“Confined to Chinatowns?”
A New Look at Chinese American Geographic Redistribution
in the Exclusion Era, 1882-1943

Susan Boslego Carter
Professor Emerita, Economics, University of California, Riverside
Susan.carter@ucr.edu

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Abstract
While the Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882 is best known for restricting Chinese immigration into the United States, it also prompted an important geographic redistribution of the Chinese American population. Using the ICPSR digitized, county-level census files, hand-coded entries from published census volumes and IPUMS full count census data from 1880, I describe, for the first time, the contours of that redistribution and hint at the forces that propelled it. I reject the standard view that Chinese Americans were “confined to Chinatowns” during Exclusion and document instead their wide geographic dispersion. The employment discrimination that accompanied Exclusion channeled the Chinese into service work, requiring them to locate near the non-Chinese population. Geographic dispersion did not necessarily expose the Chinese to racially-motivated violence. For the Chinese, as for all minorities, safety lay not in numbers, but in pluralistic communities that respected and protected human rights. An appendix details the promises and pitfalls of using the IPUMS full count census data in furthering this research.

Introduction
The Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882 ended the unrestricted migration that brought over 280 thousand Chinese to the United States in the mid-nineteenth century. The Act took aim at the laborers who comprised the majority of arrivals and brought Chinese immigration to a virtual standstill. By the 1890s inflows could no longer offset losses from return migration and death; by 1920 the Chinese American population had dropped to barely half its 1890 peak.¹

This decline was accompanied by a marked inter-regional population redistribution. On the eve of Exclusion, in 1880, almost 97 percent of Chinese Americans lived in the West; by 1950, shortly after repeal,

¹ I am grateful to Richard Sutch for his many excellent comments and suggestions throughout this project.
only 57 percent remained in their original region of settlement. The difference between the initial geographic concentration of the Chinese and their subsequent integration and assimilation into the larger society was even more pronounced than that of the better-known experience of Blacks during the same era. In 1880, before the onset of the Great Migration, about 90 percent of Blacks lived in the South; by 1950, 68 percent still did so. (See Figure 1.)

Like Blacks, the Chinese movement out of their original region of settlement was also a move from rural to urban places. As Roger Daniels noted, “Chinese became, like certain other immigrant groups, predominantly not only urban but large-city urban.” Figure 2, which plots the share of Chinese, foreign-born whites, and Blacks in cities of 100,000 or more, shows that in 1860, when virtually all Chinese lived in California and when San Francisco was still a small town, literally no Chinese lived in large cities. But with the emergence of Western cities and the movement of the Chinese out of mining and railroad construction camps, their urban population share grow. By the 1920s the Chinese were the most urbanized of America’s ethnic and racial minorities.

Scholars have equated this urbanization with a movement to Chinatowns. Daniel Rodgers pointed to the establishment of Chinatowns in cities such as San Francisco, Oakland, New York, Los Angeles, and Chicago, and suggested that all Chinese migration to big cities was migration to Chinatowns. Stanford Lyman also believed that the Chinese migrated to Chinatowns and that they did so as a strategic, defensive retreat from isolated, rural, Western camps where they were vulnerable to racial violence.

In the four decades that followed the completion of the Transcontinental Railway in 1869, the strikes and contracts established in the wake of the triumph of the labor movement drove the Chinese worker out of the many different kinds of work in which he had found a niche and confined him to Chinatown…[T]he number of Chinese communities in the United States declined while the density of settlement in the larger Chinatowns increased.

Here I propose a different view. Using newly-developed county-level data, I argue that Chinese residential segregation was most extreme in the early mining and railroad-building era. Afterwards, during Exclusion, Chinese Americans achieved an unusual degree of wide geographic dispersion. They left the

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4 Daniels, Asian America, 69-70.
West and moved to New York, Boston, Chicago and New Orleans, but also to cities like Scranton, Milwaukee, Providence, and Norfolk, cities that would never develop Chinatowns.

Mapping Chinese Residential Redistribution

Figures 3 through 12 use census population estimates to map, at the county level, the number of Chinese Americans for the ten successive censuses beginning in 1860. The maps reflect both the changing size of the total Chinese population and its geographic redistribution. Because these data are highly skewed, with most counties having either no Chinese or only a small Chinese population, I map the data using a modified logarithmic scaling that amplifies differences among the many sparsely-settled areas.

For the years 1860 through 1920 the maps reveal a remarkable redistribution of the Chinese American population out of California and into every other part of the country, including the South, a region shunned by European immigrants. Though the Chinese were increasingly likely to live in urban counties, outside the West they also established new residences in rural and suburban areas, presaging by a full century the recent tendency of new immigrants to settle in non-gateway destinations. Their geographic dispersion proceeded most rapidly in the years immediately following passage of the Exclusion Act and coincided with the decline of the Chinese American population overall.

Two measures of residential segregation, graphed in Figure 13, summarize these trends and compare them with trends among the black population. The segregation index compares the proportional distribution of the Chinese and non-Chinese populations across counties. Its values range between zero and one, with one – complete segregation -- indicating that the Chinese and the non-Chinese lived entirely apart from one another. The isolation index measures exposure to others. Its values also range between zero and one with one – complete isolation -- indicating that the average Chinese person lived in a county

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6 Sources and notes for these maps are shown in Appendix A.
populated entirely by Chinese. As Figure 13 shows, both the segregation and the isolation indices declined over time at least through 1920 when the Chinese population was at its nadir.9

David Cutler, Edward Glaeser, and Jacob Vigdor (1999: 459) have proposed that neighborhoods with segregation indices greater than 0.6 and isolation indices greater than 0.3 are “segregated” and “isolated.” According to these standards, in 1860, when all Chinese lived in sparsely settled California, the Chinese were extremely segregated with an index of 99 percent. Over time, and especially after passage of the Chinese Exclusion Act, they moved into new areas. By 1950 their segregation index registered only 62 percent, just barely segregated according to the Cutler, Glaeser, Vigdor criteria. More striking, perhaps, is the Chinese isolation index. Even in 1860 it was only 18 percent. Although they were geographically concentrated, there were so few Chinese that they did not predominant, not even in the communities in which they settled. As they expanded their geographic range and as their numbers fell with Exclusion, their isolation index fell to the stunningly low level of less than one percent. In other words, the average Chinese lived in a community in which fewer than one percent of the population was Chinese.

Reductions in the segregation and isolation of the Chinese in this era were even more dramatic than those of Blacks. In 1860, when most Blacks were enslaved, black segregation registered over 70 percent and their isolation index 47 percent, well above the thresholds for segregation and isolation suggested by Cutler, Glaeser, and Vigdor. Black segregation and isolation remained roughly constant after the abolition of slavery up through 1910 but fell dramatically in the decades that followed. By 1950 Blacks were neither segregated nor isolated according to these measures, at least not at the county level.10

Were big city Chinatowns growing despite the trend toward geographic dispersal? Figure 14 displays the percentage and number of Chinese in each of the eight cities chosen by Daniels to illustrate what he viewed as the increasing importance of Chinatowns in the years following Exclusion. Only New York – and perhaps Los Angeles -- trace the sustained growth implied by his summary. San Francisco’s Chinatown suffered a major decline in both its share of the total Chinese population as well as in absolute numbers between 1890 and 1920, with the sharpest contraction occurring in the 1890s, well in advance of

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the damage inflicted by the 1906 earthquake.\textsuperscript{11} San Francisco’s Chinatown began to recover in the 1920s, but by 1940 it had not reached it 1890 peak. Sacramento’s Chinese community declined throughout the era; Portland, Oregon’s after 1900; Chicago’s, and Seattle’s, and Oakland’s after 1920. Of course, other smaller, less well-known Chinatowns appeared in Philadelphia, Baltimore, Washington, Pittsburgh, Cleveland, Detroit, New Orleans, and Saint Louis. A comprehensive analysis should include them as well.

To better explore the “Chinese in Big Cities means Chinese in Chinatowns” equation, I construct a proxy that identifies as “Chinatown” every county with 500 or more Chinese residents. Although there is no agreed-upon minimum population threshold required for a Chinatown,\textsuperscript{12} the 500+-person rule seems to capture the emergence (and disappearance) of many of the better-known organized Chinese communities. According to this measure, San Francisco’s Chinatown was already in place by 1860; the Chinatowns of Oakland and San Jose, California; Butte and Helena, Montana; Virginia City and Winnemucca, Nevada; and Portland, Oregon by 1870; those in Phoenix and in New York City by 1880; and those in Boston, Philadelphia, and Chicago by 1890. By 1900, most of the Chinatowns in the gold- and silver-mining communities of California, Nevada, Oregon, Washington, Idaho, and Montana had disappeared.

Figure 15 displays this Chinatown proxy alongside the percentage of Chinese in cities of 100,000 or more (the criteria for “big city” used by Daniels and Lyman) and the total Chinese American population for the years 1860 through 1950. The graph indicates that while the percentage of Chinese in big cities climbed from zero to almost 90 percent over those hundred years, the Chinatown proxy exhibited a U-shape. Beginning at 93 percent in 1860 it fell to 56 percent in 1920 before rising to almost 77 percent by 1950. Contrary to Daniels and Lyman, it indicates that Chinese Americans were less likely to live in Chinatowns at the end of Exclusion than they were prior to its onset.

Of course “Chinatown” is generally understood to mean more than places where Chinese Americans live. The term properly evokes a Chinese district, a place where Chinese residences and businesses are segregated -- either by choice or by law.\textsuperscript{13} Referencing sociologist Robert Park, Rose Hum Lee defined Chinatowns in terms of their segregation and their institutions: For Lee, “the most ideal type”

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\textsuperscript{12} See Emily Aronson and Robert B. Kent, “A Midwestern Chinatown? Cleveland, Ohio in North American Context, 1900-2005,” \textit{Journal of Cultural Geography} 25(3) (2008): 305-329 for a defense of the view that no minimum population has been established. Rose Hum Lee proposed that “a Chinatown may be expected to survive so long as the state’s Chinese population does not fall below three hundred and sixty and the city’s population remains above fifty thousand.” See Lee, \textit{Growth and Decline}, 47. Lee’s analysis focused on Chinatowns with a service-based economy, not to the agriculture-, mining-, construction-, and manufacturing-based Chinese communities that predominated in the mid-nineteenth century.
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of Chinatown would involve “…a transplanting of a southern Chinese home village with its economy, government, sacred symbols, customs, language, social institutions, and inhabitants onto the frontier of the United States.” In the same vein, Alejandro Portes and Leif Jensen insisted that Chinatowns require Chinese firms employing mostly Chinese workers and offering specialized Chinese goods and services.

In the larger work from which this research report is drawn I survey detailed historical and ethnographic studies of hundreds of individual sites to corroborate the U-shape pattern in Chinese residential segregation. In this short piece I highlight the main findings.

Why was Chinese residential segregation so high in the early years? Those Chinese mining, fishing, farming, and railroad-construction camps were Chinatowns. Though located in rural areas, those communities came close to recreating “the most ideal type of Chinatown.”

Why did Chinese residential segregation decline in the 1880s? Contrary to standard belief, I show that big, organized Chinatowns offered little protection against the growing anti-Chinese violence. On the contrary, Chinatowns were often targets. Big Chinatowns in Rock Springs, Wyoming; Seattle, Truckee, Denver, Monterrey, and many other communities were obliterated by violent attacks, boycotts, round-ups, and land grabs. The cessation of Chinese migration effected by the Chinese Exclusion Act undermined the economies of Chinatowns in San Francisco, Oakland, Sacramento, Portland, and Los Angeles. The end of the mining and railroad construction booms undermined the economy of others. Employment restrictions and the growing concentration of the Chinese in self-employment occupations in retail trade and services which required the Chinese to live near their non-Chinese customers.

Why did Chinese residential segregation begin to grow after 1920? The arrival of women and the resumption of Chinese population growth in the 1920s revived Chinatowns in the Pacific port cities and reduced the proportion of solitary Chinese laundrymen and restaurateurs. In the more far-flung outposts of Chinese habitation, Chinese family restaurants and laundries replaced those run by “bachelors.”

Those Rural Nineteenth-Century Mining, Fishing, Farming, and Railroad-Construction Camps Were Chinatowns

The Chinese called it “Daifow” or “First Port.” It was here in San Francisco that they first disembarked after their long voyage across the Pacific. What they found, in miniature, was a virtual replica of the government, sacred symbols, customs, language, social institutions, and inhabitants that they had left behind in China. San Francisco Chinatown’s shops were filled with Chinese foods – “…oranges, pomelos, dry oyster, shrimps, cuttle fish, mushrooms, dry bean curd, bamboo shoots, narrow leaved greens, yams, ginger, sugar, rice, sweetmeats, sausage, dry duck, eggs, dry fruit, salt ginger, salt

14 Lee, Growth and Decline, 4.
eggs...tea oil, dry turnips, bettlenut, orange skins, kumquat, duck liver, melon seed, dried duck kidneys, minced turnips, shrimp soy, chestnut flour, birds’ nests, fish fins, arrowroot, tamarind, dried persimmons, dried guts, bean sauce, lily seed, beche de mer, Salisburia seed, taro, and seaweed.” Chinese domestic utensils, including “Chinaware, wooden ware, bamboo ware lacquer ware, iron and copper pans, chopping knives, chopsticks, ladles, tongs, and mills” were offered for sale.\textsuperscript{16} There were tea shops, gambling casinos, and a pagoda-shaped building that housed a Chinese theatre. Chinese actors performed continuously day and night.\textsuperscript{17} White visitors remarked that the buildings’ exteriors “…expressed a Chinese style with brilliantly-colored boards covered with Chinese characters suspended over the doors and yards of red ribbon streaming from them.”\textsuperscript{18} The authenticity of these buildings was hardly surprising given that many had been imported directly from China.\textsuperscript{19} Except for the absence of women, San Francisco’s Chinatown expressed the ideal type described by Rose Hum Lee, “a southern Chinese home village.”\textsuperscript{20} Impressive as it was, and in spite of its lofty designation as Daifow, it was not America’s largest Chinatown.

In San Francisco the migrants swapped their flat-bottomed, wooden- or cork-soled shoes for heavy leather stoga boots. Some acquired black woolen skull caps. Others stitched small leather pouches for the gold they hoped would make them rich. But these were pretty much the limits of their Western borrowings. Except for a few merchants, the Chinese immigrants retained their distinctive culture and style. Their shaved heads, braided queues, bamboo hats, loose-fitting jackets, and droopy pants that barely reached their knees set them apart wherever they went.\textsuperscript{21}

Soon after their arrival most boarded the ferries that left San Francisco’s docks every few hours and headed up the Bay, through the Carquinez Straits, and across the Delta to Sacramento. Some helped form a Chinese community along the four blocks of I Street between Second and Sixth. Its many Chinese “[g]ambling halls, hotels, restaurants, and houses of ill-repute” served both Chinese and non-Chinese clients.\textsuperscript{22} The Chinese called Sacramento “Yee Fow” or Second City. Its Chinese neighborhood was also a Chinatown.

\textsuperscript{17} Spier, “Food Habits,” 79.
\textsuperscript{18} John David Borthwick, \textit{Three Years in California} (Edinburgh, Scotland: William Blackwood and Sons, 1857), 75.
\textsuperscript{20} Lee, \textit{Growth and Decline}, 4.
Most, though, pushed on. Some sailed northward to the further-most Sacramento River terminal at Marysville where yet another Chinese community developed. As early as the 1850s two Chinese restaurants, three Chinese stores and the Bok Kai temple provided traditional food, clothing, gear, education, and other cultural services for the Chinese community.\textsuperscript{23} By 1860, Marysville was home to 235 Chinese, including many merchants, hotel and boarding house keepers, gardeners, physicians, washermen, and cooks.\textsuperscript{24} Marysville became “San Fow” or Third City. Its Chinese neighborhood became a Chinatown as well.\textsuperscript{25}

But the Chinese had come for gold. From Sacramento or Marysville they left the river and completed the remainder of their journey on foot. Many headed for the “Southern Mines,” in El Dorado, Calaveras, and Amador counties and set up camps along streams drained by the San Joaquin River. In 1860 the Chinese populations of these counties numbered 4,762, 3,657, and 2,568 respectively while the Chinese population of San Francisco was only 2,719.\textsuperscript{26} They “have constructed quite a number of villages,” noted one observer, “some of which contain from one to two thousand souls.”\textsuperscript{27} They lived as “…a distinct people [who] work in squads entirely by themselves in the mines,…Their living is brought from China by their own merchants; and all their trading is done among themselves, and they wear their own peculiar costume.”\textsuperscript{28}

One such village emerged in tiny Mud Flats Township in El Dorado County where the Chinese comprised 697 of the roughly two thousand residents. Almost all were miners though grocers like “Hip,” 64, “Lona,” 37, and 11 others kept the community supplied with ethnic goods.\textsuperscript{29} To finance Hip’s $500 worth of personal assets (probably inventory for his grocery store), one would need an income of $190 thousand in today’s dollars.\textsuperscript{30} Lona’s assets were worth twice as much.


\textsuperscript{24} 1860 U.S. Federal Census manuscripts for Marysville, CA as digitized by Ancestry.com.

\textsuperscript{25} After the mines closed, agriculture became a more important industry for the Chinese and Stockton replaced Marysville as “San Fow.”

\textsuperscript{26} Estimate based on a review of the manuscripts of the U.S. Federal Census of 1860 for Marysville, Yuba County, California, Wards 1 through 4. Manuscript census pages made available through Ancestry.com.


\textsuperscript{28} “Chinese in California,” \textit{Deseret News} (Salt Lake City, UT), Oct. 11, 1854.


\textsuperscript{30} This is the income value of $500 in 1860, or the relative average income that would be needed to purchase the same value of goods. Samuel H. Williamson, “Seven Ways to Compute the Relative Value of a U.S. Dollar Amount, 1774 to present,” \textit{MeasuringWorth}, 2015. \url{www.measuringworth.com/uscompare}.  

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Another Chinese village emerged in the 8th Township of Calaveras County, whose nearest post office was Angel’s Camp. There, the 542 Chinese accounted for almost a quarter of the total population and were supplied by seven Chinese lodging house keepers and 11 Chinese merchants, including “Sun Chi”, 39, whose real estate and personal assets were valued at three thousand dollars, the equivalent to over a million dollars today.\textsuperscript{31}

A third community formed at Chinese Camp in western Tuolumne County in the Sierra foothills at a junction of several major trails. After being chased off a more profitable claim, the Chinese retreated to this land that no one else was claiming and went to work as placer miners. By 1870 they numbered 657, mostly miners, but also three cooks, 17 prostitutes, and a couple of families with small children. They were supplied by 14 grocers whose collective assets totaled $33,300, equivalent to nine million dollars today.\textsuperscript{32}

The success of Hip, Lona, Sun Chi and the other merchants in enabling their kinsmen to maintain their ethnic culture is evident in an engraved sketch produced by John David Borthwick, the Scottish physician, journalist, and artist whose account of his 1851-1854 tour of California affords some of the finest first-hand images to survive from the period. His “Chinese Camp in the Mines,” included in his 1857 publication, \textit{Three Years in California}, depicts one such village. Some residents are shown digging with pick axes. Another is heading toward a stream with gravel-laden baskets dangling from a pole balanced across his shoulders. In the foreground one is shaving another’s head. In a larger group, men hold rice bowls and chop sticks while a campfire heats their wok. In the background opium smokers recline in tents. Another puffs his pipe while a companion braids his queue. All are dressed in their characteristic clothing. Those not reclining wear wide-brimmed, bamboo hats.\textsuperscript{33}

Those woks and bowls contained real Chinese food, too. Unlike the individualistic white miners, many of whom lacked even the most basic domestic knowledge, the Chinese work groups included cooks. While white miners were learning to soak their beans overnight and boil them at least two hours before adding the pork, Chinese miners were enjoying steamed rice. While white miners suffered diarrhea and scurvy from drinking stream water and doing without vegetables, tea and dried vegetables kept the Chinese miners healthy. “While at work in his claim,” Prentice Mulford wrote of the Chinese miners, “his fire is


\textsuperscript{33} Borthwick, \textit{Three Years}, 265.
always kindled near by, and over it a tea-pot. This is his beverage every half hour. His tea must be hot, strong and without milk or sugar.34 White miners subsisted largely on beans, flour, jerked beef, salt pork, coffee, and sugar. When they struck it rich they binged on oysters, sardines, champagne, and liquor.

Chinese miners ate a variety of Chinese foods, and they did so on a daily basis. Some were imported from China and shipped to the gold fields by the big San Francisco Chinese merchant houses. As the economy developed, local Chinese truck farmers began supplying the miners with fresh Chinese vegetables. American-based Chinese fishermen sold them dried fish, squid, and mollusks. They obtained fresh beef, pork, and chicken from non-Chinese ranchers, farmers, and butchers but the Chinese prepared these meats according to their traditional recipes. “There is good reason to suppose that no Chinaman, as long as he remained in the company of his fellows, ever had to rely for long on Occidental foods,” Robert Spier concluded.35

These communities were unlike the Chinatowns of the 1940s described by Rose Hum Lee in which discriminatory regulations and practices confined the Chinese to laundry and restaurant work.36 Income from mining and a dense network of merchants who supplied them with goods from home enabled the Chinese to function largely independently of the rest of the community. They did not require non-Chinese patrons in order to make a living. In these rugged mountains, far from their homeland and far from any urban area, Chinese miners lived in Chinatowns.

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The Chinese followed new gold discoveries north into California’s Sierra, Nevada, Plumas, Trinity and Siskyou counties and then into the Blue Mountain Ridge in eastern Oregon. From there they moved east into Idaho’s Boise Basin and then into Deer Lodge and Lewis and Clark counties in Montana’s Rocky Mountains.37 The farther afield they went, the more they predominated among the local population. At the time of the 1870 census, a third of the population of newly-settled Idaho was Chinese. In its rich Boise

36 Lee, Growth and Decline.
Basin, the Chinese share was almost half. Chinese merchants, physicians, and cooks supplied them with their cultural goods. “[Idaho] Mining towns such as Buena Vista, Centerville, Idaho City, and Pioneer had become true ‘Chinatowns,’” Liping Zhu concluded.38

Comstock Lode silver lured the Chinese into western Nevada. Where discriminatory laws kept them out of the mines, they worked as laundrymen but lived in Chinatowns.39 When Samuel Clemens visited Virginia City about 1870 he noted, “Of course there was a large Chinese population in Virginia—it is the case with every town and city on the Pacific coast....[A]bout a thousand... [were] penned into a ‘Chinese quarter’—a thing which they do not particularly object to, as they are fond of herding together.”40 Nearby Carson City had an estimated two thousand Chinese residents and a Chinatown five blocks long.41

Mining wasn’t the only industry to attract early Chinese arrivals. They were among the first to appreciate the commercial potential of the California fisheries and the first to establish fishing villages all up and down the Pacific coast and throughout the Sacramento River delta. Legend has it that some, sailing in thirty-foot junks directly from China, landed at Monterey and Mendocino harbors in the early 1850s.42 Not long after, five or six hundred Chinese were counted in Monterey, harvesting and drying abalone for the American and Chinese markets. As those beds thinned the Chinese expanded their hauls to include “everything from shark to shiner.” Competition from the Italians and Portuguese had little impact on them.43 Visiting in 1880, Robert Louis Stevenson was struck by the distinct culture these fishermen maintained so far from their homeland:

[T]he boats… are of strange outlandish design; and, if you walk into the hamlet you will behold costumes and faces, and hear a tonque, that are unfamiliar to the memory. The joss-stick burns, the opium-pipe is smoked, the floors are strewn with slips of coloured paper – prayers, you would say, that had somehow missed their destination – and a man quiding his upright pencil from right to left across the sheet writes home the news of Monterey to the Celestial Empire.44

Other Chinese moved south and soon, Chinese fishing villages dotted the coast. “Chinese have large villages,” a British observer of the era wrote, “some of them more like small cities, along the shores whose

38 Zhu, Chinaman’s Chance, 55.
40 Mark Twain, Mark, Roughing It, (Hartford, CT: American Publishing Co., 1872), Ch. LIV.
41 Chung and the Nevada State Museum, Chinese in Nevada, 26
43 Lydon, Chinese Gold, 31-33. According to Wikipedia, “‘Shiner’ is a common name used in North America for any of several kinds of small, usually silvery fish, in particular a number of cyprinids, but also e.g. the shiner perch (Cymatogaster aggregata).”
inhabitants are wholly engaged in catching, drying, [and] shipping fish to China.” Still other Chinese headed north, establishing villages at China Camp on San Pablo Bay in Marin, and at Mendocino and Eureka. Their size and cultural distinctiveness made these fishing communities Chinatowns as well.

California’s rich soil, mild climate, and growing population far removed from the farms of the East and Midwest prompted the development of agriculture and added a new source of employment. In Alameda County, across the Bay from San Francisco, the Chinese established truck gardens. In Santa Clara, Santa Cruz, and Monterey counties they served as laborers in the commercial cultivation of strawberries and then sugar beets and orchard fruit. In Sonoma, in the Vaca Valley of Solano, and in the Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta region of the Central Valley they worked as farmers, farm laborers, and fruit pickers. In the citrus groves in Los Angeles, Orange, Riverside, and San Bernardino counties, they supplied seasonal labor.

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When the Central Pacific Railroad (CPRR) reached Auburn, just to the east of Sacramento, it began recruiting Chinese to lay track across the formidable Sierra Nevadas. Those mountains “…were too big, too snowy, too steep, too rugged, too extensive, too formidable ever to be crossed easily,” wrote Stephen Ambrose. They “…challenged even humans on foot, as the fate of the Donner Party made clear.” White men down on their luck could be recruited to work for short periods, but as soon as they had saved enough to bankroll their next gold prospecting adventure they left. Anxious to move forward, the CPRR experimented with Chinese construction crews and quickly came to respect them. “They worked as teams, took almost no breaks, learned how to blast away rocks, stayed healthy and on the job.” The CPRR began hiring them locally and then from across the state. It was prepared to “…import them from China if necessary.” Before the end of the year, seven thousand Chinese and just under two thousand whites were at work on the line.

The CPRR encouraged the social cohesiveness that made the Chinese work groups so productive by organizing the men into gangs and having them elect a headman and designate a cook. Wages went to

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45 Quoted in Carey McWilliams. *Southern California: An Island on the Land*, (Gibbs Smith, 1946), 87.
47 Chan, *Bittersweet Soil*, 72.
48 Chan, *Bittersweet Soil*, 159.
50 Ambrose, *Nothing Like It*, 152.
the headman who gave some to the cook for provisions before distributing the remainder. A contemporary observer expressed astonishment at the strangeness and the variety of the foods the Chinese ate in that remote wilderness: “dried oysters, dried cuttlefish, dried fish, sweet rice crackers, dried bamboo sprouts, salted cabbage, Chinese sugar (which taste to me very much like sorghum sugar), four kinds of dried fruits, five kinds of desiccated vegetables, vermicelli, dried sea-weed, Chinese bacon cut up into salt cutlets, dried meat of the abalone shell, pea-nut oil, dried mushroom tea, and rice.” The Chinese supply car sold “…pipes, bowls, chop-sticks, large shallow cast-iron bowls for cooking rice, lamps, joss paper, Chinese writing-paper, pencils and India ink, Chinese shoes, and clothing imported ready-made from China. Also, scales…”

The railroad construction camps were geographically mobile, setting up, breaking down, and setting up again as the track advanced. “[W]here was a busy town of 5,000 inhabitants in the morning, was a deserted village site at night.” But move though they did, those camps were Chinatowns.

Far from satisfying the demand for railroads, completion of the Transcontinental Railroad intensified it. With Eastern markets now tantalizingly in reach, every Western town wanted a connection. During the 1870s San Francisco was linked with Monterey, Los Angeles and San Diego. From San Diego a new transcontinental line was run across southern Arizona and New Mexico, and then up to Denver. Another was extended north out of Salt Lake City to Butte, Montana. Yet another connected Portland, Oregon to Roseburg in the south, to Seattle in the north, and to Four Lakes up the Columbia River then northeast near the present-day city of Spokane. A decade later, rail lines connected cities along the entire length of the Pacific Coast from Seattle down to San Diego. New transcontinental links ran through northern and southern Idaho and Montana and through northern Arizona and New Mexico as well.

Where railroads went, new Chinatowns appeared – Auburn, Truckee, Reno, Winnemucca, and Elko on the CPRR; Tucson on the Southern Pacific; Seattle on the Northern Pacific, and San Diego at the western terminus of the Atchison, Topeka, and Santa Fe. Chinese laundries and restaurants serviced

51 Ambrose, Nothing Like It, 153.
the traveling passengers and crews. Railroad companies sometimes paid extra to keep these Chinese establishments open day and night.\textsuperscript{58}

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Between 1860 and 1880 the Chinese American population more than tripled and by the latter date numbered over a hundred thousand. San Francisco’s Chinatown absorbed a disproportionate share and by 1880 its population had reached almost 22 thousand, possibly more.\textsuperscript{59} Chinese immigrants entering and leaving the port needed legal, employment, translation, and other cultural services. The growing Chinese American population enlarged the demand for Chinese imports and supported a labor force of 2,230 Chinese merchants and their 331 employees.

Chinese employment extended far beyond trade and services. Over a third of the Chinese workforce was employed in manufacturing, with cigars, boots and shoes, and apparel being the principle industries.\textsuperscript{60} As Sucheng Chan noted, San Francisco’s Chinatown had become not only a thriving Chinese cultural community, but also included professionals, independent skilled craftsmen, and a large number of Chinese-owned and operated factories and sweatshops.\textsuperscript{61}

San Francisco’s Chinatown wasn’t the only one to grow. By 1880 Oakland’s Chinatown across the Bay had matured into a community of over 2,700 with 30 to 40 Chinese businesses including dry goods stores, fresh food markets, butcher shops, restaurants, and laundries.\textsuperscript{62} Sacramento’s and Portland, Oregon’s Chinatowns were home to over 1,700 residents each and supported Chinese businesses, temples, theatres, and social organizations.\textsuperscript{63} In Marysville the Chinese population exceeded a thousand and operated 42 businesses, most of them general merchandise stores.\textsuperscript{64} Nevada City, California had a Chinese population of 623. While the entire state of Wyoming had only 914 Chinese residents over half of them lived in Rock Springs and surrounding communities in Sweetwater County where they worked in a vast coal mine owned by the Union Pacific Railroad.

\textsuperscript{58} Chung with the Nevada State Museum, \textit{Chinese in Nevada}, 26.
\textsuperscript{59} Yong Chen cites contemporary estimates that put the San Francisco Chinese population at 30 to 40 thousand in 1880. See Chen, \textit{Chinese San Francisco}, 59.
\textsuperscript{61} Chan, \textit{Bittersweet Soil}, 71-72. See also Chen, \textit{Chinese San Francisco}, 61-69.
\textsuperscript{64} Brian Tom, Lawrence Tom, and Chinese American Museum of Northern California. \textit{Maryville’s Chinatown} (Charlestown, SC: Arcadia Press, 2008), 17.
Still, despite these large and growing Chinatowns, the overall trend was away from enclaves. Stanford Lyman understood this. “The variety of work in which Chinese immigrants engaged has been rarely noted in literature on the subject,” he wrote. He then went on to list 49 separate industries in different regions of the West where the Chinese found employment.\textsuperscript{65} The Reverend Otis Gibson called attention to this development as well. Writing, as he often did, in defense of the Chinese he noted “…wherever we find anybody at all, there we find Chinamen ready and willing to do anything that needs to be done.”\textsuperscript{66} The Reverend may have been thinking of Nan Gaon and his 65 colleagues who lived in Tacoma and were employed in the local sawmill. Or he may have known of Ah Sing and his nine countrymen who picked hops in Lake Union, Washington, just north of Seattle. Perhaps he had met Wah Sing who prepared Western meals for 23 boarders at a Markleeville hotel. Ah Sing was another cook while “China Charley” washed and ironed and Ginea Joy, a rare Chinese woman, kept house. They were the sole Chinese residents of that tiny community.

There were many others as well. Gin and Toy Kie were cooks in the home of a white family and the only Chinese residents of Linkville, Oregon – later renamed Klamath Falls. Ah Toy, Sam Sing, and Ah Roy provided cooking and laundry services at a boarding house in Stockton, Utah, about 40 miles southwest of Salt Lake City. Jo Quang was a self-employed cook and Lee Sing and his China-born wife Emmy ran a laundry. These six were the only Chinese in this relatively isolated town of 350.\textsuperscript{67} There were only 611 Chinese in all of Colorado – 206 in Denver and the remainder scattered in small towns and mining camps across the state. Laundrymen Loo Hing, Charles Len Gee, Lee Chung, and Kee Chung, were the sole Chinese residents of Boulder. Salina, eight miles to the northwest, was home to 13 Chinese miners.

Even in cities with large Chinatowns, the Chinese were moving out of the core district. Figure 16, which maps the number of Chinese by enumeration district at the time of the 1880 census, illustrates the development in San Francisco. At the eastern end of Pacific Street near Pier 7 were almost 150 Chinese railroad workers, possibly in temporary quarters awaiting new assignments. A hundred Chinese fish peddlers and laundrymen lived in North Beach. In the neighborhood adjacent to the Pacific Mail’s Pier 40, was a small community of 256 Chinese coal passers, firemen, cabin waiters, cooks, and laundrymen. Further south, at Hunters Point, was a colony of over a hundred Chinese fishermen. Just to the west, in

\textsuperscript{65} Lyman. \textit{Chinese Americans}, 73-74.
\textsuperscript{66} Gibson, \textit{Chinese in America}, 57. Lee, \textit{Growth and Decline}, 54, also identified a “Period of (Chinese) Dispersion” which she identifies as taking place between 1880 and 1910. She notes only the Chinese relocation to the Atlantic Coast, not their dispersion within the West.
\textsuperscript{67} U.S. Federal Census of 1880 as digitized by Ancestry.com.
Bayview, lived more Chinese fishermen plus some woolen mill workers, painters, carpenters, cooks, and servants. Out in the Haight, on what was then the western edge of the city, lived 178 Chinese shoe workers. Virtually every enumeration district had one or more Chinese residents.

**No Safety in Numbers**

Chinese employment in a wide range of industries didn’t last long. The railroad, built by Chinese labor, proved to be their undoing. No sooner was the Golden Spike driven into place, than cheap Eastern goods flooded the California market. Prices plummeted. Western manufacturers went bankrupt. Workers lost their jobs. Wages fell by a third.68 If that weren't bad enough, the railroads also brought in new workers – an estimated 150,000 additional ones in the four years following the onset of the Depression of 1873. By 1877, “…the usual number of unemployed, always to be found in San Francisco, was augmented many fold.”69

White workers blamed the railroads. They were America’s largest businesses and they wielded their power with impunity. Unregulated and without competitors, they set rates and paid workers whatever they liked. To gain concessions they played off municipalities one against the other. Like the Octopus depicted in Frank Norris’s 1901 novel, entire regions lay in their grip. “Communities either flourished or disappeared at their whim.”70 They mocked the democratic process. In 1876, Pennsylvania Railroad president Thomas A. Scott brokered a deal that gave the U.S. presidential election to Rutherford B. Hayes despite the fact that Hayes lost both the popular and the electoral vote.71 Many felt disenfranchised.

To resist the railroads and other big businesses, labor organizers such as Terence Powderly of the Knights of Labor, Samuel Gompers of the American Federation of Labor, and Denis Kearney of the Workingmen's Party struggled to develop national unions to match the national scale of big business. But their white European immigrant workers were difficult to organize. They spoke different home-country languages, embraced different values, and often competed against one another for scarce jobs. Scapegoating the Chinese proved to be an effective way of uniting them. “The Chinese live in filthy dwellings upon poor food, crowded together in narrow quarters, disregarding health and fire ordinances.” Their low living standards “…have reduced wages to what would be starvation prices for white men and

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women, and engrossed so much of the labor in the various callings that there is a lack of employment for whites.” Politically the Chinese were said to form “…an indigestible mass in the community, distinct in language, pagan in religion, inferior in mental and moral qualities.” White European-immigrants may have had their differences, but when contrasted with the Chinese these melted into insignificance. “The Chinese must go” became a rallying cry increasingly heard across the West and throughout the country.

The growing anti-Chinese sentiment forced some Chinese pioneers to reconsider their geographic isolation. After Chinese hops pickers on the outskirts of Seattle were attacked and killed, survivors fled to the city. Oakland’s Chinatown absorbed refugees from racially motivated firings at surrounding farms and orchards. Tiny Markleeville’s three Chinese residents left after that community organized a boycott against them. Three hundred or so Chinese men and women living in Eureka were rounded up, forcibly loaded onto boats, and shipped out to San Francisco. Except for determined opposition from the well-off women who employed them as cooks, housekeepers, and laundrymen, the Chinese in Chico would have been driven out as well.

* * *

Surely they would be safe in San Francisco’s big Chinatown. Over 20 thousand Chinese lived there. In 1877, as an extra precaution, it became a “complete arsenal” when the community purchased enough Henry repeating rifles to arm everyone. Henrys had enabled the Sioux and Cheyenne to obliterate Custer’s 7th Cavalry at Little Big Horn just the year before. If forced to defend themselves, the Chinese would use them too. But that arsenal of Henrys wasn’t the only thing that made San Francisco’s Chinatown safe. More important by far was the support of the larger community.

That support was put in evidence in the summer of 1877 when all the major railroads announced yet another coordinated round of wage cuts and kindled the Great Strike, a nationwide protest. Upon hearing the news, freight hands at the Baltimore & Ohio repair shop in Martinsburg, West Virginia stopped

74 Chin and Chin, Up Hill, 9.
75 Ma, Hometown Chinatown, 42.
77 Pfaelzer, Driven Out, 267
work and brought traffic along a long stretch of the road to a complete halt. When the state’s governor sent in the militia, violence erupted. President Hayes responded by sending in the Second U.S. Artillery. As Philip Foner noted:

Almost before the public was aware of what was happening, the huge contagion had spread as far as Chicago, St. Louis, Kansas city, and then on to San Francisco. Within a few days, one hundred thousand men were on strike in the first nationwide labor upheaval in history. All the main railway lines were affected, and even the employees of some Canadian roads joined the strike.\footnote{Foner. \textit{Great Labor Uprising}, 8.}

The railroads and the state responded with yet more violence. In Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania Railroad president Scott called upon the governor to bring in the troops and to give the strikers "a rifle diet for a few days and see how they like that kind of bread."\footnote{The Great Railroad Strike of 1877 online at: \url{http://www.east-buc.k12.ia.us/04_05/US1/vk/vk3.htm}.} If the troops hadn’t sympathized with the strikers, thousands would have been murdered.

In San Francisco, at least eight thousand people attended a rally organized by the Workingmen’s Party on the sandlots in front of City Hall. There, speaker after speaker denounced the railroads and expressed support for the Eastern strikers. But when anti-Chinese violence erupted, the two local sections of the Party withdrew, canceled all future meetings, and issued a circular condemning the anarchy: ‘Citizens and comrades,” they wrote, “Our cause lives only through law, order and good government.”\footnote{Foner, \textit{Great Labor Uprising}, 117.}

Meanwhile, the anti-Chinese element headed toward Chinatown, sacking Chinese laundries and threatening Chinese persons they met along the way. Then they entered Chinatown proper, “rather to heat their blood for the subsequent intended slaughter than with an intention of an immediate onslaught.”\footnote{“Checkmated.”} Nonetheless, four persons were killed and an estimated $100,000 in damages was inflicted on the Chinese community.\footnote{Cross, “Anti-Chinese Agitation,” 253.}

The next day, a Tuesday, a Committee of Safety was formed of volunteers from all strata of the City’s society. Emphasizing the community’s united resolve to maintain order, the San Francisco \textit{Chronicle} boasted that membership included: “the capitalist and the poor man,…the monopolist and anti-monopolist,…the anti-Chinese man and him who does not object to him.” And show their resolve they did. “On Wednesday night they dispelled the mob. On Thursday night they turned out a regularly officered and destructively armed force that might have resisted a foreign invasion. On Friday the city was as quiet as a county village.”\footnote{“Checkmated.”}
But news that evening that the City of Tokio had arrived with a “considerable complement” of Chinese immigrants led authorities to further intensify their peace-keeping forces. The man-of-war Pensacola was moored adjacent to the Pacific Mail’s dock. The Government tug Monterey prepared to land her men and Gatling guns. A powerful detachment of police was present. Back at police headquarters the full force of regulars, substitutes and specials, with their heavy fighting clothes and pistols, knife and club ready for desperate action, awaited orders. The immigrants were landed without incident.

In Oakland that same year a Workingmen’s Party rally threatened to burn Chinatown and kill its residents. A mob of 12,000 marched to the Central Pacific’s harbor operations and demanded on pain of immediate reprisals that the railroad fire its Chinese employees. As in San Francisco, a forceful and determined police response was able to avert the threatened violence.86

It wasn’t like this everywhere. When railroad employment swelled the Chinese population of Tacoma to seven hundred, white townspeople drove the Chinese from their homes and shops, marched them nine miles in the rain to a remote muddy railroad crossing, and then returned to town and demolished Chinese homes and businesses. Authorities looked the other way.87 That same year, white coal miners in Rock Springs, Wyoming fired pistols into a community of 331 Chinese and ordered them to leave. As the Chinese fled, the mob began firing at them and setting their houses on fire. At least 28 Chinese were killed and 15 wounded. Here, too, the authorities refused to intervene. The following year about 350 residents of Seattle’s Chinatown were forced from their residences, hauled to the dock, and shipped off to San Francisco. One man was murdered and four others injured. None of the perpetrators were ever prosecuted.88 Where the authorities sided with the mobs there was no safety, not even in Chinatowns.

In San Francisco Denis Kearney, a gifted orator who employed “forceful language…rather incendiary in sentiment,” become a regular speaker in the sandlots. He was soon addressing “two or three meetings every evening during the week and on Sundays.” As the crowds grew, his language became more and more violent. Concerned authorities had him arrested for inciting to riot, but were soon forced to release him for lack of sufficient evidence. That Thanksgiving, ten thousand workers paraded through the streets of San Francisco protesting the Chinese presence.89 A few months later, the Workingmen’s Party inserted a clause into the California constitution prohibiting corporations and governmental agencies from

86 Ma, Hometown Chinatown, 40.
87 Chin and Chin, Uphill, 9; Pfaelzer, Driven Out, xv-xvi, 262.
employing Chinese workers. Unions barred the Chinese from virtually all branches of manufacturing, the one exception being dynamite. Municipalities outlawed laundries operating in wood frame buildings and enacted cubic air ordinances directed against crowded Chinese tenements.

In Truckee, home to some 700 Chinese, white merchants devised yet a new line of attack. Joining with white workers, they refused to hire the Chinese or to patronize their businesses. The “Truckee Method” – as it came to be called – spread quickly: “Shingle Springs, Georgetown, Germantown, Ukiah, Sonoma, St. Helena, Orland, San Buenaventura, Marysville, Merced, Aptos, Visalia, Gridley, Pentz, Yreka, Arbuckle, Napa, Petaluma, and Vina” all organized similar anti-Chinese boycotts. When the Chinese Six Companies, the Chinese consulate, and the Chinese government complained, California Governor George Stoneman replied that “…he had received no notice of anti-Chinese violence from local officers of the peace, nor had any town officials sought his assistance.” Stoneman then blamed the Chinese for “crowding the Caucasian race out of many avenues of employment.” No Chinatown can protect against these forms of violence.

By requiring the Chinese to carry photo identification cards and stripping them of their right to testify in their own defense, the Geary Act of 1892 legalized yet another form of anti-Chinese violence, the round-up. In Como, Colorado; all up and down California’s Central Valley; in the citrus-growing communities of Southern California; in the fruit-growing and wine-producing counties north of San Francisco; and among the hops pickers in the farmlands surrounding Portland, armed gangs of vigilantes gathered up entire Chinese communities and marched them to San Francisco where they were deported en masse.

Can’t Stay If There’s No Work

Restrictions on Chinese entry, the violence directed against those who remained, the narrowing of employment opportunities, and the deportations had a devastating effect on the Chinese American population. From a peak of 107 thousand in 1890 it fell to fewer than 62 thousand by 1920. Chinatowns suffered most of all. In San Francisco, the fall in the number of Chinese immigrants moving in and out of its

90 Chan, Bittersweet Soil, 40-41.  
91 Lyman, Chinese Americans, 76-79  
92 Pfaelzer, Driven Out, 266, 281.  
93 Pfaelzer, Driven Out, 180.  
94 Pfaelzer, Driven Out, 182.  
95 Cited in Pfaelzer, Driven Out, 182  
96 Pfaelzer, Driven Out, 291-335.
port lowered the demand for Chinese cultural services. Fewer Chinese Americans meant less demand for Chinese imports. Union restrictions sharply curtailed manufacturing employment. Over the thirty-years between 1890 and 1920, San Francisco’s Chinatown population fell from almost 26 thousand to less than eight. Sacramento’s and Los Angeles’s Chinatowns contracted as well. Portland’s Chinatown grew in the 1890s, but after that, it too declined. San Francisco’s massive 1906 earthquake gave Oakland’s Chinatown a temporary boost, but as the City rebuilt, refugees returned home.

Smaller Chinatowns suffered as well. The once-thriving Chinese fishing community at Point Alones near Monterey never recovered from a fire that swept through in 1906. Buildings were destroyed and homes and stores looted. The landlord, the Pacific Improvement Company, a subsidiary of the Central Pacific Railroad, viewed residents’ misfortune as an opportunity to evict them. A lengthy legal battle enabled the Chinese to rent a nearby site, but its location within Monterey’s city limits meant they couldn’t dry their fish and squid outdoors. Their livelihood was destroyed. Sandy Lydon put it succinctly: “Before the 1906 Point Alones fire, the story of the Chinese fishermen was one of large groups of Chinese families and companies; after 1907 it was a story of a few individuals struggling to survive.”

The demise of San Diego’s Chinatown was death by a thousand cuts. Its fishermen lost their livelihood to a provision of the Geary Act that redefined “laborer” to include fishermen and barred Chinese fishermen from returning to port if their boats went out into international waters, then defined as only three-miles off shore. Unemployment forced the Chinese laborers who built the Atchison, Topeka, and Santa Fe and the California Southern Railroads, Hotel Del Coronado, and the San Diego Flume to leave after the completion of those massive projects. The final blow came from a “clean up” of Stingaree, the red light district where the Chinese lived, as the city prepared to host the 1915 Panama-California Exposition. The Chinese lost much of their housing; many of their businesses and were forced to disperse. As Murray K. Lee shows, by 1930, the Chinese were living in the most ethnically diverse neighborhood in all of San Diego, with neighbors who were “Japanese, Filipino, Hawaiian, black, white, Mexican and a Native American. Many of the white population were foreign born.”

Similar processes played out in former mining and railroad communities. As the gold deposits around Chinese Camp in Tuolumne County, California became depleted, most left. By 1920 Lum Sam

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97 Lydon, Chinese Gold, 360-377.
98 Lydon, Chinese Gold, 386.
99 Lee, In Search of Gold Mountain, 43.
100 Lee, In Search of Gold Mountain, 257.
101 Lee, In Search of Gold Mountain, 271.
Kee, 65, and his wife Milly, 55, were the only Chinese residents. They supported themselves as cooks in a hotel that catered to whites. In Idaho’s Boise Basin the Chinese began leaving in the 1870s as lode displaced placer mining. By 1900 old bachelors with nowhere else to go where the only ones who remained. They earned their living as laundrymen and cooks. “Even Chinese-owned restaurants served roast beef, French toast, chocolate cake, and white bread,” writes Liping Zhu. At Amos DiSang’s City Restaurant in Idaho City, the “1899 menu contained not a single Chinese offering.”

The Chinese who stayed on in Arizona after the completion of the Southern Pacific Railroad also worked as cooks and waiters. Over time they branched out into copper mining, domestic service and truck gardening. Some married women of other races. Lawrence M. Fong tells the story of Hi Wo, of Benson, Arizona, who married Emeteria Morena and raised four daughters: Isabel, Soledad, Victoria and Felicia; and one son, José. “These children spoke no Chinese, celebrated none of their father’s native festivals and took Spanish names,” Fong notes. “Their dominant language was Spanish and all were confirmed Catholics.”

Hi Wo’s experience goes beyond Rose Hum Lee’s “other extreme” of the Chinatown ideal type, “a Chinatown which has become an integral part of an atomic age American metropolis with its institutions, language, culture, and to be homogeneous with that of the prevailing society and era, save for the distinct physical characteristics which the inhabitants biologically possess.” She believed that “Nowhere in time or space are these ideal constructions to be found in existence.” She obviously hadn’t heard of Hi Wo.

Service Workers Live Near their Customers: The Case of the New England Chinese

As employment options in mining, construction, fishing, and manufacturing closed, those who didn’t return to China moved into retail and service work. In the West, as Figure 17 shows, these sectors accounted for only a third of Chinese employment in 1880 but by 1940 their share had risen to almost 80 percent. In the South, the agricultural positions for which the Chinese had been recruited following the

103 Zhu, Chinaman’s Chance, 60.
104 Zhu, Chinaman’s Chance, 119. “Amos Di Sang” may be the person listed as “Sang Di” in the 1900 census. Sang Di, 41, was born in California but by 1900 he was working as a cook in Idaho City and with his wife, five daughters, a son, and a boarder. He and his family were among the 125 Chinese residents of Idaho City in that year.
105 Fong, “Sojourners and Settlers,” 227-256.
106 Lee, Growth and Decline, 4.
107 The graphs in Figure 17 were constructed from the following IPUMS samples: 1800, 100%; 1900, 5%; 1910, 1%; 1920, 1%, 1930, 5%; 1940, 1%. The small number of Chinese in the years 1900 through 1940 and the small sample sizes for the years 1910, 1920, and 1940, especially, imply a wide variance for the estimates. For reasons discussed in the Appendix, I did not use the 100% sample for 1940.
emancipation of slaves remained important in the nineteenth century, but in the early years of the twentieth century retail and service work became the major Chinese occupations.\textsuperscript{108} In the Northeast and Midwest retail and services dominated from the very beginning. First as laundymen, then as restaurateurs, these service occupations took the Chinese into virtually every community in the region. The impact of their retail and service work on Chinese geographic location emerges clearly in the history of the Chinese in New England.

The earliest Chinese in New England came with the China trade. Word of a returning ship brought the entire citizenry to the dock to marvel as "mysterious matting-covered bales [were] shouldered out of the vessel's hold" and gaze at the occasional "turbaned Oriental who shipped as cabin boy."\textsuperscript{109} In 1834 the New York and Boston merchants Francis and Nathaniel Carnes tried to capitalize on the public's interest and promote sales of their imports by smuggling out of China and putting on display Afong Moy, a young Chinese woman with bound feet. In a wealthy neighborhood, just around the corner from New York's City Hall, the Carnes rented rooms, decorated them with Chinese artifacts, dressed Moy in her "national costume," and invited the public to gape. For 50 cents -- comparable to the substantial sum one might pay today for a ticket to a popular Broadway musical or professional sporting event -- visitors could see the "Chinese Lady" with their own eyes. In an era when Westerners in China were forbidden to view Chinese women and when all Chinese were banned from leaving the country, the announcement created a sensation.\textsuperscript{110} An estimated two thousand people, Vice President Martin Van Buren among them, paid the 50 cents to get a first-hand look. After a month the Carnes took Moy on a national tour with stops at Philadelphia, Washington, and Charleston; then to Boston, Salem, Providence, Hartford, New Haven, and Albany and finally to Havana and then to Pensacola, Mobile, New Orleans, Natchez, and Cincinnati. While in Washington, President Andrew Jackson invited Moy to the White House for a personal visit. Everywhere they went, mobs of curious spectators lined up. Women were enchanted with her elegant clothes and the rich furnishings that surrounded her. \textit{Godey's Lady's Book} had been urging them to decorate "in the Chinese style." This was an opportunity to see the real thing. Men couldn't take their eyes off her feet.\textsuperscript{111}

\textsuperscript{108} Reference to Chinese in the South
\textsuperscript{111} Haddad, "The Chinese Lady," 5.
Moy was “four feet 10 inches in height,” her promoters trumpeted, “yet her feet, including her shoes, are but four inches in length.”

After its defeat at the hands of the British in the First Opium War (1839-1842), the Chinese government became increasingly unable to restrict emigration and Chinese persons began to appear on the American landscape. An 1848 etching celebrating the arrival of piped water from Lake Cochituate into Boston includes the image of a Chinese man, his back to the viewer, his long queue and distinctive clothing visible among a crowd that included Daniel Webster and former president John Quincy Adams.

A particularly successful early arrival was Oong (Charles) ArShowe (mid-1820s to sometime in the first decade of the twentieth century) who began his American career working for a merchant on Boston’s Washington Street and who later joined impresario P.T. Barnum as an interpreter for the Chinese family Barnum put on display at London’s 1851 Chrystal Palace Exposition. Upon his return to Boston, ArShowe opened a tea and coffee retail store on Union Street, advertised heavily in newspapers throughout the Northeast, and soon had branches in communities across New England and eastern New York. His 1853 marriage to Miss Louisa Hentz, daughter of German immigrants, was covered in newspapers throughout the nation. After the birth of his first son, William, both father and son were baptized and ArShowe changed his given name to Charles. By 1860 he was widely known as the “celebrated Boston tea merchant” who visited the outposts of his far-flung retail empire dressed in his native costume. His family had grown to include two daughters, his real estate and personal assets were valued at $7,500, and his family employed three Irish servants.

Another success was Daniel Cough (1840-1906) who arrived in the Bar Harbor area of Maine as a stowaway about 1857. By 1870 Cough had established himself as a grocer and married Elvira Higgins, niece of James G. Blaine, Senator, Secretary of State, and later Republican presidential candidate whose support for the Chinese Exclusion Act in an unsuccessful bid to win the Western vote deeply disappointed

116 (Montpelier) Vermont Watchman and State Journal, July 29, 1859.
117 1860 census manuscript courtesy of Ancestry.com.
his allies who had campaigned in support of civil rights in the wake of the Civil War.\textsuperscript{118}

{See Figures 20 through 27 for maps depicting the dispersal of the Chinese throughout New England between 1870 and 1950. Figure 28 shows that even within a county – the example here being Suffolk County, MA, i.e., Boston – the Chinese were not fully segregated into an ethnic ghetto. Of necessity, the Chinese lived near their laundry and restaurant customers.}

[That's all for now. Stay tuned, folks! More of the narrative yet to come!]

Appendix A:
A Note on the Classification of Chinese in the IPUMS Full-Count Data Sets for 1880 and 1940

First, a Word of Thanks
Scholars rightly refer to the Chinese Exclusion Era as the “‘dark ages’ of Chinese American history, ‘a deplorable lacuna in American historiography’.”\textsuperscript{119} Writing more than a quarter century ago, Roger Daniels called attention to the absence of any “dense corpus of scholarly books and articles [on Chinese American history] based on expertise in pertinent areas of history, economics, sociology, anthropology, and folklore.”\textsuperscript{120} Daniels could have added the field of demography as well. Little has changed in the interim. The Chinese are mentioned only in passing in Michael Haines’s and Richard Steckel’s 736-page magnum opus, A Population History of North America, and in Richard A. Easterlin’s 43-page survey, “Twentieth-Century American Population Growth.”\textsuperscript{121}

The problem stems from the limited reporting of basic demographic and economic information for the Chinese in the published censuses. Before 1940, little more than the number of Chinese persons, their gender, and place of birth were reported as state-wide totals. Even age was reported only sporadically,


\textsuperscript{119} Sucheng Chan. Entry Denied: Exclusion and the Chinese Community in America, 1882-1943. Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1991, quoted in Erica Lee, At America’s Gates: Chinese Immigration During the Exclusion Era, 1882-1943. Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 2003, p. 8. In saying this I do not intend to minimize in any way the substantial and excellent scholarship on Chinese Americans during this period. My point is that this scholarship has, quite naturally, focused on topics for which research materials are available. A central topic has been the legal and political developments that defined Chinese Americans’ options. Others are Chinese social organizations, transnational connections, cultural contributions, and immigration strategies. See Lee (2003, pp. 8-11) for a relatively recent summary of the literature.


and only for the nation as a whole. There is no systematic reporting of year of immigration, industry, occupation, marital status, or living arrangements. Scholars’ descriptions of fundamental topics such as the rate of population change, fertility, mortality, international migration, internal migration, living arrangements, literacy, English language skills, and industrial and occupational attachment are necessarily limited to averages over a wide geographic range or to case studies whose representativeness is difficult to assess. Yet the census collected all the same data for the Chinese as it collected for the rest of the population. Except for the lost 1890 manuscripts, these are now available at the individual level through 1940. Some of these records have already been put into an electronic format as part of the IPUMS project. Nonetheless, because there were so few Chinese in America at the time and, because — prior to the development of the Full Count data sets — the IPUMS samples themselves are small, it is difficult to draw precise inferences from them.

Microdata on Chinese Americans in the IPUMS Full Count data sets will allow scholars to calculate, for the first time, basic demographic measures for the Chinese-American population. It’s an exciting prospect. Thank you, Ancestry! Thank you, IPUMS!

State-Level Totals for the Full Count IPUMS and the Published Censuses Compared

Table A1 displays the Chinese population by state as shown in the IPUMS Full Count data and in the published census reports for 1880 and 1940. For the 1880 census the Full Count and published population totals are, with a few exceptions, in close agreement. For the 1940 census, on the other hand, the Full Count and published census totals are quite different. For 1880 in the country as a whole the IPUMS Full-Count and the published census totals are within one percent of one another. In the Western states where the majority of the Chinese lived, the IPUMS Full Count and the published census totals are virtually identical. Discrepancies are limited to just a handful of states — Delaware especially but also Missouri, Mississippi, Ohio, and Minnesota.

For 1940 the IPUMS Full-Count total exceeds that of the published census by 47 percent, but even this large figure understates the discrepancies because in some states — Delaware, Ohio, Kansas, Missouri, Alabama, North Carolina, Oklahoma, and Tennessee — the IPUMS Full Count total is far larger than in the published census while in others — New Hampshire, Indiana, North Dakota, and South Carolina — it is considerably smaller.

After comparing manuscript census records at the county level with the totals in the IPUMS Full Count and the published censuses I am convinced that the published census counts are highly accurate. In what follows I assume that all of the discrepancies are the result of errors in the IPUMS Full-Count data. These errors fall under three major headings.

Major Sources of Discrepancy

Enumerators Who Entered “C” for “Colored” instead of “C” for “Chinese”

In 1880 census enumerators were told that the race column is “always to be filled.” In 1940 they were told, “Write ‘W’ for white; ‘Neg’ for Negro; ‘In’ for Indian; ‘Chi’ for Chinese; ‘Jp’ for Japanese; ‘Fil’ for Filipino; ‘Hi’ for Hindu; and ‘Kor’ for Korean. For a person of any other race, write the race in full.” Nevertheless, in some cases both in 1880 and in 1940 some enumerators entered the letter “C” to indicate “Colored” or “Black.” Ancestry coded these “C”s as “Chinese.” This error clearly explains the excessive number of Chinese in Delaware in the Full Count data for 1880 and is probably the reason for the large Chinese overages in other Southern states in both 1880 and in 1940.

One Type of Ditto Error -- “Chinese” or “C” Transcribed as “White”

My analysis of county-level Chinese American population totals during the Exclusion Era shows that despite their small numbers the Chinese achieved wide geographic distribution. Many were the sole Chinese American in their community. Perhaps not expecting to see a Chinese person, data entry staff appear to have coded some Chinese as “White.” An example of this error in the 1940 census is the case of Henry Yum Vog of Exeter, Rockingham County, New Hampshire, his wife Nom and their six children, ranging in age from nine years to nine months. Henry and Nom were born in China and were recorded as “Chinese” by the census enumerator but were coded as “White” by Ancestry. Correcting the racial designation of the Vogs accounts for eight of the 31 Chinese missing from the New Hampshire total for 1940.

Another Type of Ditto Error -- Chinese Entered into the Manuscripts as “White”

Another type of ditto error occurred when census takers themselves designated a person who was clearly Chinese as “White.” An example in the 1940 census is Ong Sing, 57, an alien, China-born laundryman living in Bellows Falls, Vermont. Sing’s name, birthplace, occupation, and legal status all suggest that he was Chinese. Sing was the only Chinese person in Bellows Falls, Vermont in 1940. Perhaps because the enumerator, not anticipating a Chinese person, simply entered “W”s in all the little boxes up and down the race columns.

Correcting the Discrepancies

The first error – where the census taker used “C” for “Colored” instead of “Chinese” -- is fairly easy to catch. The black population was geographically segregated. Census takers who entered “C” to mean “Colored” used “C” for all of the black people in their enumeration district. Tell-tale signs of this error are disagreement between the IPUMS Full Count and published census totals at a fine geographic level along with a high proportion of women and children and Southern birthplace among the purported “Chinese” population.

The two other errors are more difficult to detect. Birth in China offers one clue. In the 1880 census Ah Goon, a 40-year-old laundryman who lived in San Mateo, California was coded as “White” by Ancestry although the census enumerator recorded him as “Chinese.” In the 1940 census manuscripts, Mack Yee, 21, a restaurant owner in Burns, Oregon was recorded by the enumerator as “White” with a birthplace in China although Yee’s name and occupation suggest that he was Chinese. In both cases, Chinese birthplace allowed me to find these individuals and correct the errors.

Still, care must be taken. In the 1880 census the birthplace of Antonia Boziers, 32, a mill worker in Port Blakeley, Kilsap, Washington was coded by Ancestry as “China.” The same was true of the birthplace of her mother and father. The census enumerator had written “Chili” for those entries. In that same census the birthplace of A.A. Carr, 44, a hotel keeper in Wooster, Wayne County, Ohio, was coded by Ancestry as “China” although the census enumerator had entered “Ohio” as his birthplace. The same was true of Carr’s wife and daughter.

A surprisingly large number of whites in both 1880 and in 1940 actually were born in China. An example from the 1880 census is Emma Ames, 14, a schoolgirl living with her grandparents John and Martha Hayden in Bath, Maine. Emma’s parents were not living in the household. Perhaps they were missionaries who sent their daughter back home so she could obtain an American education. Another example is Susie Chase, a 26-year old single school teacher living as a boarder in Oneida, Madison County, New York. Miss Chase told the census enumerator that she and her parents were born in Shanghai, China. This example shows that even birth in China and mother's and father's birth in China do not guarantee that the person is Chinese.

In the 1880 census Ancestry reports only 1,037 “Whites” born in China so these can be checked individually. In the 1940 census, however, 11,643 persons coded as “white” reported being “Born in China.” Some errors in recording are relatively easy to catch. For example, white residents of Canton, Norfolk County, Massachusetts had their country of birth misclassified because the census enumerator entered the town under the heading “Place of Birth,” rather than the state or country. When Ancestry coded these entries “Glasgow” became “Scotland,” “Belfast” “Ireland,” and “Canton (MA)” -- “China.” In most cases, unfortunately, a trained coder will have to look at the entire entry in the census manuscripts and make a determination. Further compounding the problem for the 1940 census is the fact that “Father’s Place of Birth,” “Mother’s Place of Birth,” and “Native Tongue” are available only for sample line persons and for persons living with their parents.

Conclusion and Suggestion

In this note I document and examine discrepancies between state-level totals for the Chinese population in the IPUMS Full-Count data and in the published censuses for 1880 and 1940. I conclude that a substantial amount of additional data cleaning is required before scholars can put the IPUMS Full-Count data to effective use in studying the Chinese American population. Although I have not examined IPUMS Full-Count data sets for other census years I suspect that they, too, would require a considerable clean-up effort.

The erroneous coding of some blacks as Chinese should be relatively easy to identify and correct but other systematic errors will take quite a bit of time and effort to rectify. Comparing IPUMS and published census totals at the county level helps. Names help. Examination of the original manuscripts is essential.

Is this a project that can be crowd-sourced? Might Asian Studies classes or Chinese American historical or fraternal societies be induced to take on a city, county, or state? Suggestions welcome. Thanks, again, to Ancestry and to IPUMS for their excellent efforts on this important project!

Appendix B:
Instructions to Enumerators Regarding the Race Question, 1880 and 1940.

1880: Color.-It must not be assumed that, where nothing is written in this column, "white" is to be understood. The column is always to be filled. Be particularly careful in reporting the class mulatto. The word is here generic, and includes quadroons, octoroons, and all persons having any
perceptible trace of African blood. Important scientific results depend upon the correct
determination of this class in schedules 1 and 5.

1940: Write "W" for white; "Neg" for Negro; "In" for Indian; "Chi" for Chinese; "Jp" for Japanese;
"Fil" for Filipino; "Hi" for Hindu; and "Kor" for Korean. For a person of any other race, write the race
in full.
# Table A1

**Chinese Populations by State in the Published Census Volumes and in the IPUMS Full Count Data Censuses of 1880 and 1940**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>State</th>
<th>IPUMS</th>
<th>Published Census</th>
<th>IPUMS as % of Published Census</th>
<th>IPUMS</th>
<th>Published Census</th>
<th>IPUMS as % of Published Census</th>
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Table 1
Percentage of Counties with at Least One Chinese American Resident and Average and Median Numbers of Chinese Americans in Counties with at Least One Chinese American Resident, 1860-1960

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<th>Percentage with One or More Chinese Americans</th>
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“Confined to Chinatowns?”
A New Look at Chinese American Geographic Redistribution in the Exclusion Era, 1882-1943

Susan Boslego Carter
Professor Emerita, Economics, University of California, Riverside
Susan.carter@ucr.edu

Prepared for the Census Full Count Sessions at the NBER DAE Meetings, Cambridge, MA, July 8 and 9, 2015
Figure 1
Geographic Distribution of the Chinese and Black Populations by Region
1860-1950

Figure 2
Percent of Population in Cities of 100,000 or More
Chinese, Blacks, and Foreign-Born Whites, 1860 - 1950

Figure 3
Chinese by County, 1860

Figure 4
Chinese by County, 1870

Figure 5

Chinese by County, 1880

Figure 6
Chinese by County, 1890

Figure 7
Chinese by County, 1900

Figure 8
Chinese by County, 1910

Figure 9
Chinese by County, 1920

Figure 11
Chinese by County, 1940

Figure 13
Segregation and Isolation Indices, Residence by County
Black and Chinese Populations
1860 -- 1950

Segregation Index 0.5

Sources and Notes: See text.
Figure 14
Percentage of Chinese in Select Cities with Established Chinatowns 1860-1950

Sources and Notes: See text.
Figure 15
Chinese in Big Cities and Chinese in “Chinatowns”, 1860-1950

Figure 16
Chinese by Enumeration District, San Francisco, 1880

Figure 17
Chinese Employment in Retail and Services, by Region, 1880 - 1950

View of the Festivities on Boston Common in 1848
Celebrating the Introduction of Piped Water from Lake Cochituate

Figure 18
Chinese Population of New England  
1870 - 1950

1900 through 1950: Hand-transcribed from published census reports.
Figure 19
Chinese in New England
1870

Figure 20

Chinese in New England 1880

Figure 21
Chinese in New England
1890

Figure 22
Chinese in New England
1900

Figure 23

Chinese in New England
1910

Figure 24
Chinese in New England
1920

Figure 25
Chinese in New England
1930

Figure 26
Chinese in New England
1940

Figure 27
Chinese in New England
1950

Figure 28
Chinese by Enumeration District
Boston, 1880