Spring 6-16-2023

Portland's Lost Chinatown

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by

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An undergraduate honors thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of
Bachelors of Arts in

University Honors Sociology

Thesis Advisor
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Portland State University

2023

Acknowledgements

To my thesis advisor, Dr. Shirley A. Jackson, thank you. Thank you for keeping me motivated. Thank you for sticking with me, working on this thesis for the past two years. Thank you for keeping me on track. I realize that I was probably difficult to advise at times, as I was a bit overwhelmed at the prospect of this thesis to even work on it. There were many times, even up until the final deadline, that I did not think that I would be able to finish on time. Thank you also for replacing my past thesis advisor. You have been a joy to work with and you have done so much research and editing for me, that I could have never done this work without you.

Thank you to Dr. Julius McGee. My first sociology class was very dull and didn't teach me very much. That was about what I was expecting when I signed up for Classical Sociology. Thank you so much for expanding my knowledge about even the basics of theory from Marx to the study of Green Gentrification. Thank you deeply for igniting my passion for sociology, research, and always answering my questions.

Thank you to Portland State University's Hong Kong Student Association. Y'all have helped me get back in touch with my culture and connected me with so many wonderful people. This thesis was partially inspired by y'all. I am extremely grateful that I got involved with such a wonderful niche community that represented me.

Thank you to the Asian Pacific American of Oregon for taking me in and giving me an amazing outlet for my passions. I have grown so much in the time I have been involved with APANO, I have met so many wonderful people, and I have done so much with y'all that I can honestly say that I wouldn't be the same person I am today without this organization. I am proud to work to call all of you my colleagues. Special thanks to Kathy Wai, Robin Ye, and especially Marchel

Marcos for helping me develop my skills and connections for political advocacy and being there when I needed guidance.

Thank you to Ethelyn Tumalad. Words can not describe how grateful I am to have you in my life. From the first day I walked into your classroom, to the closing speech at my first event that I gave, you have always been there as a mentor, friend, and confidant. I regret not being able to attend your wedding, or help with the Asian Pacific Islander Student Union at Clackamas for the past few years. I hope to help you advise it from now on and I can't wait to watch Isabela grow to resemble her wonderful parents.

Thank you to Brandon Singharaj and Devin Kwon for being my wonderful best friends. I will always appreciate your companionship. Thank you to Bo Stephens for getting me involved in racial justice. I hope that we will get to work together in the future.

Thank you to my mother Flora Wong. She might not ever get to read this, but I want to thank you for my Chinese and Guangdong heritage. Without those, I might not have investigated this topic. Thank you for developing a connection between me and our ancestors, our language, and our people. Thank you for being my rock. For always being supportive of everything I do.

To all of the rest of my friends, family, and former classmates, thank you for being in my life.

Abstract

Portland's Chinatown is one of the oldest North American urban Chinatowns, but is largely unexplored in the literature. It is currently a Chinatown in name only, missing Chinese residential buildings as well as popular Chinese businesses. This article explores the mystery of Portland Chinatown's birth and death, analyzing its history with a sociological lens. It had a similar lifespan to other Chinatowns in the US. However, Portland's Old Chinatown was unique, as unlike an ethnic enclave, it did not have clearly defined boundaries, growing to cover seventy city blocks at its peak. Therefore, when urban renewal started taking place in the city of Portland and Chinatown became confined to New Chinatown north of Burnside, most of the Chinese residents had left the city. In order to understand this process fully, we must understand the residents as sociological and historical agents at the birth and death of Portland's Chinatown.

Introduction

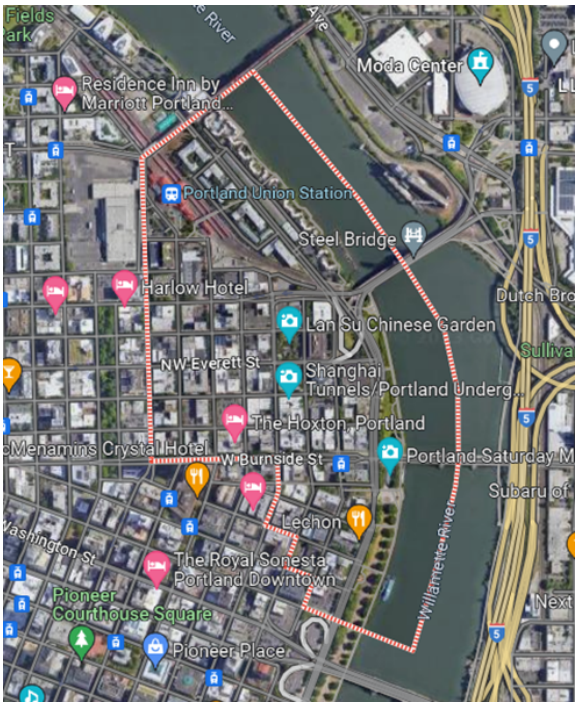
It was 2016 when I visited a shoe store named Index in Old Town Chinatown. At the time, I was a 15-year-old high school student who had just finished passing out water bottles downtown and I was following my seniors to check out some shoes. On our walk there, I passed by several dragon streetlights into an unfamiliar neighborhood. When we arrived at the corner of NW Couch and 3rd Streets, I realized where we were. Although I had visited Chinatown in my early childhood, I became aware that we had been walking around Portland's Chinatown for about half an hour, but I did not recognize a single building. My interest in this topic stems from a search for community–a Chinese community. Growing up in Portland with a 73.8% white population s has been very isolating (U.S. Census). I often fantasize about a tight-knit Chinese neighborhood where everyone spoke Cantonese and interacted on a daily basis. I longed for the Chinatowns of San Francisco, New York, or Boston. The closest Asian community in Portland is the Jade District, but the sparse nature of the neighborhood leaves a lot to be desired for community interaction (Zheng 2018). While I have few memories of going to Portland's Chinatown while the Chinese community still operated there, the striking absence of any Chinese people on the street and few remaining businesses made me wonder what had happened to Portland's Chinatown.

At the turn of the twentieth century, Oregon had the second-largest Chinese population and geographically the largest Chinatown in the country (Wong 2011). In *Sweet Cakes, Long Journey*, Marie Rose Wong shows that Portland's Chinese population at its height, was comprised of 7,841 people living in Portland's Chinatown, making up 8.7% of Portland's total population (Wong 2011:166). In their work on the presence of Chinese in Portland, Oregon,

Ooligan Press (2007) note that Chinese residents who had left California and Washington between the years 1880 and 1900, moved to Oregon. Portland was a place of refuge for these sojourners and also for those who had previously resided in other parts of Oregon (Ooligan Press 2007). This migration signaled a population growth triggered by the rising anti-Chinese riots occurring around the country. Portland was perceived as a safe haven, and interestingly, when threats of violence against them emerged, they were protected by white residents. Threats of violence against Chinese residents included "a volunteer force of about 700 armed citizens" along with "two of the city's three militia companies," as well as a doubling of the police force and a swearing-in of 200 deputies "all in an effort to stop any violent action against the Chinese" (Ho 1978:10). These findings illustrate how Portland's Chinatown was considered one of the few safe places in the West for Chinese immigrants to live and thrive.

In this socio-historical thesis, I analyze the birth and death of Portland's Chinatown. Old Town Chinatown is a cultural neighborhood within downtown Portland, Oregon (See Figure 1). According to Wong, it is a ten-block rectangular area that lies west of the Willamette River. Its borders are NW Glisan Street to the north, NW Third Avenue to the east, W Burnside Street to the south, and on the west, W Fifth Avenue (2004:3). However, other sources expand its boundaries to include an area that borders Portland's Union Station near NW Broadway, but others note this district as being recognizable due to the street signs that are written in both English and Chinese (See Figure 2).

Figure 1: Portland, Oregon's Old Town/Chinatown



Source: Google Maps

Figure 2: Street Sign in English and Chinese (Cantonese)

Source: AtlasPDX82, CC BY-SA 3.0

Literature Review

Like Portland's Chinatown, Chinatowns across the country have served as a safe haven for Chinese immigrants since the 1850s (Naram 2017). These ethnic settlements in American cities have been crucial to building a life in an unfamiliar country. As Naram points out, Chinatowns served a major purpose in integrating Chinese immigrants into life in American cities (2017). These neighborhoods connect immigrants to their culture, job prospects, and a strong community.

In their assessment of a senior housing project in Chinatown, a group of students in Portland State University's Master of Urban and Regional Planning program found that Asian seniors were particularly susceptible to social isolation due to language and cultural barriers (Halstead, et al 1999). Furthermore, they explain, "While Portland is home to nearly 70,000 people of Asian ancestry, it is the only major city on the West Coast without a strong, centrally located community center oriented towards Asian Americans" (Halstead et al 1999:103). Thus, while it is clear that a strong, centrally located community center that provides social, cultural, and economic services is important for Asian seniors, Portland lacks that structure.

Liminal spaces are those surreal places where things are somewhat nostalgic, may appear unreal, or even dystopic, yet, are filled with familiarity and nostalgia. Irving, Wright, and Hibbert (2019) reflecting on this concept note that they "are a sense of the temporal phase and social space in the middle of a ritual and involves a sense of being 'betwixt and between' (358). That is what Portland's forgotten Chinatown feels like to me. When I visit Portland, Oregon's Chinatown, I see a place now devoid of most of its culture and people, strangely familiar, however, the absence of Chinese people is deeply unsettling. Today, the 107 Asian Americans

living there comprise only 2.7% of Chinatown's population (Statistical Atlas). This thesis explores the displacement and degradation of what had once been one of the U.S.'s biggest Chinatowns. How and when did the formerly second-largest Chinatown in the U.S. become a mere shadow of its former self? Where did everyone go?

I focus on three time periods to explain the evolution of Portland's Chinatown. I begin with the arrival of Chinese settlers in Portland. I then discuss the post WWII era and end with the present day. During these periods, it is important to note the political, economic, and social factors impacting the lives of Chinatown's development, maintenance, and demise. The Pre-WWII and post-WWII eras are important as they shed light on what Portland's Chinatown was like at its peak, while also allowing for an exploration into the various ways in which the district came to be characterized during national anti-Chinese and anti-Asian sentiments and their impact on the segregation and livelihoods of Chinatown residents. In addition, it is important to explore how legislation such as the 1882 Chinese Exclusion Act, Civil Rights Act, and the Immigration and Nationality Act of 1965 affected residents of Portland's Chinatown. Finally, the present era will be important to study in relation to how plans for urban renewal may have served to displace Chinatown residents in an economic revival that has not yet been realized. I end with a sociohistorical analysis tying the historical events of Portland's Chinatown to other Chinatowns as well as comparing it with other examples of displacement.

Methodology

For this thesis, I collected three forms of data collection: primary sources from the Portland City Archives and secondary sources that included maps, histories, and interviews of Portland's Chinatown. I began by analyzing primary sources from the Portland City Archives

which has a database filled with city documents going back to the founding of Portland. I searched for documents that contained the following: mentions of Chinatown, and mentions of the Chinese in Portland. I frequented their office during my research in order to find any information relating to Old Town Chinatown in order to develop my thesis. The documents I found included old pictures saved in the archives, emails and letters from Portland officials, old newspaper articles, and official city documents such as the plans to build a Chinatown Gate in Portland.

Second, I searched for primary sources at the Portland Chinatown Museum. The Portland Chinatown Museum is the main resting place of many Portland Chinese artifacts that preserve the history of Old Town Chinatown. While there aren't many documents, there are many items preserved from the history of Portland's Chinatown at the museum. While searching for primary sources, I ran into an issue, there wasn't very much information. Sarah Griffith said in her review of court documents relating to Chinese residents of Portland that "Although Portland's nineteenth-century Chinese population eventually numbered in the many thousands, it did not leave the range of records that historians have used to reconstruct other Chinese communities along the Pacific Coast" (Griffith 2003). Therefore most of the information in this thesis comes from secondary sources.

This type of research involved heavy use of secondary sources. The secondary sources used in the thesis are mainly scholarly articles and books that studied the history of Portland's Chinatown. The two kinds of scholarly sources that I reviewed were sociological and historical sources. In identifying sources for the literature review, multiple databases were used. Initially, Google Scholar was utilized to take a sample of what kind of articles were available. I searched Google Scholar for "Chinatown Gentrification", "Chinatown", "Portland Chinatown",

"Old-Town Chinatown", and "Chinatown Urban Renewal". Through the PSU Library database, I accessed Social Explorer, JSTOR, SocINDEX, and PSU's WorldCat databases in order to look for sources using the same terms. I used these terms in order to find historical and sociological articles related to Old-town Chinatown's history.

I evaluated the sources based on how relevant they were in understanding the history of Portland's Chinatown. I analyzed sources based on what information they contained about early Chinatown (1850 to 1950), Post-Immigration Act Chinatown (1965 to 1980s), and present-day Chinatown (1980s to present), as well as information about displacement from Chinatowns across the country and in Canada. I analyzed each source for information to build a concrete narrative of the story of Portland's Chinatown, how it came to be, and when, how, and why it died.

I mainly used secondary sources such as *Dreams of the West* (2007) and *Sweet Cakes, Long Journey* (2004). I draw from these sources to tell the story of Portland's Chinatown and its Chinese community. In order to analyze this narrative, I have pulled from other secondary sources in order to analyze the narrative of Portland's Chinatown in my discussion section. The primary sources were used mainly to provide photographic evidence of the neighborhood. Portland's Chinese community did not keep many written records of its existence. Therefore, most of the primary sources that remain are photographs.

Chinese Immigration to the U.S.

From 1840 to 1860 China suffered through political, social, and economic hardships with the Opium Wars, the 1851 T'ai P'ing Rebellion, and other factors such as periodic typhoons and floods. These factors made the Guangdong province a dangerous place to live (Ooligan Press

2007:17). In 1849, a series of floods and the rumor of a “Gold Mountain” giving them an opportunity to make a fortune in the California Gold Rush gave many Guangdong men the chance to travel to the western United States (Ooligan Press 2007:18). Nearly all of these men were sojourners; they left behind their families and lives in China, with plans to return home after they had accumulated enough wealth. Those who were too poor to purchase the passage for themselves borrowed money from work brokers looking for laborers. These brokers paid the initial ticket fee in exchange for the laborers promising to pay it back with interest when they reached the United States (Ooligan Press 2007:18).

Naram (2017) discusses the specific form of xenophobia, sinophobia, faced by Chinese immigrants as well as the positive characteristics attributed to them. American sentiment towards the Chinese before the 1850s was neutral. There did not seem to be any prevailing prejudice towards Chinese and Asian immigrants. White Americans even associated Chinese immigrants with a hard work ethic and respect. “Prior to the mid-1800s, American society harbored an "ambivalent" view toward the Chinese. Discrimination and sinophobic ideologies existed, to be sure, but records also suggest many Americans respected both the Chinese work ethic and China's standing among the world's civilizations. A California newspaper described the Chinese as "amongst the most industrious, quiet, patient people among us" (Naram 2017). It is interesting that the common throughline of Asian people being quiet and patient existed during this era as well.

It was not until 1854 when the first legislation discriminating against Chinese was passed, signaling a change in attitude towards Chinese immigrants. “In 1854, the California Supreme Court adjudged the Chinese race to be inferior to Whites in the case *People v. Hall*. (11) At issue was a state statute that barred "Black," "Mulatto," or "Indian" witnesses from testifying against a

White man. (12) The court decided the statute also barred Chinese witnesses, defining in the law an underlying racial dichotomy: White and non-White" (Naram 2017). A similar form of exclusion took place in Oregon in 1857. While drafting the first Oregon Constitution, the delegates would "permit white foreigners to vote but restrict all non-whites, including "[Black people], Chinamen, and Mulattos" (Wong 2011:30). Both of these pieces of legislation marked the beginning of a long history of discrimination against the Chinese.

Discoveries of gold in the Applegate and the Rogue River areas of Southern Oregon drew the first Chinese to Oregon in 1851, many of whom were " searching for gold, employment, and refuge from recent violence, persecution, and claim jumping" (Ooligan Press 2007:17). A majority of these Chinese sojourners were men. In fact, according to the 1880 Astoria, Oregon census, only 23 of the 2,316 Chinese immigrants were women. In *Dreams of the West* the authors explain that "Such ventures were consistent with the values of Chinese society in that it was considered the man's job to provide for the family and take care of financial responsibilities, while the woman's place was at home with the children and in-laws" (Ooligan Press 2007:17). This was made worse by the Page Act in 1875 which prohibited the importation of unfree laborers and women into the United States. In the 1870's the Chinese population in Oregon grew significantly. This led to increased anti-Chinese sentiment and legislation culminating in the 1882 Chinese Exclusion Act.

The Burlingame Treaty, signed by Imperial China and the U.S. in 1868 granted immigrants and emigrants to travel freely between the two countries, and allowed for equal treatment and permanent residency rights, while also protecting Americans engaging in trade or missionary work in China (Ling and Austin 2010). The Treaty was advocated for by Anson Burlingame, who became the U.S.-China Ambassador in 1861 and served until 1867. He was

unusually appointed as the minister plenipotentiary of the Chinese Government, as a foreigner, and was tasked with negotiating the Burlingame Treaty of 1868. The U.S. and California needed more Chinese workers because the demand for cheap labor outstripped the supply. The Qing Dynasty was hostile to emigration, worried that they would lose the young Chinese men in Southeast China as a labor source, but Western merchants had a long history of trading in the Southeast region making it the most economically advanced part of their otherwise decaying empire. Prior to the Page Act of 1875 and the later Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882, the U.S. was advocating for more Chinese immigration and actually signed a treaty that allowed free and open access across borders. "The Burlingame Treaty of 1868 led to a wave of Chinese emigration to the U.S. with an average of 10,000 arriving each year during the 1870s" (Ling and Austin 2010). This trend changed with the passage of the Page Act of 1875.

While Burlingame was building a friendly relationship between the two countries abroad, the anti-Chinese sentiment was growing back in the U.S. As we discussed before, Chinese men began to sojourn to the United States in the mid-1800s and were welcomed by American capitalists seeking cheap labor. Many of the sojourners were planning on returning home after working for a temporary period of time. As such, they did not travel with their families and wives. "'Decent' Chinese women like these sojourners' wives were discouraged or forbidden from traveling abroad" (Lee 2021:1216). However, during the 1850s, a number of Chinese women traveled to California and worked in the state's burgeoning sex trade. These women would be met with anti-Chinese racism and "yellow slavery" rhetoric.

"Yellow Slavery", as Lorelei Lee explains, is a mix of "yellow peril" and the white purity movement's "modern slavery". Lee critiques the intersection of race and gender, noting "A British captivation with sexual "slavery" of white virgins … had been adopted by an American

“purity” movement that would come to focus on both “white slavery” and calls for temperance” (2021:1203). This, the sexual “slavery” idea combined with the yellow peril, created “yellow slavery”. This rhetoric was used in 1874 when House Representative John S. Hager asked Congress to modify the Burlingame Treaty, claiming that the “treaty conflicted with the 1807 ‘law to suppress the African slave trade’... Chinese men did not immigrate with families, but instead ‘bring females under contracts for purposes too vile for me even to mention in this Chamber” (2021:1220). This political intrusion into the sexual lives of Chinese men and women resulted in the characterization of Asians as a group as immoral, leading to the passage of The Page Act on March 3, 1875. The Act prohibited the immigration of Asian women from any country in a contract for lewd or immoral purposes.

After the passing of the Page Act, there was a 68% decline in the population of Chinese women entering the United States. As historian Jean Pfaezler says “That’s ethnic cleansing, without women there won’t be family; progeny; lineage; children—and so the population will just die off. And it was intended to die off” (2021:1221) The Page Act was just a precursor to the 1882 Chinese Exclusion Act. While the Page Act states that it banned Chinese women suspected of being prostitutes, in practice, the Act barred most Chinese women from immigrating to the U.S. As it was mentioned previously, the “yellow slavery” rhetoric painted all Chinese, and later all Asian, women as prostitutes and it was up to each individual to prove otherwise in order to be allowed to immigrate. This was the first national anti-Chinese immigration regulation and it led to an even larger gender disparity by creating bachelor societies in Chinese American communities..

The next important event following the Page Act of 1875 was the passage of the 1882 Chinese Exclusion Act. The 1882 Chinese Exclusion Act stemmed from two ideologies, all

stemming from anti-Chinese racism. The first ideology came from white workers lashing out at Chinese workers employed in their place as strikebreakers and cheap labor. “White laborers claimed that Chinese immigrants were reintroducing now un-American slavery into the United States in the form of ““coolie” labor and prostitution” (Lee 2021:1220). According to Lee, the white labor-focused Workingman’s Party was responsible for spreading anti-Chinese rhetoric after they took control of San Francisco’s city government in the 1870s. The Workingman’s Party also argued that Chinese male servants lacked masculinity and had the edge in the competitive market for domestic labor taking jobs from white women because “he is not a man!” This played into the white purity culture responsible for “yellow slavery” because they argued that Chinese men taking jobs from white women forced them into prostitution. These sentiments were also true in Oregon as well as Marie Rose Wong mentions in her book *Sweet Cakes, Long Journey.* A common complaint about the Chinese in the statewide newspaper, *The Oregonian* was “that the Chinese took jobs away from whites, that their wages were so low that higher-cost white labor appeared less attractive to employers' ' (Wong 2004:52). Chinese were used as scapegoats by their willingness to accept lower-wages but not the white employers who chose to hire them over white employees.

The second ideology came from the work of Lorelei Lee (2021) who explores the claims of white Americans who argued that Chinese immigrants were reintroducing slavery by importing Chinese prostitutes carrying the potential to spread diseases into the U.S. The Workingman’s Party argued that 90% of the syphilis cases in San Francisco came from Chinese women working in sex work (Lee 2021:1218). This racist rhetoric signals at the heart of the “yellow slavery” idea-–eugenics. According to the National Human Genome Research Institute, “Eugenics is an immoral and pseudoscientific theory that claims it is possible to perfect people

and groups through genetics and the scientific laws of inheritance" (2021). The term eugenics was coined a year after the passage of the 1882 Chinese Exclusion Act. Arguments for the Exclusion Act were closely aligned with the ideals of eugenics.

As with the Page Act, the arguments for the Chinese Exclusion Act were concerned with the growth of the Chinese population, particularly the sexual relations that were occurring between Chinese women and white men. Lee points out that, "As one reformer described it, Chinese prostitutes were 'infusing a poison into the Anglo-Saxon Blood'" (2021:1218). These concerns referred to contamination through disease or race-mixing (Kang 2020; Lee 2021; Shah 2001). Thus, the problem at hand was white male laborers frequenting Chinatown brothels. This was considered immoral and dangerous to ideas of white purity. Nayan Shah addressed this concern noting, "...Chinese female prostitutes were perceived as providing sexual services exclusively to Chinese men, white critics viewed them as merely immoral. But once they were believed to solicit white males, their presence was considered even more dangerous" (2001:79). Furthermore, the ideology of eugenics that fueled the Chinese Exclusion Act was "reproductive exclusion" (Kang 2020:139). Miliann Kang illustrates this idea in a speech by Senator John Franklin Miller, a Republican from California introducing the Chinese Exclusion Act: "If we continue to permit the introduction of this strange people… what is to be the effect upon the American people and Anglo-Saxon civilization? …Can they meet halfway, and so merge in a mongrel race, half Chinese and half Caucasian, to produce a civilization half-pagan, half-Christian, semi-Oriental, altogether mixed, and very bad" (2020:139). Miller's words, Kang argues, speaks to the fear that without this law the purity of whiteness would be disrupted and merged into a "mongrel race".

According to Mae Ngai (2004) after the 1882 Chinese Exclusion Act, Japanese and other Asian immigrants immigrated to the U.S. in order to fill the hole in cheap labor left by the Exclusion Act. However, in 1917 the U.S. passed an Immigration Law that barred immigrants and all other native inhabitants from an "Asiatic zone" that included all countries from Afghanistan to the Pacific Ocean (Ngai 2004:37). Ngai notes that this law also required incoming immigrants to pass a literacy test in order to enter the country (2004:55). In 1924, the United States passed the Johnson-Reed Immigration Act of 1924, which Ngai calls the first comprehensive restriction law. This Act established a quota system based on the country of origin, allowing only 100 individuals (excluding students, businessmen, and diplomats) per Asian country. In contrast, European countries were granted far higher numbers. For example, Great Britain and Northern Ireland received a quota of 65,721 and Germany 25,957. The 1875 Page Act started a trend of excluding Chinese people from immigrating to the U.S.; this trend would continue through the 1882 Chinese Exclusion Act. This exclusion would be extended to the other Asian immigrants who arrived to replace the Chinese with the 1917 Immigration Act and were given a quota of 100 immigrants per country in 1924 (Ngai 2004:28-29).

The Magnuson Act signed by Franklin Delano Roosevelt in 1943, ended Chinese Exclusion due to the need to cultivate an allyship with China against Japan during WWII (Wong 2007:261). After the war ended and due to a mixture of pressure from the Civil Rights movement and Cold War politics, Congress passed the Hart-Cellar Act, more commonly known as the Immigration Act of 1965. This Act raised the immigration ceiling to 270,000 people a year, with 170,000 of those slots reserved for Eastern countries (Eastern European, African, and Asian countries) (Wong 2004:258). While the 1965 Act abolished the previously European-biased immigration quotas, it came with another caveat that "Only those migrants whose professions

were listed on a Department of Labor schedule of occupations deemed to be in short supply nationally (among them doctors, nurses, and engineers) could enter without a specific job offer (Ngai 2004:259). This requirement was a concession to organized labor in order to make sure immigrants wouldn't threaten domestic employment and wages. On one hand, it makes sense to protect domestic workers from the possibility of being replaced by people desperate enough to work for lower wages doing the same work, this requirement aligns this progressive Immigration Act with the racist regressive Immigration Acts of the past.

Both the 1875 Page Act and 1882 Immigration Act were responses from organized labor towards the growing Chinese population who were forced to work for a fraction of what white employees were being paid. Labor groups used their political power to enact a form of slow ethnic cleansing of Chinese immigrants by banning Chinese women from entering the country and then banning new immigrants altogether, ensuring those that remained were isolated and had no way to grow, let alone, sustain their populations.

The Birth of Portland's Chinatown

Portland's Chinatown does not have a birthday. Like other ethnic enclaves, the neighborhood rose out of necessity due to the racial segregation that existed in Portland. Chinese immigrants to the U.S. arrived in Oregon in the early 1850s due to the discoveries of gold in the Applegate and the Rogue River areas of Southern Oregon in 1851. This section analyzes the forces that brought about the birth of Portland's Chinatown, what living in Chinatown was like during its peak, and finally what brought about Chinatown's demise. It will also address how the

macro-scale immigration legislation discussed in the previous section affected Portland's Chinatown.

In order to mitigate the "threat" of Chinese immigrants, the Oregon Constitution adopted a policy stating "No Chinaman, not a resident of the State at the adoption of this Constitution, shall ever hold any real estate, or mining claim, or work any mining claim therein" (art. 15, sec. 8). The discrimination that Chinese immigrants faced forced them to take jobs that whites often refused. In 1857, Representative William Watkins of Josephine County published a statement in the *Oregon Statesman* that "Chinamen in his county were practically slaves, they were bought and sold to one another, and to white men, as much as Negroes were in the south" (Wong 2004:31). They were also banned from voting, a topic of much discussion among the creators of the Oregon Constitution. As Mooney (2008), notes, this debate culminated in discussion about restricting the vote so that "No Negro, Chinaman, or Mulatto shall have the right [of] suffrage" (757). Furthermore, although all elections were to be "fair and equal" it did not refer to Chinese or Blacks.

Gold brought Chinese immigrants to Oregon, but they were not allowed to hold any mining claims or real estate. This left Chinese miners to be given the most difficult tasks (Ooligan Press 2007:30). Chinese laborers were left with few options in other occupations as well. Chinese could only find work in the harshest conditions such as working in canneries, house servants, sharecroppers, clearing land, building canals, roads, and railroad tracks (Ooligan Press 2007:35-37). Chinese laborers were fast and efficient, earning themselves a nickname, "chink", after the iron chink automated packing equipment in canneries (2007:36). It was also Chinese labor that was responsible for building the first railroad connecting San Francisco to the

Willamette Valley and cleared most of the Willamette and Tualatin Valleys for farming (2007:39-44).

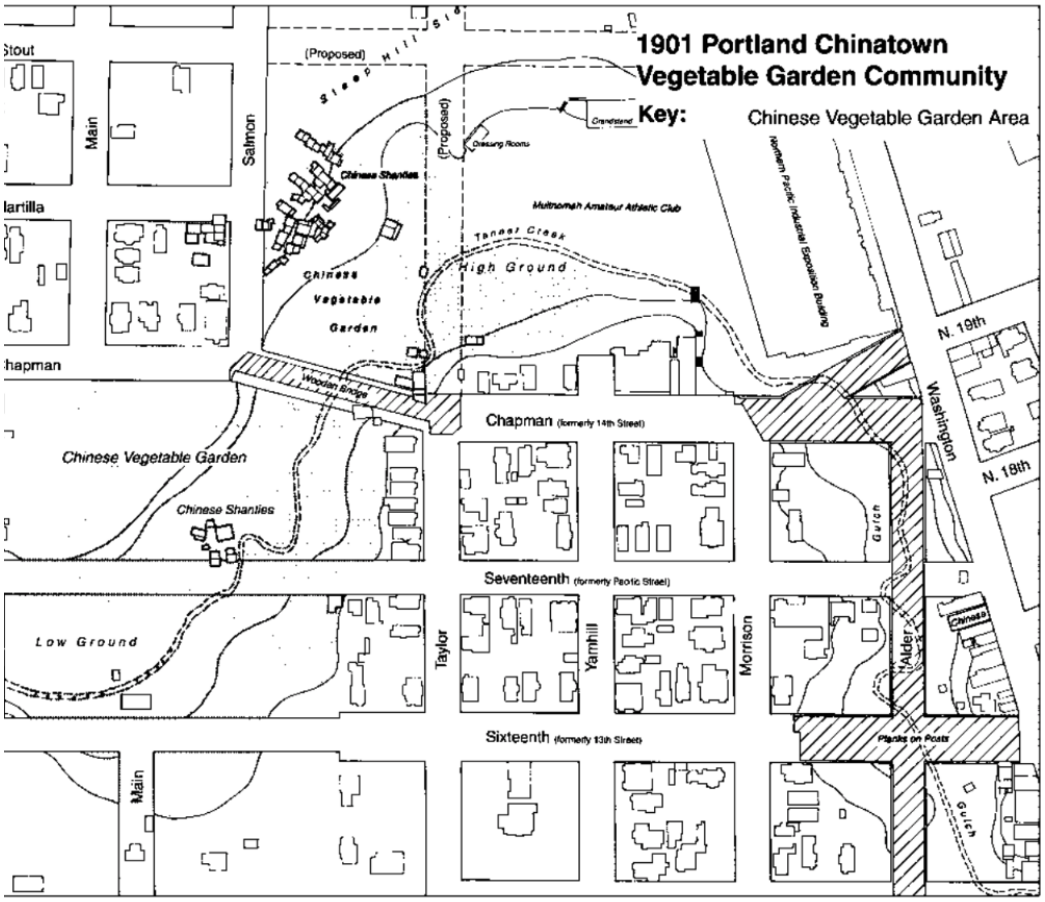
In order to find work, Chinese laborers relied on labor contractors. Labor contractors and the need for family drew many of these Chinese laborers to Chinese associations within cities. The associations were based on surname, lineage, and areas of origin and quickly became powerful entities offering various forms of aid for the Chinese living in America. They also offered community and a sense of family in a bachelor society. Portland's own Chinese Citizen Benevolent Association (otherwise known as the Jung Wah Association), hired white attorneys to represent community members in legal matters (Ooligan Press 2007:55).

Chinatowns throughout Oregon provided refuge to Chinese immigrants from the violence perpetrated by their white neighbors as they were forced to live in segregated communities. The authors of *Dreams of the West* explain that "In Eastern Oregon alone, significant Chinatowns emerged in Canyon City, John Day, Baker City, and Auburn" (Ooligan Press 2007:66) They go on to note that in Chinatowns, the Chinese were safe to live, express their culture, and build a community. They were also free from the persecution of the outside world.. However, despite the proliferation of Chinatowns in the early to late 1800s, many Chinese residents on the west coast were driven out of their homes by anti-Chinese riots (2007:84). This meant for some, fleeing to Portland, Oregon. As early as 1865, Portland had about 200 Chinese residents (Wong 2004:166). Portland's downtown was quickly becoming the settlement location of choice for the Chinese community. This settlement was quickly met with opposition from Portland officials. The newspaper, *The Oregonian* argued that the Chinese were good for the economy as cheap labor, but did not belong living in the heart of the city. Since the Chinese could not be legally kept out of the state or country due to the Burlingame Treaty, *The Oregonian* suggested that they should

at least be restricted to limited areas in the city, similar to downtown San Francisco (Wong 2004:205).

In September of 1865, the Common Council of Portland (Portland's City Council) approved "An Ordinance to Prevent Chinese using any Building or Dwelling House for Habitation within Certain Limits" making it illegal for the Chinese to use or occupy a house, shed, or enclosure as a place of residence or business (Wong 2004:205). Portland's city attorney reviewed the ordinance and said that the Council's ordinance could not be legally enforced to which the Portland Judiciary Committee agreed, and postponed the ordinance indefinitely. The population of Chinese residents increased to 324 the following year however, property owners refused to rent to Chinese residents, believing that they were doing a public good in preventing Chinese from residing or even owning a structure. Nonetheless, this effort failed as Chinese residents were willing to pay any price for dwellings. This made it a financially bad decision for whites to refuse to rent to them. In 1873, the average rent for a two-story building in Portland was $125 to $500 a month. By 1880, Chinese residents were paying $800 to $1000 a month for both business and residential use (Wong 2004:08). However, this forced Chinese merchants and renters to fit as many as thirty people into one small room in order to afford the costs. The absence of a restricted law or ordinance allowed Chinese residents to live or own anywhere in the city, as long as they could afford to pay the extra cost, that is.

Figure 3: Chinese Vegetable Garden



Map of Chinese Vegetable Gardens in Portland 1901
Source: Wong 2004 Pp. 216

From 1851 onward, Portland Chinese residents occupied various blocks throughout downtown Portland. In this time period, there were two Chinese communities in Portland. There was a rural community in the Chinese Gardens and an urban community in Chinatown (See Figure 3). The Chinese Gardens in Tanner Creek were made possible by a project that the city of Portland commissioned to prevent the frequent flooding of Tanner Creek. The 1879 project was to construct a 115–foot cylindrical brick culvert sixty feet under B street (now known as

Burnside) (Wong 2004:211). The culvert made it possible to prevent the flooding of Tanner Creek. This allowed the Chinese residents to move into Tanner Creek and use the lush soil to start farming. The residents built wooden huts and shanties and lived on the north side of the creek (See Figure 4). Wong quotes an 1889 journal describing the creek saying "To say the least, the sight of vegetable gardens in the heart of a large city was a most novel one" (Wong 2004:209). These vegetables were sold by Chinese vegetable peddlers who sold their produce door to door in Portland. The Tanner Creek shanties and farms became so successful that by 1889, the settlement had grown from the original three acres to more than twenty-one acres and went well beyond B Street and Fourteenth Streets (Wong 2004:214). Remarkably, these vegetables were also enjoyed by wealthy white people as they started developing large single-family homes uphill from the gardens, some as close as 250 feet from the gardens. There appears to be no recorded violence towards or attempt to get rid of the Chinese Tanner Creek farmers.

The peaceful coexistence did not last long, as the Multnomah Amateur Athletic Club (currently named the Multnomah Athletic Club), founded in 1891, leased five acres of the Tanner Creek Gulch in 1893, displacing some of the shanties and gardens in 1901 when the Alder Street extension was built. In 1910 the club bought the gardens for $60,000 and over the next few years would completely replace it with the expansion of the athletic club and the building of new homes (Wong 2004:219). In addition, in the same year, the Common Council passed an ordinance that forbade the sale of meats, produce, fish, ice, bread, and newspapers by peddlers, subjecting violators to thirty days imprisonment or a fine of $50 (Wong 2004:220). These two events, the building of the athletic club, and the outlawing of peddling completely displaced the fragile Chinese gardening community and erased it in 1910.

Figure 4: Tanner Creek Shanties and Farms

Source: Wong 2004 Pp.226

The best example of traditional Chinese buildings is the shanties that were built along Tanner Creek. They were near duplicates of the pitched-roof, simple wooden structures that rural Chinese lived in back in their motherland. They were based on peasant building traditions, rectangular dwellings with limited window openings. These rural communities were often clustered together in arrangements built around terraced slopes and waterways for farming (Wong 2004:225).

Portland Chinatown's architecture is in sharp contrast to the popular image of San Francisco's Chinatown as an example. According to Wong (2004), a writer in the journal *West Shore* described occupation of a building in which Chinese Portlanders took over structures no longer being used by white merchants (2004:220). Therefore, the markers of Chinese occupation of a building were not the architecture, but rather the decorative elements on the exterior of a building. Due to this nature of the occupation, the buildings lacked pagoda-style roofs, tiling, and

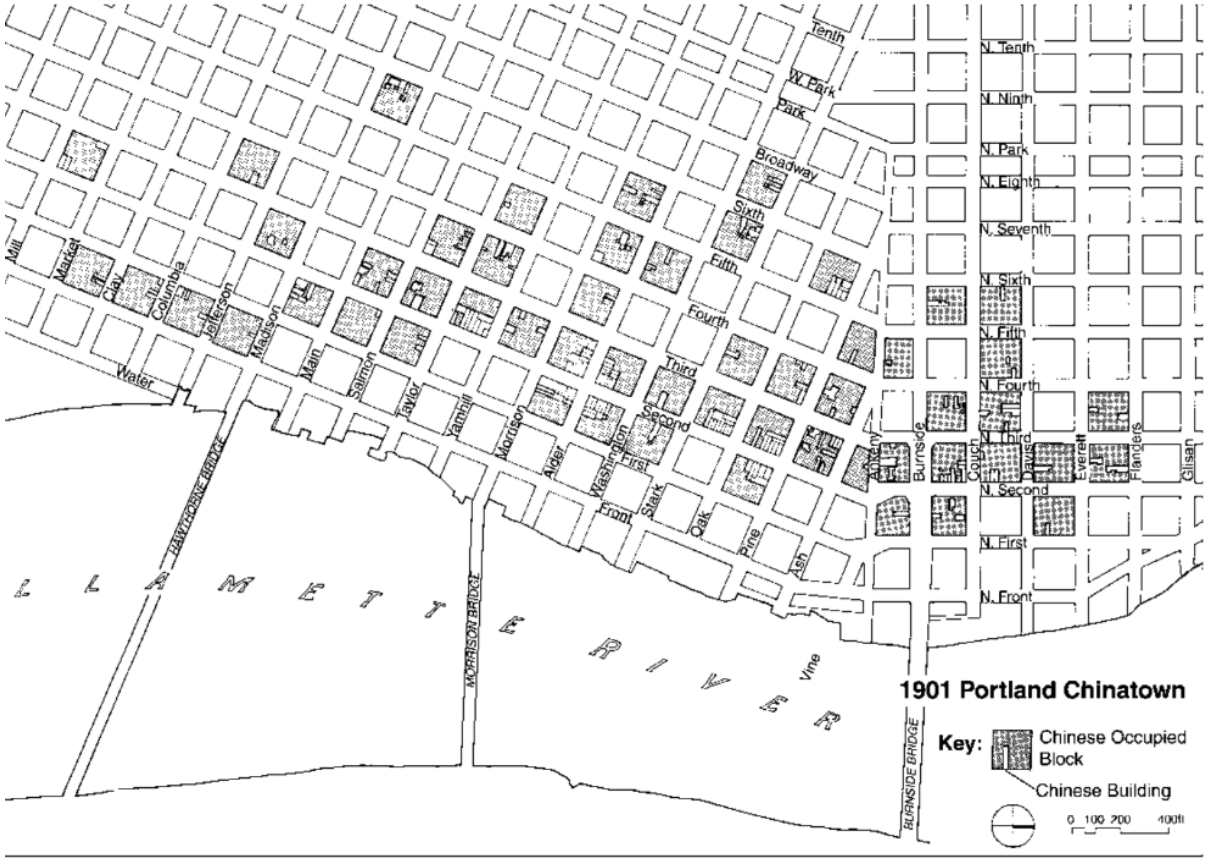
turreted building shapes that were considered authentically Chinese. An example of an exterior decoration was temple balconies, referred to as "joss houses" in the local paper, which was important to the Chinese community's social and religious culture (Wong 2004:239). These balconies resembled traditional balconies found in the buildings in the Guangdong province. The balconies provided protection from heavy rains, a place for worshiping various deities, a place to hang laundry, a vantage point to view celebrations and festivals, and as an extra room. Other exterior ornamentations were porcelain flower pots, lanterns suspended on bamboo overhangs, intricately carved screens, wall banners, and paintings along with furniture to express culture in shop interiors. Signs with calligraphy written on them were used by merchants to identify shops and contribute to the Chinatown image for the peer society (Wong 2004:228).

In 1880 the city ordered the removal of wooden buildings that were considered as fire hazards. The Portland Chinese decided to raise new structures modeled after the traditional American commercial brick buildings of their neighbors. A major example of this was the Chinese Opera Theater on Second Street. It was built in 1879 and the auditorium is described by Wong as "severe, lacking in color, decoration, and other amenities. Plain wooden benches constituted audience seating, and gallery stalls in a partial balcony were available for Portland's affluent merchant Chinese and their families" (2004:223). This building came under fire for their loud performances and long hours of operation, so the Common Council) passed an ordinance restricting the operation of the theater after midnight. The Chinese community petitioned against this, arguing that the performances required four to eight hours of presentation time, to which the city agreed to let them perform if they limited the number of performances that lasted past midnight.

It was common for the Chinese to live in the same building as their business. This meant that very few Chinese residents of Portland actually lived in the residence portion of the city. In contrast to a more traditional Chinatown, such as San Francisco's, Portland's Chinese did not develop within well-defined boundaries (Wong 2004:243). They were located mainly along Front Street in 1863 to 1868, but by 1873, they had started to spring up along 2nd and 3rd Streets south of B Street (Burnside Street), with a few even popping up north of A Street (Alder Street). The center of the community was developing at the intersection of Alder and Second Streets (2004:243).

On August 2, 1873, Portland suffered the city's largest fire. Portland elites blamed the fire on the Chinese (Wong 2004:243). The fire destroyed fourteen Chinese businesses. Nevertheless, by 1877, Portland had rebuilt the area and 18 new Chinese business and residential buildings were built. This growth continued, and four years later, Chinese residents occupied forty-nine blocks in the city's downtown area (2004: 248). Unfortunately, despite this, all of the buildings rented by the Chinese residents along Front, First, and Second Streets had disappeared because they either burned down, or the City Council voted to remove them in an effort to make the city more fire-safe (2004:248). As a result, the core of Chinatown was now Second Street between Taylor and Ash by the 1900s.

Figure 5: Map of Old Chinatown



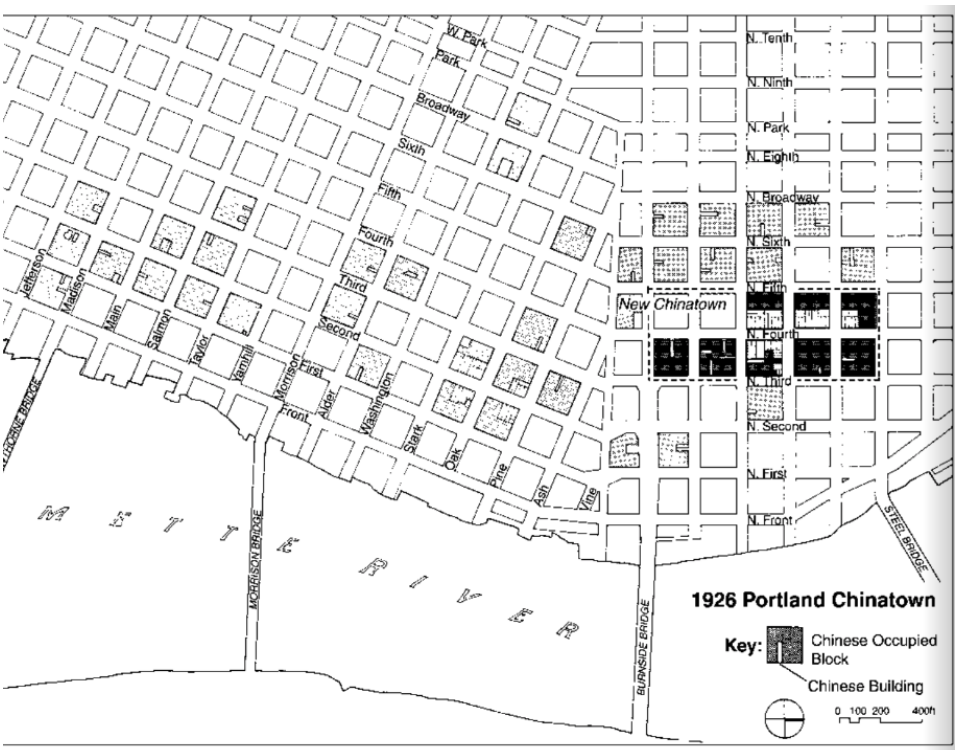
Portland's Old Chinatown, 1901.

Source: Wong 2004 Pp. 252

Nineteen hundred was the peak of Portland's Chinatown as Chinese residents now occupied 70 blocks (Wong 2004: 250). Between 1900 and 1915, Portland committed itself to the City Beautiful movement and focused on redeveloping the old structures on Front and First Street. In 1906, another fire destroyed more Chinese-occupied buildings in the area bordered by Third, Fourth, Pine and Ankeny streets (Wong 2004:253). Also in the same year, downtown

property prices began to skyrocket. Wong stated that "The half block on Third Street between Stark and Oak Streets sold for $20,000 in 1902, and the Title Guarantee and Trust Company purchased the commercial block at Second and Washington Streets for $155,000. By 1906, these same properties were valued at $350,000 and $300,000 respectively" (2004:254). These property prices made Chinatown the new target for redevelopment. The fire and the increasing property and rent prices forced a lot of Chinese businesses out of what is now known as Old Chinatown. A number of Chinese businesses moved north of Burnside Street into New Chinatown, the district that Portland's Chinatown sits in today. Old Chinatown lost its core at Second and Alder Streets in 1908 and the leases at the northeast and northwest corners had expired and were not renewed. In 1926, the core of Chinatown had moved to Fourth Avenue, marking the first death of Portland's Chinatown (See Figure 6).

Figure 6: Map of Portland Chinatown in 1926



Portland's Old Chinatown, 1926.

Source: Wong 2004 Pp.260

The next change of Portland's Chinatown would come in the 1940s, spurred on by World War II. The war sparked a large change in Portland as the city's population was growing rapidly and the call for defense workers in factories and shipyards meant that unemployment was basically nonexistent. Another factor was the demonization of the Japanese as the common enemies of the American and Chinese. In December of 1943, the 61-year-old Chinese Exclusion Act was repealed when President Roosevelt signed the Magnuson Bill (Wong 2004:261). In Portland, Chinese residents started putting up placards and stickers announcing that the stores and wearers were not Japanese. This finally allowed Chinese residents to purchase property and become American citizens. Wong explains that while the Chinese Exclusion Act was technically

repealed, the US allowed only 105 Chinese immigrants into the country per year (2004:261). Not surprisingly, the number of Chinese in Portland declined. Wong says that by the 1950s, only 16 more Chinese lived in Oregon and the population of Chinese in Portland actually declined by 100 (2004:262). Chinese-owned buildings were removed from Old Chinatown due to redevelopment for the war. By the 1950s, there were only 4 buildings occupied by Chinese merchants in Old Chinatown, the rest of the Chinese community was now confined to New Chinatown.

Modern-Day Population Shifts

As mentioned above, Portland's Chinatown does not have an official birth. It has no official death date either. Despite not resembling even the New Chinatown of the 1950s, Portland's Chinatown is still on display with a beautiful gate welcoming tourists. In this section, I analyze what is left of Chinatown and use scholarship to argue that the death of Old Chinatown actually marked the death of Portland's Chinese presence in Downtown.

Table 1. Chinese Population in West Coast States 1860-1950

Year	California total	Washington total	Oregon Total	Oregon Chinese	California Chinese	Washington Chinese
1860	379,944	11,594	52,465	435	34,933	-
1870	560,247	23,955	90,923	3,330	49,277	234
1880	864,697	75,116	174,768	9,510	75,132	3,186
1890	1,208,130	349,390	313,767	9,540	72,472	3,260
1900	1,485,053	518,103	413,536	10,397	45,753	3,629
1910	2,377,549	1,141,990	672,765	7,363	36,248	2,709
1920	3,426,861	1,356,621	783,389	3,090	28,812	2,363

1930	5,677,251	1,563,396	953,786	2,075	37,361	2,195
1940	6,907,387	1,736,191	1,089,684	2,086	39,556	2,345
1950	10,586,223	2,378,963	1,521,341	2,102	58,324	4,858

Source: Adapted from *Sweet Cakes, Long Journey: The Chinatowns of Portland, Oregon* (page 158) by M.Wong, 2004.

Table 1 shows that Oregon had more Chinese residents than Washington, but both combined had far fewer Chinese residents than California. The Burlingame Treaty of 1868 led to a large influx of Chinese immigrants overall flowing into the US (Wong 2004:62). The passage of the 1882 Chinese Exclusion Act resulted in a slowing of Chinese immigration, which is shown by the slight changes in the Chinese population between 1880 and 1890. An important change is the drastic changes between 1890 and 1900. Oregon's Chinese population increases while Washington's stays roughly the same and California takes a large drop.

The drop in California's population was the result of anti-Chinese pogroms and displacement by starvation that was common in rural towns and counties by the 1880s (Pfaelzer 2008). Pfaelzer describes the Eureka method as race riots that burned down Chinese businesses and homes and forced Chinese onto trains or boats to be taken out of town (2008). The Truckee method was equally effective as white residents would collectively starve and exclude Chinese from work and trade, forcing them to leave town (Pfaelzer 2008). Pfaelzer's (2008) *A Litany of Hate* details a history of the many instances of Chinese immigrants being driven out by racist mobs in California. This Anti-Chinese movement seems to culminate in the Geary Act. Passed in 1892, which required Chinese residents to carry photo identification cards in order to prove that they were legal immigrants (2008). This Act also extended the Chinese Exclusion Act for another decade. Many Chinese residents protested the Geary Act, but the courts upheld the law.

However, the prospect of deporting so many Chinese immigrants was too expensive to be done legally and so white Californians decided to take it into their own hands (2008). Anti-Chinese mobs began arresting, lynching, and overall chasing Chinese people out of California. As Pfaelzer (2008) notes, hundreds of Chinese left California for the East Coast where they hoped the Act, written by California Representative Thomas J. Geary's would be less likely to be enforced, to less hostile environments where they might find employment on sugar plantations.

Oregon's population increase was the result of the anti-Chinese riots that were taking place in nearby Washington State. A riot in Seattle, on February 7, 1886, was so severe, the Territorial Governor Squire placed the entire city under martial law (Clark 1974:128). Another notable riot was in the city of Tacoma. There, the Chinese were driven out of their homes and shops and forced onto a train to Portland (Pfaelzer 2008). The perpetrators of these riots arrived in Oregon within days after the Seattle riots and in response, fearing the same unrest, Portland swore in a volunteer force of 700 armed citizens, two of three city militias, 200 sheriff's deputies, and doubled the police force (Clark 1974:128). All appeared peaceful until February 22 when a mob rounded up 39 Chinese employees in Oregon City and shipped them off to Portland. The mobs drove 180 Chinese woodcutters from Albina, raided a colony of Chinese truck gardeners at Guild's Lake, both of which are now part of Portland, and attempted to blow up Chinese businesses and homes (Clark 1974:129-130). The city was not able to control the riots and violence kept occurring until the mobs petered out. The anti-Chinese attacks were fueled by unemployment and economic uncertainty. Once the job market improved and the men in these mobs found employment, the attacks stopped.

Table 2. Portland Oregon Population

Year	Total	Chinese
1860	2,874	22
1870	9,565	720
1880	17,577	1,612
1890	46,385	4,539
1900	90,426	7,841
1910	207,214	5,699
1920	258,288	1,846
1930	301,815	1,416
1940	305,394	1,569
1950	373,628	1,467

Source: Adapted from *Sweet Cakes, Long Journey: The Chinatowns of Portland, Oregon* (page 166) by M.Wong, 2004.

Despite the ineffectiveness of the militias and patrols, this show of force led to many Chinese American residents to come to Portland, ballooning their population to over 7,000. Wealthy Chinese merchant Moy Back Hin provided food and clothing and helped relocate Chinese refugees to Portland (Ooligan Press 2007:84). Unfortunately, the population of Chinese residents in Portland would steadily decline over the next half-century. Between 1900 and 1910, Portland started their commitment to the City Beautiful movement which started the redevelopment of Old Chinatown and started pushing the Chinese population to North Portland. In 1923 Oregon joined six other western states in barring non-citizens from owning or purchasing land. Luckily, wealthy Chinese merchants such as Moy Back Hin and Seid Back, as well as Chinese syndicates already owned some of Portland's downtown lots and buildings

(Wong 2004:209). However, this restricted the Chinese population of Portland to already occupied or owned properties in New Chinatown, as even the properties that the Chinese owned in Old Chinatown were too valuable to escape redevelopment. As previously discussed, Old Chinatown died during the US involvement in World War II as the few remaining buildings in Old Chinatown were replaced for redevelopment, leaving only four Chinese-occupied buildings outside of New Chinatown (2004:262).

Wong opines that San Francisco and other Chinatowns in the country represent enclaves where Chinatowns grew from places of social organization within a restricted environment. Portland's Chinatown was unique because, "the geographic pattern of the Chinatown community clearly lacked identifiable urban boundaries" (2004:267-268) making it a *non-clave* because of the lack of location restrictions. The Portland Chinese community was defined by its social characteristics rather than distinct physical boundaries. Therefore, by the time of the 1950s when the Chinese community had been restricted to New Chinatown the spirit of the community had already been lost.

Discussion

Urban Renewal and Race in Portland

According to the Statistical Atlas in 2018, there were only 107 Asian residents of Old Town Chinatown. In 1984, the Chinese Consolidated Benevolent Association (CCBA) submitted its updated "Chinatown Development Plan", previously submitted in 1983, where they defined Portland's Chinatown as the ten-block area bordered by W. Burnside, NW Glisan, NW Third, and Fifth Avenues. Portland's Chinatown has shrunk from seventy blocks in 1900 to ten blocks

north of W Burnside Street (CCBA 1984). According to the Portland State University's Race and Ethnicity in Oregon Map, there are 19 Asian people living in the definition of Chinatown based on the CCBA's Chinatown Development Plan (Wei 2021). In comparison to the year 1900, Old Chinatown occupied 70 blocks and contained 7,841 Chinese residents.

The gentrification of Old Chinatown factored heavily into the decline of Chinese presence in the historic Chinatown district. Another core factor was the Magnuson bill signed in 1943. "Many of the occupations and professions previously closed to their parents because of racial and training restrictions suddenly opened up" (Ho 1978:20). Many young, educated, and English-speaking Chinese-Americans who were now allowed to be citizens became doctors, dentists, engineers, and pharmacists. Some of them also found success opening popular restaurants in the city. This new access to capital, as well as a slight loosening in racially restrictive real estate practices for the Chinese, allowed them to relocate outside Chinatown into the previously all-white, middle-class parts of the city and suburbs. This slow assimilation and loosening up of segregation has played a role in killing the last remnants of Chinatown in downtown Portland. "On August 2, 1964, the *Oregonian* announced that 'the curtain has dropped on Portland's Chinatown with the sale of the last building housing Chinese establishments'" (1978:20). The building, located at SW 2nd Avenue and Oak Street, was torn down for a parking lot on July 15, 1965.

Ho describes the tactics used at the time to preserve the historic district of Chinatown. Tuck Lung Grocery and Restaurant had moved into the stylized Chinese building on Northwest Fourth and Davis (1978:36). This business's visible placement symbolized the tactic of potentially increasing the number of Chinese businesses by generating traffic into Chinatown for daytime activities and nightlife. Another tactic was the application to the city for recognition of

Chinatown as a historic district. The last tactic was to renovate the CCBA Community Center in another effort to build a sense of community and generate more traffic into Chinatown. Portland's Chinatown received Historic District designation in 1977 (Hong 2020). The CCBA was renovated in 1981 and from 1984 to 1986, the red lamp posts, Chinese-English street signs, and the Chinatown gateway were all built or installed. However, Tuck Lung Grocery and Restaurant, along with most of the Chinese businesses have left. The many efforts to redevelop Chinatown have come and gone.

Data from 2010 reveals that Chinese presence in Portland has grown, despite the lack of a uniting district such as Chinatown. According to the 2010 U.S. Census, Portland had 30,360 people of Chinese ancestry (Statistical Atlas). The cities with the highest population of Chinese residents are Portland, Hillsboro and Beaverton (Statistical Atlas). The other two cities, Eugene and Salem, the state capital, are located to the south of the Portland metro area (Statistical Atlas). The Chinese presence in Oregon has increased and expanded as well. However, Portland as of 2010 had 1.7% of its population made up of Chinese residents while at its height was 9.8%, so the overall concentration of Chinese residents to the total population is still low compared to 1900.

Table 3. Populations of people of Chinese descent by major city on West Coast 2018

City	Population of People of Chinese descent	% Percent of Total Population
Portland, OR	30,360	1.29
San Francisco	461,907	10.1
Los Angeles	506,818	3.84
Seattle	96,649	2.63

Data Sourced by: Statistical Atlas, 2018

Table 3 compares the Chinese populations in the major cities on the West coast, as well as how much these populations make up the total population of their cities. It is important to note that Portland has the smallest Chinese population by far, making up only 1.29% of the city's population. While not the most numerically large, San Francisco's Chinese population makes up 10.1% of the population. The city with the largest Chinese population, as well as being the largest city on the list, is Los Angeles, with the Chinese population making up only 3.84% of the total. Finally, the most interesting from the perspective of this paper is the Chinese population of Seattle. Seattle's Chinese population is triple the size of Portland's and it makes up 2.63% of the population. It shows that the displacement of Old Chinatown had a drastic effect on the Chinese population in the city. While it still grew larger than it was before, the lack of a central district for this community has made Seattle, Washington's Chinese population to grow much larger than Portland's, when until the 1930's, Portland had more Chinese residents.

Portland's Chinatown has many similarities with another forgotten historic district, Albina. Albina was a company town before being annexed in 1891 to Portland. The area was located on the east side of the Willamette river, across the river from Chinatown. The Black population had built a small community in Albina, but in 1910, they were pushed out to the east side (Gibson 2007:6). Therefore, the Black population in Portland was scattered about until the 1940s, where half of all Black Portlanders were confined to the Williams Avenue area in Albina due to severe housing discrimination (2007:5). Oregon has a racist history towards Black Americans as in 1857, the state inserted an exclusion clause that made it illegal for Black people to remain in the state, not being removed until 1926 (2007:6). In 1919, the Portland Realty Board adopted a policy that declared it illegal for an agent to sell property to Black or Chinese people in

White neighborhoods (2007:6). From 1910 to 1960, Black Portlanders were forced into the Albina District by a mix of racist real estate practices and natural disasters such as the flooding of Vanport. This segregation meant that by the 1960s, 80% of Black Portlanders lived in Albina, however from that period to the 2000s, less than a third of that community remained.

Oregon passed the 1949 Fair Employment Practices Act which made it easier for non-white Portlanders to find work, but this small amount of progress came right before the first instances of Urban Renewal. Similar to the destruction of Old Chinatown, Portland's building of the Memorial Coliseum in 1956 destroyed many Black businesses and homes (2007:11). This was followed up with the construction of Interstate 5 and Highway 99 in 1956 which ran right through the Albina neighborhood, decimating many Black homes. The Emmanuel Hospital Project also decimated more Black homes as well, about 11 hundred (2007:13). This forced the center of the Black Portland community to be relocated. The urban renewal projects displaced many Black Portlanders, destroying many communities. This was made worse by the disinvestment in the neighborhoods where landlords charging high rents would neglect the properties they were renting and banks would refuse to give mortgages to Black Portlanders. These issues shaped the Albina into a poor dilapidated neighborhood that was prime for crack cocaine trade to move in in the early 1980s (2007:17). This era of disinvestment and rise in crime led into the 1990s, where Black Portlanders with the means left Albina and White Portlanders, enticed by low property prices, started buying homes and displacing the remaining Black residents (2007:21).

Portland's Chinatown's life foreshadows the gentrification of the Albina district. The main difference between the history of the two neighborhoods is that Chinatown lacked identifiable urban boundaries, while Albina was very clearly segregated due to redlining (Wong

2004:267). Aside from this difference, the process by which the two neighborhoods were displaced share many similarities. The Urban Renewal of the City Beautiful movement and the building of various projects such as the Memorial Coliseum and the I5 corridor. Just as Wong finds that buildings in Old Chinatown were replaced for parks, land development, transportation, and to upgrade sewer and drainage systems (2004:253), a similar pattern was emerging for the Black community in Portland. Urban Renewal also coincided with the increase in property value and replacement of previous communities by white gentrifiers (Gibson 2007:21). This highlights another difference however, as the gentrification of Old Chinatown forced the Chinese residents into a segregated neighborhood that now had clear identifiable urban boundaries (Wong 2004:262).

In comparison to other Chinatowns, Portland Chinatown's lifespan is fairly typical. The original Chinatown in Los Angeles, Calle de los Negros Chinatown, was born in 1852, when Chinese immigrants started arriving in the city (Zipp 2021). During the century of the Chinatown's life, it split into five neighborhoods: Calle de los Negros Chinatown, Old Chinatown, New Chinatown, China City, and the Chinese Market District. By the 1950s, the only remaining iteration of Chinatown in Los Angeles was New Chinatown which came from the residents of Old Chinatown (2021). The rest had been demolished, replaced by urban renewal, or spread out into ethnoburbs such as Monterey Park in Los Angeles. Calle De los Negros Chinatown was paved over, forcing residents to move to Old Chinatown. Old Chinatown was destroyed to build Union Station in 1938 (2021). City Market Chinatown, a community of vegetable peddlers, died when its residents found better opportunities. Finally, China City was built in 1938 by Hollywood Executives as a tourist trap, but it only lasted a decade before it shut down (2021). The life of the Chinatowns in Los Angeles and Portland had many similarities.

They both lasted about a century, all of the old Chinese communities were displaced, and they both have only a New Chinatown remaining.

Aside from Marie Rose Wong's *Sweet Cakes, Long Journey* (2004), a comprehensive exploration of the history of Chinese immigrants in Oregon and in Portland's Chinatown, there is very little research that is specific to Portland's Chinatown and Chinese community. This thesis focuses on the birth and death of Portland's Chinatown, building upon the research done by others,exploring the whole history of the forgotten Chinatown, and placing it within a national context.

In delving into this project, I had assumed that Portland's Chinatown was the result of residential segregation. This notion was disproved by the history of Portland's Old Chinatown. Portland failed to implement segregation of the Chinese residents until 1923 (Wong 2004:209). This unique property of Portland's Chinatown made it the largest Chinatown in the country due to the lack of restrictions. However, although formal legal restrictions may not have existed, informal social restrictions cannot be discounted in explaining the concentration of Chinese residents in Chinatown (2004:207). It is also an important case study of how gentrification and urban renewal can erase the presence of ethnic enclaves, as was the case not only in Chinatown but the Albina neighborhood. Lastly, the importance of a slow death of Chinatown is evidenced by the passing of the Magnuson Act in 1943 and the death of New Chinatown in Portland (Ho 1978:20). The Magnuson Act was the first step in sounding the death knell of Portland's Chinatown twenty years before segregation for the Chinese community ended with the passage of the Immigration and Civil Rights Acts of 1965.

Future research might address the racialization of Chinese immigrants during the life of Portland's Chinatown. Nadia Kim notes that current racialization of Asian Americans stems from

the model minority myth, which forces Asian Americans to "solve contradictions within capitalism, for they … fill holes left by a lack of attention to social welfare, such as in the medical field, in the academy, and so on" (2018:270). However, Chinese immigrants did not start out with this connotation. When Chinese immigrants first arrived in the U.S. they were excluded from owning real estate or mining claims (Wong 2004:33). Fear of Chinese immigrants replacing or intermingling with White people drove the anti-Chinese movement to pass the 1882 Chinese Exclusion Act (Kang 2020:139). This rhetoric characterized Chinese residents as foreign and "in the service of a foreign enemy" (Genova 2006:10). Chinese labor was also subordinated in a way that emphasized servility and Chinese people were judged as incapable of self-control (2006:10).

In addition to the above, Chinese exclusion efforts have been likened to genocide by Kang (2020:142). This racialization did not change until 1943 with the passing of the Magnuson Act, ending Chinese exclusion, in hopes to build a partnership between the US government and China during World War II. The Chinese were now a trusted ethnic group and they were pitted against the Japanese (Wong 2004:261). This "one of the good ones" connotation evolved into the model minority myth. This now seemingly positive connotation of the Model Minority myth absolves capitalism for its failures in serving disadvantaged communities and pits Asian Americans against Black Americans (Kim 2018:271). These discoveries have many implications for future research.

This understanding of the birth and death of Portland's Chinatown creates new avenues in understanding the relationship between other Asian groups in Portland. For instance, the relationship between the Chinese and Japanese within Portland, the influence of the Japanese invasion of Manchuria and how the Chinese in Portland benefitted and perhaps were complicit in the violence against Japanese Americans during World War Two. As Wong explains, "In

Portland, the Chinese consul distributed placards and stickers for the windows of stores and homes along with badges announcing that the wearers were not Japanese" (2004:261). The movement of Chinese residents into Japantown during World War II would be particularly interesting as this history has been explored little in the literature as well as the growth of other Asian groups such as Filipinos and Japanese, past and present.

Finally, these questions arose from my research. What was the relationship between Black and Chinese people in Oregon and what similarities and differences were there in the way they were treated? How did the practice of using whites to rent or purchase property impact the development and maintenance of a sense of community compared or differ for these two groups? What was the process of Chinese flight from New Chinatown compared to the flight (or pushout) of Black residents due to gentrification? Where did the Chinese in Portland go after displacement? What other Chinese communities were established in Oregon? How did the new Chinese immigrants coming in after 1965 affect the remaining ones? What is the relationship between labor unions and Chinese immigrants? Again, there is much to learn about the differences and similarities of the experiences racial and ethnic communities have had with regard to race and segregation in Portland, Oregon.

Conclusion

This research aimed to explore the mystery of the development and disappearance of Portland's Chinatown. It explored the history of the neighborhood with a sociological lens to identify what forces caused its birth and death. Portland's Chinatown was born out of necessity due to the influx of Chinese immigrants looking for work in Oregon. It died due to a mix of

urban renewal efforts in Portland, displacing Chinese residents from Old Chinatown, and the loosening of racist real estate practices after the repeal of the Chinese Exclusion Act in 1943.

Although the Chinese population in Portland was once quite high, this population has dispersed to areas outside the city, and most importantly, outside of Chinatown. Yet, Chinese Americans continue to be one of the largest Asian groups in Oregon, Colorado, and Utah (Hoeffel and Jones 2012). The section summarizing national immigration policy explored the anti-Chinese movement and described how it affected the Chinese immigrant population as a whole. The Birth of Chinatown section explored the history of Portland's Chinese residents. The section after that used census data to contextualize the historical events and illustrated how urban renewal erased Old Chinatown from Portland's waterfront area when property prices started rising. The discussion situated these events with the displacement of other Chinatowns in the US as well as the Albina District in Portland. With this new understanding, it is important to investigate the implications these findings have on ethnic neighborhoods such as Portland's Jade District, Chinatowns spiritual successor.

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