

LIVING WITH EXCLUSION:
CHINESE MERCHANTS IN BAKER CITY, OREGON
1899-1915

by

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The image of Chinese merchant, Leong Dod, of Baker City, Oregon, gazes from the final page of the 1899 affidavit that attests to his partnership with the firm, Wing Hing Yuen. The photograph shows him wearing traditional Chinese attire—a dark colored tunic that buttons across the chest and a close-fitting cloth cap. His intense gaze—in keeping with the photographic style of the era—does not reveal even the hint of a smile. Notarized December 22, 1899—just days before Christmas and a week away from a new century—the document was created in the midst of Chinese Exclusion to assure the man's reentry into the U. S. following his upcoming trip to China.¹



Leong Dod of the Wing Hing Yuen Company in traditional Chinese attire, ca. 1899. Source: U. S. Customs Service, *Affidavit*, 22 December 1899. Records of the INS, RG 85, Box RS098, Case No. RS16338, Leong Dod. NARA-PAR.

The Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882 marked the first time immigration to the United States was restricted based solely on race or nationality. The Act prohibited Chinese laborers from entering the country for a period of ten years, but granted entry to certain classes, including "merchants, teachers, students, diplomats, and travelers."² Renewed several times until it was finally repealed in 1943, the Act forced Chinese merchants in towns such as Baker City to vigilantly maintain their merchant status under the watchful eye of U. S. immigration officials. Case files on Chinese merchants in Baker City made by the Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS) during the early 1900s held by the National Archives and Records Administration,

¹ U. S. Customs Service, *Affidavit*, 22 December 1899. Records of the Immigration and Naturalization Service, RG 85, Box RS098, Case No. RS16338, Leong Dod. National Archives and Records Administration, Pacific Alaska Region. (Hereafter cited as NARA-PAR).

² Erika Lee, *At America's Gates: Chinese Immigration During the Exclusion Era, 1882-1943*. (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2003), 4.

Pacific Alaska Region (NARA-PAR) in Seattle, Washington, provide a glimpse into the administration of Exclusion at the local level.³

Important to any study of the files is the recognition that the documents contained therein—affidavits, letters, testimony—are not completely reliable because they were made within the framework of government regulation. White federal officials held the position of power and formulated questions, guided the direction of testimony, and ultimately decided the fates of Baker City's Chinese merchants. The testimony delivered by the Chinese within the context of Exclusion also raises interpretive questions about veracity and completeness.

This paper has two objectives. First, the research intends to illuminate attitudes held by the city's White newspapermen about its Chinese residents. The analysis of newspaper coverage pertaining to the Chinese from the 1870s through the late 1890s in the Baker City *Bedrock Democrat* sheds light on how racial attitudes espoused by the White newspapermen had evolved during that twenty-year period.⁴ News content has a dual quality of manipulating public sentiment while concurrently reflecting it. This quality allows for inferential reasoning about the attitudes of White businessmen who acted as witnesses for the Chinese merchants at the opening of the 20th Century. Second, the research examines how the merchants adapted to Exclusion by obtaining testimony of local Whites and by adopting an appearance that fit the Custom's Services definition of a merchant. A merchant's appearance was important because many policy-makers,

³ The case files amassed for this paper's purposes were gleaned from a partially completed database of Chinese Exclusion case files held by NARA-PAR. Case files that contained Baker or Baker City, Oregon, as the Case City or City of Residence were selected if the name shown on the file had appeared in the Baker County (Tax) Assessment Rolls, in the Manuscript Census Returns or in the Polk's Baker City Directory. Thirty case files were reviewed resulting in the selection of 23 case files. The selected files contain documents ranging in date from 1899-1928. The bulk of the collection—16 of the 23 files—range in date from 1898-1912. The file of Mrs. Pearl Leo (Liu) was also acquired. This was due firstly, to the rarity of cases pertaining to women, and secondly, because her file contained a letter penned by Peter Basche, which was important to this study. See Records of the INS, RG 85, Case No. 2962, Mrs. Pearl Leo (Liu). NARA-PAR.

⁴ According to the Illustrated History of Baker, Grant, Malheur and Harney Counties, the town had four newspapers in 1885 that included, *The Daily Sage*, the *Bedrock Democrat*, the *Reveille* and the *Tribune*. Western Historical Publishing Company, *An Illustrated History of Baker, Grant, Malheur and Harney Counties: With a Brief Outline of the Early History of the State of Oregon* (1902), 212.

labor unions, and citizens of western states perceived the Chinese as unassimilable. Thus, cultivating a Euro-American appearance countered these notions. Two questions will be addressed in this section. First, who was providing testimony on behalf of these merchants and what does that tell us about the merchants' adaptation to Exclusion and about their witnesses? Second, what factors around the turn of the century pushed Leong Dod and the other merchants to adopt a Westernized appearance?

Newspaper coverage of the late 1890s depicts Chinese culture in a more respectful manner than earlier coverage. This suggests a White social environment that is more accepting of its Chinese residents than in preceding years. Greater acceptance by Baker City's White population may have aided the Chinese merchants to obtain testimony they needed from White elites thus securing their position in the merchant class. Baker City's Chinese merchants adapted to Exclusion by cultivating relationships with the town's White elites and by adopting the appearance that fit the Customs Services' definition of a Chinese merchant. Thus, adaptive acculturation and networking allowed the merchants to maintain their position in the merchant class and to avoid being deported.

Contents of the Case Files: Three Stages to the Administration of Chinese Exclusion

The case files bring to light three stages to the administration of Exclusion. The first stage was called the preinvestigation. The purpose of this stage was to verify an immigrant's claim of merchant status. As a first step, White witnesses attested to a merchant's status in an affidavit. Witnesses submitted affidavits to the Customs Service, which subsequently sent a Chinese Inspector to investigate the claim, and record the personal testimony of the Whites who had witnessed the original affidavit. If all was in order, the merchant received a certificate that would allow him to re-enter the U.S. upon his return from China. Although the case files do not specify

the type of certificate issued, they were probably "Section 6" certificates, "which referred to the provision in the 1882 Exclusion Act that stipulated which category of Chinese were exempt from Exclusion."⁵ As mentioned previously, the exempt classes included, "merchants, teachers, students, diplomats, and travelers."⁶

The second stage of administration found in the files is the application. When a merchant returned from China, he was not automatically granted admission, but instead had to apply for it.⁷ He was not allowed to enter the U. S. until federal officials confirmed his status as a returning merchant. This stage involved either sending a Chinese Inspector to the merchant's town of residence to conduct an investigation, or having the town's postmaster conduct the investigation and send his report by mail. The returning merchant was the most vulnerable at this stage. He was held in port, apparently aboard ship, until his status was affirmed. For example, documents indicate Leong Beon, a partner with Wing Hing Yuen, was held aboard the *Shinano Maru* off Port Townsend, Washington, for eight days before he was granted permission to enter the country.⁸



Leong Beon of the Wing Hing Yuen Company, ca. 1901. Source: U. S. Customs Service, *Affidavit*, 21 May 1901. Records of the INS, RG 85, Box RS117, Case No. RS18016, Leong Beon. NARA-PAR.

Leong Dod, of Wing Hing Yuen, appears to have been detained 15 days—from his arrival date at the Port of Sumas, Washington on October 18, 1907 until he secured admission

⁵ Lee, *At America's Gates*, 49.

⁶ Lee, *At America's Gates*, 4.

⁷ The thirty case files reviewed for this research were most often for males. Two of the case files, however, were for women. One of the women, Lee Mo Nui, was a merchant. Her file indicated she was in business in Portland, Oregon. Her file was not selected for further scrutiny because her name had not appeared in previous research and because she did not appear to be connected to the Chinese merchants in Baker City. See Records of the INS, RG 85, Case No. 5017/613, Lee Mo Nui and Case No. 2962, Mrs. Pearl Leo (Liu). NARA-PAR.

⁸ U. S. Customs Service, *Transcription of Examination. S.S. Shinano Maru*, 22 April 1903. Records of the INS, RG 85, Box RS117, Case No. RS18016, Leong Beon. NARA-PAR.

November 3rd.⁹ The documents do not reveal the nature of the holding facility at Sumas where he was in custody.

The final stage of the administration of Exclusion appears to have involved ongoing surveillance of merchants as evidenced by a transcript of testimony identified as, "ad interim investigation of (Leong Boon's) status as a merchant and member of the firm Wing Hing Yuen."¹⁰ The third stage clearly represented a standalone element of Exclusion, as suggested by the lack of other documents in Leong Boon's case file, such as an affidavit prepared for a preinvestigation or documents pertaining to admission. The surveillance meant the merchant was at risk of deportation at any time and was thus required to vigilantly maintain the persona of a merchant.

The Setting: Baker City in the Early 1900s and its Chinatown

Baker City was in the midst of a mining boom in the early 1900s, which brought an immense amount of wealth into the community.¹¹ According to a 1914 report, 53 gold and silver mines in the Sumpter Quadrangle had produced ore conservatively valued at \$15.9 million for gold and \$595,000 for silver.¹² The authors combined the more accurate post-1900 records with pre-1900 records to infer production from both placer and deep mines. The city dubbed itself the "Gold Belt of Eastern Oregon" and the "chief commercial and railroad center" and had more than

⁹ U. S. Customs Service, *Examination of Application*. 18 October 1907; *Finding of H. Edsell*. 3 November 1907. Records of the INS, Box S036, Case No. 704, Leong Dod. NARA-PAR.

¹⁰ U. S. Customs Service, *Transcript of Interim Investigation*. 4 January 1908. Records of the INS, RG 85, Case No. 4858, Leong Boon. NARA-PAR.

¹¹ Rand, *Gold, Jade and Elegance* (Baker: The Record-Courier, *Printers*, 1974).

¹² State of Oregon, "Geology and Mineral Resources of the Sumpter Quadrangle, Oregon." J. T. Pardee and D.F. Hewett, Oregon Bureau of Mines and Geology, *The Mineral Resources of Oregon* 37, no. 6 (October 1914) 11. It is important to emphasize the report only addresses production from mines in the Sumpter Quadrangle; thus it is not reflective of overall mining production in the region. For example, the Whitney, Bourne, Mt. Ireland, Greenhorn and Granite Quadrangles also contained mines that produced to varying degrees.

doubled its population to 6,663 in 1900—up from about 2,600 in 1890.¹³ Baker City boasted a gravity water system, sewer system, and telephone service, and was in the process of building a street railway system.



Baker City Main Street looking north, ca. 1910. Source: Baker County Library, Baker City Oregon, Record 1981.1.244.

The mining boom coincided with a building boom that saw the construction of many beautifully crafted brick and volcanic tuff buildings and elegant residences.¹⁴ Direct rail service "to the east and west" via the Oregon Railway and Navigation Company's (O.R.&N.) line—which connected with the Union Pacific at Huntington—brought not only investors and

¹³ R. L. Polk & Co. Baker City Directory 1905, 17. U. S. Census, *Thirteenth Census*, Population, Volume III, Table 1: Population of Minor Civil Divisions: 1910, 1900, and 1890, 492.

¹⁴ R. L. Polk & Co. Baker City Directory 1905, 17. James Hamrick and Kimberly Lakin, eds., *Historic Baker City: A Walking/Driving Tour* (Baker: Hudson Printing Co., Inc., 1985), 7-27.

speculators, but supplied the opulent Geiser Grand Hotel with fresh lobster and turtle for its 1905 Christmas dinner.¹⁵

Although primary sources are available for Baker City's White community in the early



Panoramic view of Baker City, ca. 1880. Chinatown is the cluster of low buildings in the middle of the photograph. The Joss House is the two-story building with the curved roof at far right. Source: Baker County Library, Baker City, Oregon, Record 1981.1.353.

1900s, little is known about the inhabitants of the local Chinatown because the Chinese did not leave English language records. Whites of the era contributed to this dearth of information by failing to record Chinese contribution on the frontier. Federal citizenship law exacerbated this paucity of evidence. The Naturalization Act of 1790 only allowed aliens classified as “free white persons” to acquire citizenship through naturalization, and consequently Chinese immigrants did not generate the abundant and rich naturalization records housed by local county clerks, including certificates, declarations of intention, petitions and orders. This created a situation in which the bulk of English language records exist in the form of data-driven government documents such as census returns and tax rolls, or in the case of this research, Chinese Exclusion

¹⁵ James Hamrick and Kimberly Lakin, eds., *Historic Baker City: A Walking/Driving Tour* (Baker: Hudson Printing Co., Inc., 1985), 2. Rand, *Gold, Jade and Elegance*, 75.

case files. Such records do not reveal the nature of the people behind the entries—their personalities, aspirations, family connections, or experiences of persecution in the United States. Existing scholarship pertaining to the Chinese in Eastern Oregon has focused on the latter half of the 19th century at a region-wide level and on frontier-era newspaper coverage in selected Oregon cities.¹⁶ In addition, reminiscences of old timers and works of local historians flesh out the few extant sources chronicling the lives of Baker City's Chinese community. Through careful scrutiny of these sources, however, one can craft a basic narrative of the district at the opening of the 1900s.

The 1900 Manuscript Census Return lists around 150 Chinese in the district when the census enumerator came by on June 6 of that year.¹⁷ Photographs of the district show most of the structures were small, single-story, wood frame structures. There was, however, a two-story brick temple, called a "Joss House," and a couple of stone structures, one of which housed Wing Hing Yuen. The memories of long-time resident, Bill Patterson, as retold by author, Helen B. Rand, provides a visual of the scene. Patterson's mother had sent him to the district:

to find An Gow to work for her. He first went to the Win Him Yin Company to inquire. This was a good sized store extending along Resort which sold products used by the Chinese. Bill was sent to the rear of the store where the lots had been filled with little cubicles, each surrounded by a high board fence. Each had a gate in front and another one out the back connecting with the next little shack. He went in and out until he finally found the man he was hunting.¹⁸

Wesley Andrews' description of a "stockade" that had been built "for the restricted district along Resort Street where it crosses Auburn"—in his reminiscence of the Chinatown in the

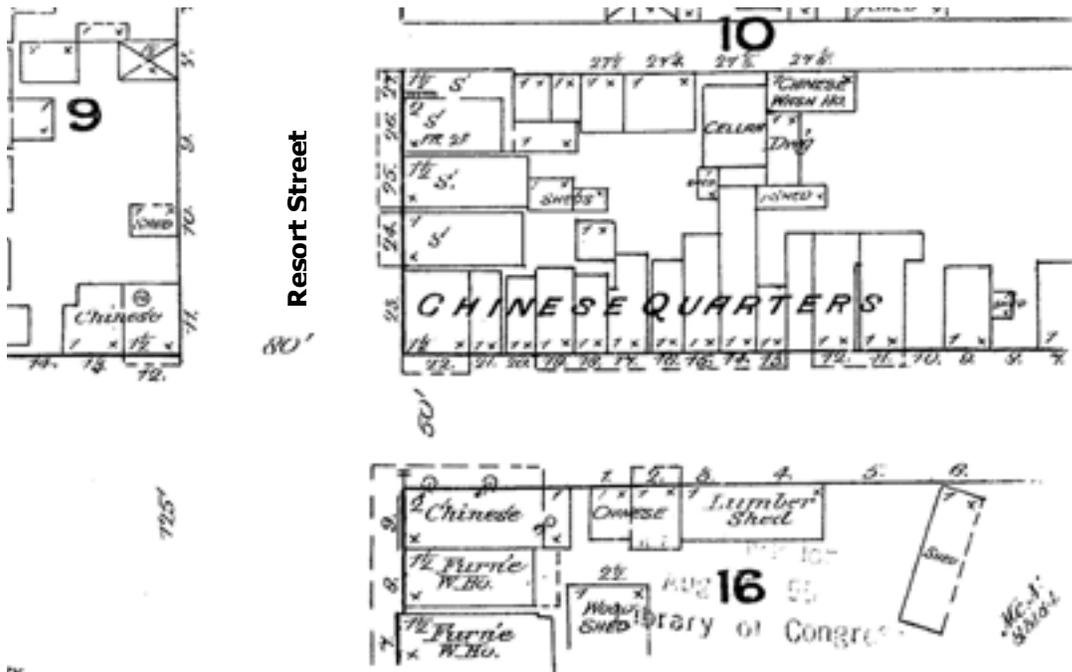
¹⁶ See Christopher Howard Edson, "The Chinese in Eastern Oregon, 1860-1890" (master's thesis, University of Oregon, 1970). Herman B. Chiu, "Oregon's Chinese and Newspaper Coverage: The Road to Acceptance" (master's thesis, University of Oregon, 1995).

¹⁷ U. S. Bureau of the Census, Manuscript Census Returns, *Twelfth Census*, Population Schedule, Baker County, 1900, University of Oregon Library, Eugene, OR. See Schedule No. 1—Population of Baker City, Oregon, Ward 1, pp. 6, 7, 7, 8. [The census enumerator designated two pages as page number 7.]

¹⁸ Rand, *Gold, Jade and Elegance*, 49-50.

1880s—hints at tension between the two communities.¹⁹ His vague description leaves the exact construction of the stockade, its precise location, if it was still standing in the early 1900s and what exactly was being restricted in question.

Frontier era maps of Baker City created by local insurance agent, James Ferguson, and printed by the Sanborn Map Company for fire insurance purposes, show Chinatown located along Resort Street and Auburn Avenue—terminated on the east by the Powder River. Resort



Chinatown in 1884. Source: 1884 Sanborn Map 1. © 2001 The Sanborn Map Company, Sanborn Library, LLC.

Street parallels Front Street—now Main Street—along which the town's main business district was located.

¹⁹ Wesley Andrews, "City in the Eighties: Boyhood Memories," *Oregon Historical Quarterly* 50, no. 1 (June 1949), 87.

Resort Street

number 26, is in the location of the Wing Hing Yuen store. The 1888-1890 versions also cut off the eastern end of Chinatown but show a district similar in layout to the 1884 map.

The 1903 map shows the entire district all the way to its eastern perimeter on the Powder River, including the two-story Joss House that was built in the 1880s.²²

Here, the map signifies the building that houses Wing Hing Yuen as 1718 Resort Street, and

describes it as a stone building. It is not known whether this stone building is the same building shown in the 1884 map or whether it was erected at a later date on the same location. The later, 1911 map shows the house number of the stone building as 1722 Resort, which correlates with Wing Hing Yuen's address listed in the 1905 Polk's Baker City Directory.²³ The 1911 and 1923 maps show little change in the physical layout of the district and its structures, the most apparent change seen in the absence of dwellings labeled as female boarding.

The 1959 map still designates the area as Chinatown but it is apparent the district has largely disappeared. The Joss House, along with most of the dwellings and stores are absent. In their place one sees a few small dwellings, an apartment building, and an auto battery shop. Only a few key structures remain—notably the Joss House

Keeper's residence (first seen on the 1911 map) and the building that housed Wing Hing Yuen.



Chinatown in 1959. Map is oriented east-west. Source: 1923, Republished 1959, Sanborn Sheet 12. © 2001 The Sanborn Map Company, Sanborn Library, LLC.

²² This map, in contrast to the 1884 map, is oriented east-west. Andrews, "Baker City in the Eighties," 87.

²³ R. L. Polk & Co. Baker City Directory 1905, 141.

Unfortunately, the person who updated the 1959 edition did not have Ferguson's fine hand, thus rendering many of the map's descriptors illegible.

The News: The Tone of Chinese Newspaper Coverage Shifts Over Time **The *Bedrock Democrat*: 1870s to 1890s**

Early newspaper coverage in the *Bedrock Democrat*—from the 1870s through the late 1890s—hints that attitudes held by White newspapermen about the town's Chinese population may have changed for the better over the course of that twenty-year period.²⁴ By the 1890s, Chinese news coverage had broadened from the racist pieces of the 1870s to include articles that explained aspects of Chinese culture, announced Chinese events such as Chinese New Year, and covered general Chinese news to varying degrees. This suggests that the general public's attitude may have reflected this trend as well.

During the late 19th and early 20th century, objective journalism was not a professional aspiration. Instead, small-town newspapers such as the *Bedrock Democrat* were intentionally and unabashedly partisan mouthpieces for specific political parties, candidates, constituencies and interests. This is evidenced in the paper's May 18, 1870 edition in which its mission is stated, “[The *Bedrock Democrat*] will endeavor to be one of the true exponents of the Democratic Party in Oregon, and as such strive to merit the support of the party.”²⁵ Thus, news coverage in these papers was influenced by party politics and interests and any interpretations of content should bear this in mind.

The racialized narrative content of early *Bedrock Democrat* coverage is evidenced in the

²⁴ The *Bedrock Democrat* was a four-page weekly published by Abbott & McArthur that commenced publication May 11, 1870. See Isaac Hiatt, *Thirty-One Years in Baker County: A History of the County from 1861 to 1893*, (Baker City: Abbott & Foster Printers, 1893), 64.

²⁵ *Bedrock Democrat*, May 18, 1870. According to the Illustrated History of Baker, Grant, Malheur and Harney Counties, the town had four newspapers in 1885 that included, *The Daily Sage*, the *Bedrock Democrat*, the *Reveille* and the *Tribune*. With the exception of the *Bedrock Democrat*, the political affiliations of the other papers are not known. Western Historical Publishing Company, *An Illustrated History of Baker, Grant, Malheur and Harney Counties: With a Brief Outline of the Early History of the State of Oregon* (1902), 212.

following piece printed in the December 18, 1874 edition. A reprint from the *Owyhee Avalanche*, it reads:

There is an old Chinaman near our office who annoys us both day and night, by scraping away on an old fiddle. We tried to buy it, but the old fellow won't sell; so in all probability, we're doomed to listen to that discord of sweet sounds while old moon-eye lives; which we trust won't be long.²⁶

This racist 1870s piece pokes fun at the spectacle of “old moon-eye” and the cacophonous racket he makes on his fiddle, portraying him as a silly irritant.

A December 20, 1871 article announced a children's book sale sponsored by Rev. Kum Lum, who was a representative of the Home Mission Society of San Francisco—a Baptist charitable organization. The publishers, Abbott & McArthur, printed the announcement at the Reverend's request, describing the books as “worthy of all approbation” and “very appropriate for Christmas presents for children.”²⁷ The editor's acceptance of Kum Lum and his books, however, stemmed from their belief that he was a “genuine Christian,” and not a “heathen Chineese”—a “race” in whom they had “very little faith.”²⁸ Thus, the editors' acceptance of Kum Lum was based on an acculturative trait—his Christianity. Historian Erika Lee's observation that the Chinese “were considered to be biologically inferior because of their status as heathens and their alleged inability to conform to an Anglo-American mold,” helps to explain the editor's approval of Kum Lum, which was based in his Christianity.²⁹ The editors quickly pointed out, however, that the reverend, as a “genuine Christian,” was a unique exception to their overall

²⁶ *Bedrock Democrat*. December 18, 1874. J. M. Shepherd assumed publication of the newspaper in sometime between 1873 and 1874. Missing editions render the exact date uncertain.

²⁷ *Bedrock Democrat*. December 20, 1871. The May 22, 1872 edition elucidates Abbott's full name as Milton H. Additionally, the publishers are identified as M. H. Abbott and Judge L. L. McArthur in the *Morning Democrat, Eastern Oregon's Gold Fields: Baker, Grant, Harney, Malheur and Union Counties, May 20th 1898 Souvenir Edition*. (Baker City: Bowen & Small Publishers, 1898; Republished 1977), 4.

²⁸ *Bedrock Democrat*. December 20, 1871.

²⁹ Lee, *At America's Gates*, 34.

opinion of the Chinese "race" in general.³⁰ Additionally, this edition's "Items In Brief" section reported the death of a "Chinaman" who had died suddenly in "one of the Chinese hellholes of this place."³¹ The piece reported that "foul play" was suspected because "the body was buried quickly...without permitting a white man to see the body."³² Whatever suspicions surrounded the man's death, the editors' reference to the Chinese as living in "hellholes" further supports Lee's assertions.

News coverage of the political debates surrounding the Chinese (Exclusion) Bill was one exception to the *Bedrock Democrat's* rare coverage of the Chinese. Between April 12 and June 21, 1882 the *Bedrock Democrat* published sixteen articles pertaining to the bill or to the Chinese in general. News content during this period included coverage of the congressional debates, criticism of the various versions of the bill, articles that fanned racial biases and articles that reported on violent acts that had been carried out against the Chinese population in the region. The articles expose the push for Exclusion in the western United States—based as it was in perceived competition for labor jobs—and reveal partisan bickering between the Democrats and Republicans. Although both parties had adopted a restrictionist agenda by this time, the Democrats "had been at the forefront of the campaign to exclude the Chinese."³³ Republican President Chester A. Arthur ratified the Chinese Exclusion Act in the midst of this flurry of articles—on May 6, 1882.

An April 12, 1882 reprint from the *Walla Walla Statesman* headlined, "The Chinese Bill Vetoed," expressed frustration at President Arthur's veto of the bill, stating that the "Pacific

³⁰ *Bedrock Democrat*. December 20, 1871.

³¹ *Ibid.*

³² *Bedrock Democrat*. December 20, 1871.

³³ Lucy Salyer, *Laws Harsh as Tigers: Chinese Immigrants and the Shaping of Modern Immigration Law*. (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1995), 14.

Coast States and territories" desires had been "scorned."³⁴ While the piece conceded, "Chinese labor ha[d] been in the past of great benefit to the country in the building of railroads," it asserted the Chinese had "usurped" labor jobs "from those of our own race and blood."

The April 19, 1882 edition printed the thirteen points of Oregon's "Democratic State Platform."³⁵ The fifth point explained the party's opinion of the President's veto:

"That the President's veto of the Chinese immigration bill is a public misfortune. It is the degrading mark of competition with the coolies of China upon the labor of the workingmen of America, and it treats with contemptuous [sic] disregard the unanimos [sic] protest and appeals of the entire Pacific coast. In behalf of the people of Oregon, we disapprove and condemn it, we declare it to be the duty of every citizen, regardless of party, to express his disapproval with his vote as well as his voice."³⁶

An April 26, 1882 article headlined, "The New Chinese Bill," explained how the new bill differed from the one vetoed by President Arthur. According to the article, the new bill could not "be considered a whit less effective than the original bill."³⁷ The revised bill apparently jettisoned a passport system contained in the original bill in favor of a registration system. Under the registration system, all "Chinamen...leaving the country" would be issued "certificates, which will describe their personal appearance, distinguishing marks, etc."³⁸ The certificate was to be "exhibited by the Chinaman on his return to America."³⁹ The writer of the article deemed this development propitious because "under the registration plan proposed by the new bill the number of Chinese in the State at the time it goes into force cannot be increased."⁴⁰ Additionally, the new bill retained the "prohibition of naturalization" as set forth in the original bill and would

³⁴ *Bedrock Democrat*. April 12, 1882.

³⁵ *Bedrock Democrat*. April 19, 1882.

³⁶ *Ibid.*

³⁷ *Bedrock Democrat*. April 26, 1882.

³⁸ *Ibid.*

³⁹ *Ibid.*

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*

suspend Chinese immigration "sixty days after [the bill's] passage."⁴¹ The article's lack of reference to another newspaper indicates the *Bedrock Democrat's* editor, J. T. Donnelly, may have penned the piece although this is not clear. The writer closed the article with the hope "that no obstacles to the speedy passage of the measure in its present shape will be placed in its way."⁴²

The local Democratic Convention took place in Baker City on April 27th. Its proceedings were reported in the *Bedrock Democrat's* May 3, 1882 edition under the headline, "Our Democratic Ticket."⁴³ The article named the local candidates for state and county positions, stating, "each candidate is willing and thoroughly able to stand upon his own merits and carry his own shield."⁴⁴ This singular piece of truly local coverage during this intense political period focused on the experience and character traits of the nominees. Interestingly, nothing in the article and none of the candidates' bios openly stated that there was a local Chinese labor problem or any problem with the Chinese that needed to be addressed. For example, I.B. Ison, one of the nominees for a seat in the House of Representatives, was described as, "eminently qualified to serve...efficiently in the Legislature."⁴⁵ James H. Shinn, "the nominee for county judge" was deemed "thoroughly competent" for that office.⁴⁶ The bio of R.M. Lineberger, the nominee for assessor, described his experience as a "deputy assessor" in Nevada and spoke of him as a "young man of ability and integrity."⁴⁷ Overall, the article described, "the ticket [as] a happy combination of wisdom, strength, efficiency and popularity."⁴⁸

⁴¹ Ibid.

⁴² *Bedrock Democrat*. April 26, 1882.

⁴³ *Bedrock Democrat*. May 3, 1882.

⁴⁴ Ibid.

⁴⁵ Ibid.

⁴⁶ Ibid.

⁴⁷ Ibid.

⁴⁸ Ibid.

The power of the Democratic Party during this period is evidenced by local historian, Isaac Hiatt's, observation that, "the democratic party generally carried the elections in the county" prior to 1886.⁴⁹ After 1886, Hiatt states, the "honors were more evenly divided" between the Democrats and the Republicans.⁵⁰ Given the flurry of pro-Exclusion coverage, this anomalous piece about Baker County's Democratic Party candidates raises several questions. First, how serious were local Democrats about Chinese Exclusion? Or, was the paper simply parroting the party platform as a means of supporting its mission to "be one of the true exponents of the Democratic Party" and to "merit the support of the party"?⁵¹ In their avoidance of the Chinese issue, were local Democratic nominees trying to appease their Republican constituents in an effort to curry their votes and maintain the primacy of the Democratic Party at the local level?

Curiously, the May 10, 1882 *Bedrock Democrat* contained no articles on the Chinese bill or the Chinese in general, in spite of the fact that President Arthur had signed the bill on May 6. This mirrored national trends in which an "eerie silence greeted (the bill's) passage."⁵² Many newspapers, if they reported the bill's passage at all, did so "perfunctorily, with scant comment or criticism."⁵³

A May 24, 1882 article headlined, "Chinese Bill Criticized," doomed the bill to "utterly fail to accomplish what its originators and supporters desire," i.e., to "prevent emigration of any new Chinese subject[s]."⁵⁴ The piece pointed out that it was unknown whether the "Chinese government" would see the law as "a violation of treaty stipulation and [would thus] utterly

⁴⁹ Isaac Hiatt, *Thirty-One Years in Baker County: A History of the County from 1861 to 1893*. (Baker City: Abbott & Foster, 1893; republished 1970), 50.

⁵⁰ Isaac Hiatt, *Thirty-One Years in Baker County*, 50.

⁵¹ *Bedrock Democrat*. May 18, 1870.

⁵² Andrew Gyory, *Closing the Gate: Race, Politics, and the Chinese Exclusion Act*. (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1998), 254.

⁵³ *Ibid.*

⁵⁴ *Bedrock Democrat*. May 24, 1882.

decline to be bound by its terms."⁵⁵ Here, the author references the Burlingame Treaty of 1868 and its later revision, the Angell Treaty of 1880. The Burlingame Treaty—in a U.S. effort to expand trade with China and to gain "an upper hand over European nations" through this trade—accorded full diplomatic status to China.⁵⁶ Significantly, the "treaty granted Chinese individuals the same right as people of other nations to emigrate freely to the U.S."⁵⁷ The Angell Treaty, in contrast, allowed the U.S. government to "regulate, limit or suspend" immigration of Chinese laborers at its discretion.⁵⁸ The wording of the treaty stopped short of absolutely prohibiting Chinese laborers from immigrating—the diplomats promising that they would exercise "wise discretion" and "entire justice" in their regulation of immigration.⁵⁹

The same article went on to express skepticism that the identity papers issued to the Chinese—revealingly described as "similar to freedom papers carried by free negroes before slavery was abolished"—could be monitored adequately to enforce that they were used by the person to whom the paper was issued.⁶⁰ Finally, the piece professed doubt that the Chinese government would "feel it necessary to aid in the detection of any Chinaman who may seek [U.S.] shores under freedom papers," because the law contained "no provision for joint action" between the U.S. and Chinese governments.⁶¹

A June 21, 1882 article discussed the strengths and weaknesses of the "Chinese Certificates," which were a manifestation of the registration system discussed previously.⁶² The certificates would include the individual's name, age, occupation, last place of residence in the

⁵⁵ Ibid.

⁵⁶ Gyory, *Closing the Gate*, 26.

⁵⁷ Ibid.

⁵⁸ Gyory, *Closing the Gate*, 216.

⁵⁹ Gyory, *Closing the Gate*, 215.

⁶⁰ *Bedrock Democrat*. May 24, 1882.

⁶¹ Ibid.

⁶² *Bedrock Democrat*. June 21, 1882.

United States, height, complexion, eye color, and "physical marks or peculiarities."⁶³ One way the certificates could be enforced, the article asserted, was by requiring the holder of the certificate to disclose his last place of residence. This, the article pointed out, would allow the individual to be traced back to a location where it would "be easy for him to find white witnesses to identify him if he is the right person."⁶⁴ Another effective method of enforcement, the article stated, was through the disclosure of "physical marks or peculiarities."⁶⁵ The article exposes the personal and probing nature of what such marks might be, including, "the loss of a tooth; in a mold [sic], old sore marks, or marks on his fingers or palms from labor, or cuts or bruises [sic], or scars...a broken finger." Thus, the article foreshadowed later enforcement of Chinese Exclusion for Baker City's Chinese merchants.⁶⁶ For example, a handwritten interrogation note pertaining to Leong Dod as part of his reentry application in April 1901, noted a "scar outer corner of left eye."⁶⁷ Leong Beon's examination aboard the *Shinano Maru* in April 1903 noted "two small moles outer corner of left eye."⁶⁸

Articles that fanned racial biases also characterized the flurry of articles during this period. For example, the *Bedrock Democrat* ran four articles on opium in its May 3, 1882 edition. Above the fold on the front page one headline screamed, "On the Road to Destruction."⁶⁹ The piece referenced an article originally published in the *Philadelphia Press* that blamed the Chinese laundrymen for introducing "the newsboys of that city" to "the vice of opium

⁶³ Ibid.

⁶⁴ *Bedrock Democrat*. June 21, 1882.

⁶⁵ Ibid.

⁶⁶ Ibid.

⁶⁷ U. S. Customs Service, *Ex. North Pacific*, 19 April 1901. Records of the INS, RG 85, Box RS098, Case No. RS16338, Leong Dod. NARA-PAR.

⁶⁸ U. S. Customs Service, *Transcription of Examination. S.S. Shinano Maru*, 22 April 1903. Records of the INS, RG 85, Box RS117, Case No. RS18016, Leong Beon. NARA-PAR.

⁶⁹ *Bedrock Democrat*. May 3, 1882.

smoking."⁷⁰ The article smugly chided the Philadelphians' naiveté, pointing out that the introduction of opium smoking among the newsboys was "just a slight forerunner of what our Eastern friends may expect from the introduction of the Asiatic type of civilization in their midst."⁷¹ A reprint from the *San Francisco Chronicle* headlined, "A Chinese Evil," again targeted the Chinese laundryman as the scapegoat in the spread of opium smoking, "there is now not a hamlet in any Pacific coast State, where the Chinese laundryman has hung out a shingle, which has not its 'opium joint' frequently [sic] by white people."⁷² This article also raised the specter of youths drawn into degeneracy, "During the last few years the youth of our city have been seduced into smoking opium in frightfully increasing numbers," and pointed out that local police had little success in "checking the evil."⁷³ The remaining articles discussed the joint U.S.-Chinese government's ban on the importation of opium for both White and Chinese shippers, and the Treasury Department's April 16, 1882 order to enforce it.

Articles that reported on violent acts perpetrated against the Chinese also embodied the expanded coverage of the Chinese during this politically charged period. Headlined, "Good Chinaman," one piece reads:

"A report has reached this city just as we were going to press, that a white man had killed a Chinaman near Sumpter. Later – There were two Chinamen shot in a row yesterday at Union Creek, near Auburn, one of the wounded men was brought to town to-day (Tuesday) the other reported dead. An officer has gone to make arrests."⁷⁴

This announcement reported the events dispassionately. The headline, however, is chillingly reminiscent of the racial slur of the era, "the only good Indian is a dead Indian," which had been

⁷⁰ Ibid.

⁷¹ Ibid.

⁷² *Bedrock Democrat*. May 3, 1882.

⁷³ Ibid.

⁷⁴ *Bedrock Democrat*. April 26, 1882.

in use since the 1860s.⁷⁵ The second piece, found in the "Bedrock Nuggets," reports, "Three Chinamen were recently foully murdered near Lewiston, Idaho. A man named Galloway is suspected."

These pieces raise several interpretive questions. First, did the anti-Chinese fervor of this period contribute to the deaths? Second, were the murders anomalous, and thus attributable to the height of anti-Chinese fervor, as a review of day-to-day news coverage would indicate? Third, was the *Bedrock Democrat* in the habit of reporting all Chinese murders in the region? Or, fourth, did the editor choose to report these particular murders, simply due to their timing in the midst of this period of heightened Chinese news coverage? Due to the scarcity of Chinese news coverage, however, it is unclear if such murders were a regular, yet unreported occurrence.

J. T. Donnelly and Co. assumed publication of the *Bedrock Democrat* on April 1, 1882, just prior to this period of expanded Chinese news coverage⁷⁶ Curiously, one J. T. Donnelly testified to Leong Dod's status as a merchant over twenty years later in November 1905.⁷⁷ At that time, the man gave his occupation as the "Cashier of First National Bank" and stated that he had resided in Baker City for "Twenty-six or 27 years."⁷⁸ While no explicit evidence was found that unequivocally links the two Donnelly's as the same individual, the Donnelly who testified for Leong Dod in 1905 stated he had lived in Baker City since 1878 or 1879. Thus, he may have been the same man who took over as the newspaper's publisher in April 1882.

The testimony Donnelly gave on behalf of Leong Dod in 1905 was the only time the man acted as a witness for a Chinese merchant in the case files reviewed in this research. Thus, his

⁷⁵ Wolfgang Mieder, "'The Only Good Indian is a Dead Indian': History and Meaning of a Proverbial Stereotype," *The Journal of American Folklore* 106, no. 419 (Winter 1993), 42.

⁷⁶ *Bedrock Democrat*. April 19, 1882.

⁷⁷ U. S. Customs Service, *Testimony of J.T. Donnelly*, 27 November 1905. Case No. 704, Leong Dod. NARA-PAR.

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*

anti-Chinese fervor, as inferred by the marked editorial change after he assumed the reins of the newspaper, may have toned down somewhat from the early 1880s. As a witness in 1905, Donnelly testified that he had known Leong Dod for "at least ten years" and that the merchant had "done business with us in the bank in his name and in the name of the firm, issued checks against accounts of drafts to pay for merchandise, and such things as that."⁷⁹ None of the sources reviewed for this study indicate where the publisher Donnelly lived prior to his arrival in Baker City. Thus, one cannot surmise if his anti-Chinese attitudes were reflective of local racism or from his having lived in an area rife with anti-Chinese sentiment—such as California—prior to his move to Baker City.

Herman B. Chiu's analysis of Chinese newspaper coverage in Oregon in the 1870s and 1880s reveals how the *Bedrock Democrat* compared to newspapers in other Oregon towns in its coverage of the Chinese. He examined newspapers from John Day, Astoria and Jacksonville, in addition to Baker City, because each community had a significant Chinese population at that time. He found that the *Bedrock Democrat* contained "the largest number of 'positive' to 'neutral' stories relating to the Chinese of the four papers in the study."⁸⁰ A word of caution is appropriate here, however, because the papers Chiu studied very rarely published news about the Chinese. On the occasions they did, Chiu found the news derogatory and racially biased to varying degrees.

One example from Chiu's study is a February 1882 article that announced the commencement of Chinese New Year celebrations. The article described how the Chinese lit firecrackers, made "offerings to the spirits, lancantations, prayers, etc." and how they continued

⁷⁹ Ibid.

⁸⁰ Chiu, "Oregon's Chinese and Newspaper Coverage," 53.

"celebrating as long as their money lasted."⁸¹ Chiu pointed out how this portrayal of the celebrants made the Chinese "appear mysterious and foolish."⁸² In contrast, the paper's announcement of Chinese New Year in its January 28, 1895 article begins with the perfunctory announcement, "The Chinese New Year begins Friday, January 25, and tomorrow local Celestials will cease their labors and proceed to celebrate, an operation that requires about three days."⁸³ The article proceeded to describe the Chinese calendar in the tone of a human-interest piece. References to firecrackers, spirits and hedonistic revelry until one's funds are exhausted are markedly absent from the 1895 article. Instead, its factual announcement, along with the description of the calendar points to an editor, and a readership, that may have become accustomed to the festivities since the 1882 report and was perhaps accepting of them and curious about Chinese culture. Possibly the Chinese had been in the area long enough that White townspeople had become familiar with them and their customs through social interaction and business relationships. The article's use of the common pejorative label—Celestials—suggests, however, that a residual level of racism occupied the social psyche of the editors in parallel with gains in respect and understanding of Chinese culture.

Other articles from the 1890s indicate certain facets of the relationship between Baker City's White and Chinese business communities remained complicated and divisive. For example, the "Brief Mention" column of the February 11, 1895 *Weekly Bedrock Democrat* noted, "The Chinese laundrymen are greatly disturbed by the enforcement of the ordinance requiring them to pay a quarterly license of \$10. They don't like it and say they will be compelled to close

⁸¹ Chiu, "Oregon's Chinese and Newspaper Coverage," 54. See also Herman B. Chiu, "Power of the Press: How Newspapers in Four Communities Erased Thousands of Chinese from Oregon History," *American Journalism* 16, no. 1 (1999).

⁸² Chiu, "Oregon's Chinese and Newspaper Coverage," 55.

⁸³ *Weekly Bedrock Democrat*. January 28, 1895. The November 12, 1894 edition of the *Weekly Bedrock Democrat* names the publishers as Abbott & Small. *Eastern Oregon's Gold Fields* names the men: "Messrs. I.B. Bowen and George B. Small" and states that they took over publication of the paper in May 1887; see page 4.

up shop."⁸⁴ The same edition reported the proceedings of the previous evening's city council meeting. Apparently, the Chinese laundrymen had not paid the fee and later resisted police efforts to collect it. The article relates, "Chief of Police Lamb reported that he had been unable to collect wash house licenses and asked for instructions. The officer was instructed to enforce the ordinance relating to the same."⁸⁵

A month later, an article headlined "Steam Laundry Purchased" tells of "F. M. Gates'" purchase of the "Baker City steam laundry plant."⁸⁶ The article contended, "The need of a good laundry has been a long felt want in Baker City and now that one is to be established the people should show their appreciation by liberally patronizing it."⁸⁷ Although the article did not overtly state that customers should discontinue their patronage of the Chinese laundries, the 1895 Sanborn maps demonstrate Chinese hegemony in the laundry business.⁸⁸ Therefore, the Whites' only other option for laundry service beyond the steam laundry would have been the Chinese-owned establishments. The Sanborn maps show three Chinese laundries located on the border between the commercial and White residential districts on 1st Street between Washington and Court Avenues.⁸⁹ In addition, a fourth Chinese laundry was located at the south end of Front

⁸⁴ *Weekly Bedrock Democrat*. February 11, 1895.

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*

⁸⁶ *Weekly Bedrock Democrat*. March 18, 1895.

⁸⁷ *Weekly Bedrock Democrat*. March 18, 1895.

⁸⁸ The "People's Steam Laundry," a White-owned laundry located on Washington Avenue one-half block east of Resort Street, is mentioned in *Eastern Oregon's Gold Fields*. The publication was a souvenir edition of the *Morning Democrat* that printed in May 1898. The 1895 Sanborn Map 11 does not show a laundry at this location. The 1903 Sanborn Map 9, however, shows the "X.L. Steam Laundry" at this location. Thus, the People's Steam Laundry was not likely in operation in 1895, leaving the Baker City Steam Laundry as the only White-owned establishment mentioned in news accounts or shown on Sanborn maps. *Morning Democrat, Eastern Oregon's Gold Fields*, 20. 1895 Sanborn Map 11. © 2001 The Sanborn Map Company, Sanborn Library, LLC. See block number 280. 1903 Sanborn Map 9. © 2001 The Sanborn Map Company, Sanborn Library, LLC. See block number 280.

⁸⁹ The Chinese laundries were designated as "Chin. Wash Ho." 1895 Sanborn Map 7. © 2001 The Sanborn Map Company, Sanborn Library, LLC. See block numbers 129 and 130.

Street.⁹⁰ The only other laundry shown on the maps is the "Baker City Steam Laundry," which was on Resort Street south of Auburn Avenue, its location nearly contiguous to Chinatown.⁹¹

Passing ordinances that regulated laundries, and discriminated against Chinese establishments in particular, was not unusual. Marie Rose Wong has pointed out that San Francisco levied differential license fees "based on the type of transportation used."⁹² For example, a business that operated "a single wagon with one horse" paid a fee of "\$2 per quarter."⁹³ A business operating with "two such vehicles" paid "\$4 per quarter."⁹⁴ The Chinese laundries, however, were levied a \$15 per quarter fee even though they did not use such vehicles or provide a delivery service.⁹⁵ In contrast, Wong found that Portland, Oregon's license fees for Chinese-owned laundries were "no higher nor...restrictions harsher" than they were for White-owned businesses.⁹⁶ Portland charged "a \$5 quarterly fee for all laundry businesses, including those run by non-Chinese."⁹⁷ Although the reporting on the license issue did not indicate the steam laundry was exempt from the license fee or that it paid a reduced fee, it seems apparent, given Chinese hegemony in this business domain, that the license fee may have been discriminatory in nature. Unfortunately, the newspaper did not report further on this issue; thus, the ongoing course of Chinese resistance to the license and Chief Lamb's attempts to collect the fee is not known.

Several articles from the 1890s, however, are more newsworthy, detailed, and respectful than earlier coverage from the 1870s and 1880s. A January 27, 1896 article headlined "A

⁹⁰ 1895 Sanborn Map 10. © 2001 The Sanborn Map Company, Sanborn Library, LLC. See block number 164.

⁹¹ 1895 Sanborn Map 11. © 2001 The Sanborn Map Company, Sanborn Library, LLC. See block number 289.

⁹² Marie Rose Wong, *Sweet Cakes, Long Journey: The Chinatowns of Portland, Oregon*. (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2004), 36.

⁹³ *Ibid.*

⁹⁴ *Ibid.*

⁹⁵ Wong, *Sweet Cakes, Long Journey*, 36.

⁹⁶ *Ibid.* Wong references "Portland, City Ordinance 2958 (23 December 1880), 281.

⁹⁷ Wong, *Sweet Cakes, Long Journey*, 36-37.

Chinese Funeral,” for example, detailed “a first class funeral” of “Choi Foy” who was “high up in the degrees of Chinese Masonry.”⁹⁸ The article described the lavishness of the funeral, how “the finest hearse in the city” took the body to the cemetery and that “a large number of the Chinese population attended.”⁹⁹ The unbiased tone found in the reference to Chinese masonry indicates an acknowledgment of and respect for this Chinese institution. Additionally, the reference to the “Chinese population” as opposed to employing the common derogatory epithet of the era—Celestials—further points to increasing respect for the community and its institutions over earlier coverage. Finally, the fact that the Chinese were allowed access to the hearse—presumably owned by a White—points to acceptance by the White owner for Chinese use, a possible acculturation of Chinese funerary ritual and, therefore, a possible cultural connection between the two communities at least in this one aspect of death ritual.

A second article from this later period, run on December 7, 1896 under the headline “Going Back to China,” described an elderly Chinese resident “known as Lee” who had saved “about \$1,000” and was planning to return to China.¹⁰⁰ It informed the reader that returning home was the goal of every Chinese sojourner, but that this rarely occurred. When it did, the article stated, it “is indeed quite fortunate.”¹⁰¹ The piece subtly belittled the man, however, by printing his pidgin English reference to his wife as his “wifo” while at the same time showing empathy for the man’s separation from his wife for “almost a quarter of a century.”¹⁰² The fact that this man's accomplishment was deemed noteworthy enough to warrant an article several paragraphs in length and that his longtime employers at “The Mint” warmly expressed “regrets

⁹⁸ *Weekly Bedrock Democrat*. January 27, 1896.

⁹⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁰ *Weekly Bedrock Democrat*. December 7, 1896.

¹⁰¹ *Ibid.*

¹⁰² *Ibid.*

over his leaving," bespeaks of both a genuine fondness for this man as an individual and of a cultural understanding of and respect for the Chinese sojourner status.¹⁰³

A third article, headlined "The Chinese Lily: A Chinaman Relates a Story [Of] How It Was Discovered," ran on the front page of the February 3, 1896 edition of the *Weekly Bedrock Democrat*. Apparently, a local "Chinaman" had related the story of how the lily was discovered, which the paper's editors deemed "of considerable interest" to their readers due to the "fad of having Chinese lilies in many homes."¹⁰⁴ The unnamed Chinese laundryman related the following tale:

"Once on a time there lived a Chinaman who had two wives. Each wife bore him a son. The man died in a terrible scourge, which swept away many hundreds of the Chinamen, and then there came the division of property for the children. The property consisted of a piece of very fertile land in a beautiful valley, which would produce any variety of food plant known to that zone.

The other was a narrow strip of land along the bed of a small stream, rocky and sterile and seemingly worth nothing as a means of subsistence for the owner. One of the widows proposed to the other that the two pieces of land be each equally divided between the two sons, arguing that that was perfectly fair and the only just division. But the other so strenuously insisted on having the fertile piece for her son that the other yielded, although, after the division had been made, she sorrowed deeply and feared she had doomed her own son to a life of hard labor because she had allowed all the good land to slip from his grasp.

From the rich soil the one son reaped bountiful harvests, while from the rock piece the less fortunate son at first took nothing. Finally, the latter noticed a flower, which bloomed out from among the rocks, and it was found nowhere else in China. He also discovered that the bulbs could be transplanted, and, if placed in similar soil, would blossom. These bulbs came into great demand, until he finally came to sell them and become immensely rich from the trade he built up."¹⁰⁵

In addition to relating this tale—with its themes of enduring through adversity, seeing the possibilities and making the most of them, and persisting despite having been dealt an unfair hand—the article points out that the Chinese "regard the Chinese lily sown on that land almost

¹⁰³ Ibid. Note: The street sign in the right foreground of the Baker City Main Street photograph shown on page 7 says, "The Mint."

¹⁰⁴ *Weekly Bedrock Democrat*. February 3, 1896.

¹⁰⁵ *Weekly Bedrock Democrat*. February 3, 1896.

sacredly," that, "wherever Chinamen are found in America, there the species of Chinese lily is found."¹⁰⁶ Local pioneer and lifetime resident, Loy Winter Wisdom, related:

"The Chinese were great for gift-giving. In the Fall a Chinese would take Chinese lily bulbs to all his friends; these were put into a dish or bowl with rocks to hold them steady and by Chinese New Year in February the bulbs would be in full bloom. It was a sign of good luck if one's bulbs did well."¹⁰⁷

Thus, the beloved lily made its way to Baker City and into the homes of Whites. Given the parallel metaphors found in this tale with Chinese experience in the U.S., it seems no surprise that this hardy plant would be a companion to the Chinese on the frontier.

The *Weekly Bedrock Democrat* coverage of the late 1890s falls at the cusp of the earliest documents contained in the case files. The articles hint at a White community that had gained respect for its Chinese population, as well as showing an increased interest in and knowledge of Chinese culture. News coverage during the 1882 Congressional debates surrounding the Chinese Exclusion Bill raise interpretive questions about how the local editor, J. T. Donnelly, reflected or diverged from the Democratic Party's state and national agenda. The editor's anti-Chinese stance is readily apparent as seen in the increased anti-Chinese news coverage during this period. Coverage of the local Democratic Convention and the positions of local candidates, however, do not mention a local dispute between White and Chinese labor. This suggests that Baker City's Democrats may not have mirrored the staunchly restrictionist views of others in the party—such as those in California. To be certain, this paucity of coverage does not constitute evidence of the absence of a local labor dispute. It does, however, raise questions about how serious local Democrats were about Chinese Exclusion.

¹⁰⁶ Ibid.

¹⁰⁷ Loy Winter Wisdom, *Memories: Ninety Years of Baker City*. (Baker: Baker Printing and Lithography, 1976), 63.

The license fee meted out to the laundries, and the Chinese laundrymen's resistance to it, suggests that facets of the relationship remained racially divisive. In contrast, the White perception of Chinese masonry as a counterpart to a Euro-American fraternal organization hints at a cultural bridge between the two communities. Additionally, the exchange of lilies demonstrates Baker City's Chinese were reaching out to the White community. Both the newspaper reporting and Wisdom's reminiscence indicate the White recipients of the bulbs not only accepted them but also enjoyed them. Moreover, Chiu's findings, when combined with the changes in tone of the *Bedrock Democrat/Weekly Bedrock Democrat* between the 1870s and 1890s points to Baker City as a community that may have treated its Chinese residents somewhat more respectfully than other Oregon towns of the era that had large Chinese populations.

The Chinese Merchants: Wing Hing Yuen and On On Co.

This paper focuses in particular on information gleaned from the case files of men who were partners in two Chinese businesses—Wing Hing Yuen and On On Co. The case file collection contains the most files for the partners of Wing Hing Yuen.¹⁰⁸ Sources indicate the business prospered in the early 1900s and had a run of nearly 50 years. The Baker County Tax Roll of 1890 indicates "Ming Hing Yuan" owned "Block A, Part of Lot 3" in Fisher's Add'n" of Baker City.¹⁰⁹ Moreover, the Chinese Exclusion case file of Leong Sun who left for China in October 1890 states the firm owned "lot No. 2 in Block "A" in said Baker City Oregon, together with the Stone Store building and other improvements situate [sic] thereon."¹¹⁰ The Chinese

¹⁰⁸ The collection contained nine case files for partners of Wing Hing Yuen. The 1905 Polk's Baker City Directory also lists Sang Ling Hop Kee & Co., Sin Kwong Hop, Sing Lee & Co., and Yee Yuen & Co. in its Classified Business Directory as proprietors of Chinese and Japanese Goods; see page 578.

¹⁰⁹ Baker County Oregon, Tax Roll 1890, 3rd page of "W" section, Line 24.

¹¹⁰ *Case files of Chinese Immigrants, 1890-1914*, M1638, Roll 1, Case 1, microfilm, quoted in Brian Thornton, "Exceptions to the Rule: Chinese Merchants and the Exclusion Laws, 1890-1894," *Pacific Northwest Forum* 6, no. 1 (1992): 53.

Inspector's report of February 17, 1904, describes the "stock on hand" at the store to be of "considerable proportions."¹¹¹ He further characterized the business as able to "easily support all the active members."¹¹²



Standard Station at the corner of Auburn Avenue and Main (formerly Front) Street looking east ca. 1930. The Wing Hing Yuen store is seen in the middle, left of the photograph, partially obscured by the Standard Station garage. Source: Baker County Library, Baker City, Oregon, Record 1992.11.

The business was still in operation at 1722 Resort Street as late as 1937.¹¹³ The 1930 Baker County Tax Roll showed "Lot 2, Blk. A" under the ownership of "Poy, Lee et al."¹¹⁴ Although this entry does not show the property under the ownership of Wing Hing Yuen, the case files indicate Lee Poy was a partner.¹¹⁵ The reference to "et al" in the tax entry points to multiple owners, implying the property remained under the collective ownership of the firm's partners.

¹¹¹ U. S. Customs Service, *Letter of Chinese Inspector in Charge*, 17 February 1904. Records of the INS, RG 85, Case No. 1009/2, Long Guoy. NARA-PAR.

¹¹² *Ibid.*

¹¹³ R. L. Polk & Co. Baker City Directory 1937, 113, 117, 157.

¹¹⁴ Baker County Oregon, Tax Roll 1930, Vol. 2, p. 121, Line 2 lists "Poy, Lee et al" as having paid taxes on "Fisher's Add to Baker, Ore., Lot 2, Block A."

¹¹⁵ Lee Poy is listed as a partner of Wing Hing Yuen. U.S. Customs Service, *Partnership List of the Wing Hing Yuen Company*, 9 March 1911. Records of the INS, RG 85, Box RS158, Case No. RS27253, Leong Dod. NARA-PAR.

The discrepancy between the lot numbers listed in the 1890 and 1930 tax rolls is alluded to in the case files. One of the partners, Leong Dod, affirmed in testimony in January 1908 that the firm owned "the Noodle Restaurant" located next door to the store "and the cribs in the rear of the building."¹¹⁶ Whatever purchases and sales of property took place between 1890 and 1930, the firm nonetheless appears to have owned property as late as 1930 and was still listed in the city directory as late as 1937.



On On Co. Dry Goods store at left, its sign partially obscured by the automobile, ca. 1910. South side of Court Avenue between Main (formerly Front) Street and 1st Street. The Ellis Transfer Company wagon is the main subject of the photograph. Source: Baker County Library, Baker City, Oregon, Record 1981.1.154.

The second establishment, On On Co., was located in Baker City's White business district and catered to a White clientele. An affidavit on behalf of Leong Kie of On On Co., dated January 14, 1904, signed collectively by witnesses, J. H. Parker, P. Basche and S. A. Heilner, indicates the firm had been in business "on Court Street between Main and First Streets" since 1896.¹¹⁷ The firm did not own the property in which the store was located but rented the space

¹¹⁶ U. S. Customs Service, *Testimony of Leong Dod*, 4 January 1908; *Testimony of W. A. Baird*, 4 January 1908. Case No. 4858, Leong Boon. NARA-PAR.

¹¹⁷ U. S. Customs Service, *Affidavit*, 14 January 1904. Records of the INS, RG 85, Box S010, Case No. 159, Leong Kie. NARA-PAR.

from Heilner.¹¹⁸ Heilner described the company's stock as "mostly dry goods, fancy Chinese and Japanese goods," which were sold "mostly to the white people...because they keep mostly white



Leong Kie of On On Company, ca. 1904. Source: U.S. Customs Service, *Affidavit*, 14 January 1904. Records of the INS, RG 85, Box S010, Case No. 159, Leong Kie. NARA-PAR.

goods."¹¹⁹ The testimony of M. Hoff expands upon Heilner's testimony by describing On On Co. as a business where his "wife buys gowns for the children."¹²⁰ He went on to state that they "make up shirts and ladies gowns" and sell "baskets like they have in those Chinese concerns, willow work and

bamboo."¹²¹ The collective affidavit of Parker, Basche and Heilner adds "men's furnishings, curios and fancy articles" to the store's stock.¹²²

The 1903 Sanborn map shows the businesses of the three witnesses—Parker, Basche and Heilner—were located in close proximity to each other and to On On Company. Sigmund Heilner was the proprietor of the Heilner Commercial and Commission Company.¹²³ The business was located in the Heilner Block on the northwest corner of Front Street and Court

¹¹⁸ U. S. Customs Service, *Testimony of S. A. Heilner*, 2 December 1903. Records of the INS, RG 85, Case No. 4775, Leong Chung Goon. NARA-PAR.

¹¹⁹ *Ibid.*

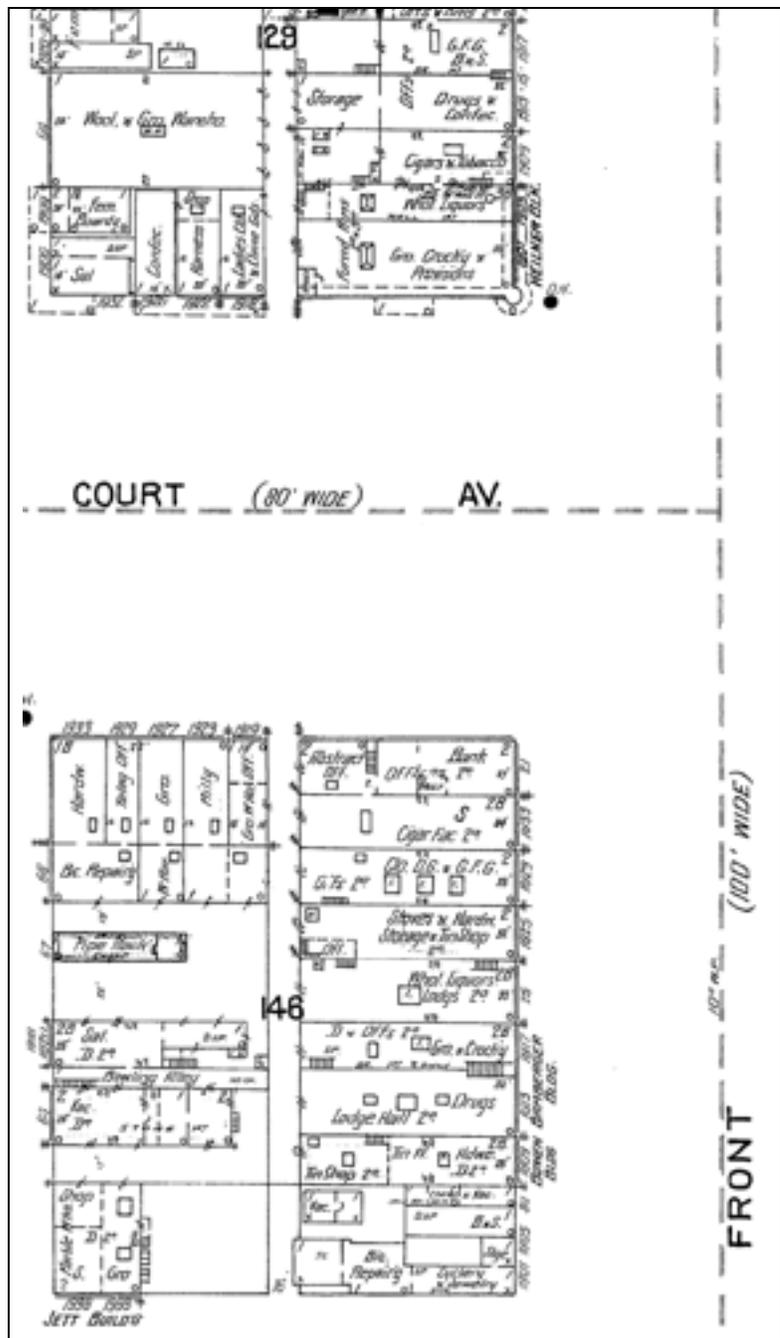
¹²⁰ U. S. Customs Service, *Transcript of Testimony*, 3 December 1903. Case No. 4775, Leong Chung Goon. NARA-PAR.

¹²¹ *Ibid.*

¹²² U. S. Customs Service, *Affidavit*, 14 January 1904. Case No. 159, Leong Kie. NARA-PAR.

¹²³ R. L. Polk & Co. Baker City Directory 1905, 75.

Avenue.¹²⁴ The building's three stories and cupola dominate the left side of Main (formerly Front) Street in the photograph shown previously. First National Bank, with which Parker was affiliated, was just across Court Avenue from Heilner's store, located on the southwest corner of Front and Court.¹²⁵ Peter Basche's business, Basche-Sage Hardware, was located two doors south from the bank at 1825-1829 Front Street, between Court and Valley Avenues, just out of the photograph.¹²⁶ On On Company was across the alley behind the bank and across Court Street from Heilner's store. Its location is denoted as 1919 Court Avenue on



1903 Sanborn Map 13 blocks 129 and 146 depicts the proximity of Heilner Block, First National Bank and Basche-Sage Hardware Co. to On On Co. Source: 1903 Sanborn Map 13. © 2001 The Sanborn Map Company, Sanborn Library, LLC.

¹²⁴ 1903 Sanborn Map 13. © 2001 The Sanborn Map Company, Sanborn Library, LLC. See block number 129. Map is oriented east-west.
¹²⁵ R. L. Polk & Co. Baker City Directory 1905, 63. See also 1903 Sanborn Map 13, block number 146. Map is oriented east-west. 1903 Sanborn Map 13. © 2001 The Sanborn Map Company, Sanborn Library, LLC.
¹²⁶ R. L. Polk & Co. Baker City Directory 1908-09, 34. See also 1903 Sanborn Map 13, block number 146. Map is oriented east-west. 1903 Sanborn Map 13. © 2001 The Sanborn Map Company, Sanborn Library, LLC.

the map.¹²⁷ The space is shown on the map as having an office next to the street, with a grocery warehouse to the rear. This correlates with Heilner's testimony in which he stated Leong Kie rented the space from him and that he was in On On Co. "nearly every day because our back door leads to their store."¹²⁸ Heilner's business was in part a grocery, thus it would have been feasible that he used the space to store groceries.

Those Who Witnessed: the Banker, the Hardware Merchant and the Postmaster

According to Erika Lee, the "social and class standing of witnesses" was a key consideration for immigration officials.¹²⁹ Middle and upper class White witnesses were looked upon more favorably by immigration officers and increased a merchant's "chances of reentering the country."¹³⁰ Who was providing testimony on behalf of these merchants and what does that tell us about the merchants' adaptation to Exclusion and their relationships with White witnesses?

Two men in particular acted as witnesses for affidavits and provided personal testimony repeatedly for these merchants. The first, J. H. Parker, gave his occupation as Vice President of First National Bank.¹³¹ The 1910 Baker County Tax Roll lists Parker as one of 18 bank stockholders—his personal shares valued at \$4,345.¹³² He appears to have moved



James H. Parker, date unknown. Source: Baker County Library, Baker City, Oregon, Record 1981.1.308-1.

¹²⁷ 1903 Sanborn Map 13. © 2001 The Sanborn Map Company, Sanborn Library, LLC. See block number 146. Map is oriented east-west.

¹²⁸ U. S. Customs Service, *Testimony of S. A. Heilner*, 2 December 1903. Records of the INS, RG 85, Case No. 4775, Leong Chung Goon. NARA-PAR.

¹²⁹ Lee, *At America's Gates*, 137.

¹³⁰ *Ibid.*

¹³¹ U. S. Customs Service, *Transcript of Application*, 4 January 1908. Case No. 4858, Leong Boon. NARA-PAR.

¹³² Baker County, Oregon, Tax Roll 1910, Vol. 2, p. 161, Stockholders listed on Lines 12-29; "Parker, J. H." entered on Line 22.

up in the social strata since the 1870s when the *Bedrock Democrat* printed an advertisement for one J. H. Parker who was a "Dealer and Worker in Tin, Sheet-Iron, and Copper."¹³³

In addition to his position at the bank, the Polk's 1893 Baker City Directory listed Parker as the President of Baker City Gas & Electric Company and the Treasurer of Baker Valley Irrigation Company. These affiliations were listed in the miscellaneous information contained in the opening pages of the directory under the heading "Incorporated Companies."¹³⁴ The 1908



First National Bank interior, southwest corner of Front (Main) Street and Court Avenue, 1888. The men in the photo are identified as Walter Fernald, Vice President; J. H. Parker, Cashier; Thomas Downing, Assistant Cashier, and Sam Murphy, Bookkeeper. Source: Baker County Library, Baker City, Oregon, Record 1981.1.230.

directory does not contain this section so it is difficult to surmise if Parker was still involved with these companies. Tax data are inconsistent as well. The above-mentioned list of stockholders was the only time such an entry appeared in the ledgers referenced for this research.¹³⁵ The 1893 information, nonetheless, points to Parker's heavy involvement with the town's infrastructural and real estate development during the early years of its mining boom, in addition to his position at the bank.

¹³³ *Bedrock Democrat*. December 18, 1871.

¹³⁴ R. L. Polk & Co. Baker City Directory 1893, 22-23.

¹³⁵ Ledgers referenced were from years 1879, 1890, 1900, 1910, 1920, and 1930.

The second man who provided testimony was Peter Basche, a prominent and wealthy hardware merchant. Data compiled from the 1910 Baker County Assessment and Tax Roll indicate Basche paid over \$3,800 in taxes that year.¹³⁶ The entries indicate he was involved in multiple business partnerships in addition to his hardware business. His real estate holdings



County Judge Peter Basche, ca. 1912.
Source: Judy Boguski, e-mail message to author, December 14, 2007.

included lots in Baker City, acreages outside the city, and properties in Sumpter, McEwen and Whitney. Nearly two thirds of his taxes that year—based on land and personal property valued at over \$80,000—stemmed from his lucrative hardware business, Basche-Sage Hardware Co.¹³⁷ His second largest tax liability of over \$800 was incurred on multiple city and county properties he owned in partnership with J. H. Parker.¹³⁸ The relationship

between the two men stretched back over 30 years by 1910. According to Basche family records, Peter married his wife Lucy at Parker's home in 1876.¹³⁹ Basche had political connections as well that included holding the position of County Treasurer.¹⁴⁰ A letter he penned to the U. S. Immigration Service in March 1913 evidences his later position of County Judge. The letter, written on "Office of the County Judge of Baker County" letterhead, shows Basche's title appended to his signature.¹⁴¹

¹³⁶ Baker County Oregon, Assessment and Tax Roll 1910, Vol. 1, p. 32, Lines 12-25; p. 33, Lines 1-21.

¹³⁷ Baker County Oregon, Assessment and Tax Roll 1910, Vol. 1, p. 33, Lines 19-21, entry for *Basche-Sage Hardware Co.*

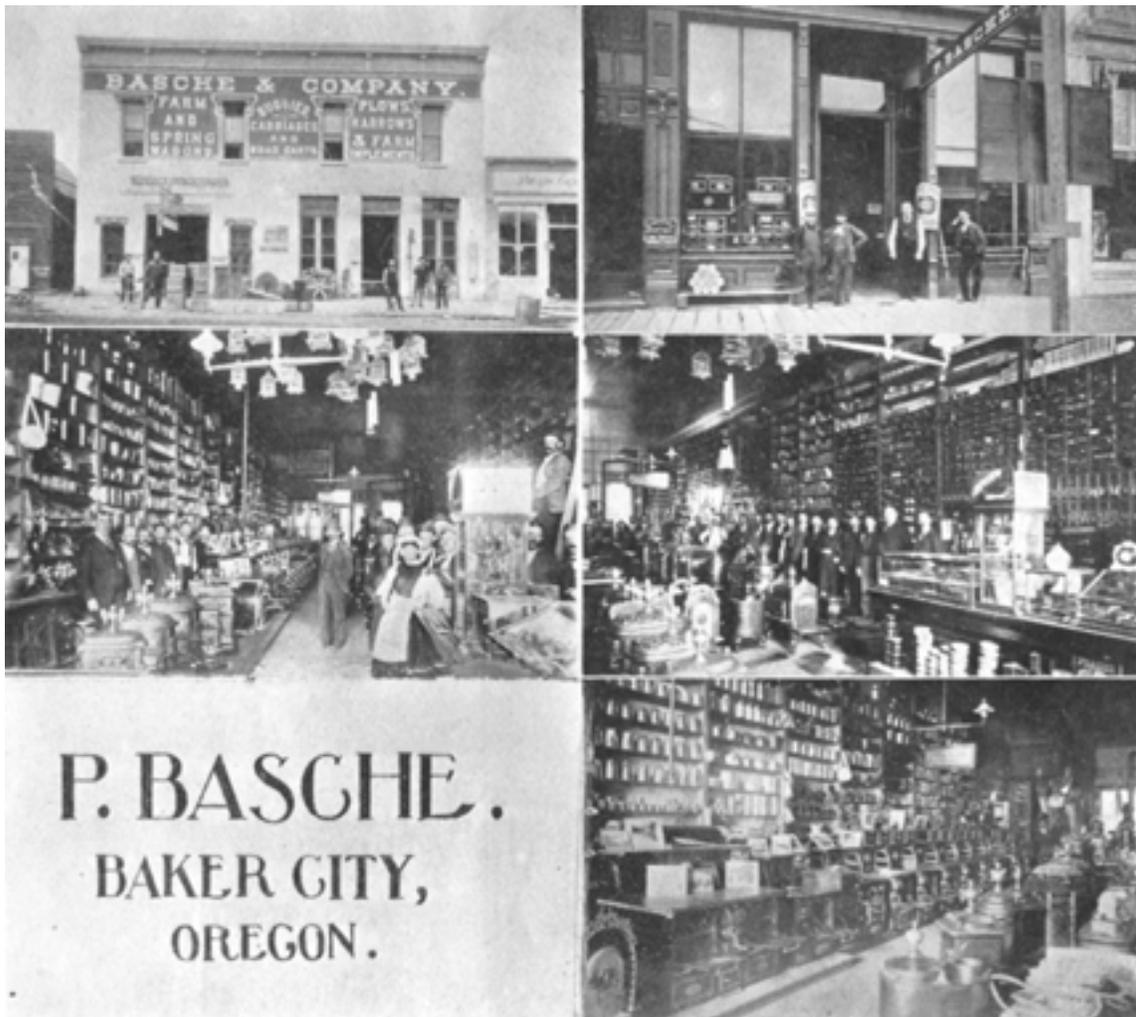
¹³⁸ Baker County Oregon, Assessment and Tax Roll 1910, Vol. 1, p. 33, Lines 5-12, entry for *Basche P. & Parker J. H.*

¹³⁹ Correspondence of Judy Boguski with author, December 2007.

¹⁴⁰ R. L. Polk & Co. Baker City Directory 1908-1909, 18.

¹⁴¹ U. S. Customs Service, *Letter of P. Basche*, 8 March 1913. Records of the INS, RG 85, Case No. 2962, Mrs. Pearl Leo (Liu). NARA-PAR.

Basche's connection to Wing Hing Yuen, according to testimony he gave on behalf of Leong Dod, in March 1911, was in relation to some placer mines "at Connor Creek near Huntington, with which [he was] concerned."¹⁴² He explained, "The mines are worked by the Chinese and Leong Dod's firm has furnished the supplies."¹⁴³ Basche's curious coupling of the



Basche & Company advertisement, 1897. Source: Baker County Library, Baker City, Oregon, Record 1980.1.517.

Chinese workers in the same sentence as his reference to supplies, however, hints that Wing Hing Yuen may have acted "as sort of a hiring hall for Chinese labor" in a manner similar to the

¹⁴² U. S. Customs Service, *Testimony of P. Basche*, 9 March 1911. Case No. RS27253, Leong Dod. NARA-PAR.

¹⁴³ *Ibid.*

Kam Wah Chung Co. of John Day.¹⁴⁴ Here, it would seem that Basche—when taking into consideration his obvious wealth combined with his livelihood as a hardware merchant—would be able to outfit his mining operations with everything he could possibly need. Indeed, Basche-Sage Hardware Co. is listed as a “provisioner” of Mining Supplies in the 1905 Classified Business Directory.¹⁴⁵ Additionally, an 1898 description of Basche's business pointed out that his business carried "Powder, caps, fuse and &c.," in a "specially constructed warehouse" outside of town.¹⁴⁶ It is thus possible that he caught himself mid-sentence in an effort to avoid connecting Wing Hing Yuen with the excluded labor class.

Basche testified several years earlier, in February 1904, that he visited Wing Hing Yuen "frequently" because he purchased his "tea from them."¹⁴⁷ He also pointed out that the partner, Long Guoy, for whom he was testifying, did "all the buying from the merchants in Baker City," thus indicating the two men may have transacted business at Basche's hardware store as well.¹⁴⁸

News coverage of Basche's death on December 15, 1913, described a kind, generous, highly successful businessman who accorded everyone the same respect, regardless of race or class. The *Morning Democrat* described him as one who "indelibly stamped his name in the hearts of the people for [his] unswerving honesty, liberality and generosity...he was beloved and respected by all with whom he was acquainted."¹⁴⁹ The *Baker Herald* described his "big heartedness" and "unimpeachable character" and how his "work of good was unostentatiously

¹⁴⁴ Jeffrey Barlow and Christine Richardson. *China Doctor of John Day*. (Binford & Mort Publishing, 1979), 28.

¹⁴⁵ R. L. Polk & Co. Baker City Directory 1905, 599.

¹⁴⁶ *Morning Democrat, Eastern Oregon's Gold Fields*, 20.

¹⁴⁷ U. S. Customs Service, *Testimony of P. Basche*, 12 February 1904. Case No. 1009/2, Long Guoy. NARA-PAR.

¹⁴⁸ U. S. Customs Service, *Testimony of P. Basche*, 12 February 1904. Case No. 1009/2, Long Guoy. NARA-PAR.

¹⁴⁹ *Morning Democrat*. December 16, 1913.

done."¹⁵⁰ Extraordinarily financially successful, the *Morning Democrat* pointed out that "money for itself was never his object, for Judge Basche gave away more in his lifetime than he will leave behind."¹⁵¹

Basche's consideration and generosity extended to the Chinese as well. The *Morning Democrat* reported that he "befriended many of the older Chinese" and "by his assistance enabled them to succeed."¹⁵² The town's Chinese community—grieving over the Judge's death—was granted the opportunity to visit the "Basche home in a body" to pay their last respects and "to perform a ceremony of their own."¹⁵³ The ceremony was described as "the highest possible honor they can bestow."¹⁵⁴

The city came to a virtual standstill during the funeral services—its businesses closed, its Circuit Court recessed, and its flags lowered to half-staff.¹⁵⁵ The "hundreds who attended" the services at the family home on First and Place "spilled out of the house and into the street," standing vigil in a "driving snow storm to pay their last respects."¹⁵⁶ The six pallbearers, "selected from Judge Basche's intimate friends," included Chinese resident, and native-born U. S. citizen, O.H. (Oscar) Fong who had been a resident of Baker City since about 1890.¹⁵⁷ The "Resolutions of Condolence of the Chinese Republic Association," of which Fong served as President, was read by "Judge Samuel White of Portland" and Fong gave "a short address" about

¹⁵⁰ *Baker Herald*. December 15, 1913.

¹⁵¹ *Morning Democrat*. December 16, 1913.

¹⁵² *Morning Democrat*. December 17, 1913.

¹⁵³ *Ibid.*

¹⁵⁴ *Ibid.*

¹⁵⁵ *Ibid.*

¹⁵⁶ *Morning Democrat*. December 18, 1913.

¹⁵⁷ *Baker Herald*. December 16, 1913. U. S. Customs Service, *Testimony of O. H. Fong*, 11 April 1928. Records of the INS, RG 85, Case No. 30-4353, Chan Chow Mow. NARA-PAR.

"the friendship of Judge Basche to the Chinese people and of the deep respect and love for the departed friend."¹⁵⁸

Evidence of Basche's solid moral and character development—illustrated by the humanity and generosity that he accorded to everyone—abound in these accounts. His social leadership was recognized by the *Morning Democrat* as "an indication of how close he was to all classes, all of whom respected and esteemed him."¹⁵⁹ O. H. Fong's address at the service and his participation as pallbearer, along with the reading of the Resolution by Judge White, establish a willingness to allow the Chinese to actively participate in the funeral of a prominent member of the White community. The accounts also signify an acceptance of and consideration for Chinese death ritual and acknowledge the need of the Chinese to grieve within the framework of their own ethnic heritage and religious beliefs. Finally, these accounts demonstrate that the testimony Basche provided to the Chinese within the framework of Exclusion was not solely based on his mining interests, but also stemmed from a charitable and philanthropic nature.

In addition to Parker and Basche, the town's postmaster was occasionally called upon by the Customs Service to conduct investigations. This occurred when a merchant had returned from a trip to China, had arrived in port, and was requesting re-admission. The Customs Service sent investigation paperwork to the postmaster who was assigned two tasks. His first task was to get answers to the following questions:

1. The approximate value of the stock of goods carried by said firm, and the amount of money invested in said business by said applicant.
2. Are the witnesses personally acquainted with the applicant, and were the enclosed papers signed in presence of applicant?
3. What is the standing of the witnesses?
4. Ascertain, if possible, by inquiry of applicant's firm, whether photograph was taken in your city, and if so, interview the photographer.

¹⁵⁸ *Baker Herald*. December 17, 1913. See Appendix for the complete text of the Resolution.

¹⁵⁹ *Morning Democrat*. December 17, 1913.

5. State whether, during the twelve months prior to departure from the United States, said applicant engaged in any manual labor except such as was necessary in the conduct of business as such merchant. **THIS IS ESPECIALLY IMPORTANT.**
6. Is said firm still doing business?
7. Does this firm permit gambling in their place of business?
8. For what amount is this firm assessed?
9. Make careful inquiry as to applicant's ability to understand and speak English?
10. Do you believe the applicant entitled to admission?¹⁶⁰

These questions illustrate how the Customs Service both defined and created the attributes of an acceptable Chinese merchant. The postmaster's second task was to have the witnesses to the original preinvestigation affidavit fill out a questionnaire that reaffirmed their original statements. These questionnaires were notarized and returned, along with the postmaster's response, to the Customs Service office that had made the inquiry. Thus, the merchant's admission to the country depended in part on the postmaster's investigation and favorable report.

In one such case, Postmaster D. L. Moomaw conducted an investigation into Leong Beon of Wing Hing Yuen. Leong Beon had arrived in Port Townsend, Washington, and was interrogated aboard the *Shinano Maru* on April 22, 1903—setting in motion what was the first step in his admission application. That same day, C. W. Ide, the Collector of Customs at Port Townsend, sent a letter outlining the above-mentioned questions to Postmaster Moomaw, along with the questionnaires that were to be filled out by the original witnesses.¹⁶¹

¹⁶⁰ U. S. Customs Service, *Transcript of Examination*, 22 April 1903; *Letter of C. W. Ide*, 22 April 1903. Case No. RS18016, Leong Beon. NARA-PAR.

¹⁶¹ U. S. Customs Service, *Transcript of Examination*, 22 April 1903; *Letter of C. W. Ide*, 22 April 1903. Case No. RS18016, Leong Beon. NARA-PAR. Note: A previous version of this paper gave the Postmaster's surname as Moorman, instead of Moomaw. Many thanks to Gary Dielman of Baker City for his discerning reading of the paper and for pointing out this error. Indeed, the 1905 Polk's Baker City Directory lists David L. Moomaw as the town's Postmaster, see page 25.

The responses Moomaw gave went well beyond the parameters of several of the questions. One such example is his response to the yes-or-no question, "Are the witnesses personally acquainted with the applicant?":¹⁶²

The witnesses Messrs. Parker and Baird, are absolutely reliable. Mr. Parker being Vice President of the First National Bank of this city; an institution with nearly a million and one-half assets, and Mr. Baird being the owner of three different and various department stores, and one of the well to do business men [sic] of this city. There is no question of their acquaintance with applicant, and in fact, all the Chinese merchants in business in this county.¹⁶³

Moomaw expanded his responses similarly to questions that pertained specifically to Wing Hing Yuen, and to Leong Beon in particular. He not only affirmed the company was still in business, but underscored that it was "the leading Chinese firm of this county."¹⁶⁴ The tenth and final question Moomaw responded to, "Do you believe the applicant entitled to admission?," was more heavily weighted than the other questions because it most directly allowed for Moomaw's personal sentiment to leak into the investigation.¹⁶⁵ This question, placed as it was at the end of the questionnaire, could sway the immigration officials' decision to admit Leong Beon. Moomaw expanded his response here, as well with his statement, "there is no question whatever, in my mind, as to his being entitled to admission."¹⁶⁶ Leong Beon was admitted on April 30, due in part to the "favorable report of the postmaster at Baker City, Ore."¹⁶⁷

Moomaw elaborated his responses similarly when he conducted an investigation in February 1903, pertaining to the admission applications of Leong Bue of Wing Hing Yuen and Leong Wa of On On Co. He once again wrote glowingly of the witnesses—Peter Basche and

¹⁶² U. S. Customs Service, *Letter of C. W. Ide*, 22 April 1903. Case No. RS18016, Leong Beon. NARA-PAR.

¹⁶³ U. S. Customs Service, *Letter of D. L. Moomaw*, 25 April 1903. Case No. RS18016, Leong Beon. NARA-PAR.

¹⁶⁴ *Ibid.*

¹⁶⁵ U. S. Customs Service, *Letter of C. W. Ide*, 22 April 1903. Case No. RS18016, Leong Beon. NARA-PAR.

¹⁶⁶ U. S. Customs Service, *Letter of D. L. Moomaw*, 25 April 1903. Case No. RS18016, Leong Beon. NARA-PAR.

¹⁶⁷ U. S. Customs Service, *Transcript of Examination*, 22 April 1903; *Letter of C. W. Ide*, 22 April 1903. Case No. RS18016, Leong Beon. NARA-PAR.

James Ferguson—and composed advocatory replies to the questions:

The witnesses are perfectly reliable, and reference to mercantile reports of Dunn or Bradstreet will advise you as to standing in particular of Mr. Basche, he being one of the wealthiest as well as leading merchants here, and Mr. Ferguson, one of the old residents here, is comfortably well off¹⁶⁸

In reference to the Chinese firms and the merchants in particular, Moomaw classified both as "the leading Chinese merchants of this county," and reiterated that he had "no doubt whatever as to their being entitled to admission."¹⁶⁹



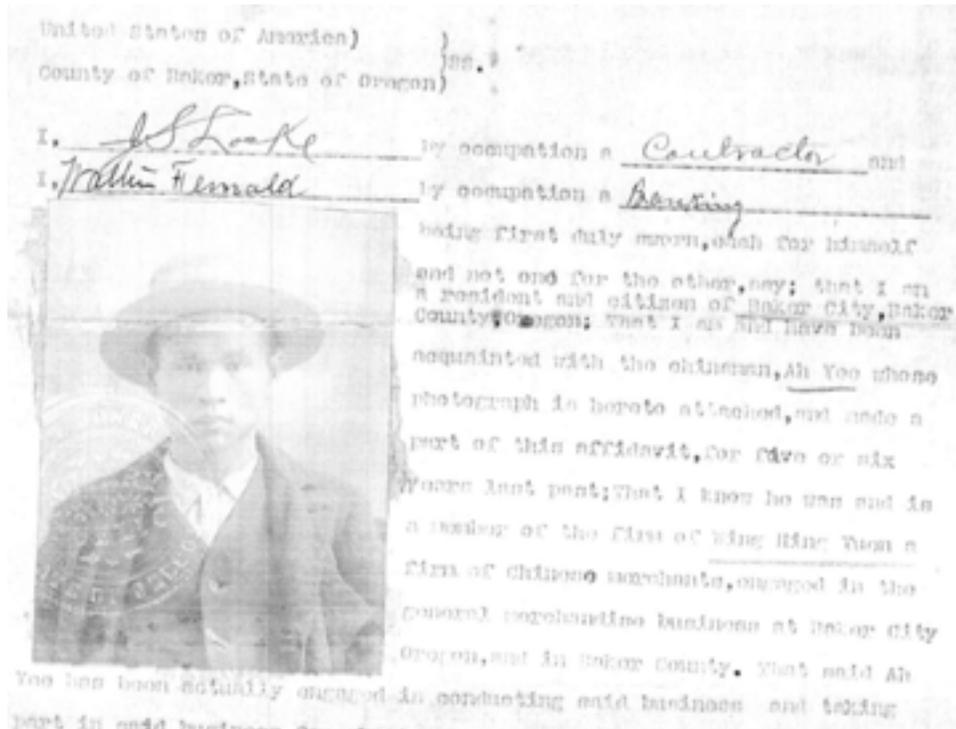
Leong Bue of the Wing Hing Yuen Company. Source: U. S. Customs Service, *Affidavit*, 13 May 1902. Records of the INS, RG 85, Box RS116, Case No. RS17964, Leong Bue. NARA-PAR.

An earlier postmaster, B. T. Potter, also assumed the role of advocate in his replies in the November 14, 1901 investigation report he penned in reference to Ah Yee, of Wing Hing Yuen. Potter attested that Ah Yee had been a member of the Free Will Baptist Church since 1878, in

¹⁶⁸ U. S. Customs Service, *Letter of D. L. Moomaw*, 12 February 1903. Records of the INS, RG 85, Box RS116, Case No. RS17964, Leong Bue. NARA-PAR.

¹⁶⁹ *Ibid.*

spite of the fact that he was not asked to report on the man's religious affiliations.¹⁷⁰ This contrasts with Moomaw's expansive discussion of the White witnesses, which verged on boastfulness about the town's wealthy businessmen. Postmaster Potter does not extol the White



Ah Yee of the Wing Hing Yuen Company, ca. 1899. Source: U. S. Customs Service, *Affidavit*, 30 September 1899. Records of the INS, RG 85, Box RS 104, Case No. RS17052, Ah Yee. NARA-PAR.

witnesses in his investigation, but instead focuses on an acculturative attribute of Ah Yee that would likely be viewed favorably by immigration officials. This passage points to Potter's savviness about which attributes of Chinese merchants immigration officials deemed beneficial. In addition, it points to a connection between the Baptist Church and this one member of Chinatown that dated back over 20 years. None of the other case files indicate membership in the Baptist Church or any other church in town; thus, it is unknown how widespread the Christianization of Baker City's Chinese was at this time.

¹⁷⁰ U. S. Customs Service, *Letter to Collector of Customs*, 14 November, 1901. Records of the INS, RG 85, Box RS 104, Case No. RS17052, Ah Yee. NARA-PAR.

These records demonstrate the merchants of Wing Hing Yuen and On On Co. successfully secured the testimony and favorable accounts from prominent Whites, which allowed them to maintain both their place in the merchant class and to conduct regular trips to China. Both Parker and Basche indicated ties to the businesses, which appear to have transpired both in Chinatown and in the White business district. These relationships not only point to the merchants' awareness of the importance of powerful White witnesses in their efforts to maintain their merchant status, but also intimate a fluidity of movement between the two districts and a certain acceptability of Chinese crossover into White social space.

Leong Dod: The Cultivation of a Western Appearance.



Leong Dod of the Wing Hing Yuen Company shown in western garb for the first time, ca. 1905. Source: U. S. Customs Service, *Affidavit*, 15 January 1905. Case No. 704, Leong Dod. NARA-PAR.

Leong Dod's 1899 affidavit photograph is the only time he appears in Chinese attire in his four affidavit photographs dated between 1899 and 1911. The next affidavit, from 1905, shows him wearing a Western style suit jacket, white shirt and dark tie.¹⁷¹ For his 1908 photograph he donned a cravat and carried a pocket watch—the chain of which can be seen attached to his vest.¹⁷² The final photograph, from 1911, shows a man with a trace of a smile and a look of contentment.¹⁷³ A young man, Leong Tai Yow, had successfully entered the country in 1910 as Dod's son, and had been granted a partnership with Wing Hing Yuen, indicating that the older Leong may have been preparing

¹⁷¹ U. S. Customs Service, *Affidavit*, 15 January 1905. Case No. 704, Leong Dod. NARA-PAR.

¹⁷² U. S. Customs Service, *Affidavit*, 23 September 1908. Records of the INS, RG 85, Box RS056, Case No. RS2222, Leong Tai Yow. NARA-PAR.

¹⁷³ U. S. Customs Service, *Application for Preinvestigation of Status*, 9 March 1911. Case No. RS27253, Leong Dod. NARA-PAR.

to return to China permanently.¹⁷⁴

Leong Dod is just one of several merchants in the case files who adopted a Western appearance just after the turn of the century. In contrast, photos of Chinese merchants in U. S. Customs Service Portland Bureau Chinese Exclusion case files from the 1890s show merchants from this era looked "very Chinese," and that "no Western clothes were in evidence, although queues, small, black felt skull caps and silk" adorned the applicants.¹⁷⁵ While some earlier photos of the partners of Wing Hing Yuen show them in Chinese attire, all photos after 1902 show the partners in Western garb.



Leong Dod of the Wing Hing Yuen Company, ca. 1908.
Source: U. S. Customs Service, *Affidavit notarized by V. W. Tomlinson*, 23 September 1908. Records of the INS, RG 85, Box RS056, Case No. RS2222, Leong Tai Yow. NARA-PAR.

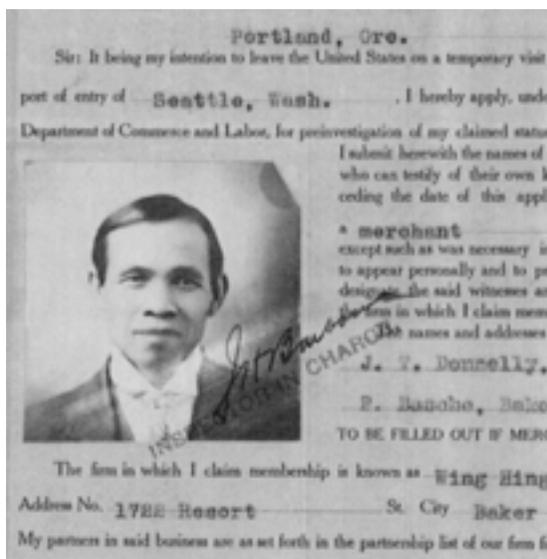
The three-year period from 1902 to 1905 saw significant consolidation in the administration of Exclusion at the federal level. Three events in particular may have contributed to the merchants' cultivation of a Westernized appearance. First, Frank P. Sargent was appointed commissioner-general of immigration in 1902, just two years after Congress assigned this position responsibility for the administration of Chinese Exclusion.¹⁷⁶ A former labor leader and ardent exclusionist, Sargent prided himself on the increased denials and deportations under his leadership. For example, in 1894 "the ratio of admissions to denials and deportations was 100:7;" whereas, under Sargent's leadership "the

¹⁷⁴ U. S. Customs Service, *Letter of R. E. Hussey*, 28 August 1912; *Application for Preinvestigation Testimony*, 1 August 1912. Records of the INS, RG 85, Case No. 1534, Leong Tai Yow. NARA-PAR.

¹⁷⁵ Brian Thornton, "Exceptions to the Rule: Chinese Merchants and the Exclusion Laws, 1890-1894," *Pacific Northwest Forum* 6, no. 1 (1992), 54.

¹⁷⁶ Lee, *At America's Gates*, 66-67.

ratio had changed to 100:57" by 1904.¹⁷⁷ Next, the Bureau of Immigration was given jurisdiction over all Chinese immigration affairs in 1903.¹⁷⁸ Finally, the 1905 Supreme Court decision disallowing any Chinese to appeal a Bureau of Immigration decision in court "gave the bureau unprecedented power that exceeded that of most federal agencies."¹⁷⁹ Thus, after 1905, a merchant faced a formidable infrastructure that could see him peremptorily deported without recourse.



Leong Dod of the Wing Hing Yuen Company, ca. 1911. Source: U. S. Customs Service, *Application for Preinvestigation of Status*, 9 March 1911. Case No. RS27253, Leong Dod. NARA-PAR.

These changes are illustrated at the local level in Chinese Inspector, J. H. Barbour's, February 1904 question about a merchant's mode of dress. He asked witness Peter Basche, if the merchant, Long Guoy, dressed "in American clothes and has the general appearance of a merchant?"¹⁸⁰ This was the first time in the case files that Barbour asked such a question, to which Basche responded affirmatively. Barbour's question indicated the Customs Service had created a template image of a Chinese merchant—

an image that was pointedly Western. It was against this backdrop of both federal regulation and local inspection that the shift to Western attire took place for the partners of Wing Hing Yuen. It is unknown whether Long Guoy was present at Basche's testimony, if Basche related the nature of the question to the partners of Wing Hing Yuen, or the extent to which these Chinese

¹⁷⁷ Ibid.

¹⁷⁸ Lee, *At America's Gates*, 68.

¹⁷⁹ Ibid.

¹⁸⁰ U. S. Customs Service, *Testimony of P. Basche*, 12 February 1904. Case No. 1009/2, Long Guoy. NARA-PAR.

merchants were able to apprise themselves of the recent changes at the federal level of Chinese Exclusion. Nonetheless, after Barbour asked this question, all photos showed the merchants in Western attire.

Conclusion

The newspaper coverage of the 1890s when taken in concert with the testimony of Parker and Basche and the reports of the Postmaster point to a community whose attitudes about its Chinese may have improved by the early 1900s. The documents found in the case files highlight leading businessmen who were interested in maintaining Baker City's Chinese merchant class—whatever their motives for doing so may have been. Was Basche motivated by access to laborers he needed to work his mine? Was Parker motivated by the money the Chinese—noted for their frugality—deposited at First National Bank? Did the witnesses receive payment for their testimony? If so, was this a lucrative source of income? News accounts at the time of Basche's death, however, indicate that his motives extended beyond the profitability of his mining operations. Instead, one finds in the accounts reports of a man of integrity and generosity who was held in high esteem by the community.

Documents not found in the case files also shed light on the Chinese merchant's relationship with the larger community. Historian, Erika Lee, found correspondence from "enemies" in some of the case files from other cities she investigated.¹⁸¹ However, none of the 23 case files reviewed for this paper contained any such correspondence.

The case files illustrate the administration of Chinese Exclusion at the local level. They shed light on how the Chinese merchants of Baker City operated within federal legal constraints by harnessing the testimony of powerful White businessmen and bureaucrats, and by cultivating

¹⁸¹ Lee, *At America's Gates*, 14.

the appearance and connections that fit the Customs Service's definition of a Chinese merchant. This carefully crafted visage of acculturation aided their efforts to maintain their place in the merchant class.

Unfortunately, the nature of the merchants' trips to China—who they visited, where they went, the names of the districts and villages from whence they came—are only rarely a part of the documents. Thus, the insights the documents provide are muted by the nature and enforcement of Exclusion, by the perspective and beliefs held by the immigration officials who administered it, and by the carefully crafted responses of the Chinese themselves—made as they were to fit the White-created definition of a Chinese merchant. The case files, nonetheless, highlight a largely forgotten chapter of Oregon history, enrich and complicate the understanding of Chinese Exclusion at the local level, and shed light on the nature of Baker City's Chinese community in the early 1900s.

Appendix

Resolutions of Condolence of the Chinese Republic Association

WHEREAS, Almighty God, the God of all the peoples of the earth, has taken from our midst our beloved and true friend and benefactor, the Honorable Peter Basche, and

WHEREAS, Peter Basche was an old and faithful friend of the Chinese people of the City and County of Baker, and has trusted us and extended to us the same uniform courtesy that characterized his dealings with all men alike, and has out of the kindness of his great heart and his true sense of justice and equity, extended to us material assistance and sympathy at times of trouble and want, now, therefore,

BE IT RESOLVED: That it is the sense of this association and all of the Chinese people in Baker County that in the death of Peter Basche we have lost our best and truest friend and benefactor.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED: That we endeavor always to cherish the memory of Peter Basche and the long record of his useful life and good deeds, to the end that in the daily affairs of life the influence of his sterling character will be to us a constant blessing and an abiding inspiration ever to emulate his noble example.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED: That a copy of these resolutions be spread upon the records of this association, and that a copy be presented to the bereaved family of Peter Basche, and that these resolutions be published in the newspapers of the City of Baker.

CHINESE REPUBLIC ASSOCIATION

By O. H. Fong, President

Attest: LEE POY, Secretary¹⁸²

¹⁸² *Baker Herald*. December 17, 1913.

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