

The Celestial Kingdom on the Upper Missouri

A series of frontier historical sketches by historians at the
Joel F. Overholser Historical Research Center in Fort Benton.

Ken Robison

Oct 28 and Nov. 25 2009, 24 February, 28 July and 4
August 2010

Contents

Part I: The Chinese of Historic Chouteau County	3
Part II: “Aliens Alive and Aliens Dead”	12
Part III: The Benton Chinese Persevered and Worked On	23
Part IV: “The End of the Fort Benton Chinese”	29
Sources	38
Appendix: More Examples of Anti-Chinese Sentiments	42
Chinese Labor	42
Tonight’s meeting	43

Part I: The Chinese of Historic Chouteau County

Among the most remarkable stories of early Fort Benton is the growth of a multi-cultural society in the town. By the 1850s many unions had been formed by early American Fur Company and opposition traders with Native American women. By the late 1860s many of these mixed race families remained in Fort Benton while others had moved on to join Blackfoot or other Indian nations. Adding to this melting pot were Black Americans and Chinese who found conditions right in Fort Benton during the booming years of steamboating and overland freighting to open small businesses and find jobs in service industries.

Fort Benton of the 1860s was a rough frontier town with “the bloodiest block in the West.” The Vigilante hanging of Bill Hynson from a temporary tripod gallows at Fort Benton on August 24, 1868 had a Chinese connection. Hynson, a tall, handsome Missourian, age about 28 years old, allegedly had strangled a Chinese woman to death in Helena for her poke of \$1,000 worth of gold dust. Frontier justice caught up to him in Fort Benton.

The first Chinese resident of Fort Benton is not known, but the early Chinese in the town included 32 year-old Sam Loy who operated a laundry in 1870 with Chang Haw, age 40, and Lee Wang, age 28, working as washermen. During the 1870s some of the younger Chinese worked as houseboys and cooks in local homes. The earliest Chinese clustered on Main Street, the site of a laundry for many years. In April 1877 the *Benton Record* reported that Arthur Sling Bang, a Chinese laundryman planted “a fine bed of asparagus seeds, and proposes to furnish the Benton market with this delicious esculent during the coming season.” Chinese gardening activities centered on a block or so above the Grand Union, long known as the Chinaman’s gardens for the vegetable gardens they kept there [later the site of the Missouri River Lumber Company].

By 1880 eighteen Chinese were present in Choteau County and their number continued to grow throughout the 1880s. The census of June 1880 showed Ah Wan cooking at Fort Belknap, and George W. “Taylor” cooking for farmer Isaac Taylor on the Upper Teton River. Seven of Fort Benton’s sixteen Chinese worked as cooks while eight operated or worked in laundries. Of the cooks Kung Chung and Ma Kay worked for Robert S. Culbertson at his Pacific Hotel. No occupation was listed for Charles Chow although he was head of household with three other Chinese living with him so he apparently



Chinese Gardener in Early Fort Benton

maintained a small boarding house. Three of the eighteen Chinese in the county were married, although no wives were listed. At this time all were born in China.

In the words of historian Joel F. Overholser, “Bentonites in general regarded [the Chinese] with more curiosity than wrath, an 1881 funeral for Quong Chong drew a lengthy account in the *Benton Record*.” This fascinating article in the *Benton Record* provides insight into Chinese culture:

“Although there was an evident disposition on the part of the Chinese, friends of the deceased Quong Chong, to conceal from our people the hour for the funeral services, a large and curious crowd was drawn to the grave yard last Saturday afternoon. However common Chinese burials are to other communities this one was the first that ever occurred to Benton, and hardly any of the spectators had ever had an opportunity to see the curious ceremonies of such an occasion.

It would be interesting to know the significance of the various rites and we have made several efforts to obtain the information; but the Chinese are very reticent and are not all willing to communicate what we were anxious to find out. It must suffice, then, to say that the body— completely dressed in a white costume, such as Chinamen wear indoors, wearing shoes and hat—was placed in the coffin. Four packs of cards, with four silver half-dollars, were also placed inside. The coffin was then put in the hearse together with the bedding, clothes, and other personal property of the dead man. One Chinaman who acted as chief mourner rode beside the driver; at intervals of a few yards along the route of the procession this man threw out small scraps of paper.

On arriving at the cemetery the body was summarily placed in the ground and covered up. As soon as this had been done, a bonfire was made of all the dead man’s effects which formed as odd a collection as can be imagined. After the fire was well under way the chief mourner, after having first poured out a libation of whisky, burned, with great care to have every fragment of it consumed, a brown paper book supposed to contain the accounts of the deceased. This done, there was arranged about the foot of the grave a bowl of cooked rice with two chop-sticks stuck therein, a bar of soap, two whisky bottles, three cups and some burning tapers and papers and decorated candles. In turn each Chinaman approached, and after having bowed three times, knelt and poured whisky into the middle one of the three cups from which some of the liquor was distributed to the other two and some poured on the ground. Then he bowed low again three times and made way for the next man. A board was placed at the foot of the grave instead of at the head; it was covered with hieroglyphics and one half of it was buried. The rice, whisky, candles, &c., were allowed to remain at the grave. One Chinaman carefully gathered up a handful of earth from the mound and wrapped it in paper and the obsequies were concluded. The body will be in the ground for two years and will then be disinterred and sent back to China.”



Chinese Burial Site at Unidentified Location in Montana

One Chinese custom drew disapproval from residents and the Benton press—opium dens. In 1881 a *Benton Record* reporter visited an opium den and wrote a detailed report about the “Raid on an Opium Den Winding Up of an Infamous Business”

“The Sheriff, Thursday night, made a descent on an opium dive, on Front st., nearly opposite Murphy, Neel & Co.’s store, and captured four Chinamen, one in the act of smoking, two lying in a drunken stupor, and the fourth, the owner of the house, raided.

The fact is a notorious one that all the Chinese laundries about town do a little business on the side, in letting out opium pipes to smokers at fifty cents a smoke. Before the enactment of the opium law, last winter, the dealers in the drug were able to carry on their frightful trade without any possibility of molestation by the authorities, all attacks upon the business through the nuisance act, since there was no specific law to govern the case, having met with failure. No one, who has not looked into the matter, can have any idea of the magnitude of the traffic here. The patrons of the various houses have been, it is true, for the most part Chinese, but many of the white trash about town are frequenters of the little rooms at the rear of the laundries, where curled up on the bunks they, can, under the influence of a few whiffs of smoke escape for a time from their beastly selves. Besides, this kind of a drunk has to them the merit of cheapness.

The traffic has been more secretly conducted since the opium law went into effect last winter, and consequently it has been more difficult to take offenders red-handed, so to speak. One den in particular has been under surveillance for the last three nights, and our reporter accompanied the sheriff last evening as he went to station himself where, through an uncurtained window, he could watch the movements of the occupants of the room. After a few moments of waiting, one Chinaman was seen to take up a pipe and lie down on one of the bunks. This was the chance sought; the door was quickly opened and the sheriff and our reporter entered the room. On the bed, a pipe between them, lay two Chinamen, their staring eyes and the set expression on their faces telling the story of their indulgence. They were declared under arrest.

In another bed was found a Chinaman so sound asleep that it was with great difficulty that he was aroused. After the drunken men became aware of the situation a string of extremely lucid and plausible pigeon-English explanations followed—none of them smoked, one had too sore a finger, another had sworn off and had smashed his pipe, the fragments of which he produced; the third said ‘he smoke alle time; he know law, he don’t gib dam; he Slan Flanciso man; hell!’

The owner of the house, Ah Gee, was put under arrest. What seemed to concern him most was the Sheriff's taking away his pipes, lamps and a stock of opium on hand. A few small bottles were scattered about on the table and these and a single pipe were declared to be everything connected with the business about the place. He is an accomplished liar. A movement to break some locked drawers showed him the jig was up, and he took a key from his pocket and, unlocking the drawers, gave up two large tin boxes of the drug, each weighing about a pound, a glass jar containing about as much more, and several small bottles, all full. Under the bed and concealed in various places were found in all about a dozen pipe bowls, all thoroughly saturated with the stuff, three stems, lamps, weigh scales, and other tools of the trade, besides a cigar box full of cinders which are apparently saved for the purpose of extracting the unconsumed opium therein. The latter is the best evidence of the amount of the drug consumed in this single den.

The Chinamen were all broke up over the closing of the house. They could not do justice to the subject in their broken English, but poured forth their indignation in pure Chinese all the way to the jail, and as the doors closed they were driving the prisoners inside mad with their pitiful story. We predict that these arrests will end the nefarious business for a long time in Benton.

The sequel to the capture resulted, this afternoon, in the Chinamen being brought into Court before Judge Tattan, who fined "Charley" \$5.00 and costs; Ah Sing \$5.00 and costs; Quong Lee \$5.00 and costs; Ah Lee \$50.00 and costs, or to stand committed to jail for two months. Most of the fines were promptly paid.

Despite occasional raids, opium dens continued operations for many years.

The Chinese in Benton were at all times objects of curiosity and amusement, and the press took full advantage of every opportunity to capture the humor of their cultural activities. In February 1880 the *Benton Record* correspondent reported that the Chinese celebrated their New Year and warned "Extreme vigilance is in order at present. Marshal Frank is exhausting himself in the discharge of his duties and can be found on hand at any time, ready to use up a cane on the chinaman who should possess the temerity of exploding a firecrackers. To-day being the [Chinese] New Years the ladies were visible who visited the China quarter to satisfy curiosity. How many opium dens those ladies graced with their presence, I am unable to say, but presume that their curiosity was satisfied to the fullest extent."

Chinese New Year brought special fascination by the Benton community. In February 1882 the *Record* reported "Persons sweetly slumbering this morning in the vicinity of Chinese wash-houses must have thought 'Gehenna broke loose' when at six o'clock the Chinamen ushered in their New Year with fire-crackers, and the noise all Celestials



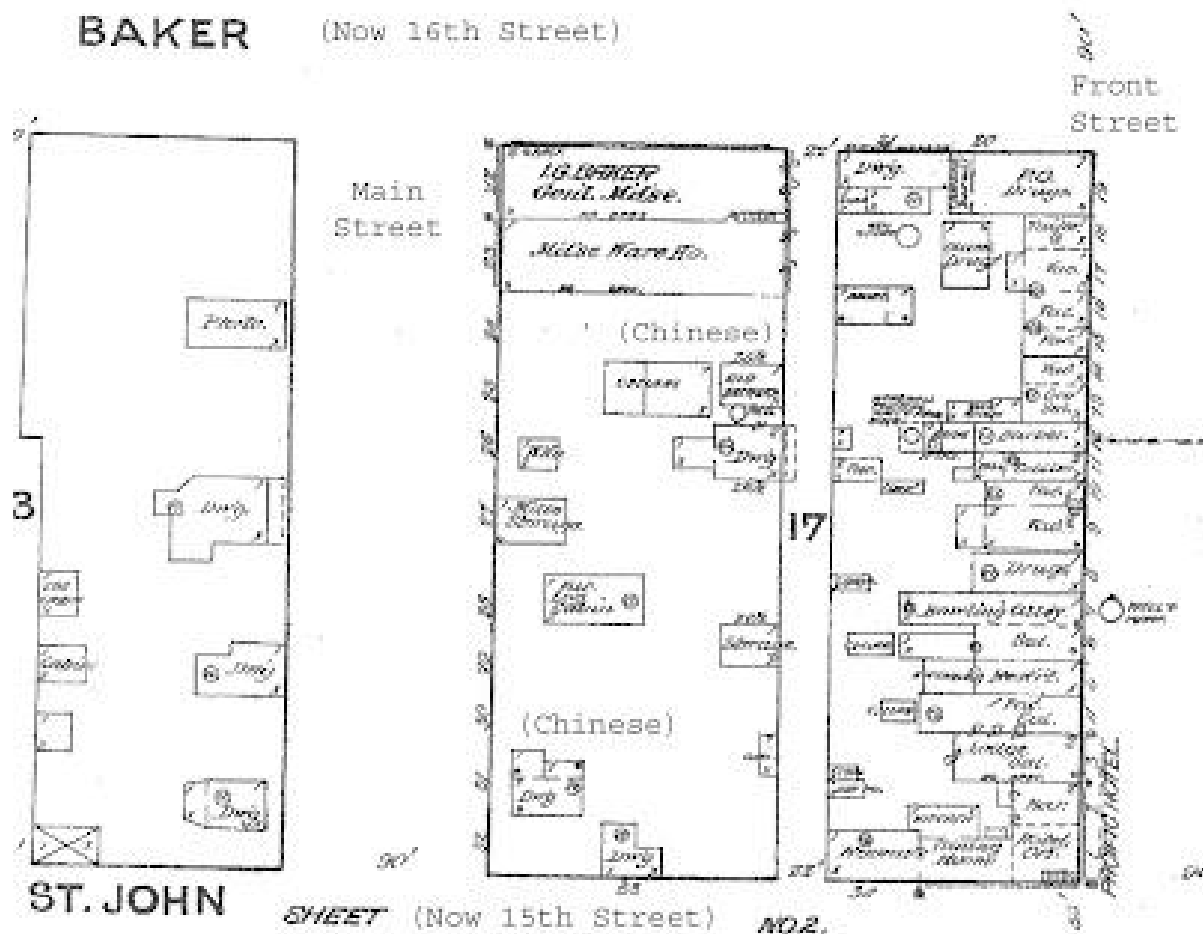
Early 1900s Humor in the Anaconda Standard Depicting “A Chinaman”

so dearly love. The holiday season will last for three days, and during that time we may expect our clothing to be badly mixed, or else not come home from the wash at all. The Chinamen were running around to-day exchanging calls, ‘all same Melican man.’ Their cards were of red paper folded several times. In all the laundries an entertainment, consisting of cake, wine or whiskey, cigars and Chinese dried fruit, or confectionery, was provided and the white callers were treated with marked consideration. It is with them the year 8, but what that means is ‘something no fellah can find out.’”

The *Benton Record* often made fun of the Chinese use of the English language. In February 1880, the Record reported, “One of the Chinese laundresses of Benton says, ‘Bilness no muchee good. Melican man ‘wellie shultee too long, wellie shultee so long make chinaman sickee to washee.’”

Life in Benton’s “Bloodiest block in the West” often featured humorous reporting on the latest incident in the Chinese quarters located there. In March 1880, the Record reported, “A shooting scrape took place among the disciples of Confucius in the Chinese quarters last Monday. No Asiatic soul was sent to the Flowery Kingdom; but the heathen who attempted to convert a live Celestial into a corpse was curtailed by Judge [John J.] Donnelly to the extent of \$100 fine and costs of court. It was a heavy toll on all.”

In Fort Benton’s multicultural society, Chinese interaction with the many Black Americans sometimes led to moments of tension. In August 1881 the Record reported “There was a bit of excitement up town night before last. It appears from the tale told us by [a] Mongolian, that a number of colored men were playing cards in the Eagle Bird Saloon and, if the Chinaman is correct, a job was put up among several of the dusky gamblers to rob him of his oriental ducats. Tumbling to the racket, however, before the advantage was taken of him, John Chinaman grabbed his money and prepared to make



Chinese Section of Fort Benton in the early 1880s centered on the alley between Main and Front Streets and on the north side of St. Johns across the alley from the Pacific Hotel

a lively exit when, with his usual free and easy manner of handling deadly weapons, the proprietor [Black American William Foster] leveled a pistol at him and ordered him to stay. But John knew they cared more for his money than his company, so he forthwith dropped his checks like hot cakes and took French leave of the assemblage. If this story be true, and we have no reason to doubt it, the parties to the affair should be arrested and punished.”

Benton’s Chinese interacted also with resident and visiting Native Americans. More than one Chinese bartender was arrested for serving “fire-water” to Indians. In June 1883 the *Benton Record* reported with disgust, “The public sale to a Chinaman of a squaw in our very midst, for the trifling compensation of two sacks of flour, will horrify and alarms our readers. Does slavery exist amongst us in this year of universal enlightenment? Are human beings to be bought and sold upon our public streets, and at so small a price as that mentioned? Are Chinamen not only to pauperize our working classes, but enslave the original owners of this splendid continent. Why, where will they stop? If they will buy a squaw for four sacks, and so on until they will have us all in a condition of servitude. Some of our citizens should inform that squaw how her aboriginal honor has been degraded, and advise her to take her glittering scalping-knife in the solemn watches of the night and remove the capillaries of the daring oriental.”

Photos:

- (1) Chinese gardener in Fort Benton
- (2) Chinese burial site at unidentified location in Montana
- (3) Early 1900s humor in the *Anaconda Standard* depicting “a Chinaman”
- (4) Chinese section of Fort Benton in the early 1880s centered on the alley between Main and Front Streets and on the north side of St. Johns across the alley from the Pacific Hotel

Part II: “Aliens Alive and Aliens Dead”

This continues the story of the Chinese in historic Choteau County and Fort Benton. Despite the derision of “Chinamen,” “Mongolians,” and “Heathen Chinese,” the Benton Chinese were tolerated, owned businesses, gave testimony in courts, and maintained their distinct cultural identity within the community—often to the delight, and sometimes to the disgust, of other Bentonites. In March 1881 Ah Sing operated the Benton Wash House at Main and St. John, where the Hagen block is today. Two years later, the *Record* reported on another laundry, “The house used by Mr. Culbertson as a dining hall during the time he was building his new hotel—and which is on St. John street on the opposite side of the street from the Pacific Hotel, has been rented by a Chinaman said to be Quong Lee, for a laundry, and he is making a sewer on the edge of the sidewalk from his laundry to the Missouri river, running along the sidewalk past Miller’s saloon, which he expects to have completed to-day or to-morrow.”

In August and September 1882 advertisements appeared in the *Benton Record* for the “Oriental Saloon Bakery and Restaurant with Choice Wines and Liquors Constantly on Hand Open Day and Night, Hop Lee, Proprietor.” In February 1883 Chung Kee opened another Saloon Bakery and Restaurant. The *Benton Record* noted in April 1883 “Chinamen seem to be the best, or at least the most successful vegetable gardeners in this vicinity. One of those industrious pig-tails is already hawking young onions and spinach, and had a good stock of celery as late as the first of February. They are not very modest in charging for their produce, however.”

In June 1883 five Chinese arrived in Benton by the Helena stagecoach intending to start a Chinese store in William Foster’s old Phoenix Exchange saloon building on Main Street—Foster, himself, was well remembered for skipping town and leaving lots of unpaid bills. The *Benton Record* reported their arrival and playfully added, “They are reported to be plentifully supplied with the condign, and will probably carry a good stock. This has long been a great want in Benton. No place can hope to flourish unless it contains a store where you can purchase fans painted with hump-backed Chinamen and impossible swans, or blue vases with green lizards crawling over them, and other things to suggest the horrible possibility that you’ve got ‘em again.”

The Chinese in Montana in the 1880s were a mobile population ranging out from the larger Chinese centers in Helena and Butte to outlying areas such as Fort Benton, Sun River, and Fort Assinaboine. In addition, the Montana Chinese traveled to and from San Francisco and even to and from China with surprising frequency. Perhaps



Chinese Laundryman on the Streets of Fort Benton

the best insight into this mobility comes from a report in October 1882 in the *Benton Record*, headlined “A Celestial Returning to the Flowery Kingdom

“Ah Too leaves to-morrow morning for China. He and Char Lee in partnership carry on the laundry opposite Murphy, Neel & Co. on Front Street [today’s site of the Grand Union]. Ah Too has been a resident of this country for a little over eighteen years, more than two years of which he has lived in Benton, and the remainder of the time in San Francisco.

“During the time he has sojourned in this country he has returned to China four times and he is now going back for the fifth, and is uncertain whether he will ever return again to this country or not, but will be governed by circumstances in that respect after he returns from China. He expects to go direct from Benton to San Francisco, and there take one of the ocean steamers to Hong Kong and from thence to Canton, and there he will embark on one of the boats peculiar to that country and go up the Canton river about 500 miles to his native place, Wam Boo, a town of about 3,000 inhabitants, immediately upon the river, and in the Province of Canton, and where he expects to arrive about the tenth of next November.”

The next week, October 12, 1882, Sim Sing, who had just arrived in Benton a few weeks previously to form a partnership with Hop Lee at the Oriental Saloon, presented the editor of the *Benton Record* with “a newspaper printed in the celestial kingdom, at Canton, as a token of acknowledgment of the obligations which he is under to us for noticing the departure this morning for China of his friend Ah Too. He assured us that the paper contained news of the highest importance and interest, and everyone connected with the establishment examined it until they almost become cross-eyed, and attempts at deciphering it will have to be suspended until a more fitting opportunity.”

The Benton Chinese followed events closely in other communities in Montana. In March 1882 the Record reported from Fort Assinaboine that “Ah Wan, a Chinaman who has been working for one of the officers of this post was found this morning in a cellar of the house hanging dead from a beam, having committed suicide. The cause of the act was that John could not rest easy knowing that his father had killed another Chinaman. The Chinamen at the post say the Devil came after him ... The body of Ah Wan, the Chinaman who committed suicide by hanging at Assinaboine the other day, has been sent to Helena for burial.”

The *Benton Record*, always fascinated by the Chinese, became more harshly racist in its later years, writing in 1883 “The Chinese must go. Ah Hay, or Gee Whiz, or some other euphoniously titled Celestial, left by the Helena stage this morning to make his home hereafter among his Mongolian brethren at the Capital.” In June 1883, the Record reported with horror and alarm on “The public sale to a Chinaman of a squaw in our very midst, for the trifling compensation of two sacks of flour. Does slavery exist amongst us in this year of universal enlightenment? Are human beings to be bought



Chinese Temple in Virginia City, Montana

and sold upon our public streets, and at so small a price as that mentioned? Are Chinamen not only to pauperize our working classes, but enslave the original owners of this splendid continent. Why, where will they stop? If they would buy a squaw for two sacks of flour soon they will not hesitate to buy a white woman for four sacks, and so on until they will have us all in a condition of servitude.”

Most Chinese in Fort Benton were unmarried, and few Chinese women lived there. In April 1884 the more tolerant Fort Benton *River Press* reported on the marriage of Ah Son, of Benton, and his bride Ah Hou, of Bozeman in Helena at the Mount Helena House. The couple was married “melican fashion” by Judge Sterling. The *Press* continued, “Mr. Ah Son and wife, formerly the handsome and charming Miss Ah Hou, of Bozeman, who were recently married at Helena, arrived in the city on yesterday’s coach, and have now quietly settled down to the enjoyment of domestic affairs.”

A party of hungry travelers on Montana’s Benton Road arrived at the 28-Mile Springs stage stop late one evening in September 1884. Asking proprietor Colonel Andrew Jackson Vance if they could get anything to eat, he replied, “I don’t know; it depends on the Chinaman. If you can get him up, all right.” The travelers went to the Chinese man’s room, awakened him, and were informed they could get nothing at that time of night. The group reported back to Vance, but he kept deferring to the party to find a means to get the cook up. Finally, a traveler told Vance, “Well, you are the boss.” Vance replied, “You bet I am,” and proceeded to the room, roused the sleeping Chinaman, and raised him by the hair. “Throw him out of the window,” shouted the travelers. So “John” was thrown out into the night. The unhappy Chinese cook went into the kitchen, and the guests had a good supper. But, “the Chinaman got even by giving them in the morning the most execrable breakfast they ever sat down to.”

In February 1885 the *River Press* reported that an unusual event occurred at McDewitt & William’s saloon when a prize fight was arranged in the morning and the fight occurred in the afternoon between “Nosey, the Kid” and “Chung Lung, a Chinaman, under the rules of the London prize ring.” Later that month the Chinese residents of Fort Benton “commenced celebrating their New Year to-day in good style with the firing of immense fire crackers and other harmless but noisy amusements. The crackers made as much noise as a mountain howitzer, and caused many of our citizens to think the reservation bill had passed.” The next week on a typically wild evening in Benton “a shooting scrape took place in the Chinese saloon on Main street, during which John Lloyd, who is well known here, was shot through the hand and in the leg, shattering that member above the knee, by a Chinaman, known as Arthur.” Meanwhile, in January 1886 Lee Gee opened the Enterprise House in the new Cummings Building.

By the mid 1880s attitudes toward Chinese in some communities in Montana were hardening. From its founding in 1884, workingmen in Great Falls, with support of town leaders, had established a “don’t let the sun set on you in our town” Chinese exclusion policy. That harsh policy prevailed in Great Falls prohibiting settlement of any Chinese in the city until the mid-1930s.



At 28-Mile Springs Proprietor Vance raised his "Chinaman" by his hair. Sketch in 1901 Anaconda Standard.

Some years later Worden P. Wren, the agent for Murphy-Maclay & Company in the village of Great Falls, recalled the incident with the first Chinese in Great Falls

“Chinese were good laundrymen, but did collars and cuffs so poorly that Mr. Wren sent his to Troy, New York to be laundered while he was in Fort Benton and even after he came into the Falls. In 1884 and 1885 other laundry was sent from the Falls to Fort Benton or Sun River, but early in 1885 an intrepid young Chinaman came from Sun River to start a laundry. Soon after he hung his shingle, several boys with a strong antipathy for the yellow race tried to persuade him to leave town. Pat Hughes led the crowd. He refused to comply with their request. They told him they were going to hang him with a long rope they had with them. He was led to the river, placed in a skiff with two men at the oars, and started for the opposite shore. The crowd on the bank yelled ‘Hang him’ ‘Hang him!’ It was getting dark; the Chinaman was so frightened he jumped overboard in the middle of the stream. The men at the oars and on the bank feared he had been drowned and the next morning they were not to be found. The streets were deserted. The Chinaman however, reached shore, went to the Townsite office, knocked on the door, and was admitted by Jim Matkin who gave him dry clothes to wear until his had dried sufficiently to put on again. The next day he left secretly for Sun River. The news was well circulated around the country, and Great Falls was visited by no more Chinese. Whenever one came to town, he carefully avoided the hotel, and spent the night locked in Murphy-Maclay’s store until Mr. Wren let him out the next morning. This was the first labor trouble in Great Falls.”

In January 1886 the *River Press* brought news to the Benton Chinese that “the Chinamen at Maiden received notice to quit the camp and not having complied with the same were last week escorted out of town by a band of masked men and instructed to keep right on going. They went.”

Anti-Chinese sentiment throughout the United States was building with the first Chinese Exclusion Act in 1882. In February 1886 the *River Press* reported that Howell Harris had returned from Oregon with news that “there is great excitement over the Chinese question and the recent troubles in Seattle. There is a general feeling against the Chinese, who are controlled by the companies in San Francisco, although Mr. Harris is of the opinion that the habits of the Celestials in that section has probably more to do with the determination to rid the country of them than anything else. The citizens have tried every peaceable means to rid themselves of Chinese, but without avail, and it has been the general belief that agitation or legislation would bring no relief, and the people took summary measures to compel them to go, feeling sure that this would be the only means of calling public attention to the evil. That something must be done, and that speedily, is evident.”

One year later, in 1887, a Chinese man was held up and robbed in Benton. Zack Larsen and Rube Houser were arrested on the strength of damaging circumstantial evidence. The two were examined before Judge Crane and bound over to await action by the grand jury. More White-Chinese violence, almost unheard of in earlier years in Montana, occurred later that year when the *River Press* reported, "Chinaman Hong, who assaulted a man the other day with deadly weapons, two beer bottles and a tack hammer, was bound over by Judge Luke in the sum of \$500 to appear before the grand jury. Hong is congratulating himself over the fact that in his excitement he did not make the fatal mistake of hitting his man with two bottles of Benton China whiskey. If this had occurred he is satisfied he would have gone to jail without benefit of bail, on a charge of murder in the first degree. As it is Hong furnished bail and is holding just as good hands as ever in the great American game of poker."

In 1905 The *Great Falls Leader* carried a humorous story about the "Resignation of Chinese Cook" in 1887. The *Leader* wrote, "As one of the souvenirs of the old army post at Fort Shaw, which was abandoned by the war department for such purposes a number of years ago, Mr. F. Geo. Heldt, who during the days of that post was situated there as a member of the J. H. McKnight company and was in charge of its business at that place, retains a letter which was written by a Chinese cook employed by the company in its restaurant at the post. The latter complains of the methods by which the man in charge of the restaurant, Mr. Ferg, conducted the place. The cook was able to read and write in English, but the letter which he addressed to Mr. McKnight was so peculiarly constructed that it is evident the writer made use of a dictionary and employed words far beyond his grasp to express himself. The letter [which may drive you batty] follows

'November 10th, 1887, Fort Shaw, Montana.

Messrs. McKnight.

Dear Sir

I am very gratefully to you and every gentlemen and ladies, so kindness, and so nice place to work for. I am very glad to have it, but Mr. Ferg so grudge and manifest at frequently make me very hard to stay, the only trouble he is, but I tend to the place never had any not well of it and did to try how I possible, to do all boarders satisfy and rejoice. just work at every things take what they want whole day I never say a word and continually the meals in time and the morning he get up at 7 o'clock or half past 7 and take his breakfast then he way out and I wait on the table, some day in afternoon he went out to supper time nor come back and I wait on also, never speak a word to him. I suppose probably was a dutition, and some times may be I feel not well, he will say I get made and since in last Sunday morning make some cocoa for breakfast to boil over sat on the stove keep warm, then he take a cup

put some cool milk on it and put little cocoa to it mix up and he say what is so cold, and I say the cool milk make so if put some ice on it more cold too and he just so fierce and he say G____ d_____ wish to hold a log wood to lick me, so bottom and speak so many nonsense. I could not stay with and so for I refuse my place in 15th this month. If he was a good man I will stay a long time and when I go will send a good man to take my place before I way, but he was such circumstances I prefer not to stay. I am very sorry to say. I use to explication what do I be, and he was so highton and so lazy. on to do any work then. So and so I let to know

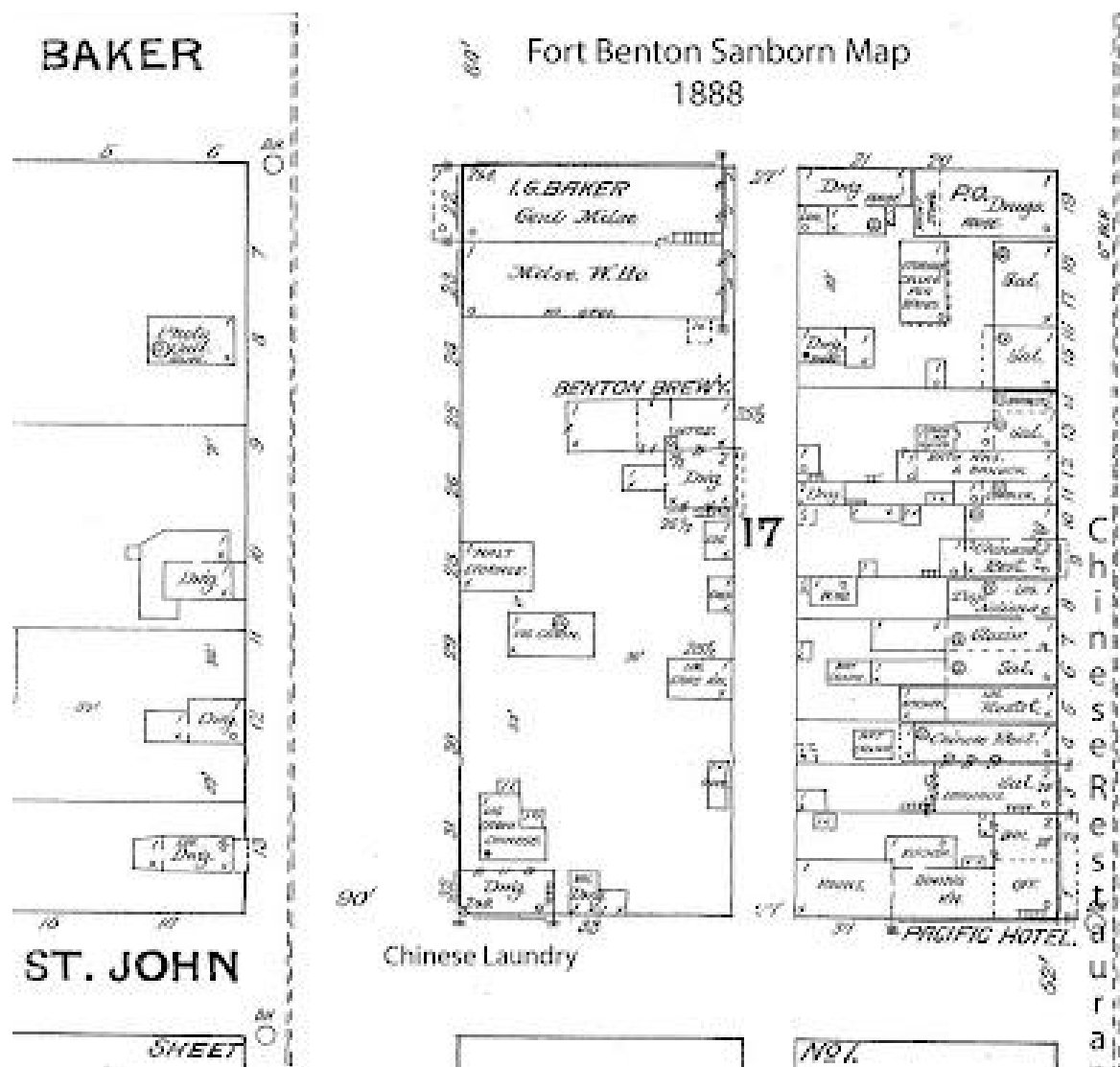
Yours respectfully servant
AH WAI'

At the bottom of the letter was the notation of Mr. McKnight, made before sending the letter back to Mr. Heldt at Fort Shaw, which read as follows: "What is the matter with the Chinaman?—if Ferg is not attending to his business better stir him up."

Worden P. Wren recalled another incident involving Chinese burial bones in early Great Falls, and his story was written in Great Falls Yesterday.

"Murphy-Maclay and Co. were agents for the stage line to Lewistown and had a quantity of bedding and other things in the basement awaiting shipment elsewhere. Some of it got wet, so Mr. Wren had the store porter take a coal oil lamp to the cellar, sort out the packages, and throw in the river any that were badly damaged. The porter asked what should be done with one box he found. Mr. Wren told him to open it up and see if it was of any value. In the box were Chinese papers, incense, Chinese candies, paper covered with Chinese writing, and at the bottom, a skull. The articles were returned to the box, and Joe McKnight of Fort Shaw brought a Chinaman to the store to interpret the writing. A Chinese had been murdered at Lewistown—knocked in the head with an axe—and the remains were to go to China via San Francisco, for burial. Mr. Wren wrote Chinese headquarters in San Francisco telling them a box was held here awaiting money for express from Lewistown to China, but no reply was ever received to the letter so the box was taken to the warehouse and put on the crossbeams where it stayed for five years. Some boys found it, took it down, and no one knows what eventually became of the poor Chinaman's remains."

The absence of the 1890 U. S. Census [long ago destroyed by fire] precludes detailed analysis of the Chinese in Choteau County at that time. Some insight into the Chinese community in Fort Benton in the late 1880s comes from licenses paid and issued by the Choteau County treasurer during 1889. Wun Ling held both gaming and saloon licenses, while Hop Ling and Chin Hin held gaming licenses. King Faun held licenses to operate both saloon and gaming. Wah Soo operated a laundry, and Wah Sing held both saloon and gaming licenses. Sing Lee owned both a laundry and a restaurant. Wong Quot bought the Enterprise Restaurant from Sing Lee, while Sam Lun ran the White Elephant on Front Street.



Chinese Section of Fort Benton in 1888 with two Chinese restaurants on Front Street and a Chinese Laundry near today's Hagen Building. Sanborn Fire Insurance Map 1888.

The *River Press* made clear the sentiment of much of the Benton community in April 1891, editorializing “We understand that a Chinese resurrection will take place here next Saturday. The remains of a Chinaman, who died here several years ago, will be exhumed, his bones carefully secured and polished up—even to the smallest bone in the body—when they will be carefully packed, in the smallest square box that will hold them, and sent back to China. These people—the Chinese— will not allow even their bones to rest in American soil. They are aliens alive and aliens dead, and have nothing in common with our people. It would be better for them and better for our people if every one of them could be sent back within the next twelve months to their own land.”

Part III: The Benton Chinese Persevered and Worked On

Throughout the 1890s the Chinese in Fort Benton and Choteau County grew in numbers and persevered. In June 1891 an unusual marriage license was issued in Fort Benton for Lee Pack Foet, “formerly of China, and Miss Long Hair, a native American, one of the first families of the Gros Ventre reservation.” The bride, Miss Longhair, 19 year-old daughter of Gros Ventres parents Bad Dog and Nice Woman, married 22 year-old Lee Pack Foet, son of Lee Foet. The wedding took place in Chinook, then part of Choteau County, with Justice of the Peace William T. Richey officiating and his wife, Fannie Richey, and Chinese Sum Land witnessing the ceremony. Lee Pack Foet lived at Fort Belknap at the time.

While sentiment was hardening against the Chinese statewide, their number in Fort Benton and the new towns of Havre and Chinook was increasing. This was due in part to active use of the old Whoop-Up Trail for smuggling operations. On the 5th of August 1891, lightning struck and killed freighter Gus Brede during a violent storm. The first report reaching Fort Benton was that Brede was hit by lightning while sitting on a wagon between two Chinese, who were unhurt. The *River Press* editorialized “It seems a great deal like discrimination for a streak of lightning to dodge nine Chinamen in order that it may get a whack at a smuggler. It may be, however, that of the ten evils it chose the lesser.” The *Press* went on to headline “He’ll Smuggle No More. Chinese Contrabands Will Have to Find Another Pilot [than August Brede] Across the British Line.”

Contrary to the Press’ rumor, the county coroner found that Brede was alone on the wagon seat with nine Chinese concealed in the wagon bed, being smuggled from Fort Macleod to Fort Benton. Eight of these men were captured and deported to China via San Francisco. The men were held in jail in Fort Benton for ten days, the mandatory time allowed in which to make an appeal. The ninth man, Sing Lee, proved that he was a legal U. S. resident formerly residing in Fort Benton and Fort Assinaboine, and consequently was discharged. Sing no doubt had been along to select locations to distribute his contraband countrymen. Brede clearly had a racket going for some time, smuggling whisky into Canada and returning with smuggled Chinese. Earlier he had been fined \$1,000 by the North West Mounted Police for smuggling whisky into Canada, and his outfit had been confiscated for smuggling Chinese into the United States by customs collector Jere Sullivan in Fort Benton.

The *Great Falls Leader* provided insight into these smuggling operations when it reported, "It has been common talk on this frontier for some time that the Chinese were coming into the British possessions to the north of us and were securing entry into the United States through Montana teams. The Celestials being well provided with money were able to pay handsomely for their overland trip and it is reported that \$75 per head [the price was elsewhere reported as \$15] is what it is worth to a teamster and guide who will undertake to pilot the Chinamen past the custom officers and deliver them at some point on the line of the railroad traversing the central portions of the state."

Testimony at the coroner's inquest provided further insight from Chinese witnesses. Brede with his human cargo hidden in the covered wagon had left Lethbridge five days before his death and reached a point just south of the Teton Bridge. When Brede was struck by the lightning, the Chinese panicked. Farmer Sam Heron, then stock inspector for Choteau County, arrived on the scene and discovered the tragedy. The Chinese had not yet recovered from their panic, and their superstitions were so great that Heron had trouble getting help to load Brede's body in the wagon.

In the aftermath of the Brede smuggling episode, Jere Sullivan, Collector of Customs for Montana and Idaho, asked for the right to appoint a force to patrol the Canadian line to prevent the influx of Chinese from Canada. Sullivan planned to establish a system similar to the mounted police of Canada with twelve to fifteen armed men. Sullivan argued "With all its force of mounted police Canada is unable to totally suppress all whisky smugglers who attempt to enter that territory, and much less can one man, with a couple of deputies, stay the host of Chinese who are constantly streaming across the border into Montana and Idaho. Once these Mongolians succeed in getting into this state it is next to impossible to prove that they are illegally here, or, in fact, to even find them." Sullivan's plan for Montana's Mounted Police did not happen.

By the dawn of the 20th century, the attitude in Fort Benton toward the Chinese was mixed with some advocates and many detractors. An insightful report by a special correspondent of the Great Falls Tribune is fascinating, "The ministers of Great Falls are losing a whole lot of good material by the dictum of the labor unions excluding Chinese. The Benton Chinese have begun to take kindly to the gospel and both the Episcopal and Methodist churches have flourishing China Sunday school classes. It is our custom to name Chinese servants after the man they work for and one can imagine a stranger's feelings hearing 'Charley Duer' or 'Doc Fields' or 'Tom Cummings' or some other prominent citizen instructed in the elementary principles of the sermon on the mount, etc."

The Chinese Exclusion Act, passed by Congress in the 1880s, restricted immigration and froze the Chinese community in place, preventing it from growing and assimilating into U.S. society. Another federal law, passed in 1891 required all Chinese to register and be photographed, and by early 1894 Fort Benton's photographer Dan Dutro recorded photographing 21 Chinese in Fort Benton, 18 at Fort Assiniboine, 14

at Havre, and 9 in Chinook. In February 1894 29 Chinese registered in Fort Benton and about 50 overall in the county.

Despite the setbacks, the Chinese in Benton worked on. Those running the laundry on St. John Street in Fort Benton opened a branch washhouse in Havre with two of their number moving to the railroad town to run the operation. The *Press* noted, "The gentle Mongolian has not only adopted the American customs, but is getting onto the 'branch' business." Lee Gee bought the popular Enterprise Restaurant from Sing Lee and continued the business "at the old stand." Lee Gee went back to China in October 1891 to visit relatives. By the following June, he was back in San Francisco, returning to Fort Benton in late July. In an 1892 ad in the *River Press*, Lee Gee & Company, proprietors of the Enterprise Restaurant, charged 50 cents for meals and 50 cents for lodging with board six dollars per week. His ad emphasized that the "popular restaurant" had fresh oysters in season. Later that year the Chinese laundry on St. John was gutted by fire although a week later Joseph Milligan was repairing the building owned by G. F. Deletraz.

Poor construction and deterioration of the wooden buildings occupied by several Chinese businesses seemed to plague them. In March 1894 the *Press* reported, "The 'devil' of which the superstitious Chinese complained so bitterly seems to have followed them to their new quarters. The Chinese left the Deletraz building two weeks ago, giving as their reason that the 'devil had set it on fire twice, and they moved into the Huston brick [building], corner St. John and Main [probably the first part of the Hagen block], where they again started a laundry. At about one o'clock Tuesday morning the large frame wash room adjoining the brick was noticed to be in flames, as was also the log house used as sleeping apartments by the Chinese. The flames quickly communicated to the main building, but were gotten under control by the hose company before much damage was done to the brick structure. The wooden buildings were a total loss."

In April 1895 the Chinese community went out to the cemetery one morning and left a supply of cigars, candles and other luxuries on the graves of their departed countrymen. The *Press* reported "Some irreverent American small boys will probably appropriate the mementoes before the resurrection of the dead, this being the result of such proceedings for some years past." That same year the *Press* reported, "One of the meanest jokes we have heard of was recently played in this city upon a Chinese cook who is also running a chicken ranch. A party made nightly raids on the Chinaman's hen roost, and then turned the plunder over to the heathen to be dressed and cooked, and up to date has eluded detection."

Only a few letters have been found from or to the Chinese in north central Montana. When Fred C. Campbell became Superintendent of the Fort Shaw Indian Industrial School in 1898, he brought along Joe Ling to cook in his household. Although the Campbells departed Fort Shaw in 1908, Joe Ling stayed on with new Superintendent John B. Brown. In 1910 F. C. Campbell sent a remarkable letter to his long-time Chinese cook, "Dear Joe," urging him to come cook for Campbell at the Fort Peck Agency,

and concluding “A great many of your friends down this way have been inquiring if you are coming. I feel sure you will like the work and the people.” Overall, the letter read like correspondence between two friends, perhaps not surprising since F. C. Campbell proved over several decades to be a strong advocate for Native Americans in Montana.

Another fun and fascinating letter was sent by the smuggler Sing Lee at Fort Leavenworth October 28, 1898, to Charles E. Conrad. The letter reads, “Dear Sir I have send Hung letter to him nearly a months ago but still have no answer come to me yet. I want to know that you have hear from him yet? If you can not find him and if you want a good cook I will get you one. I left Montana about five years I did not make enough of any thing. I am hardly could make my living here if there is any things that I could do to make living there please let me know? Yours truly [signed Sing Lee]” Perhaps this letter explains why Sing Lee was augmenting his income by helping smuggle his fellow countrymen into Montana—he needed the money.

It is interesting also to note that African American J. P. Ball photographed Tu Hang, C. E. Conrad’s Chinese cook in the late 1890s. Perhaps the same man, Charlie Hung, also cooked on ranches in the area at this time.

The Chinese presence in Fort Benton continued and in June 1899 Wing Lung & Company opened a new laundry on Front Street next to the Owl Barber Shop. The next February a couple of Chinese opened a restaurant in the Magnolia Saloon building, next to Thielbar Brothers. By June 1900, 39 Chinese resided in the Fort Benton, and were operating washhouses, restaurants, the ever-present opium dens, and were in demand as gardeners and as cooks on area ranches. Ling Wock cooked at the Culbertson House, and Gee Ak and Lee Sam were partners in a laundry employing six other Chinese. Aum Lum cooked for Thomas Clary, while Frank Lee Hung operated as a silk and tea merchant. Gee Lee with brothers Lung Lee and Him Lee and partner Poy Lee operated a restaurant in the Culbertson Block employing young Sing Lee who had apparently returned to Montana by then. Laundryman You Louie employed five other Chinese in his business.

Overall, Choteau County had 86 Chinese in 1900 with Havre having 25, Chinook 13, Big Sandy 4, Harlem 1, and Fort Benton 39. The new Teton County, by then split away from Choteau, had 16 Chinese residents. Great Falls still had no Chinese, strictly enforcing its self imposed exclusion policy although within Cascade County there were Chinese residing in Sun River and Belt.

Ranchers in the Sun River valley and Fort Benton areas sought the services of Chinese cooks as status symbols in the community. Four successful ranchers in the Shonkin range had Chinese cooks. John Woodcock employed young California-born 23 year-old John Charles as cook on his ranch. Charlie Hung, born in China in 1863, immigrated to the U.S. in 1879, and cooked for James Patterson. Ah Jim, born in China in 1863, immigrated to the U.S. in 1875, and cooked for W. P. Sullivan. Ah Ling cooked for Charles Lepley. Ah Ling was born in China in 1857 and immigrated to the U. S. as a boy of ten. In addition from photographs held in the Overholser Historical Research Center we know that Joseph A. Baker had Chinese cooks “Jim”

and “Toy” at various times, and that “China Boy” cooked at the Milner-Sullivan Ranch at Square Butte. Years later, Frances Ameilia Babcock recalled, “So many people in Fort Benton had Chinese cooks in those days. Mrs. Joe Baker, who was one of the Conrad girls, had a marvelous one, who used to send to China for their Christmas candy, nuts, fruit, and sauces.”

Fort Benton historian Jack Lepley recalls stories his mother Margaret told him about her childhood on the George and Louise Patterson ranch in the household with a Chinese cook. Their cook Charlie Hung would often laugh and tell young Margaret, born 1894, “when I go back to China, I take you with me.” They would all join in the laughter and treat his comment with the sense of humor believed intended. This went on for several years until Margaret was about seven years old and Charlie Hung decided to return to his home in China. One day Hung announced that he was ready to take Margaret with him. It began to dawn on Mrs. Patterson and Margaret that Charlie seriously wanted to “buy” Margaret and take her back to China with him. He was not at all happy when his offer was turned down, but Margaret Patterson remained on the ranch and later married Charles Lepley.

One studio photograph of a Chinese man in the collection of our Overholser Research Center has fascinating insight written on the back. The image taken by photographer John G. Showell shows “Lum,” no doubt Lum Crum, cook for Sheriff Thomas and Mary Clary. Also written is “Lum was one of about 5 Chinese taught English by Mrs. Buzzell, wife of Methodist minister. According to her daughter Esther Buzzell Turner, Lum and the others came to the Buzzell home in Fort Benton 1 or 2 evenings a week to learn to read and write English about 1900.” One can only imagine that this related to earlier reports that by this time some Chinese were attending church services in Fort Benton. Imagine Chinese Sunday School in the Methodist Church on Sunday mornings and English lessons at night at the home of the Methodist minister.

In March 1901 Joe Yu, a Chinese who had cooked for a number of parties in the Benton area during the previous ten years, died of pulmonary oedema. The funeral was held from Wolff’s undertaking rooms with “the local celestials turning out in force.” Joe Yu was about 50 years of age and had lived in the United States for over 25 years.

In October 1901 Lee Gee, who had owned the Enterprise restaurant most of the time for the past fifteen years, sold out to Lee Hing and left for China along with a party of other Benton Chinese including Gee’s two brothers. The *Great Falls Leader* covered their departure, “Speaking of the Chinese party that left Fort Benton last week for China, an old-timer who is well informed on such matters said that the three Lee brothers had been thrifty almost beyond belief. ‘They came here only six or seven years ago,’ said he, ‘and two of them ran a little restaurant while the other farmed a small truck patch, and yet I know that they took \$31,00 [sic apparently \$31,000] to China with them, and they made it here too, every cent of it. That is what I call thrift.’” The *Leader* concluded, “Lee Gee, the eldest of the trio, said that they intended to return to their native province in China, build houses and live the rest of their years in ease and plenty.”

That same month, October 1901, Mar Joe, a Chinese who had been in Fort Benton just a month was arrested by Customs Inspector E. A. Ringwald for violating the Chinese exclusion act. The U. S. Commissioner granted him ten days to prepare his defense. While Mar Joe remained in jail, it was discovered that he was wanted by Canadian authorities at Fernie, British Columbia, and they offered a \$500 reward for his arrest, although the nature of the crime was not known. After a ten-day delay, Mar Joe was escorted west by Inspector Ringwald and Deputy Marshal Wall for deportation to Canada.

More troubles arose from the Chinese exclusion act for a man in Fort Benton in January 1902, when Louis Kim, alias Ung Toy, was arrested. One evening Henry Hagen noticed smoke coming from under the sidewalk in front of the old Magnolia saloon building on Front Street, recently vacated by the St. Paul restaurant. Hagen could not locate any fire and despite a thorough wetting with a hose, the volume of smoke did not diminish. He then got Marshal Sneath, who finally located a trap door in a lean-to kitchen at the rear of the building. On raising it a Chinese man was found in the cellar, and a fire he had made on the floor accounted for the smoke. Kim had been working at Tong Chong's restaurant for about six months and was evidently prepared for quite a stay, as he had bedding with him in his cellar dwelling. Louis Kim was lodged in jail for ten days while Inspector Ringwald investigated. The finding was that Kim's paper had been issued in Buffalo, Wyoming in April 1893, but had not been re-registered that November when a new exclusion law was passed. Louis Kim was released and allowed to remain in the country, but he was fined \$8.50 for the bonfire. Louis Kim died in Fort Benton just five months later.

Sam Lee's laundry at the corner of Main and St. John's was closed for quarantine most of the month of February 1902 when clothing from Mrs. William Morrow's home had been taken there. The board of health discovered that young Harry Morrow had come down with a mild case of varioloid, smallpox in a previously vaccinated patient. By the end of the month all the clothing at the laundry had been fumigated and the quarantine lifted much to the relief of the hard-pressed laundry.

Photos:

(1) Identification Cards Similar to This One Issued in San Francisco Were Issued to Chinese in the United States during the 1890s. (Ken Robison Collection)

(2) Chinese in Choteau County Were Photographed during the 1890s. Lum Crum, cook for Sheriff Thomas Clary was photographed by John G. Showell. (Courtesy of OHRC)

(3) Charles E. Conrad's Chinese cook Tu Hang photographed by Famed Black Photographer J. P. Ball in Helena. (Courtesy of Thomas Minckler Collection)

(4) Chinese Gardens Area on the 1902 Sanborn Fire Insurance Map (Ken Robison Collection)

Part IV: “The End of the Fort Benton Chinese”

In one of the few positive articles on the Chinese ever to appear in the Great Falls Tribune, the January 4, 1893 edition carried this editorial:

“The Chinese have a beautiful custom which they religiously observe on New Year day—that of paying promptly every cent they owe. Perhaps the custom would be quite as beautiful for Caucasians as Chinese and a few days after New Year better than never.”

Meanwhile, the Great Northern Depot in Great Falls bore a sign that read, “China-man don’t let the sun set on you here.” On occasion the racist Great Falls Tribune even tried to stir up trouble for Chinese in Fort Benton. In March 1902 the Tribune was not only urging exclusion of Chinese from Great Falls but also headlining, “Chinks Must Go. Citizens of Fort Benton Will Establish a Steam Laundry and Force Them Out ... A movement is on foot here to put in a steam laundry at an early date. Investigations which have been made by a number of business men who are heading the movement show that the Chinese laundries here take in about \$1,000 per month, if anything a little over that sum. This is sufficient to make a steam laundry pay from the start, if its work is good and the charges reasonable ... Chas. H. Green has been placed in charge of the canvas of the town, and hopes to be able to report definite results in 10 days.”

The local Fort Benton “exclusion” operation drew a headline in the *River Press* “To Banish The Chinese” adding that the two Chinese laundries in Benton employed 15 to 18 men at different times of the year and urged “the manifest benefit to the town from having white labor employed in place of Chinese is patent to everyone.” Apparently nothing came of this scheme for the press quietly dropped the matter, and the Chinese laundries of Fort Benton continued for many more years.

Despite the growing anti-Chinese mood in the county, life for Chinese in Choteau County went on. The first Chinese marriage to occur in the county was solemnized at Havre when Mr. Y. P. Yup, a resident of Havre, and Miss Low Dey Gum, of Portland, Oregon were married April 7, 1902, by Reverend Stringfellow in the Presbyterian Church.

Benton law enforcement and courts played a relatively even hand with the Chinese in town during this period. Cornelius Manning assaulted a waiter in a Chinese restaurant

and was arrested. Judge Sullivan ordered Manning held to await the outcome of the Chinese man's injuries since it appeared possible that Manning had fractured the man's skull by a blow with a pitcher. In early May 1902, Marshal Sneath reacted to an altercation between the Chinese manager of Lee Hing restaurant and a white customer over the price of a meal. The customer drew a six-shooter, "giving him the best of the argument until the marshal appeared. Judge Sullivan imposed a fine of \$25. Later that same day Marshal Sneath was attracted to a shack next to the Sam Lee laundry "by weird and awesome howls which indicated murder, at the least. But after forcing the door he was greeted with the bland assurance: 'Dat all right. China boy got bellerake.'"

Ah Fong, resident of Fort Benton for almost 25 years, died in May 1902 with the *River Press* covering his funeral. "The funeral of Ah Fong took place this afternoon, interment being in Riverside cemetery for the present. Deceased has been a resident of this city most of the time for nearly a quarter of a century, but at one time had a restaurant at Havre. He was able to read and write English and was quite well off some years ago, owning some real estate here but during his sickness for two years past has been supported by his countrymen."

After the turn of the century and perhaps in reaction to the increased anti-Chinese sentiment in the community, news coverage about Fort Benton's small Chinatown and Chinese decreased in the *River Press*. Except for occasional arrests for registration lapses and rare incidents with the law, the Chinese became almost invisible in Fort Benton society. Even Chinese New Years passed with scant mention in the press.

In early February 1903, the *River Press* reported simply that Chinese New Year was being celebrated with "considerable enthusiasm by the Mongolian race. Besides witnessing their display of fireworks, all who pass their places of business are invited to partake of Chinese nuts, candy, and a cigar."

Ung Wing, the cook at the Overland hotel was arraigned before Judge Sullivan during the afternoon of February 10, 1903, on a charge of assault with intent to kill. The case was set for 2 o'clock but J. E. Stranahan, attorney for the defendant, asked for a postponement of 24 hours to prepare the case, which was granted on the receipt of a \$50 cash bond. The *River Press* reported, "It appears that orders (at the Overland) got mixed, which is done occasionally at the best regulated hotels, and as raw eggs and coffee cups accompanied by plates seemed to be the principal articles of the order that was mixed this morning, the cook and waiter made targets of each other with the order. The cook served the first of the order, this being a raw egg followed closely by a coffee cup, and the waiter returned a volley of cups and dishes, after which the cook took to the alley and left the order as it was. Judge Sullivan will rehash the served order tomorrow." The feuding parties came to court the next day. Ung Wing, the defendant charged with assault, was fined \$20. Luther Bain, who took the "poke" at the Chinaman, was fined \$7.

Fire was a constant threat in frontier towns. Fort Benton had wisely positioned water wells along Front Street (marked now by brick circles) and consequently had few fires there. Main Street and other parts of town were not so fortunate. In March 1903,

the Chinese laundry building near the sawmill at Fort Assinniboine burned down and about \$1,000 worth of soldier's laundry was destroyed.

Chinese New Year in Fort Benton in 1904 was celebrated February 17 with the usual festivities. In China the "years" number from the beginning of the reign of each emperor, and the present monarch, Quong Sue, was crowned about thirty years ago. One week later, in Havre an unidentified man was arrested for making a murderous assault upon a Chinaman. The man had been eating at a Chinese restaurant, and when asked to pay up he drew a knife and inflicted a wound on the Chinaman's head that required surgical attention.

Lee Sing was taken into custody in late February 1904, because he could not produce his residence permit. He was taken to Helena March 2 by a deputy United States marshal to have a hearing before the federal authorities. In April eight Chinese were arrested at Fort Assinniboine because they could not produce the necessary residence papers. They were to have hearings before U. S. Commissioner McIntyre, and probably were deported.

James Soo, a Chinese patient, died of consumption in mid August 1904, at St. Clare hospital. Soo was formerly a resident of Harlem. In September 1905, fire destroyed a Chinese log cabin on the corner of St. John and Main Streets.

In a sobering report in the Great Falls Tribune in November 1905 under the headline, "Back to China to Die. 'Many people have a mistaken idea about Chinamen,' said Deputy United States Marshal Young, who passed through Great Falls last night, en route from Helena to Port Townsend, Wash., where he will deport one of the yellow race.

"The impression generally prevails that the average Chink has plenty of money, or, at least, is seldom 'broke.' That is a mistake. It has fallen to me to arrest scores of Chinamen, principally upon the charge of living in this country without the proper credentials, in violation of the exclusion act. I have found, in a majority of cases, that they were short of money and frequently in destitute circumstances.'

"In company with Emil Schmidt, a Helena saloonkeeper, Deputy Marshal Young was on his way to Havre, where a Chinaman named Wah Lee was arrested several days ago, charged with not having papers in his possession to show that he was entitled to remain in Uncle Sam's domain.

"Wah Lee was on his way to the coast from Minot, N. D. Upon reaching Havre, a federal inspector ordered the almond-eyed traveler detained until such time as the case could be investigated. Lee appeared to be sick, and has since been able to sit up only at intervals.

"It is believed that Lee was taken ill at Minot and decided to return to his old home in the Flowery kingdom, probably to die. Deputy Marshal Young thinks that the Chinaman will be fortunate if he crosses the Pacific Ocean alive."

On May 29, 1907, Jim Charlie, proprietor of the O. K. restaurant in Havre, was assaulted in his kitchen early Sunday morning by Charles Woods, a Black American, and badly beaten up. The Chinaman was rendered unconscious and Woods then rifled

a trunk, stealing about \$35, and made his getaway. There were two assailants, one from whom watched the dining room while the other went back into the kitchen. Woods was captured a short time later by Chief Bickle. No money could be found on him.

Lee Sing had escaped deportation in 1904, and was now a gardener, when he was arrested and required to pay a small fine for selling the ever present opium in 1907.

Across the Medicine Line in Canada, riots occurred in Lethbridge against the Chinese in December 1907. A dispatch from Lethbridge reported:

“Because they believed that a prominent citizen had been murdered in a Chinese restaurant, 1,500 men raided the Oriental quarter late Christmas night and left a wreck behind.

“Restaurants and laundries were smashed; doors and windows and entire fronts of buildings were reduced to splinters.

“The regular police of the town were powerless and a brigade of mounted police had to be called out to quell the riot.

“It was just after 9 o’clock that the mob began to form.

“The story had got abroad that Harry Smith, one of the best known ranchers of the cattle district of which the city is the center, had been fatally wounded in a restaurant.

“Curiously enough, neither Smith nor anyone else had been hurt, but even the police were misled by the tale, and two Orientals were placed under arrest and charged with his murder.

“An indignant mob gathered opposite the eating house and there was talk of lynching.

“Suddenly some one threw a rock that smashed a front window. In a moment the crowd was beyond control.

“Bricks and stones were hurled and when the doors had been broken the tables and chairs and dishes inside were smashed.

“The Columbia and Alberta restaurants were literally wrecked. What could not be conveniently smashed by the few who could get inside was passed out to the street to the howling mob in waiting and there demolished.

“At 10 o’clock a detachment of the mounted police appeared and the crowd scattered. Hundreds of the rioters merely shifted the scene of the pillage. Three blocks away, opposite the Arlington hotel, they cleaned out another Chinese restaurant and mishandled two Orientals who were captured within.

“Mayor Galbraith and Magistrate Townsend both addressed the mob and urged it to disperse, and as all possible damage had been done, it obeyed.”

In late 1908 the Enterprise Restaurant was still operating under a succession of proprietors, Lee Gee in October, Lee Shone & Brother in November, and Lee Hong & Company in December.

In late January 1909, the *River Press* barely mention Chinese New Year saying only, "The Chinese residents of this locality are celebrating their New Year today, the festivities being of the usual kind."

Later that year the *Press* reported, "A Chinese cook, who was known by the name Charlie Kong and who has been employed by various residents of this vicinity, was found dead in his room this morning by one of his fellow countrymen. The deceased had been on the sick list the past three weeks, and death is supposed to have resulted from pneumonia."

The old time Chinese were dying off. In December 1909, Ah Que, the Chinese who has made his home in Armington for so many years, died Tuesday night, December 7th. He was an old timer in this part of the country having lived in Fort Benton, Neihart and Armington for the last 30 years. The remains were taken to Helena by John Gray where burial will be made.

By 1910 the Chinese presence in Chouteau County had decreased to 40 with just 12 in Fort Benton, 18 in Havre, 2 in Chinook, 6 at Harlem, 1 on the lower Teton, and 1 on Eagle Creek. Dick Lee, a 49 year-old single man born in China and in the U.S. since 1876 served as cook on a ranch near Eagle Creek, probably the McMillan Ranch. Lewis Luna, a 63 year-old man born in China and in the U.S. since 1865 worked as cook on the sheep ranch where Charles Schwandt was manager.

In September 1910, the *River Press* headlined, "Attempted to Commit Murder. A man who gives his name as John Smith, and who has been employed in the Grand Union hotel kitchen as dishwasher, was arrested by the city marshal Sunday morning on a charge of attempting to commit murder. The prisoner is alleged to have assaulted a Chinese cook, generally known by the name of Toy, apparently without provocation. "The victim of the assault was struck several times with a cleaver, one of the blows fracturing the skull and causing a wound that may have serious results. He is under the care of a physician, and in the event of death the prisoner will face a charge of murder."

In mid November, the jury term of the district court opened, with the first criminal case of the term being that of John Smith, the defendant charged with assault with intent to kill. The alleged assault took place in this city in September, the victim being a Chinese cook named Lee Chung."

The trial progressed as reported in the Press, "The trial of John Smith, accused of a murderous assault upon a Chinese cook employed at the Grand Union hotel was in progress in the district court today, William Toy, of Helena, acting as interpreter during part of the testimony. The latter was to the effect that there had been no trouble between the men, and that the assault was without provocation. The defendant, in testifying on his own behalf, declared he had no knowledge of striking the Chinaman with a cleaver, his mind being a complete blank as to the incident. The case was given

to the jury at a late hour this afternoon.” The jury in the case of John Smith returned a verdict of guilty, and sentence was pronounced: “John Smith, convicted of assault in the first degree, was given a sentence of eight years.” Despite the trend toward increased violence against the Chinese, they continued to receive even-handed justice in Chouteau County courts.

Chinese New Year January 1911 was ushered in at midnight by the usual firing of firecrackers, and for two days the Celestials kept open house, entertaining their friends with various kinds of Chinese delicacies.

For the first time since the passage of the bankruptcy law in 1910, a Montana Chinese took advantage of its provisions. In December 1911, Charlie Wang Luk, proprietor of the Chicago cafe at Havre, filed a petition for bankruptcy in the federal court at Helena. The Chinaman gives his liabilities at \$589.50 and his assets at \$1,280, the greater part of which, however, are of doubtful value.

The local Chinese residents celebrated their New Year February 1912 in the usual quaint style Saturday, this celebration probably being the last of a series that dates back hundreds of years. It has been the custom in China to regulate their calendar by the changes of the moon, making 360 days in the year, but under the new form of government recently adopted it is believed this will be changed to the Julian calendar.”

Lee Kim, a Chinaman against whom the county attorney had filed a charge of assault in the first degree, and who has been held in jail about six months, was allowed to plead guilty to assault in the third degree. In view of his long confinement in jail the court fined the defendant \$150, which was paid.

In 1917 the *River Press* carried advertisements for The Enterprise Restaurant, which was still in business on Front Street with Quan Shol, Proprietor. Jack Lepley remembers hearing that as a boy George Veilleux and other boys “explored” the basement of this building to find a series of upper and lower bunks arranged for opium smokers in this very old opium den. Today, this is today’s the Liquor Store portion of R J’s Toggery.

In January 1919, the Great Falls Tribune reported, “Noted Bar Goes to Chinese Firm. Old Havre Saloon’s taxidermy specimens to Be Retained; Cafe Changes Hands.

“The Mint saloon building, owned by C. W. Young, has been leased until February 15, 1924, by Wong Kim, Wong Sam and William W. Lee, a firm of Chinese residents of Havre who now operate the California cafe, and they will take possession on or about February 15. It is their intention to remodel entirely the interior, but retain the present fancy decorations and famous specimens of taxidermy of which Mr. Young was always very proud. In Havre’s palmy days the Mint was considered the finest bar in the city and the new proprietors are to pay a monthly rental of \$225 for the building.”

Even the new town of Geraldine had a Chinese resident. Lou Wong came to Geraldine from Lewistown to open a laundry. In November 1919, Lou Wong died in his laundry in Geraldine. His body was taken back to Lewistown where a funeral was held. His short obituary reported that Wong was an old man who was well known in both Montana and Utah.

Montana attitudes toward the Chinese ranged from total exclusion in Great Falls to toleration in Helena, Butte, and Fort Benton. The prevailing feeling in Fort Benton seemed most influenced by economic conditions and by 1920 Chouteau County homesteads was suffering hard times. By then the Chinese population in Fort Benton had declined to six, although they were still in demand as cooks. In that year young 27-year-old China-born Owen G. Fat owned and operated a restaurant on Front Street with Lew Shu as cook. This restaurant was located in the Culbertson House block, between Black American Peter Burnett's shoe repair shop and Japanese-American Tommy Matsumoto's restaurant. Matsumoto, born in Japan in 1874, had come to the U. S. in 1900, and operated the Club Café on Front Street for about twenty years before moving to Great Falls to open the popular Club Cafeteria on Central Avenue.

Two other Chinese residents in Fort Benton in 1920 were Chow Heery, who operated a restaurant on Front Street and elderly 75-year-old Tom Mun, who served as cook at Jere Sullivan's popular Choteau House hotel. The final two Chinese resident in Fort Benton were young American-born Chinese, Wong G. Ham and Young Yen, who were the cooks at Charles Lepley's Grand Union Hotel.

In January 1922, a fire that was caused by hot ashes dumped near a wooden fence would have developed into serious proportions had it not been for prompt action by Henry Hagen about 3:00 o'clock Tuesday morning. The blaze was discovered by one of the tenants of the Hagen block who gave the alarm, and when Mr. Hagen reached the scene of trouble in the rear of the Chinese restaurant, the flames were creeping toward a block of frame buildings that it would have been difficult to save.

The last Chinese in Fort Benton operated the Quan Café until February 1923, when cook Wong Ming hung himself. As reported in the *River Press*:

"Wong Ming Hangs Self. Wong Ming, cook at the Quan Café hung himself sometime during Tuesday night or early Wednesday morning. Upon opening up Wednesday morning, the proprietor, Tom Mum, noted Wong's absence from his accustomed job and went upstairs to call him and upon opening the door found him, hanging from the door casing. Wong had driven a nail into the casing and used a small rope to carry out his purpose. No cause is known to exist for his act, more than that he was of a morose disposition and was given to times of despondency. He came here from Butte about two years ago and was 23 years of age. The body will be taken to Butte Thursday for burial, relatives of the Chinaboy living there.

"Tom Mum, who has conducted the Quan Café during the past few years, came here about eight years ago. He has decided to close the restaurant for the present at least and will go to Butte where he will secure employment. Mr. Mum is well liked and will be greatly missed by his patrons."

Another perspective on this incident came from the Great Falls Tribune under the headline, "Cook Scolds Helper For Absence From Tasks But He Only Shivers In Answer; He Talks to Dead Man.

“Wong Ming, cook’s helper at the Quam restaurant here, was not on hand to help prepare breakfast Wednesday morning. The cook stormed around a while, did some of the odd jobs Wong was supposed to do, then went to Wong’s room fully determined to give the late sleeper a large fragment of his mind.

“Wong was standing just inside his room when the cook opened the door. He appeared to be shivering violently, a fact which the cook credited to the cold weather. All the cook said may not be translated here, but in substance his remarks were to the effect that Wong could warm himself by getting down into the kitchen and rustling about a fit.

“Wong made no reply, but kept on shivering. Thoroughly exasperated, the cook attempted to grab him by the arm. With the touch, Wong floated away from him a little ways and seemed to sort of stay suspended in the air. The cook was conscious of a prickling feeling along his spine, but he needed help in the kitchen. With a silent appeal to his ancestors, he tip-toed closer to Wong and this time took a grip on Wong’s arm that no shiver could break.

“Wong tumbled in a heap at the cook’s feet. Sometime during the night he had mounted a chair, driven a nail into the casing above the door, attached one end of a small rope to the nail and the other to his neck, kicked the chair away. He had been suspended, his feet just off the floor, when the cook opened the door and set the body to “shivering.” The cook did not notice the rope until the body fell.

“Employees of the restaurant say that Wong was in a cheerful mood when he finished up his work the night before and retired. His father and brother live in Butte, and it is expected that the body will be taken there for burial.”

Speculation at the time indicated that Wong Ming was hanged to scare-off the remaining Chinese in the town. Although never proven, the incident led Manager Tom Mun and staff to close the café the same day and leave for Butte. This sadly ended the era of the Celestial Kingdom in Fort Benton.

Despite the ending of the Chinese presence in Fort Benton in 1923, that was not the last word. The real ending appears to be the return of a Chinese man to the town about four years later, in 1927. Wally Morger, who was four years old at that time and the only son of the Fort Benton Town Marshal Earl Morger, remembers that a Chinese man named Chow Hoy approached Marshal Morger and asked if he would be interested in buying his home. The house had been built in 1912 in the Delatraz addition, and Chow Hoy had bought it in 1917. Chow Hoy wanted \$500 for the house and four 35 ft. by 120 ft. lots. He indicated that the ethnic situation in town directed against the Chinese had fomented threats against him, a sentiment not unique to Fort Benton.

Marshal Morger approached his two uncles, Ed and Henry Davis, merchants in town, and managed to secure the money to seal the deal. Although the house was a small one bedroom, one bath home, it was well built and remains in the family today. Randy Morger purchased the home, at 1810 Franklin Street, three years ago. Wally concluded his story by saying, "The home holds many special memories for the Morger family." To which we might add, the early Chinese on the Upper Missouri left many memorable stories we can all enjoy.

Sources

- U.S. Census
- Great Falls Yesterday, p. 12
- Benton Record Weekly 20 Sep 1978
- BRW 13 February 1880
- BRW 27 February 1880
- BRW 19 March 1880
- BRW 2 Jun 1881;BRW 16 Jun 1881
- BRW 18 August 1881
- BRW 23 February 1882
- BRW 16 March 1882
- BRW 23 March 1882
- BRW 17 August – 14 September 1882
- BRW 5 October 1882
- BRW 12 October 1882
- BRW 2 June 1883
- BRW 25 August 1883
- Fort Benton River Press Weekly 2 April 1884
- FBRPW 3 September 1884
- FBRPW 4 February 1885
- Great Falls Tribune Weekly 26 Dec 1885
- FBRPW 20 Jan 1886

- FBRPW 24 Feb 1886
- FBRPW 15 January 1887
- FBRPW 16 Nov 1887
- FBRPW 8 April 1890
- FBRPW 8 April 1891
- FBRPW 24 Jun 1891
- Great Falls Leader Daily 6 August 1891
- FBRPW 10 Feb 1892
- FBRPW 20 Jul 1892
- FBRPW 12 August 1891
- FBRPW 26 August 1891
- FBRPW 29 June 1892
- GFTD 4 Jan 1893
- FBRPW 21 Feb 1894
- FBRPW 6 March 1894
- FBRPW 3 April 1895
- FBRPW 28 August 1895
- FBRPW 4 Feb 1900
- FBRPW 27 Feb 1900
- FBRPW 20 Mar 1901
- FBRPW 2 Oct 1901
- FBRPW 16 Oct 1901
- Great Falls Leader Daily 24 Oct 1901
- FBRPW 29 Jan 1902
- FBRPW 5 Feb 1902

- FBRPW 26 Feb 1902
- GFTD 29 March 1902
- FBRPW 2 Apr 1902
- GFTD 7 Apr 1902
- FBRPW 9 Apr 1902
- FBRPW 30 Apr 1902
- FBRPW 7 May 1902
- FBRPW 14 May 1902
- FBRPW 4 Feb 1903
- FBRPW 11 Feb 1903
- FBRPW 25 Mar 1903
- FBRPW 17 Feb 1904
- FBRPW 24 Feb 1904
- FBRPW 2 Mar 1904
- FBRPW 13 Apr 1904
- FBRPW 17 Aug 1904
- GFTD 3 Nov 1905
- GFLD 4 Nov 1905
- GFTD 30 May 1906
- GFTD 30 Dec 1907
- GFLD 11 Dec 1909
- FBRPW 14 Sep 1910
- FBRPW 16 Nov 1910
- FBRPW 23 Nov 1910
- FBRPW 24 Feb 1912

- FBRPW 31 Jul 1912
- GFTD 20 Jan 1919, p. 7
- GFTD 13 Nov 1919
- FBRPW 4 Jan 1922
- GFTD 15 Feb 1923
- FBRPW 21 Feb 1923
- Ltr Sing Lee to C. E. Conrad 28 Oct 1898, Small Collection 185 Mansfield Library,
U of M

Appendix: More Examples of Anti-Chinese Sentiments

Chinese Labor

The Semi-Weekly Miner (Montana), September 19, 1885. <mthspublic.newspapers.com/article/the-butte-weekly-miner/209033719/>

The circular against the employment of Chinese labor, circulated in Butte on Tuesday, has been since the cause of much comment, pro and con. That Chinese labor is inimical to white, free labor is acknowledged by all. That the Chinese now in America are simply the creatures of the Six Companies and in effect slaves is true. That these people are of a low caste, vulgar and vicious and addicted to disgusting habits is known to all who have observed their customs. They are spreading vice and misery among our own people and generally are most undesirable additions to our population. For these reasons their importation should cease and those now here should be returned to China as speedily as possible. They are imitative, servile, sober and industrious and hence make good servants, especially in a country where white domestic labor is scarce. In Butte, for instance, they almost monopolize positions in hotels, restaurants and laundries and such other places as are usually occupied by ladies. Their reliability and industry make them favorites as cooks— drink and gambling making the white man “mighty unsartin.” To do away with this labor will amount almost to a revolution. It will be very difficult to find white people to replace them. The only way it could be done would be by importing help: That will take time.

There has long been a growing feeling that such a demand as is contained in the circular referred to would eventually be made by the workingmen of the camp and hence it did not occasion much surprise. The prevailing opinion, however, is that the time given is too short and that the threat to resort to violence contained in the concluding paragraph of the circular is a mistake.

The community is not in a mood to submit to violence. Peaceful measures alone should be resorted to. Violence will accomplish nothing. The law may be trampled upon for a day, but it will exert itself eventually and right the wrong. The strong arm of the Government will always interpose itself between order and disorder, and it is

too powerful to be resisted. Anarchy will not be tolerated and rioting will be quelled, no matter how serious its aspect.

In 1880 a Chinese riot was precipitated upon Denver. Several Chinese were murdered, many were beaten and more were robbed. The Sabbath before the Presidential election of 1880 Denver was a perfect pandemonium and the city was in the hands of a wild, irresponsible, resistless mob, bent upon rapine and murder. Before night that madstrom of madmen was put under control and the ring leaders placed in jail. Thousands of lives and millions of dollars of property had been jeopardized and no good results secured. The Government was compelled to pay several hundred thousand dollars in indemnities, and unusual precautions were taken to protect the Chinese in the city in the future, they being, under the present treaty, the wards of the Nation, who is responsible for their treatment.

No good citizen, no true friend of labor, will incite men to such acts. No deeds of violence should be countenanced by the Knights of Labor, under whose auspices this crusade in Butte is alleged to have been inaugurated. The order cannot afford to lend itself to such acts. It cannot afford to have rapine and murder laid at its doors. Let this slave labor, this very objectionable element, be got rid of by peaceable means, but all true men will counsel against violence and disorder.

Tonight's meeting

Source: The Daily Town Talk (Montana), Sep 30, 1885, vol. 1, no. 97, Page 1.
<mthspublic.newspapers.com>

A Few Reasons Why the "Chinese Should Go."

How to Accomplish Their Removal—Stop Patronizing Them—Their Habits, Traits and Character Discussed.

Butte, City, Sept. 30, 1885.

Editor Town Talk:

Apropos of the meeting of the Knights of Labor to be held this evening, I ask the use of your valuable space, to make a few timely suggestions in regard to the now all-absorbing question of the day:

There are but few if any in this city who have closely observed the degrading influence of Chinamen in their midst, and who have thoughtfully considered the effect of Chinese labor in its relation to the prosperity and happiness of a community that do not sanction the movement being inaugurated to rid Butte of the objectionable

element. The grounds upon which this movement is based are patent to every thinking mind. But in a newspaper article of reasonable length it is impossible to go over them all. A few of them may only be briefly stated. To come directly to the point at once, it may be stated in the first place that a Chinaman's religion, his traditions which have grown out of five centuries of paganism, and his habits of thought, of action and of life, stand in his way of becoming a citizen of this country. And not being a citizen of entertaining a desire to become one he has no end or object in life in common with our people. He is a "foreigner" in the most objectionable sense of the term. Foreign in tastes, foreign in habits, foreign in inclinations, foreign in thought, with no knowledge of our institutions, or of personal liberty and without a just appreciation of the value of either.

In the second place he is a slave or "coolie" whose labor is mortgaged to one of the great Chinese companies that brought him to this country. As such slave or coolie he is not permitted to invest in enterprises which create a permanent taxable wealth, the real support of our government. He is charged and bound to make and to save all he can, to account to the last farthing to his masters, to give them the lion's share, and to return with his pittance to the land that gave him birth. Hence he can neither build up a community nor add to its prosperity by the outlay of his gains. He is an absorber, not a creator of wealth.

In the third place, he is filthy in his habits and his surroundings, and, consequently, a breeder of loathsome, infectious diseases. He pollutes not only the physical, but the moral atmosphere. He is a debauchee of the lowest type. He introduced and established the death-dealing opium joints which have ruined the lives of thousands of the youths of the land, and brought unhappiness, desolation and death to the hearthstone of as many homes. He is a moral as well as a physical leper, and a stranger to purity and virtue in either sex.

In the fourth place, by his heathenish mode of living, by his ability, or rather willingness to subsist upon the cheapest and coarsest food, and to clothe himself with raiment which no civilized being would wear, he is able to underbid white or other labor and thus monopolize many industries and situations which should be pursued and filled by the men and women of our own country. He is crowding out white labor and filling the country with tramps and paupers and starving women and children. Every Chinese laundry-man, every Chinese cook, every Chinese servant takes the place of a white woman or a white man or a white girl. He robs many a family of bread, and God only knows how many poor girls are forced to lives of shame by reason of his occupying positions which, by right and by every obligation imposed upon us by humanity, belongs to her.

It is urged by some that it is impossible to find white or colored help to do some of the work performed by Chinamen. The assertion is not borne out by facts. Every town and city east of the Missouri river is in evidence against it. Every station of menial labor is filled by white or colored help just as it was filled before the Chinese coolies cursed this free land with their presence.

Again it is urged that the Chinese are docile, obedient and industrious, and for this reason they are preferable to white labor in menial stations. The proposition is not sound. The Tartars that we have in this country, and who are known here as Chinamen simply because they are subjects of China, are the most servile, slavish, spiritless and insincere race of people in existence. All their courage was stamped out of them by their conquerors ages ago. Their apparent docility is servility; their tractableness or obedience is that of the spiritless slave. With very rare exceptions their insincerity is as marked as their servility, for they are as ready to steal from you as they are to serve you. As for their industry they are like all other human beings. They will work when they are paid for it. Who ever heard of a Chinaman working for fun or for the love for work?

It is true the Chinese are imitative, and hence easily learn certain duties. They will stand being “blown up,” “jawed” at, kicked and cuffed about and submit to other indignities. But these are not qualities in help that should recommend their possessor to the consideration of the intelligent, conscientious housewife or landlord. Neither the refinement nor Culture of the day demands that domestics shall be devoid of dignity or self-respect. Laborers should be selected with reference to their ability and willingness to work, their integrity, their reliability, their intelligence, and with female help, their domesticity. When thus selected the Chinese will go of their own accord, for no one will contend that white labor answering to these requirements cannot be obtained in Butte. It may require an extension of time to get all Unit is needed here. If so, time should be granted.

The withdrawal of patronage from these people would be sufficient grounds for their quiet departure, which if practiced simultaneously by our citizens would have the desired effect, for when he finds no field of labor he quietly decamps. The assurance that good cooks, laundry men and servants generally can obtain employment in Butte at fair wages will bring all that are wanted here within a month. Let us give our own people a chance In the race for a livelihood. When that shall be done it will be time enough to give thought to the “heathen Chinees.” Until then let the watchword be “The Chinese must go”—peaceably go.

Anti-Chinese.

The Ted K Archive

Ken Robison

The Celestial Kingdom on the Upper Missouri

A series of frontier historical sketches by historians at the Joel F. Overholser

Historical Research Center in Fort Benton.

Oct 28 and Nov. 25 2009, 24 February, 28 July and 4 August 2010

The River Press (Montana). <fortbenton.blogspot.com>,

<mthspublic.newspapers.com> & <archive.org>

www.thetedkarchive.com