

SONOMA STORIES AND THE SONG WONG BOURBEAU COLLECTION:
A MODEL FOR AN EXHIBITION AND A PUBLIC OUTREACH PROGRAM—
AN INNOVATIVE APPROACH TO CRM

SECTION II. SOCIAL AND HISTORICAL CONTEXTS
FOR CHINESE AMERICAN HERITAGE

Students and visitors to SCM are able to gain a sense of the broader history of Santa Rosa's former Chinatown and its inhabitants through the preservation and display of the Song Wong Bourbeau Collection and by providing historical contexts for its interpretation. In this manuscript, portions of this section have been excerpted and incorporated into stories for teachers, students, and the general public. This has been kept to a minimum to avoid undue redundancy. This is demonstrated in Sections V and VI of this paper. I chose to arrange this section in chronological order, which allows us to see how social change took place in Sonoma County and Santa Rosa's Chinatown.

Representing history is problematic because it is, as Ann-Louise Shapiro (1997:2) deftly describes, "a dynamic project that encompasses both the production and reception of intersecting, overlapping, contradictory, and parallel accounts of the past." Historian Edward T. Linenthal (1994:993) explains that events portrayed in exhibits are not seen as static truth, they are interpreted and read differently "according to the cultural fashions and political needs of particular times." Archaeologists likewise recognize their fallibility in producing "definitive accounts of the past" because there are always incomprehensible factors present in life (whether in the past or present), and because of the "fragmentary nature of all archaeological evidence" (Skeates 2000:104).

The story of Chinese Americans in Sonoma County spans nearly a century and a half. There is no singular Chinese experience; many individuals experienced this multicultural place. Documentary and ethnographic records show that Chinese Californians were subject to unique hostilities and legal constraints, but not without their challenge. They came face to face with a society intent on designating boundaries and deciding who owned what land (Limerick 1987:27). For most of Western history, the Chinese were excluded from this arena. Nonetheless, Chinese labor was an integral factor in the “capitalists” equation--extractable resources (farmland and timber) and profits equal expansion. In this milieu a boom and bust economy followed according to nature’s plan, capital availability, accessibility to markets, reliability of prices, and supply of labor. Competition for resources, markets, and employment pitted ethnic populations against each other and Asian immigration was seen as a threat to America. Resisting hostilities, the Chinese successfully showed incredible productivity, efficiency, and resiliency.

Chinatowns throughout Sonoma County helped to mediate these complex social dynamics. In this setting individuals used personal connections and material culture as reference points for political, social, and ethnic identity. Chinese merchants were vital links in this integration of cultures. Though the Chinese population was overwhelmingly male, Chinese women were largely responsible for the continuity of Chinese customs and traditions (Chinn 1969:68). Tragically, by the beginning of the twentieth century, most of the Chinese enclaves were abandoned or destroyed. Ultimately, for those who chose to endure hostilities, the meeting of East and West was the catalyst for a new identity--Chinese American. The Song Wong Bourbeau family legacy is Sonoma County’s quintessential example of the Chinese experience in Western history. And Song herself

epitomized “the women in the West who were quick to extend its boundaries into the culturally defined male spheres of business and commerce” (White 1991:315).

IMMIGRATION AND THE OVERSEAS CHINESE

As Stanford Lyman (1970:1) wrote, “The Chinese coming to America in the middle of the nineteenth century was really part of a great world –wide migration movement.” The Opium Wars, natural disasters, disease, and competition from Western imports weakened the economy and made for social unrest. The Taiping Rebellion, which began in 1851, claimed an estimated 30 million lives and spread poverty and ruin throughout southeastern China (Yee 1984:25). As Samuel D. Lee (1937:6) explains, “The terrors of war, famine, and plundering paralyzed all industry and trade.” This was the impetus for the mass migration out of China. The Overseas Chinese headed south or east across the Pacific Ocean despite the Chinese government prohibition against emigration codified in *Fundamental Laws of the Ch'ing Dynasty*, Section 225 (Yee 1984:23).

After hearing countless tales about pans of gold for the taking, the nineteenth century Overseas Chinese called California “Gum San,” which means “Gold Mountain.” They came to California through the decades and eventually despite laws that excluded them from entering. They endured hours of interrogation that scrutinized whether they belonged to the one acceptable class--the merchant. According to Lee (1937:6), “Of the early Chinese who came to California at least one-half of them were married and expected not merely to make their personal fortune but to support a family at home; for no man in China, over twenty, remains unmarried unless he is a wanderer or very poor.”

Many found the conditional freedoms they had secured in California sufficient to stay, persevere, and send for their family in China or to start a family here. Some returned to China only to come back to the United States again. The promise of a better life in America called generations to immigrate despite U. S. anti-Chinese laws that prohibited all but certain social classes citizenship, which stayed in affect until 1943. The Chinese Republic (1911-1949) was formed after the overthrow of the Manchu (Qing) dynasty in 1911. Chinese statesman Sun Yat-sen, commonly known as the “Father of Modern China,” led the successful revolt and, it is critical to note, with great support from Chinese Americans (Lyman 1970:12; Yee 1984:305). The effort to reconstruct took place under conditions of abject poverty, corruption, and social-political chaos (Yee 1984:97). Through three decades China witnessed Japanese imperialism, World War I, the subsequent nationalist student protests of the May Fourth Movement, the rise of the Communist party, Nationalist party reforms, and the Japanese invasion in the 1930s. These factors were further cause for many to leave their homeland and come to America.

The earliest arrival of Chinese were the sailors on American ships and on Chinese junks. Most of those who chose to disembark in California to find work did so at ports in San Francisco; others, especially lumbermen, landed in Mendocino. A Chinese American community was established in San Francisco and was actively engaged in local political and cultural events. Chinese labor was extolled as an answer to affordable farming enterprises underway in California in 1848 (California Magazine, November 4, 1848). A year later, the Gold Rush of ‘49 caused a massive increase in demand for labor and trade goods from China. On October 15, 1849 one vessel, the *Amazon*, pulled into port in San Francisco with more than 100 Chinese passengers (Barth 1971: 64). A year

later, the *Frolic*, shipwrecked just south of Fort Bragg on the Mendocino Coast. LeBaron (2004) suggests a possible connection between the Frolic and residents of Santa Rosa who may have acquired goods from the wreck at the mouth of the Russian River.

Even pre-cut granite blocks for prefabricated buildings were shipped across the Pacific and, logically, Chinese stonemasons followed (F. Soule, *The Annals of San Francisco and History of California* [1855], pp. 414-415). Enough stonemasons entered the state that they were able to come together in solidarity and strike for higher wages as early as June 8, 1852 (Chinese Historical Society Bulletin, Vol. 2, No. 5 [May 1967]). In that very year governor McDougall recommended employment of Chinese laborers in reclamation projects, including roadwork and converting tule marshes into farmlands. His call was answered, and because of the diligence of Chinese labor the state of California reaped considerable profit, which at the time was estimated at \$289,700,000 (A Report of the Joint Special Committee to Investigate Chinese Immigration (44th Congress, 2nd Session, 1876-1877, Senate Report 689), p. 54). This fact may also have implications for those who counter the claim that the Chinese sent their money back to China. Archaeologist Priscilla Wegars (2001:17) likes to emphasize that: “The Chinese made substantial contributions to local and territorial government in the form of taxes.”

Gunther Barth (1971:186) explains the management of this growing labor force: “Control over the newcomers remained in the hands of the San Francisco merchant princes” (Barth 1971: 181). According to Barth (1964:55), the majority of Chinese immigrants to San Francisco traveled by the “credit-ticket system” as “indentured servants” to the Chinese merchants at San Francisco or Hong Kong who paid the expenses. Seasonal river mining opportunities was the predominant occupation for these

early arrivals. The San Francisco Custom House recorded the number of incoming laborers at more than 16,000 in 1854 (Sandmeyer 1991:16).

According to Him Mark Lai (2004:40-50), the *huiguan*, or regional associations of the Chinese Consolidated Benevolent Association established by the merchant class among nineteenth century Chinese abroad, maintained economic power and social control. The first two *huiguan* were established by 1851. Merchants from Canton led in the formation of the Sam Yup Association or the "Canton Company (Lai 2004:87). The other *huiguan* was the Sze Yap Association (Lai 2004:41).

Few women came to California during the Gold Rush, especially from China. The first Chinese woman to journey to the United States with intent to reside here is believed to have entered a San Francisco port in February 1848. She was sent from Hong Kong to a wealthy businessman who hired her as a domestic servant (Wegars 1993:230). The ratio of Chinese men to women in 1850 stood at 39 to 1 (Yung 1999:99). Judy Yung's (1999) research chronicled in *Unbound Voices* brought her to the following conclusions. Social norms in China imparted a constraining force of its own on the imagination and will of women to emigrate--remaining in the homeland and caring for the family while the men sought financial fortunes abroad was common. Moreover, for many the damage to feet caused by the practice of footbinding was a real impediment to travel. Still others found the cost and distance of the journey, as well as the fear of racism too restrictive. Despite these factors some women managed to make their way here. The following decades brought exclusion laws, which made it impossible for anyone but merchants from bringing over their family. It was also against the law for Chinese American men to marry white women. By 1900, women had increased in

numbers nonetheless, but the sex ratio still remained skewed at 12 to one (Yung 1999:99).

Between 1852 and 1890 California's population grew faster than anytime in its history. The Chinese immigrant was instrumental in the growth of this new market economy. In 1852, the number of Chinese in California rose to about 25,000. Concentrated in the mining regions and in San Francisco, they were now by far the largest of the foreign minorities. By 1870, California was home to nearly 50,000 Chinese. At this time, the Irish and Chinese were the largest ethnic populations in San Francisco—and the city began to swell with anti-Chinese sentiment. Resentment was fueled by the sheer foreignness of things Chinese, by their willingness to work for low wages, and by the competition Chinese entrepreneurial enterprises presented. Labor union sympathizers supported efforts to stop the Chinese alongside members of “anti-coolie clubs” with demonstrations, parades, and mob violence. A rising number of unemployed from all over the state came to the city for refuge; bitter over the inequitable displays of wealth they sought a forum for their grievances. On 23 July 1877 a group gathered in front of city hall without any forethought of denouncing the Chinese, but members of the anti-coolie clubs barged in with banners and called for a resolution against the Chinese; refuted they took to damaging a number of Chinatown laundries. In the fall of 1877, in response to this turmoil, the Workingman's Party of California was formed. Denis Kearney, first its secretary and then its president, ended his speeches with: “And whatever happens, the Chinese must go” (Rawls and Bean 1988:135 and 186).

Nonetheless, by 1890, there were over 72,000 Chinese in California, but by 1900 the Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882 had caused a rapid decline in their numbers. Thomas

Geary, congressman from Sonoma County, drafted the extension of the Exclusion Act of 1892. This extended the law prohibiting Chinese from entering the United State for another ten years and mandated proof of residence for all Chinese living in the United States. As early as 1860, a law was passed prohibiting Chinese American children from attending public school. Legislated discrimination continued for decades, it wasn't until 1943 that Chinese immigrants were allowed to become naturalized citizens, and thus have the right to vote, own property, testify in court, or hold public office despite paying taxes and contributing significantly to the state and national economy.

For over 60 years, until 1943, immigrants from China were limited to certain social classes; in the process many relied on loopholes in the law and devised means to enter under fraudulent pretense. Merchants were allowed to enter, those in this category often would claim they had a new born son or daughter, which would allow a relative from China to immigrate at a latter date under a false name. Speaking of her family's immigration experiences Song said, "They all used each other's papers when they came from China" (LeBaron 20 November 1994). Judy Yung's (1999:11) research allowed her to make the astonishing claim that: "Based on a number of sources, I estimate that 90 percent of the Chinese immigrants were fraudulent, 25 percent failed the interrogation, and 70 to 80 percent of those ordered debarred managed to enter the United States by appealing their cases in federal court."

Archaeologist Robert L. Schuyler (1980:87) calls the early Chinese American experience "industrial servitude." Urban centers offered a safer haven after time spent in the oppressive atmosphere of most rural mining, logging, and railroad camps. According to Sucheng Chan (n/d: p.23), "The twentieth century saw an acceleration of the trend that

forced more and more Chinese to retreat to urban centers where they earned a living through trade and menial labor. By 1920, fully 48 percent of all the Chinese in the United States were in small businesses.” Even a city’s periphery, outside the core environment of any town’s Chinatown, proved to be filled with social stigma and obstacles. Perhaps this is why Chinese Americans were intent on preserving their Old World ways and acculturated slower than other immigrants until the twentieth century accelerated the mode of adaptation.

THE CHINESE POPULATION IN SONOMA COUNTY

1860-1875

The first major influx of Chinese labor into the county came in 1860. In the Sonoma Township, Erwin and Edwin Johnson had a Chinese cook; E. Robbin and his four sons, all from France, had many Indian laborers and 19 Chinese. Ten Chinese worked for viticulturist, Agoston Haraszthy (LeBaron Archives), the Hungarian immigrant who founded Buena Vista winery in 1857. The earliest report of Chinese in the county was the *Sonoma Democrat’s* February 1861 article on Haraszthy employing Chinese workers to reclaim Sonoma Valley swampland. The Chinese hired by Haraszthy cleared fields for vines, filled, corked, and wired champagne bottles, and dug caves for wine storage cellars that would tunnel into the hillside. The *Alta California*, a San Francisco newspaper, reported on 23 July 1863 that the tunnels would be “twenty-six feet wide, thirteen feet in height and three-hundred feet long.” According to wine historian Ernest P. Peninou (1998:69), Chinese workers employed at Buena Vista lived in cabins on the hillside and worked 10 to 11 hours a day for one dollar a day. There were over 7,000 acres planted to grapes in Sonoma County in 1872 (Peninou 1998:48).

The National Park Service's (1980:135) publication, *Five Views - A History of Chinese Americans in California*, sums up the contribution made by the Chinese working in the winery industry saying:

It is estimated that viticulture in California would have been set back 30 to 50 years without Chinese vineyard workers. Although grape vines are now pruned to waist height, they were originally pruned to a foot and a half above the ground. This forced the picker to kneel or to bend his back to a painful angle. Many non-Chinese laborers could not or would not perform stoop labor. About 1890, pruning customs changed, and there was much agitation to replace Chinese workers with white laborers.

The Chinese were responsible for a great deal of infrastructure building around the town of Bloomfield seven miles northwest of Sebastopol between 1860 and 1885 (Clayborn 1993:41-42). Historian Hannah Clayborn explains: "At certain times of the year as many as 300 to 500 Chinese toiled for pittance during the day, and slept in cramped quarters in the basements of the buildings along Main Street at night." A "China Camp" with eight to 10 cabins was set up at today's Emma Herbert Memorial Park. Apple dryers were common in the county and the Chinese operated one at the corner of Main Street and Petaluma-Valley Ford Road. The Chinese were run out of Bloomfield in 1886, after which the town fell on hard times (Clayborn 1993:68). A few stayed. Two Chinese men single-handedly built a 46,000-gallon capacity reservoir in two weeks back in 1888 on the Nazareno Pozzi ranch (Clayborn 1993:69).

Anti-Chinese sentiment expressed in the newspaper appeared a decade and a half before Bloomfield's tangible evidence. On 11 March 1871 the *Sonoma Democrat* reported that about 100 Chinese workmen for the Vallejo & Sonoma Railroad passed through town; it was accompanied by the editorial comment that no company that employees Chinese should get subsidy money. The Sonoma County supervisors had

recently offered \$5,000 per mile to the first company to complete 10 miles of track through the county (Wilson 1998:42). Towards this endeavor, California Pacific Railroad employed predominantly Chinese labor to build a line from Sonoma Valley to Healdsburg. At the same time, Irishmen were employed in direct competition with the Chinese to continue the Petaluma-Santa Rosa track to Healdsburg for the San Francisco and North Pacific Railroad. A race of sorts ensued and the result was a construction pace of a mile of track a day.

By 1873, 1,300 Chinese laborers were laying track for a coastal route through the western portions of Sonoma and Marin counties from Sausalito to Monte Rio (Wilson 1998: 44). Hay, milk, clams, oysters, potatoes, hogs, and lumber were commodities eventually transported along this route. Railroads were a boost to business, agriculture, and the timber industry. Soon railroad spurs were allowing access to more remote stands of redwood and tanbark oak.

Sonoma County's economy was primarily based on extractive resources, mostly from timber and agriculture. It thus became a community with broader social, economic, transport, and communication links critical to the industrial frontier. The heavily forested regions of the county were the first to be exploited. With machinery brought from the East Coast, a steam-powered mill was established at Bodega by Captain Stephen Smith in 1843 (Andrews 1958:18). Such mechanized sawmills "revolutionized the California logging industry and placed it in the forefront of all the western timber states by the mid-1860s" (Dillon 1995:159).

The Bodega Bay mill was eventually acquired by John S. Rutherford and subsequently was moved further north. In 1862, it was reconstructed on the Gualala

River, which divides Sonoma and Mendocino Counties. This new saw mill, known initially as Rutherford & Webber's Mill, was a consolidation of two mills--Timber Cove Mill, or the Ross & Webber Mill, and John S. Rutherford's Saw Mill at Bodega, both of Sonoma County. The Mendocino County *Census of 1870* shows 53 Chinese males working in Gualala--19 working in the sawmill, 14 laborers, 11 fishermen, four washermen, three cooks, and two domestic servants. Timber company land was extensive on both sides of the Gualala River. The China Gulch area, immediately adjacent the north side of the river, is where the Chinese made their huts, grew their gardens, raised chickens and pigs, and gathered fish. It was in very close proximity to the mill site.

Just as they labored in the timber industry in other pockets of the county such as Guerneville (Stumptown) or Occidental, many of the Chinese employed by the Gualala Lumber Company were water-slingers keeping the skids wet. They also pulled loads like the oxen, cooked and were servants at the campsites and the local hotel, and were the ones who built the cribbing for the log ponds in the Gualala River. One Chinese man by the name of Bing was a schooner engineer and Gualala's most famous Chinese resident (Parks 1980:27-105).

1875-1886

The continual presence of Chinese in the various labor markets caused an escalation of anti-Chinese sentiment. Chinese were working the Geyser's mine area in the spring of 1874. In the spring of 1876, resentment surfaced over a foreman's hiring of Chinese to work on Guerneville Road. Similar complaints echoed through the county. Chinese laborers and an Irish foreman were hired around this time by G. W. Call to build

a new road along the coast from Fort Ross to the intersection of what today is Meyers Grade Road, along with some other road improvements in the area. This included the construction of a road, about three miles in length, from Fort Ross up to the ridge road. These laborers may have continued to live in the area after these jobs were completed. There were Chinese busy in the vicinity of Fort Ross shipping abalone to San Francisco between 1877-1880 (Douglass 2000; Gaye LeBaron archives Folder 1).

Local archaeologist Robert G. Douglass (2002) wrote his thesis on the Chinese bunkhouse in Miller Gulch, an Overseas Chinese archaeological site at a Sonoma Coast sawmill. Preliminary results from an excavation at the site were published in the *Proceedings of the Society for California Archaeology* (Douglass 2000:126-135)--an interesting excerpt sheds light on the diligent nature of the Chinese laborer in supplementing their diet and income through the use of coastal resources.

The coastal environment added another dimension to the camp life of the Bunkhouse laborers. The evidence of ocean foraging by the Bunkhouse laborers to further diversify their diet is interesting by itself, but it is also possible to argue that they were extending their income by producing dried abalone and abalone shell (and probably seaweed) for sale. Abalone harvesting by Chinese fishermen in central and southern California was a well-recorded industry in the late nineteenth-century (Chinn 1969:40-41; Schwartz 1995). Kaye Tomlin (1986:1-2), a descendent of Fort Ross's George Call, found records of Call shipping out small amounts of abalone, shells, and seaweed for local Chinese road builders in 1880. Additionally, an 1875 newspaper description of products shipped from the Timber Cove chute, also owned by William Miller, contains this statement: 'Abalone shells are obtained at low tide in great quantity along the coast, and these are also an article of traffic. They are used in the manufacture of ornaments and jewelry, and bring in the San Francisco market 2 cents per pound, while in the eastern markets they are worth 7 cents per pound' (SD, 24 July 1875:1) (Douglass 2000:131).

Sebastopol had a variety of extractive industries from agriculture to timber and mining. There was a Chinese mining settlement in the vicinity of Sebastopol around

1876-78 where workers would earn 25 cents a day (Gaye LeBaron archives). Some enterprising Chinese went beyond manual labor; not only was Bow San Kee a washerman, pruner, and handyman around the vineyard vats, he also was a respected wine taster (Gaye LeBaron archives). Sebastopol's Sam Yup community was established around 1880, by then there were 12,000 members statewide (Lai 2004:90 and 106). In its heyday, the Association members worked in the fields and orchards, and looked to the organization for protection against commonplace anti-Chinese actions. According to Chinn et al. (1969:59), "Areas such as Sebastopol and Watsonville had numerous Chinese-operated apple evaporating furnaces."

Roughly 500 Chinese lived in the Petaluma area during the 1870s and 1880s, working as railroad laborers, quarry miners, laundry proprietors, household servants, and creek restoration crew-members. An 1883 map depicts several Chinese stores and shanties (Heig 1982:142). The *Sonoma Democrat* reported on 12 May 1883 that there was a Chinese school with 15 students in Petaluma.

Archaeologist Paul A. Shackel (2003) argues that we need to place working people in the equation when considering the American industrial landscape and make them part of the official history of industry. Here in the state of California and in Sonoma County, the Chinese contributed greatly to the development of various industries and the economy in general. It is important, however, as Stanford Lyman (1970: 5) contends, that we guard against writing history that emphasizes the "contributions" of Chinese Americans--because it implies that a contribution is only that which "fits in with the cultural mainstream of white America," and ignores the complexity of cultural life. The "Chinese-American migration experience" and, by extension, how "Chinese

Americans maintained a strong Chinese identity prior to the US civil rights movement” to counter the experience (Chinese Historical Society of America 2005:v), is just one example of an issue to be examined in avoiding the myopic “contributions” perspective.

Santa Rosa’s Chinatown—The Early Years through 1885

Santa Rosa’s Chinatown evolved mostly from the influx of railroad workers; it grew as they found employment as field hands and as domestic servants in homes and hotels after the railroad work ended. No visible imprint remains on the Santa Rosa landscape of this important immigrant group. Santa Rosa’s Chinatown had its own social organization, physical appearance, and daily life apart from the rest of the community. The Sanborn Insurance Company made the earliest maps of the city showing buildings occupied by Chinese in 1885. Julio Carrillo and Barney Hoen had surveyed the area to establish the town of Santa Rosa in 1852. A subsequent Santa Rosa 1854 Plat Map (Sonoma County Library’s History Annex archives) shows 417 lots 40 wide and the majority 120 deep, in a north-south alignment around a central plaza. Streets were established with a width of 60 feet, except First Street was 30 feet wide. Santa Rosa Creek served as the southern boundary of the town; a bridge was built across it connecting it to agricultural fields to the south. As Overseas Chinese settled here in the West, they congregated together and were commonly segregated, often to flood prone areas such as creek side locations. Santa Rosa’s Chinatown was no exception, it was located at the confluence of two creeks (at the time)—Matanzas and Santa Rosa creeks on First and Second streets between today’s Santa Rosa Avenue and D Street. Anti-Chinese agitation limited possibilities for employment and access to goods; this affected settlement patterns and contributed to a prohibitively high cost of housing materials

(Adrian Praetzellis, personal communication 2005). Chinese temples or shrines in California Chinatowns were commonly the most colorful structures, but “varied greatly in size and stateliness . . . Some, in fact, were mere lean-tos or sheds” (Chinn, Lai, and Choy 1969:73).

It is uncertain if the Chinese constructed the buildings in Santa Rosa’s Chinatown, but given the layout of the streets the orientation of the properties seem logical. Important to consider, however, is that traditional Chinese settlement patterns incorporate geomancy or Feng-shui, the principles of which dictate appropriate orientation of residences near and facing water for maximum health and prosperity. Indeed, Feng-shui means “wind and water.” Buildings were traditionally believed to be best oriented south, constructed using a rectangular footprint, and preferably made with earth and wood. Archaeologists have verified that this practice dates back to the Neolithic-period houses in China; it is still practiced there today. Archaeologists have also found the application of geomancy to dwellings in nineteenth century Chinatowns (Mueller 1987) and the organization of burials in Chinese cemeteries (Rouse 2000). Spatial analysis of fire insurance maps published by the Sanborn Company reveal the orientation of Chinese dwellings in Santa Rosa to be facing the east-west flowing creek, which easily facilitated the dictates of Feng-shui. The important aspects of Chinese domestic architecture of a south facing orientation and rectangular footprint are clearly visible. Although some of the buildings on Second Street had front facades facing north onto the street, they had porches and doors in the back that faced the creek.

We can also see by the Sanborn maps and historical photographs that most buildings in Santa Rosa’s Chinatown were of simple wood construction with minimal if

any adornments. The expansion of the railroad network, beginning in the 1870s, helped to spread a much more elaborate style of wood home construction popular throughout the nation. Manufacturing and pre-fabricated architectural details such as Victorian-era spindle work and porch columns were becoming commonly used. About a mile east of Chinatown eventually stood the epitome of this style, Colonel Mark McDonald's Mableton mansion built in 1885. Praetzellis and Praetzellis (1997:11) have argued that: "As Victorian models of architecture adorned the Caucasian neighborhoods, the Chinese community adhered to a different mode of construction and stood singly among the population to do so." They did this by maintaining unadorned wooden facades, except for the business sign(s) that hung on the exterior that housed multiple businesses. In this way, individuals would compensate for the high cost of rent by sharing space (Chinn et al. 1969:63) and eliminate the unnecessary expense of building ornamentations. These measures of intra-cultural self-sufficiency were matters of adaptive survival.

Sanborn Insurance maps show the initial geographic patterning that influenced the relationship between individuals and the environment. Topography and transportation were the primary influences in the transformation of this valley into a residential and agricultural region. Fertile land surrounded the city; and the configuration of the city itself was centered on railroad transportation, which was a vital link for the produce, wine, beer, and other goods produced in Santa Rosa. The Santa Rosa Creek was a key resource and confined the city's core. Some of the earliest Euro-American residences were established alongside Chinatown. Santa Rosa became incorporated in 1868.

By 1870, the North Pacific Railroad had built a track through Petaluma and Santa Rosa and established a depot a half-mile from the center of Santa Rosa. At the same

time, the reconfiguration of downtown was taking place as realignment of its business center along Main Street moved to enterprises being established on Fourth Street. Santa Rosa Creek and the railroad line circumscribed the city grid pattern. First Street ran alongside the creek and its line extended was the base from which houses were numbered on streets running north and south. The San Francisco and North Pacific railroad was the base from which houses were numbered on streets running east and west. Small farms, dairies, orchards, and hay surrounded the central town.

The 1870 Census is the earliest available that lists Chinese; it shows 467 in Sonoma County--as elsewhere in California, few women were present. At the time, 25 men and one woman, 17-year old Tommy Sing, were living in Santa Rosa. The Sonoma County Genealogical Society (1990:1 and 135) published a list of Sonoma County Marriages between 1847 – 1902, which included two Chinese couples: Yung Lee wed Choy He 27 March 1871 and Ah One married Sin Kim 7 October 1873.

Property ownership was rare for the Chinese in the early days of California, although, in some cases they owned mining claims. A thorough examination of the Index to Deeds 1835-1861 at the Sonoma County Assessor's Office did not reveal any Chinese listed in property transactions. Further research of "Probate Orders: 1870-1918" and "Sonoma County Record of Abstracts of Mortgages 1853-1883" (Sonoma County Library's History Annex) revealed no record of Chinese property ownership. Indeed, as Song Wong (Bourbeau 1994) told Gaye LeBaron: "Don't you know Chinese were not allowed to own land?" This was true in the early years, but to the contrary, it was not true during much of Song's life.

Stephen T. and Amanda Fulkerson owned lots number 72, 73, 74, 81, 82, and 83, in Block 16, in Chinatown on Second Street, with an estimated value of \$4,000.00 (Sonoma County Wills, January 6, 1912, Book J, Page 489 and his probate file is in Sonoma County Probate Records, Register 107, Page 84, Record 5234; [Wendt 2002]). Stephen's father, Richard Fulkerson was the previous owner of the six lots having acquired them from the Cockrill family 1 November 1877 (Sonoma County Deeds, Book 61, Page 480; [Larry Wendt, personal communication 2005]); Amanda's father was Harrison Cockrill who had acquired the land from Hoen and Company operating out of the old Carrillo Adobe on 7 August 1855 (Deed Book 6 Page 87 [Wendt 2002]). According to *An Illustrated History of Sonoma County, California* (1889), Richard Fulkerson arrived in Santa Rosa in the fall of 1854. S. T. Fulkerson was receiving rents from these properties in Chinatown that totaled \$45 a month in 1911 (Wendt 2002).

Early History of Song Wong Bourbeau Family in Santa Rosa

Song Wong Bourbeau claimed that her Second Street property, which she called "shacks," belonged to the Hahman family. The Bisordi brothers, who were related to her husband Charles Bourbeau, owned property near the Hahman's (Bourbeau 1994). Berthold Hoen, John William Hartman, and Feodor Gustave Hahman, along with Julio Carrillo, were the men in the firm Hoen and Company who not only surveyed the future town of Santa Rosa, but also bought 70 acres in the center of town (Wilson 1999).

Many hardships suffered by the Chinese community were chronicled in the local press during Santa Rosa's formative years. The *Santa Rosa Times* 16 September 1875 reported on a fire at the Chinese laundry at 5th and Mendocino. In 1876, the Presbyterian Church started a Chinese Mission School; three years later vandals broke in and wreaked

havoc. A few months later Santa Rosa architect, S. T. Coulter's idea for a Santa Rosa public market, in part to get business away from Chinese growers, got support in the *Sonoma Democrat*.

LeBaron (1985:81) tells us that the “defenders of the Chinese were few--but courageous.” Contact with their cultural traditions and neighboring communities remained a strong counterweight to the hardships of emigration. As early as 1855, San Francisco had two Chinese-language newspapers (Chinn 1969:70; Tung 1974:9). Archaeologist James Deetz (1996:122) argues that religious institutions and their artifacts are known to be the most conservative aspects of a culture resisting change. Some Chinese converted to Christianity after arriving in America, but most continued to worship Taoist deities such as Kuan Kung. Santa Rosa’s Chinatown also had a temple, the name of which is not known. Song Wong’s merchant father was the caretaker of the temple. It might have resembled the temple in the Sam Yup Association’s San Francisco headquarters constructed in 1900, which venerated Guandi, patron saint of merchants and travelers, and had a shrine dedicated to deceased association members (Lai 2004:94). There is an extant altar cloth from the Santa Rosa temple commemorating the dead with calligraphy that reads: “Go to heaven for a new life” (Chinese Cultural Center of San Francisco, personal communication March 11, 2005).

Song’s maternal grandfather, Poy Jam, settled first in the Sonoma Valley and in 1877 moved to Santa Rosa where he opened the first Chinese restaurant, Jam Kee, on Second and D streets. The 1870 Census for Santa Rosa does not show a Poy or Kee with the given name Jam; however, it does show a 25-year-old male with the last name Kee and the first name Sam. In 1900, the census records indicate a Poy, Ah, a male, age 41.

The 1910 Census lists a Poy; with the given name Jim, age 42, with the occupation of restaurant cook. This profile, except the age (research indicates he would have been 47), fits the family's oral history for Poy Jam. Census data in this case may be an inaccurate recording of Jim for the Chinese name Jam, and the age 42 may easily be read or recorded as 47. In other cases, the Chinese custom of placing ones family name first may have been ignored or misunderstood by the recorder.

According to the interment record he was Poy Jam, born August 9, 1857 in Canton, China, he died March 23, 1957 at the age of 99 (Odd Fellows Cemetery Association of Santa Rosa, California). Interestingly, this record records his race as white. His obituary states that he had been "a Santa Rosan for 80 years. He had worked for the MJB Coffee Co., for C. A. Wright, and later established Jam Kee Restaurant in Santa Rosa" (Odd Fellows Cemetery). This information indicates that Poy Jam moved to Santa Rosa in 1877.

In comparing two annual statements of the Santa Rosa Waterworks for 1883 and 1894, which list all Santa Rosa residents who subscribed to the water system and what street they lived on, there were two Chinese residents on Second Street with the last name Kee. This suggests that Poy Jam's restaurant, Jam Kee, may have been a partnership. This would not have been uncommon (Lai 2004:158).

Poy Jam had a brother by the name of Moon, variously known as Young or Ah, who worked in Glen Ellen as a winemaker, brandy distiller, and cellar boss at the old Chauvet winery. According to the *Sonoma Index Tribune* of 19 February 1937, Young Moon was born in 1868 to a Chinese merchant. The vocative *Ah* as a prefix before Chinese names is extremely common in the federal census records for Sonoma County.

It was a central and southern Chinese custom (Louie 1998:193). According to Emma Woo Louie (1998: 96): “The Ah type of name and names that consist of only two words prevail instead, suggesting that the early emigrants were either reluctant to reveal their full name to strangers or they found it more convenient to use only part of their name.” Poy Jam and Ah Moon did not share the same name because they entered the country under false identification.

Song Wong Bourbeau (1994) recalled how her grandfather, Poy Jam, and his younger brother, Ah Moon, first found employment in the county: “He liked to be called Ah Moon. He came here and worked at a winery in Glen Ellen. In fact, he said, ‘I’m the best brandy maker!’ Grandpa worked for O’Brien, the coffee king. So, that’s how he started Jam Kee.” When Ah Moon moved to Santa Rosa he became a bartender and steward for the Santa Rosa Elk’s Club. Gaye LeBaron (1994) referred to Ah Moon as, “One of the best-known Chinese in Sonoma County.”

Chinese occupancy and usage associated with structures in Santa Rosa is evident on 1885 and 1888 Sanborn Company maps (see Figures 72, 74,76 in Appendix G). At the time only eight structures were scattered about the Second Street area; by 1908 there were twice as many buildings (see Figure 71 in Section V). There is a Chinese grocery on the northern corner of D and Second streets that may have been Song’s fathers, although other data places the temple, family, and business inhabiting the south side.

Anti-Chinese actions continued to be made public. By 1883, Mark L. McDonald bought a lot east of the plaza with a residence on it occupied by Chinese with the intent of destroying it to build a city hall and a fire department. Notice of the removal of the building is evident on an 1888 Sanborn map (see Figure 79 in Appendix G). About a

year later the *Sonoma Democrat* reported a failed attempt to blow up a Chinese washhouse on Second Street. Meanwhile, the Kohler and Frohling winery in Glen Ellen were using Chinese labor to construct two large barns. In the winter of 1885, an arsonist set fire to a Chinese washhouse near the Santa Rosa depot on Third Street. A paper titled "After the Chinese" circulated around town just a month prior; it contained resolutions for the expulsion of Chinese residents (*Sonoma Democrat*, 17 October 1885).

1886-1890

The peak of anti-Chinese activity was the year of 1886, when records indicate 600 Chinese living in Santa Rosa (LeBaron, *Press Democrat*, 18 January 2004). Continual stories appeared in the *Santa Rosa Daily Democrat* of anti-Chinese sentiment, groups, committees, and leagues, and suggestions or announcements of boycotts against those who employed Chinese labor. February began with a story that one of the county's largest wineries, owned by Cady, Kohler, and Frohling, fired all their Chinese employees. Tensions were high and many Chinese began to leave. On 9 February 1886 a Chinese business at the corner of Fifth and Mendocino advertised the liquidation of assets prior to the owners return to China. On 24 February 1886 a Main Street building, once occupied by Chinese residents, was vacated; this occurred just weeks after the proprietor of the Grand Hotel discharged all of his Chinese help. Two weeks later an article referred to an imminent deadline for the Chinese to leave and reported that 35 had. Some Chinese stayed when they found work on ranches near Glen Ellen. At the same time a Chinese chain gang worked on sewer connections in the plaza, residents of Chinatown picked weeds around the plaza to eat after agitators destroyed their gardens.

Anytime a group of Chinese left it was worth a story. The month of March ended with the declaration that 10 more Chinese residents had left Santa Rosa. By the middle of April, the efforts to drive out the Chinese was mostly effective as the Chinese population of Santa Rosa dropped by half, and at the least was financially devastating for those who remained. As the *Santa Rosa Daily Democrat* touted these events in successful tones, the *Petaluma Argus Courier* condemned the anti-Chinese efforts. In May the *Sonoma Democrat* reported that Chinese washhouses had been removed from Hinton Street. By summertime the *Santa Rosa Daily Democrat* was boasting that there were no gardens left in Chinatown. And, as local historian Gaye LeBaron (*Press Democrat*, 18 January 2004) has reminded us, hanging high in the middle of the street was a large banner that read: “The Chinese Must Go; We Mean Strictly Business.”

The Bureau of Labor compiled employment data from Sonoma County for years 1885 and 1886 following the distribution of a questionnaire that was subsequently summarized (Lai n/d [State of California 1886]). The questions asked of employers pertained specifically to Chinese residents. The presumption is that the accuracy of these statistics are problematic because it takes into account only those individuals who chose to respond and represents their own biases. Given this caveat, there was reported to be 1,500 males and 25 females living in “extremely bad” conditions in the county at the time. Eighty percent of the Chinese population was employed—three-quarters of which were domestic cooks. The final report concluded that a Chinese laundry existed in “every house.” Two hundred Chinese were stated to be busy “cultivating the soil.” The gross amount paid to Chinese labor annually was recorded to be \$450,000. The respondents said that the Chinese paid “very little” in rent. Likewise, Chinese were said

to have spent “very little” on clothing and food per month choosing to purchase imported products. The employers estimated that their workers sent 90 percent of their yearly earnings out of the county. It is highly unlikely that they would be privileged to know this personal information. The Euro-centric bias is transparent in the response to the last question: “To what extent does their employment come in competition with the white industrial classes?” The answer: “It takes the employment from thousands of women in the laundry business, hop, and grape picking, and numerous other industries that are now monopolized by the Chinese to the detriment of the white population.”

During the 1870s, the establishment of the Sonoma County Grange successfully united farmers in political action that resulted in tax reforms, establishment of a Grange Bank, and in cooperatives for buying and selling goods. The emergence of the Grange co-occurred with the Populist Party movement and an economic recession, rising anti-foreign sentiment, the nativist movement, and rapid urbanization. In the 1880s, as prosperity returned to the region and farm conditions improved, the Grange’s leadership role started to decline. In the 1890s, California was experiencing an inclement climate, but Sonoma County remained moderate enough to promote prosperity, which stifled the voice of farmers seeking relief through Populist reforms. Specialized agriculture was underway by 1890 and was the most important contribution to the county’s economy--grapes and fruit replaced wheat. The diversification of farms affected the complexion of farm labor in character and demand for more (Spooner 1988:20-21). As the Chinese exited the fields in mass, the newly immigrant Italian, familiar with viticulture, proved a suitable replacement labor force. Favorable weather conditions, sufficient labor, plant diversification, a rise in farms concomitant with a decline in their per acre size were key

factors in the county's relatively secure economic profile. Consequently, there was definite decrease need for drastic economic reforms as outlined by the Populists Party. Banking and prosperity continued to flourish in Sonoma County in the face of bank closures and economic declines elsewhere in the state and across the nation (Spooner 1988:23-25). Economic conditions did not justify an anti-Chinese labor stance.

Santa Rosa's Occupational Directory for 1886 (Haywood 2000) indicates the following seven proprietors operating businesses in the vicinity of Chinatown: H. A. Hall, launderer on First Street; I. Haltener, a brewer on Second Street; F. Hillman, a tanner on East and Second streets; Fred Hirth, a butcher on Third Street; R. Hodgson, a tailor at 316 B Street; W. R. Smith, a blacksmith on Main and Second streets; and J. S. White, a livery on Second Street. Competition for clientele was high. According to the Sonoma County Land Register and Santa Rosa Business Directory (Grosse 1884) there were 15 Euro-American operated groceries, five barbers, five cigar and tobacco businesses, and three bathhouses within the town limits. The *Santa Rosa Republican* reported ownership of Chinese laundries by whites: in 1887, a Chinese washhouses on Second Street, owned by Ridgway estate; again in 1887, a Chinese washhouse near the depot, building owned by Boylan; in 1901, a Second Street business owned by Kee, Yun, and Lee, building owned by Madsen; and in 1903, Fee, owner of a Chinese laundry on Fourth Street.

Healdsburg had Chinese working in mercury mines, in Alexander Valley operating fruit dryers, and in town working as laundrymen (Clayborn 2003). There were quite a few chefs and culinary helpers employed in two hotels and in private homes. Ah Sing Lee had a vegetable and fish business he operated in traditional fashion, walking the

streets carrying the commodities in baskets strung on a bamboo pole balanced on his shoulders ((Shipley 1965). But, as elsewhere anti-Chinese sentiment gathered strength, by 1900 all the Chinese had left Healdsburg.

Problems of violence persisted for years afterwards and it resulted in a scarcity of workers. In January and September of 1887 the *Santa Rosa Republican* reported arson fires at two separate Chinese laundries. The mass exodus of Chinese laborers stifled businesses; the insufficient numbers of white laborers soon grew intolerable. The demand for Chinese workers was heard once again by the beginning of 1888 when the Santa Rosa Carquines Railroad employed 250 Chinese.

The Hinton Avenue neighborhood in Santa Rosa had its own Chinatown. According to the 4 September 1886 *Sonoma Democrat* the Chinese neighborhood located there had an estimated 125 Chinese men living in four or five rooms. Sanborn Insurance maps show transitions in the structure of the city's Chinese neighborhoods--removal of buildings around the plaza for government purposes, conversion of a property to a different use, and urban renewal. The 1888 Sanborn map marked Chinese buildings on Hinton Avenue and Third Street "to be removed." On the north side of Santa Rosa Creek at Sixth and Jefferson streets, the Santa Rosa Packing Company had Chinese quarters adjacent to the canning warehouse. The May 1890 *Sonoma Democrat* wrote of a cannery denying that it would use Chinese labor in the fall. The 1908 Sanborn map no longer indicates the presence of the Chinese quarters. Similarly, the 1893 Sanborn shows a Chinese boardinghouse near Hunt's Brother's packing at Roberts and D streets, by 1908 the boardinghouse was gone.

1890-1900

Not all Chinese had intentions of returning to China. Their population was once again increasing despite ongoing hostilities and legislative racism under the Exclusion Act. 1891 began with proof in the *Sonoma Democrat* that some Chinese refused to be deterred from the opportunities of their new adopted homeland. It reported that there was another Chinese grocery store on D Street near Second; this is the location Song Wong Bourbeau (1994) claims was her half-brother's business.

A census of miners and quarrymen in the mid-1890s indicated that in 1893-1894 there were "227 'white men and Chinese' miners and quarrymen working in Sonoma County" (Waghorn 2003:101). A large source of the volcanic outcrops prized for construction projects was found in the area of present day Annadel State Park.

Transportation of the resource was lacking until James and Mark McDonald established railroad stations at Annadel, Melitta, and Kenwood in 1888 (Olmsted 1991:20).

Archaeologist Annita Waghorn (2003:102) found that many quarry workers and blockmakers were members of the Block Maker's Union, a subsidiary of the American Federation of Labor (AFL). It is uncertain if Chinese labor had any representation in this union. The Chinese workers lived at the Melita Station where the Johnson Paving Rock Quarry was known to be paying \$5,000 per month in payroll to their workers, many of whom were Chinese (Parmalee 1963:3).

Many stone fences can be found in Sonoma County such as in Sonoma and Bennett Valleys and in Annadel State Park. It is unknown who actually built the stone fences, but there is some indication they were built by Italian rather than Chinese labor (Waghorn 2003:170-171). However, stone fences found elsewhere in the state are attributed to nineteenth century Overseas Chinese labor (Chartkoff and Chartkoff

1984:292; Chinn 1969:57; Wey 1980:110). Drylaid stone fences and property boundaries in Annadel constructed between 1860 and the 1930s represent an important feature of agricultural landscapes in California at the time. They were most likely built before 1900, because after this time more cost-effective fencing methods such as wood and barbed wire existed.

In the last two years of the nineteenth century, Sebastapol's Chinatown was often the subject of newspaper stories. The Gaye LeBaron archives at Sonoma State University reference numerous accounts in the *Sebastapol Times* occurring in 1897 and 1898. They often mentioned employment needs, charges of infractions made by the Chinese, or opium raids in Chinatown. On 17 November 1897 Hang Wah, a prominent Chinese merchant and contract laborer, was reported in need of hands for land clearing, chopping wood, and working in vineyards, orchards, and hop fields. On 17 March 1897 there was a search for illicit opium in Sebastapol's Chinatown without success. The week prior a raid in Sonoma's Chinatown had found "\$400 worth of opium that had not been legally stamped." On the 8 September 1897 Wo Lee had accused Bert A. Park of Petaluma of failing to pay wages to his laborers who chopped wood at Delaney's place. 29 September 1897 the Chinese cook at Meeker's Mill claimed Jim Yip needed medical attention. A September 1897 column refers to Wo Lee, a labor boss. Two 1898 entries referenced fires, one in a temple in "Brown's Chinatown" the other at the home of King Kee. On 14 September 1898 Chinese merchant, Hang Wah, instituted civil proceedings against Sabin D. Thrift, defended by Webber and Julliard, for annulling a berry-picking contract. The Chinese community commonly took advantage of the American court system as a means to thwart discrimination. As early as 1862, a Chinese laundryman took his case all the

way to the California Supreme Court. The verdict of *Lin Sing v. Washburn* was found in favor of the laundryman who had refused to pay a tax placed on Chinese workers (Ma 2000:44).

Wey Sun accused officer Jim Woodward with attempting extortion. 30

November 1898 Jim Woodward raided Sing Woo's opium den. On the 19 October 1898 Dee Louy accused two men of assault and robbery. A column on 7 December 1898 wrote that Sing Wo, a Chinese merchant, paid a \$25 fine for conducting a public opium den. The same day six Chinese highbinders from San Francisco were reportedly turned away by the locals of Sebastopol's Chinatown. Hang Wah, a prominent merchant, said: "The highbinders are desperate criminals." They subsequently headed to Santa Rosa's Chinatown, after which three returned to Sebastopol and stayed. Highbinders were thugs that worked for brothel owners and lived off the prostitutes by levying upon each girl a weekly fee (Tsai 1994). The last entry, chronologically speaking, states that Arron Barne's Chinatown burned down in 1900. The 1900 Census reported 502 Chinese living in the county at the time and only five females -- three women were listed living in Sebastopol, Kee Jon, 27 years of age; Qui One, 46 years old; and Choi Di, 40 years old and two in Santa Rosa, 41 year old Ini Hey, and 42 year old Cah Hoo. There was no wife listed for Tom Wing Wong.

Song's father, Tom Wing Wong, came to this country as a teenager from Canton, China sometime before 1890. The only record of his age is on the 1910 Census, which gives his age as 49. This record lists him as Tom Wong, a head of a household with a wife (illegible name) age 29, and a six-month old daughter, Song Sing. He arrived in San Francisco and worked there in a shoe factory before moving north to Santa Rosa. The

1878 Wells Fargo Business Directory lists two shoe manufacturing factories in San Francisco—Poy Kee and Quan Wo (Louie 1998:99).

Song (Bourbeau 1994) referred to her father as Tom Wing Wong; he was also known as Tom Wing. The Chinese practice of placing the surname first suggests an allegiance to the family rather than the individual. Relationships within a family and clan are further emphasized by the given name (Louie 1998:51). The Chinese who had names like “Tom” Wing didn’t have to adopt American names because their surnames—the first word in their names—could easily be mistaken as such (Louie 1998:140).

Tom Wing Wong garnered the accolade “mayor” from the white community for his various occupations and central leadership role in Santa Rosa’s Chinatown. Tom Wing Wong was primarily a merchant with a grocery selling vegetables from his own garden; he was also a labor contractor, property manager, lottery manager, lawyer for the Chinese community, caretaker of the temple, and seller of homemade rice whiskey and handmade cigarettes rolled in rice paper by his wife and daughter. According to Praetzellis and Praetzellis (2001:649), despite the turmoil of the times “many prominent Californians came to see Chinese merchants as quite Victorian in their devotion to commerce, hard work, and social order.” Song (Bourbeau 1994) told Gaye LeBaron about those days when her father made his own whiskey and the prominent whites that would visit him. Ironically, Congressman Tom Geary, author of the Chinese Exclusion Act, was among the first. Then later, during the prohibition movement, according to Song, “Frank P. Doyle, Luther Burbank, and Henry Ford, they use to come over, drink some of my dad’s booze.”

In the *Sonoma Democrat* 9 September 1893 two stories involving Song Wong's father appeared. One column referred to Tom Wing as a local merchant and Chinese attorney, and reported that he signed a certificate stating Long Nuey and Wong Gee were merchants. Nuey and Gee visited China and subsequently an agent determined they were not merchants and would not be allowed to return to the United States. The second article reported the sad account of the suicide death of his first wife. Mrs. Wing apparently hung herself. After being married only a month, Mrs. Wing believed her husband had deserted her when he was actually away on business.

Tom Wing Wong remarried in June of 1898, and the local newspaper reported on the firecrackers that accompanied the celebration of his second marriage to a woman from San Francisco, Lo Kane. On 13 July 1898 the newspaper wrote that Lo Kane had been ill with consumption and died. Several mourners attended the funeral. Six months later, in January of 1899, Tom Wing, married his third wife, Toy Lon. The following month, during Chinese New Year, the newspaper had a story on the folks that were escorted through Chinatown to view the New Year's festivities and to meet Tom Wing's new wife. Song's mother, Lun Moon Wing, was Tom Wing's fourth wife.

In addition to the occasional Chinatown festivities noted in the newspaper, the complaints of cheap labor continued to appear in the *Press Democrat*. The 6 April 1901 edition said that some Chinese were being paid 20 cents per hour as cooks, while others were paid 12-15 cents in the cannery; the editor decried the lack of white labor willing to work for the same. The cannery may have rid its property of Chinese boarders, but it clearly retained or re-employed Chinese labor. Agitation still would not cease. The

Santa Rosa Republican article on 25 June 1901 described a fire, most likely arson, on the north side of Second Street in the building occupied by Kee, Yun, and Lee.

1900-1920

According to the *Press Democrat* 3 February 1905, Tom Wing's merchant brother, Charlie Quong Sing, was the "recognized leader of Chinatown's social set." A letter dated March 6, 1916 (SCM archives) written by the Chief of Police, J. M. Boyes, testifies that Quang Sing's store was established around 1896. The letter certifies that Boyes has known the firm of Quang Sing and Company for 20 years and that Charley Quang Sing is the merchant doing business at 634 Second Street and "he is considered a good citizen and quite Americanized." The white community would frequent Chinatown for fireworks and groceries. Song's father and Uncle Charlie would have fresh milk available and the neighborhood families would bring their cans and buy the milk. Song's other uncle, Wong Tan, lived next to the temple and a Japanese store, Sanyo, owned by the Nagase family (Bourbeau 1994). There is a copy of a document in the archive drawers at the SCM that states Wong Lung operates the Quen Yick Company store at 642 Second Street and seeks permission for his son Wong Wing to enter the U. S. Tom Wing also had sons from a previous marriage, two of which were also storekeepers in Santa Rosa's Chinatown; and another son, Bok Wong, who had a washhouse on Second and D streets. According to LeBaron (*Press Democrat* 18 January 1994), "The rooms beneath the second-floor temple and above the stores housed up to 200 Chinese men in the harvest season." Practically every establishment in Chinatown had a backroom lottery operation.

Over the decades Santa Rosa's Chinatown, and boardinghouses or businesses in nearby neighborhoods, became ever more confined within a certain number of blocks. Just as Judy Yung (1999) found it to be in San Francisco, prejudice and the expansion of competing businesses and government restricted the Chinese community's possibilities. Sanborn Insurance maps from successive years (1885, 1888, 1893, 1904, 1908) show the change in the streetscape (see Appendix G) --where a Chinese residence, business, or boardinghouse was once indicated they are no longer depicted, but still some remained. Song Wong's family and the family restaurant, Jam Kee, were among the survivors of a hostile, competitive atmosphere.

The Chinese population in the county and the town of Santa Rosa peaked in 1890 when 1,145 were recorded in the county and 143 in the town (Blackman 1981:8). By 1908, Santa Rosa Creek bordered two tanneries, wineries, Grace Brothers Brewing and Cold Storage, a furniture warehouse, a steam laundry, a wagon shop, and the Santa Rosa Milling and Construction Company. In 1908, the 600 block of Second Street was the heart of Chinatown with several Chinese washhouses and opium bars. Next to the Wong family home was the small temple; alongside the restaurant at 640 Second Street was a boardinghouse and next door to that was Charlie Quong Sing's Mercantile Company. By 1910, however, a clear decline is evident as the census indicates 253 Chinese in the county and only 97 in the Santa Rosa Township. The population of Santa Rosa's Second Street Chinatown in 1910 was 67.

Song Wong Bourbeau, a first generation Santa Rosan and second generation Californian, was born 7 October 1909 and passed away in 1996 at the age of 86. According to the 1910 Census, Song's mother, Lun Moon Wing, was born in California

in 1881. Her marriage to Tom Wing Wong took place in San Francisco and was arranged by a traditional Chinese matchmaker (LeBaron 1994). Song Wong and her mother, who worked as a cook, claimed to be the only females in the Santa Rosa community. The 1910 Census supports this assertion. Song's (Bourbeau 1994) oral history describes her family, home, and garden and how they raised all their own food -- chickens, rabbits, and pigeons, and tobacco too. They also had an apple dryer, and would sulfur a crop and send them to market. Song and her mother would do all the cooking for the boarders in Chinatown. Despite their family's stature in the greater community, Song still felt the brutal sting of racism. She was integrated into Fremont School after the Presbyterian Church's Chinese Mission School, established in 1876, closed in 1911. Song's father had to walk her to and from school everyday because she was often beaten up.

Song also witnessed violence in Chinatown. An increase in Chinese immigration after the 1870s coincided with a rise in rival secret societies or highbinder tongs. These intra-community groups fought for control and hegemony. Tong gangs in the bay area involved in gambling or opium trafficking would flee to the hinterlands to escape their debts. Because she lived next door to a Chinese temple, which also served as a boardinghouse and, consequently, a possible hideout, and because she had the boy's name of Song, which made the visitors less than discreet in their words and actions--she blended into the ambience and thus became acutely aware of certain clandestine activities. Him Mark Lai (2004:46) explains that the role of the *huiguan* was to act as arbitrators of disputes among its members and to offer rewards for the capture and conviction of murderers of its people; a primary function was "to prevent the absconding of defaulting debtors." According to Song (Bourbeau 1994), men were paid a hundred

dollars to go kill someone. Everyday, before and after school, she put incense before the gods in the temple, and every once in awhile she saw a body lying out in the alley and men all over the floor smoking opium. Thinking that Song was a boy, the men never appeared concerned that she was a witness.

1920-1996

Song Wong lost her father at the age of nine. Tom Wing died of influenza in 1918 and was buried at the potter's field cemetery in Santa Rosa, a site used for the indigent population. But, Tom Wing was neither poor nor without distinction. One might think it was because he was a victim of a communicable disease, however, Song (Bourbeau 1994) argues it was discrimination. Extant records show that Shill Wong (Song's younger brother, who she refers to as Harry [Bourbeau 1994]) was born just two years earlier, on July 16, 1916. Song grew up quickly after the death of her father, assisting her mother and grandfather in the restaurant and continuing with duties necessary for worship at the temple.

Song later became an exemplary figure in business, education, and women's organizations. We might ask, what historical processes empowered Song to become such an active agent in society? The study of Song as a protagonist shows her refusal to be dominated by a patriarchal and Euro-centric society. Her activism arguably started unknowingly as a young primary schoolchild. Song was born just two years before the 1911 Revolution in China, which saw the demise of the Qing dynasty and ushered in a new era of intellectual development. This period in Chinese history has come to be known as the May Fourth New Culture movement, the height of which occurred in 1919. Although this dynamic change was happening in her parent's native homeland, the

influence was palpable to Chinese American women in the United States. The May Fourth movement stirred women to action in China. Western feminism was imported and was alive and growing; and in this social milieu women's rights were a topic of escalating concern (Zheng 1999). Gender relations in the United States were being contested as much as they were in China. Remarkably, the success of feminism was much swifter by decades in China, than in the United States where it was marginalized for seventy years. Examining this movement, historian Wang Zheng (1999:357) concluded: "The narratives in this study testify to the existence of a social group unnoticed by previous studies of China's Republican period. Career women emerged from the May Fourth new women as a new social category in the early twentieth century."

As China found feminism an irresistible strategy toward economic, social, and intellectual evolution after the fall of the Qing dynasty, women in the West were seizing opportunities to extend their boundaries into the culturally defined male spheres of business and commerce (White 1991:315). Moreover, given the possibility that Song's father was a member of the Sam Yup Association, it is important to consider Him Mark Lai's (2004:101) contention that, "Females of Sam Yup descent were among those pioneering the efforts of Chinese females to enter mainstream America." Song's mother and, consequently, many friends and acquaintances of Song herself, had lived or lived in San Francisco's Chinatown, where Sam Yup individuals contributed greatly to the modernization of the community. They were instrumental in establishing the Chinese Chamber of Commerce, and actively participated with the Chinese hospital, cemetery, YMCA, and Chinese Central High School.

Song was only 20 when her mother passed away in 1939. Lun Moon Wing, like her husband, Tom Wing Wong, was denied burial in the town's main cemetery; a decision was made to have services in San Francisco. Song arranged for a band and a flatbed truck with an enlarged photograph of her mother surrounded by white gardenias to lead the funeral procession down Grant Avenue in San Francisco's Chinatown, followed by a burial in the Peninsula. When they arrived at the cemetery, Song's younger brother, Shill, handed all those in attendance a tiny red envelope with good luck money in it, a nickel and dime. Then they all proceeded to the gravesite where joss sticks were burned (Barbara Duggan, personal communication 2005).

It is likely that Lun Moon Wing is buried at the Chinese Cemetery in Happy Valley near Colma in San Mateo County, which was established in 1897 by the six *huiguan* or district associations comprised of Sam Yup among others (Lai 2004:117). This may be true for Song's great uncle also who passed away a couple of years before Song's mother. The *Sonoma Index Tribune* (19 February 1937) reported that Young Moon, son of a Chinese merchant, died at the age of 69 years on February 18, 1937. Song's grandfather, who died in 1957, lived long enough to have found a resting place in the more appropriate Santa Rosa Odd Fellows Cemetery.

Few gravesites have been found for all the Chinese who died in the county, be they sojourners or the ones who settled. Many bodies were exhumed and the bones sent back to China, which required a permit. San Francisco levied a tax on those who chose to exhume bodies as part of a discriminatory bundle of laws (Daniel Markwyn, personal communication 2005). The *huiguan* oversaw the shipment of bones (Chinese Historical Society of America museum exhibit winter 2005).

In her oral history interview with Gaye LeBaron, Song Wong (Bourbeau 1994) explains that along with her “grandpa” buried at Santa Rosa’s Odd Fellows Cemetery are Bobby Wong and his father, Ham Wong, and mother, Minnie Wong. Ham Wong was her “dad’s half brother.” The family owned and operated a Chinese restaurant out of a house on Fourth Street, near the railroad depot (LeBaron Press Democrat [PD] 12 November 1994). The gravesite markers give Ham’s date of birth as 1858 and Minnie’s as 1896, they both died in 1949. Gong Tin Bo’s (1882-1952) grave lies next to these; we have no information on him, but for the fact that “Gong” means, “grandfather” in Chinese.

Song Wong’s cousins, Ernest and Bessy Wong, lived in Sebastopol’s “Old” Chinatown. In speaking with Gaye LeBaron, Song (Bourbeau 1994) remembered where Chinatown was --“Where Pellini’s is now, that alley. The new Chinatown is where the vinegar works is now.” An old time Sebastopol resident and author, Johnny Ginn (excerpt from “Longtime Californian” [SCM archive drawers]), recalled the Chinese in the early years saying: “Well, there they were, with 300 Chinese workers, and except for my mother, not a single woman . . . And the reason there’s no Chinese in Sebastopol today is that eventually they all died off because there was no reproduction.” According to Him Mark Lai’s (2004:110) research on Sebastopol obtained by oral history interviews with Mrs. Fong Gung and Chen Zaochang both conducted on January 28, 1973:

There were two Chinatowns, established by the Sam Yup and Sze Yap communities, respectively. Many of the Chinese worked in apple drying and the hop fields. The Sam Yup people there were mostly from Nanhai, and Nanhai emigrants from the Sai Chew area founded stores such as Yung Kee, Kong Kee Brothers, and Chew Kee. The local Sam Yup Association was probably established during the middle of the Guangxu reign era (1875-1908). At first it was on Petaluma Street, but later it moved to McKinley Street. It ceased operations after World War II.

Barbara Duggan (personal communication 2005) was seven years old when her family moved to a home on King Street in Santa Rosa in 1928. Barbara has a vivid image of Song in her office at the back of Jam Kee restaurant busily marking gambling tickets with a brush. All Barbara's father's employees would play the lottery and if anyone won they would go to Sebastopol to collect. Charles Bourbeau, Song's future husband, worked for Barbara's father, Limm Applegate, who owned the Santa Rosa Garage and Storage on B and Third streets. Charles was the night manager. The garage was next to a connecting alley behind Jam Kee restaurant, which was at 506 Third Street across from the telephone office. Song or one of her relatives had a car that was stored at the garage and she visited the shop frequently. Song was very fond of Barbara and her parents Ada (Meader) and Limm Applegate.

Barbara and her family received many gifts from Song. One of the first gifts she received as a youngster was a small, 4" x 7" Japanese made jewelry box of carved black teakwood. Song gave Barbara a number of Chinese chests, the size of which got increasingly larger with the years. Song was so appreciative of the Applegate family that she outfitted Limm Applegate's office with modern style furniture made of leather and metal. Barbara's mother was talented at lacework, so she bought a dozen Irish linen handkerchiefs and embroidered Song's initials on them, then trimmed each one in lace and gave them to Song on Christmas day. The gift exchanges never stopped. It was often Barbara's mother making lemon pie and Song bringing over a casserole. Their families shared Thanksgiving dinner together with Charles' relatives from Sebastopol. They would always have it at Jam Kee restaurant, never at Song's home. As Barbara describes it, Song felt she could be a better hostess at the restaurant, and that was her

primary goal. They would sit in the back room of the restaurant at the “family table.” A collection of Famille Rose China would be brought out for those special dinners. Charles continued to work as the night watchmen at the garage, but often assisted with Jam Kee restaurant duties during the day.

Through the 1930s and 40s, Chinese establishments and residences disappeared and were replaced by white owned properties: Raz’s welding, Proll’s auto and bicycles sales and repairs, and a house on the corner of D and Second streets where Song’s brother had a laundry. The Chinese community continued to decline until there was a movement back to the county around World War II. Song (Bourbeau 1994) explains that a lot of Chinese moved here and bought chicken ranches.

Albert H. Yee, author and retired educational psychologist, is a third generation Californian who spent some of his earliest years in Santa Rosa. Notably, it was his mother, Bertha, and his grandmother that were native Californians, his father, George, immigrated to California at the age of 20. His great-grandfather had returned to China after making a “fair fortune in California” (Yee 1984:9). Yee’s family originated from Toishan in the Sze Yup, where 40 percent of the Chinese American population came from prior to 1949 (Yee 1984:25). He remembers his parents moving to Santa Rosa in 1937 and opening the China Café on Second Street (LeBaron 2005). Yee recalling his youth in Santa Rosa (1984:7-9) writes:

In 1937, we moved to a town in northern California and within a year the fourth son was born. There my parents opened a cafe in the local Chinatown after relatives gave them some quick lessons in cooking chop suey and chow mein. Stretching for nearly one long block, Chinatown was composed of about twenty weather-worn buildings in which fewer than thirty Chinese—mostly elderly men—lived. As I recall, few of these men were fully employed or had much income. The old gents would sun and talk during the day, and at night they would try their luck by marking tickets for one or two games of White Pigeon Lottery in

the local gambling hall . . . Wee Ghong had to be the most memorable of the old men . . . (He) had given good service to many people by working in cafes, mines, and at many kinds of farm work for whatever wage he could get.

In 1941, the Yee's opened the Twin Dragons bar and restaurant on the southwest corner of Third and D streets. By this time, Chinese schoolchildren like Albert Yee had the opportunity to attend a Chinese school in a nearby farmhouse on Saturday mornings. There were maybe a dozen children in attendance, mostly from two families, the Yees and the Wings, the latter family owned the Diamond Meat Market. Eventually, George Yee sold the Twin Dragons establishment; it was demolished in the late 1950s during urban renewal efforts. George Yee took his profits and developed the Mayette area subdivision, naming streets after his wife and children. In 1955, Albert Yee was the "first Chinese to become a certified teacher in Sonoma County" (Yee 1984:40).

Diamond Meat Market was located on Fourth Street where the downtown mall is today; the market was originally owned and built by the Wings (Blackmen 1981:10). In the early 1930s, a close family friend of Song, Henry Gregory Jeung, came from San Francisco to work as a butcher at the market. The 1920s and '30s saw the establishment and proliferation of Chinese-owned meat markets in larger northern California cities (Lai 2004:155). Henry Jeung's mother and Song's mother had been friends in San Francisco. Henry Jeung was a "paper son" having arrived under false pretenses and having several aliases; he was born in 1916. Henry Jeung married Alyce Hong in San Francisco in 1946 and built a home on the corner of Vallejo and Brookwood streets in Santa Rosa in 1947.

Alyce was born in 1921 in Stockton where her father, Bing Hong, had a lottery business. The family went back to China when Alyce was a young girl just three years of age. Alyce's mother, Rose Hong, was introduced to her father's first wife. Alyce's

mother did not get along with her husband's first wife and after seven years in China returned with her siblings to San Francisco without her husband. The 1906 San Francisco earthquake and subsequent fires destroyed government immigration records that kept track of the thousands who emigrated from China, which allowed the men and women entering the United States to form families. Rose Hong worked in a sewing factory, as did most of the working class restricted by discrimination during that time (Hsue 2004:xiv). When Alyce was old enough, she worked as a housekeeper before marrying Henry Jeung and moving to Santa Rosa (Buccholtz and Hong 2005). Later, Alyce's mother married her second husband, Harry Lee, in the late 1940s. Harry worked at Diamond Meat Market located one block north and just a couple blocks west of Jam Kee's Third Street restaurant. Rose and Harry opened the Chinese Kitchen restaurant on Mendocino Avenue in 1957. Rose's godson, Harry T. Lee managed the local National Dollar Store, which was owned by Joe Shoong from San Francisco (Louie 1998:142).

According to Him Mark Lai (2004: 147-148), many Hua Xian immigrants migrated to communities with a Sam Yup presence; the groups shared geographically close proximity in their homeland and thus had a similar dialect and customs. Many were entrepreneurs specializing in meat markets and supermarkets; a single individual established some businesses, while others were begun by a group of investors. The largest supermarket is Santa Rosa's G & G founded in 1964 by Gee Kai Gong and which later expanded (Lai 2004:159).

Song and Charles inherited the Jam Kee restaurant after Poy Jam passed away at 99 years of age in 1957. Only Jam Kee restaurant would survive the decades; it was the last remnant of the historic Chinatown once located near Santa Rosa Creek on First and

Second streets between D and Main streets (now Santa Rosa Avenue). The original restaurant on Second Street was quite small, having only two tables. It moved a few times--first to Main Street, then to 506 Third Street, and with the advent of urban renewal in 1966 to 836 Fifth Street, where it remained in business until 1988 when Charles died. The restaurant was destroyed by fire in 1992, after being idle for four years.

Song would rise above her early experiences of racism in primary school and continue her education all the way to Stanford. Song had aspirations of being a medical doctor, but had to discontinue her studies to return home for a family member in need (Barbara Duggan, personal communication 2005). An exemplary woman of local renown, Song is rightfully a role model for all citizens. She was a charter member and former Vice President of the Soroptomist Club where she never missed a meeting since 1945. She demonstrated a tireless commitment to the community by her 40 years of involvement as a member of the Theodore Roosevelt American Legion Post 21 Auxiliary and service as its President in 1953-54. In the fall of 1971, Song received the Business Woman of the Year award from Santa Rosa. She was honored as Woman of the Year by the American Legion Auxiliary Department of California in 1990. Song's sense of social justice and compassion extended to include work as an interpreter for lawyers with Chinese clients and as a tutor for Chinese attempting U.S. citizenship (LeBaron archives).

These remarkable profiles of local women bring to mind a similar point made by Judy Yung (1999)--about the impact of the Great Depression of the 1930s on the lives of immigrant women as a necessary avenue for further investigation. She found that as many men lost their jobs, women were able to secure the economic means to sustain the family. Yung (1999:7) also argues that the changing political climate in San Francisco,

“Encouraged second-generation women, who were less affected by unemployment to become social activists by advocating for and providing public assistance to the less fortunate in the community.”

The local Sonoma County economy developed by significant measure because of the toil of Chinese—picking hops, building roads, stooping low to prune grapes, swinging a pick and axe to lay track, digging and hauling quarried rock, slinging the water buckets along skid roads in timberlands, operating mercantile shops, grocery stores, restaurants, laundries, and meat markets. The experiences and everyday lives of this population are integral to history at every level—city, county, state, and nation. Sonoma County’s Chinese residents played an undeniably important role in linking this place to a broader social, economic, transport, and communication network critical to the industrial development of California and the United States. More than this, all our lives are richer because of the ethnic and cultural diversity that has been present in this county for the past two centuries and is the hallmark of this nation.

In particular, Song Wong Bourbeau and her family were instrumental to the vitality of the Chinese community in Santa Rosa, and thus contributed greatly to the growth and development of the town and county. Chinatowns throughout Sonoma County helped to mediate complex social dynamics and counter resistance based on ethnicity. In this setting individuals used personal connections and material culture as reference points for political, social, and ethnic identity. Chinese merchants like Song’s father, Tom Wing Wong, were critical links in this integration of cultures. Though the Chinese population was overwhelmingly male, Chinese women, as Song herself proves,

were largely responsible for the continuity of Chinese customs and traditions (Chinn 1969:68) and were invaluable stewards of family and cultural heritage.

This history has shown how Song Wong Bourbeau was undoubtedly determined in her aspirations, lofty in her goals, and selfless in her actions in the midst of a society swirling with a plurality of tensions based on gender and the social construct of race. It is history that helps us to understand the world in which we live and the roots of our linked lives. I conclude with the words of Santa Rosa's past resident, Albert H. Yee, who eloquently expressed the cultural heritage of Chinese Americans saying:

Diverse as people can be in vocation, interests, and marks of achievement, Chinese Americans possess something precious of which they may not be consciously aware. That something I tell you is the human actualization of the meeting of East and West, potentially embodied within each of us, the qualities of East and West somehow combined into a new identity (Yee n/d:Him Mark Lai Papers).