.[43]

There were those who were vocal. One unnamed employer of a Chinese declared he would keep his "Chinaman." His employee had cut his queue, and "donned American dress, even to the dude collar and the pointed shoes."[44] Some white citizens may have silently protested the boycott by hiding their Chinese friends or employees. A few residents wrote letters of objection to the editors of local newspapers, but they were the exceptions. In one, the writer presciently predicted that the anti-Chinese hostility would not last twelve months.[45] Those voices were few, overwhelmed by the sheer number of column inches devoted to anti-Chinese editorials, letters in support of the boycott, reports of the meetings and activities of the Anti-Chinese Leagues, the continuing reports of Chinese leaving the urban areas or enduring hardships, and the general perception of the progress of the boycott.

The Sonoma County vintners and hop-growers disagreed with the boycott, but did not actively oppose it: their resistance appears to have been limited to postponing the

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[41] "Anti-boycott Meeting Held by County Fruit Growers," *Daily Alta California,* April 22, 1886, California Digital Newspaper.
[42] "Personal Rights," *Petaluma Argus*, March 6, 1886; "The Boycott," *Petaluma Argus*, March13, 1886.
[43] "Anti-Chinese Meeting," *Daily Democrat,* March 30, 1886; "The Chinese at Home," *Daily Democrat,* February 13, 1886; "Going," *Daily Democrat,* February 18, 1886.
[44] Going to Keep His Chinaman," *Daily Democrat,* February 27, 1886.
[45] "John Chinaman," *Daily Democrat,* Feb. 20, 1886.

boycott until after the harvest. The growers feared that with the loss of Chinese labor they would be unable to obtain suitable white labor by harvest time and warned that hasty imposition of the boycott would impair their investments before they could find substitute labor. [46] Both the *Sonoma Democrat* and the *Sonoma Index Tribune* responded with editorials pleading for the indulgence of the Sacramento Anti-Chinese League to delay the imposition of the boycott on Sonoma growers.[47] The Sacramento Anti-Chinese Executive Committee quickly addressed the concerns of the Sonoma growers when they recommended to Sonoma County that "after May 1st the members of the association cease to patronize those who can dispense with Chinese help and will not, but postpone the general boycott until the 10th of November next," a date beyond the fall harvest, and admonishing their members that "everyone who can should let the Chinese severely alone from this date."[48]

The Anti-Chinese Leagues had serious concerns over the effect of these "backsliders" – those in the white community who continued to employ or continued to patronize the Chinese. Secret committees were formed to spy on local businesses or individuals to "ascertain those whose sympathies lay with the Chinese."[49] Those found in non-compliance would risk being exposed to public shaming and obloquy. In Healdsburg, the names of two farmers and a "well-known lawyer" were published in leaflets and distributed throughout the town. A Petaluma member characterized a Prof. Lippitt, one of the "three very obnoxious opponents" of the boycott, as a special target.

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[46] "The Chinese Question in its Local Aspect," *Sonoma Index Tribune,* February 6, 1886.
[47] Ibid.; "The Boycott Proceeds," *Sonoma Index Tribune,* April 10, 1886; "The Boycott," *Daily Democrat,* March 14, 1886.
[48] "The Boycott Again," *Daily Democrat,* March 16, 1886.
[49] "Anti-Chinese Meeting," *Daily Republican*, May 15, 1886; "Install Officers," *Daily Democrat,* May 15, 1886, reporting that the names of the committee's members would not be made public and its meetings would be secret, but their intent was to shame any "backsliders" or uncooperative citizens with public rebukes.

One member suggested that the committee call on Prof. Lippitt's employer, the Donahue Road Company, where he was their attorney, and demand his dismissal.[50] Wealth and status did not render one immune to the consequences of non-compliance with the boycott. John McNear, one of Petaluma's most prominent and influential citizens, was "conspicuously singled out" for "inquisitorial thumbscrews" for providing employment to Chinese in Petaluma.[51] By singling out McNear it was clear to all that no one would be exempt from the tentacles of the boycott.

Ridding the county of the entire Chinese population was the overriding consideration and the moving force of the boycott. The *Daily Republican* urged that citizens not only withdraw economic support from the Chinese, but deny them housing as well when it editorialized: "Let us starve them out and refuse patronage to anyone who keeps them in their employment or hires them premises to live in."[52] Similar notions frequently appeared in the press and in letters to the editor.

The Boycott: Its Effects and Failure

The boycott had an immediate effect. In mid-February, all of the Chinese employed on the narrow gauge railroad were discharged and replaced with white workers.[53] Santa Rosa merchant Mon Sing reportedly closed his business as early as March because he could no longer make a living since the Chinese had departed.[54] By

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[50] "Anti-Chinese Convention," *Daily Republican,* June 8, 1886; "Anti-Chinese Meeting," *Daily Democrat,* May 15, 1886.
[51] "The Boycott," *Petaluma Argus*, March 13, 1886.
[52] "The Chinese Must Go," *Daily Republican,* January 26, 1886.
[53] "Local Intelligence," *Daily Republican,* February 20, 1886.
[54] "Local Intelligence," *Daily Republican,* March 2, 1886.

April 10, the last vegetable peddler had reportedly left Santa Rosa.[55] Bloomfield's "large Chinatown" was quickly decimated. In April there were only four Chinese left, and they were unemployed.[56] In that town, notwithstanding the fact that the Chinese did the "majority of the work" and provided the necessary seasonal labor, the boycott was particularly harsh. Many of their water holes were poisoned, "reputedly" killing as many as 17 Chinese.[57] According to the *Daily Republican,* the last Chinese vegetable peddler left Petaluma in early April.[58] The Chinese were not only being denied employment and business, but housing. Judge Johnson evicted them from two of his rental houses in Santa Rosa on Second Street.[59]

The Chinese departed from many towns throughout the county. In early February, only five "discouraged" Chinese remained in Windsor.[60] Within four weeks the more than four hundred Chinese in Sebastopol and the vicinity were reduced to less than fifty, "few of whom are employed." No Chinese were left in nearby Analy, where the local residents refused to hire the Chinese even to cut wood.[61] In Healdsburg, Truitt's Theater was "packed to capacity," the audience unanimously declaring "The Chinese Must Go." Making good on the threat, Healdsburg was reported to have reduced its Chinese population to twenty-five by June 3, just short of the denouement of the boycott.[62]

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[55] "Local Intelligence," *Daily Republican,* February 20, 1886.
[56] "Local Brevities," *Daily Democrat*, February 26, 1886; "Local Brevities," *Daily Democrat*, April 16, 1886.
[57] Hannah Clayborn, *Dirt Roads and Dusty Trails: A Bicentennial History of Bloomfield, Sonoma County, California* (Santa Rosa, CA: Cleone Publishing Company, 1976), 41.
[58] "Local Intelligence," *Daily Republican,* April 10, 1885.
[59] "Vacated," *Daily Democrat,* February 20, 1886.
[60] "Anti-Chinese Meeting at Windsor," *Daily Democrat*, February 18, 1886.
[61] "Sebastopol Notes," *Daily Democrat*, March 16, 1866.
[62] "Healdsburg in Line," *Daily Republican,* January 29, 1886; "Local Brevities," *Santa Rosa Democrat*, June 3, 1886.

Many Chinese left the county within days and weeks after the boycott, creating a shortage of white labor in the county.[63] One report lamented that "the proprietor of the [local] employment bureau states that he has not been able to supply the demand for white labor from the ranks of the laboring class in this city and has had to send to San Francisco for help." The paper editorialized that white laborers avoided the arduous work in the fields, preferring to "drive a hack, tend a poodle dog, advertise a saloon, or some light employment."[64] By April the effect of the boycott was so severe that growers sought "white men and white women, including boys and girls to seek employment at reasonable wage" in "all lines of labor filled by Mongolians."[65] The same plea to replace Chinese labor would be made again after the boycott.

The boycott had disastrous effects on those Chinese unable or unwilling to flee. Within a month after the boycott was declared, the "Santa Rosa Chinese were never poorer than at present. Some suffered privation, poverty kept many in place, others were reduced to eating roots or weeds, and others lost their businesses. Many of them would be glad to leave us, but have no money to go on."[66] Some managed to take in laundry, while a few were still employed as servants. Those residing in the two Chinese boarding houses on Hinton Avenue were reduced to eating "a kind of leaf and root which grows along the river."[67] A Chinese firm on the corner of Fifth and Mendocino Streets closed, the owner having left for China.[68] By March 2 only one vegetable vendor was left in the city, down

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[63] "Local Brevities," *Daily Democrat,* February 02, 1886, "Still they go. Seven Chinamen left town Friday afternoon"; "Local Brevities," *Daily Democrat,* February 20, 1886, noted more Chinese leaving in late February.
[64] "Scarcity of White Labor," *Daily Democrat,* February 24, 1886.
[65] "The Boycott Progressing, "*Sonoma Index Tribune,* April 10, 1886.
[66] "Local Brevities," *Daily Democrat*, February 24, 1885.
[67] "How Do They Live," *Daily Democrat*, April 16, 1886.
[68] "Local Brevities," *Daily Democrat*, March 10, 1886.

from four a month before.[69] It appeared he departed by June 19, prompting the *Daily Democrat* to report there were no more Chinese vegetable gardens.[70] One farmer provided transportation for his Chinese: Bayard Peterson dropped off a "peculiar spring crop" – a wagonload of Chinese whom he had discharged – in Santa Rosa.[71]

The *Daily Democrat* gave regular updates on the number of Chinese departing the city and the effect of the boycott. The worse the conditions became for the Chinese, the more successful the boycott appeared in the eyes of its supporters. No business was too small to participate. Throughout the boycott, and even before, Peavey's Drug Store in Santa Rosa repeatedly advertised that it employed no Chinese. By June, Santa Rosa's Chinese population dropped from 600 in January to 100 three months later.[72] On July 14, the Santa Rosa Woolen Mill proudly announced it employed no Chinese.[73] In Sonoma County and elsewhere the boycott began to lose steam by June. At the beginning of June the members of the Grape-growers and Wine-makers Association (certainly many Sonoma growers would have been members) denounced the boycott and declared it a failure."[74] The boycott failed to attain its stated goal of driving all the Chinese from the county. Although there was an exodus of Chinese from Sonoma County during the boycott, it wasn't permanent. Overall the county's Chinese population increased from 904 in 1880 to 1,145 in 1890, an increase of 26.65 percent during the decade in which

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[69] "Local Brevities," *Daily Democrat*, March 2, 1886;
[70] "Local Brevities," *Daily Democrat*, June 19, 1886.
[71] "A Spring Crop," *Daily Democrat*, February 24, 1886.
[72] Street, *Beasts of the Field*, 351. This figure is commonly used in every history of Sonoma County in which the boycott is part of the narrative. None of the many local sources that I examined have given a source reference to validate that figure. See also Harry J. Hansen and Jean Thurlow Miller, *Wild Oats in Eden, Sonoma County in the Nineteenth Century* (Santa Rosa, CA: [NP], 1952), 84-85. Any figures, other than the official census figure, should be viewed with caution; they may have been perception rather than enumeration. There is no evidence of how the Chinese were counted during this period.
[73] "SR Woolen Mills," *Daily Democrat*, July 14, 1886.
[74] "Grape Growers Meeting," *Sacramento Daily Union*, June 2, 1886, California Digital Newspaper Collection.

exclusion laws were enacted and the boycott was imposed. In 1891 the Chinese continued to return to Sonoma County and businesses began to establish (or reestablish) themselves. "Another" Chinese grocery store opened at Second Street and D in Santa Rosa in 1891, while the Chinese population of Santa Rosa increased by 100.[75] Locals could celebrate the Fourth of July in 1901 by purchasing firecrackers from Yet Hop's store at 419 Fourth Street.[76]

The reasons for the boycott's demise are unclear. Richard Steven Street attributes the death of the boycott not to resistance or lack of enthusiasm, but to a ruse by Major W. J. Burns, a secret operative working closely with the Six Companies. That summer Burns frightened zealots with the false claim that he intended to publish the membership rolls of the anti-Chinese groups, then threatened that the government would arrest and prosecute 5,000 members, all of whom would be held on a 300-acre tract near Folsom Prison pending trial. According to Street, Burns further promised to record the names of property-owning boycotters to make it easier for the government to confiscate their property. Street claims Burns' disinformation campaign ended the boycott and "intimidated anti-Chinese boycotters and drove them into the shadows," but did not end their anti-Chinese activities.[77]

To find the reasons for the collapse of the boycott, it is necessary to examine the attitudes toward the boycott throughout the state. While extolling the need to reduce Chinese immigration or to use solely white labor, a plethora of newspaper editorials and public objections to the boycott by growers associations throughout the state railed against the imposition of the boycott, or warned of its harsh application, on a variety of

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[75] "Chinese Grocery," *Daily Democrat*, January 31, 1891.
[76] Yet Hop advertisement, *Press Democrat*, June 28, 1901.
[77] Street, *Beasts of the Field,* 351.

grounds.[78] The common objections were interference with their freedom to contract, the impairment of existing contracts with Chinese tenants, that the boycott was unfair and unjust, and that the immediate cessation of the use of Chinese labor would cause financial hardship or bankruptcy. Michelle Stover underscored the "need" for Chinese labor in pointing out that the housewives of Chico, California won the domestic argument to keep their Chinese house servants.[79] When put to a public referendum in the city of Hayward in Alameda County, a local newspaper reported that "the Boycotters were excellently organized," but out of a total vote of 300, the boycott ticket got "an average vote of 40."[80] We can only speculate that the sentiments of the editorials and objections of the agriculturalists eventually coalesced into the consciousness of a significant portion – if not a majority – of the public, causing the boycott to eventually lose popular support. This was perhaps aided in some fashion by Major Burns' deception. While anti-Chinese racial attitudes continued to persist, the public appears to have lost its taste for severe actions in the boycott. Perhaps being required to participate in such harsh measures or run the risk of public opprobrium, and seeing the effect on the Chinese and local businesses, was finally too much to bear.

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[78] For example see, "Press Expressions," *Sacramento Daily Union,* April 19, 1886, California Digital Newspaper Collection; "The Labor Problem; Anti-Coolie Conclusions," *Pacific Rural Press,* April 10, 1886 California Digital Newspaper Collection; The Labor Problem: State Horticultural Society Meeting," *Pacific Rural Press,* May 8, 1886, California Digital Newspaper Collection; "Opposed to Boycott," *Pacific Rural Press,* May 15, 1886, California Digital Newspaper Collection; "State Horticultural Society; Resolutions Adopted concerning Chinese in California," *San Francisco Bulletin* published as Daily Bulletin, February 27, 1886, California Digital Newspaper Collection; "Reaction; Farmers and Fruit Growers to the Front," *San Jose Evening News* published as *The Daily News,* March 5, 1886, California Digital Newspaper Collection; "Action by Mendocino Hop Growers," *Pacific Rural Press,* April 3, 1886, California Digital Newspaper Collection.

[79] Shover , Michelle, "Chico Women: Nemesis of a Rural Town's Anti-Chinese Campaigns, 1876-1888," *California History* 67, no. 4 (December 1988): 228-243, JStor Article DOI: 10.2307/25158493, stable URL: http://0-www.JStor.org.iii.sonoma.edu/stable/25158493.

[80] "Anti-Boycott Meeting; Alameda County Opposes the New Anti-Chinese Movement; The Farmers' Resolutions; Election at Haywards (sic) – The Boycotters Defeated – Speeches by Prominent Citizens – Injury to the Fruit Interests," *Daily Alta California,* May 6, 1886, California Digital Newspaper Collection.

Yet, for all of the public excitement preceding the boycott, I found no public record in Sonoma County of any debates, meetings, controversy to end or continue the boycott, or mention of Burns' activities and no public explanation was given for its sudden termination. The local newspapers that so vociferously supported the boycott were remarkably silent throughout the denouement of the boycott. There was no public outcry on either side of the issue.

The end of the boycott did not bring an end to the Anti-Chinese Leagues and their activities.[81] Even after the boycott petered out, there was still strong public opinion against hiring Chinese workers: the Anti-Chinese leagues continued to exist, and although their activities were more muted their goal remained the same. The underlying antagonism toward Chinese labor was sometimes accompanied by violence, especially when unemployed white workers were in the neighborhood. Nineteenth century anti-Chinese responses to Chinese labor competition could be expected if the kindling and the fire were in close proximity. A late nineteenth-century incident of violent retaliation against Chinese farm workers occurred in Cloverdale in March 1891, "four or five years after the town had been free from this alleged curse to California civilization," when some Chinese arrived in town and took up quarters in Frank McElarney's houses. Apparently, McElarney was about to employ these Chinese in Cloverdale. This probability stoked anti-Chinese passions, resulting in mass meetings reminiscent of the early days of the boycott. When the "merchants and others doing business" refused to support a boycott, it was "determined to experiment with the efficacy of fire as a means of enforcing respect for the Anti-Chinese sentiment." McElarney's property was set

[81] "Anti-Chinese Convention, *Sonoma Democrat,* June 12, 1886.

ablaze twice, the first attempt having failed. Even though the arsonist was caught, there was fear that some boycotters would kill Duffy, the arsonist, for confessing his crime.[82]

The intense anti-Chinese feelings were not localized but appeared to be county-wide, as evidenced by the case of Henry Leggett, a young Sonoma County farmer. The echo of the anti-Chinese movement surfaced in 1893, when Leggett, who employed twenty Chinese, received a threatening letter ordering him to "help out the whites and let your Chinese help go, or take the other. We mean what we say." To emphasize the seriousness of the threat, four matches were found in the envelope containing the letter.[83] Economic arguments continued to rage. Stereotypical ideas of Chinese frugality incensed local residents. "[The Chinese] pickers trade at the Chinese stores, buying everything they need in the way of food and clothing from their own countryman. At the end of the season the Chinese merchants make their remittances to the Chinese wholesalers in San Francisco, and the latter in turn send the money to China." Anti-Chinese proponents argued that using white labor would benefit the county by an estimated $100,000. [84] If the estimate that the Chinese previously outnumbered whites in the field by a ratio of ten to one, and now the reverse was true, the economy of the county should have been on a more solid economic footing.

Some Speculation

Why, then, did not all Chinese depart to more hospitable areas where employment was more certain, and where they might have found solace in the midst of more of their

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[82] "Cloverdale Firebugs; Some of the Results of the Anti-Chinese Agitation," *Daily Democrat,* March 14, 1891.

[83] "An Anonymous Warning," *Santa Rosa Republican,* September 5, 1893.

[84] "White Pickers; The Hops Will be worth $100,000 More to the County this Year," *Daily Democrat,* September 9, 1893 (These figures should be viewed with skepticism given the continuing unavailability of white labor); "The Hop Money; How Much of It Was Saved by Employing White Pickers, "*Sonoma Democrat,* September 30, 1893.

countrymen? Why did the Chinese persist in staying in Sonoma County? I believe the Chinese survived the boycott for three reasons. First, as a matter of speculation, the Chinese may have viewed the boycott as a short-term phenomenon that would eventually end. They had been the subject of decades of employment hostility, but always found employment in the face of prejudice-based resistance to their use. Because they withstood efforts in the past to oust them from the fields, they would have had reason to believe the growers would again seek their services because of their skill, availability, and price.

Second, their persistence was grounded in the very nature of Chinese immigration and family structure. As Madelyn Yuan-yin Hsu pointed out in *Dreaming of Gold, Dreaming of Home,*[85] the reciprocal obligations of the family and the immigrant outweighed his suffering. Family and community practices accommodated long term absences. Chinese emigration from Taishan County (the county from which the majority of Chinese emigrated) in large part was an organized affair within the family, the clan, and the village. It was based on notions of filial piety, kinship values, ties to native place, and a split-family structure that supported the immigrant. Families adhered to permanent responsibilities associated with familial bonds or resorted to adaptive strategies when reunification seemed impossible, and the willingness to "return the gaze of their immobile compatriots" created a stiff resolve for success.[86] And, though many miles away, the immigrant still maintained a place at the table in the Chinese kitchen and his advice and admonishments were frequently heeded. Common duties and expectations provided support for perseverance in the face of adversity.

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[85] Hsu, *Dreaming of Gold.*
[86] Hsu, *Dreaming of Gold,* 10.

Third, there was hope for a better life. The expectations of the Chinese were no different from other immigrants who hoped for a better future when they compared their life in California with the lower standard of living and social upheavals they had left behind. They felt "that the pot of gold was waiting in America at one end, and family and a life of leisure at the other."[87]

Finally, the boycott may have been no worse than the experiences of many in their native villages. In contemplating the vicissitudes of life in China with banditry, uprisings, warlords, floods, earthquakes, incessant poverty, and incompetent governance, life in China offered much less hope and profit.[88]

The Chinese could not know of the existential challenges they would face at the dawn of the twentieth century as a result of changing migratory patterns, the inability to replace a declining and aging population, and the entry of a new labor force that would eventually replace them in Sonoma agriculture. Most importantly, they could not see the effectiveness of the exclusion laws in breaking the cycle of immigration. They could not foresee that in a few years they would be permanently removed from the fields, not by a harsh boycott but by a combination of social and demographic forces. Yet, the change in migration patterns was one in which they unwittingly participated in their own demise as an agricultural labor force. In the meantime, for the first decades following the boycott they became the labor force to whom the Sonoma farmers turned when women, children, orphans, families, or white males could not be found for harvest labor. Clearly, the

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[87] Hsu, *Dreaming of Gold,* 14, 54; Julia Fong, "The Fong Family History," *Chinese History and Perspectives, Chinese America: History & Perspectives,* accessed March 20, 2011, Ebsco Academic Search Premier, 1999, SSN: 1051-7642, Accession No. 2230729.10517642, accessed September 9, 2012. For many, immigration was an individual choice to pursue a better life, and not all Chinese intended to return home.

[88] Yong Chen, "Understanding Chinese American Transnationalism During the Early Twentieth Century: An Economic Perspective," in *Chinese American Transnationalism,* 159.

Chinese had returned to Sonoma County, but the population surge between 1880 and 1890 would be short lived. Beginning in 1890, the population of the Sonoma County Chinese would begin to decrease, spiraling downward for at least four decades, and presenting an existential challenge to the Chinese community.

Chapter 3

Twentieth Century Challenges to the Sonoma Chinese, and Their Effects

The end of the boycott did not end the challenges the Sonoma County Chinese faced at the dawn of the twentieth century. Chinese patterns of internal migration would change, a flood of new foreign immigrants would be absorbed by Sonoma County agriculture, and the long-term effects of exclusion would prevent the replacement of sick or elderly Chinese workers by healthy, younger Chinese workers. Together these forces created an existential threat to the Sonoma Chinese community as its population fell from 1,140 in 1890 to 190 in 1930. This chapter will explain the nature, depth, and effect of these disparate forces on the Sonoma Chinese. The impacts would be felt for generations.

Migration to the Cities

Two major demographic trends affecting the Sonoma Chinese from 1900 to 1930 were internal migration to urban areas and the arrival of new Japanese and Italian immigrants. The exclusion laws have often been cited as a cause of the Chinese population decline in Sonoma County, but internal migration was the primary factor. The major effect of exclusionary legislation on the Sonoma Chinese community was to sever the tradition of chain migration whereby sons would replace their fathers. Cutting this chain prevented the replacement of aging or infirm workers.

As the nineteenth century was coming to a close, the local Chinese community would have to face the loss of able-bodied men as rural workers migrated to large urban areas. Those who worked in the fields faced stiff competition from competent Japanese and Italian immigrants who provided an alternative labor force for Sonoma farmers.

Although racial prejudice in the county ebbed from its nineteenth-century callousness, violence always remained beneath the surface when whites perceived Chinese to be competing with white workingmen. Chinese who were not merchants, restaurant owners, boarding house operators, or fruit dealers were relegated to menial wage labor in which the majority of all males earned their livings as servants, cooks, dishwashers, field workers, day laborers, and laundrymen.

The majority of the Chinese population of California no longer lived in rural areas, as they did in the nineteenth century.[1] Beginning in the late nineteenth or early twentieth century, the Chinese began a nationwide migration to urban areas. An official report of the State of California noted that in 1907-1908, "the Chinese population seems to be gradually leaving the agricultural fields and turning toward the cities and towns."[2] They moved to the cities and became "not only urban, but big city urban" dwellers.[3] A myriad of statistics provide evidence of the movement of the Chinese from the countryside to the cities. For example, by 1910, the Chinese had already become urban dwellers, with 76.0 percent living in urban areas (2,500 or more inhabitants) and only 24.0 percent in rural areas.[4] The transition would be almost complete by 1930, when only

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[1] Sucheng Chan, "Chinese Livelihood in Rural California: The Impact of Economic Change, 1860-1880," *Pacific Historical Review*, 53, no. 3 (August 1984), 276. JStor, article DOI: 10:2307/3639231, Article Stable URL: http://0-www.JStor.org.iii.sonoma.edu/stable/3639231.
[2] State of California, Bureau of Labor Statistics, *Thirteenth Biennial Report, 1907-1908* (Sacramento: Superintendent of State Printing, 1908), 202, books.google.com/books?id=uEiOhjVZKUEC&pg=PA36.
[3] Roger Daniels, "Chinese and Japanese as Urban Americans, 1850-1940," *The History Teacher,* 25, no. 4 (August 1992), JStor Article DOI: 10:2307/494351. Stable URL: http://0-www.jstor.org.iii.sonoma.edu/stable/494351. 435.
[4] U.S. Bureau of the Census, Bulletin 127, *Chinese and Japanese in the United States* (Washington D.C., 1910), Table 6, 8; Table 54, 26, http://www2.census.gov/prod2/decennial/documents/03322287%20no121-130ch08.pdf; Daniels, "Chinese and Japanese as Urban Americans," 427-441.

a few Chinese were rural dwellers. In California in 1930, 66.9 percent of the Chinese were living in urban areas, while 33.1 percent remained in rural locations.[5]

Sonoma County's loss of population during the early twentieth century has been commonly attributed to the effect of exclusionary legislation. However, the relative stability of the surrounding urban areas strongly indicates that it was the migration to the populated centers, not exclusion per se, that led to Sonoma County's loss of Chinese population. An examination of census data supports this conclusion.

Table 1. Chinese Population for the United States, California, Northern California Counties, Northern California Urban Areas and Sonoma County, 1890-1930

	1890	1900	1910	1920	1930
United States	107,844	89,853	71,531	61,689	74,954
California	72,742	45,753	36,248	28,812	37,361
Counties					
--Alameda	3,211	2,211	4,588	4,505	3,700
--Sacramento	4,831	3,254	2,143	1,954	2,792
--San Francisco	25,853	13,954	10,852	7,744	16,303
Urban Areas					
--Oakland	1,128	950	3,609	3,821	3,048
--Sacramento	1,753	1,065	1,054	831	1,366
--San Francisco	25,853	13,954	10,582	7,744	16,303
Sonoma County	*1,145*	*599*	*287*	*183*	*190*

Source: U. S.Bureau of the Census, 1910. Statistics of Population-Color, Table LX, Table 13 (Sex, Nativity and Color), Table 20 (Chinese Population by Counties), Table 23 (Population by Sex, General Nativity, and Color, for Places Having 2,500 Inhabitants or More), (www.census.gov/prod/www/decennial.html); U.S. Bureau of the Census,1930, Vol. II, Population-United States Summary, Table 17 (Population of the United States, by Color, Nativity, and Sex: 1930, 1920 and 1910), Population-California, Table 17 (Indians, Chinese and Japanese, 1910 to 1930, and Mexicans, 1930, for Counties and cities of 25,100 or More), (www.census.gov/prod/www/decennial.html)

There is general agreement among historians that the Exclusion Act of 1882 had a profound effect on Chinese immigration and decimated the Chinese population of the United States and California, the home of the largest population of Chinese in the country. However, rural migration played an equally important – if not more important – role in the loss of Sonoma County's Chinese population during the first decades of the

[5] U.S. Bureau of the Census, *Chinese and Japanese in the United States, 1910,* Table 54, 26.

twentieth century. Table 1 is a summary of population for the period 1890-1930 for the United States, California, and the major counties of Alameda, Sacramento, and San Francisco, and their urban centers of Oakland, Sacramento, and San Francisco. The table demonstrates the different demographic trends between the nation, the state, northern California urban counties and cities, and Sonoma County.

Neither Alameda County nor Sacramento County followed the national or state demographic trajectories, and both followed somewhat similar, though not parallel, demographic patterns. Alameda County lost population only during the 1890-1900 decade, and thereafter increased its population from that in 1890. Sacramento County, on the other hand, did suffer almost as precipitous of a drop as California (58 percent for California, 48 percent for Sacramento) between 1890 and 1900. During the next decade, however, Sacramento County's population did not drop as steeply as California's; after its initial decline, Sacramento's Chinese population remained relatively steady until 1930. Each municipality suffered population losses between 1890 and 1900, and both thereafter remained relatively stable through 1930. The explanation for the relative stability of the urban centers – that new immigrants compensated in part for exclusion-related losses – would lie in the fact that these urban areas were the ultimate destinations for many rural Chinese during the era, and these new migrants more than replenished the losses occasioned by exclusion.

Sonoma County demographics for this period do not follow the same pattern of either the nation, state, or local urban areas. We can hypothesize that its population decline was due factors other than, or in addition to, exclusion. Sonoma County lost population at a startling rate: from 1890 to 1900 the population fell to 599, from 1,145, a

loss of 53 percent; between 1900 and 1910, the population fell to 287, a loss of 109 percent; from 1910 to 1920, the population decreased to 183, a loss of 57 percent, then increased slightly to 190 in 1930, an increased of four percent. The county's loss of its Chinese population from the onset of exclusion to 1930 was 955, or 81.5 percent. My examination of the 1930 census of cities of 25,000 or more does not reveal any large municipality that suffered any significant loss of Chinese population over the two decades from 1910 to 1930 equivalent to that suffered by the Chinese of Sonoma County.[6]

San Francisco followed a demographic pattern similar to California, affected only by exclusion. As it is an urban enclave, one might ask why did its population numbers did not behave in a manner similar to its neighboring counties and cities. San Francisco is unique: it is both a city and county, and home of the largest Chinese population in the United States; it followed a pattern more similar to that of the nation and the state, losing about 20 percent its population between 1890 and 1900, thereafter decreasing continuously at a slower pace, until increasing its population by almost 30 percent between 1920 to 1930. San Francisco was more likely to be influenced by exclusion than either Oakland or Sacramento because it was the major port of entry for all Chinese and home of the nation's largest population. Further, there is no evidence that Chinese were migrating from San Francisco. Lastly, the numbers of migrants from rural areas may have been too small to offset the effects of exclusion because of San Francisco's unique role in Chinese immigration.

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[6] Author's conclusions based on a review of the U.S. Bureau of Census, 1930, Population, Part III, Table 17, www.census.gov/prod/www.decennial/html.

I contend that the major (not sole) reason for the almost existential loss of Chinese population in Sonoma County was their voluntary migration to major urban centers. This is supported by both the evaluation of census data and observations during the era. There is no doubt, however, that exclusion played an unquantified, but far lesser, role than normally attributed to it.

Song Wong gave a simple reason for the urban preference: all Chinese left Chinatown because of lack of work, and when young people came to the county seeking employment, there was no work.[7] Unfortunately, in the absence of letters, memoirs, or local news reports, we can only speculate that they were pushed out by the arrival of new Italian and Japanese immigrants and pulled by expanded job or entrepreneurial opportunities in urban areas, the availability of social and cultural resources there, and the protection of living in a larger Chinese community.

In some areas of Sonoma County the Chinese population was decimated and never recovered. The Chinese colonies in the Russian River, Redwood, and Ocean townships that engaged in forestry pursuits no longer existed by 1930. In 1900, 24 Chinese were employed in Ocean, 14 in Redwood, 19 in Russian River, and 22 in Salt Point. By 1920, neither Redwood, Russian River, or Salt Point had a Chinese population of more than three. Guerneville and Ocean had none.[8] Prior to the boycott, the Chinese were a substantial part of the lumber industry in these areas, working in the forests and in saw mills as bark cutters, sawyers, and cooks. Following the boycott it is likely that they were never rehired; and they had already been displaced from mining by the early twentieth century. My tally of the 1920 census reveals only 22 Chinese lived outside of

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[7] Doherty, "Sonoma Stories,"186.

[8] Author's calculations based on manuscript census data.

the townships of Santa Rosa, Petaluma and Sebastopol.[8] Petaluma continued to lose its Chinese population, which declined from 35 in 1905 to 15 in 1920, a loss of 57 percent.[9] The destruction of Petaluma's Chinatown twenty years later would further decimate their already diminished population.

One can only speculate upon the reasons the Chinese left the outlying areas. Perhaps the employers in the logging camps did not suffer a labor shortage, allowing the logging camps to employ preferred white labor. Then, too, these Chinese may have merely joined the trend for urban migration; there were no Chinatowns in these smaller enclaves and their social impulses and needs could not be fulfilled in these locations. The most likely explanation would seem to be that a combination of lack of employment and the general tendency of the times to resettle in larger communities with more cultural resources resulted in the Chinese leaving the forests of Sonoma County.

Japanese and Italian Competition

Beginning in the last decade of the nineteenth century, California's agricultural districts suffered a severe labor shortage. The shortage was caused in part by exclusion legislation, an aging Chinese work force, continued resistance to the use of Chinese labor, and, possibly, the recognition by farmers that Chinese labor would continue to be in diminishing supply.[10] The failure of families, women, boys, girls, and orphans to provide a cheap labor force was solved when the growers turned to the Japanese to harvest their

[8] If we assume that those unaccounted for (8) were to have moved to outlying areas, still only 25 Chinese would have lived in rural Sonoma County, or 13 percent of the total Chinese population in California.
[9] "Population of this City," *Petaluma Argus*, May 5, 1905; "The School Census is Made," *Petaluma Argus*, May 10, 1905. These interim census figures placed Petaluma's Chinese population at 35; there were no children.
[10] Ira B. Cross, *History of the Labor Movement in California* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1935), 262.

crops.[11] The increase in Japanese workers provided formidable competition to the Chinese in the fields. There were no Japanese in Sonoma County in 1870 and 1880. Table 2 illustrates how the Japanese population increased in counterpoint with the decrease of the Chinese population.

Table 2. Chinese, Japanese, and Italian Population: Sonoma County, 1890-1930

	Chinese	Japanese	Italians
1890	1,145	74	1,026
1900	599	148	1,266
1910	287	554	2,715
1920	183	506	2,843
1930	190	716	3,176

Source: Anthony Speth, *A History of Agricultural Labor in Sonoma County, California* (master's thesis, University of California, Berkeley, 1938), Table 1, Nativity of the Population of Sonoma County, 19.

The staff of the Presbyterian Mission School in Santa Rosa, as early as 1900, observed the "Japanese are flowing into our country in an ever-widening stream," and "readily find work in the fruit orchards and on the ranches," while, at the same time the Chinese were diminishing.[12] The Bureau of Labor Statistics noted in 1910 that, "Japanese are more numerous in the agricultural pursuits and the Chinese in domestic service and laundries."[13] One state report observed: "While there are still considerable numbers of Chinese employed in the fruit growing sections, their employment is not so extensive as to make them live competitors to the Japanese."[14] Another report noted that the Chinese were gradually being crowded out of agriculture and were increasing their participation in commercial activities, maintaining large markets, grocery stores, and

[11] Street, *Beasts of the Field,* 407-523 for the displacement of Chinese workers by Japanese and the Japanese in California agriculture; Cross, *History of California Labor,* 262.
[12] General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church, *Sixty Third Annual Report of the Board of Foreign Missions* (New York: Presbyterian Building, 1900), 282.
[13] U.S. Bureau of Census, *Chinese and Japanese in the United States, 1910*, 48.
[14] State of California, Bureau of Labor Statistics, *Fourteenth Biennial Report: 1909-1910* (Sacramento: Superintendent of State Printing.1910), 48, books.google.com/books?id=uEiOhjVZKUEC

"very large fruit canneries." [15] W. Flanders Setchell, president of the Valley Fruit Growers Association, in a letter to Frank L. Lathrop, Farm Expert of the State Board of Control, claimed "the Chinese, while still fairly numerous, were available in lessening numbers. Today, legislative exclusion has reduced the Chinese coolies to an almost disappearing quantity; whilse opportunity has served to transform the able and hard-working Japanese form laborers into prosperous farmers."[16]

Table 3. Total Improved Acres, Sonoma County: 1890-1920: Chinese and Japanese as a Percentage of the Total Improved Acreage of the County

	Total Improved Acres Farmed By Chinese	Chinese % Of Total Imp. Acres	Total Improved Acres Farmed By Japanese	Japanese % Of Total Imp. Acres
1890	576	0.19	0.00	0.00
1900	187	0.08	0.00	0.00
1910	85	0.03	81	0.03
1920	0	0.00	106	0.04

Source: State of California, State Board of Control, report to Gov. Wm. D. Stephens,, *California and the Oriental: Japanese, Chinese and Hindus,* (Sacramento, CA: State Printing Office, June 19,1920, revised to January 1, 1922), 120, books.google.com/books?id=ZbYTAAAAYAAJ .

Chinese were not only field hands, but formed partnerships that entered into share-cropping leases with white landowners whereby the Chinese would maintain the physical structures and equipment, plant, harvest and sell the crops and split the profits with the landlord at an agreed percentage. Table 3 shows the total number of improved acres farmed by the Chinese as a percentage of the total improved acreage in the county, and illustrates abandonment of tenant farming by the Chinese between 1890 and 1920;

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[15] State of California, State Board of Control, Report to Gov. Wm. D. Stephens, *California and the Oriental: Japanese, Chinese and Hindus,* June 19, 1920, revised Jan. 1, 1922 (Sacramento: California State Printing Office, 1922), 118. books.google.com/books?id=ZbYTAAAAYAAJ
The purpose of this report, though ostensibly dealing with "Orientals," was to support California's efforts to enact exclusionary legislation directed toward Japanese immigration as a result of the failure of the "Gentleman's Agreement." Japanese were at that time considered a bigger threat than the Chinese. 115.
[16] Ibid., 120.

during the same period the Japanese were rapidly establishing themselves as the primary Asian agriculturalists in Sonoma County.

The Chinese were the only Asian farmers in Sonoma County in 1890, farming 576 acres, or a total of 0.18 percent of the county's total improved acreage. The Japanese did not enter farming until 1910, with 81 acres or 0.03 percent of the total improved acreage of the county – about equal to what the Chinese had at the time. By 1920, the Chinese were no longer engaged in farming and the Japanese had increased their leases to 106 acres or 0.04 percent of the total improved acreage. This retrenchment from tenant farming in Sonoma County contrasts with Sucheng Chan's finding that as late as 1920 Chinese were still leasing thousands of acres in rice-growing areas of Colusa, Yolo, and Yuba counties, and fruit growing in the Vaca Valley of Solano County, and is evidence that the response of the Chinese in the different rural counties varied during the period.[17]

Additional evidence points to growing Japanese agricultural dominance not only in Sonoma County, but throughout the state. The total acres owned or purchased on contract by the Japanese in California was 74,769 acres and under lease or crop contract was 383,287 acres compared with that of Chinese farmers who owned or were purchasing on contract 12,076 acres and had under lease or crop contract 65,181 acres.[18] Further signs of the dominance of the Japanese in California agriculture are found in the agricultural statistics for 1910. In that year the value of all farm property owned by the Japanese was $22,709,156, representing 2,029 farms, while that of the Chinese was $8,600,010, representing 642 farms. The value of domestic animals owned by Chinese

[17] Chan, *This Bittersweet Soil,* 379, Table 31, 382-383.
[18] State of California, *California and the Oriental,* 47. Data therein compiled from official reports of the U.S. Government, State Surveyor General, Federal Census and Federal Irrigation Manager.

farmers was significantly less than the value owned by the Japanese; $253,718 compared to $727,843.[19]

The end to share-cropping had several adverse consequences. Most Chinese farms were operated by partnerships. The partnerships were usually more profitable than working for wages, and a vehicle for upward social mobility.[20] Thus, the retreat from tenant farming meant the loss of upward mobility that agricultural partnerships provided to the Chinese farmer. The number of farms operated by Chinese farmers was never significant, but by 1920 they were no longer able to employ any of their countrymen in the fields, adding to the diminution of available farm-labor employment. The end of tenant farming had important social and economic consequences for Chinese agriculturalists. In addition, the withdrawal from tenant farming reduced significantly an important point of interaction between the Chinese and the white community. The opportunity to negotiate with their white landlords and operate under the mutually beneficial landlord-tenant relationship was lost.

The State Board of Agriculture observed that nationwide "Italian immigration is of comparatively recent growth," beginning in 1880 and "rising to 100,135 in 1900 and reaching the high record of 285,731 in 1907." California's Italian population began its increase in 1890 when the population doubled to 15,495 from 7,537 in 1880. By 1900, there were 22,777 Italians in the state.[21] In Sonoma County, the Italian population slightly more than doubled from 1900 to 1910, from 1,266 to 2,715, and increasing to 3,176 in 1930. The percentage growth rate of the Italian population was not as impressive as that

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[19] U.S. Bureau of the Census, "*Chinese and Japanese in the United States*, Table 5, 44.
[20] Chan, "Chinese Livelihood in Rural California," 295-296.
[21] State of California, Board of Agriculture, *Statistical Report of the State Board of Agriculture for the Year 1919* (Sacramento: California State Printing Office, 1920), 28, 30.

of the Japanese, but their numbers were far greater, so that by 1930 the Italian population of the county exceeded the Japanese by 2,460.[22] The *Rural Survey of Marin and Sonoma Counties* conducted by the Presbyterian Church concluded that Italians and Swiss Italians were the largest group of foreign-born whites in Sonoma "who are found chiefly in the wine growing districts."[23]

Italians posed a formidable threat to the Chinese in agriculture, not only in viticulture, but as entrepreneurs as they developed their wineries and employed their countrymen. The Italians "made their most profound and lasting mark," when around 1881, Andrea Sbarboro formed a cooperative vineyard and winery in northwestern Sonoma County, four miles outside of Cloverdale. Financial difficulties forced him to reorganize as Italian Swiss Colony Agricultural Company in 1885, selling shares to investors. He employed Italians who "proceeded to plant the hillsides, battle grasshopper plague and erect the world's largest wine vault, a five-hundred-thousand-gallon subterranean tank cut into the solid rock," thence producing excellent wines under Pietro C. Rossi.[24] The venture is illustrative of the aggressive entrepreneurship the Italians brought to viticulture.

It was soon observed that "the Italian population of Sonoma County is larger than might be supposed. Their laboring class is slowly but surely crowding the Chinese out...The Chinese are inferior gardeners to the Italians, and cannot stand the competition, developing numerous wineries in the Healdsburg area, Windsor, Mark West and

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[22] See Table 2, page 51.
[23] Presbyterian Church of the U.S.A Board of Home Missions, Department of Church and Country Life, *A Rural Survey of Marin and Sonoma Counties of California* (New York: 1916), 31, books.google.com/books?id=50xAAAAAYAAJ,31.
[24] Street, *Beasts of the Field,* 367-368.

elsewhere."[25] Charles Forni recalled the displacement of the Chinese by Italians in neighboring Napa County in 1900: "...[t]he Italian immigration started here after 1900, they were coming in here pretty often... The Italians were adapted to vineyard work and we, they, beat the Chinamen out, in two years we cleaned them all out."[26]

The available evidence does not establish a cause-and-effect relationship between the increasing numbers of Japanese and Italians available to work and the Chinese being forced from agriculture. The evidence is sufficient to allow only a correlation between the increase in the population and participation of the Japanese and Italians in Sonoma County agriculture with the exodus of the Chinese, their reduced participation as wage earners, and their elimination as tenant farmers. It is a reasonable hypothesis that the Chinese were aware of the increased numbers pouring into the county, the reliability and proficiency of these new workers, and their aggressiveness in becoming part of the new labor force. If the Japanese and Italian immigrants did not force the Chinese from the fields, their increasing presence must have been a significant influence for many to leave the fields because it was evident opportunities were becoming significantly reduced as each ethnicity began employing members of its own group.

An Aging Population

Exclusion prevented the replacement of elderly workers. Table 4 demonstrates the changing demographics of the Chinese as a percentage of the total Sonoma County population from 1900 to 1930. The long term effects of exclusion on the demographics of the Sonoma County Chinese began to be felt in the decade 1900-1910 when the number of elderly people sixty years and over more than doubled from 8.72 percent to 19.77

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[25] "Our Italian Neighbors," *Sonoma Democrat,* April 3, 1886.
[26] Heintz, *The Role of Chinese Labor in Viticulture,* 98.

percent, remaining steady for the remaining two decades until 1930 when that cohort comprised 22.28 percent of the Chinese population.

Table 4. Age Distribution as a Percentage of the Total Chinese Population

Age	1900	1910	1920	1930
0-5 yrs	0.33	1.93	3.93	13.04
6-10 yrs	0.51	0.78	3.93	6.74
11-15 yrs	0.33	3.49	5.05	6.74
16-20 yrs	2.00	2.71	2.80	8.70
21-30 yrs	8.45	5.81	9.55	15.76
31-40 yrs	28.89	12.79	8.43	9.24
41-50 yrs	31.08	25.19	12.92	8.15
51-60 yrs	19.43	26.74	21.35	9.78
60+ yrs	8.78	19.77	32.02	22.28
Unknown		0.7		

Source: Author's calculations based on the manuscript census data.

Many of these elderly people no doubt suffered the effects of age-related or other illnesses that rendered them unable to work full time under the harsh conditions of field labor, or rendered them otherwise unemployable. I will discuss in Chapter 5 the combined effect of the increase in the aged and of the accelerated birth rate on the Chinese community. By the time of the boycott, the Chinese had survived generations of racial prejudice because of their value to Sonoma County's agriculture. A thriving merchant class had formed. Following the boycott, the Chinese faced a multi-faceted, existential threat: exclusion, internal migration, and new immigrants finding a home in

agriculture. At the end of the third decade of the twentieth century it seemed uncertain whether the Chinese would be able to remain in Sonoma County. As the Chinese faced the early twentieth century, the loss of population was accompanied by a stability in the remaining population that was exemplified by a retention of their traditional practices. At the same time, they were accommodating to Western values while raising larger families, which would change the demographic complexion of the local Chinatowns.

Chapter 4
The Chinese Remain Chinese:
The Persistence of Tradition

Even as the Chinese determinedly remained in Sonoma County in the early twentieth century, they continued to follow their cultural traditions through Chinese associations, tongs, burial customs, herbal medicine, and traditional holidays, as well as by maintaining typical Chinese attitudes towards gambling, religion, resolving disputes, and other issues. Trade organizations helped them keep touch with their roots by obtaining clothes, food, opium, news, and more from China. As the Chinese transformed their mentality, becoming acculturated and westernized settlers, they had no intention of losing their Chinese-ness, their sense of ethnic identity. This chapter will demonstrate their adherence to their traditions and their accommodation to at least some Western values during the initial period of their transformation.

The Chinese immigrating to California in the 1850s in search of gold had no intention of remaining in California; they were sojourners who, one day, intended to return to their native village, rejoin their wives, children, and parents as wealthy men with status in the community and retire with at least a modicum of wealth. When they arrived in California, they brought much of their home with them: language, food, clothing, traditions, and culture, all which would give them comfort and solace in a strange land against the hardships they would face. As sojourners, their object was to remain in America only so long as necessary to accumulate sufficient funds to allow them to return to their families in China wealthy men.[1] The enterprise was solely economic.[2]

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[1] Chan, *This Bittersweet Soil,* xx (preface). Chan warns against the use of the term "sojourner" or "settler" because it is impossible to know what is in the mind of each individual. That, of course, is true. She has,

As the Chinese began their transformation to transnationals, they developed an ethnic identity, submerging the parochialism that defined them by place of birth, village, or region within traditional dimensions.[3] The immigrants brought with them their customs, traditions, dress, food, language, and social organizations, which allowed them to give coherence to their existence, maintain their cultural identity, and provide a framework for comprehending life in the United States.[4] The sojourner had no incentive to acculturate into American life or adopt Western values, except where necessary or practical, and the maintenance of traditions eased the hardships of his quotidian existence and kept his connections with family and native place in a land that would never become home. The observance of many traditional Chinese practices allowed them to maintain their Chinese-ness as a source of pride, as well as reinforced their connections with their overseas families, native place, and country of their birth.

Chinese Associations, Tong Violence, and Crime

Chinese social or benevolent organizations played in important role in aiding the sojourner to maintain his identity. District associations (*huiguans*) were replications of the organizations in the native province or village, reflecting old world association-based clan [common family name] or districts of common origination [districts] or common

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however, edited a book on Chinese American transnationalism, a definition that would suffer the same infirmity.

[2] Yong Chen, "Understanding Chinese American Transnationalism" in *Chinese American Transnationalism,* 157-159, "it is not surprising, then, that the Chinese immigrant continued to view the United States primarily in economic terms, which helped them to endure their maltreatment as culturally and physically inferior people, and thus unsuitable to become part of the social and political fabric of America"; Paul C. P. Siu, "The Sojourner, "*The American Journal of Sociology,* Vol. 58, No. 1 (July 1952), 34-44.

[3] Yong Chen, "Understanding Chinese American Transnationalism" in *Chinese American Transnationalism,* 160.

[4] Yong Chen, *Chinese San Francisco,* 126.

dialect [language], but adapted to local conditions.[5] These associations were a fundamental part of individual identification, and their members (as were most Chinese immigrants) were mostly from the Sanyi (three county) or Siyi (four county) regions of the Pearl River Delta. These organizations performed a myriad of valuable functions: they met newly arrived immigrants as they arrived in San Francisco, provided lodging, forwarded letters to relatives in China, settled quarrels, outfitted miners, cared for the sick and indigent, built altars and temples, and exhumed the bones of deceased for shipment back to China.[6]

Where they were present in rural areas, they allowed rural Chinatowns to serve as "geographic sanctuaries" where the Chinese could enjoy common amenities of "ethnicity, language and cultural practices."[7] Stanford Lyman has argued that because of the absence of family life, these associations maintained a powerful hold on immigrant men, providing a venue for social interaction, recreation, employment opportunities, and, perhaps most importantly, that their bones would be returned to China for burial; it was not until the establishment of "conjugal and domestic life" that the Chinese worker began to free himself of his dependence upon the associations.[8]

There are no reports of any district association present in Sonoma County in any contemporary news articles. However, when the Works Project Administration surveyed the foreign-born in Sonoma County in 1936 it was revealed that the "majority of foreign born and second generation" were members of the Chinese Six Companies.[9] Because of

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[5] Yong Chen, *Chinese San Francisco*, 126-128.
[6] Sucheng Chan, *Asian Americans: An Interpretive History.* (Boston, MA: Twayne Publishers, 1991), 64.
[7] Street, *Beasts of the Field*, 300.
[8] Stanford Lyman, "Marriage and the Family among Chinese Immigrants in America." *Phylon,* 29, no. 4 (4th Qtr. 1968), 322.
[9] U.S. Works Project Administration, *Foreign Born in Sonoma County*, Richard Brooks and Dorothy Wolf, compilers (Santa Rosa?: Works Project Administration, 1926), 44-46.

the ages of the members, it is not unreasonable to assume they were members for many years. Tong lodges provided an alternative organizational refuge to the district associations. Tong lodges were an off-shoot of the Triad Societies that were organized to overthrow the Qing Dynasty. Membership was not restricted to family, place, or language, but they were sworn brotherhoods that bound their members together through secret initiation rites. In addition to providing an alternative to membership in the district associations, the tongs offered their members protection from the lawlessness of other Chinese and from white people's discrimination.[10] There is ample evidence that these organizations were active in rural California during the first three decades of the twentieth century, and ample evidence that many Sonoma Chinese were members of tong lodges.[11]

Some tong organizations became enmeshed in a variety of illegal activities, including opium, gambling, and prostitution, crimes that were tolerated in China but illegal in the United States.[12] These lodges, known as fighting tongs, placed enforcement in the hands of feared hatchet-men (also called highbinders) who traveled throughout the state enforcing the obligations of the tong, whether attempting to kidnap women for prostitution, collecting debts, shaking down merchants, or committing mayhem or

[10] Tong War, Encyclopedia Britannica Online, accessed December 25, 2012, http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/599143/tong war.

[11] Paul Chase, "On Dying American: Cantonese Rites for Death and Ghost Spirits in an American City," in *Chinese American Death Rituals: Respecting the Ancestors,* ed. Sue Fawn Chung and Priscilla Wegar, (Lanham, MD: AltaMira Press, 2005), 53-56, discusses the contributions of the Marysville tongs in assisting in traditional burials of Chinese. In Sonoma County, the tong murder at the Finley Ranch and numerous other news reports of tong activity indicate a significant number of Chinese were tong members.

[12] Chan, *Asian Americans*, 67. Gambling and the use of opium products are described by C.N. Reynolds as "two important Chinese vices" that were indulged in by the Chinese in China with a temperance that was "largely removed in America," C. N. Reynolds, "The Chinese Tongs." *American Journal of Sociology,* 40, no. 5 (March 1935), 616. Tong War, *Encyclopedia Britannica Online.*

murder.[13] Sonoma County was the site of repeated tong violence that was a concern to the entire Chinese community.[14] During the thirty-year span, 1900 to 1930, the county witnessed numerous threats, assaults, murders, and kidnappings that usually originated from out-of-town tongs seeking to collect debts, exact revenge, or to protect or establish territory for their business activities.[15]

The Chinese Freemasons (Chee Kung tong) were non-fighting tongs; they maintained lodges or halls in Santa Rosa, Sebastopol and Petaluma.[16] In Petaluma, the Freemasons were well known for their display of national pride by flying the Chinese flag in celebration of important events "on numerous occasions."[17] The lodge existed peacefully in the community, and was only a source of controversy when it was attacked by an adjacent property owner who threw a rock through a window, destroying some property. A letter to the editor from the lodge seems to have resolved whatever local issues prompted the mischief.[18] Although members of other local tong lodges were the recipients of threats or worse, there were no reported incidents of any Freemason members involved in any incidents during the county's tong wars.

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[13] Sue Fawn Chung, *In Pursuit of Gold: Chinese and American Miners and Merchants in the West* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2011), 27, accessed April 1, 2014, books.google.com/books?isbn=0252093348, argues that there is a misunderstanding of the nature of the violence. Chung claims they were a part of the internal resolution of disputes that allowed the Chinese to bypass American courts.

[14] Street, *Beasts of the Field,* 397-398, argues the Tong Wars were one of the causes of the migration of the Chinese from the countryside to the cities. I could find no evidence of this for Sonoma County, and consider it doubtful because they knew they could not escape the Tongs Wars in the cities where they were fighting more fiercely than in the rural areas.

[15] Reynolds, "The Chinese Tongs," *American Journal of Sociology,* 618-621.

[16] Ibid., 620. The Chinese Freemasons were not "of the same stamp" as the fighting tongs.

[17] "Chinese New Year Began Today," *Petaluma Argus,* February 13, 1926; "Are Razing Chinatown," *Petaluma Argus,* January 7, 1926.

[18] "Has His Say," *Petaluma Daily Courier*, October 11, 1901. The incident is reported in an appeal by Yee Kam to the Petaluma Board of Trustees on behalf of the residents of Chinatown in response to a petition denouncing Chinatown as a haven for lawbreakers, arguing the troubles arising in Chinatown were caused by outsiders. The stone-thrower, according to Yee Kam, was one of the signers of that petition. Yee Kam denied that any illegal activities were occurring, concluding with the plea, "All we ask is to be left alone and we will not violate any of the laws of the state." On the razing of Chinatown and the destruction of the lodge, see "Are Razing Chinatown," *Petaluma Argus*, January 7, 1926.

Some may think the Chinese Freemasons were associated with or a formal adjunct of international Freemasonry, which would represent an acculturative impulse by some Chinese Americans to form an organization affiliated with, or part of, the international organization of Freemasonry. International Freemasonry has denied any connection between itself and the Chinese Freemasons.[19]

There is a brief mention of a Chinese Odd Fellows lodge in Santa Rosa. The interior of both the Santa Rosa Freemasons and Odd Fellows were similar; their halls maintained traditional Chinese décor, "similar in arrangements, a picture of their High God Being the center figure over a table, on which are artificial flowers, candles, urns, and various sauce-plate-shaped vessels containing different oils. At midnight a bountiful repast is spread on the table for the gods to partake of at their pleasure. At the same time the spirit-lamp and candles are lit, and kept burning throughout the night. At the Odd Fellows hall, the three links are represented by three small dishes containing different colored oils which occupy the foremost place on the table."[20] Except for this report, nothing further is known of the Chinese Odd Fellows, and it is doubtful that it survived into the twentieth century.

Many local Chinese were members of Tong lodges and were often the target of out-of-town violence. The most notorious was the murder at the Harrison Finley Ranch, when the San Francisco Tong wars spilled over into Sonoma County on March 9, 1916. It

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[19] "The Grand Lodge of British Columbia and the Yukon, "Chinese Freemasons," accessed August 12, 2013, http://freemasonry.bcy.ca/history/chinese_freemasons/; Francis Hern in Chapter 5, "Mounting Discrimination," in *Amazing Stories: Yip Sang and the First Chinese Canadians* (Toronto, CAN: Heritage House Publishing Co.) [unpaginated version], accessed October 10, 2013, books.google.com/books?isbn=1926936965, "The Chinese Freemason were not affiliated with western freemasonry, however, they too had a somewhat secretive background."

[20] [No headline], *Sonoma Democrat*, January 16,1886, page 1, column 6. I was unable to locate any evidence of a relationship between the Chinese Odd Fellows Lodge and the Western Lodges. The fact that Chinese were denied burial in the Odd Fellows cemetery in Santa Rosa would belie any formal relationship.

was then that the Hop Sing and Suey Sing tong gangs surprised members of the Bing Kong tong society who were employees of the ranch. Lee Sing Park, Toy York, and Willie Yee arrived by taxi and saw a member of the Bings, Hom Hong, chopping wood. Willie fired five pistol shots at Hom Hong, killing him and then warning the six surviving workers, "There's one shot left for anyone who testifies against us," before throwing the pistol into the hop field. The culprits were soon arrested. One pled guilty, the other two were tried and sentenced to prison.[21] Local police would sometimes warn a local tong member that he might be the target of a hatchet man. In 1927, Wing Wo, a well-known laundryman in Petaluma, and reputedly a member of the Hop Sing tong, was warned by the police that the Los Angeles tong wars were expanding to San Francisco and that he might be in danger. He purchased a revolver, and the police chief ordered that any strange Chinese in the city be stopped. The *Petaluma Argus* editorialized that the Bing tong were on the warpath and members of the Hop Sing tong were marked for death.[22] This is illustrative of the close relationship of the police to local tong members, their knowledge of local tong membership, their recognition of the violent nature of tong activities at that time, and their willingness to take pre-emptive action to avoid tong conflict and protect local residents.

The whole community was sensitive to the threat of highbinders and the violence they brought with them. In March of 1901, personnel at the Presbyterian mission school reported to the Santa Rosa police that they "had every reason to believe" that one of their charges, Sum Low, "was in danger of falling into the hands of Chinese highbinders," and

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[21] Wallace Ware, *The Unforgettables,* (San Francisco: Hesperian Press, 1964); Carmen Finley, *The Finleys of Early Sonoma County* (Bowie, MD: Heritage Books, 1997), 30. The date of the event varies greatly. Finley places the event on March 9, 1916; Street, *Beasts of the Field,* 397, dates the murders in spring, 1900; and the official report of the appeal of the conviction of William Yee, *People v. Yee,* 37 Cal. App. 519, places the event on March 11, 1917. The latter, based on official records, is probably correct.
[22] "Local Chinese Receive Warning," *Petaluma Argus*, January 7, 1927.

sought police protection for her. One week earlier, members of the Suey Sing tong arrived in Santa Rosa and sought to obtain possession of her. After police raided the living quarters of the highbinders, they were ordered to leave town. Shortly thereafter, a Chinese gentleman from San Francisco appeared demanding the arrest of the woman on grand larceny, claiming she ran away from her husband with six hundred dollars with a man who alienated her affections. The San Francisco man had no warrant, but claimed one would be telegraphed. The authorities intervened and placed the woman under the protection of Mrs. Todd of Healdsburg, where Sum Low saved money from her wages as a seamstress with the goal of returning to China.[23] The *Santa Rosa Republican* was skeptical of the claim of an outstanding warrant for Sum Low's arrest, opining it was a ruse by her enemies to capture her.[24] Yet the mere possibility of a highbinder threat was sufficient for the police to order the out-of-town tongs out of Santa Rosa and secrete Sum Low for her safety.

Song Wong often saw the results of the Tong wars. When asked by Gaye LeBaron to "talk about the Tong wars" she described what she saw as a young girl growing up in Santa Rosa's Chinatown:

> Well, we lived next door to a Chinese temple and they ... different Chinese, you know, they have several, how shall I say, like gangs. So, they get into problems like gambling and things like that in the bay area [sic] and everything. And they pay these men, say a hundred dollars to go kill them. They'd come up here and hide. Because they know that my dad had a boardinghouse and everything and they come up here every once and awhile they catch one....So every once in a while I see a body lying out there in the alley. They would get into an argument over maybe opium debt or gambling debt.[25]

[23] "Waiting for Necessary Warrant," *Santa Rosa Press Democrat,* March 1, 1901.
[24] "Chinese Girl Fears Highbinder' Plot; Applies to Police for Protection; They Charge Her With Grand Larceny but Produce no Warrant for Her Arrest," *Daily Republican*, March 1, 1901.
[25] Doherty, "Sonoma Stories," Appendix C, 192.

An episode of Tong violence broke out in Santa Rosa in August 1929 and provoked a heretofore unseen reaction among the residents of Chinatown. An apparent dispute between the Bing Kong tong and the Hop Sing tong resulted in the murder of Chew Tuck, allegedly a Hop Sing member. Fear spread through Chinatown. "Tong members remained fortified behind barred doors in darkened rooms, and the population of the district as far as the casual passerby could see, was made up chiefly of women and children." Li Tong, a local Hop Sing member, considered arming himself, though he thought it was unlikely the police would issue a permit because "it would establish a bad precedent."[26]

Harry Wong, Song Wong's brother, related an incident that occurred in 1929 or 1930. A group of Chinese from San Francisco who intended to open a restaurant in Santa Rosa (later discovered to be used as a hideout) were shot down in the street. Harry related to Gaye LeBaron, that one morning on the way to school he saw people lying all over Second Street in an incident in which four died.[27] This incident was not described as an incident of tong violence, but its details seem to suggest it was not an individual dispute. Indeed, violence among and between Chinese was common, usually the result of someone being robbed returning from an evening of gambling or set off by some "slight affront" by an exhausted or despondent farm worker. Rarely were more than two or three individuals, usually the participants, involved in these crimes.[28]

By 1921 the community's fear of highbinders was palpable. The incident was initially reported on the front page of the *Santa Rosa Press Democrat* as "Chinese Tong

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[26] "Chinese Here in Hiding For Fear Of New Killing; Get Slayer's Fingerprints; Only Women and Children Found on Streets in Oriental Quarter; Murder here Believed Due to Quarrel of Tongmen 2 Weeks Ago," *Santa Rosa Press Democrat*, September 1, 1926.
[27] Gaye LeBaron column, *Santa Rosa Press Democrat*, February 24, 1985.
[28] Street, *Beasts of the Field,* 398.

War Breaks Out in Valley of the Moon Woman Shot in Tong War in Sonoma."[29] The following day, the police reported that Mrs. Lee was probably accidently shot by her husband, who claimed he was not a member of any tong. The investigator speculated it was likely Mrs. Hop Lee's husband became excited when he heard noises outside the house. Whether or not the Lees were members of any tong organization may be open to question. That this single incident would result in a headline that a Chinese tong war had broken out in the Sonoma Valley indicates the wide-spread association within the white community of Chinese-on-Chinese shootings with tong activity.

The tongs maintained an extensive network of gambling dens throughout Sonoma County. Law enforcement officials considered national tong organizations to be at the root of Sonoma County's gambling problem, one that extended far beyond the local Chinatown lotteries. After a raid on Chinese gambling houses in Santa Rosa and Sebastopol, investigators found evidence of "gambling of every kind," including lottery equipment. Officials claimed that "three large national lottery companies, Fook Tai of San Francisco, Eastern of New York, and Chicago of that city had branch headquarters in Sebastopol from which the entire county was worked." "No county in California," it was asserted, "was so infected by open gambling of the Chinese as Sonoma," including the poor, women, and especially boys between the ages of 15-18 years.[30] Whether an exaggeration or not, the extent of tong gambling enterprises was of considerable concern to local law enforcement.

Shakedowns and robberies by the Tong were frequent, but not always successful. Often highbinders would come to Sonoma County just to "work over" the local

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[29] "Chinese Tong War Breaks Out in Valley of the Moon; Woman Shot in Tong War in Sonoma," *Santa Rosa Press Democrat,* August 3, 1921.
[30] "Chinese Gamblers Raided in Sebastopol and Santa Rosa," *Press Democrat*, May 1, 1920.

merchants. A report in the *Sonoma Democrat* relates an instance in which highbinders came to Santa Rosa and attempted to rob store owner, Tong Sing, at gunpoint, claiming Sing owed them $20. As Sing was about to pay, a voice outside yelled for the police and the gunmen fled.[31]

Death Rituals, Worship, and Celebrations

The importance of burial rites remained paramount, and even though a Chinese might be buried in the United States, it was only temporary until the body could be returned to China.[32] The deceased was often either a single man or possibly a married man living a solitary life, having left his family in China. Most likely the man was poor and unable to afford a traditional Chinese funeral, so it was left to the district associations or the tongs – which had no birthplace restrictions – to assist with the funeral and burial duties when the deceased had no family or funds.[33] Thus, the unique rituals of traditional Chinese burial would be preserved in a strange, and often unwelcoming, society.

Sonoma's Chinese continued to observe many of these traditional burial practices. Traditional burial rites were usually performed by members of the community or family members.[34] Kee Haw, an elderly Chinese woman, was afforded a traditional burial. Object places in her casket included a Chinese parasol, a Chinese bowl with rice, some ivory chop sticks, and "other gifts in accordance with Chinese custom." One of her

[31] "Wiley Highbinders; They Try to Clean Out One of Our Chinese Merchants," *Daily Democrat,* February 27, 1892.

[32] This aspect of Chinese burial practices has long disappeared. In the San Francisco Bay Area there are several Chinese cemeteries. In an email to the author on August 3, 2012, Richard Roccetta, Secretary of the Colma Historical Association, listed a total of five Chinese cemeteries (one of which is Christian) in the Colma-Daly City area alone.

[33] Chase, "On Dying American," in *Chinese American Death Rituals,* 53-56. These practices were maintained by other rural Chinese. Chase describes the role of the local tong association in Chinese birth, marriage, and death rituals in Marysville, CA.

[34] "Chinese Woman Buried," Press Democrat, April 2, 1905. The burial was rooted in Chinese traditions, with members of the community providing the food and performing graveside rites.

cousins, also following Chinese custom, placed a dime between her teeth.[35] Other reports describe Chinese riding on a hearse with the driver scattering prayer papers along the way. These were to "propitiate the unseen attendant devils who play the star part in the Mongolian's religious belief. After a time, if the deceased has any friends either in this country or in China, her bones will be disinterred, sewed up in a little white sack and shipped home across the wide Pacific. If not, her dust will lie and mingle with those of the Occident."[36] If the family could afford it, mourners were employed at funerals.[37] At times, a local citizen might accompany a burial party to the cemetery and be invited to join the mourners in a banquet following the rites.[38] Wang Sing's 1894 traditional Chinese funeral at Cypress Hill was described as "an elaborate feast, consisting of chicken, pork, ham, rice, cake, gin and pea, with plenty of cigarettes placed on the mat at the head of the open grave, hundreds of punks and colored candles were burned and the clothing, shoes, bedding, valise and even the net with which he was fishing, when drowned, were heaped in a big pile and destroyed by fire. ... Before the earth was filled into the grave, a brick covered with Chinese writing was dropped on the head of the coffin."[39]

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[35] "Deceased Aged Chinese Woman Buried Yesterday," *Santa Rosa Republican,* April 23, 1905; "Rice and Chopsticks and Silk Parasol," *Press Democrat,* April 20, 1905.
[36] "Deceased Aged Chinese Woman Buried Yesterday," Santa *Rosa Republican*, April 21, 1905; "Rice and Chop Sticks and Silk Parasol," *Press Democrat*, April 20, 1905.
[37] "Rite According to Chinese; Funeral Procession That Attracted Attention on Fourth Street," *Daily Democrat*, February 1, 1906.
[38] "Over the Graves," *Petaluma Daily Imprint*, April 3, 1893.
[39] "A Chinese Funeral," *Petaluma Daily Imprint*, April, 4, 1894; See also Sylvia Sun Minnick, "Chinese Funeral Customs," Sacramento Historical Society's *Golden Notes*, 27, no. 3 (Fall 1981), google.books: http://schs.sacramentohistory.info/wp-content/uploads/2013/09/GN_V27No3_Fall1981_GhineseFuneralCustoms_red1.pdf. http://www.sachistoricalsociety.org/userfiles/File/GN_V27No3_Fall1981_ChineseFuneralCustoms_red.pdf, for a description of Chinese burial rites in California.

In Santa Rosa, racial prejudice dictated a pauper's grave in Potter's Field in Chanate Cemetery for their deceased Chinese;[40] Chinese were not permitted interment in any Santa Rosa cemetery in which whites were buried.[41] The status or wealth of the decedent was of no consequence. Tom Wing, Song Wong's father, perhaps the wealthiest of Santa Rosa's Chinese, was not allowed to be buried in the Odd Fellows cemetery "or anywhere else;" so he was buried in Potter's Field alongside the poorest of his countrymen. When Song Wong's mother died in 1937, Song Wong had to bury her in San Francisco "because I couldn't bury her [here], they wouldn't allow it."[42] In Petaluma, the Chinese fared better. While they could not be buried alongside whites, Cypress Hills Cemetery allocated a separate plot called the Chinese section, adjacent to the white cemetery, that permitted the burial of Chinese.

The Chinese celebrated another death-related tradition, Spring Pure Brightness Day or Ching Ming. Families honored the dead by gathering at the grave site each spring to clean the grave site, clip the weeds, and clean the monument. Incense was burned, candles placed in holders, and paper money placed on the grave in the hope that the items would be transmitted to provide comfort to the deceased.[43] The *Petaluma Argus*, in reporting the Chinese New Year celebration, referred to "the next big Chinese event" when the "Celestials donate huge quantities of provisions to the use of their departed friends," a reference to Ching Ming."[44]

[40] Jeremy Dwight Nichols, *The Chante Historic Cemetery in Santa Rosa, California: A History of the Old Sonoma Cemetery, Plus A Bibliographical Record of Burials, 1881-1944/Sonoma County Coroner.* (Westminster, MD: Heritage Books, 2009).
[41] Doherty, "Sonoma Stories," Appendix C, 190-191. See also Nichols, *The Chante Historic Cemetery.*
[42] Doherty, "Sonoma Stories,"191.
[43] Minnick, *Chinese Burial Practices,* 12.
[44] *Petaluma Weekly Argus*, January 30, 1900

For the sojourning Chinese, it was of paramount importance that the bones of the deceased be returned to China for a proper burial. Sylvia Sun Minnick explained that "Chinese feared that when they died, their spirits would not rest until their remains were given a proper burial, because in a foreign land without kin, there was no one to tend their graves and placate their spirit."[45] For those who could not afford to do so, the Six Companies would see to it that the bones would find a resting place in China in accordance with tradition. In May, 1913, the Six Companies exhumed the bones of Chinese interred during the preceding ten years at Cypress Hill cemetery for traditional burial in China.[46] Because the headboards in Chanate cemetery were marked only by the initials and the hospital number of the deceased, it was probably too difficult or burdensome for the Six Companies to locate the Chinese interred there.[47] In August of that year, the Six Companies, apparently working their way up the coast locating deceased Chinese, exhumed the remains of four Chinese buried in Mendocino, numbered the bones and placed them in glass jars for transport to China. The association had chartered a ship to transport to China practically all the remains of Chinese interred in California, some 5,000, for final internment of the bones in accordance with Chinese tradition.[48]

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[45] Minnick, *Chinese Burial Practices*, 4.
[46] "Will Ship Bodies of Chinese Dead," *Petaluma Argus*, May 2, 1913.
[47] The headboards in Chanate cemetery's Potter's Field had only the initials and hospital number of the deceased. The identity could have been discovered; according to a May 24, 2014 email to the author from Jeremy Nichols, "it might have been possible to locate specific graves by referencing hospital records, provided the time between death and 1913 was not too great." I do not believe the Six Companies would have undertaken this burdensome task. This may explain the lack of news reports regarding disinterment of Chinese remains at Chanate.
[48] Dorothy Bear, "The Chinese of the Mendocino Coast," *Mendocino Historical Review* (Winter/Spring 1990-91), 15, 31. Bear notes that Mendocino had the largest number of Chinese burial plots on the coast, but only five gravesites remain. No graves remain at Fort Bragg's Rose Memorial Cemetery; the author assumes all bones were returned to China.

Joss houses, places of religious worship, were maintained in Santa Rosa, Petaluma and Sebastopol, and very likely in the town of Sonoma, and possibly elsewhere.[49] Though the Chinese did not always have the funds to build a house of worship, they never lacked places to worship. Separate structures were not necessary for a joss house; a simple room, perhaps behind a merchant's store or above some other enterprise, would be sufficient. However, ornate joss houses were built throughout California.[50] The earliest record of a joss house in Sonoma County was one established in 1887 on Second Street in Santa Rosa.[51] Song Wong tells of living next to a Chinese temple where the worshipers had kitchen gods and outdoor gods "and all that." She carefully tended the temple, every morning placing incense by each god and repeating the procedure each night when she came home from school. An altar cloth from China was placed atop the altar. She reported the temple was not used like a church; it had no minister, and rather people would use it in a traditional manner. by getting down on their knees in prayer. On the first and fifteenth of each month "chickens and oranges and food" were placed in the joss house for worshippers. The temple may have had occasional recreational uses. Song Wong reported that the men would often use it to smoke opium.[52]

The Chinese, when possible, used traditional principles of feng shui to position the location of the joss house. On February 23, 1893, Young Kee, Kong Kee, Kwong Kee, Man Wan Gat, Kui, Tuck Hop, and Wing Hop leased land in Sebastopol from John

[49] "A Mongolian Ceremony," *Sonoma Democrat,* August 10, 1889.
[50] A joss house was a term used to describe an environment of worship, accessed August 8, 2012, http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Joss_house.
[51] "A Mongolian Ceremony," *Sonoma Democrat*, August 10, 1889. The ceremony at the Joss House was reported as a ceremony for the dead, with "cooked chicken, rice, tea, and several varieties of fruit and vegetables....floral decorations and lighted tapers." Those officiating "made a ring of fire out of paper around the refreshments..."
[52] Doherty, "Sonoma Stories," Appendix C, 192-193; LeBaron column, *Santa Rosa Press Democrat*, Feb. 24, 1983. LeBaron states the temple was "not exactly a Buddhist Temple...but a gathering place, a recreational hall, built on the second floor over still another boarding house for farm workers."

A. Brown. That agreement required Brown to "remove all houses and buildings where the lessees now reside in Sebastopol aforesaid and which were recently purchased by the Lessor from Mrs. Wilson on the lot of land hereby demised and so that the Josh [sic] House shall be in the middle of the north end and face south."[53] Feng Shui has been in continual use by the Chinese and has become accepted by some Americans for planning and decorating homes, and represents a successful cross-cultural adaption by Americans.

The many Chinese holidays continued to be celebrated. Song Wong told her interviewer that the Chinese "have just so many different holidays" and they were "all celebrated in Chinatown" because "it's an old tradition."[54] The Lantern Festival, the Dragon Festival, Qing Ming, and the Mid-Autumn Festival were most likely among the "so many different holidays" observed. Unfortunately, I have been unable to locate any public reports of other celebrations. It is probable that many celebrations, rites, and rituals were not public events accessible to reporters or non-Chinese. The record (both public and private) is sparse for celebrations of births and weddings. Yet we know that beginning in the 1920s an increasing number of Chinese were being married and an increasing number of children were born, and it would be expected that those marriages and births would be celebrated.

The Sonoma Chinese never ceased to respect their traditional holidays. According to a 1936 survey by the Works Project Administration, the Sonoma Chinese community continued to observe Chinese holidays well after 1930. Clearly, at the turn of the century, traditional Chinese practices were being maintained. In part this is because the Santa Rosa Chinese community of 60 Chinese contained a large elderly population: twelve

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[53] Sonoma County Recorder's Office, Leases.
[54] Doherty, "Sonoma Stories," Appendix C, 184.

foreign born Chinese between the ages of 65 to 89 years. With the passage of time, by 1936 only the older residents continued to observe "all the old Chinese feast days and holidays," but the whole community observed "the Chinese New Year, Festival of the Moon, the Spring and Fall Memorial Days and several other of the more important Holidays," though the observances "are no longer kept in the old form."[55] The WPA report noted that "in line with Chinese tradition, the achievements and activities of family members for generations were instilled in the minds of Chinese youth, together with the symbology and observances no longer kept in the old form."[56]

The Chinese cultural identity was more than a state of mind. It was publicly displayed during Chinese New Year celebrations in Santa Rosa, Sebastopol, and other towns in which there was a Chinatown, by the traditional display of lanterns, gongs, and firecrackers.[57] Chinese New Year was a time of inter-ethnic good will. It was a celebration in which the local Chinese invited local residents as a gesture of good will. Chinese officially invited the white community to participate in the event by making an official announcement of the dates.[58] Prominent Chinese citizens made calls to the local newspapers to extend New Year's greetings, notifying them of the dates of the event.

These celebrations may have brought home memories to the older residents who would have seen them as reminiscent of their village celebrations. With the passage of time, the celebrations became smaller and smaller as there were fewer and fewer people in the impoverished Chinatowns; the articles announcing the onset of the Chinese new

[55] U.S. Works Project Administration, *Foreign Born in Sonoma County*, 44-45
[56] Ibid, 45.
[57] Yong Chen, *Chinese San Francisco,* 138.
[58] See for example, "Chinese Merchant Here Fifty Years," *Press Democrat,* February 12, 1926; "Chinese New Year Fete to Start Today," *Press Democrat,* February 10, 1929, noted that Charlie Quong Sing, the Mayor of Chinatown, "made his time honored call to the Press Democrat to extend New Year's greetings."

year also diminished in column inches. The celebration gradually declined in exuberance and scope.

The observance of the New Year and other Chinese holidays, the maintenance of the Chinese diet, the importation of opium and all of the other essentials to maintain their Chinese-ness would have been impossible without a source of supply from China.

The Importance of the Jinshanzhuang

Located in cities throughout the United States, Jinshanzhuangs[59] were Chinese import-export organizations which supplied the immigrants and Chinese businesses – both urban and rural – with a myriad of services. It is likely that the Chinese merchants in Sonoma County were no different from Wing An Wo in Dutch Flat, Placer County, who had several American suppliers but obtained his Chinese goods from Kwang Sick Company in San Francisco. Sonoma County merchants like Tom Wing, who catered to both Chinese and Caucasian clientele, necessarily established relationships with Jinshanzhuang-connected merchants in San Francisco in order to provide their Chinese customers with the products needed to maintain their Chinese identity and satisfy their need for Chinese food, along with an array of other goods and services.[60]

These organizations provided a variety of traditional foods that allowed the Chinese to maintain their health and diet: herbal medicines; fruits like lychee, pineapples and pears; other cooking ingredients such as ginger, water chestnuts, and water lily roots; sweets; seafood, like flower fish, black fish, eels, and oysters; as well as large numbers of live ducks, fried rice, birds, and quail. In addition, they added to the Chinese diet with

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[59] The description herein of the Jinshanzhuang is excerpted from Madeline Hsu, "Trading with Gold Mountain: Jinshanzhuang and Networks of Kinship and Native Place" in *Chinese American Transnationalism*, 22-33.
[60] Ibid., 28.

shrimp, cuttle fish, mushrooms, dried bean curd, bamboo shoots, sweetmeats, duck livers, and kidneys, and water chestnut flour. These organizations also served as a trustworthy transfer agents for sending remittances to China. In addition, they provided banking services, such as safe deposit boxes, savings accounts, and currency exchange. Perhaps next to foodstuffs, the most important items were newspapers and magazines - particularly *Xinning* magazing - from villages and provinces published in Taishan County (Toishan in Cantonese), that kept the immigrants connected to their families, villages, and native place.

It was the Jinshanzhuang that enabled the Chinese community in Sonoma County and throughout the United States to retain their Chinese-ness and their geographic and kinship relations, allowing the immigrant to maintain a place at the family table.[61]

Herbalists

The practice of traditional herbal medicine accompanied the Chinese to the United States as part of their cultural heritage and as a medical necessity because they were denied access to San Francisco hospitals between 1852 and 1870. These traditional practitioners became a vital part of the Sonoma County Chinese community.[62] Herbalists initially found their way to the frontier where medical facilities were often inadequate and the Chinese were already familiar with herbal treatments. The success of herbalists is reflected in the fact that the demand for herbs resulted in a substantial trans-Atlantic trade to supply their needs.[63]

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[61] The description herein of the Jinshanzhuang is excerpted from Madeline Hsu, "Trading with Gold Mountain: Jinshanzhuang and Networks of Kinship and Native Place" in *Chinese American Transnationalism*, 22-33.
[62] Shehong Chen, *Being Chinese, Becoming American.* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2002), 157.
[63] Haming Liu, "Chinese Herbalists in the United States" in *Chinese American Transnationalism,* 136-155.

There was no lack of herbalists in Sonoma County, including Wong Ock Herb Company, Chan and Cheu Co., Chan and Chun, Chan and Lee, and Shun Chew in Santa Rosa and Chan & Lee in Petaluma. Several practitioners from San Francisco and Oakland advertised in the local papers. All were a telephone call away. One of these, one of the most famous practitioners in the San Francisco Bay Area, was Fong Wan, who began his practice in Sonoma before establishing an office in Oakland. His practice became so lucrative he was able to invest in a number of successful business ventures, and achieved notoriety as a result of his frequent arrests and the willingness of his white patients to testify on his behalf.[64]

Herbalists throughout the state found themselves subject to frequent arrests under the guise of practicing medicine without a license. But the law was used often for harassment rather than punishment. On October, 9, 1920, Shun Chew, a Santa Rosa herbal practitioner, was arrested in his office.[65] Shun Chew's advertisements reappeared in the *Santa Rosa Press* Democrat within days after his arrest, indicating the arrest was but a momentary interruption in his business. The reason for his arrest, the apparent failure to prosecute, and the lack of further enforcement against the county's herbalists remain a mystery, considering the number of herbalists practicing in the county. Perhaps the arrest was made to set an example to practitioners. Shun Chew's advertisements were the largest and most prominent of all the practitioners and the only ones with a photograph of the herbalist. These advertisements may have given the authorities the impression that he was the most successful, and the arrest may have been to set an

[64] Gaye LeBaron, Welcome to Santa Rosa, "Santa Rosa's rich, painful Chinese legacy gets its due in museum exhibit," *Press Democrat,* June 25, 2012, accessed December 2, 2013, http://santarosa.towns.pressdemocrat.com/2012/06/news/santa-rosas-rich-painful-chinese-legacy-gets-its-due-in-museum-exhibit/.

[65] "Arrest Chinese Doctor in Raid," *Santa Rosa Press Democrat,* October 9, 1920.

example to the other practitioners. However, Shun Chew was the only Sonoma County herbalist arrested under this law; there were no further reports of arrests of Chew or any other Sonoma County herbalist; and the Sonoma County herbalists continued to practice unmolested by the authorities. Herbalists continued to advertise in local newspapers. The irony of Chew being referred to a "doctor" may have been lost on readers of the news item describing his arrest for practicing medicine without a license, yet it may reflect the esteem in which Shen Chew was held by the community.[66]

Vice

Organized Chinese crime was not the only venue for gambling activity. Merchants maintained backrooms for games of chance, while other entrepreneurs sought out both Chinese and white patrons.[67] While tong gambling parlors attracted many in search of diversion, much gambling appeared to have retained its traditional, individual purposes. Gambling was a pastime in which almost every worker participated, and games were set up at any convenient location. Gambling was especially heavy in the days leading up to the New Year in hope of accumulating enough money to pay off their debts. Often, they had to turn to Chinese moneylenders to pay their outstanding bills at an exorbitant rate of interest. The result of these gambling endeavors left the Chinese tied to labor contractors who acted as moneylenders. When fights arose over gambling debts, the courts would often dismiss the cases because no witnesses would testify in court.[68]

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[66] Louise Leung Larson, *Sweet Bamboo: A memoir of a Chinese American Family* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2001). Larson relates how her father, a Los Angeles herbalist, was arrested so frequently that he kept an attorney and bondsman on call for a speedy release.

[67] For example, see ""Gambling Den Raided," *Petaluma Argus,* September 22, 1922, describing a raid on a gambling den in the rear of Wong Tan's grocery store.

[68] Street, *Beasts of the Field,* 302. My examination of the recorder's court and small claims court dockets did not reveal any gambling debt litigation by the Chinese. It is likely that during this era gambling debts may have been uncollectible, each party being in pari delicto (equal fault).

Fan-tan seemed to be a favorite recreational activity. One Sebastopol resident was upset not only by the number of Chinese in the town, but also that a "fan game was going full blast."[69] According to Song Wong, fan-tan was one of the several games played by the workers during the winter months when there was no work. Laborers in the shacks on Second Street would play fan-tan, dominos and mah jong in each "little place." The lottery was not the same as the "numbers racket," but played according to traditional rules. Song Wong described the game "as beginner Chinese, it's all words, and they're not numbers. In fact, the first word is God; the first word in the lottery ticket. And you go up and down, you read it up and down, you don't go sideways." The numbers were picked out of four bowls, and "there's eight words, each word means something. They play the lottery with superstition. Somebody's birthday, well they go and play." The words were chosen from the four bowls in which eighty words were placed and "stirred up," and picked from the four bowls. She went on to explain "they have dice and they roll the dice and whatever bowl that comes out of they take those bowls and they are the ones that are winners." At first only one lottery was played, later there were two or three.[70]

Not all Chinese supported gambling in the community. Some Chinese cooperated with law enforcement officials by informing on their countrymen suspected of violating the local laws. In 1915, a letter was sent by a Chinese informant to John A. Robinson, an immigration officer, complaining of gambling activity at Quon Yick & Co, 642 Second Street and Quong Sang & Co., 634 Second Street, in Santa Rosa. The informant concluded his testimony by noting that "You shall found [sic] out my name from number

[69] "Letter from Wake-Up Jake; Sebastopol Full of Chinese – Politics and High License," *Petaluma Weekly Argus,* January 20, 1901.
[70] Doherty, "Sonoma Stories," Appendix C, 182-183.

over the other side [sic]. Do not tell anyone about this letter."[71] W. A. Tan, a Sebastopol Chinese resident, informed on fan-tan gamblers that resulted in the arrest of several fan-tan-playing Chinese.[72]

A number of Chinese, however, had to violate other local laws in order to enjoy another traditional recreational activity: opium. This was not only a source of relaxation, but, as we shall later see, a source of income as more of the local inhabitants also found surcease in the relaxation of opium. Richard Steven Street estimated that one-third to one-half of all Chinese in California used opium, a legal substance until 1909.[73] Chinese merchants carried opium and sold various grades, along with the necessary opium pipes, stems and bowls. The opium dens were not dingy basements without ventilation, as so often portrayed. The back room of the merchants' stores had places set aside where men could relax with the necessary trays and other paraphernalia. They could then "mount the dragon" and escape from their daily grind. Periodic raids and local efforts to "clean up" the practice were unsuccessful because the merchants posted sentinels around town to warn of approaching police.[74] The opium used by the Chinese in Sonoma was imported from China.[75] After opium was made illegal, newspaper reports show a series of opium raids throughout the county. Chinese appeared as persistent in their use of opium as their white neighbors were of alcohol. Though there were a few arrests of Chinese for drunkenness, traditional opium continued to be the favorite intoxicant. There were many

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[71] RG 85 13583/14. Copy of unsigned typewritten letter dated February 22, 1915 to John A. Robinson
[72] "Tan Players Arrested," *Sonoma Democrat,* August 20, 1887. "Three Chinese were arrested because Mr. Tan, of Sebastopol [sic] will permit no playing of the game…"
[73] Street, *Beasts of the Field,* 303.
[74] Ibid., 303.
[75] Doherty, "Sonoma Stories," Appendix C, 194. That the American Chinese had to import opium from China is an irony when one considers that in the 1820s and 1830s, much of the opium smoked by the Chinese in southern China, the home of most American Chinese, was imported from America.

arrests of Chinese for violations of local opium ordinances, and among them were more than a few recidivists.

Visits to brothels provided another source of comfort. This might be part of a general recreational activity that included shopping for gifts, smoking opium, gambling, or even attending church.[76] Chinese prostitutes were available in almost every populated area throughout the state, but there is scant evidence that Chinese prostitution was endemic in Sonoma County. The relationship between the customer and the prostitute was not always entirely sexual. There are numerous instances of households with several men and one to three single women with no occupation. In those instances, the relationship may have been a polyandrous or polygamous relationship, not necessarily one of prostitution.[77] Yet, while the public often complained of gambling and opium, I found no articles or letters to the editor complaining of Chinese brothels. Surely, their presence would rouse the ire of the community – especially by wives and churches - in defense of both the family purse and the threat to the family and to the morals of their husbands and sons. If prostitution existed in Sonoma County its existence is difficult to ascertain. As I point out elsewhere, there is little evidence of Chinese prostitution, yet because it was an endemic practice, it is likely to have existed solely within the Chinese community.

There is no record of arrests of Chinese prostitutes, but gambling and opium-related offenses brought the Chinese in frequent contact with the police. These minor interactions of the Chinese with the American criminal justice system are revealed in the available arrest reports and dockets of the Recorder's Court. The everyday conflicts and

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[76] Street, *Beasts of the Field,* 300-301.

[77] Lucie Cheng Hirata, "Free, Indentured, Enslaved: Chinese Prostitutes in Nineteenth-Century America," *Signs* 5, no. 1, "Women in Latin America" (Autumn 1979), 14.

confrontations between law enforcement and the Chinese for these and other minor crimes in Sonoma County exhibit an absence of prejudice or racial hostility. An examination of all available arrest records and Recorder's Court dockets reveals that some Chinese became partial to liquor and were arrested for being drunk, while others were arrested for trivial misdemeanors such as operating a laundry during curfew, riding a bicycle on the sidewalk or peddling without a license. Disturbing the peace and battery were only occasional offenses. There were dismissals by the court on occasion, as well as elevation of the offense to Justice Court for serious charges, such as battery. The Chinese did not appear to suffer the usual prejudice in the police courts and recorders' courts for minor offenses they committed in the larger community. The penalties were consistent with that imposed on white defendants.[78] Notably, the standard penalties imposed for gambling- and opium-related offenses did not hamper the Chinese involved in these illegal activities, all of which were apparently known throughout the entire community and participated in by more than a few Euro-American county residents.

Resolving Disputes

There is a scintilla of evidence to suggest the Chinese preferred to settle disputes among themselves or through traditional arbitration mechanisms provided by their associations. Notwithstanding the evenhandedness of American courts, my examination of the small claims court dockets reveals little or no use of the court; few Chinese names appeared on the small claims dockets. One Chinese court was convened in Santa Rosa in 1899 to investigate a business fraud dispute, reportedly the first such court in many years.

[78] Petaluma Recorder's Court records and Santa Rosa Recorder's Court records, Santa Rosa Public Library, http://www.sonomalibrary.org/history/archive/index.php?p=core%2Fsearch&q=recorder%27s+court&content=1; Santa Rosa Police Department records, 1890-1928, Sonoma County Public Library, http://www.sonomalibrary.org/history/archive/index.php?p=collections/controlcard&id=30&q=arrest+records.

The hearing lasted from before noon until late evening, evidencing a thorough examination of the testimony from numerous witnesses.[79] While there are no further reports of such courts being held in Sonoma County, the private nature of the proceedings likely kept them from public view; the fact no other proceedings were reported does not mean they were not held. The lack of use of American courts and the frequency Chinese disputes points to the possibility they used traditional dispute resolution to resolve many of their business and personal disagreements during this era.[0] When necessary, however, the Chinese would use American courts if they were the only avenue for redress. When Ernest Finley died in 1917, two Chinese employees, Fog Yew and Ching Kee, used courts to file claims against the estate for labor.[80] With the passage of time and the decreasing influence of district associations and tong lodges, the Chinese undoubtedly relied on the courts, rather than traditional informal methods of adjudication to resolve disputes.

Loss of Local Chinatowns; Recognition of Change

Civic renewal and accident destroyed Sonoma County's Chinatowns, and with them the fabric of the county's Chinese community. Sebastopol's Chinatown was leveled by fire in 1899.[81] Petaluma's Chinatown was torn down in 1926 to make room for the construction of modern buildings. The *Petaluma Argus* described the "razing" of Chinatown's historic buildings on the east side of Third between C and D streets (one two-story and several one-story structures) that "have long been an eye-sore and have been allowed to fall into decay. For years they were well kept up and only fell into disuse

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[79] "Chinese Hold Court in Santa Rosa," *Press Democrat,* January 25,1899.
[80] Finley, *The Finleys of Early Sonoma County*, 33.
[81] "Went Up In Smoke," *Press Democrat,* May 3, 1899

as the large number of celestials who used to reside here, left the city. A few of the last remaining Chinese have occupied the buildings. The upper floor was for years the meeting place of a Chinese lodge of Masons and the big dragon flag flew from the flagpole on numerous occasions."[82] The *Petaluma Argus* ruefully noted that this was the first time in Petaluma's history that it was without a Chinatown.[83] Civic progress in the form of new structures replacing the old ended a Petaluma Chinatown that had endured for generations. Later, Santa Rosa's Chinatown would suffer the same fate when it "disappeared piece by piece in the 1930s and '40s" as Santa Rosa replaced Chinatown's shanties with modern commercial buildings.[84]

These centers of Chinese tradition and culture – the neighborhoods where news, conversation, recreation, and expression of everyday concerns with their neighbors occurred – were no longer. The decades-old complaints about the unkempt shacks in Chinatown, the noise, smelly laundries, gambling and opium dens, and the mutual enjoyment of Chinese and whites of New Year celebrations, would eventually be silenced along with the community of Chinese who for generations struggled to earn a living, establish families, and maintain their traditions. The small remaining population continued to huddle together, in ever-decreasing numbers, tenaciously maintaining a foothold in the county. In the end, it is fair to ask whether Chinese migration played as important a role in the destruction of the Petaluma's Chinatown as the landowners' desire to improve their properties for greater returns.

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[82] "Are Razing Chinatown," *Petaluma Argus,* January 7, 1926; "Chinatown Building Being Razed, " *Petaluma Daily Courier,* January 7, 1926; "The Last of Chinatown," *Petaluma Argus,* January 20, 1926.
[83] "The Last of Chinatown," *Petaluma Argus,* January 20, 1926.
[84] LeBaron, "Santa Rosa's Rich, Painful Chinese Legacy," *Santa Rosa Press Democrat,* June 25, 2012.

By the early 1920s, changes were occurring among the Sonoma County Chinese. American-born and American-educated Chinese youths were beginning to break with family and cultural traditions, a situation that certainly caused family stress. The Chinese New Year, always a festive and celebratory occasion in which the Chinese engaged in the traditional observances, was looked upon differently by American-born Chinese youth. The *Daily Republican* observed on the eve of the 1913 celebration that "the younger Chinese will refrain from participation because they have adopted the custom of celebrating the New Year with the English speaking races" and, as a result the festivities will "lack much of the spectacular features" of the past and "will be far less entertaining to the small urchin."[85] Intergenerational stresses were becoming self-evident and were beginning to show signs of altering at least a portion of the family nature of the observance.

This new era was reflected in signs of a new nationalism. Not only did the Dragon flag fly over the Chinese Freemason headquarters in Petaluma, but by 1926, the "display of the dragon flags and the flags of the Chinese Republic" was for the first time reported in the plural. The destruction of the Chinatowns and the display of the dual flags were physical manifestations of the changes and ambiguities that overtook the Sonoma County Chinese community in the early twentieth century. The New Year celebration of 1922 had a sense of foreboding and change. The *Santa Rosa Press Democrat* noted "in the past the Chinese were accustomed to visit Caucasian friends during these holidays, and make gifts of candy, silk handkerchiefs and Chinese lilies, the 'Chinatown' block was brightly

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[85] "Chinese New Year Arrives; Begins Wednesday and Lasts Five Days," *Santa Rosa Republican,* February 4, 1913.

lighted and sounds of revelry were in order. But this time it is not the ancient hilarious welcoming of a new year but the serious greeting of a new era."[86]

Santa Rosa and Sebastopol, the homes of the largest Chinatowns in the county, were still able to maintain somewhat festive celebrations, but they were diminished by the severe loss of population. In Santa Rosa, a sense of loss and nostalgia was expressed by the white community because Chinatown would "not be the spot of many lights and colored banners that it has been in years gone by," becoming a "safe and sane affair." The *Petaluma Argus* recalled an earlier era when 2,000 to 3,000 Chinese from Petaluma and its environs would hold great celebrations. The newspapers wistfully noted that "dem days is gone forever."[87] In comments reported in the *Press Democrat* in January 1922, Charlie Qing Song, then "Mayor of Chinatown" and a long-time merchant and resident, probably reflected the mood of the Chinese community about the passing of an era and the need to adapt to change:

> Charlie Quong Sing said he was "reconciled to the new era." ... His voice seemed a little sad when he told of the celebration lasting only few days now, and how it used to last a month. But when he sensed that he was being sympathized with, his attitude changed marvelously and he spoke hopeful, cheering words of the New China.
>
> "By 'm bye all ole fella he die in China, and young fella getum education in Melica, go back China, then China alla same United States," he said.
>
> Charlie displayed a recent photograph of his son and grandson, who are in Canton – both of them garbed in American-cut street clothes. The old merchant says that according to letters received from his uncle and his son in China the whole nation is making great strides in the overthrow of the ancient and worshipful ancestor and are beginning to take steps to provide for the welfare of posterity. He lays the responsibility of China's awakening with the American educated Chinese youth who has returned to his native land brimming over with

[86] "Local Chinese to Shoot Fire-Crackers Today, but Boys, It's Not the Same," *Santa Rosa Press Democrat,* January 27, 1922.
[87] "Chinese New Year's Occurs Tomorrow," *Petaluma Argus,* January 21, 1925.

platforms of progressiveness. And, Charlie thinks it is good. But it is hard to give up the old customs....[88]

[88] "Local Chinese to Shoot Fire-Crackers Today, But Boys, It's Not the Same," *Santa Rosa Press Democrat,* January 27, 1922.

Chapter 5

The Sonoma Chinese Become Transnationals: The Elements of Transition

To understand the Chinese American experience in the early twentieth century, one must examine this community's new connections with China. A short-lived boycott in China of American goods in 1905-1906, instigated in response to the racial discrimination against Chinese Americans, strengthened the bond between Chinese Americans and their compatriots back home. The establishment of the Chinese Republic in 1911 gave rise to an outpouring of nationalism and patriotism by Chinese Americans that manifested itself by participation at an unprecedented level in Chinese politics, investments in Chinese enterprises, donations to Chinese charities, and political contributions. The American Chinese community made these contributions to a modernizing China in the hope that a stronger China would have the strength to protect them from the anti-Chinese racism that was so prevalent throughout the United States.[1]

Yong Chen described the manifestation of transnationalism as "a manifestation in the everyday world in which Chinese Americans work and live...delineated by "the movement of people, ideas, goods, and capital across the Pacific Ocean" yet "its extent and meaning ...have shifted a great deal as circumstances changed from one historical moment to another."[2] Their Chinese-ness, according to Chen, was associated with economic values and they "viewed and articulated the meaning of their American experience in economic terms, but impacted by racism, the Exclusion Act, prejudice and

[1] Yong Chen, "Understanding Chinese American Transnationalism" in *Chinese American Transnationalism,* 156-160.
[2] Ibid., 156.

violence in rural areas, circumscribed employment in limited, low paying, wage-earning jobs. In China, however, they found the social and political rights denied them in the United States."[3] Not only did the individual Chinese begin to undertake a gradual change in mentality, but San Francisco's Chinatown began an examination of its social and cultural underpinnings, looking toward Western values and modernization while, at the same time, actively engaging in Chinese politics and making investments in China.

The Impact of Political Changes in China

The new China, intent on modernizing its industries and political system, determined that women must be active participants. Social change for Chinese women in the United States was tied directly to the women's movement in China.[4] The 1911 revolution recognized the necessity of the full participation by women in creating a new nation-state. The "new woman" was considered worthy of an education and equal rights. Foot binding, female slavery, and polygyny were curtailed or eliminated. Men gradually eliminated the queue. In addition, women began to achieve new liberties as China's reliance on the "new woman" as a necessary adjunct to achieve the goals of the revolution resonated in the United States. Although traditional restraints on women had already been relaxed, women now achieved even greater liberties. Now they were "permitted to work outside the home, get an education and participate in community activities," participate in beauty contests, date whom they chose, and seek education and work outside the home, primarily as the result of "social upheavals" in China and

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[3] Yong Chen, "Understanding Chinese American Transnationalism" in *Chinese American Transnationalism*, 156-160.

[4] Judy Yung, *Unbound Feet: A Social History of Chinese Women in San Francisco* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995), 55.

Chinatown.[5] But for Chinese men and women alike, transnationalism for the individual "manifest[ed] itself in the material world in which the Chinese lived and would continue to live."[6]

The effects of China's modernization affected more than women's rights. In San Francisco, new institutions were formed – Chinese schools, churches, a hospital, newspapers, and organizations such as the Chinese Chamber of Commerce, the Chinese American Citizens Alliance, Chinatown YMCA and YWCA, and the Christian Union and Peace Society.[7] Even the district associations (*huiquans*) were not immune to modernization. District associations become vanguards of the new mentality by favoring buildings in a more modern architectural style.[8] Following the lead of the Republic, the Western calendar was adopted in San Francisco's Chinatown, save for the celebration of Chinese holidays. Gradually, many Chinese came to regard the United States as their adopted home.[9] The Chinese American community did not accept "unthinkingly" the ideologies of Chinese politicians, but arrived at independent conclusions based upon their situation and their interests as transnational migrants.[10] Both individually and as a community, they were becoming transmigrants, settling in the United States, but maintaining strong kinship and cultural attachments to the Old World.

These changes occurred within the urban confines of San Francisco, and there is little evidence for how rapidly and to what extent they found their way into the more

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[5] Yong Chen, *Chinese San Francisco*; Yung, *Unbound Feet,* 55; Coolidge, *Chinese Immigration*, 437. Coolidge observed that "the women like it here ...because they have so much freedom; they can go out on street alone and not have to live with their mother-in-law." Moreover, they enjoyed ease of life provided by modern conveniences they did not have in China, e.g. gas stoves, running water.

[6] Yong Chen, *Understanding Chinese American Transnationalism* 156.

[7] Yong Chen, *Chinese San Francisco,* 124-147; Yung, *Unbound Feet,* 69.

[8] Yong Chen, *Chinese San Francisco,* 183-184.

[9] Ibid., 154, 164-198.

[10] Ibid., 154, 164-198.

sparsely settled rural communities. Chan noted in her study of nineteenth century Chinese that regional variations between San Francisco, Sacramento, Marysville, and the "rural hinterland" were the result of each region's industrial base, its degree of urbanization, and its degree of industrialization, and that occupational structure in these there cities "differed sharply from that found among the Chinese in the hinterlands."[11] Sonoma County reflected these differences. Sonoma County was (and is) an agricultural county located forty-five miles north of San Francisco with little industry or manufacturing. San Francisco's Chinatown served the city's entire Chinese community, while Sonoma's County's Chinese population was small and decentralized, with a Chinatown in each of its urban centers. Unlike San Francisco's Chinatown, where Chinese manufacturers provided some jobs for the residents in cigar, shoe, and clothing factories, wage-earning Chinese in Sonoma were highly dependent upon white employers for jobs that were racially defined and limited to household servants, cooks, dishwashers, laundrymen, day laborers, and agricultural field hands. Occasionally, a few would find contested employment in the woolen mills or canneries.

The life of Chinese women in agricultural Sonoma County was far more economically constricted than that of their San Francisco sisters. Some San Francisco Chinese women worked for wages in Chinese factories; others worked in the home where they could conduct a modest business, such as sewing, making clothing, doing piece work for factories, or other similar enterprises that did not require start-up costs or a need to leave the family home. In Sonoma County, however, save for an occasional field laborer, servant, or laundress, the census for the decades from 1900 to 1930 does not report any Sonoma Chinese woman working for wages outside of the home or earning

[11] Chan, "Chinese Livelihood in Rural California," 285.

money by accepting homework. The lack of industrialization in Sonoma County had a direct impact on women's employment opportunities.[12]

The Chinese of Sonoma County, while geographically isolated, had access to much the same information as their counterparts in San Francisco. Local merchants were the source of San Francisco-published Chinese newspapers that kept them abreast of the debates and changes occurring in Chinatown. In addition, these papers published price lists, business information, and articles explaining facts about America to familiarize the Chinese with their new environment. Trips to San Francisco likely ended up in gambling houses, opium dens, restaurants, or the halls of a district or tong association where the news of the day would be discussed and opinions exchanged. Sonoma County Chinese were well aware of the conditions and activities in China, as well as in San Francisco.

Sonoma County merchants were not only of sources of local news and information, but often their premises were the gathering place for the local community to receive the latest news from China. It was here they could purchase copies of newspapers and magazines from China, an important resource to keep them connected with their province and village in China.[13] Yong Chen claimed that "it is safe to assume that through the help of their literate fellow countrymen, even the illiterate had access, albeit

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[12] The canneries were a source of non-agricultural employment in the county, but they had no history of employing women. There were no Chinese industries of sufficient size to employ women.

[13] Hsu, *Dreaming of Gold,* 34, describes how the jinshanzhuang provided the local merchants with the necessary supplies for the Chinese community, "including Chinese books and magazines." U.S. Works Project Administration, *Foreign Born in Sonoma County,* 44, reveals that in 1936 the Chinese in Santa Rosa's Chinatown subscribed to *Chung Soi Yat Bo* and *Young China*, both published in San Francisco. It seems likely that *Chung Soi Yat Bo*, an important Chinese newspaper, would have been available in Sonoma County at least from 1900 forward, if not before. See "Magazines as Market Places: A community in dispersion" in Hsu, *Dreaming of Gold,* 124-127, for a discussion of the importance of Chinese overseas magazines (*qiaokan*) to Chinese American immigrants. These magazines were readily available to overseas Chinese, kept them informed of local and regional events in China, and were an important element in overcoming the "obstacle of separation" by maintaining a sense of community, strengthening transnational ties, and sharing information.

indirect access, to the information in the newspapers."[14] Magazines and newspapers were essential for the local Chinese to keep abreast of events in their village and county, along with political and social changes occurring in San Francisco, as well as the debates among their urban counterparts who were reexamining the role of customs and traditions in a changing Chinese world.

Chinese American Brides, Family Formation, and Settlement

Transnationalism provided the psychic space to permit the process of acculturation to occur, a necessary step to allow the sojourners to become a community of settlers. Judy Yung described the process as pragmatically taking from Western cultures that which was useful, practicing both cultures at the same time, but fighting to preserve Chinese practices they thought important.[15] Unlike European immigrants, Chinese racial characteristics as well as different dress, food, and language set them apart from Euro-Americans. The Chinese could not alter their physical characteristics, nor would they abandon their culture and traditions; the external trappings of "otherness" created inherent difficulties in the racial milieu of the day. As Chinese continued to acculturate to their new land they gradually rid themselves of these social encumbrances. They no longer thought of themselves as sojourning Chinese Americans, but assumed a new identity "from a blending of Chinese and American culture and ideologies."[16] The Chinese now lived in a transpacific world and traveled freely between China and

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[14] Yong Chen, *Chinese San Francisco*, 73-75. It seems certain the jinshanzhuang would make these newspapers available for distribution to merchants in rural areas.

[15] Yung, *Unbound Feet,* 107-108, citing Ching Chao Wu, "Chinatowns: a study in symbiosis and assimilation," (Ph.D diss., University of Chicago, 1928). Yung claims that assimilation cannot occur so long as race consciousness remains.

[16] Shehong Chen, "Republicanism, Confucianism, Christianity, and Capitalism" *in Chinese American Transnationalism*, 193.

America, and "did not have to make a choice between being settlers or sojourners.[17] Like Janus, their gaze focused in two directions: east and west.

Chinese society was often referred to as a "bachelor society" because of the high number of men resident in the United States without their wives. The separation of the immigrant from his family was physical only. The process of emigration was embedded in family life, group oriented, family supported, and transcended national boundaries, based on the understanding that the migrant would support his family by remittances, and that his sons would eventually join him, allowing him to eventually retire. Though he might be in the fields of Sonoma, he always had a place at the table in his home in China; his opinions were respected, regardless of the separation.[18] According to the 1920 census, 46 per cent of the Chinese men in the United States were married, 50.4 percent were single, 2.5 percent were widowed and 0.3 percent were divorced. The percentage of married Chinese men exceeded that of the whites (40.7 percent), Negros (39.4 percent), Indians (34.5 percent), and Japanese (43.0 percent). [19] Out of all these cultures, married Chinese were the only ones who emigrated without their wives.

The distorted ratio of males to females that created the bachelor society of the nineteenth century began to close during the first thirty years of the twentieth century. In California the ratio in 1910 was 1,017.0 males per 100 females; 1920 saw a further reduction to 528.8 males per 100 females; and by 1930, the ratio was still further reduced

[17] Yong Chen, *Chinese San Francisco,* 57; see also Hsu, *Dreaming of Gold.*
[18] Haiming Liu, *The Transnational History of a Chinese Family* (New Brunswick, N.J.: Rutgers University Press, 2005), 3, 16; Evelyn Nakano Glenn, "Split Household, Small Producer and Dual Wage Earner: An Analysis of Chinese-American Family Strategies," cited in Hsu, *Dreaming of Gold,* 38; Hsu, *Dreaming of Gold,* 2-10, 14-15.
[19] U.S. Bureau of the Census, 1920 Census, Population, Census of Population and Housing, Table 5, *Marital Condition of the Total Population by Sex and Periods*, 324, www.census.gov/prod/wwww.decennial.html.

to 298.6 males per 100 females, an improvement of 241.3 percent in twenty years.[20] Some of that reduction was undoubtedly due to more female births occurring in the United States. Gender parity would not be reached until after World War II.

Two of the strongest indicia that the Chinese were becoming settlers are (1) the increased number of marriages to American-born Chinese women, and (2) the rapid increase in fecundity that resulted in larger nuclear families. The number of American-born wives remained stable during the first two or three decades, gradually increasing to six in 1930 from two in 1900, while the number of China-born wives slightly decreased over the same period. By 1930, one-half the wives were American-born, one-half China born (see Table 5). These numbers are too small to be of statistical significance or be labeled a trend, but they do underscore the increased availability of American-born Chinese women and the willingness of Chinese men to marry them. Clearly, the custom – whereby the male married before emigrating or returned to China to marry and sire his children, the child later joining his father, the ritual of chain immigration continuing until the family was secure (if ever) – was broken. Exclusion legislation and its burdens cannot explain this phenomenon; the vast majority of women married merchants, herbalists, or businessmen, an excluded class under the Exclusion Act, who were free to travel outside the United States and return. Most likely the availability and convenience of American-

[20] U.S. Bureau of the Census, 1930 Census, Census of Population and Housing, Vol. II, Pt. 1, Table 2, 233, www.census.gov/prod/wwww.decennial.html. The reasons given for the lack of female immigration widely varies. Some historians claim that the Confucian culture required the wife to remain home to care for her husband's parents and arrange their proper burial, others claim that maintaining a wife was not economically viable when the effort was to save money to return home wealthy, while others maintain that many women hearing the stories of bureaucratic harassment and anti-Chinese feeling elected to remain home. Merchants' wives, however, had the derivative status of their husband and were not barred by exclusion laws, and class distinctions made the application of the Page Law more lenient. In any event, it was merchants in Sonoma that comprised the married population, with few exceptions.

born Chinese women played a major role in their increasing selection as marriage partners.

While the number of families remained relatively stable during the decades 1900-1930, Table 5 illustrates the increase of family size during that period.[21] During the three decades from 1900, the number of families increased by only four; yet the number of persons living in a familial relationship increased from 26 to 59, this while the total population was plunging from 599 to 190. Thus, during the period the percentage of the

Table 5. Family Formation, Sonoma County: 1900-1930, Number of Families, Children, and Place of Birth

	1900	1910	1920	1930
Number of Families	11	6	9	14
Wives: US Born	2	3	4	6
Wives: China Born	9	2	4	6
Children: US Born	4	9	23	49
Children: China Born	0	0	1	3
Family Population H/W and/or Children	26	20	25	59
Members of extended family	0	1	18	35
Family population including extended family members	26	21	43	94

Source: Author's calculations based on manuscript census data.

[21] For purposes of this thesis, I define nuclear family as a married couple, or one or both parents residing with their unmarried children in one household. Extended family means one or one or both parents, spouses and children of married children, and other relatives by blood or marriage residing in one household.

total Chinese population living in a familial relationship rose from 4.34 percent in 1900 to 49.47 percent in 1930. This would have a stabilizing effect on the community and would demonstrate to the Euro-American community that the bachelor society was not a normal condition.

English became more prevalent as their children began to attend public schools and became fluent in English. Census data reveals fluency in English was almost universal among the self-employed merchants, grocers, restaurant owners, boardinghouse keepers, and herbalists. In contrast, many laborers could neither read nor write nor speak English; some had ability in one or two aspects of the language. The most likely explanation is that those who learned to read, write, and speak the language did so from the economic necessity of needing to communicate with the Euro-American community or their employers in business matters. For example, farm laborers, usually employed through labor contractors, were neither compelled to negotiate wages nor communicate with their employer and had far less English language ability; many could not read, write, or speak English, while some had the ability to speak English.

Another aspect of the familial acculturative process was bestowing Western names upon their children. No doubt the children were also given Chinese names, but Western names facilitated the child's social interaction with the Euro-American community, which often had difficulty with pronouncing and remembering Chinese names. A Western name tended to reduce the cultural distance between the child and his or her peers. Chinese families did not begin to bestow English names upon their children until after 1910; the census reveals no children with English names in either the 1900 or 1910 census. By 1920, Chinese names were still predominant, with several children

bearing Western names. During the ensuing decade, English names were more common than Chinese names, though assuredly they were also given Chinese names. The Chuck Mou Wong family, for example, named their children May, John, Wilson, Nellie, William, and Frank. The heads of another Wong family, Sam and Minnie Wong, named their children Willie and Bobbie, while the Chans' named their offspring Louise, Katherine, Raymond, Amy, Warren, Harry, Benjamin, and Alice. Of the thirteen cousins residing with Wong Wing's extended family in 1930, eight had Western names.

Impoverishment of a Community: The results of Exclusion

During the last ten or fifteen years of the era under study, approximately one-half of the Sonoma County Chinese were dependent on the earning of others. In Chapter 3 I discussed the effects of exclusion and its effect on the inability of the Chinese to regenerate younger workers to replace those who have grown too old or too sick to work in the fields. Table 4 (page 57) illustrates the increase in the cohort of those sixty years and older to 32.02 percent in 1920 and 22.28 percent in 1930, from 8.78 percent in 1900. Large numbers of this cohort of workers were presumably unemployed because of the usual ailments associated with old age, perhaps exacerbated by years of arduous field work and less than desirable living conditions, and as a result were not employable. I recognize these figures may be exaggerated because some may have continued to work full or part-time. Reference to census data offers no explanation or elucidation for "unemployed" or "none" for response to employment. Nonetheless, the life of an aged worker was often marginal at best and they rarely had excess funds.[22]

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[22] Jeff Gillenkirk and James Morrow, *Bitter Melon: Stories from the Last Rural Chinese Town In America.* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1987), for example see biographies of elderly Chinese field hands in the Delta region and their living conditions.

The effect of having a large proportion of the population unable to work was further complicated as the Chinese settled in Sonoma County and began to sire children and begin families. Table 5 (page 97) illustrates the rapid increase in fecundity that began during the decade 1910-1920. The settler mentality of the Chinese reflected itself in a rapidly rising birth rate during this period, resulting in an increase of youth between 0 and 15 years, presumably unemployable because of age. That cohort (0-15 years) comprised a mere 1.17 percent of Sonoma's Chinese population in 1900, but began to increase rapidly to 6.2 percent in 1910. By 1920, it again doubled to 12.91 percent of the population, and more than doubled the following decade to 26.52 percent of the total Chinese population in 1930. Thus, combing the two cohorts, in 1920 the percentage of Chinese presumably unemployed was 42.93 percent of the total Chinese population, and increased in 1930 to 48.8 percent of the total Chinese population. My calculations from the 1930 manuscript census indicate that of a total population of 190, 102 or 53 percent of the Sonoma Chinese responded "none" for their occupational status. My calculations differ from those in Table 4 (page 57) because the table includes wives and other adult females over the age of 15. However, both figures indicate a remarkably high percentage of Sonoma County's Chinese population were not wage earners and were probably dependent upon others for some or all of their support. The high percentage of non-earners exacerbated the financial condition of the community. Monies that would have been paid for dues to the district associations or tong lodges for burial assistance or for the annual Chinese New Year celebration or for the development of community institutions, viz. a Chinese school, would now be dedicated to the support of the family and to remittances for their

overseas families. There were too many families with too little income to attempt to emulate the communal institution-building of the San Francisco Chinese during this era.

Intermarriage

In many foreign lands – such as Malay, Borneo, Sarawak, the Dutch East Indies, the Philippine Islands, and Mexico – Chinese men married local women when Chinese women were unavailable, and the host society imposed no social or legal barriers to intermarriage[23] However, California's anti-Chinese feeling imposed both social and legal barriers to such interracial marriages. The social stigma attaching to a white female if she married a Chinese man discouraged many possible relationships. In addition, California's miscegenation laws prohibited legal interracial marriages between Chinese and Caucasians.[24] However, there were some Chinese men and American women who entered into interethnic marriages. In many cases the non-Chinese women were not white, or the couple went to another state where such marriages were recognized. Most of the inter-racial marriages ultimately failed. For example, Ah Quay had his lawyer procure his marriage license to wed Rosie Hackett, who was half Indian and half Spanish. Rosie soon tired of the marriage, and left less than a month after the ceremony.[25] Tom Chung, a restaurant owner and twenty-year resident of Healdsburg, married Gertrude Higgenson, a music teacher, missionary, and a thirty-year-old widow. Chung was described as an Americanized Chinese and a Healdsburg restaurant owner. He had cut off his queue and

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[23] Ching Chao Wu, *Chinese Immigration in the Pacific Area* (PhD diss., University of Chicago, 1926), 16-17.

[24] The California miscegenation statute was amended in in 1901 to include Mongolians, and repealed in 1948, ArtLung, "California's History of Miscegenation Laws," accessed November 30, 2012, http://artlung.com/blog/2008/10/28/californias-history-of-miscegination-laws.

[25] "Chinaman Will Wed," *Press Democrat*, October 25, 1904; "Wed After Style of Melicans," *Press Democrat*, October 27, 1904"; "Soon Tired of Husband; Ah Quay Busy Searching for His Bride of a Few days Who Had Eloped; She is Said to have found Someone Better, and Ah Quay Believes the Marriage to Have Been a Failure," *Press Democrat*, November 15, 1904.

he dressed in American clothes, but according to a local paper, "he was Mongolian just the same." The couple married in Washington to avoid California's prohibition, but Gertrude left the family domicile two months after the ceremony.[26]

The most remarkable and enduring marriage occurred in the late 1920s between a Chinese woman, Song Wong, and a Caucasian man, Charles Borbeau. Because interracial marriage was still illegal, Song Wong and Charles most likely evaded California's law prohibiting such a union by being married in a state (or Mexico) without racial restrictions on marriage. The couple eventually went through a second ceremony in Los Angeles in 1953, after California repealed its miscegenation statute.[27] Song Wong is the only Sonoma Chinese woman known to have entered into an inter-racial marriage during this era, but unlike the experience of Ah Quay or Tom Chung, Song Wong's marriage endured until Charles' death in 1988. By choosing her own husband, Song exhibited an independence from matriarchal authority (her father died in 1918), and challenged the ancient notion of filial piety. However, Song's mother accepted Charles and the marriage was a happy one that "worked out beautifully."[28] Song and Charles were challenging the racial mores of local society, and risking personal ostracism and business failure should the general public be repelled by the notion of their marriage. While community response apparently did not affect their restaurant business, Song continued to suffer racial slights to the date of her oral interview in November 1994.

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[26] "American Woman To Wed Healdsburg Chinese," *Daily Republican*, August 5, 1907; "Leave State To Evade Law," *Press Democrat*, August 7, 1907; "Were Married in Seattle," *Press Democrat,* August 8, 1907; "Chinese Wife Leaves Her Home," *Daily Republican*, November 19, 1907; "Yun's American Wife Tires of a Celestial Husband; Chinaman Charges Gertrude May with Larceny," *Press Democrat,* November 19, 1907.

[27] Doherty, "Sonoma Stories," Appendix C, 187.

[28] Ibid.

Yet, some Chinese men still preferred Chinese brides from their native land.[29] When a suitable wife could not be found in the United States, one would be sought in China. Some like Ah Wow, a 55-year-old hop yard manager, went to China to find a bride. Notwithstanding the several thousand dollars he took with him, his search, for reasons not disclosed, was a failure. In a letter addressed to a former employer, Dr. Rohr, he acknowledged his return to Santa Rosa and that he "no more like olee countree."[30] Freddie Wing (Taw Wing Fon Yee) arrived in San Francisco in 1895, and achieved success as the chef for the Swiss Hotel in the town of Sonoma. In 1921, he went to China to find a bride, and had better luck than did Ah Wow. He served as a cook in the U.S. military during World War I, bought a home, and continued to reside in Sonoma, apparently without any racial animosity.[31] An increasing ratio of Chinese women to men, war, and the Communist revolution would all but eliminate the preference for Chinese-born wives.

Independent Chinese Women

Born in 1909 in Santa Rosa, Song Wong was both a participant in and a witness to the changing fortunes of Santa Rosa's Chinatown, and her story is as much one of assimilation and independence as it is one of tradition. Song Wong's story underscores the difficulties and conflicts of transnationals (even if born in America) in navigating their day-to-day existence. The bonds of traditional patriarchy were loosened at an early age, perhaps when Wong was 16 or 17 years of age. Her uncle, owner of the Poy Jam

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[29] Hsu, *Dreaming of Gold,* 102.

[30] "Ah Wow Did Not Find A Bride; Aged Chinaman Who Was A Resident Here For Years Coming From China; Did Not Find The Almond Eyed Lass It Was Reported He Went After And Will Settle Down To Hop Raising," *Santa Rosa Press Democrat*, January 1, 1904.

[31] H. K. Wong, *Gum Sahn Yun* [*Gold Mountain Men*], ([California: Fong Brothers Printing, Inc., 1987]), 106-123.

Chinese restaurant, circumvented the traditional Chinese preference for males by employing her as the manager of his restaurant, arguably a position in which she had greater responsibility than her younger brother, Harry, who worked as a waiter. Song Wong embarked on a path that perhaps no other contemporary Sonoma Chinese woman of her era attempted: seeking a college education. Song Wong attended public school in Santa Rosa, graduated high school, and continued her education at Santa Rosa Junior College; she matriculated to Stanford University before marrying Charles.[32] Wong told LeBaron that, as a child, she was under constant fear of being beaten up because she was Chinese. In later life, she continued to suffer social slights from her former classmates, who would laugh about their treatment of her in school. On some occasions, "Charles and I have been invited to different things and they see my face and they say, 'I don't think you have an invitation, or something like that.' So I'm used to it." Her marriage to Charles apparently continued to fester among some in the Santa Rosa community. "Borbeau didn't mean nothing to the people," she related to LeBaron. "When they seen me [sic], well, they just, in fact, to this day, some people aren't very happy."[33] She enjoyed a successful career as a businesswoman and was a charter member of the Business and Professional Women's Club, and was accepted into membership of the Soroptomists and the American Legion Auxiliary. Song Wong earned community esteem and public recognition for her contributions to Santa Rosa.

In some places, as late as 1898, Chinese women were still excluded from view except when in the presence of other women, and were transported in a closed carriage

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[32] LeBaron, "Santa Rosa's Rich, Painful Chinese Legacy," *Press Democrat,* June 25, 2012, .
[33] Doherty, "Sonoma Stories," Appendix C, 187, 196-198. The interview took place on November 19, 1994.

regardless of how near the destination.[34] The tradition of cloistering women has not been reported in Sonoma County, and it's doubtful that the practice ever existed here. In Sonoma County, women were freely permitted to work in occupations that brought them into contact with both the Chinese and white public. This position placed them in a role that by its nature demanded interaction and negotiation with men that defied the traditional requirement of submissiveness of woman. These female merchants graphically exhibited the independence and resilience of Chinese women who had to make it on their own.

In Santa Rosa in 1920 Wing X, a 36-year-old widow, worked as a merchant to support her two daughters, ten and twelve years of age, and her four-year-old son. She apparently received some assistance from her thirty-three-year old cousin who worked as a cook in a hospital. Wing and her children were all born in California, and all spoke English.[35] In Sebastopol, Seita Gum, a 43- year-old married woman with an absent husband, was a fruit merchant, and owned her own home. Like Wing X, Gum and her children were all born in California, but unlike Wing, Gum's married son and unmarried daughter had English names. The entire Gum family was born in California, attended school, and could read, write, and speak English. Living with Gum in 1920 were: Gum's 23- year-old married son, N. Louis, an expert in apples, his Hong Kong-born wife, 23, and her two daughters; Gum's daughter Florence, 13 years old; a 23-year-old married woman, also with an absent husband; and Ting Choy, a foreman in the apple industry.

Some fathers and daughters jointly operated the family business. In 1920, Lee Chong, 24, and her 59 year-old father, Lee Bow Chong, jointly operated a general retail

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[34] Stanford Lyman, *Chinese Americans* (New York: Random House, 1974), 89, quoting from Louis J. Beck, *New York's Chinatown: An Historical Presentation of Its People and Places* (New York: Bohemia, 1898).
[35] Ancestry.com, database: California, Sonoma County, Santa Rosa, Ward 4, District 159, Sheet 29.

merchandise store in Sebastopol. Lee Chong was single, but her mother (and Lee Bow Chong's wife) was absent. Both father and daughter were born in China, and apparently arrived in the United States together in 1890.[36]

The story of Chen See is the unique story of a Chinese woman in Sonoma County, and illustrates the independence of Chinese women and their domestic relationships within China's Confucian, patriarchal society. Some Chinese husbands placed trust and confidence in the business decisions of their wives, who were de facto heads of the family. Chen See and her husband had run a successful business in Sonoma before selling it and returning to China in about 1875. In 1900 she and her husband decided that she would return alone to Sonoma to consider establishing another store. Her husband intended to return to Sonoma, but, according to Chen See, she thought he was too old, adding that "if I find the business prosperous, I well send for him to come, but if not, I will sell it out and go back to China."

She was re-entering the United States not under the derivative status of her husband, but independently as a merchant without her husband. Questioned about her status as a merchant, the Town Marshall, H.H. Albertson, testified that "the woman was more businesslike in the conduct of the business than was her husband and that she was full active as was her husband." Another witness, familiar with Chen See's business activities, told the immigration agent that "she was more of a merchant and displayed more ability in that time than did her husband."[37] Yet, for all of her business acumen and work in the family business, she did not know if she had a legal partnership interest. Chen

[36] Ancestry.com, database: California, Sonoma County, Sebastopol, Manuscript Census, District 131, Sheet 8.
[37] National Archives, San Francisco, Immigration Arrival Case Files, 1884-1944, Immigration and Naturalization Service Record Group 85, 9756/34.

See was the only Sonoma County Chinese woman to be admitted to the United States independently of her husband, under her own standing as a merchant during the era. There were no doubts as to her ability and status.

This anecdote illustrates that within the family unit the woman could be valued and relied upon for more than the traditional duties; that husbands recognized their wives' skills and depended upon their abilities to advance the families fortunes. Patriarchy was a condition that may have been dependent on circumstances and parties. Perhaps the three obediences of Confucian patriarchy, admonishing the woman to obey the father at home, the husband after marriage, and the eldest son when widowed was more elastic when applied within some family units.

Chen See's story of emigration to America, establishing a business with her husband, selling the business and returning with him to China for a period of time, then returning to establish a new business and re-settle with her husband in the United States if it were successful, underscores the sojourner and entrepreneurial mentality of many of the Chinese at the beginning of the twentieth century.

Chinese Women Constrained

Huping Ling catalogued the major occupations of Chinese women in the United States from 1920-1990.[38] For both the years 1920 and 1930, the majority of Chinese women were employed in domestic service, manufacturing, and clerical, with 14 percent and 13 percent, respectively, listed as "other." In Sonoma County during these periods, Sonoma Chinese women were not employed in any of these common occupations, save domestic service. Even domestic service in Sonoma County was male-dominated. Aside

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[38] Huping Ling, *Surviving on the Gold Mountain: A History of Chinese American Women and their lives* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1998), Table 4.3, 123.

from a couple of female merchants, a few worked out of the house in "other" occupations for wages as laundresses, farm laborers, or cooks. There was even an occasional female farmhand. Sonoma Chinese women paid the price for the county's lack of industrialization. The canneries and woolen mills provided occasional opportunities for (contested) employment of Chinese men. And, although these employers hired females, there are no reports of Chinese women being employed in either of these industries, even during labor shortages.

When asked by the census enumerator for their occupations, the wives of merchants, laundrymen, restaurant owners, and boarding house operators responded "none," yet these women surely were indispensable to their family's economic survival.[39] The fact that many women listed "none" as their occupation belies the dual role that many Chinese women played within the household. As the wife of a merchant, boarding house owner, restaurant operator, or laundryman, she was both a partner in her husband's business and a nurturing mother raising the children according to Chinese tradition. The family functioned as a productive unit and the wife not only had the responsibility of doing the housework and raising the children, but also assisted her husband in the family business without wages. The merchant's wife worked alongside her husband stocking and re-stocking shelves. The wife of a laundryman most likely did ironing or waited on customers. A boardinghouse keeper's wife probably cleaned the house and prepared the meals. The wives of herbal medicine practitioners were able to be actively involved in the business because it was a part of Chinese culture with which they were familiar.[40] Other

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[40] Liu, "Chinese Herbalists in the United States," in *Chinese American Transnationalism,* 152; Huping Ling, "Family and Marriage of Late-Nineteenth and Early-Twentieth Century Chinese Immigrant Women,"

women occupied responsible positions. For example, Song Wong was the manager of the family restaurant and Yetta Fung was a bookkeeper, most likely in the family business. While there may have been others, the record is barren of women working in the public or responsible areas of the family business or a public workplace, even though they may have been active participants in the enterprise. Nonetheless, women participated in and were indispensable not only to the operation of the family business, but to attend to the routine nurturing of the children and the myriad of usual household tasks.

Chinese Christians

The late nineteenth century and early twentieth century saw a small number of Chinese Christians in the county. Choosing the church over the joss house for their children, "the Chinese themselves" began a Presbyterian Mission School in Santa Rosa when they donated forty dollars toward a new building purchased by the Presbyterian church in 1882.[41]

The willingness of Chinese youth to become Christians – and they were highly praised publically – did little to assuage the racial feelings that surrounded the school, which had a troubled existence. During the boycott, when the community asked all Chinese to leave the city, the school's Chinese employees and students (and presumably their parents) remained, their loyalty praised.[42] A "cruel raid made a few years ago upon the Chinamen that scattered church members abroad" and a failed arson attempt did not

Journal of Ethnic History, Winter 2000, 19, no. 2, 47-48; Ling, *Surviving on the Gold Mountain,* 85-86, 88-89.

[41] *Seventy-Five Years of Presbyterianism: Compiled for the Diamond Jubilee Celebration,* Julia Goodyear Sweet, ed. (Santa Rosa, CA: Press Democrat, 1930), 1855-1866. This pamphlet is on file with the Sonoma County Library.

[42] Presbyterian Church of the U.S.A Board of Foreign Missions, *Annual Report of the Board of Foreign Missions of the Presbyterian Church of the United States of America, Sixtieth Annual Report* (Philadelphia, PA: McCalla and Stavely, printers, 1886), Minutes of the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church, 150.

discourage students continued did not discourage students from continuing to enroll.[43] In 1893 the school suffered a raid by hoodlums that destroyed all of the school's property and probably resulted in yet another a loss of students.[44] The school suffered continuous financial difficulties as the it's existence became more and more tenuous. The exclusion law began to effect the ministry, as "...the Chinese are diminishing through the effects of the exclusion law, the Japanese are as free to come as emigrants from Europe and flowing into our country in an ever-widening stream" [45] By 1906 the school was enrolling Japanese children. Eventually, when the school shut its doors in 1913, the situation was bleak: teachers had left and the Chinese population diminished to three or four Chinese Christians in Santa Rosa.[46]

The Congregational Church in Petaluma established a night school for Chinese students in 1880.[47] Little is known or reported about the school. The school "is one of many others under the general management of a regularly organized Chinese mission, at the head of which is Rev. W. C. Pond." the former pastor of the Congregational Church.[48] A news item reporting sixteen students in native costumes participated in the 1885 anniversary exercises that drew a capacity crowd, including a number of "Celestials" in the gallery," is the sole remaining evidence of any school activity. Except for that report, little is known of this school. The school was successful, at least in the opinion of the

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[43] Presbyterian Church of the U.S.A. Board of Foreign Missions, *Fifty-First Annual Report of the Board of Foreign Missions of the Presbyterian Church of the United States of American, of the Board of Foreign Missions* (Philadelphia: McCalla and Company, 1888), 175.

[44]Presbyterian Church of the U.S.A. *Twenty –Third Annual Report of the Board of Home Missions*, (Presbyterian House: New York, 1893), 73

[45] Presbyterian Church of the U.S.A Board of Foreign Missions, *Sixty-Third Annual Report of the Board of Foreign Missions of the Presbyterian Church of the U.S.A.*, (New York: Presbyterian Building, 1900), 282.

[46] Presbyterian Church of the U.S.A. Board of Foreign Missions, *One-Hundredth Annual Report, Report of the Board of Home Missions* (New York: Presbyterian Building, 1913), Part I, 436.

[47] The Petaluma Chinese Mission observed its thirteenth anniversary in 1893. *Petaluma Daily Imprint*, [no headline]. If this date is correct, the school was established in 1880.

[48] "Chinese School," *Petaluma Argus*, August 15, 1885.

Argus, which editorialized that the school's missionary work was "more effective than ship loads of bibles…"[49] Based on calculations in news reports, I estimate the school closed sometime after 1914.

Following the closure of these schools, there is no evidence of any Chinese attending any of the local Christian churches, nor is there any suggestion of evangelizing by any of them. The existence of these two mission schools undoubtedly had an influence on a number of their students, but the effect of these churches was severely circumscribed to youth. The adult Chinese population – with the possible exception of parents of children enrolled in the schools – maintained their traditional beliefs and methods of worship.

Supporting China, Becoming American

The Sonoma Chinese also maintained a continued interest in China, its political activities, and its modernization. Chinese nationalism was openly displayed in Sonoma in 1894.[50] The first Sino-Japanese conflict of 1894-1895 was of such concern to local Chinese as to warrant their prayers; it gave the Petaluma Chinese "something to talk about." The report of the first Chinese victory resulted in running the Chinese flag up three times over the Third Street building where the Chinese lived.[51] This response was most likely a cultural, familial, and localized identification with China, but points to deep

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[49] "Chinese School," *Petaluma Argus*, August 15, 1885.

[50] Yong Chen, "Understanding Chinese American Transnationalism" in *Chinese American Transnationalism,* 160.

[51] "The War in Petaluma," *Petaluma Daily Courier*, October 1, 1884. This building was most likely the meeting hall of the Chinese Freemasons. Numerous articles describe the flagpole and the flag flying atop that building.

pride that was the well-spring from which twentieth century nationalism sprung.[52] There were frequent reports of the Chinese Freemasons in Petaluma flying the Chinese national flag over their lodge on Chinese holidays and other important occasions, and by 1926, the ambiguous "display of the dragon flags and flags of the Chinese Republic" was for the first time reported in the plural.[53] Hoisting the national flag was emblematic of the heightened nationalistic feelings during the early twentieth century and reflected an acceptance of change.[54]

During this period many Chinese invested in enterprises in China, but these investments were, according to Yong Chen, "a material manifestation of their political ideology aimed at renewing China." Investments in China's industries and railroads increased significantly after 1906.[55] According to Yong Chen, "Chinese investments were not purely economic activities but represented manifestations of their political ideology aimed at renewing China."[56] At least one local Chinese American, Wong Tan, a 65-year-old merchant who was known locally as the "Chinese lawyer," sought investors in a mining scheme for gold, coal, lime, and cement deposits in China that would "not only serve to develop his own country, but will line the pockets of those who finance the operation."[57] There were no reports on the success or failure of his venture.

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[52] Yong Chen, *Chinese San Francisco,* 141, distinguishes between nineteenth century Chinese whose "consciousness was defined primarily by cultural and historical ties" and the nationalism formed in the early twentieth century.
[53] "Chinese New Year Begins Today," *Petaluma Argus,* February 13, 1926; Flying the national flag acknowledged that a change had taken place.
[54] Yong Chen, *Chinese San Francisco,* 172.
[55] Ibid., 170.
[56] Yong Chen, "Understanding Chinese American Transnationalism" in *Chinese American Transnationalisma,* 165.
[57] "Chinese Here Bares Dream to Win Riches; Oriental Seeks Aid to Develop Mine in His Native Country," *Press Democrat,* January 29, 1924.

In Sonoma County, Song Wong's artifacts are emblematic of the relationship American-Chinese maintained with China. Her collection included a variety of Chinese items that once adorned her home: an assortment of Chinese figurines, dolls, ivory carvings, brass vases, woks, a Chinese bamboo umbrella, incense burners, a pair of shoes for bound feet, a cloth mailing bag from Chien Fing Bank in Canton, a Chinese herb, and a carved Chinese ship, among other pieces.[58] Song's life story – including the racial harassment she faced -- and the tensions between her sense of identity and the realities of everyday life illustrate the complexities of Chinese American transnationalism.

Changes in dress and hairstyle gradually occurred among Sonoma's Chinese male population after 1900. Bureau of Immigration photographs taken at the turn of the century showed Sonoma Chinese merchants in traditional dress. In 1904, when some Chinese businessmen arrived in Santa Rosa "dressed in [sic] most approved American style and were minus the queues" to investigate the purchase of a hop yard, they were looked upon as curiosities.[59] By 1930, American suits, ties, and shirts were customary. A photograph of Young Moon taken in 1930 at a Santa Rosa Elks club event at which he was honored, portrayed him in suit, white shirt, and tie, his hair worn in the Western style of the day. Shun Chew, the prominent Santa Rosa herbalist, ran large advertisements in the *Press Democrat* during the 1920s in which his photograph displayed similar attire and hair style as Young Moon.

Cars are another indication of adapting to Western standards. The purchase of a motor vehicle represented a significant investment by Chinese families and was a further indication of both their affluence and their intention to remain in the United States. In

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[58] Sonoma County Museum, Collection with Descriptions (Song Wong Borbeau).
[59] "Hightoned Chinamen Here," *Press Democrat*, October 27, 1904.

previous decades the frugal Chinese would rather have saved these funds to return to China as a wealthy family or as remittances to their family in China. Photographs on file in the Sonoma County Library include a picture of Willie Gin and David Wong, taken in 1929. Willie and David are both clad in Western clothing and hairstyles, standing by automobiles. And apparently Song Wong's family owned an automobile. Among her ephemera is an automobile insurance policy issued in 1928, as well contracts to purchase a 1924 Ford and a 1923 Ford town car by Ben Wong. These are records of significant expenditures that represent the family's permanent connection with Sonoma County. [60]

There is a scintilla of evidence that suggests some Chinese enjoyed American forms of entertainment. When the *Sebastopol Times* reported the death of Ah Wah, a resident of Sebastopol's Chinatown for twenty-five years, it noted that he was "a great admirer of the movies" and that he died shortly after returning from the Starland theater.[61] There has been no research into the recreational habits of rural Chinese, other than gambling and opium smoking. Further research may disclose that Western entertainment was an additional dimension to the acculturation of the Chinese during the first decades of the twentieth century. Can we assume that Ah Wah was merely an outlier?

There is always a tension between the maintenance of "old customs" and acculturation to life in the United States. This was succinctly described by Poy Jam when he told the WPA compilers of the *Foreign Born in Sonoma County* that "the activities and achievements of the various members of each family for generations back are carefully kept and instilled into the minds of the young Chinese-Americans, along with

[60] Doherty, "Sonoma Stories," Appendix F, 221.
[61] "Aged Chinese Dies Suddenly Tuesday Morning," *Sebastopol Times,* June 23, 1916.

the symbology of the ceremonial holidays….," but, he also noted, "the observances (of the holidays) are no longer kept in the old form."[62] Charlie Quong Sing, one of Chinatown's most prominent merchants, was prescient in predicting that long practiced customs would undergo irreversible change as the Chinese began to adapt to American life. Yet, in spite of the relative impoverishment of the community, it is highly likely that remittances kept flowing to their relatives in China.[63]

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[62] U.S. Works Project Administration, *Foreign Born in Sonoma County,* 44.
[63] Yong Chen, "Understanding Chinese American Transnationalism" in *Chinese American Transnationalism,* 44.

Chapter 6

Sonoma County Becomes More Tolerant of the Chinese During the First Three Decades of the Twentieth Century

Sonoma County became a more hospitable place for the Chinese beginning in the early 1900s. The explanation for the changing cultural attitudes lies in the interactions between the Chinese and the white community, mediated by the visible signs of Chinese acculturation that resulted in discarding the nineteenth-century stereotypes of the Chinese. This situation was augmented by the diminished Chinese population countywide, a result that satisfied the white residents of the effectiveness of exclusion (although migration to the cities was the major factor in this population loss). Finally, the retreat of the Chinese from the agricultural labor force relieved the tension of ethnic competition with the largest segment of Sonoma County's white workforce, as newly arrived Japanese and Italian immigrants replaced the Chinese in the fields.

As the Chinese changed their outward appearance by cutting off their queues and adopting Western garb and hairstyles, the white community saw that the Chinese were beginning to make Sonoma County their home. As they began to establish families, raise children, give them English names, and send them to local schools where they learned English as their primary language, local newspapers no longer described the Chinese in the derogatory language of the nineteenth century; no longer were they considered permanent outsiders.

Fewer Chinese Equals Fewer Problems?

Adding to the relaxation of tensions was the drastic reduction of the county's Chinese population. The perception of white Sonomans may have been affected by the

diminution in the percentage of Chinese in relationship to the county's growing population. The Chinese population not only was decreased in absolute numbers, but also as a percentage of the white population of the county; indeed, the total population of the county was undergoing a steady increase during the period of declining Chinese population. The Chinese in 1900 were 1.5 percent of the county's population (599/38,480), declining to 0.59 percent in 1910 (287/48,394), falling to 0.35 percent in 1920 (183/52,090), and finally dropping to 0.31 per cent in 1930 (190/62,222).[1] Though Chinese never were a significant population of the county, it is a reasonable hypothesis that they were perceived by the white community to be less and less of a threat because their rapidly diminishing numbers provided visual proof of the efficacy of the exclusion act and assuaged earlier fears of being inundated by "hordes" of Chinese. As early as 1901, Prof. E. J. Wickson of the University of California's college of agriculture, testified before the Industrial Commission on Agriculture and Taxation that throughout the state "Asiatic help of both kinds [Chinese and Japanese] serves a very good purpose for temporary uses, but is too restricted in volume to menace the white population or *to maintain the antagonisms which once existed.*" [italics added][2] Some twenty years later the local attitude was no doubt consistent with the opinion in *California and the Oriental: Chinese, Japanese and Hindus* that "owing to the effectiveness of the Chinese Exclusion Act, the Chinese cannot be considered a menace for the future."[3]

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[1]The numerator is the total Chinese population, the denominator represent the total population of the county.

[2] U.S. Industrial Commission, Report of the Industrial Commission on Agriculture and on Taxation in Various States (Second Volume on Agriculture), Vol. XI. (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1901), 108, books.google.com/books?id=UvwhAQAAIAAJ..

[3] State of California, *California and the Oriental,* 115; "Undesirables, Another Phase in the Immigration from Asia, Japanese Taking the Place of the Chinese – Importation of Contract Laborers and Women," *San Francisco Bulletin,* published as *Evening Bulletin,* May 5, 1891, accessed July 25, 2011, California's

An ancillary benefit was the reduced labor conflict. During the nineteenth century, labor tensions appeared to be the greatest source of racial animus between the two communities. But with a minimum of Chinese workers available, Sonomans (and Californians) became focused on the Japanese as the primary Asian threat.[4] By 1930, Chinese farm laborers were so few that the opportunity for competition with white labor was reduced to a bare minimum.

Nonetheless, labor disputes still occasionally arose, usually accompanied by violence or threats. These labor conflicts echoed nineteenth-century antagonisms. Conflicts between white and Chinese workers were still certain to stoke the dual fires of white workers' claim to exclusive rights to defined areas of employment and racial prejudice. Geyserville had been free of Chinese labor for thirty years, – yet as late as July, 1931, it was the scene of a potentially violent labor is dispute. Chinese were brought in to work in Geyserville's packing houses. The focus of the agitation was the low wages of the Chinese and displacement of many local people for whom the packing houses had provided annual employment. Turlock had evicted its Japanese melon pickers the day before, and many citizens and unemployed laborers now urged eviction of the Chinese by similar action. Under threat, the Chinese left but returned and continued to work in the packing houses under armed guards. Sonoma County sentiment, it was reported, supported the anti-Chinese faction, and "other Sonoma cities and towns declared in favor of Geyserville"[5]

Historical Newspapers. Sonomans debated the issue of Japanese immigration; see, "High School Congress Considers Jap Exclusion," *Press Democrat,* March 23, 1905.

[4] State of California, *California and the Oriental,* 9. The report was explicit in stating "The Japanese are impossible to our white ideals," to such an extent that "...the people of California are determined to repress a developing Japanese community within our midst."

"Eviction Feared; Geyserville Aroused; Eviction of Chinese by Citizens Looming," *Santa Rosa Republican,* July 22, 1921; "Drive on Chinese Feared; Northern Sonoma County in High State of Agitation Over

Sonoma has always been an agricultural county. As late as 1930, Sonoma County had a total of 21,021 males employed in all industries, including Chinese. Of that number, 10,329 (49.1 percent) were employed in agricultural pursuits, either as owners, tenant farmers, or in some form of labor.[6] A tally of the 1930 census reveals the total number of Chinese engaged in farm labor to be 18. Because the census was taken during the first part of the year, it did not capture the total number of seasonal workers that were employed for the harvest. - As the Chinese population declined and the Japanese and Italians became dominant, a combined with continuing resistance to Chinese labor, it would seem the demand for Chinese seasonal labor would have diminished significantly.

More Interactions, Less Hostility

The attitude of the public was reflected in the tone of the newspapers when discussing the Chinese. With the exception of labor conflicts, most of the harsh and disparaging newspaper articles that frequently appeared during the latter part of the nineteenth century all but disappeared during these early twentieth century decades At most, the articles were reduced to occasional mimicking of Chinese speech patterns or mocking burial customs. The stereotypes of the Chinese as filthy, immoral, and disease ridden appeared infrequently, and by the mid-teens were absent even from the *Press Democrat,* the successor to the *Sonoma Democrat,* the most virulent anti-Chinese newspaper in the county. The condition was not one of welcoming assimilation; as long

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Oriental Labor Problem; Anger of Residents Aroused When Chinese Hire Armed White Guards," *San Jose Mercury News* published as *San Jose Mercury Herald,* July 23, 1921, database: California's Historical Newspapers.

[6] U.S. Bureau of the Census, Population and Housing, 1930: Population, California. Table 20, 276.

as the Chinese remained within the socially defined constructs of employment – social and economic stasis prevailed.

There were many nodes of intersections between Chinese and whites during the early twentieth century that served to reduce the tensions that often flared during the nineteenth century. The most popular was Chinese New Year, an event looked forward to with great anticipation by the white community. Starting in the late 1890s, Chinese New Year celebrations were, for the residents of Petaluma and Santa Rosa, a new and exciting experience. Every year Charlie Quong Sing, a longtime resident, would visit the local newspapers to extend New Year's greetings.[7] Visitors were always "cordially" received. Newspapers praised the decorations, the firecrackers, and the hospitality of bestowing a variety of gifts upon friends and neighbors.[8] From the late 1890s through 1930 the date of the annual event (still celebrated according to the lunar calendar) was publicized in the local newspapers, but by the mid-1920s the occasion received less and less publicity as the festivities became less and less festive. By then, it is likely Sonoma Chinese were still observing the traditions of paying their debts, decorating their homes, and, perhaps, exploding a few firecrackers News accounts reported that the extravagant outdoor

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[7] "Chinese Merchant Here Fifty Years," *Press Democrat,* February 12, 1926.

[8] "Chinese New Year; Petaluma Celestials Stand Treat for the Citizens," *Petaluma Argus,* January 30, 1900, reported that "Chinese candy, nuts and China lilies are now much in evidence and the Celestials are standing treat that their white brothers may eat and be merry." "Visited Chinatown: The Celestials Give Greeting to White Friends and Extend Hospitality; Annual Tour of Visits which mark Chinese New Year Celebration in Their Quarters on Second Street;" *Press Democrat,* January 1, 1903 chronicled that "several parties of Santa Rosans accepted the opportunity afforded them once each twelve month period when Chinese new year's comes round and visited the Celestials in the abodes on Second street…, " and that most of the Second Street merchants, including Tom Wing and Quong Sing "are always glad to see their white friends call at New Years… ."; "The Celestials Enjoy a Feast; New year's Day and What Quong Sing Says of the Celebration," *Press Democrat,* January 25, 1906, related that "some merchants on Second Street will receive their friends among the whites and candy and nuts and cigars will be presented to visitors."

festivities of earlier years were no more. The passing of the Chinatown New Year's celebrations, the "spot of many light and colored banners," was lamented, complaining, "Boys it's Not the Same."[9] The one institution in which the races enjoyed momentary social parity was gradually losing its expansive celebratory nature as a result of those forces that made the Chinese less visible and more acceptable to the white community. Petaluma's loss of Chinese population was so severe by the turn of the century, many Chinese were celebrating new year's elsewhere.[10]

Sonomans patronized a variety of Chinese commercial establishments. Chinese merchants not only provided native goods to the local community, allowing the Chinese to buy familiar foods, clothes, books and newspapers, but they also carried American merchandise and served white residents.[11] Song Wong's father stocked both Chinese and American goods, and she mentions the fact that "Caucasians come to Chinatown … to buy different things.[12] Other merchants took advantage of American holidays to boost trade. Yet Hop, the grocer, solicited white patronage as he advertised the sale of fireworks for the Fourth of July celebration.[13] Thus, Chinese merchants were a likely site where frequent interchanges occurred on a regular basis between the residents of both ethnicities. Song Wong tells of visits to her father, Tom Wong, by the dignitaries of the day, including Henry Ford, Luther Burbank, and prominent Sonoma County banker Thomas Doyle. Though they were fed by Song Wong's father and drank his liquor, the visits seem to have had no lasting political effect.[14]Most likely Tom Wing, Song Wong's father and a prominent merchant and labor contractor, acted as a middle-man during these

[9] "Local Chinese Shoot Firecrackers Today, But Boys It's Not The Same," *Press Democrat,* Jan. 27, 1922.
[10] "Chinese Celebrate Their New Year," Petaluma Argus, February 3, 1905
[11] Hsu, "Trading With Gold Mountain" in *Chinese American Transnationalism,* 27.
[12] Doherty, "Sonoma Stories," Appendix C, 183-184.
[13] Advertisement, *Press Democrat,* June 28, 1901.
[14] Doherty, "Sonoma Stories," 184-185.

visits, obtaining information from prominent white visitors about attitudes and conditions in the Euro-American community that might be valuable to the Chinese residents, while the visitors would gather information on Chinese culture, attitudes, and responses to current events affecting the Chinese. However, the Chinese were not a political constituency – their numbers were small and they could not vote – and politicians would be unmoved by their interests.

Chinese restaurants, grocery stores, and laundries were all patronized by local white residents. Sonomans enjoyed Chinese restaurants and continued to patronize them even in the penumbra of the boycott.[15] The popularity of Chinese food is illustrated by the popularity of Song Wong's uncle's Poy Jam restaurant that was a popular local eating establishment until its demise in the 1980s. Other Chinese restaurants received occasional business by catering public events featuring Chinese themes, costumes, and food. Many whites patronized Chinese merchants. It was here they could obtain the lanterns and other decorations or catered Chinese food for the Chinese-themed events that became popular after the turn of the century.[16] Sonomans made the trek to Santa Rosa's Second Street Chinatown or to one of Sebastopol's merchants where they could find Chinese delicacies, clothes, and lanterns to provide an authentic Chinese aura for their event. For those who wanted genuine Chinese decorations or memorabilia around the house, they could also visit the Poy Jam restaurant. Among the items available for sale to the public were porcelain Yin and Yang figures, Chinese opera dolls, Chinese children dolls with soft bodies and paper mache heads, brass incense burners, wood abacuses, and Mud Man

[15] "A Chinese Restaurant," *Daily Democrat,* December 4, 1886, warning patrons against the vile character of a local Santa Rosa Chinese restaurant because it was observed that "among the frequenters of the place observed by the police in their rounds are several white men and women." The paper warned of patronizing the place, whether for illicit motives or to "allay calls of hunger."

[16] Doherty, "Sonoma Stories," Exhibit C, 183-184.

Chinese figurines.[17] It is likely that local Chinese merchants also had an array of similar goods. Chinese laundries managed to survive the boycott, but by the turn of the century the high cost of technological advances, such as steam cleaning, spelled the end of the Chinese laundry. These entrepreneurs did not have sufficient capital to modernize their operations. Their original investment of back-breaking work, drudgery, and long hours was no longer sufficient, and only a few survived.

Chinese vice proved an equally irresistible attraction to many Sonomans, regardless of class, color, or gender. Santa Rosa's Second Street was a hotbed of gambling activity. Even Chinese vice began to accommodate a cross-cultural dimension. To appeal to their potential white clientele, Chinese gambling parlors began adding American games. The police discovered in one raid that gamblers were engaged in an American card game, studhorse poker, but Chinese money was used for the chips.[18]

The participants in games of chance offered in Chinatown were not only those on the edges of society, but also members of the business community that found gambling irresistible. According to Gaye LeBaron, "farmers in town for the day routinely played the lottery."[19] Both whites and "coloreds" were present at a raid in 1909 that netted 19 participants in Santa Rosa, while in 1910 a white woman was netted in a raid of Doon Kee's gambling house.[20] The *Petaluma Daily Courier*, on September 22, 1911, reported that among those arrested in a gambling raid were whites, including a number of

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[17] Sonoma County Museum, Song Wong Collection List with Descriptions.
[18] "Chinese Gamblers Caught in Raid," *Press Democrat,* December 1, 1910. It is difficult to discern whether an arrest of any merchant for gambling or opium means that person was engaging in a tong activity. The police generally were familiar with tong members and likely would have identified a raid as tong-related. Nonetheless, the lack of such identification does not assure that the activity was not part of a tong enterprise.
[19] LeBaron, et. al, *Santa Rosa: A Nineteenth Century Town*, 258.
[20] "18 Arrests Made for Gambling," *Press Democrat,* September 28, 1909; "Arrest Chinese for Gambling," *Press Democrat,* December 6, 1910.

prominent Santa Rosa businessmen.[21] After a raid in Santa Rosa on March 25, 1914, a noodle joint owner was fined $100 as a result of gambling, and both whites and Chinese were arrested.[22] In September 1922, when police raided Wong Tan's gambling enterprise in his Petaluma grocery store, they found a "few Santa Rosa businessmen" among those caught in the raid.[23] Wau Tom, a merchant on Second Street in Santa Rosa, ran a gambling establishment behind his store. When the police raided Wau Tom's gambling den, also in September 1922, they found seven Chinese and fifty whites, many of whom were well known. The operation provided a variety of games, and was described as a "gaming resort." Fan-tan, chuck-a-luck, faro, lottery, black jack, dice pits, and other forms of gambling were available. Business was so profitable that Wau Tom's den had been raided three weeks prior to this raid, and in both cases re-opened almost immediately.[24] Arrests for the sale of lottery tickets were common until 1925, – when Santa Rosa's Mayor Dunbar declared "open war" on the lotteries.[25]

Not only did white Sonomans patronize Chinese gambling parlors, when they needed surcease from the tribulations of the day many sought Chinese opium dens. Opium use rivaled gambling, especially for those looking for an escape. It not only attracted men; women and boys were frequent visitors as well. A Sebastopol resident complained of one opium den that "most of the women who visit this den come from

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[21] "Police Arrest Four in Raid in Santa Rosa Chinatown, " Petaluma Daily Courier, September 22, 1922; "Noodle House Owner Fined $100 for Gambling on Monday [sic]," *Petaluma Argus,* May 25, 1914.
[22] "Noodle House Owner Fined $100 for Gambling on Monday [sic]," *Petaluma Argus,* May 25, 1914.
[23] "Gambling Den was Raided," *Petaluma Argus,* September 22, 1922.
[24] "57 Arrested in Raid Here; 14 Officers Smash Way Through Chinese Doors, Seize Well Known Men," *Press Democrat,* September 22, 1922.
[25] For example, "Fined $50 for Selling Lottery Tickets in City of Santa Rosa," *Press Democrat,* October 21, 1915; Gaye LeBaron, et al., *Santa Rosa, A Twentieth Century Town (*Santa Rosa, CA: Historia, Ltd., 1993), 258.

Santa Rosa," and of the "boys who came from miles around" to partake of the drug.[26] In early 1886 a *Daily Democrat* reporter toured Santa Rosa's Chinatown to learn about the opium dens and opium habit, and to provide an accurate report on the number of dens and their method of operation. He estimated that opium dens exceeded the number of saloons in the city. One of those interviewed on the premises was a white man.[27] White customers who "hit the pipe"were arrested in Ah Look's drug emporium, while "several white men were laid out stiff." Other white customers left hurriedly as the officers approached. Ah Look was arrested on two charges: keeping an opium den and permitting white persons to engage in the use of the drug.[28]

Arrests did not dim the desire of the Chinese to provide the drug nor of the whites to use it. My examination of official arrest records indicated a Santa Rosa raid in 1904 netted least one white woman. In 1906, six African-Americans were found in a raid on a Petaluma opium joint. A raid on a Petaluma parlor in August 1912 resulted in the arrest of four opium dealers, prompting prominent local residents to furnish bail for one of them.[29] The desire for opium not only crossed gender, age and class lines, but also lowered racial barriers.

Inter-ethnic Interactions

Local residents of all genders, classes, and ethnicities were attracted by a variety of Chinese gambling activities. Fan-tan games were a popular form of gambling. Song Wong acknowledged its popularity among both the Chinese workers and among white participants willing to place bets. Fan-tan games were going "full blast" and "several

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[26] "Chinese at Sebastopol," *Petaluma Weekly Argus*, June 1, 1887 [June 11?] (blurred copy, unclear date).
[27] "Opium Joint Raided," *Sonoma Democrat*, January 16, 1886.
[28] "Officers Raid Petaluma Chinatown," *Petaluma Daily Courier,* September 22, 1922 reported the presence of white patrons.
[29] "Posses Raid Chinatown Here and Arrest Four Opium Dealers," *Petaluma Argus.* August 1, 1912.

young men who are considered respectable in this community" were frequenting the opium dens, according to Wake-Up Jake, in a letter to a local newspaper in January 1901. The letter warned of the excessive number of Chinese in Sebastopol and the vice they brought with them.[30] The lottery, along with fan-tan, attracted the attention of law enforcement and resulted in frequent arrests.[31]

The practice of herbal medicine provided treatment not only for the Chinese, but for many white patients, as well. It was one traditional practice that was unaffected by its Western setting, as its healing powers were perceived to be in its traditional methods and applications. The herbalists represented a clear breakthrough of Chinese culture into American society.[32]For almost 100 years they were indispensable, according to Haiming Liu, to both Chinese and non-Chinese communities.[33] The popularity of Chinese herbalists in the white community is evidenced by the fact that not only did several (including Shun Chew) advertise continually in local newspapers, practitioners in San Francisco and Oakland also placed advertisements in Sonoma County newspapers. These advertisements, giving the telephone numbers of the herbalists, were placed with the hope of acquiring new customers. It does not seem likely that the small Chinese population could have supported the number of practicing herbalists in the county. Obviously, these advertisements would not have been placed in English language newspapers unless they sought white customers. Indeed, some women preferred herbalists to medical doctors because of their non-invasive techniques. They were not required to undress in order to

[30] "Letter From Wake-Up Jake; Sebastopol Full of Chinese-Politics and High License," *Petaluma Weekly Courier,* January 20, 1901.
[31] Data of arrests for lottery infractions from the author's examination of Santa Rosa arrests reports and Santa Rosa Recorder's Court docket.
[32] Ibid., 45, 53.
[33] Haming Liu, *Transnational History of a Chinese Family: Immigrant Letters, Family Business, and Reverse Migration* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 2005), 45.

check the body, and they appreciated the objective, non-moralistic approach on sexual matters and the social distance between the Chinese community and the Caucasian community. When Shun Chew was arrested in Santa Rosa for practicing medicine without a license, Mrs. A. O'Connor was present in his office, being treated for her rheumatism. [34] Chew's advertisements continued in the local press within days after his arrest and there were no further reports of prosecutions.

An even more pronounced acceptance of herbal medicine by the Euro-American community is demonstrated by the harassment of herbalist Fong Wan. Fong Wan's arrests and acquittals attest to the loyalty and trust his white patients placed in his practice of herbal medicine. Fong Wan, one of the most prominent Sonoma herbalists, began his practice in 1913 at 209 Fourth Street in Santa Rosa. He later moved his offices to Oakland, though he continued to advertise in the Santa Rosa Press Democrat as late as 1930. As the self-proclaimed "King of the Herbalists," he suffered twenty arrests for practicing medicine without a license. Following each incident he would place newspaper ads detailing the arrest. After many white patients testified on his behalf, his trials all ended in acquittals. Fong proved an eminently successful businessman, becoming a millionaire through his acquisition of nightclubs and real estate.[35] The verve and loyalty with which Fong's customers responded to his arrests attest to the wide-spread popularity of Chinese herbal medicine, as well as Fong's abilities.

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[34] Liu, *Transnational History of a Chinese Family,* 53; Liu, " Chinese Herbalists in the United States," in *Chinese American Transnationalism,* 143-151; "Arrest Chinese Doctor In Raid," *Press Democrat,* October 9, 1920.

[35] LeBaron, "Santa Rosa's Rich, Legacy Gets Its Due," *Press Democrat,* June 25, 2012; advertisement for Fong Wan of Oakland, Press Democrat, January 21, 1930. For a history of Fong Wan see: "Fong Wan, Chinese Herbalist," Virtual Museum of the City of San Francisco, http;//www.sfmuseum.net/hist8/fongwan1.html.

Formation of a New Stereotype; Ethnic Stasis

The change in attitude by the white population was reflected by a broad array of public and private Chinese-themed events. Although the parties and dances occurred during a period of general Asian hostility, the events attempted to imitate Chinese dress, decorations, or aspects of a perceived exotic Chinese culture. A "Chinese Marriage," one of the "most novel and elaborate affairs given in Petaluma for some time" was performed for the benefit of the Woman's Club. The decorations were carried out "Chinese style," and the "women assumed the role of feminine Chinee [sic] with ease and grace," and that "everything from the costumes of the maids to the decorations were carried out in Chinese style, all being complete," including the display of numerous Chinese flags.[36] When the Queen Esther's Circle of the First Methodist Church in Santa Rosa hosted a Chinese social, "the refreshments were served after the manners and customs of the Chinese".[37] The Elks Club used Fourth Street in Santa Rosa as the venue for its "Oriental City," presenting visitors the opportunity to view a reproduction of a Japanese Shinto Temple. The Asian influence included Chinese, Indian, and Turkish booths.[38] The Chinese theme was not limited to local social or church organizations; bridge parties held in private homes also featured Chinese themes, often prompted by the Chinese New Year.[39]

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36 "Chinese Wedding Occurs This Evening, February 24, 1905," *Petaluma Argus*, February 23, 1905; "The Wedding," *Petaluma Courier*, February 24, 1905; "A Chinese Marriage," *Petaluma Argus*, February 24, 1905.

37 "The Chinese Social; Unique Entertainment Given By Queen Esther Circle At The M.E.Church," *Press Democrat*, May, 16, 1903.

38 "The Oriental City; Plans On A Magnificent Scale For the Elks Part Of The Great Fair," *Press Democrat*, September 24, 1902.

39 "Chinese Bridge Party Featured For Bridge Guests," *Press Democrat*, January 29, 1922; "Chinese Bridge Party – H.A. Hahmen's Residence," *Press Democrat*, February 20, 1901; "Chinese Bridge Party Featured for Guests," *Press Democrat*, January 29, 1922.

Sonoma lodges used the Chinese motif for public dances. The Odd Fellows "decorated the walls with Chinese banners and decorations, with Chinese figurines and lettering" for their "Night in Chinatown" dance. The public was invited to the event and "a man in Chinese costume received the half dollar admission and rung them up in the cash register." Patrons could dine on dishes prepared by a local Chinese restaurant, and enjoy mah jong and cards.[40] The most remarkable public event occurred in 1930, when the Santa Rosa Elks Club honored Young Moon for his long service as steward in a gala "Moon Night." Young Moon originally earned his fame in the vineyards of Sonoma.[41] Following his work in the vineyards, he became the steward of the Santa Rosa Elks club and served many years in that capacity. The Elks developed more than a seemingly sincere and affectionate employer-employee relationship with Moon and honored his loyal service with a celebratory event. The event was described as "one of the outstanding events in the lodge annals" and "one of the greatest gatherings seen in Santa Rosa for years." The sentiments reported after the event represent a significant change in attitude toward Chinese, although directed solely to Moon. He was so well thought of that there was no hesitation in stating that "one might have thought he was a long lost brother, judging from the enthusiasm that greeted him. The Elks long since forgot race and color in regarding Moon."[42] Following the success of the Oriental theme honoring Young Moon, the Elks Club held another Chinese-themed dance, "Shanghai Gestures."[43]

[40] "Night in Chinatown" advertisement, *Press Democrat,* November16, 1923; "Chinese Night at Odd Fellows' Hall Proves Big Event," *Press Democrat,* November 18, 1923.
[41] William F. Heinz, "Role of the Chinese in Viticulture and Winemaking in Nineteenth Century California" (master's thesis, Sonoma State University, 1977), 62-64. Young Moon was a cellar boss at Chauvet Winery in Glen Ellen and was known for his expertise in "matching" or blending wines. Hines, relying on his obituary, claims that Moon began work at the Elks Club in 1927.
[42] "Moon Night; Provides Elks With Spectacle of Orient, " *Press Democrat*, January 23, 1930.
[43] "Elks Oriental Dance Draws Throng," *Press Democrat*, January 26, 1930.

The popularity of Chinese-themed events represents a significant attitudinal change for white Sonomans who had perceived the Chinese as an immoral, disease-ridden, ignorant race that was a blight on white society. Now the Chinese were viewed as civilized and exotic. An ancillary result of these events was the likelihood of heightened interaction between the white community and Chinese merchants, who probably provided the decorations, and Chinese restaurants that catered the food for some of these events.

The effect of these disparate private and public events was to take the Chinese out of Chinatown and place them in the public events and private parties of middle- and upper-middle class white Sonomans. Had these Sonomans continued to harbor the negative nineteenth-century stereotypes, it is unlikely they would have paid homage to the Chinese at their public dances and in their homes.

Jonathan Spence intimates the possibility that "some kinds of American exotic was … in formation, replacing the crudities of Chinatown characterizations with something at least partly rooted within China and Chinese culture."[44] Spence argues that in the early twentieth century Americans felt a moral obligation as result of the Boxer uprising, and a moral commitment to the Chinese for the development of democratic institutions brought about by the collapse of the Qing Dynasty. In addition, the change in attitude was in part a backlash because of what some Americans believed to be a compromise in the fundamental values of Chinese culture by the modernization of Chinatowns. The continued prevalence of Chinese discrimination brought a sense of shame which created a new stereotype of the Chinese as exotics; this was represented in

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[44] Jonathan Spence, *The Chan's Great Continent: China in Western Minds* (New York: W.W. Norton & Co., 1998), xv.

American culture in films, literature, and poetry.[45] Yet, Spence seems to leave this question unanswered [he titled his chapter "An American Exotic?"] when he concludes: "The curious readiness of Westerners for all things Chinese was there from the beginning… Precisely why this should be so remains, to me, a mystery…"[46]

Perhaps a more rewarding alternative is to view these activities through the lens of orientalism, the process of dealing with the Orient whereby the West dominates, restructures, and asserts its authority over the Orient by essentially defining the Orient in Western terms.[47] In America, according to Naomi Rosenblatt, "orientalism, as an expression of cultural superiority, by means of material possession, had taken root at a very early stage, that European forms of orientalism … [which was] primarily social, conferring status on those who possessed Chinese things and ideas."[48] Karen Leong summarized early twentieth-century American orientalism: "American orientalism from the turn of the century through the 1920s projects similarly distorted images of Chinese as primitive, slavish, exotic, manipulative and amoral while American nationalism views its own population as modern, free, civilized, and trustworthy," drawing on orientalism "to affirm the political, social and cultural superiority of the United States and European Americans relative to Asia and Asian Americans."[49] Were Sonomans imposing their interpretation of things Chinese? Was donning Chinese garments a means of crossing boundaries to the exotic, or allowing the freedom to return to their bourgeois life? Were these events an exercise of cultural superiority and domination of Western culture over

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[45] Spence, *The Chan's Great Continent,* 165-167.
[46] Ibid., 241.
[47] Edward Said, *Orientalism* (New York, N.Y.: Vintage Books, 1979).
[48] Naomi Rosenblatt, "Orientalism in American Popular Culture," *Penn History Review*, 16, Issue 2 (Spring 1998), 52.
[49] Karen Leong, *The China Mystique: Pearl S. Buck, Anna May Wong, Mayling Soong and the Transformation of American Orientalism* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2005), 2, 155.

China and Chinese culture? Did these events serve an ancillary function of making Chinese and Chinese culture acceptable to the white community? Orientalism provides a reasonable hypothesis to explain the flurry of early twentieth century activity that focused on recreational emulation of things Chinese.

Acts of kindness were sometimes bestowed upon the Chinese by members of the Euro-American community, especially when there was a personal relationship or familiarity between the individuals that overcame racial prejudice. Many of these acts undoubtedly went unreported. When impoverished and aged Mrs. Kee Haw died, the response of white neighbors is illustrative of the metamorphosis of attitude of many white neighbors toward the Chinese. Though a number of Chinese assisted with her burial, her white neighbors paid the burial expenses and several of the white children "living in the neighborhood who knew her well" placed a few flowers on her cheap coffin before she was interred in the county cemetery.[50]

Reports are abundant of families providing for their Chinese servants when they were no longer able to work. They often occupied a position of trust and responsibility for administering the household, and were frequently considered a part of the family.[51] Newspaper reports indicate many Sonomans became attached to their house servants and cooks, who often served the family for years.

During the mid-point of exclusion, both the Chinese and the dominant communities developed a new outlook: the Chinese adopted Western mannerisms that made them appear ready to accept Western values while, at the same time, the harsh, prejudicial, and misinformed nineteenth-century views the Chinese receded among the

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[50] "Deceased Aged Chinese Woman Buried Yesterday," *Santa Rosa Republican*, April 21, 1905. See previous discussion of Kee Haw's funeral, p.70.

[51] Street, *Beasts of the Field*, 242-245.

white population. The white community would live with the Chinese and, for the moment, the Chinese would co-exist within the limits imposed.

Chapter 7

Conclusion

By 1930 the cultural distance between the Sonoma Chinese and the white population had begun to close. The acculturation of the Chinese to Western values – a process occurring throughout the American Chinese community – included changes in their dress and personal appearance that made them look more like the dominant American culture, and the establishment of families, including rearing children with American names who attended public schools. They were no longer considered vile and immoral, or a blight on society, but as exotics who were emulated by the white middle class with mock Chinese weddings or public events where lodge members dressed in Chinese costumes. Although they were still marginalized, still segregated, and racial prejudice kept most in menial positions, the Chinese in Sonoma County reached a state of social equilibrium with the dominant community. The Euro-Americans' stereotype of the Chinese changed from the idea that they would forever damage American society and culture, to the desire to emulate Chinese customs, clothes, and food. The Chinese in Sonoma County in 1930 were more accepted than their nineteenth century forbearers, but racial prejudice still colored the attitudes toward the Chinese.

As they increasingly adopted Western dress, spoke English, increased their fecundity, and gave their children English names, they no longer seemed so distant, so foreign to the white community. They were becoming settlers while maintaining a close economic, political, familial, and psychic relationship with China. However, their inability to become citizens would keep them at a civic distance, without a political voice, for many decades.

Sonoma County's Chinese community in the 1930s faced an arguably more difficult struggle than they faced during the anti-Chinese movement of the nineteenth century. They were now confronted with a migration to the larger urban areas that resulted in an almost existential decline in the population between 1900 and 1930. This declining population, when combined with an increasing number of children, an aging adult population, and an unemployed female population increased the non-wage earners to at least 50 percent of the total Chinese population. With fewer wage-earners there was less income and fewer funds available for the public celebration of the traditional Chinese New Year or for the creation, support or maintenance of new institutions. It was an impoverished community. The challenges, though less harsh than the boycott of 1886, were deeper, more profound, and longer lasting.

And Sonoma County remained anti-Chinese. Perceived labor competition would still arouse the sentiments of an earlier era, yet there were few reports of labor disputes after 1920. It appears the Chinese had settled in to the economic milieu of the county by becoming merchants, while a small labor force of farm workers and day laborers, cooks, waiters, dishwashers, a declining number of laundrymen and apple driers eked out a living. Herbalists seemed to have found a robust white clientele. The grudging willingness of the Chinese to remain in the socially and economically defined workspace was their method of avoiding conflict in labor relations.[1] Chinese culture remained an integral part of the community. Traditions and rites were maintained, though by the 1920s, the grand public celebrations of the Chinese New Year, looked upon with

[1] Roger Daniels, "Westerners from the East: Oriental Immigrants Reappraised," *Pacific Historical Review.* 35, No. 4 (November 1966), 378, article DOI: 10.2307/3636973, article stable URL: http://0-www.JStor.org.iii.sonoma.edu/stable/3636973

anticipation by many in the white community, had largely diminished in size. Many local Chinese were themselves going elsewhere to celebrate.

As the Chinese approached the twentieth century, it does not seem unreasonable to assume that some number of them had acculturated or had begun the process of absorbing Western values. Events in China in the early twentieth century gave that impetus to San Francisco's Chinese. The early 1900s saw a nationalistic and patriotic fervor, inspired in part by their desire for a strong China to come to their support in America, to help alleviate the racial discrimination they were suffering. Accompanying this hope – which would remain unfulfilled – was a re-examination of their place in American society, the viability of their celebrating ancient customs in their traditional form, and the role of women in the Chinese community. A modernizing China would be reflected by a modernizing Chinatown, but on Chinese-American terms.

The sojourner mentality of the past was being replaced by a trans-Pacific outlook. Sonoma County was becoming home. It was here they would continue to make their living and raise their families. The number of families barely increased betweem1900 and 1930 but the nature of the family was undergoing significant and important changes. The availability of Chinese American women provided an some relief from the sexual imbalance had inhibited the formation of families from the time of their initial immigration in 1849. As Chinese families grew larger, the children would likely serve as an anchor to the community; it would be in Sonoma County where their children would learn English, be brought up internalizing Western values, and having the customary attachments of place of birth. During this era, the nature of the Sonoma Chinese

community was transformed from a bachelor society to one of households. However, sexual imbalance remained and it would take decades for there to be gender parity.

The relations between American Chinese and their mainland compatriots drew ever closer. The Sonoma Chinese maintained an economic interest in China, investing whenever possible in China's modernization. The purchase of Chinese bonds evidenced continued support for the Chinese government. And there is little doubt that Sonoma County merchants carried San Francisco-published Chinese language newspapers to keep them abreast of the current news in China. Their small numbers and meager financial resources probably kept them from participating in the Chinese economy and politics on a larger scale, but there is some evidence the Sonoma Community did reflect the same interests in China as in the larger San Francisco Chinese community.

As the harsh rhetoric of the nineteenth century that supported the 1886 boycott gradually diminished, there was increasing contact between the races in business, employment, and vice, along with a more respectful (or new stereotypical) attitude toward China and its culture. Chinese culture suffused a number of public and private events in which Chinese dress, culture, and food were emulated. There were increasing areas of interaction between the Chinese and white communities that served to reduce tensions. Gambling, opium, herbal medicine, Chinese restaurants, and Chinese grocery stores all provided services sought after by a large number of the local Euro-American population. The result was that the familiarity bred of interaction led to a relaxation of social, if not economic, prejudices. The perceived threats of hordes of Chinese overrunning the county had dissipated because of the effects of exclusion, easing inter-ethnic relations.

The experience of the Chinese in rural areas of California during the exclusion era is an important element in Chinese American history, providing us with a more complete understanding of the evolution of this population throughout the state. During the nineteenth century, a majority of the Chinese in California lived in rural, agricultural, or mining areas. It was in the period studied, from 1900 to 1930, that they began to be primarily urban dwellers. It is important to understand, as much as possible, the daily existence in their rural environment, and how they coped with the political, socio-cultural, economic, and racial hurdles they faced during the early years of the twentieth century.

My research has shown that Chinese in rural Sonoma County faced an entirely different set of problems from their urban counterparts in San Francisco and the greater Bay Area, and other rural areas and responded differently. In addition, the story of the Sonoma Chinese may provide some insight into the adaptation of "unwanted" immigrants in a hostile host society.

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