# Episode 1: Our Land, Our Roots.

# Lesson Title: Ruination and Resilience: Denver's Chinatown

Author: Kurt Knierim

## Episode Description:

*Our Land, Our Roots* introduces audiences to the deep, layered histories that shaped Colorado long before statehood and continues through the settlement era of the 19th century. Episode 1 establishes the thematic foundation for the entire series by highlighting land, roots, movement and adaptation. It reinforces that Colorado's identity has always been shaped by many peoples whose connections to place continue to evolve, intersect and endure.

## Episode Inquiry Questions:

1. What strategies have people and communities used to influence change in Colorado? What were the outcomes of civic engagement?
2. Why is it important that diverse voices are heard by communities, as well as, local and state government officials?
3. Why is it important for those who are most impacted by an issue to be involved in creating solutions?

## Lesson Description:

This high school lesson explores the history of Denver's Chinatown, specifically focusing on the anti-Chinese xenophobia of the late 19th century and the 1880 attack on the community. Through the analysis of primary sources—including political cartoons, historical articles, and newspaper archives—students will examine the factors that fueled this violence and, crucially, investigate how the Chinese-American community demonstrated resilience and continued to thrive in the years following the devastation. This inquiry-based lesson encourages students to evaluate historical narratives "against the grain" to uncover the agency and perseverance of an underrepresented group in Colorado's history.

## Grade Level/Time Needed:

High School/90 Minute Block

## Lesson Inquiry Question:

1. What were the circumstances that led to such violence against the Chinese community in Denver in 1880 and what were some ways that this community was able to recover from this attack?

## Supporting Questions:

1. What factors led to the anti-Chinese sentiment beginning in California and spreading across the United States during the 1860s-1890s?
2. How was anti-Chinese sentiment reflected in Denver by the late 1870s?
3. In the face of this severe xenophobia, in what ways did the Chinese community persist and overcome this racism?

## Lesson Objectives:

Students will be able to:

1. Analyze the factors that led to the anti-Chinese xenophobia of the 1870s and 1880s.
2. Describe the attack on the Chinese community in Denver in October of 1880.
3. Examine some ways in which the Chinese community faced and overcame the obstacle of xenophobia in the years after the attack.

## Background Knowledge / Contextual Paragraph for Teachers:

This lesson traces the xenophobia that led to the attack on Denver's Chinatown in 1880. Useful background knowledge of the wider anti-Chinese movement in the United States would be helpful. Some topics include, but are not limited to, the California Gold Rush, the building of the Trans-Continental Railroad, the Burlingham Treaty 1868, the Panic of 1873, Anti-Chinese legislation in California, Denis Kearney and his followers, the *San Francisco Illustrated Wasp*, Presidential elections of 1876 and 1880, the Asiatic Exclusion League and the Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882. A clear overview of this period can be found in chapter 3 of

Erika Lee's text, *America For Americans: A History of Xenophobia in the United States*.

It would also be helpful to have some knowledge of the attack on Denver's Chinatown in October of 1880. This article, The Rise and Fall of Denver's Chinatown is an overview of information regarding Denver's Chinatown.

The lesson also asks students to evaluate primary sources "against the grain." Some instruction on what this means and how to employ this method would be helpful for students. This article, History Primary Sources: Evaluating Primary Sources contains background on using this methodology.

It is also very important to make students aware that they will see racist language and images in this lesson. Explain that this is part of examining primary sources from this period in United States history.

## Building Background Knowledge for the Student:

To get students thinking about the complex relationship between political rhetoric, xenophobia and resilience in the face of these, begin by asking students to recall the rise in anti-Asian hate during the Covid-19 Pandemic. Have students discuss what caused it, how it manifested and how AAPI communities banded together to fight it. A helpful resource in this regard would be a section of the documentary *We Need to Talk About Anti-Asian Hate*. Begin video at time stamp 36:01. This is the section titled "Hate Rhetoric."
After a short discussion of these recent topics, Introduce the lesson with a brief discussion of the events listed in the "Contextual Paragraph for Teachers."

## Lesson Sources:

1. Documentary featuring Eugene from the "Try Guys" that introduces Asian xenophobia in United States History, *We Need to Talk About Anti-Asian Hate*.
2. History Colorado article on the history of Denver's Chinatown, *The Rise and Fall of Denver's Chinatown*.

3. Article on evaluating primary sources "against the grain". History Primary Sources: Evaluating Primary Sources.
4. 

"The Last Load," The Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley [call no. 315].
5. 
"What shall we do with our boys?" Cartoon depicting a stereotypical caricature of a Chinese immigrant with many arms performing multiple jobs at once while white American workers stand dejectedly outside. The Wasp, March 3, 1882.
6. Excerpt from *"Meat vs. Rice: American Manhood Against Asiatic Coolieism, Which Shall Survive?"*
7. Description of the 1880 *Attack in Denver's Chinatown*
8. Rocky Mountain News (Daily), Volume 70, Number 42 Monday, February 11, 1929 *"Denver Chinatown Observes New Year"*
9. The Rocky Mountain News (Daily), Volume 50, Number 235, August 23, 1909 *"Chinatown Greets New Queen with Fireworks"*
10. The Rocky Mountain News (Daily), Volume 42, Number 171, June 20, 1901 "*Belle of Chinatown Leaves*"
11. The Rocky Mountain News (Daily), Volume 59, Number 341, December 7, 1918 "*Lena Kaihara, Daughter of Chinatown Mayor, Dies*"
12. The Rocky Mountain News (Daily), Volume 46, Number 197, July 16, 1905 *"Continental Trip for Chinese Youths"*
13. The Rocky Mountain News (Daily), Volume 45, Number 75, March 15, 1904 *"Yune, Founder of Chinatown, Dead"*

## Lesson Materials Needed:

1. Each student should have a laptop or similar, and access to Wi-Fi.
2. If needed, paper copies of visual and written primary sources.

## Lesson Instruction:

1. After an introduction to get students thinking about anti-Asian hate in recent United States history (see "Building Background Knowledge for the Student" section) direct students to look at the cartoons entitled, "The Last Load," and "What shall we do with our boys?". Ask students to turn to a partner and briefly discuss the intended message of the cartoon. Pull class together and discuss the intended meaning of the cartoons to set context.
2. Next, ask students to open the excerpt of the *"Meat vs. Rice: American Manhood Against Asiatic Coolieism, Which Shall Survive?"* By Samuel Gompers. Before they start reading, take a minute to address the racist slur in the title and tell students who Samuel Gompers was if students are not already familiar with him. Have students read the excerpts independently and then turn to a partner and make a verbal list of the perceived threats, according to Samuel Gompers, that Chinese immigrants pose to the white working class. Pull class together and discuss what Gompers message was. Then have the class discuss how rhetoric like the previous three primary sources could have a detrimental impact on the Chinese Immigrant community.
3. Now tell students that an extreme example of the negative impact of this hateful rhetoric happened in Denver on Halloween in 1880. To help students see the connection between rhetoric and action, have them read a section of an article, *Attack in Denver's Chinatown* about the attack. For the sake of time, have students only read the section labeled, "Anti-Chinese Riot of 1880." When most students have finished reading, have them pair up once again and discuss what they read, focusing on what stood out to them in the description. Pull the class together and discuss the events of that night.
4. Finally, have students look at how the Chinese community fared in the years following the attack. To do this, begin with a short discussion about

using sources "against the grain." Here is an article that discusses this type of primary source analysis History Primary Sources: Evaluating Primary Sources. Point out that the language of the articles is very racist and disparaging, but students should focus on reading these sources to glean what the community was like (i.e. strong community leaders, vibrant cultural events, education, marriage, travel, etc.).

5. Ask students to choose two of the six articles listed in the Sources section from the Rocky Mountain News and read them looking for clues as to what life in the community looked like in the years following the attack (*"Denver Chinatown Observes New Year," "Chinatown Greets New Queen with Fireworks," "Belle of Chinatown Leaves," "Lena Kaihara, Daughter of Chinatown Mayor, Dies," "Continental Trip for Chinese Youths," "Yune, Founder of Chinatown, Dead"*). When most students are finished reading, have them pair with a student near them and make a list of the observations they made. Then bring the class together and make a list with the entire class of the types of things that were happening in the community. Once the list is substantial, ask students to assess how the community thrived despite the oppression they experienced from the non-Chinese population.
6. End the lesson with the summative assessment question located in the "Assessment" section of this lesson.

## Strategy Instruction Differentiation:

1. Rocky Mountain News articles can use the audio feature to have the article excerpts read to students.
2. Amendments can be made to the number of articles students are asked to read.

## Assessment:

Formative Assessments:
Formative assessments of the lesson happen as students write, discuss with a partner, and participate in whole group instruction. Teachers should monitor student progress and adjust accordingly.

Summative Assessment:
Students will end the lesson by writing a reflection paragraph based on the following question:

1. In what ways did the Chinese community in Denver's Chinatown resist and overcome the racism and physical devastation that they faced after the attack in 1880?

## 2022 Social Studies Standards:

1. SS.HS.1.1.EO b. Gather and analyze historical information to address questions from a range of primary and secondary sources containing a variety of perspectives. For example: Perspectives of historically underrepresented groups.
2. SS.HS.1.2.EO.a. Analyze continuity and change over the course of United States history. Including but not limited to: The expansion and limitations of rights, the balance between liberty and security, shifts in internationalist and isolationist policies, debates over the role of government, and the impacts of expansionist policies.
3. SS.HS.1.2.EO.b. Investigate causes and effects of significant events throughout United States history. For example: World and national conflicts, urbanization and suburbanization, economic cycles, and both popular and counterculture movements.
4. SS.HS.1.2.EO.c. Analyze the complexity of events throughout United States history.
5. SS.HS.4.2.EO.g. Understand the structure of the American judicial system, the process of judicial appointments and key court decisions, in both Colorado and the United States, that affect the system of checks and balances and interactions of the local, state, tribal, and federal systems.

## Extension Activities:

1. Take a walking tour of where Denver's Chinatown was located.

## Additional Resources:

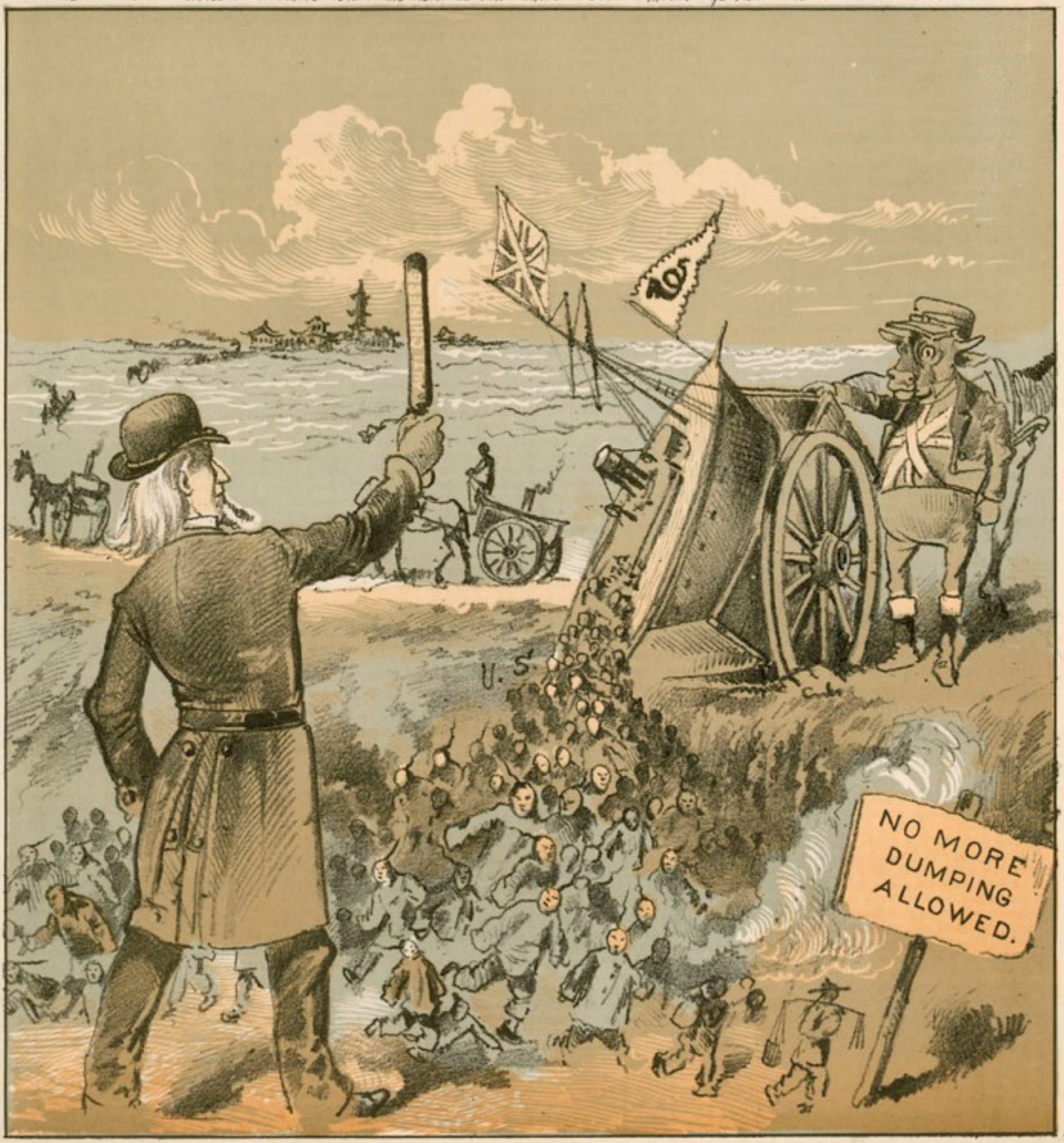
1. Wei, William. *Asians in Colorado: A History of Persecution and Perseverance in the Centennial State.*
2. Zhu, Liping. *The Road to Chinese Exclusion: The Denver Riot, 1880 Election, and Rise of the West.*
3. Colorado's Asian Pacific United (CAPU) has several resources and student activities around Denver's Chinatown.

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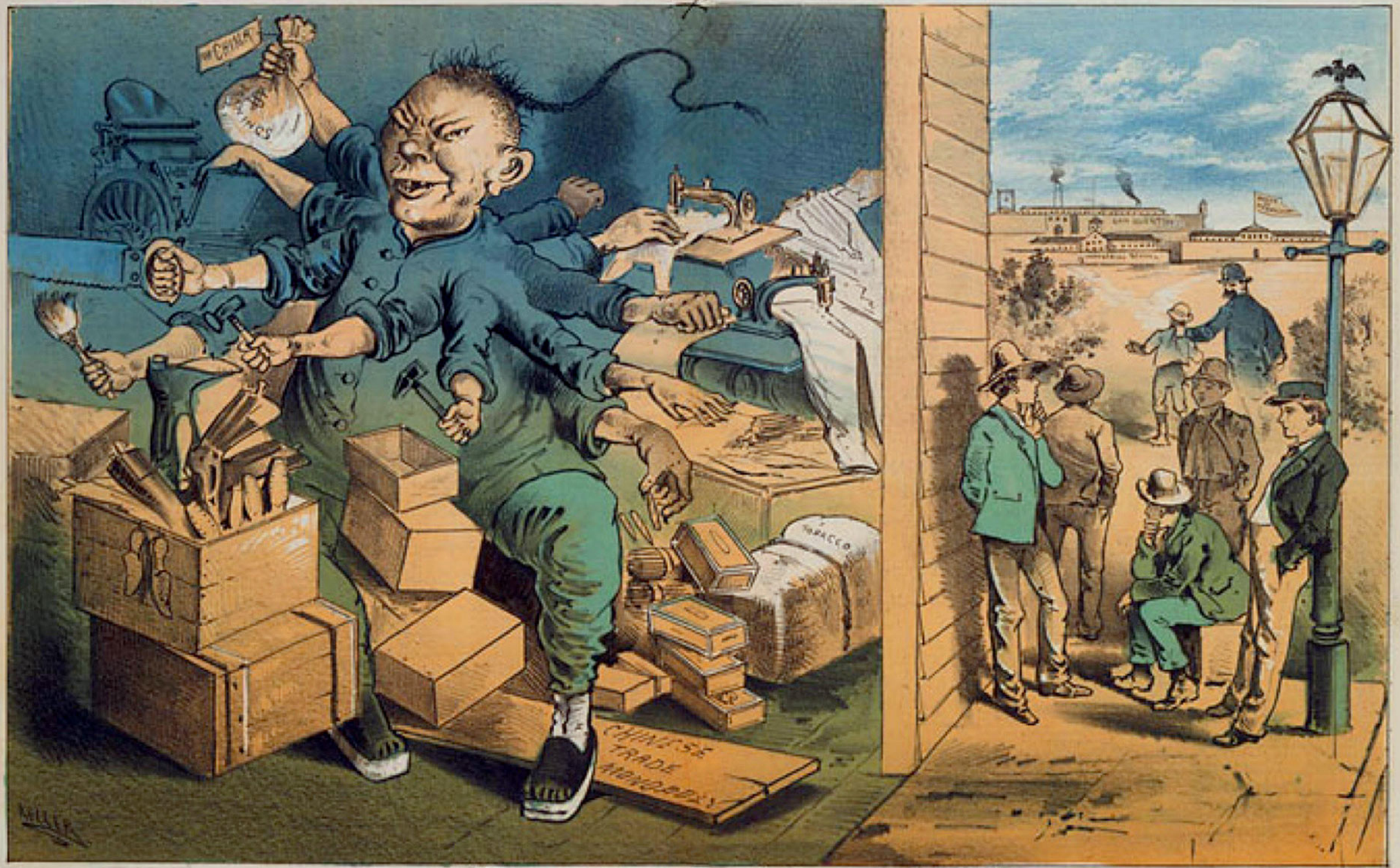
# The Wasp

SAN FRANCISCO, AUGUST 12TH 1882.

ENTERED AT THE POST OFFICE AT SAN FRANCISCO, CAL. AND ADMITTED FOR TRANSMISSION THROUGH THE MAILS AT SECOND CLASS RATES




THE LAST LOAD.




"WHAT SHALL WE DO WITH OUR BOYS?"

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# Excerpt from Meat vs. Rice: American Manhood Against Asiatic Coolieism Which Shall Survive?

***Background:*** In the decades after the Civil War, representatives of organized labor generally opposed the immigration of Chinese workers to the United States. In 1902, Samuel Gompers, the founder and long-time president of the American Federation of Labor (AFL), and Herman Gutstadt, president of the Trades Union Mutual Alliance, published this pamphlet, making a case for extending the Chinese Exclusion Act. Along with believing that all immigrants threatened organized labor's successful efforts to improve working conditions, they perceived Chinese immigrants to be outsiders who would never adopt American values. To make their case, they quoted a speech that Senator James G. Blaine of Maine had delivered in support of the original amendment. The pamphlet, and the speech quoted here, used stereotypes and offensive language to malign the character of Asian immigrants and defend restrictive immigration.

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As a fitting close to this document we submit the remarks made by one of the greatest of American statesmen, Hon. James G. Blaine, February 14, 1879, when a bill for restriction of Chinese immigration was before the United States Senate. Mr. Blaine said:

"Either the Anglo-Saxon race will possess the Pacific slope or the Mongolians will possess it. You give them the start today, with the keen thrust of necessity behind them, and the inducement to come, while we are filling up the other portions of the Continent, and it is inevitable, if not demonstrable, that they will occupy that space of the country between the Sierras and the Pacific. . . .

I am opposed to the Chinese coming here. I am opposed to making them citizens. I am unalterably opposed to making them voters. There is not a peasant cottage inhabited by a Chinaman. There is not a hearthstone, in the sense we understand it, of an American home, or an English home, or an Irish, or German, or French home. There is not a domestic fireside in that sense; and yet you say it is entirely safe to sit down and permit them to fill up our country, or any part of it.

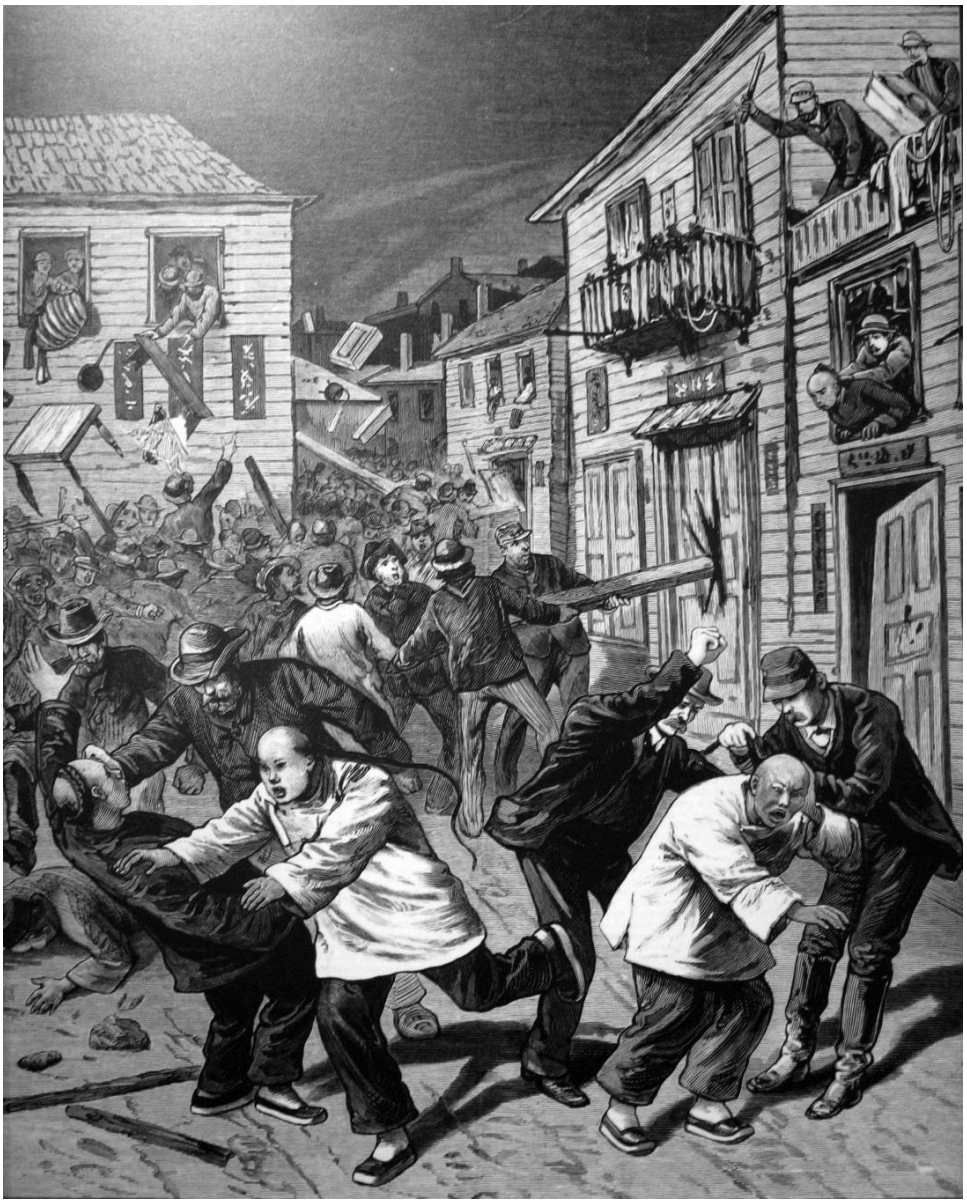
Treat them like Christians, say those who favor their immigration; yet I believe that Christian testimony is that the conversion of Chinese on that basis is a fearful failure; and that the demoralization of the white race is much more rapid by reason of the contact than is the salvation of the Chinese race. You cannot work a man who must have beef and bread alongside of a man who can live on rice. In all such conflicts, and all such struggles, the result is not to bring up the man who lives on rice to the beef-and-bread standard, but to bring down the beef-and-bread man to the rice standard."

Source: *Meat vs. Rice; American Manhood Against Asiatic Coolieism* (American Federation of Labor, 1902, repr. San Francisco: Asiatic Exclusion League, 1908), p. 22, https://hdl.handle.net/2027/uc1.32106007093054?urlappend=%3Bseq=26%3Bownerid=9007199272226838-30.

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**Denver's Chinatown** was a Chinese enclave neighborhood in Denver, Colorado, which existed by at least 1870 and endured until the 1940s. It was located in what is now the LoDo neighborhood, approximately between Market Street and Wazee Street. It was also referred to as "Hop Alley", after a nineteenth century slang term for opium.

Chinese American immigrants established the neighborhood in the early 19th century after arriving in Colorado seeking work in the railroad, mining, and service industries. The enclave was a thriving community and home to many Chinese American-owned businesses, including laundries such as Sing Lee's Laundry and restaurants such as the Lotus Room, Yuye Cafe, and Cathay Post #185. Throughout its existence, the neighborhood

endured decades of racially motivated violence and other forms of abuse, including the violent Anti-Chinese Riot of 1880 which destroyed most of the original neighborhood and killed at least one resident. Following the riot, Denver's Chinatown decreased in size but was rebuilt. A combination of ongoing, intense racial discrimination and economic factors led to most of the residents of Denver's Chinatown leaving the area by the 1940s, and not longer after the city razed the district.

## Origin & Location

The first Chinese immigrants arrived in the Colorado Territory in the 1860s. Most were single men who came to the United States for economic reasons, often with the goal of saving up money for a few years before returning to China. A large number came to the United States to work on the railroads or in the California gold rush, but following the completion of the transcontinental railroad and the depletion of many California gold mines many Chinese immigrants arrived in Colorado seeking steady work.

Despite overwhelming discrimination against Asian Americans by white settlers and racially-biased newspapers, the government of the Colorado Territory initially sought to attract Chinese immigrants to the region in order to provide a reliable and inexpensive workforce. On February 11, 1870, the Colorado Territorial Legislature adopted a joint resolution encouraging more Chinese to immigrate to the area, believing they would "hasten the development and early prosperity of the territory, by supplying the demands of cheap labor." Except for the brief deluge of people during the 1858–59 Gold Rush, the territory suffered from chronic labor shortages, and hard physical work was necessary to make Colorado economically viable. The resolution guaranteed Chinese immigrants "security in their persons and property," but the territorial (and later state) government did little to nothing to rein in prejudiced Euro-Americans who frequently persecuted Colorado's Chinese American population over the following generations.

Chinese immigrants founded majority Chinese communities in and around many of Colorado's mining towns, where they came seeking work on the railroads, in the mines, or in growing service industries needed by white miners. These communities often faced significant discrimination and outright attacks from other miners and settlers of European descent. As the mining boomtowns dwindled throughout the late nineteenth century, many of their inhabitants including Chinese Americans relocated to larger cities such as Denver.

As more Chinese immigrants arrived in Denver they developed Denver's Chinatown as a neighborhood. In the 19th century ethnic enclaves were common, as they provided protection and support for minority groups in the often hostile Euro-American culture of the time.

Denver's Chinatown was located in what is now Lower Downtown (LoDo) near the city center. Its boundaries were not clearly defined, but at its apex it occupied the area along Wazee and Market streets, between Fifteenth and Twentieth streets. By the 1940s, the center of the community was found around Market street and Twentieth, near the current day site of Coors Field. It was adjacent to the city's old red light district, and was near other ethnic enclaves, including an Italian neighborhood known as the Bottoms.

## Culture & Economy

In the 1800s, most of Denver's Chinatown residents were men from southern China. The majority spoke Cantonese and wore distinctive clothing such as black cotton shirts and wide-brimmed bamboo hats. Many also wore their hair in a long braided style known as a queue, which was considered a marker of Chinese citizenship and nationality both in China and in the West.

Few women initially lived in Denver's Chinatown, which was typical of Chinese communities in the United states at the time.

Federal laws restricted East Asian women from immigrating to the United States as part of an attempt to restrict the number of Asian Americans in the country. Almost all of the Chinese immigrants to the United States at the time were married, but most left their families behind in China and supported them by sending back money they earned in the United States. Occasionally, wives joined their husbands in the United States, but only after the men had established themselves and could support the family.

In 1880 only twenty-nine women lived in Chinatown, and there were only twenty-two in 1885. In 1882 the United States federal government passed the Chinese Exclusion Act, which prohibited all further immigration of Chinese nationals for ten years, further limiting the arrival of Chinese women. Meanwhile, anti-Chinese sentiment made intermarriage between Chinese people and white Coloradans a very rare occurrence. The gender imbalance prevented Chinese immigrants from establishing stable families and delayed new births in the community. The imbalance would begin to correct itself with the repeal of the Chinese Exclusion Act in 1943 and the influx of Chinese immigrants after the Immigration and Nationality Act of 1965. Colorado's Chinese-American communities experienced gender imbalance until the 1990s.

Those who lived in Denver's Chinatown worked to preserve their culture. They constructed temples and shrines for Buddhist, Taoist and Chinese folk religion observations, and openly celebrated Chinese holidays such as Lunar New Year. There were many restaurants in the neighborhood, which served traditional Chinese food alongside American dishes.

Chinese immigrants in early Denver had limited employment prospects. Along with other racial minorities they often were excluded from occupations that placed them in direct competition with Anglo-Americans. They often found work in labor-intensive fields, including on railroads and in the mining industry. Many others worked in the service industries that white workers avoided, especially as laundrymen. In the United

States laundry was viewed as a low-status occupation, but it was a valuable and necessary service and many Chinese-owned laundromats became successful businesses. Until the turn of the century and the invention of steam laundries, hand-laundries owned and operated by Chinese Americans dominated the laundry industry in Denver.

The residents of many American Chinatowns formed mutual aid societies known as Tongs (from 堂, táng, meaning a meeting place or town hall) to help protect themselves and each other from the widespread discrimination they encountered in nearly every facet of society. These organizations arose from older sworn societies in China, which were often political groups. American Tongs were community organizations. Chinese American members would pay dues to the Tong and in turn would receive support in the form of housing assistance, employment opportunities, legal representation, and religious gatherings. Denver's Chinatown was home to three prominent Tongs: the Bing Kong Tong, the Hop Sing Tong, and the Hip Sing Tong. The Hop Sing Tong is still in operation in Denver.

In other cities, especially San Francisco, Tongs garnered a reputation for criminal activity. Some Tongs were known to be affiliated with organized crime, and this spread as a stereotype applied to all Tongs by many white Americans, including the Tongs in Denver's Chinatown. They were viewed chiefly as criminal organizations, which was reinforced by frequent discriminatory media coverage that emphasized the Tongs' involvement in gambling, opium smoking, and sex work. However, none of these activities were illegal in Denver at the time, and while they were frowned upon by "polite society" they were also engaged in by Denver residents of all ethnicities and backgrounds.

Leadership among the residents of Denver's Chinatown was often unofficial and decentralized. Chin Lin Sou was one of the most prominent residents of the neighborhood's early history. He was one of the earliest Chinese immigrants to Colorado, arriving in the early 1870s. He gained a great deal of respect due

to his honesty, entrepreneurial spirit, and his fluency in both Cantonese and English. For decades he served as an unofficial spokesman for the community and was sometimes called the "Mayor of Chinatown."

## "Hop Alley"

From the beginning Denver's Anglo-American population viewed Chinese immigrants with suspicion but also a sort of fascination. Newspapers reported often on Denver's Chinatown, but in an example of yellow journalism primarily focused on sensationalized articles and outright misinformation. The neighborhood became associated with various vices including illicit sex work, gambling, and opium smoking. This gave rise to a common nickname for the location among Anglo citizens: "Hop Alley", which referred to "hop" or opium.

The vices most closely associated with the Chinese community were gambling, and opium. In the late 19th century Denver had seventeen opium dens, twelve of them in Chinatown. While many white citizens thought of Chinese Americans as "opium fiends", the opium dens flourished in Chinatown because of the large number of white patrons. Before World War I, according to retired police captain Tom Russell, 60 percent of the dens' customers were white addicts from uptown Denver. While opium smoking was socially frowned upon, there was no law against it until the Harrison Narcotics Tax Act of 1914.

Sensationalized journalism contributed to a number of urban legends about itself and the Chinese who lived there. It was rumored that tunnels and secret rooms accessible only by trapdoors connected the buildings. Gang activity was rumored as well, with some suspecting the Tongs—Chinese American community organizations—of organized crime or engaging in territorial wars with one another. While criminal Tongs and violent conflicts between them were known to exist in other

cities, most famously San Francisco, Denver never experienced a "Tong war."

Denver's Chinese population became a scapegoat for many of Denver's issues. White residents of the city stereotyped Chinese Americans as dangerous, and journalists and politicians used references to "heathen Chinee" and "Oriental hatchetmen" as an ethnic boogeyman.

## Anti-Chinese Riot of 1880

On October 31, 1880, the white population of Denver rioted against an Anti-Chinese race riot broke out in Denver, targeting the inhabitants of Denver's Chinatown. This riot led to the destruction of many Chinese-owned businesses and homes, and resulted in the death of at least one man.

In the 1870s and early 1880s, Chinatown was the most visible ethnic enclave in the city due to its centralized location. Because of that visibility, white Denverites easily singled out the Chinese for persecution, a phenomenon that resulted in Denver's first recorded race riot. Though there were few Chinese people in Colorado, and their work was too specialized to constitute significant competition, many European immigrants and Anglo-Americans viewed them as an economic threat. Due in part to their perseverance against the discrimination they faced, Chinese immigrants garnered a reputation as "docile" laborers whose willingness to work for low pay would thwart early Labor Movement efforts to improve working conditions.

The 1880 Anti-Chinese Riot allegedly broke out as the result of an altercation in John Amussen's saloon on Wazee Street. Two Chinese patrons were playing pool when a group of drunk white men began harassing them. The Chinese men left the saloon, but were followed and assaulted. Shortly afterwards, a mob numbering over three thousand marched on Chinatown. They raided homes, destroyed businesses, and attacked residents. The

rioters reportedly chanted slogans such as "Stamp out the yellow plague" and other racially charged statements.

Rioters attacked twenty-eight-year-old immigrant Look Young, who had only lived in Denver for six months at the time. He was dragged out of his job at Sing Lee's laundry, and the rioters beat him, cut off his braided queue, tortured him, and hanged him by the neck from a lamppost. Doctors attended to him, but he died of his injuries. Four white men were arrested and tried for his murder, but were found not guilty.

Hundreds of Denver's Chinese population fled from the riots. Some received shelter from other residents of the city, including white brothel owner Lizzie Preston. Others were placed in the city's jail by Denver's small police force, apparently for their own safety.

No Chinese families or individuals ever received compensation for their financial losses or physical injuries. While some rioters were charged with crimes, it's unknown if any served jail sentences.

The riot left Denver's Chinatown in a state of near-ruin. The Rocky Mountain News reported that the neighborhood was "gutted as completely as if a cyclone had come in."

In 2022, the city of Denver issued a formal apology for the Anti-Chinese Riot. City officials wrote, "While the city cannot ease past injustices against Chinese immigrants and the Asian American and Pacific Island communities, the city owes them a long-overdue apology. An admission of the wrongs committed and its failure to correct them is a first step towards recognizing and honoring their contributions, and can contribute to racial reconciliation. It will also serve to educate those who are ignorant of this shameful chapter in Colorado's history and hopefully bring some closure to the families whose loved ones suffered racial violence and abuse."

## Decline

In spite of the violence, many residents of Denver's Chinatown chose to return after the riot. The neighborhood continued to grow as more Chinese immigrants arrived in Colorado, and it reached its peak population of over 1,000 residents in 1890. However, the economic depression of the 1890s combined with ongoing and escalating discrimination, both from residents and from state and federal government, led many residents to leave. In addition, during the early 1900s the city's government began to push Chinese Americans out of Denver's Chinatown to make way for new developments. As the city's central districts grew, many of Chinatown's original buildings were demolished. By 1920, only 203 Chinese Americans lived in the entire city of Denver, and by 1940 this dropped to a historic low of 110.

In the 1930s and 1940s, Denver's officials echoed earlier racist rhetoric to justify pushing out the city's Chinese population. They claimed that the demolition of Chinatown would lead to social betterment by making way for modernized architecture, removing "dangerous" buildings, and discouraging a criminal element. Many of the remaining Chinese residents, displaced by the demolitions of the 1940s, relocated to other Denver neighborhoods including Five Points and Whittier.

The area that once was Denver's Chinatown is now part of Lower Downtown (LoDo). While there is no distinct Chinatown in Denver anymore, the city's Asian American and Pacific Islander (AAPI) population continues to thrive around the city. Modern centers of Asian American communities include Sakura Square and the Far East Center. Today, the location of Denver's Chinatown is honored by three historical markers which were installed by Colorado Asian Pacific United (CAPU), a non-profit organization for Asian American and Pacific Islander communities. CAPU has also worked with local artists to create two murals to celebrate Denver's Asian history, located at 1890 Lawrence Street and along the 5280 Trail on the Auraria Campus.

## Additional Information

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Christian Toto, "Remembering when Denver had a Chinatown," *The Denver Post*, May 6, 2011.

William Wei, "History and Memory: The Story of Denver's Chinatown," in *Western Voices: 125 Years of Colorado Writing*, ed. Steve Grinstead and Ben Fogelberg (Denver: Colorado Historical Society, 2004).

Bernard P. Wong, "Chinatowns: Persistence and Change," *Journal of Chinese Overseas* 7, no. 1 (2007).

Arif Dirlik and Malcolm Yeung, *Chinese on the American Frontier* (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2001).

Liping Zhu, *The Road to Chinese Exclusion: The Denver Riot, 1880 Election, and the Rise of the West* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2013).

## Related Article



A Confluence of Cultures: An Introduction to the Community Section

Alan Berney Fisher



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# The Rocky Mountain News (Daily), Volume 70, Number 42, February 11, 1929 — DENVER CHINATOWN OBSERVES NEW YEAR [ARTICLE]

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DENVER CHINATOWN OBSERVES NEW YEAR

**Orientals Begin Celebration That Will Continue 15 Days**

With a din of popping firecrackers and with interludes of oriental music, residents of Denver's Chinatown yesterday began their celebration of the Chinese New Year.

The holiday atmosphere descended on Chinatown and for 15 days the celebration will continue in that portion of Denver between 19th and 20th sts. and Blake and Market sts.

During the New Year season, there will be special services in the Chinese Masonic Temple as well as feasting on foods brought here from China for the event.

COLORADO HISTORIC NEWSPAPERS COLLECTION
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# The Rocky Mountain News (Daily), Volume 50, Number 235, August 23, 1909 — CHINATOWN GREETS NEW QUEEN WITH FIREWORKS [ARTICLE]

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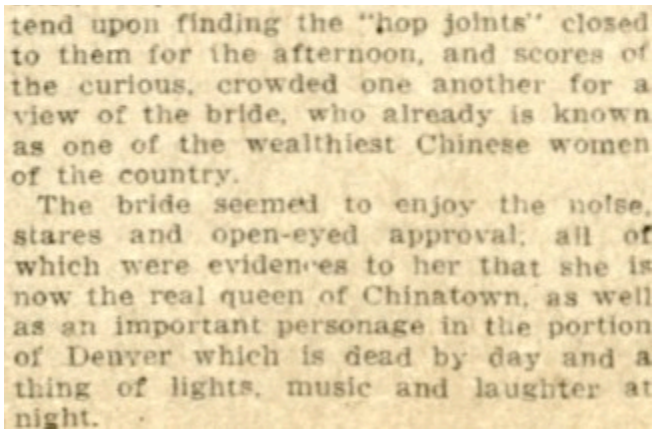
CHINATOWN GREETS NEW QUEEN WITH FIREWORKS

## Gorgeous Raiment and Brilliant Pyrotechnics for Bride of Look Chew.

In true Oriental fashion the wedding of Look Chew Moon, the moneyed king of Denver's Chinatown, and Nok Yug, the daughter of a wealthy San Francisco Chinese, which was solemnized in California two weeks ago, was celebrated on Market street yesterday. By special dispensation of the fire and police board fireworks were set off as a part of the program of the triumphant return to Denver of the big man of Chinatown with his youthful and, according to the Oriental type of beauty, pretty bride.

In the history of Denver's Chinatown, which is as old as the city itself, yesterday was by far the most auspicious and the noisiest celebration ever held. The aristocracy of the Oriental district was there in full Chinese garb, as were the most humble laundrymen, who shuffled about the home of Sing Wah, where the celebration was held, emitting their joyful congratulations in their peculiar guttural language.

But the Chinese were not alone represented at the celebration or civil ceremony. Denizens of the tenderloin district, "hopheads" who were forced to at-



tend upon finding the "hop joints" closed to them for the afternoon, and scores of the curious, crowded one another for a view of the bride, who already is known as one of the wealthiest Chinese women of the country.

The bride seemed to enjoy the noise, stares and open-eyed approval, all of which were evidences to her that she is now the real queen of Chinatown, as well as an important personage in the portion of Denver which is dead by day and a thing of lights, music and laughter at night.

COLORADO HISTORIC NEWSPAPERS COLLECTION
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# The Rocky Mountain News (Daily), Volume 42, Number 171, June 20, 1901 — BELLE OF CHINATOWN LEAVES [ARTICLE]

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BELLE OF CHINATOWN LEAVES

Lily Look Wing Yuen, for years the undisputed belle of Chinatown, yesterday left Denver for the Flowery kingdom. She and her husband are well provided with this world's goods, thanks to the business acumen she displayed during the time she supervised the conduct of her husband's tea store in Chinatown. After a stay of indefinite length she will return to this country.

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# The Rocky Mountain News (Daily), Volume 59, Number 341, December 7, 1918 — LENA KAIHARA, DAUGHTER OF CHINATOWN MAYOR, DIES [ARTICLE]

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LENA KAIHARA, DAUGHTER OF CHINATOWN MAYOR, DIES

Chinatown was in mourning yesterday, for Lena Hung Kaihara, eldest daughter of W. G. Hung, known in Denver as the "mayor of Chinatown," is dead. Mrs. Kaihara was the wife of a Japanese gardener of Arvada and one of the victims of influenza listed during the last week.

She was born in Denver in 1893 and was graduated from East Denver High school in 1911. She was one of the brightest pupils in her class and won many scholarship honors.

Her sister, Mary Hung, is attending school at Ann Arbor, Mich., and has been summoned home. She was valedictorian of the graduating class at Manual Training High school in 1915. When she completes her course at Ann Arbor it is the intention of her father to send her to Johns Hopkins university for a post graduate course.

COLORADO HISTORIC NEWSPAPERS COLLECTION
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# The Rocky Mountain News (Daily), Volume 46, Number 197, July 16, 1905 — CONTINENTAL TRIP FOR CHINESE YOUTHS [ARTICLE+ILLUSTRATION]

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## CONTINENTAL TRIP FOR CHINESE YOUTHS

Traveling all the way from Denver to San Francisco without a guardian or any one to care for them, and obliged to make the trip like their older and more experienced companions in the coach, is the novel experience of Margaret and Ella Hung, aged 12 and 10 years respectively, the bright and pretty daughters of W. Q. Hung, one of the most prosperous and best known Chinese merchants of Denver's Chinatown.

Hung has four children, two daughters and two boys. All of the children were born in this country and are being brought up in true American fashion. A few weeks ago the Chinese merchant received a letter from his sister in Chinatown, San Francisco, asking him to let his daughters go to that city. After much deliberation the merchant decided to let his daughters, who have the reputation for brightness and aptness, take the trip and see something of the country west of Denver.

Accordingly he made all the arrangements, and on Monday he put his daughters on the train going west, leaving them in charge of the Pullman conductor. The proud father of the youthful and inexperienced travelers expressed no fear after he had bid them good-by, and said that they would be just as well off as though he went with them. He seemed very proud of his daughters and wore a happy smile when the children attracted the attention of the other passengers in the car.

They will be met in San Francisco by their aunt and escorted to Chinatown. Their visit will extend until September, when they will return to Denver and start into school here.

The two younger children, the men of the family, are also bright and healthy. They are general favorites in the vicinity of Chinatown, where W. Q. Hung is so well known.





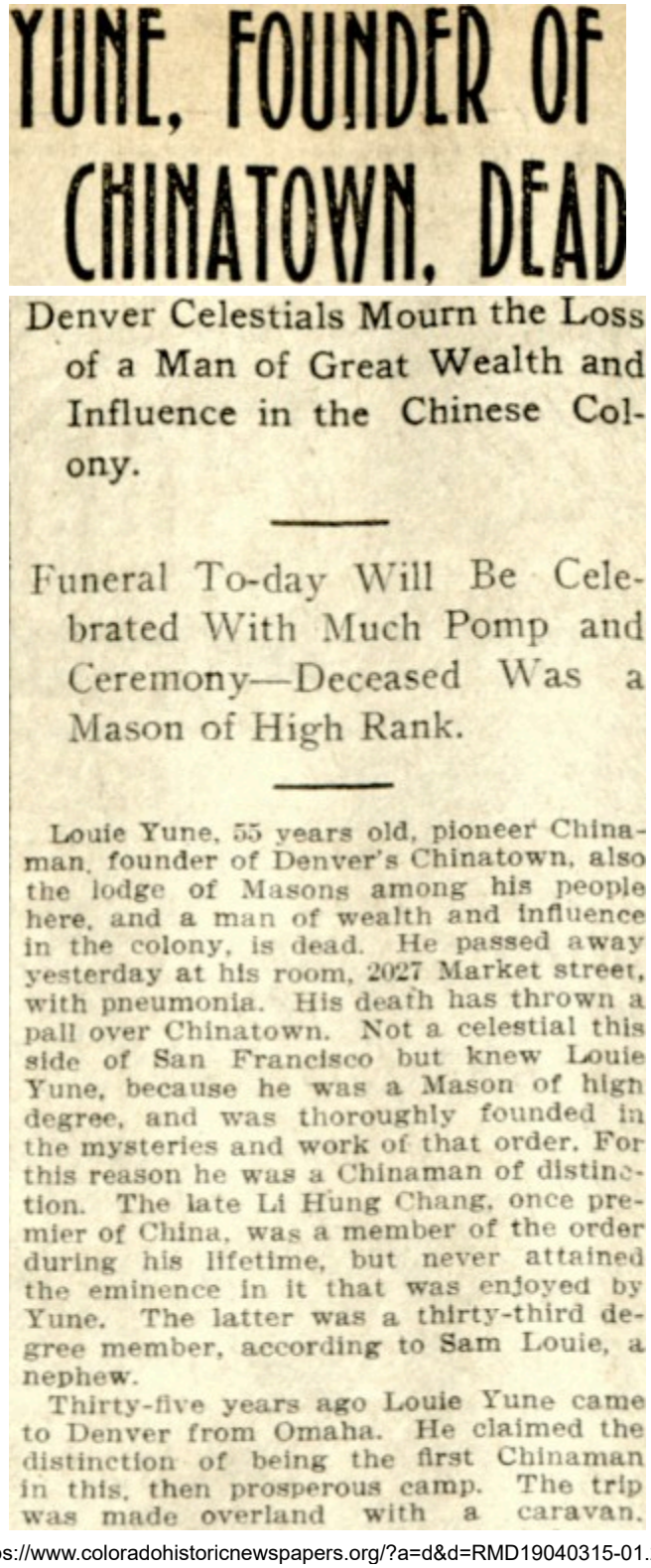
CHILDREN OF W. Q. HUNG,

Two of Whom Traveled to San Francisco Unattended

COLORADO HISTORIC NEWSPAPERS COLLECTION
Experience Colorado as It Happened

# The Rocky Mountain News (Daily), Volume 45, Number 75, March 15, 1904 — YUNE, FOUNDER OF CHINATOWN, DEAD [ARTICLE]

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YUNE, FOUNDER OF CHINATOWN, DEAD

Denver Celestials Mourn the Loss of a Man of Great Wealth and Influence in the Chinese Colony.

Funeral To-day Will Be Celebrated With Much Pomp and Ceremony—Deceased Was a Mason of High Rank.

Louie Yune, 55 years old, pioneer Chinaman, founder of Denver's Chinatown, also the lodge of Masons among his people here, and a man of wealth and influence in the colony, is dead. He passed away yesterday at his room, 2027 Market street, with pneumonia. His death has thrown a pall over Chinatown. Not a celestial this side of San Francisco but knew Louie Yune, because he was a Mason of high degree, and was thoroughly founded in the mysteries and work of that order. For this reason he was a Chinaman of distinction. The late Li Hung Chang, once premier of China, was a member of the order during his lifetime, but never attained the eminence in it that was enjoyed by Yune. The latter was a thirty-third degree member, according to Sam Louie, a nephew.

Thirty-five years ago Louie Yune came to Denver from Omaha. He claimed the distinction of being the first Chinaman in this, then prosperous camp. The trip was made overland with a caravan.

Many years he cooked, then started up a restaurant of his own. By dint of hard work and characteristic policy he thrived apace and accumulated wealth. In time he brought his nephews, Sam Louie and "Fat" Louie, over from the old country, and put them in business. Several years ago he retired from business, having gotten together some $10,000, according to those who know. Two weeks ago he took down sick and died yesterday.

His funeral will be held to-day. It will be an event for Chinatown. There is no hall in the city large enough to hold the mourners who will pay their last respects to the dead man. On this account, it has been decided to hold the public funeral services in the open lot at Twenty-first and Blake streets. Some 5,000 people are expected to gather there to do honor to their friend and countryman. The obsequies will be commensurate with the distinction of the man. Not since Denver grew from a camp will there have been such doings in Chinatown. Timbrels, gongs and other foreign instruments of discordant sound that prey upon the senses, but which are solemn and musical to the celestial, will be in evidence. Chinese liturgies will be chanted in gutturals. Punk and other incense of the Far East smell and custom will mingle as one to make the dead man's soul journey pleasant. Many funeral frills and furbelows not yet given to a deceased Denver Chinaman are to be unfolded on this occasion in all their mystery, significance and splendor.

Four white horses will draw the hearse of Yune. There are to be any number of carriages, all decorated in a fashion befitting the occasion. The body will be removed from Wal ey & Rollins' undertaking parlors to-day at 1:30 to the Chinese joss house. There the local lodge of Chinese Masons, also the priests of the colony, will say service peculiar to that people. This over, Yune's remains will be taken to the vacant lot at Twenty-first and Blake streets for a second demonstration of affection by his friends. The funeral procession will move from there and pass through the down-town streets, thence to Riverside cemetery. Later in the year Yune's body will be exhumed and shipped to his native land to rest forever.