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## **Chinaman Go Home!: A Socioeconomic and Gendered Examination of the Anti-Chinese Movements of Portland, Oregon and San Francisco, California**

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LINFIELD COLLEGE HISTORY DEPARTMENT

# Chinaman Go Home!

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A socioeconomic and gendered examination of  
the anti-Chinese movements of Portland, Oregon  
and San Francisco, California

**Kali Ingerson**

**12/11/2012**

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## Introduction

Chinese immigrant communities did not function outside of American society but within it, creating a community that should not be defined as an ethnic ghetto but as an example of cross-cultural communication.<sup>1</sup> The relationship between Chinese immigrants and Euro-Americans was a rocky one as seen in the various Anti-Chinese movements that sprung up both in the years preceding and following the federal ban against Chinese laborers immigrating to the United States in 1882.<sup>2</sup> The Anti-Chinese movements were a direct response to the continued large-scale immigration of male Chinese laborers that started at the beginning of the gold rush in 1849.

While the Anti-Chinese movement was seen as a reaction to the development of Chinese communities, the Chinese communities in the cities grew due to both to the Anti-Chinese riots held in smaller towns and to the passing of the Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882.<sup>3</sup> Treatment of these Chinese immigrants in the city varied based on the cultural construction of the city itself. The cultural environment of the people who lived in the cities would dictate how they responded to the Chinese population. Euro-American's economic stability, social class and gender identity affected their perception of the Chinese population. While the perceptions of immigrants in the nineteenth century were hardly positive to the Euro-Americans in any city, the environment helped to shape the severity of the Chinese threat as perceived by the Euro-American population.

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<sup>1</sup> Marie Wong in her book *Sweet Cakes, Long Journey: The Chinatowns of Portland, Oregon* argues that Portland's Chinese community was not considered an urban ghetto in the traditional sense as Chinese and whites worked and lived alongside one another. This exemplifies the concept that these communities were interconnected in various ways.

<sup>2</sup> The first Chinese exclusion act was signed on May 6, 1882. While the act only limited immigration for 10 years, this exclusion act would be followed by several more that would limit Chinese nationals from immigrating into the United States until 1944. Information found in Percy Maddux, *City on the Willamette*, 94. Roger Daniels, *Asian America*, 60.

<sup>3</sup> While actual immigration did not increase, in the years of greater Anti-Chinese violence, the immigrants became more concentrated in the cities by migrating out of rural communities. The Chinese Exclusion act would essentially be renewed for another 60 years.

Despite the similarities between the cities of San Francisco, California and Portland, Oregon, the severity of the Chinese threat differed greatly as did the response to this perceived threat. The examination of San Francisco shows that the population was much more hostile to the Chinese immigrants than in Portland. Using the framework to analyze the cultural construction in Portland, research shows that the socioeconomic background of the city's inhabitants is the largest factor in analyzing race relations between Chinese and Euro-Americans.

The socioeconomic status of an individual living in the nineteenth century reflected not only economic realities but also cultural, specifically gender, expectations. The language used by anti-Chinese groups in California reflected not only economic insecurity but also insecurity of them performing their masculine obligations to themselves, their family and their community. Portland's population later spoke of the Chinese threat but in less hostile, more concrete terms of economic competition. The anti-Chinese groups in Portland were less influential than those in San Francisco because the socioeconomic construction of the city's inhabitants did not allow the Chinese to become a severe threat to the Euro-American inhabitant's livelihood or masculinity.

Socioeconomics, gender identity, and the values placed by individuals on occupations and race all refer to the culture of a specific environment. Culture is an all-encompassing phenomenon that silently influences our actions and perceptions. As a historian, one would be neglectful in not looking at this same phenomenon in a historical context. Underlining this cultural framework is economics, the way in which economic conditions respond to social behavior specifically in how masculinity is constructed. Using a framework like this to study Portland, Oregon in relation to the largest city in the West during the nineteenth century, San Francisco will highlight the importance of environment when conducting historical studies. The comparison aspect of this research serves the purpose of proving that the experience of these



Chinese immigrants was not universal. This study will not only add to the inquiry regarding Portland, a city not mentioned in many works regarding Chinese immigrants but will help to bring older studies lacking a cultural framework to the present.

### Secondary Literature Review

This cultural connection between race, socioeconomics and gender has not been discussed adequately in secondary literature regarding race relations between Chinese and Euro-American or the formation of the Anti-Chinese movement in the Western states. Only recently has work been published relating to the cultural constructions of these communities. Historical inclusion of Chinese immigration into modern US History did not occur until the latter half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. The 1990's brought with it a more focus view on the Chinese immigrants themselves, specifically women in the community. While useful for those wishing to create a more inclusive history, the focus on women in the community created an issue of its own in which men in the community were ignored. Specific to the Chinese Immigrant Communities, women in the community did not participate in the public sphere as women were kept inside or worked as prostitutes with little documentation. Due to the cultural restrictions placed on women, it seems backwards that works regarding life in the Chinese communities would focus exclusively on women and not men.

While the focus on women's experiences before men's may have been due to the emphasis on minority studies within history, the current trend historic inquiry allows for a more holistic view of the Chinese immigrants through the integration with other social sciences.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> The introduction of micro histories was a result of integration of Sociology and Anthropology into historical methods. The inclusion of men in these histories would draw on some of these theories but more importantly create a more accurate depiction of Chinese Community life in the United States as community life was predominantly a masculine realm due to cultural and demographic reasons.

Modern historical theory has deviated from examining the minorities (gender, race, and etc.) to analyzing the relationships individuals and groups. This relationship between the Chinese immigrants and the Euro-Americans can be analyzed through masculinity due to the cultural focus on men in both the immigrant community and in the frontier west.<sup>5</sup> The study of both San Francisco and Portland's position as a cross cultural environment will shed light on how race, gender and socioeconomic ideals are created and transformed.

With the theoretical framework for the study established, an examination of the environment is necessary. Research surrounding Chinese scholarship with specific emphasis on negative reactions to Chinese immigration is focused almost entirely on the Bay Area. The conclusions surrounding anti-Chinese protests in regards to vigor, stereotypes and reasons supporting Chinese exclusion can be tied to the culture surrounding the immediate area as specific environments bring their own perspective on issues. Examining the relationship between the Euro-American and Chinese communities in a different environment, specifically that of Portland, Oregon will test the theoretical framework. Underlying the research will be the anti-Chinese movements of the two cities and defined as perceptions or actions between Euro-Americans and Chinese immigrants during the height of Euro-American hostility toward Chinese immigrants during the 1870s and 1880s.

Deviating from the Bay Area when studying early Chinese American communities may seem difficult as it was the first stop for almost all Asian immigrants and was the most impacted area of the United States in regards to Chinese immigration.<sup>6</sup> While the Bay Area held the largest

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<sup>5</sup> For more on Chinese notions of masculinity see : Kam Louie, *Theorising Chinese Masculinity: Society and Gender in China*. New York: Cambridge University Press, 2002.

<sup>6</sup> This is due to the economic boom in California that was a direct result of the discovery of gold. The boom created a large labor shortage and high wages for laborers. Frank Soule et al., *the Annals of San Francisco*, 253.

concentration of Chinese immigrants in the latter half of the nineteenth century, it was not the only community affected by a large immigrant population. Oregon's early industry and California's racist legislation beckoned Chinese laborers to Oregon, both in the rural countryside and to the towns in the frontier. By the 1870's, Portland's Chinese community was second only to San Francisco and maintained a unique environment of its own.<sup>7</sup>

Jeff Pricco's examination of the Portland Chinese community in his Master's thesis *Homeless Strangers Among Us* had been invaluable regarding the research into Portland's Chinese population.<sup>8</sup> While Pricco argues that the two Chinese communities in San Francisco and Portland did development differently in the two environments, his focus on the labor statistics of the community does not provide a stable framework to examine the cultural components of racial interaction. His focus on social organizations in the community highlights different patterns of acculturation between the two cities.

While a more developed theoretical framework would have benefitted Pricco, this study will aim to enhance his findings. The analysis of race, gender and socioeconomics in the Portland Chinese immigrant community as a comparison to San Francisco will test the theoretical framework on different communities. Despite the differences between the two communities, in many ways they were connected to one another during the nineteenth century and developed an economic relationship with one another that encouraged the Chinese immigrants to migrate to Oregon with relative ease.

By examining different communities, the experiences of these Chinese immigrants are seen to be part of an interconnected society that fostered intercultural communications rather

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<sup>7</sup> Maddux, 83. Carl Abbott, *Portland*, 57.

<sup>8</sup> Jeff Pricco, *Homeless strangers among us: the Chinese community of Portland, Oregon, 1860-1900* (master's thesis, University of Oregon, 1978).

than victims of circumstance. The relationship between Chinese immigrants and American natives has a long and complex history resulting in the Chinese exclusion act. Through the examination of separate communities we can better understand the popular and political motivation behind the Chinese Exclusion Act, the cultural dynamic between immigrants and natives as well as paint a more collective picture of the Chinese-American experience that is too often muddled by stereotypes and assumptions. Assumptions that are more the product of racists in the Bay Area than grounded in truth about the Chinese themselves.

### Historical Context

Chinese immigration into the United States is considered to a part of modern US history as wide spread immigration did not occur until 1850, coinciding with the gold rush. Like with all immigrants, the decision to leave one's native land consisted of several push and pull factors. What caused them to leave China in the first place and why would they choose to come here? Briefly, the former will be discussed along with the state of American culture at the time of the nineteenth century. This historical context will highlight the importance of analyzing the communities through a cultural framework as the American West in the nineteenth century and circumstances revolving around Chinese immigration resulted from unique circumstances that cannot be understood through economics alone.

Throughout the centuries of Chinese Civilization, the Chinese subjects have kept to themselves for the most part being both sedentary and xenophobic; it is a highly unusual occurrence that thousands would emigrate from this country. What would have caused these people to leave their native country that bound them economically, socially and spiritually? The circumstances of widespread immigration are a result of a series of unfortunate events that encouraged the Chinese to leave and offered little incentive for them to stay. For the last several

decades, the population of China had grown at an exponential rate. This made the draught of 1847 and flooding in 1849 more devastating as it cause famine for thousands of Chinese citizens.<sup>9</sup> The population suffered from starvation, an increase of crime and sickness as a result. While the Chinese were suffering from these natural calamities, little was done by the Qing government to help these people in need. Disillusioned, the Southern part of China (Kwangtung) became a breeding ground for anti-Manchu sentiment and political unrest.<sup>10</sup> The largest rebellion became known as the Taiping Rebellion. The Taiping remain infamous in modern Chinese history as they formed an army that would wage battle against the Qing government for fourteen years, financially and politically devastating the Qing Dynasty, while taking twenty to thirty million lives.<sup>11</sup> The rebellion left the Kwangtung Province economically devastated and it comes to no surprise that many in this region of China would seek to emigrate as this is the region where nearly all Chinese immigrants who settled on the western coast of the United States would later come from.<sup>12</sup>

Immigration was not an easy decision to make as there were political, spiritual, emotional and economic consequences for the Chinese. Chinese citizens were forbidden to leave the country as it was considered traitorous.<sup>13</sup> Cultural values regarding family loyalty required the younger generation to take care of older relatives both financially and spiritually. Both of these considerations would have placed a heavy burden on the immigrant's minds.<sup>14</sup> As wives were

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<sup>9</sup>Gregory McConnell, "A historical geography of the Chinese in Oregon", 8.

<sup>10</sup> The Qing were of Manchu not Han descent and while the native population in China always disliked the idea of foreign or outside rulers, the famine and lack of political action in response to it, resulted in a resurgence of anti-foreigner (Manchu) feeling.

<sup>11</sup> McConnell, 9.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid, 6.

<sup>13</sup> The Chinese government at this time was being controlled by foreign Manchus who demanded loyalty from their Chinese subjects to ensure their political power. The ban on emigration was an old policy to prevent the development of an off shore community of political dissenters.

<sup>14</sup> Judy Yung, *Unbound Feet*, 2 and Huping Ling, *Surviving Gold Mountain*, 46.

also given the task to take care of the older generation, specifically their in-laws, women were discouraged from travelling with their husbands abroad. This would have caused great emotional distress for both parties as some men left without ever finding a way to return home.<sup>15</sup> Finally, the financial cost of travelling abroad was incredibly high requiring many families to sell whatever they had to finance one ticket. Chinese immigrants ventured to various parts of the globe and created overseas communities that barred few similarities to the home they just left.<sup>16</sup> However, a great number of them were drawn to the golden shores of California to find just that, gold.

In January of 1848, gold was discovered at Sutter's Mill in California and news spread rapidly to the Far East. Despite laws forbidding emigration and a deep responsibility to family, many poor peasants began to pack up their belongings and head towards California.<sup>17</sup> To these immigrants who crossed the Atlantic, the allure of "Gold Mountain" (California) as a means to support their starving family seemed too good to ignore.<sup>18</sup> Chinese immigrants began to come in large numbers to California as male sojourners hoping to strike it rich in the Gold Rush and later return to their families.<sup>19</sup> Due to the Gold Rush, San Francisco became these immigrants first stop in America, arriving by the hundreds.<sup>20</sup> Along with Germans and other European groups, the Chinese found themselves in the biggest city in the Western United States. The formation of a

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<sup>15</sup> The pain that these immigrants went through due to separation from family and being held on Angel Island where immigrants would be detained for long periods of time is shown through songs and poetry written by these immigrants in Marion K. Hom's *Songs of Gold Mountain: Cantonese Rhymes from San Francisco, Chinatown*.

<sup>16</sup> For more information on the construction of overseas Chinese communities see: Voos, Barbara. "The Archaeology of Overseas Chinese Communities." *World Archeology* 37, no.3 (2005) 424-439.

<sup>17</sup> McConnell, 8.

<sup>18</sup> The immigrants at this time were sojourners, and none had the intention of staying permanently in America.

<sup>19</sup> Jack Chen, *The Chinese in America*, 28. Sojourners unlike immigrants, have every intention of returning to their native land. This was the case for most American immigrants. In the context of this study, due to the focus on the Chinese community in America, I will use the term immigrant rather than sojourner.

<sup>20</sup> Data collected in Mary Coolidge's *Chinese Immigration*, 498 as seen in Jeff Pricco's *Homeless Among Us*, 11.

multicultural city in such a short time span would have severe implications on how the Chinese were perceived and interacted with the other ethnic groups.

### American West in the Nineteenth Century

Immigrants and Euro-Americans rushed to the west for a variety of reasons. During the nineteenth century the American west was a destination for thousands of migrants due to the land grants, gold rush and the symbolic escape it offered.<sup>21</sup> As modernization was taking its toll on the East coast, men looked to the west as an escape back to traditional life and masculinity. The mechanization of labor helped to alter traditional gender norms by separating family and work life along with making traditional skilled trades unprofitable.<sup>22</sup> Masculinity itself changed as it became more intertwined with the modern market economy; the traditional masculine characteristics of provider, producer and protector of family became more neglected in favor of business entrepreneur.<sup>23</sup>

Cities themselves were also becoming gendered through modernization through contemporary efforts to rid them of the vices that bonded the masculine world. As women became more publicly outspoken and politically active during the nineteenth century, the cities began to become feminized while the unsettled west offered “fantasies of male escape” as described by Kimmel.<sup>24</sup> Due to the desire to leave a feminized city, promotion through contemporary works and encouraged by the Gold Rush in 1849, men headed West in large numbers. The West became a masculine culture as seen in skewed sex ratios during the mid-nineteenth century. The large amount of Euro-American men, their involvement in the Anti-

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<sup>21</sup> The federal government in an effort to settle the West, were offering land to settlers who were willing to clear it in the West.

<sup>22</sup> Michael Kimmel, *The History of Men*, 20. This symbolic escape was seen as a response to industrialization according to Kimmel.

<sup>23</sup> Kimmel, 38.

<sup>24</sup> Kimmel, 23.

Chinese movement and the exclusion of Chinese women all promote the examination of the environment on the basis on gender identity.

### San Francisco's views on Chinese immigrants.

#### White/ Native Population of California<sup>25</sup>

1845	1850	1860
Approx. 8,000	70,795	233,466

San Francisco's growth and development directly preceding the Gold Rush helped to create the socioeconomic environment of the city that would later succeed in promoting nationwide exclusion. San Francisco was a small mission at best, before 1849. There were few people who could claim this part of the West as their home.<sup>26</sup> The discovery at Sutter's Mill altered the slow lifestyle of the Bay Area dramatically, attracting 15,000 people to the area between January of 1849 and June of 1850.<sup>27</sup> San Francisco, being the only port near the gold mines became a metropolis almost overnight.<sup>28</sup> People from all over the world were attracted to the area. It was mostly the laboring class of men who migrated, desperate for a chance to gain a small fortune.<sup>29</sup> The physical nature of the mining industry attracted more cheap labor, as these laborers wanted to strike it rich creating a more labor-friendly city.<sup>30</sup> Women were rarely seen in

<sup>25</sup> Data for 1845 was from Soule et al., *The Annals of San Francisco*, 129 and the data from 1850 and 1860 is from the US Bureau of the Census.

<sup>26</sup> According to Soule in *The Annals of San Francisco*, the white male population was 247 as of June 1847.

<sup>27</sup> Frank Soule, John H. Gihon, M.D., and James Nisbet, *Annals of San Francisco: The Annals of San Francisco, containing a Summary of the History of the First Discovery, Settlement, Progress, and Present Condition of California, and a Complete History of all of the Important Events Connected with its Great City: to which are added, Biographical Memoirs of Some Prominent Citizens* (New York, San Francisco, and London: D. Appleton and Company, 1854), 243.

<sup>28</sup> The mining area was about 130 miles inland but the shipping of goods, supplies and people for the mining towns can attribute to the rapid and continued growth of the coastal city of San Francisco rather than any of the mining towns.

<sup>29</sup> Karen Clay and Randall Jones, 1000.

<sup>30</sup> Soule et al., 253.



the town, resulting in a much skewed sex ratio. The absence of women had a psychological impact on the community as a whole.<sup>31</sup>

As soon the Chinese began coming to San Francisco, they faced hostility due to their race and cultural values. The large influx of immigrants from China, Europe, and the other regions of the United States offered chances for conflict to arise.<sup>32</sup> Institutionalized racism from the South did not leave Southern workers when they migrated to California resulting in hostility against the Native Americans, Mexicans and Chinese they encountered.<sup>33</sup> The Chinese as well as other foreign immigrants were subject to unfair mining taxes, but the Chinese in particular were victims of claim jumping, which kept Chinese workers from amassing the same kind of wealth as any white miner.<sup>34</sup> The Chinese also entered into other professions, but due to their status as aliens, their positions were low skill, low wage, and were often seen as feminine in nature.<sup>35</sup> Their roles as domestic servants, laundry men and boarding house keepers were deemed feminine by the Euro-American community due to the relationship it had with domestic responsibilities.<sup>36</sup> The Chinese association with feminine work would result in racial stereotypes of inferiority. They did not enter these industries as a choice but through necessity for work.<sup>37</sup>

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<sup>31</sup> Without many women, the West became known as a center of vice but more importantly, men became judged on their character and masculinity rather than social class and wealth.

<sup>32</sup> US Census Bureau tables 13 and 19. For more information regarding statistics on race in the gold rush see: Kevin Starr and Richard J. Orsi (eds.). *Rooted in barbarous soil: people, culture, and community in Gold Rush California*. (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press:2000).

<sup>33</sup> Jack Chen, *The Chinese of America*, 46.

<sup>34</sup> Claim jumping was the act of white miners taking over successful mines being worked by the Chinese. See Chinese Consolidated Benevolent Association, *Dreams of the West*, 77.

<sup>35</sup> The Chinese worked in various occupations during the late nineteenth century but the common stereotype of "Chinese Laundries" and their role in feminizing Chinese labor and personhood is more adequately explained in Joan Wang's "Race, Gender and Laundry Work: The Roles of Chinese Laundrymen and American Women in the United States, 1850-1950"; Lisa Lowes's *Immigrant Acts*.

<sup>36</sup> Those three jobs made 21% of California's working Chinese population in 1870. Data from table 30, State of California, US Census 1870.

<sup>37</sup> An interview with a Chinese man mentioned this. He also makes a point to say that back home in China, only women did this work and they had to learn it here from the housewives they worked for. See: Chew, Lee. "The Life Story of a Chinaman" in *The Life Stories of Undistinguished Americans as told by Themselves*. ed. Hamilton Holt.

Although faced with opposition, wealthier Americans began to see these immigrants as industrious, reliable and in many ways, a better investment than other nationalities.<sup>38</sup> Employers began to specifically seek out the Chinese due to their work ethic and cheap labor. This reputation was no doubt the reason why the railroads were built almost exclusively by Chinese labor.<sup>39</sup>

The Chinese in San Francisco created an ethnic community. The size of the community was challenged by the rapidly growing population. The community itself adjusted to the confinement of the area and high rents by fitting as many people in a building as possible.<sup>40</sup> These types of living conditions were seen as unsanitary and inhumane by the Euro-American community who responded with fines and codes. The community also housed various brothels and opium dens to cater to the large single, male population.<sup>41</sup> While the Chinese interactions may have been positive due to their work ethic, the community itself was seen as an immoral, dangerous eyesore that brought vice and disease to the city.<sup>42</sup> Reports such as this one furnished by a member of the Chinese Investigation Committee helped to promote the exclusion of Chinese out of California.

We went into places so filthy and dirty I cannot see how these people could live there. The fumes of opium, mingled with the odor arising from the filth and dirt, made rather a sickening feeling creep over us. I would not go through that quarter again for anything in the world. The whole Chinese quarter is miserably filthy, and I think that the passage of an ordinance removing them from this city, as a nuisance, would be justifiable....I do not

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<sup>38</sup> Daniels, 48. Pricco, 23.

<sup>39</sup> McConnell, 12

<sup>40</sup> The practice of the Chinese crowding into a single room was a constant complaint of the Euro-American community as it was seen as unhealthy. The practice later led to the passing of the Cubic Air Ordinance in both San Francisco and Portland that fined men for overcrowding in buildings. Wong, 39.

<sup>41</sup> It is meaningful to note that because of cultural norms and fear of sexual harassment, the immigrant population was almost exclusively male. The few Chinese women who came abroad were wives of wealthy men (who could afford it) or prostitutes either willingly or unwillingly serving this bachelor community.

<sup>42</sup> California Senate, *Chinese Immigration: The Social, Moral and Political Effect of Chinese Immigration*, Testimony (Sacramento, CA: 1876): 152.

see how it would be possible to cleanse them, unless you burn up the whole quarter, and even then I doubt whether you can get rid of all this filth.<sup>43</sup>

These accusations would result into hysteria of Anti-Chinese protests that would later consume the entire country.

Chinese Population in:	1860	1870	1880
California	34,933	49,277	75,132
San Francisco <sup>44</sup>	2,719	12,022	21,745

Between 1860 and 1880, Chinese immigration had grown exponentially resulting in a greater negative attention to the immigrants by Californians.<sup>45</sup> Political leaders, labor unions and workers themselves began to unite against these foreign invaders, passing racist legislation and committing hate crimes.<sup>46</sup> Anti-Chinese propaganda set the California movement apart from the rest with plays, pamphlets, and articles highlighting the evils of Chinese immigration. Political platforms took Chinese exclusion seriously in their campaigns and state senate hearings in Sacramento discussed the issue at length. It was through the efforts of those involved in the Anti-Chinese movement in California that a federal exclusion law was able to pass in United States Congress. The Gold Rush and the development of the city of San Francisco had unique racial, gendered and socioeconomic characteristics that made it into a successful and large city but complicated notions of social hierarchy and interaction. Just as San Francisco's demographics shaped the city's inhabitants treatment of Chinese immigrants, Portland's unique environment did the same.

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<sup>43</sup> Statement of Hon. E. J. Lewis in *Chinese Immigration*, 45.

<sup>44</sup> Data in table was found in the US Census of 1880.

<sup>46</sup> White political and labor leaders proposed anti-Chinese measures through the 1850s to 1870s. As more of their measures were invalidated by the courts, more pressure was placed on Congress to enact a national Chinese Exclusion law.

## Portland and Oregon's Chinese

Unlike San Francisco, Portland's population did not expand rapidly overnight. The first formal count of Portland's population listed 805 residents with over three quarters of the population male. In ten years the population grew to 2,874 compared to San Francisco's growth of 807 to 12,030 during the same time period.<sup>47</sup> Just as San Francisco was shaped by its population and environment, so was Portland. Portland's historical foundations and inhabitant demographics are important to consider when examining the treatment of Chinese immigrants within the city itself.

Portland's humble beginnings can be traced to a coin toss between Francis W. Pettygrove and A. L. Lovejoy. These two men, partners in establishing the city platted sixteen blocks and four streets in the summer of 1845.<sup>48</sup> Through the addition of a ferry across the Willamette and the creation of Canyon road, Portland became the perfect place for ships to dock as the depth of the water allowed for larger vessels and with the creation of Canyon road, farmers from the Tualatin Valley would bring their produce.<sup>49</sup> This along with the Gold Rush in California helped for the city to grow. The relationship between San Francisco and Portland was an economic one. Portland would be able to grow produce, manufacture goods and then sell them to San Francisco. This economic relationship encouraged the growth and migration of business.<sup>50</sup> With this

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<sup>47</sup> Information gathered from the US Census of 1860 and 1870 accessed from [www.census.gov](http://www.census.gov) on November 21, 2012.

<sup>48</sup> The two men named the city on the basis of a coin toss as neither could agree on a name. Portland was named after Portland Maine, Pettygrove's hometown.

<sup>49</sup> The creation of the Canyon road to Portland allowed it to surpass other rivals in the area as a shipping port. Maddux, 19.

<sup>50</sup> These businesses were seen as more successful than San Francisco merchants as MacColl notes that 20% of Portland businesses were reaping large profits compared to 10% of businesses in San Francisco staying afloat by making marginal profits. Kimbark MacColl, *Merchants, Money and Power*, 28.

economic dependence on the city, it was not long before several regular steamers were making their way between the two cities.<sup>51</sup>

Portland was seen as modern west coast that modeled itself after New England with its push for public education, literature and culture during its early years.<sup>52</sup> Many if not all, of the early business leaders and merchants in Portland were from New England.<sup>53</sup> New Englanders and New Yorkers also dominated politics as well with fourteen of Portland's Mayors being born in the region from 1852 to 1900.<sup>54</sup> Beginning in the early 1850s there was an emphasis on education, creating schools and bringing principals and teachers from the Eastern seaboard of the United States.<sup>55</sup> This New England feel and heritage in Portland helped to appeal to a wealthier merchant class and create an environment that would be more tolerant of Chinese immigrants.

Records and historians agree that other Chinese laborers came to Southern Oregon earlier to mine for gold as a continuation of the California Gold Rush. Encouraged by a higher pay and a less hostile work environment, some Chinese migrated north to work for the mining industry in Josephine County.<sup>56</sup> The Chinese population slowly grew in Oregon but remained in the rural communities due to the mining industries being the first major employers of Chinese in the state.

Although racial tensions were present, it seems to be the prejudice of the Native Americans rather than the Euro-American that receives greater attention to these Chinese laborers when they first arrived in Oregon.<sup>57</sup> Chinese labor was vital to the early mining industry

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<sup>51</sup> Maddux, 26.

<sup>52</sup> Maddux, 39.

<sup>53</sup> A quarter of the population of Portland in the 1850's was from either New York or New England. Carl Abbott, *Portland in Three Centuries* (Corvallis: Oregon State University Press, 2011): 28.

<sup>54</sup> Data collected from the Appendix of Jewell Lansing's book *Portland: People, Politics and Power, 1851-2001*.

<sup>55</sup> Lansing, 64.

<sup>56</sup> "Chinese in Josephine County", *The Weekly Oregonian*, October, 31, 1857.

<sup>57</sup> Animosity against the Chinese was not limited to any particular race as Native Americans disliked them. This is evident in a news article in *The Weekly Oregonian* "Chinaman having Indian Servants" published in January of 1857.

in Oregon due to their role in digging the ditches required for hydraulic mining.<sup>58</sup> The Chinese worked hard but eventually due to racism, they began to suffer the same type of discrimination as they had experienced in the mining industries in California.<sup>59</sup> Similar to laborers in San Francisco, the low pay being given to the Chinese forced them to live off of less and be seen as a cheaper alternative to white labor.<sup>60</sup> The preference of Chinese miners by businesses began to attract some hostility from the white miners.<sup>61</sup> While faced with cultural racism, the Chinese worked separately from the white miners just as they had in California and promptly left Eastern Oregon when the mining boom waned. Chinese immigrants travelled to Astoria, Idaho and Portland to look for other work opportunities. It is due to the decline of the mining industry that many Chinese migrated to the Willamette Valley and to Portland itself.

### Portland's Chinese Community and Anti-Chinese Movement

#### Chinese Population in Portland and Oregon State<sup>62</sup>

Year	Oregon	Portland	Ratio Port/OR
1860	425	18	4.2%
1870	3,330	460	13.8%
1880	9,512	1,678	17.6%
1890	9,540	4,539	47.5%

<sup>58</sup> Hydraulic mining was the process of using blasts of water to uncover areas that may have gold. This technique required ditches built to transport water great distances and the formation of these ditches was left to the Chinese. Familiar to them as they had used similar irrigation techniques back home to grow rice, the Chinese formed many of these ditches used for mining.

<sup>59</sup> This includes lower comparative pay than other miners, claim jumping, and less frequent occasions of violence.

<sup>60</sup> This was a sensitive issue for working class men as labor unions became more influential during the late nineteenth century. The Chinese could be used as strike breakers but more commonly, white labor was angry that a single Chinese man could live off of a wage that most working class Euro-American men would abhor.

<sup>61</sup> The most well-known instance of anti-Chinese violence was the Snake River Massacre in which a community of 50 to 60 Chinese were slaughtered and their bodies thrown in the Snake River. None of the men who committed the crimes were found guilty. This took place after the Anti-Chinese Movement in Portland. See "Chinese Miners Murdered" *New York Times*. July 8, 1887.

<sup>62</sup> Tables found in Pricco, 36 and 41. Information from US Census.

1900	10,397	7,841	75.4%
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As a city, Portland became an attractive place for the Chinese throughout the late nineteenth century. As the mining industry in the Southern and Eastern parts of the state began to decline, the immigrants migrated to Portland were the community of Chinese men began to slowly grow. The first indication of Chinese immigrants in the Portland area was an advertisement in *The Weekly Oregonian* for the Tong Sung House on November 15, 1851. This house ad is as follows:

Mr. Sunsung from China would inform the public that he has opened a Boarding House and Restaurant, and, having first rate China cooks, can give good board and lodging to those who may favor him with their patronage. Private rooms for gentlemen, and suppers got up to order. A choice of a variety of liquors constantly on hand.<sup>63</sup>

Despite this ad, the Chinese community within the city remained small until the 1880's. The city offered workers accommodation during the winter months when work was more difficult to find, Chinese food and even some entertainment. Portland's early connection to San Francisco made it physically less difficult for the immigrant communities to migrate and it was a natural second destination for many.<sup>64</sup> During the California Gold Rush, Chinese immigrants migrated from the south. As early as 1851 Portland and San Francisco became connected by regular steamers. Steamers such as the *Columbia* brought goods and people between San Francisco and Portland on a regular basis. Chinese immigrants would often arrive in the steerage

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<sup>63</sup> Advertisement, *The Oregonian*, November 15, 1851. Percy Maddux, *City on the Willamette*, pp.77.

<sup>64</sup> Oregon experienced a shortage of labor along with San Francisco and the hunt for gold continued in the mines of Southern Oregon.

of these steamers which offered the cheapest fare.<sup>65</sup> When referring to contemporary articles of the *Weekly Oregonian*, the Chinese immigrants provoked curiosity on their arrival into Portland.

As time went on, more references to supporting the exclusion and expulsion of Chinese immigrants were heard although more often than not, they were the loud cries from outside the state. Editors of the *Weekly Oregonian* held more conservative views regarding the treatment of Chinese immigration and labor, especially when concerning with foreign treaties with China.<sup>66</sup> Using articles from *The Weekly Oregonian* as a timeline of anti-Chinese support, objections to the Chinese presence in Oregon began to be published in 1866.<sup>67</sup> Even then, it would be another twenty years before Oregonians began to politically align with the issue of Chinese exclusion and physically intimidate and harass the Chinese community at large. Thirteen years later in 1879 article in the New York Times shows a gathering of individuals wishing to protest Chinese immigration into the state of Oregon by expressing their thoughts in a letter to President Hayes. In the letter, the Oregonians focus on the issue of Chinese labor and its effect stating: “the Chinese seriously interfere with all free labor, as they are able to exist upon an pittance that does not suffice for the merest support of a white laborer and his family...”<sup>68</sup>

Through an examination of the Portland newspaper, little is mentioned in the way of the Chinese until 1886. It is during this year that Portland and the surrounding area experienced its Anti-Chinese movement, four years after the Chinese Exclusion act passed. The Anti-Chinese vigor in Portland was supported and possibly started by Daniel Cronin who arrived from Tacoma.<sup>69</sup> February of 1886 was filled with Anti-Chinese meetings and rallies across Portland.<sup>70</sup>

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<sup>65</sup> Observation was made by reading contemporary articles from the *Weekly Oregonian*.

<sup>66</sup> “Uncontroverted Fact” *The Weekly Oregonian*, Sept. 14, 1869.

<sup>67</sup> “Chinese: Objections to Presence in Portland” *The Weekly Oregonian*. November 21, 1866.

<sup>68</sup> “Oregon Denounces the Chinese” *The New York Times*. April 18, 1879.

<sup>69</sup> Cronin had gained leadership of the Anti-Chinese Movement a year earlier in Seattle. He was responsible for organizing the expulsion of the Chinese in Tacoma a few month earlier. MacColl, 239.



While a large parade was being held on the night of February 22 in Portland to intimidate the Chinese who lived there, workers at a mill in Oregon City forced Chinese workers on a boat to Portland.<sup>71</sup> This was later followed by a similar incident where a community of over 100 Chinese was driven out of the Mt. Tabor area into downtown Portland.<sup>72</sup> By the end of March, the violence has ceased partly due to the efforts of Portland officials who called in the militia and charged the leaders with federal indictments.<sup>73</sup> The violence, rioting and pro-exclusion rallies left as quickly as they came. Oregon's Anti-Chinese hostility and its support in the city of Portland was not strong enough to keep the movement active.

San Francisco and Portland both contained a proportionally large Chinese population within their city limits. Both experienced a sudden growth in their communities when migration of Chinese immigrants from the rural districts began to swell into the city and while both cities shared these characteristics and developed their own Anti-Chinese movements, several stark differences surfaced between the two. The Anti-Chinese movement in California lasted for nearly three decades and successfully turned Chinese immigration into a federal issue. While state representatives from Oregon supported exclusion, residents of Oregon did not support the radical thoughts surrounding expelling them forcefully. Oregon was not only less concerned politically of the presence or migration of Chinese immigrants than in California, but the Anti-Chinese movement in regards to meetings, protests and acts of violence against the community lasted only a few months.<sup>74</sup> Depictions of the Chinese varied between the two cities as well. In

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<sup>70</sup> "Anti-Chinese Speeches" *The Weekly Oregonian*. February 13, 1886. "They Met: The Anti-Chinese 'Congress' in Session." Ibid. "Anti-Chinese Meeting" *The Weekly Oregonian*. February 23, 1886.

<sup>71</sup> "Chinese Deportation at Oregon City." *The Weekly Oregonian*. February 23, 1886.

<sup>72</sup> "125 Chinese Driven into Portland from Mt. Tabor." *The Weekly Oregonian*. March 5, 1886.

<sup>73</sup> MacColl, 240.

<sup>74</sup> The year of 1886 was when violence against the Chinese became widespread and frequent as seen the headlines of *The Weekly Oregonian* during the year "Anti-Chinese Congress meets in Portland. Given 40 days..."; "Anti-

Portland, the Chinese were considered a possible threat to working class men and little more while San Francisco's Anti-Chinese movement depicted them as social, moral, economic and health threats to the community with a greater sense of urgency and venom. An analysis of socioeconomics, gender and race relations will uncover why Portland was the more tolerable city on the West coast.

### Socioeconomic background and its relation to the treatment of Chinese immigrants

Acting as a cultural filter, economic classes and social norms will help to regulate and influence interactions between individuals and groups. The inhabitants of Portland were influenced by cultural and capitalistic reasons to support exclusion but restricted by these same values to produce a less violent and shorter Anti-Chinese movement in 1886. The economic conditions of San Francisco and Portland are directly related to the establishment of the communities as well as their continued prosperity regarding growth in terms of monetary value and population. Just as the economic conditions help to attract certain groups, the social conditions of the city's inhabitants dictated the treatment of racial groups. In this case, by examining the socioeconomic conditions of the two cities, it becomes apparent that Portland remained more hospitable to the immigrants that offered no economic threat to the majority of the city.

Portland's Anti-Chinese riots were short lived due to a number of factors. Portland's movement, unlike San Francisco, strictly focused on the Chinese problem as being a labor issue. By narrowing the support for exclusion by focusing on the issues regarding immigrant labor, the

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Chinese Manifesto"; "Chinese deportation at Oregon City"; and "125 Chinese Driven out into Portland from Mt. Tabor."

Chinese threat was taken less seriously by the more wealthy groups in the community. The Chinese were characterized as a threat only to working class individuals and of those who reacted violently, mostly outside of the city limits. The socioeconomic data surrounding the city of Portland made it more tolerable as a community to the Chinese immigrants.

Anti-Chinese prejudice and the violence surrounding it was an initial response to employing Chinese labor and its perceived effect on the livelihood of Euro-Americans. Americans were uneasy with immigrant labor and this was painfully true for the Chinese. Both cultural and racial differences set them apart from their European counterparts, and unlike many Irish, Italian or German immigrants who faced persecution, the Chinese were unable to assimilate, first generation or the latter, due to the physical racial differences. American society was suspicious of immigrants, with hostility and discrimination against them mounting based on their perceived differences to “normal” Euro-American society. The Chinese immigrants were met with discrimination and latter hostility in the workforce.

Both legislation and overt racism were responsible for discriminatory practices involving Chinese workers. Chinese workers were only allowed to enter a few employment opportunities, resulting in actual little competition with Euro-Americans. When working in non-Chinese owned businesses, Chinese workers were placed into subservient positions and offered no promotions in the process, maintaining a need for white supervisors. The Chinese were paid significantly less than their white counterparts. They not only made less money, but were required to provide their own or pay extra for room and board when lodging for white employees was provided. This overt racism was common practice for Chinese workers throughout the nation.

These discriminatory practices started as soon as the first steamer filled with Chinese laborers arrived to San Francisco allowing white employers to keep the Chinese laborers in check. However, it was an economic recession that caused concern for these white laborers.

Initially, the Chinese being paid less money was a bad thing as the capitalist market encourages people to seek the most reward from the least amount of work. However, after the gold rush and the railroad boom in the 1870's, the country went into a recession. California was deeply affected as many laborers lost their jobs. Employers on the other hand were able to hire Chinese for a fraction of the cost of Euro-American labor. It was during this time that Anti-Chinese sentiment began to rise on a large scale.

The resulting competition between Chinese and Euro-Americans was minimal. The Chinese were only open to a few employment opportunities, resulting in little actual competition with Euro-Americans. Rarely did Euro-Americans work alongside the Chinese and when they did, it was almost always in unskilled labor. The economic threat that the Euro-Americans faced regarding Chinese was perceived with more severity the lower on the social/economic scale one was. Industries such as mining, agricultural laborer and non-specific labor were the occupations that hired Chinese immigrants in the 1880s. These occupations also hired white laborers as well. While white men were more likely to participate in these manual labor jobs out of economic dependence rather than racism, white men were still granted a bit of a luxury in regards to the ability to refuse certain work as seen in the Oregon salmon industry. The industry in particular was dependent on Chinese labor as Euro-American men did not wish to "hack fish all day."<sup>75</sup> Along with industries dependent on Chinese labor as well as Oregon's relative economic

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<sup>75</sup> A contemporary made this statement describing why the Chinese should remain in Oregon stating they are the only ones who are willing to do the miserable job of hacking fish all day.

stability, Oregonians made a connection on how they needed their laborer and saw them as a necessary rather than a threat. The socioeconomic status of individuals affected how they perceived Chinese immigrants as threats to their livelihood.

Euro-Americans who were employed as unskilled laborers perceived the Chinese as a larger threat than the individuals who were wealthy enough to hire them as domestic help. The wealthier classes had less to fear with the immigrants on an economic level and in some ways benefitted greatly from their labor and fought on their behalf.<sup>76</sup> The Anti-Chinese movement consisted of men who feared that the Chinese would take away or limit their livelihood. This fear is what drove the Anti-Chinese movement and explains the variance of the movement between San Francisco and Portland.

While Portland and San Francisco described the reactions against the Chinese as labor issues, Portland focused on the labor argument exclusively as support for the hostile actions against the Chinese.<sup>77</sup> The late blooming, short-lived anti-Chinese movement in Portland resulted from a large class of wealthy inhabitants that were not threatened by the immigrant labor. When mill workers in Oregon City forced the Chinese workers to leave it was considered a labor issue.<sup>78</sup>

It was this labor issue that helped gain support for nationwide exclusion. In 1880, the infamous Morey letter highlighted the politicized importance of the Chinese issue on the national level with Mr. Page, a representative from California stating:

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<sup>76</sup> Pricco, 57. Much of this evidence comes from Articles in the weekly Oregonian and the hiring practices of companies themselves.

<sup>77</sup> "Anti-Chinese Congress Meets in Portland. Given 40 days..." *The Weekly Oregonian*. February 14, 1886.

<sup>78</sup> Wishing to get rid of the cheap immigrant labor at the mill, workers revolted against the Chinese at the mill and forced them to leave. "Chinese Deportation at Oregon City." *The Weekly Oregonian*. February 23, 1886.

The sentiments expressed in the Morey letter are absolutely and unqualifiedly the sentiments of those who believe it is right to bring here millions of cooly slaves that their labor may be brought into competition with and their society insult the respectable people of this country.<sup>79</sup>

Mr. Cassidy, a representative of Nevada also shares a negative view on the Chinese laborers as he states they “bring crime, pestilence...demoralization of our youth and starvation for our laboring classes.”<sup>80</sup> Just as historians later pointed out, the Chinese seem to represent loss of livelihood to these white laborers. The loss of livelihood transformed the Chinese into a serious threat for these white laborers and required immediate and often brutal responses.

Oregon shared some of these attitudes and hostile action. What characterizes the city of Portland as being different than these other environments is that while the population of the community is large, there were not many instances of violence between the whites and Chinese within the city itself. Most of the violence took place in the rural countryside and in smaller towns and cities while the city center of Portland remained relatively peaceful during this time. The different attitudes between the urban and rural communities reinforce my conclusion that the treatment of the Chinese immigrants was dependent on the environment. Communities with a higher socioeconomic demographic like in Portland less likely to feel threatened by the immigrants than other areas that often consisted of working class people such as in the rural mining towns of Oregon.

Due to investing, promotion and luck, Portland was developing into a model little city by 1880. The census compiler describes Portland as an eastern city that promoted culture and education. The city also held a large number of wealthy individuals, many of whom made their fortune in trade. This reputation of being a cultured and civilized city attracted more upper class

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<sup>79</sup> Quote from in manuscripts in the Ethnology collection, Mss 1521, Oregon Historical Society Research Library.

<sup>80</sup> Ibid.

people than other Western cities. In the 1850's for the first time because of the capital created by the gold rush, merchants from the eastern United States began to look at Oregon as an opportunity to expand. Merchants from New England and New York headed West to Portland and along with a rather a stable economy, helped to create a successful and wealthy city.<sup>81</sup> As early as 1855, Portland was seen as the richest per capita city north of the California border.<sup>82</sup> The separation of classes in society helps to dictate appropriate norms for a certain level of society.

The wealthier, cultured class of people would have a different relationship and perspective of the Chinese immigrants than others. This class of people being so predominant in Portland had an impact regarding how people in the city treated the immigrants. To the upper class, the Chinese were at most necessary and trustworthy servants and at worst, uncivilized pest. They were not however, seen as a threat. The socioeconomic status of those who lived in the city created less anxiety of job loss to poor, uneducated immigrants. Upper class individuals in the city saw the Chinese sojourner as a hardworking individual that benefited the community. The Chinese gardens just north of the city provided produce to Euro-Americans and with such low prices for labor, middle class families were able to keep house servants.<sup>83</sup>

Besides during the laundry work of the city, he is a cook and general house servant. He saws wood, he mows the lawns, he works the gardens, he is a scavenger and a vender of fruits and vegetables. Lightly traversing the streets...he calls from house to house and supplies fruits and vegetables to those who want them.<sup>84</sup>

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<sup>81</sup> Before the California gold rush, eastern merchants were unwilling to invest in the Oregon market, it was only afterwards with a growing money supply and a development of a market that merchants began getting involved in the frontier. MacColl, 28.

<sup>82</sup> Lansing, *Portland*, 75.

<sup>83</sup> Pricco, 53.

<sup>84</sup> *The Weekly Oregonian*, July 22, 1884 as seen in Pricco, 53.

In an environment such as Portland, there was less of a reliance on these low skill jobs as the city was more attractive to educated and skilled workers; thus as a community, Portland would not feel as threatened by the Chinese immigrants as would be San Franciscans, who were predominantly dependent on manual labor jobs for their livelihood.

Portland's attitudes on race were deemed more progressive than in other areas across the country during the time period due to the New England influence with city.<sup>85</sup> Portland also developed a spatial equality in the sense that it never developed a separate Chinese ghetto.<sup>86</sup> Whites and Chinese worked and lived alongside one another throughout the nineteenth century. The creation of "Chinatown" didn't occur until later. Many of the buildings in downtown were occupied by Chinese merchants as well as Euro-American owned shops. Lyon's thesis "Chinese Immigrants, Cultural Hegemony and The Politics of Everyday Crime in Portland, Oregon 1859-1908" also reflect a growing interaction and tolerance between Euro-American whites and Chinese immigrant laborers in the city.<sup>87</sup> The Chinese population communicated and interacted with other immigrant groups as well. Like all cities in the United States, both historic and contemporary, there are racial tensions but the socioeconomic and political background of those who constituted the early settlers of Portland, Oregon helped to create a city that was less racially hostile than others of the time.

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<sup>85</sup> As stated in the 1880 census regarding the city of Portland, "Business is in the hands of men from the eastern and middle states, Great Britain and Germany. Education is guided by Americans from New England and the Northern States. The New England element has a marked influence throughout."

<sup>86</sup> Marie Wong, *Sweet Cakes, Long Journey: The Chinatowns of Portland, Oregon*, 267.

<sup>87</sup> Lyon used arrest records from the Portland Police to track the relationship between the Chinese community and the dominant white community and concluded that overtime the relationship between the two shifted from one of dominance to of cultural hegemony. See Cherstin M. Lyon, *Chinese immigrants, cultural hegemony, and the politics of everyday crime in Portland, Oregon, 1859-1908* (University of Oregon: 1998).



The socioeconomic structure of the city of Portland helped to prevent long or wide scale violence along with added reinforcement from the city officials. The greater political and social influences of wealthy individuals prevented the Chinese within the city experiencing violent expulsion. Even primary source documents highlights this phenomena with *The Weekly Oregonian* stating that “the wealthier citizens like them but there is no greater curse of the community than these low life whelps.”<sup>88</sup> While the socioeconomic condition of the city’s inhabitants helped to influence the outcome of the Anti-Chinese movement, gender helped to define it.

#### Gender as Defined by socioeconomic background

As important as economic class is to American history, its relation to cultural values creates a more holistic view. This holistic view allows historians to analyze complex relationships such as the one between gender identity and work. The connection between labor and masculinity is a byproduct of the industrial revolution. As cities and industries began to become more feminized, the clearing and settling of the uncivilized west began to reflect masculinity. The Anti-Chinese movement in San Francisco created material that exemplifies this connection. Compared to Portland which experienced a short lived and delayed Anti-Chinese movement, San Francisco inhabitants reacted earlier and more harshly to these immigrants and created a successful fear campaign that promoted exclusion. The San Francisco Anti-Chinese movement was more aggressive due to the more intimate connection the inhabitants had between their socioeconomic status and masculinity.

The reaction against the Chinese was not a purely economic issue. It was rooted in socioeconomic definitions of masculinity as well cultural implications among race relations.

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<sup>88</sup> *Weekly Oregonian*, July 10, 1866.

The gold rush was the cause of the population of the city of San Francisco. Many miners, both successful and down on their luck settled in the city after the gold rush was over. San Francisco's unstable economic market affected the working class men who came to inhabit a large percentage of the city's population. Miners along with other male laborers bonded within the homo-social society of the gold rush. The Euro-American male would have judged other men on the basis of whether they met the same standards of masculinity. It was during this formation of a masculine society that Euro-Americans began to encounter the Chinese.

This large working class population along with an ever growing Chinese population would have created anxiety for these workers regarding job loss. While in reality Euro-Americans were not likely to lose their jobs to Chinese immigrants, a Euro-American laborer was more likely to see the Chinese as a potential threat as they may have worked in similar occupations.<sup>89</sup> Not only would a laborer interpret job loss as an economic concern but it would also severely damage his reputation as a man.

In the late nineteenth century as the industrial revolution was making its mark in American society, the increased mechanization of labor helped to alter gender identity. As middle class norms became closer aligned with the success of the market economy, a working class family would have different notions of masculinity and femininity due to the inability to meet those ideals.<sup>90</sup> In an environment and culture than stressed self-sufficiency and hard work, men would have tied their employment (or lack thereof) to their personhood. Due to economic challenges for working class men and women, a white laborer's ability to provide for themselves and later for a family, defined them as a man. A man was praised for the work he did to create a

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<sup>89</sup> Chinamen and white laborers worked together on the railroad and even struck together. "Chinese Laborers on Strike." *New York Times* Oct. 21, 1881.

<sup>90</sup> This idea of gender norms being relative to the socioeconomic realities of the individuals has been discussed at length referring to modern discussions of feminism. I am expanding this idea to relate to masculinity as well.

homestead, earn an honest living and prove himself as a provider for the few women in the West.<sup>91</sup> The use of the Chinese being seen as a threat to their livelihood not only labeled the Chinese as an economic competitor but also as a threat to their masculinity. Fear of the Chinese taking away employment opportunities for the white laborers lead to anxiety of not being able to meet the ideals of working class masculinity by not having a living wage job to support themselves and families.

San Francisco's focus on the moral and safety concerns of the community in regards to housing these Chinese immigrants created an aggressive campaign for exclusion and published material for the cause that would help to sway public opinion. The depictions of Chinese men coming out of San Francisco were often feminine, weak and cowardly, representing the exact opposite of the Euro-American masculine ideal. These depictions underlined the various fears the Euro-American held against the Chinese immigrants which often contradicted one another.<sup>92</sup> The speeches surrounding the Chinese community in San Francisco were often less about economic problems but more about the problems the Chinese brought with them, specifically moral problems. Chinese brothels and their effect on the health of the men and boys in the community was a topic of great discussion in state senate hearings. Their women were all seen as prostitutes in the white community with their numbers greatly exaggerated.<sup>93</sup> The popular past

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<sup>91</sup> As described in "Sex, Gender and A Great Event: The California Gold Rush", the scarcity of females in the West allowed women to be more discriminatory regarding their mate.

<sup>92</sup> Floyd Cheung argues that the many contradictions of gender stereotypes of the Chinese men reflect the anxieties of Euro-American men. Cheung, Floyd. "Kingdom of Manly Style: Performing Chinese American Masculinity 1865-1941." PhD Thesis, Tulane University, 1999.

<sup>93</sup> This helped to promote the exclusion of Asian Women through the Page Law to eliminate Prostitution before the Chinese Exclusion Act was in Place.

time of opium smoking was seen as a moral threat to the community as they could lure young white girls into their dens, never to be seen again.<sup>94</sup>

Euro-American men were threatened by Chinese labor by way of economics and gender and produced a variety of material during this time that reflected their fears by degrading the Chinese men. In many cases, the Chinese were degraded sexually as being seen as effeminate. The focus on the sexuality of these immigrants in literature, plays, imagery, and personal testimonies did not hold up to the explanation that the Chinese were an economic threat. The depictions of these immigrants were overly sexualized for a purpose. Aside from the focus on the sexuality (or in some cases, lack thereof) of these Chinese immigrants, the sanitary conditions of the community called for exclusion by the Euro-American inhabitants as well.<sup>95</sup> The creation of the Chinese immigrants as a moral as well as a labor threat not only reflected the anxiety of these poor white men who could not meet the masculine ideal but also helped to create a nation-wide Chinese scare that led to Chinese exclusion.

The Californian political and social landscape allowed for a large reaction against Chinese immigration to occur. During the years following the gold rush the Chinese Community in and around the Bay Area grew rapidly.<sup>96</sup> While the population of the state was growing rapidly, the state economy did not result in economic problems.<sup>97</sup> The pressure of reelection

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<sup>94</sup> "The department of Police, in enforcing the law in regard to this matter, have found white women and Chinamen side by side under the effects of this drug- a humiliating sight to anyone who has anything left of manhood. Testimony of James R. Rogers in *Chinese Immigration*, 152.

<sup>95</sup> Descriptions of the Chinese community in the California state senate report on the issue vividly describe the filth in the community as well as a potential fire danger as seen with John L. Durkee's statement in *Chinese Immigration*.

<sup>96</sup> According to the 1880 census, the Chinese population in San Francisco grew from 12,022 in 1870 to 21,745 in 1880.

<sup>97</sup> Economic failures in the state due to the decline of the railroad and mining industries led to a recession in the state.

and the responsibility of the financial crisis itself left politicians needing a scapegoat.<sup>98</sup> The people who comprised of the darker skinned, uneducated, non-English speaking population were considered social and racial outcasts, traits advantageous to those seeking a scapegoat. Their positions as unskilled workers further threatened the Euro-Americans as they were seen as competing for those same jobs. The social problems of the ethnic community were highlighted as a moral degradation to the society at large rather than safety or sanitary issues.<sup>99</sup> The emphasis on cultural, religious and material differences between the Chinese workers and the Euro-American population was emphasized to characterized the Chinese immigrants as “barbaric heathens” who were not worthy of citizenship.<sup>100</sup> These differences were in a sense justified by the labeling of the Chinese problem as a shortage of affordable labor problem.

### Comparative Analysis of Portland and San Francisco

The socioeconomic construction of the two cities was instrumental in influencing the effect, stamina and direction of the Anti-Chinese movements. The social and economic identification of San Francisco as a working class city altered the perception of the severity of the Chinese as a labor threat. Not only were the inhabitants of San Francisco more hostile to the immigrants through their long lasting push for exclusion, they connected the labor threat to their ability to provide for their family and fit into a normative masculine model. Portland residents did not make that connection as many people in the city made their living off of other enterprises and therefore did not see the Chinese immigrants as threats in the same way. San Francisco’s

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<sup>98</sup> This recession was blamed on Chinese labor. This conclusion was made by Shane Michael Fisher in his thesis *From Gold Mountain to a Mountain of Hate: exploring the Chinese resistance against discrimination in California, 1850-1892*, (Master’s Thesis, University of Oregon, 1999).

<sup>99</sup> State Senate of California, 46-49.

<sup>100</sup> A Sensible Democrat, *Morning Oregonian*, June 28, 1869, page 2, Provider: NewsBank/Readex, Database: The Historical Oregonian, 1861-1972 (accessed November 4, 2012).

early development as a masculine city would have biased their view of the immigrants from the start.

This dramatic interplay between racial hierarchy, gender expectations and socioeconomic position held to create the dedicated support for the anti-Chinese moment in San Francisco. This interplay did not affect Portland as much as it did San Francisco. Portland's cultural roots were products of the settlers who first claimed the land. These men, as previously mentioned, were predominantly from New England and New York. The Northeastern United States' ideas of race were less harsh than other regions of the United States as they were influenced by abolitionist ideas during the war. Even before the Civil War, many New Englander's were anti-slavery and promoted ideas of equality. The Eastern roots of Portland were in fact, more progressive and this tone is reflected in *The Oregonian*. Mentions of the Chinese are of a more informative nature, and in some cases, defensive of them. There are several articles in the paper from 1869 that defend the right of the Chinese to remain in the United States and criticized talk of exclusion.<sup>101</sup> When more serious talks of Chinese exclusion and forceful deportation were discussed, the editors mocked those involved. The Anti-Chinese "Congress" article proudly includes criticism of the paper by members and the use of quotes in the article questions the seriousness of the meeting.

## Conclusion

The Chinese immigrants of the late nineteenth century faced many obstacles when living in the United States. Many of them came during or directly after the Civil War when questions of race and slavery were being formed. During this same time period the Industrial Revolution was drastically altering lifestyles and social norms of Americans which created an age of anxiety and

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<sup>101</sup> *The Oregonian*. Sept 13 and 14, 1869.

stubbornness to change. The social changes and problems were just the result of the time period in which they arrived. The Chinese also faced the usual obstacles as an immigrant group such as racism, uncertainty about their future and separation from all of their loved ones all to live in an environment that was strange and unwelcoming. While the hardships experienced by other immigrant groups are not to be ignored or devalued, the Chinese stood out culturally and racially as foreign. Their arrival to California brought up these issues of slavery as they were seen as *coolies* and their willingness to work for and live on a fraction of what Euro-Americans wanted in an era of labor unions and interests caused some to take issue with them as a presence in the state.<sup>102</sup>

As they migrated up to Oregon, these issues did not disappear. They were discussed at length by Oregonians who had an interest in “white labor.” The differences in the treatment of these immigrants between the two major cities in the west San Francisco and Portland, were based not on the immigrants but on the social environment itself. San Francisco was a city built by laborers who, after failing to strike it rich in the mines settled in the city. The people had a strong vested interest in keeping “white labor” for both their pocketbook and their pride. This strong association between masculinity and labor helped to drive the anti-Chinese hysteria in San Francisco early on creating racist legislation, and media while holding political meetings to discuss Chinese exclusion.

Portland on the other hand was less vested in labor as a whole because the city was attractive to wealthier men. These higher class men were not dependent on unskilled labor for their livelihood or for their pride as a man. The socioeconomic environment itself led to less

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<sup>102</sup> Coolie is a term coined in the nineteenth century. While the original term was used to identify a common laborer, during the anti-Chinese movement it was used to describe the Chinese as bonded slaves. An untrue assumption.

overt racism in the media or legislation in the early years against the Chinese and a less passionate uprising against the Chinese in the 1880's. This examination of the two communities of San Francisco and Portland show that every Chinese community is unique based on the cultural environment in which it is established and that socioeconomics, gender and race are interrelated in history and the Chinese-American community needs to be included in such a history.

These differences held to shape the Anti-Chinese Movements within the two separate communities as San Francisco's labor background, large population of Chinese and greater political influence as a state helped to turn this "California" problem into the "Chinese Problem" and successfully pass the Chinese Exclusion Acts. Portland's more conservative business classes saw the Chinese not as competitors and Oregon laborers were more reluctant to align themselves with the radical exclusion groups resulting in a very short lived Anti-Chinese Movement.

Portland's development shows that the socioeconomic differences in the white community created a more tolerant environment for the Chinese as opposed to San Francisco and these socioeconomic differences had a direct impact on how the Chinese were perceived by the Euro-American community. Being that the Euro-American communities and the Chinese immigrant communities were interacting with one another and these interactions affected the passing of the Chinese exclusion act; examining these interactions in regards to racial, economic and gender differences will provide others with more context in understanding the formation of the Chinese immigrant communities across the country and the variety of treatments each one received.



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