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CHINESE BURIALS IN SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA, THEN AND NOW

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With a mixture of awe and amazement, but filtered through their own biases and perceptions, nineteenth century newspapers from New York to Los Angeles reported observations of the elaborate traditions of Chinese funerals, processions to the cemetery, and the ritual honors subsequently paid to the deceased. Prompted partly by tradition and also by overcrowding in local cemeteries and pressures for land development, this was followed by selective exhumations for shipment of the remains back to the homeland. Around the turn of the century, there were increasing accounts of burials that were disinterred and forwarded from California to China. The tide, so to speak, is turning now, with many ancestors being removed from family graves in China and brought to this country where traditional customs of honor and respect can be observed by families settled permanently in the United States.

Historically, it was the fervent wish of a Chinese in this country, whether isolated working man or prosperous merchant, to be buried in the homeland. To this end, from at least 1892 well into the 1930's, exhuming those interred along the West Coast became ever more regularized as an annual spring event.¹ The benevolent associations hired men to search for temporary graves along the route of the Central Pacific Railroad, so that the bones could be recovered, bundled, and rafted to Victoria for shipment.² In Southern California, the bodies of railroad workers were sent to Sacramento for transshipment.³ It was distinctly newsworthy when Gold Rush pioneer Yee Ah Tye instructed his family to bury his remains in this country permanently; in fact, he obtained a piece of land near

Point Lobos in San Francisco, which he gave to his association (Kong Chow) in 1864 for the express purpose of creating a cemetery. In time, this was one of the cemeteries that was physically relocated in 1900 when the city needed more room, and Ah Tye's own remains were later moved once again to Oakland where other family members were buried.⁴ The relocation of whole cemeteries, as well as of individuals, was to become a recurring phenomenon and occurred as well in Tucson.⁵

The cemeteries where Chinese were buried typically had shrines where representations of goods, money, and even images of servants were burned to accompany and serve the dead. Remains of such a shrine in Ah Tye's cemetery survive on the first hole of the Lincoln Park Golf Course in San Francisco. Two more almost exactly the same were built in Colma,⁶ one was erected in Santa Cruz in the 1890s,⁷ and there was another in Yreka.⁸

In Los Angeles, there are references to early burials in the "City" cemetery on Fort Moore Hill in 1871 and 1872. Evergreen Cemetery was created in 1877, and the City operated about 5 acres of it as a potters' field. Perhaps as early as 1877, the City allowed the Chinese community to use part of this parcel.⁹ The shrine was erected in 1888 with two brick and mortar furnaces each 12 feet high flanking a central altar and a stone stele. The whole covered approximately 1,000 square feet. Historical photos show the altar with pots of plants, and the stela inscriptions can be literally interpreted as "Respect as still exists," implying that people should respect those who have gone before as if they are still with us. The shape of the burners recreates old traditions. Particularly in North China, earth was piled up over the grave in a cone-shaped mound,¹⁰ and the mounds were reformed at each of the postfunerary rites.¹¹ Tomb covers of the ancient dynasties had the same shape as the shrines: square at the base and tapered on top. The lower portion of the tomb covers would be decorated with scenes from the lives of people, while the tapering upper portions would have images of the heavenly elements. The shape is thus a metamorphical expression of the structure of the universe as a whole.¹²

After the primary burial, ritual visits to the cemetery were made twice a year, and the observances were much the same throughout the West. One such seasonal ceremony in Ventura was described as follows in 1884:¹³

About 25 Chinamen went out to the graveyard last Saturday to perform a religious ceremony. The ceremony consisted of placing goat pork [sic] and chicken, oranges, rice, cereal, candles etc. about the graves of two Chinamen.... A celestial explained to us that after a Chinaman died he went to China and then came back to the place of his burial. He further informed us that the deceased Chinamen had returned and for several nights had caused considerable trouble in Chinatown, but that their wrath and hunger had been appeased by going through the above "ceremony."

A similar ritual, which the newspaper compared to Memorial Day observances, was

called a “picnicky” in Santa Barbara:¹⁴

Yesterday morning several carriages were drawn up in line in front of the Chinese temple...they proceeded to the graveyard east of the city to decorate the graves of their countrymen with roast pig, Chinese ginger and tea...they burned paper and made gestures with their hands...they gathered together and indulged in a feast. A circle was formed and apples, oranges, and candies were passed around.

Most of the burials in California were regarded as temporary. “All cemeteries in the Monterey region underwent these periodic exhumations.”¹⁵ A total of 188 bodies was returned from Watsonville in 1902-1903. In just two weeks during 1913, the Chinese Consolidated Benevolent Association exhumed from the Watsonville Chinese Cemetery 68 additional individuals who had died in the last 11 years. In a previous episode, 120 bodies had been shipped. The Sacramento Newspaper reported that “the accumulated bones of 1,200 Chinese workers on the Central Pacific” passed through in 1870,¹⁶ and it has been estimated that 10,000 boxes of bones left the United States for China in 1913 alone.¹⁷ At least one Chinese individual was removed from a grave on San Nicolas Island for reburial by 1897,¹⁸ and Chinese cemetery plots in Oregon are marked “vacated.”¹⁹ The practice was observed in the east as well, where the recovery and shipment of remains in Baltimore could be arranged through the Chinese Consolidated Benevolent Association, district, or family associations.²⁰

In Los Angeles, three Chinese benevolent associations disinterred remains of 850 Chinese in 1937 for return to the homeland. The skeletons were assembled with great care so that they would be complete. Each was placed into a white cotton bag, and the bags set into a metal urn; the urns were packed eight to a wooden crate. Once the remains arrived in China, the skeletons would be wired in a fixed position, sealed in earthenware jars, and placed in family tombs.²¹ Although incomplete, available cemetery records indicate that women, infants, and victims of violence were less apt to be removed, either for return to China or relocation to a different local cemetery.²² This seems to parallel the Confucian tradition whereby family altars in China never contained “soul tablets” of juvenile males or unmarried women.²³

Remains from Santa Barbara were shipped by Wells, Fargo & Co., one individual each to a redwood box 3 feet long and one foot square.²⁴ Such exhumations (Figure 2) were regarded as indecent in Los Angeles²⁵ and in 1878, the State passed a law called “An Act to Protect Public Health from Infection Caused by Exhumation and Removal of the Remains of Deceased Persons.” Thereafter, permits to exhume bodies were required from county health officials, and the Federal Trade Commission and the State of California became the regulatory agencies.²⁶ The associations were held responsible for seeing that all bones were present, and the shipments were insured in transit by the Fireman’s Fund

Insurance Company.²⁷ The belief in the eternal bond between the living and the dead was illustrated in one example when the deceased expressed discomfort to a living descendant that not all of his bones were present in the reburial. The vacated grave was reopened, a finger joint was recovered, and a later communication to the living expressed that all was now well.²⁸

Except for the sea voyage and the distance traveled, the concept of removing remains from the original grave is not too different from traditions prevailing even now in Southern China. Burial is nearly universal in Guangdong Province; while cremation is encouraged by the government, it has made little headway until recently. In the past, graves were scattered in the hillsides, although more recently, they are concentrated in graveyards. Families are free to make a grave on any unoccupied land, preferably a hillside for feng shui, but when the government or commune opts to use the land, the families must move the remains. As here, observances take place on the traditional holidays, *Qingming*, in the spring, and *Ch'ung-Yang chieh*, a lesser commemoration in the fall, and the family may provide offerings at 7, 14, 21 and on up to 49 days after the funeral, in the traditional seven-day mourning cycle, and on the birth date or anniversary of death of the deceased.²⁹

From 3 to 7 years later, family members in China or, less often, part-time specialists, dig open the grave, clean the bones, and place them in an established order in a pottery urn called a "golden pagoda" (*chin-t'a*) or golden womb.³⁰ The urn is then partially buried in the hillside. Whether it is reburied in the same place or not depends on the recent fortunes of the family. The ideal last stage, rarely observed now, is to build a tomb to contain the urns of all the ancestors.³¹

The shipment of human remains back to China was discouraged in 1937 during and after the Japanese invasion, and again in and around 1949 when the People's Republic was established.³² At any time, the numbers of individuals transported depend on both the political situation and immigration statistics. Nixon's visit in 1972 opened the door. Then, the reversal began. Margaret Thatcher's agreement in 1984 to end the British lease on Hong Kong, President Carter's opening of diplomatic relations with China, and the ending of relations with Taiwan – all prompted emigration. Vietnamese Chinese boat people came to the United States in the 1970s and 1980s, and Chinese students arrived in high numbers in the 1990s. When many achieved citizenship and established families and livelihoods here, the direction of the movement of the dead was reversed, and the number of burial remains shipped out of China has grown steadily since the 1970s. The need for more cemetery space in the Bay area is predicated in part by this movement, and the new Golden Hill Memorial Park in the San Francisco Bay area helps families with the arrangements and plans to open offices in Hong Kong and on the mainland to bring ancestors' ashes to America.³³ A new mausoleum in Vancouver is being built, in part to

accommodate Chinese immigrants wishing to bring their ancestors to join them.³⁴ A Chinese funeral director related that this resulted more from the sheer location of residence, then from religion or culture. People feared that the Communists might prevent them from returning to observe the annual customs, and the trip was costly and difficult, yet they wanted to reunite families so that they could maintain the favor and good will achieved through ceremonial respect of the ancestors.³⁵

The following personal account is cited with the permission of the family.³⁶ Yook Chew Tong, age 72 when interviewed in 1999, was born in a village on the Pearl River Delta, 3 hours by bus from Canton, or overnight on a barge. He came to the United States in 1952 to join a brother and sister already here. He had another brother, sister, and mother-in-law in Hong Kong, and a nephew at university in China. Although Tong's father had been born in San Francisco in 1873, he frequently went back and forth to China and because of his poor health, remained there permanently after 1925 with his second wife. The father and one brother starved to death under the Communist regime, his stepmother died of gangrene, and his sister-in-law, a doctor, drowned herself in fear of being shot. The family members had been buried on a piece of their own land, a private plot about a mile from their village, with the expectation that the remains would be dug up 3 to 5 years later, and put securely into an urn. Each family in his village had its own area.

It was the nephew, now a prosperous electrical engineer in Hong Kong, who recommended that Tong reunite and rebury the family in the U.S., including *his* own father, Tong's brother, a cook who had been buried in Kansas. Tong accepted the idea willingly since he had been unable to attend his father's funeral, give him a proper ceremony, or provide for the regular observances. Tong's father, sister-in-law, and younger brother were originally buried without caskets; before she left China, Tong's wife arranged to have their remains dug up and reburied in big urns so that they could be exhumed at a later time. The U.S. State Department sent documents to Hong Kong for a visa, and the Chinese government required that the remains be cremated prior to shipment.

In September 1998, a cousin still in China helped arrange six cremations and the shipments. The remains of Tong's father, mother, stepmother, two brothers, and one sister-in-law were delivered by air cargo and truck directly to Tong's home in southern California, and the remains of the third brother were brought from Kansas. Tong inserted a 1998 silver dollar into each round marble urn (Figure 3), symbolizing payment for entrance at the gate of heaven; in a primary burial, the coin would have been placed in the mouth of the deceased. At the Rose Hills cemetery in August, 1999, the urns were first placed on a table covered with a white cloth while Tong read a poem he had composed.³⁷ Twenty-two members of the family gathered, and burned the symbolic spirit money, imitation gold bars, and representations of gold coins. Tong stated, "It was a way to pay respect [because] I couldn't give them a proper burial or visit the grave site." The family

placed flowers at each grave, burned incense, and kowtowed three times to each of the deceased. Each urn was then buried in a square vault of cement painted to look metallic. Later, when the nephew came from Hong Kong, the family had a second, smaller service with a roast pig and other food offerings. The expenses, including shipping the remains of the relative from Kansas, came to approximately \$5000, and 10 local burial plots were purchased for about \$25,000. When Tong's own wife had died in 1993, he had visited her grave every week for several years, and later, on Mother's Day, Father's Day, Christmas, Chinese Easter (*Qingming* or "sweeping the tombs"), and *Ch'ung-yang chieh* ("Double Night Festival") late in autumn.³⁸

There is a simpler service for a reburial than for a primary funeral, and a difference in customs, depending partly on where the families come from. Mainland Chinese tend to have more secular funerals stemming from the Communist rejection of religion, while Overseas Chinese have religious ceremonies. For example, those from the Philippines tend to be Catholic, Malaysians and Taiwanese are mostly Buddhist, but they pay the same respects.³⁹ There might be a portrait on display, but a reburial will usually lack the procession, band, ritual mourners, traditional garb, and other elements described in historical accounts. One practice that cross-cuts religions is the burning of incense sticks, spirit money, gold (foil) ingots, Hell banknotes, and representations of items used in daily life. The Win Sense Trading Company in Los Angeles offers paper replicas of contemporary checkbooks, credit cards, cell phones, televisions with remote and VCR, Rolex watches, both traditional and modern ranch houses, passports and bank statements, human servant figures, and words of a chant on a yellow disk, and sells them as far as Texas. Comparable funeral bundles sold at the old Man Lo Temple in Hong Kong in 2,000 include candles, fireworks, and incense as well as the paper money. When these objects burn, they ascend for the use of the deceased. Cemeteries like Rose Hills that do not have permanent shrines or furnaces purchase bright red portable burners wholesale in Chinatown and sell them to the customers. The mortuary also offers a choice of 25 burial urns variously made of wood, cloisonné, marble, acrylic, and bronze, in different sizes.⁴⁰

In this country, it is the oldest descendants who make the decision to exhume relatives buried in China and rebury them here. Usually, they only bring back family members to the grandparents' generation. At Rose Hills, the balance between men and women has been fairly even, but no children have been returned for reburial.⁴¹ Reminiscent of the same selectivity observed early in the century when remains were exhumed from Los Angeles for shipment to China,⁴² the very young, women, criminals, or those associated with violence are less likely to be exhumed in the homeland and brought to this country. If they had been cremated, the removal is easier and more likely to occur; if they had been interred originally, it is harder.

The remains are usually contained in an urn of marble or ceramic, which is then placed

in a vault. Most families prefer to bury the vaults in the ground, rather than install them in a columbarium or niche in a wall. The urn is oriented so that the name of the deceased faces forward, if it is to be placed above ground, or outward if it is buried on a slope. The vaults used for either reburial or cremation range in cost from \$395 for the minimum concrete box, to one lined with stainless steel over Strentex at \$1,995, to one which is copper and lined with Strentex at \$2,395. Scattering of ashes at sea, in contrast, would be strenuously opposed by friends and relations.

The U.S. Customs Service does not require a declaration for either bones or cremations, and local funeral homes and cemeteries assist with burial permits. There is some irony in the fact that immigration is restricted, but the dead may come. Shippers like Federal Express or United Parcel Service will not accept burial parcels because of the liability, but the U.S. Post Office must transport them. However, it is considered more respectful to carry the ancestors personally, and lacking a family member to accompany the remains, funeral directors or couriers sometimes carry cremations in both directions. Through his own company, funeral director Henry Kwong sends about 10 to 20 individuals a year back to China, while receiving almost one a week from China.⁴³ At Rose Hills, fewer than 100 deceased were sent to China last year, while about 500 are returned here each year, and the number of reburials is expected to increase.⁴⁴

Contrary to what one might first assume, all those interviewed agreed that it is those who are the most assimilated who are the most apt to bring their ancestors to the New World. Their ties to the homeland are attenuated, and the actual place of burial was not their primary concern, but they wish to ensure the safety of the remains and facilitate their access to them. The exchanges between the living and dead represent a reciprocal relationship. Through the presentations of food and the other observances, the descendants hope to ensure a good life for themselves: wealth, health, good harvest, and offspring.⁴⁵

The relocating of human remains – in either direction – is neither unusual nor a new custom, nor even limited to the well-documented historical return to China of individuals who died in this country. Exhumation of graves in China has long been practiced for the ritual cleaning of bones and placement in urns, and the urns might be reburied in a different location and ultimately moved again if the family relocated or constructed a tomb. The custom was particularly strong in Cantonese society, much less so in North China.⁴⁶ In this country, burials were very apt to be relocated because cemeteries were full or closed, or to bring family members together, or when a family moved to a different location.⁴⁷ Mr. Kwong related moving burials from one cemetery to another, even within Los Angeles County.⁴⁸ The incentives for facilitating access to the ancestors to fulfill ceremonial obligations are cultural and of long standing.

The underlying motive, that proper care and honor expressed to the dead benefits the living, reveals a distinct contrast to Euroamerican attitudes toward human remains and the

place where they are interred. The difference seems to be in the levels of regard expressed for the actual physical remains, as opposed to the grave or cemetery where they are buried. Early American faiths discouraged concern for bodily remains as this implied a lesser confidence in eternal life.⁴⁹ Since cremation began to be promoted in the United States in the 1870's, it has been declared acceptable to all the major religions, as well as desirable for reasons of sanitation.⁵⁰ The burial plot was regarded as not much more than a place to store the dead, although some later became imbued with historical importance (e.g., the Granary Burying Ground and several others carefully preserved in the middle of downtown Boston), and others were embellished with elaborate statuary or memorials as a public display of wealth or status. The plots themselves were protected, more as a link to the past, as open green space or historic landscape, than for the individuals resting there – except, of course, for celebrities. This concern for the place rather than the individual is reflected in various ways. In a Kentucky county, the court denied a landowner permission to move a small cemetery even though some of the graves had already been disturbed. The Indiana legislature is considering a bill to make it a felony to remove any gravestone, and illegal to move a cemetery for any reason.⁵¹ The idea of the cemetery as a final resting place seems more important than the individual remains; the importance of the plot would thus vary inversely with the level of concern for the remains buried therein.

In China, the place of burial was not closely linked to the community, as here, because traditional graves were usually on family land rather than institutional cemeteries. As land use intensified, burial locations were simply moved, rather than being preserved. Moreover, as families attained citizenship in the United States, ties to the homeland often weakened and for reasons of time, cost, age, and/or politics, fewer were able to make the regular visitations to honor the ancestors. Cemetery locations here have become places of historical, even secular, value. An example is the shrine in Evergreen Cemetery in Los Angeles where the physical remains of the old features and the immediately surrounding land have been acquired by the Chinese Historical Society of Southern California. The burners and altar have been restored, rededicated, and declared a city Historical Landmark. Although there is no continuing association with any of those once buried there and long since removed, the *Qingming* observance that was discontinued in the 1960s was reinaugurated in 2001 as an historical commemoration.

The Chinese burial customs relate directly to a continuing association between the living and the ancestors, for the ultimate benefit – it must be said – of the living. The actual place of burial is secondary to being able to visit and honor those who have gone before. Therefore, whether a family moves across an ocean or within the same county, it is efficacious in lowering the level of guilt to relocate the remains to ease the burden of the

traditional seasonal observations. Just as it was with the earliest Chinese in the New World who expressed their hopes to die in China, or to have their remains shipped back to China so that the spirits of the deceased could be cared for by the family, this bond of proximity between the living and the dead remains paramount.⁵² Thus, the actual initial place of interment becomes increasingly irrelevant.

Mr. Tong expressed this movingly in the poem he composed to read at the reburial of his family members.⁵³

*"Neither the tallest mountain, nor the longest river can match a
parent's never-ending love of their child.*

*Neither the oldest cedar, nor the senior pine can match a child's eternal devotion
to their parent."*

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The Chinese Historical Society of Southern California was organized in November 1975. The purposes of the society are: 1) to bring together people with a mutual interest in the important history and historical role of Chinese and Chinese Americans in Southern California; 2) to pursue, preserve, and communicate knowledge of this history, and 3) to promote the heritage of the Chinese and Chinese American community in support of a better appreciation of the rich, multi-cultural society of the United States.

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CHINESE LUMBERMEN IN THE LAKE TAHOE REGION

By: Sue Fawn Chung, University of Nevada, Las Vegas



Ah Can - Idaho wood sawyer in winter 1920

The timber industry in the Lake Tahoe region prospered twice in the late nineteenth century. With the discovery of gold and silver in the Tahoe Basin, the need for wood for the operation of smelters, construction of mines, making of charcoal, fueling of steam machinery, and general community uses, especially buildings, furniture, and wagons was critical. This started the first boom in lumbering between 1849 and 1870. When the transcontinental railroad was built and completed, even more wood products were re-

quired until the turn of the twentieth century when technological developments and the decline in mining led to a drop in the demand.

Who were the people who worked to supply the much needed wood products to the Comstock (Virginia City and Gold Hill area in Nevada)? In the late nineteenth century two ethnic groups were vital to the production: the French-Canadians, who took on many of the skilled positions and the Chinese, who constituted 82% of the total lumbering workforce by 1880. Little is known about both groups but this study hopes to shed some light on the Chinese experience.

The discovery of the Comstock Lode led to the first big demand for wood in the region. Between 1860-1881 the Comstock used approximately 2.6 billion board feet of lumber. Independent entrepreneurs and small companies did most of the logging and milling between 1850-1870. Mill towns grew up. At first lumbering companies hired skilled workers from the East Coast and Canada, but eventually used Chinese workers. The Chinese cooked for the lumber crewmen, built and tended flumes, constructed and maintained irrigation systems, built and maintained the narrow gauge railroads, leveled roads, cut cordwood, loaded and unloaded wood, and transported the wood. Some independent Chinese wood dealers also worked in lumbering. Among these was the Quong Hing (also spelled Kong Hing) Company, Sun Han Tong Company, and Hong Yick and Company, all of Carson City.

Between 1864 and 1869 the Central Pacific Railroad (CPR) was constructed. The Chinese constituted about 90% of the workforce of between 5,000 (1864-65 and again in 1869) to 12,000 (1868-69). By the time the CPR reached present-day Reno, the workforce was cut to 5,000 since the most difficult route had been completed. Chinese workers cleared the road for the train and this involved cutting trees. The CPR also used large amounts of timber for ties and to fuel the steam engine. Although the CPR contracted with some independent companies or individuals for the lumber, they probably also used some of their Chinese workforce since some of the Chinese worked in the lumbering in China.

The federal census manuscripts for 1870 and 1880¹ give an approximation of the number of Chinese that might have been involved in the industry. In 1870 in Ormsby County there were 772 Chinese (21% of the county's population) and 72 of these lived outside of Carson City and therefore may have been involved in lumbering. Three men (Hi Sonee, age 32; Su Su, age 35; and Ah Hin, age 25) lived in Carson City and gave their occupation as woodcutters. By 1880 there were 45 woodcutters in Carson City, as well as one wood dealer, Hing Luck, age 40, married, one wood packer, Kong Chi, age 44, and one carpenter. The more prosperous related Chinese often created "employment families" as a substitute for the natal and extended families that were so important in South China. Out of the county's 972 Chinese residents (18% of the county's population), 178 lived outside the city and many of these men were probably involved in lumbering. In 1870 in

Douglas County there were 24 Chinese (less than 2% of the county's population) and by 1880 they had increased in number to 157 (10% of the county's population). 52 of the latter lived in "The Mountains" and ranged in age from 18 to 65, with only 17 who were married. Another 38 lived in the lumber mill town of Glenbrook. 20 of these, ranging in age from 25 to 50 with 13 of them married but living separately from their wives (which was typical for the times),² lived in a boarding house next to M. E. Spooner, a wood contractor, and his wife. Next to Glenbrook was Chinese Gardens, presumably the Chinatown of that town. Glenbrook was the center of operations for the Carson and Tahoe Lumber and Fluming Company (CTLFC) that bought out many of the small, independent firms between 1871 and 1873. Duane L. Bliss and Henry M. Yerington, two of the major leaders in the business, controlled most of the lumber industry in the region until the closure of most of the business in 1898 and its demise in 1947. At the height of their activities, the CTLFC either owned outright or leased approximately 1/5 of the Lake Tahoe Basin, employing 500 men in milling, logging, and fluming operations as well as subcontracting to others. Yerington branched out into other areas and was a director of the Bodie Railroad and Lumber Company that hired many Chinese workers and sold lumber to the Comstock. It might also have sold lumber to the Chinese in the port cities of China, where new buildings were being built as international trade developed at a fast pace.

Many Chinese worked for the CTLFC. Just as the CPR had used the Chinese labor contracting firm of Quong Hing and Company, so the CTLFC hired Chinese workmen through Quong Hing and other merchandising firms like Chung Kee and Company. In 1871 the Virginia and Truckee Railroad (VTR), another Bliss and Yerington enterprise, hired Quong Hing to employ 100 Chinese workers to cut wood for the railroad. The manager of Quong Hing was Yee Non Chong or Ah Chung, better known in the community as Sam Gibson. According to Carson City plat maps, Sam Gibson and his wife owned at least five buildings in Chinatown in the 1880s and the four boarding houses probably were the living quarters of the Chinese workmen. Quong Hing owned one city block, from Stewart to Valley and Second to Third. Articles in the Carson City Morning Appeal in this period indicate that Sam Gibson was one of the leaders of Carson City's Chinatown. Sam not only made money as a labor contractor but also prospered by supplying goods on a regular basis to the Chinese working in the Tahoe Basin. Quong Hing was the largest merchandising store in Chinatown in the late 1870s to mid-1880s. When the anti-Chinese movement directed toward Chinese involved in the lumber industry broke out in 1885-1886, Sam left Carson City with his wife and two of his three children. In 1892 when Duane L. Bliss visited China, the two men met again and renewed their friendship. *According to records of the immigration service, in 1897 Sam's son, Yee King, returned to the Carson City and made enough money to make at least two trips to China. Yee King worked in the Quong Hing firm as well as in the railroad industry then moved to El Paso,*

Texas to work for relatives in a firm there.

The amount of lumber used during this era was staggering. The VTR transported lumber from the CTLFC facilities to the Comstock and used between 20 to 30 cords of wood during each of its 4 round trips at the height of Comstock mining. By 1872 the VTR reached Reno, thus connecting the region to the transcontinental railroad system. In October 1880 the CTLFC shipped 10,000 cords to the mines, mills, and construction projects on the Comstock. In September 1879 Sierra Wood and Lumber Company, headed by Duncan McRae, hired the Hi Wah Company to cut and cord wood almost 10,000 cords of wood for \$1.50-\$2.00 per cord, depending upon the size and type of wood. The work was completed by the end of November 1879. Some companies, most notably the Pacific Wood, Lumber and Flume Company headquartered in Virginia City, refused to employ Chinese workers. By 1880 the Pacific Wood, Lumber, and Flume Company had cut all of the trees in its 12,000 acres of land near Mount Rose for use on the Comstock within five years of its incorporation.

Upon completion of the VTR, some of the Chinese workers probably became cordwood cutters. In 1880 the Virginia Evening Chronicle reported that there were 3,000 Chinese cutting wood in the Tahoe region for \$1 or less per cord. Cordwood primarily is scavenged from leftover trees, stumps, roots, and brush. However, the price varied from \$1 to \$2.50 per cord and during cold winters in Virginia City when there was a shortage of cordwood, Chinese wood sellers could earn as much as \$60 per cord.

Some Chinese leased land for cutting wood. There was one notable attempt to buy public land. Fook Ling, a bona fide resident of Douglas County for several years, tried to purchase non-mineral public land in Douglas County at \$1.25 per acre, but Surveyor General C. S. Preble refused to sell him the land. The constitution of the state allowed resident aliens to purchase, own, and sell land. In 1883 the case went to the Supreme Court of Nevada (*State ex rel. Fook Ling v. C.S. Preble, 1883*) and it was decided that he was entitled to purchase public property.

A few Chinese were cooks in the lumber camps. Good food was important because single men tended to remain in the job if the food was good. Chinese cooks often bought fresh herbs, fruits, and vegetables from Chinese growers, thus enhancing the meals served. CTLFC payroll records indicated that the head chef was paid \$40 a month and his two assistants \$30 a month. CTLFC purchased produce and fish from Chinese and non-Chinese sellers. The close relationship between a mill superintendent and a Chinese cook can be illustrated by the story of William Baird, superintendent of one of the Loma Prieta Lumber Company's logging camps in Watsonville, California and his cook Mock Get. When Baird died in 1905, Mock Get, devastated by the loss, committed suicide by hanging himself in the cook house. As a member of the Zhigongtang (Chinese Free Masons Association), an elaborate funeral was staged and all of the loggers and their

wives attended the event. Other stories of the same nature exist.

Flume construction workers and tenders also played a major role in the Lake Tahoe logging industry. For centuries the Chinese had built flumes, slipways (*liuzu*), and waterways to transport the logs in China. Therefore it was not surprising that many of the lumber companies hired Chinese workers as flume builders and tenders in the late 19th century. Flumes moved the logs from the forests to the sawmills and were very extensive. The main V-flume from Marlette Lake to Spooner Summit was 11,330 meters long and at its upper end was at an elevation of 7,800 feet. The water was regulated through a system of earthen dams, reservoirs, and ditches much like the irrigation systems used in Chinese farming.

By 1880 Chinese lumbermen felt the tensions of the growing anti-Chinese movement and formed a Chinese Carpenter's Mutual Protective Association in California. The association was headquartered in San Francisco, where there were at least four Chinese owned lumbering companies in Chinatown. It had a capital of \$300, established a minimum wage for their members at \$2 per day, assisted their members in sickness, and helped their members return to China when they were no longer able to work. Like the Chinese Consolidated Benevolent Association, better known as the Chinese Six Companies, the association probably had branches in Nevada.

In 1882 the anti-Chinese forces won a major victory in getting the first of several Chinese Exclusion Acts passed. According to the Irish, who often led anti-Chinese movements perhaps in reaction to the discrimination they experienced in Great Britain, Chinese laborers could be hired cheaply and therefore took away jobs from "whites." Therefore Chinese laborers and their wives could no longer enter the United States. During the ensuing decades the immigration laws were more exclusionary until the 1924 Immigration Act effectively limited Chinese immigration to a very small number.

Not all Chinese involved in the lumbering industry achieved the status of wealth like Sam Gibson. A few, like Tom Bing Chew, did. Tom Bing Chew opened the Tie Hing & Company, wholesale and retail dealers in lumber, at 839 Clay Street in San Francisco in the 1860s. By 1893 the company had a capital stock of \$20,000 and 7 of the 22 members of the firm visiting China. On the other hand, June Young, who immigrated in 1872, made enough money to be able to travel to China twice before the industry collapsed, then he became a paper hanger in San Francisco's Chinatown. Wong Sam, who immigrated in 1882, eventually owned a lumber business in San Francisco's Chinatown by 1892, but when the financial difficulties arose, he moved to Ogden, Utah to find a completely different type of work. Some were even less fortunate. Day Kee, who immigrated in 1876, settled in Nevada, California for 11 years before moving to Dayton, Nevada. As a woodchopper who moved from camp to camp with his base in Dayton for over twenty years, Day Kee did not make enough money to go back to China and in 1905 still resided

in Dayton. Woo Hing, age 35, was killed by a saw log in Ormsby County in 1870 – one of the few deaths of a Chinese person that was recorded. More work is needed in uncovering the experiences of Chinese workers in the Lake Tahoe Basin.



PIT Site

Archaeological evidence indicates that the Chinese worked with the same tools as other lumbermen: cross-cut saws, axes, mauls, splitting wedges, files, shovels, black powder, nails, bolts, and so forth. Most, if not all, discarded their traditional Chinese soft soled shoes for western leather/rubber boots. They also ate American foods, especially in tin cans, to supplement their Chinese diet. They drank Chinese tea and liquor and ate imported foodstuffs such as dried, pickled or fermented soybeans, cabbage, and other vegetables. Therefore the distinctive Chinese brown-glazed (*Jianyou*) utilitarian ware, Four Seasons and other dishware, traditional Chinese medicine bottles, and opium paraphernalia as well as refashioned American cans are found on sites. At one site near Lakeview, near Carson City, Nevada, it appeared that those who indulged in opium smoked apart from those who ate and played recreational games or musical instruments. They usually raised and butchered their own pigs but purchased beef from a non-Chinese butcher. They also purchased American foodstuffs and liquor. One unusual item now in the museum in Sparks, Nevada is a cast iron stove that was divided in two parts so that it could be carried on a Chinese shoulder pole. At one site in Spooner Summit, there are the foundations of seventeen structures with one larger than the rest. It probably served as the eating and recreation center while the smaller structures were equivalent to boarding houses. Another interesting characteristic was the moving of the roof of their cabin from

one location to another. The roof was the hardest to construct and the most important for residential buildings. For those who originally were farmers in China, they continued their love for growing produce so that "Chinese gardens" often could be found in logging camps. Therefore while they adapted to their American environment, they also tried to maintain some of their traditional ways.

In June 2002 the U.S. Forest Service "Passport in Time" volunteers, in conjunction with the University of Nevada, Reno and Las Vegas, excavated a single Chinese dwelling not far from Bliss Peak. The log cabin, located at the intersection of possibly three roads and near a water system or flume, was built with notched logs and had a cooking hearth-heater of rocks in one corner of the building. Near the hearth were pork bones, indicating the southern Chinese preference for pork over other meats. Among the items uncovered were parts of two opium tins, Chinese coins (used for gaming) and glass gaming pieces, indicating that the resident or residents partook of opium and enjoyed gaming as a pastime. Chinese pottery ware, tin cans, an American teapot cover, two obsidian arrow-heads, a champagne bottle, and remnants of a leather boot were also found.

The Chinese played an important role in the development of the west not only in helping to build the transcontinental railroad but also in the timber industry in the Bodie-Lake Tahoe-Comstock economic network and perhaps in the U.S.-China lumber trade in the late 19th century as well. Their contributions helped to sustain the mining and transportation industries in the region. Some became prosperous but others barely made a living. The 1882 and 1892 Chinese exclusions acts resulted in a dramatic decrease in the Chinese population:

Year	Chinese in U.S.	Chinese in Nevada
1880	105,465	5,416
1890	107,488	2,833
1900	89,863	1,352

Because of the combination of the decline in the mining and lumbering industries in the Lake Tahoe-Comstock region, the advances in new lumbering technology, and the effects of the exclusion acts in the substantial decrease in the Chinese population, the Chinese no longer played an important role in the lumbering industry by the turn of the twentieth century.

¹ The 1890 census for the West was lost in a fire.

² The 1875 Page Law essentially required Chinese women to prove that they were legal wives and not prostitutes before immigrating to the United States. The 1882 and subsequent Chinese exclusion acts made it even more difficult for Chinese women to join their husbands in the United States.

IMPORTANT PLACES IN GUM SAAN: CONTINUING INTO THE NEW MILLENNIUM

By: Thomas A. McDannold
(Professor Emeritus)

Introduction

Gum Saan, or California as the state is sometimes known, has a rich and varied collection of places that reflect the historic importance of the Chinese in the state's growth and development. More than one thousand such places have been identified and marked by monuments, plaques, place names, etc. for the enjoyment and education of those of the new millennium. Diversity characterizes those responsible for much of the naming: individuals, groups, historical societies, service organizations like the Rotary Club, professional organizations such as the American Society of Civil Engineers along with government agencies, historic preservation commissions and the State Historical Resources Commission (McDannold 2000). Unfortunately, some places have been lost. The loss often occurs when there is a change in property ownership and the new owner does not see the need for preservation. This has been the situation with Rocklin China Gardens (Placer County). Loss also happens when economic considerations such as maintenance, refurbishing or raising land costs prohibit continuance of the site. The Los Angeles Cemetery Shrine (Los Angeles County) would have been lost this way, were it not for the action of a historical society. Loss of a place name can occur because of competing interest in the identification of historic places where one group's interest surpasses another. This is presently taking place with China Basin Street (San Francisco County). Fortunately, the ongoing process of recognizing and protecting sites has taken place more rapidly than the loss and as a result, a more complete picture of the Chinese importance in the state is developing.

Guidelines

To aid in officially establishing and protecting historic places, the federal government has provided guidelines for determining the worthiness of a place (*National Registry Bulletin 16A*). An awareness of the guidelines is necessary because they are observed in various forms at the local and state level.

In essence, the guidelines state that any improvement, building, structure, sign, feature, site, place or object can be designated as significant and that any grouping of such may be designated as a historic district if it meets one or more of the following criteria:

1. It exemplifies or reflects special elements of historical, archeological, cultural, social, economic, political, aesthetic, religious, engineering or architectural development; or
2. It is identified with persons or events significant in local, state or national history; or
3. It embodies distinctive characteristics of style, type, period, or method of construction or is a valuable example of the use of indigenous materials or craftsmanship; or

4. It is representative of the notable work of a builder, designer, architect, engineer, landscape architect, interior design, artist or craftsman; or
5. Its unique location or singular physical characteristics represent an established and familiar visual feature; or
6. It has the potential of yielding archaeological or palaeontological information or scientific value.

Nomenclature

Like the guidelines, the designation's identifier is important (Office of Historic Preservation 1990: ix-xii). The identifier indicates the position of the place in the local, state and national hierarchy. Thus, use of the appropriate designator such as, *Point of Historic Interest*, *Historic Landmark*, or *Historic District* reduces confusion.

Examples abound: a Point of Historic Interest is considered important at the local level, be it neighborhood, city or county—China Alley (Western Kern County) bears just such a designation. If a place is a State Historic Point of Interest, the County Board of Supervisors has recommended to the State Office of Historic Preservation that it be identified as such. Examples include Riverside Chinatown (Riverside County) and Natoma Station Ground Sluices Chinese Diggings (Sacramento County). If the designation is that of Historic Landmark, the place is one with local and lasting statewide importance. It may be the first, last, only, largest or smallest site of a particular type and would include places such as Suey Sing Store (Yuba County) and Locke (Sacramento County). Historic Districts, covering a large geographic area, include the Asian/Pacific Thematic Historic District (San Diego County) and Chinatown Historic District (San Luis Obispo County), to mention only two.

When a place is entered into the National Registry of Historic Places, it signifies its importance at the local, state and national level. Placement into the National Registry occurs only at the recommendation of the State Office of Historic Preservation. Some examples are the Sam Kee Laundry (Napa County) and Wong Kee Gew Mansion (San Joaquin County).

The Process

The process of becoming an officially designated site illustrates several aspects of the importance of having places identified. The following steps are drawn from a sample of cities throughout the state and are only meant to illustrate the process. Some have a very convoluted process while others have no formal process at all.

1. Initially, one must obtain an application. A person, group or property owner may originate the application. The application form itself is usually available from the city; more specifically, the official body referred to in some fashion as the Historic Preservation Committee. There may be a fee associated with the application. If ultimately approved, a plaque, memorial, certificate, etc. is usually at the applicant's expense.

2. Next, one must complete the application. This is the opportunity to establish the significance of the place in question. The most successful applications are those that demonstrate an in-depth knowledge of the place and its overall role. Maps, photographs,

archaeological reports, and written and oral histories may form the basis of the rationale.

3. Once completed and in the hands of the Historic Preservation Committee, the application is reviewed at a public meeting. After review, the Commission recommends approval/disapproval to the City Council.

4. If approved by the Council, the designation is recorded on the property's Deed of Trust. Henceforth, a request for a change to the property triggers notification of the Commission.

5. Lastly, the Commission then reviews the proposed change(s) and approves/disapproves.

Other Strategies

There is a certain familiarity with having a place identified by city, county or state agencies. In addition, there are a number of relatively unfamiliar and increasingly popular strategies that offer a means of expanding the legacy of important places.

1. Generate a Street Name. The continued growth of the state prompts numerous housing developments to be constructed. The developer of the land may be receptive to capturing a historical aspect of the development through street names that commemorate the Chinese in some manner. For example, there is Young Wo Circle and Fong Street (both in Sacramento County).

2. Create a School Name. The local Board of Education often welcomes and even encourages residents to participate in the creation of a school name for newly constructed schools. The Oak Chan Elementary School (Sacramento County) and Sing Lum Elementary School (Western Kern County) serve as examples.

3. Identify a Portion of a Highway. CalTrans, at the suggestion of the highway's district state assemblyman or senator may agree to name a portion of a highway after an individual. If so, the legislator prepares the appropriate legislation that must be approved by both houses. Bridges, section of a highway, rest area, etc. are available. Thus far, there is the Moon Lim Lee Rest Area (Trinity County).

4. Establish a Site Within an Existing Unit. An example is the identification of a historically significant place within a National Forest. Sing Peak in Sierra National Forest (Madera County) and China Point in Klamath National Forest (Siskiyou County) illustrate the idea.

5. Erect a Monument. One can create a memorial that notes the importance of a place through the placement of a monument. Owners of private property and official agencies are often receptive to the placement of a commemorative element. Impressive ones include the China Beach stele (San Francisco County), the Consolidated Chinese Benevolent Association/Kong Chow sculpture (Fresno County), the Hanford Chinese Cemetery (Kings County) and the Iron Road Pioneers statue (San Luis Obispo County).

6. Emblazon a Star. The Hollywood Chamber of Commerce has an aggressive program of placing a star along the Hollywood Walk of Fame, thereby memorializing those of importance in the entertainment industry. Examples include stars for Bruce Lee, Keye Luke and Anna May Wong.

Conclusion

California has many clearly identified places that speak to the importance, both past and present, of the Chinese within the state. Even though some sites have been lost, more and more are being officially recognized. However, all must meet a well-defined criteria; thereby, gaining greater protection, legitimacy and respect. In a like-manner, the standardized nomenclature of places indicates their level of importance whether it is local (Point of Historic Interest), statewide (Historic Landmark), or national (National Registry of Historic Places). New strategies for recording history on the land include coining of street names and school names, naming portions of highways, identifying sites within locations and the construction of compelling monuments. As more places are officially established throughout the new millennium, there will be a more precise and larger record of Chinese places in Gum Saan. Keep informed about places within the state by visiting www.heritagewestbooks.com/what'snew.html.

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Guidelines for Article Submission

Gum Saan Journal solicits manuscripts that explore the historical, cultural, and humanistic aspects of Chinese American experiences, particularly relating to Southern California, as well as contemporary issues of relevance to the Chinese American community. *Gum Saan Journal* also publishes book, media, and exhibition reviews. Original work is preferred, but reprints of significance will be considered. Students and community members are especially encouraged to submit items for consideration.

Manuscripts should be approximate 3000 words in length; endnotes should be written according to the *Chicago Manual of Style*. All text must be double-spaced in a clear, easy-to-read typeface on 8.5 x 11 inch white paper.

Submit two hard copies of the manuscript and one disk copy (Microsoft Word for PC preferred, Macintosh accepted) to Editorial Committee, *Gum Saan Journal*, Chinese Historical Society of Southern California, PO Box 862647, Los Angeles, CA 90086-2647. If your manuscript is accepted for publication, you will be responsible for obtaining permission to reproduce any copyrighted materials (e.g. reprints, photographs) used in your article.

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