

The History Of Winnemucca

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THE CENTRAL PACIFIC RAILROAD

There have been many significant historical events that affected the history of the United States in which Winnemucca has been a participant, but none has been of greater significance than the joining of the east and west with the iron rail. The building of the Central Pacific and the Union Pacific Railroads in the 1860's truly united this country for the first time, and made westward expansion a fact.

The first proposal for a transcontinental railroad was made as early as the 1830's, well before anyone knew what the western part of the continent contained. The matter was brought before Congress for the first time as early as the 1845-47 session.

In 1853 the Pacific Railroad Surveys were authorized and by 1856 were completed. These surveys comprised thirteen volumes of information and outline five routes that the railroad could utilize to cross the United States from coast to coast.

Up until the start of the Civil War the southern route was favored more so than the other four. With the advent of the War between the States the southern route was out and there was a real need to bind the State of California to the rest of the Union.

On July 1st, 1862, President Abraham Lincoln signed the Pacific Railroad Act, and the first transcontinental railroad was assured. This act also chose the central route through northern Nevada.

The true father of the Central Pacific Railroad was Theodore Dehone Judah. His surveys of the central route were meticulous and well done and his testimony before Congress for the Pacific Railroad Act assured its passage. Judah lined up the financial support of four businessmen, Huntington, Hopkins, Crocker and Stanford—the "Big Four" of the Central Pacific.

On August 19, 1868, the tracklayers for the CPRR laid six miles and 200 feet of track in a single day near Humboldt City Station. There was a competition between the construction bosses of the Central Pacific and Union Pacific, which was building from east to west, concerning the amount of track that could be laid in a single day. The Union Pacific soon beat the six mile record. Shortly after the Central Pacific construction crew entered what is now Utah they laid ten miles of track in a day, a record which has never been equaled or broken since then. At the time this record was set the rail weighed between 56 and 64 pounds per yard.

Before the railroad company could sell a completed section of line to the government it first had to be inspected by men from the U. S. Railroad Commission. On September 5th, 1868, Inspectors Denver and Smith came up the railroad as far as Humboldt City Station, or Humboldt House as it was to be named, and accepted another twenty miles of finished railroad. This made 282 miles of the Central Pacific from Sacramento in running order. At this time the construction trains were at Raspberry Canyon, 24 miles further up the line, and the grade builders were past Winnemucca.

As the railroad moved east it was connected to Idaho Territory and Oregon by a stage line and fast freight service owned by Hill Beachey. His freight and stage road from Humboldt House and Mill City is still apparent in many areas across the desert heading north. Beachey was one of the most famous stage line owners in the west.

The Central Pacific rails reached Winnemucca on September 16th, 1868, and was officially opened to Winnemucca on October 1st, 1868. The "Champion" was the first locomotive into town. There was no celebration at Winnemucca at the time of its arrival, and the work pushing the line to the east continued. By November the railroad was completed through Humboldt County.

On May 11th, 1869, the first through train of four cars passed through Winnemucca at noon. The train carried Governor Safford, the Railroad Commissioners, and the President and Vice-President of the Central Pacific Railroad Company. The Humboldt Register described the celebration in Winnemucca as follows: "We had a big time in Winnemucca celebrating the completion of the railroad. Firing guns, blowing whistles, ringing bells, 'driving spikes', and drinking champagne, was the order of the day. Some of the boys are celebrating yet; others became so enthusiastic that they had

east close by the slaughterhouse. This set of corrals was torn down in the early 1970's. Thousands of cattle were shipped from Winnemucca to points east and west each year from the 1870's until the end of the 1920's. In the early days it was said that a person could not eat a steak in San Francisco that had not started life on northern Nevada grass.

The Railroad Company formed the tax base for early Humboldt County. The people who lived in Humboldt County, and the rest of the states served by the Central Pacific paid dearly for the few tax dollars they received.

The Central Pacific figured their freight rates from the point of origin through to San Francisco and then back to the destination of the shipment. For example, a carload of coal oil shipped from New York to San Francisco ran up a freight bill of \$500. The same carload of coal oil shipped from New York to Winnemucca, 475 railroad miles less distant, cost \$716. The buyer paid \$500 for the freight to go to San Francisco and \$216 for it to come back to Winnemucca from San Francisco. The car of coal oil had been dropped off in Winnemucca on its way west. The Railroad Company continued to price freight this way until well after the turn of the 20th Century.

There were bills introduced in the Nevada Legislature to make the railroad freight rates fare to all, but the Central Pacific controlled politics in Nevada for a number of years, not only on the State level, but on the County level as well. This influence would also continue well into the 20th Century.

The Central Pacific Railroad changed the history of Winnemucca like no other single event ever would. It brought the world to Winnemucca and Winnemucca to the world. It insured that Winnemucca would grow and prosper for years to come. It also brought the County Seat to Winnemucca in 1873.

HUMBOLDT COUNTY'S HISTORICAL LEGACY Vol.2 A HISTORY OF WINNEMUCCA, HUMBOLDT COUNTY, NEVADA.

CHAPTER 2. THE CHINESE IN WINNEMUCCA.

There have been many different ethnic groups in Winnemucca and Humboldt County. Some of these groups stayed in Winnemucca and were soon assimilated into the cultural mix that makes Winnemucca what it is today. The one race of people that was never assimilated into the cultural mix in Winnemucca was the Chinese, and from the very earliest days of their arrival within this community, they remained separate. This could be one of the reasons that they are no longer part of the present cultural mix.

The Chinese have been one of the most maligned, if not the most maligned, racial group in the United States. They are the only racial group that was forbidden to immigrate to the United States by law. In 1880 California passed laws that put an end to Chinese labor use in that state. In 1882 the United States followed suit with the Exclusion Act of 1882. This bit of legislation barred Chinese immigration for 10 years. This act was renewed over and over again and the exclusion policy remained in force until World War II. At this time the law began to be modified until it was finally dropped, after 86 years in effect, in the 1968 overhaul of immigration legislation.

In the early days many of the Chinese who had become United States citizens and returned to China to visit were refused entry when they tried to return.

In 1893 a Chinese man by the name of Hi Loy, also known as "Ace In The Hole", went home to China for a visit with the family he had left behind. When he returned in May, 1895, immigration officials would not let him off the ship at San Francisco. The officials said that his reentry papers had been altered, and they refused to let him off the ship.

Hi Loy wired Winnemucca and affidavits were produced stating that he was a resident of Winnemucca and well known here to both the whites and the Chinese. After several weeks had passed he was allowed to disembark and return to Winnemucca.

In 1902 Sing Yuen, a Winnemucca merchant, returned to the United States after an extended visit to China. He was held in San Francisco for over two months while his paperwork was verified. A Treasury Department officer came to Winnemucca and conducted interviews before Sing Yuen was allowed to return to his home and business.

This problem of readmitting Chinese into the United States continued. In 1928 Yee Jam, the owner of the Hi Loy Jan store in Chinatown, wanted to bring his wife, Soo Soo Chee, to Winnemucca to enjoy his prosperity. He started the paperwork to unwind the red tape in 1927 with the aid of the City Attorney. Inspectors came from San Francisco to Winnemucca to inspect his store. A friend of Yee Jam in North Dakota gave an affidavit stating that he had known Yee Jam in China and that Soo Soo Chee was his wife. Finally Soo Soo Chee had the paperwork necessary to leave China but upon her arrival at San Francisco she was held on Angels Island for three weeks for more investigating. She finally arrived in Winnemucca on February 17th, 1928. This problem would continue for many years.

One of the myths of history is that the Chinese came to the western United States for the construction of the Central Pacific Railroad. The reality is that they arrived in California in the very early days of the gold rush, which started in 1849.

The first mention of Chinese in Humboldt County appeared in the first issue of The Humboldt Register in May of 1863. At that time the citizens of Unionville were united in their effort to rid the town of the Chinese presence there.

When the railroad began building through the area in 1868 the Chinese arrived in Winnemucca, and maintained their presence here until the 1940's.

Another historical myth concerning the Chinese was that they built the Central Pacific Railroad. The Chinese did all the grading on the Central Pacific. The ties and rails were laid by white men. After the Central Pacific

was built, a small percentage of the Chinese construction crews were employed by the railroad as section hands, maintaining the railroad bed and tracks. After the turn of the 20th Century these Chinese section gangs were replaced by other ethnic groups.

Not all the Chinese worked for the railroad. When we think of the Chinese in the early days we think of them as running laundries. There were several Chinese wash houses in Winnemucca, located both on Railroad Street and Bridge Street. Chinese were also employed as cooks and domestic servants in town as well as on ranches throughout the county.

The more industrious Chinese opened stores and supplied their fellow countrymen with the foodstuffs of their native land. Starting in the 1890's there were several restaurants in Winnemucca that were ran by Chinese, one of these lasting through the 1920's.

One of the most successful merchants in McDermitt in the late 1890's, Jim Low, was of Chinese decent. The story of the Low family in Humboldt County would fill a book by itself.

CHINATOWN.

In Winnemucca in the 1870's, there was more than one Chinatown. Three separate settlements were scattered within the limits of the town. There was a small enclave near the river off of East Second Street. Another was located along the Humboldt Canal west of the Courthouse. The third site was along Bridge Street east of the Courthouse. Each tong seemed to have their own Chinatown.

By 1870 the citizens of Winnemucca began lobbying to have the Chinatown on Bridge Street moved off the main connecting road between Upper and Lower towns. The editor of the Humboldt Register stated that the Chinese quarters on Bridge Street were an affront to the morals of all the citizens of Winnemucca and should be forced to locate elsewhere. The newspaper railed against the Chinatown being on Bridge Street across from the stately Humboldt County Courthouse, and in January, 1873, their campaign bore fruit. It was then that Alex. Wise purchased the land upon which the Chinatown on Bridge Street across from the Courthouse was located.

Wise gave the Chinese two months to move their dwellings, but they didn't have anyplace to move to. The Central Pacific Railroad Company offered the Chinese a lease on the ground along Cross Creek, about 120 feet behind the Bridge Street location. This was land that was not wanted by any of the white residents of the community at that time. By July, 1873, the Bridge Street Chinese were relocated. These were the first of the Chinese to be located on Baud Street.

The Chinatown that was located on Second Street soon moved up into the area along Cross Creek.

The Chinese enclave to the west of the Courthouse was known as Hong Kong Row. The Chinese living here considered themselves of a higher social standing than those whose dwelling had just been moved to the banks of Cross Creek. They managed to keep themselves separated from their Chinese brethren until sometime after 1876 when the pressure of the good citizens of Winnemucca became too much and they too moved to what would become Baud Street.

In several research papers written about the Chinese in the west, Hong Kong Row in Winnemucca has been mentioned, along with the fact that there were several high-class Chinese houses of ill repute located there. The source for this information is listed as an issue of The Silver State from February, 1875. After reading this article several times I still am amazed that these learned people drew the conclusions that they have from this article.

The article is about a Chinese man swindling a Chinese woman out of a loan that was secured with a house and piece of ground. It is the only time in all of the newspapers published in Winnemucca that any of the Chinatowns were referred to by the sobriquet of Hong Kong Row. There is no mention of houses of ill repute nor is there any indication in the article that they ever existed. This myth created by an individual writing a master's thesis has been perpetuated by others researching the Chinese presence in the west.

One of the events which precipitated the move of the Chinatowns was the discovery of the skeletal remains of an infant in the old canal that ran through Hong Kong Row. It immediately was assumed by the denizens of Winnemucca that these remains were, of a Chinese infant, probably female,

that had been killed by her parents. It was stated that in China it was the custom to kill unwanted female infants immediately after their birth.

The Silver State whipped the local citizens to a high frenzy. The day after the discovery of the body the good white people of Winnemucca were still trooping up to view the partially exposed remains in the dry canal. The Silver State wanted to know whose responsibility it was to have the remains properly interred.

Apparently the only indication that this child was Chinese was that it was found behind Hong Kong Row. The resulting public outcry led to the moving of Hong Kong Row to the banks of Cross Creek. The Chinatowns of Winnemucca were now united and the tongs had to work out a peace treaty between them to insure their tranquility in their new setting.

Now all of the Chinese of the various tongs, or companies as they were called by the whites, lived in the same general area. Chinatown began to grow.

The Chinese built houses in much the same manner that the white men in the area did. They didn't believe in wasting time or money painting their buildings and these buildings were always referred by the more proper citizens of Winnemucca as shacks.

One myth about the Chinese that has survived to modern times is that they tunneled from building to building and from Chinatown to what the local inhabitants considered to be the respectable part of town. The tunnel stories are not based on fact. The Chinese believed in constructing their dwellings into the high banks and having parts of their buildings under ground. They built sub-basements under their basements. There is nothing in the historical record to indicate that they tunneled anywhere in Chinatown at any time. The Chinese wanted to be separate from the rest of the community. They wanted to be left alone by the whites. This rumor probably arose because of the prejudices of the white community.

Old tunnels have been found in downtown Winnemucca from buildings across alleys to other buildings. These were not constructed by the Chinese, as many have been led to believe, but by the criminal element in Winnemucca that was active during the prohibition period in our history.

In 1892 the Chinese in Winnemucca's Chinatown were constructing substantial dwellings that caught the attention of The Silver State editor. He mentioned that he was favorably impressed with a two-story wooden dwelling house that was being built. He stated that possibly the heathens would now do away with their dugouts in the banks and move to more acceptable housing.

In 1907 the Chinese again fell in disfavor with the powers that be in Winnemucca. Petitions from Winnemucca citizens were presented to the County Commission asking that East Fifth Street be opened through to Baud Street. Up until that time East Fifth Street had only been a line on the city maps, and the street alignment was occupied by a part of Chinatown. The Commissioners ordered the District Attorney to see that the street was pushed through.

The Chinese failed to realize that the Commissioners and District Attorney were serious when they said that the street would be opened. The Chinese did not remove their buildings.

Early on the morning of August 6th, 1908, the chain gang arrived on the scene under the direction of Deputy Sheriff Pearce and began tearing down the buildings that were in the way. This caused the inhabitants of the buildings to come rushing out and when they saw what was happening they told the Deputy that they would immediately tear down the buildings themselves. Late into the night the Chinese worked removing their household effects and tearing down their buildings. By the morning of August 7th the roadway for East Fifth Street was nearly clear and ready to be graded for a street.

The Chinese population began shrinking in the years after the turn of the 20th Century. When the emigration from China to the United States had started only able bodied men were needed. Many of the Chinese women that did come in the early days were slaves, and usually had been sold by their parents. Many of the early Chinese women that came to Winnemucca were used as prostitutes. In Winnemucca the lack of women for the Chinese men to marry led to a lack of children, and without children the Chinese community began fading away.

There were some Chinese families, but not as many as one would think. The old bachelors began dying off or retiring to one of the big

Chinatowns on the West Coast. In the early part of the 20th Century many of the older Chinese men sold out and went back to their boyhood homes in China to spend their remaining years. By the late 1930's there were very few Chinese left in Chinatown,

In 1939 the Winnemucca City Council decided that Chinatown had become an eyesore and formulated a plan for doing away with it. They planned to buy up lots with the run down buildings on them, tear down the buildings, and resell the lots. They bought their first lot and building in July of that year, but this project failed to eradicate the eyesore that Chinatown had become.

Over the years after 1939 fires and time caused the buildings to fall further and further into disrepair. In the early 1950's the only brick structure in Chinatown, the joss house, was torn down because of its unsafe condition.

By the middle 1960's there was only a small part of Chinatown remaining. This last bit of history was removed to make way for the present Humboldt County Library in 1965. Winnemucca had lost the last remains of an important part of her history.

CHINESE QUEUES.

One of the most noticeable characteristics of the Chinese in the early days were their pigtaileds, or queues, as they were properly called.

The queues were adopted as the headdress of the Chinese, though not through choice, but through force. When the Manchus conquered China in 1644 they made all make Chinese wear "pigtaileds" as a sign of subjugation.

In 1877 a bill was introduced in the Nevada Legislature providing for the cutting of the hair of anyone convicted of larceny. A person convicted of larceny could pay an additional fine and keep his hair. This bill was aimed at the Chinese and called the "Chinese Que" bill. It was known that a Chinaman would do anything in his power to keep the long queue that he had worn almost since birth. The legislators thought this would be a good way to generate extra money for the school fund. Whether the law passed or was defeated is not known.

In 1911 the Manchu rule was finally overthrown, and many of the Chinese men in Winnemucca cut off their queues for the first time in their lives.

THE JOSS HOUSE.

One of the first and most important buildings erected in any Chinese community was the Joss House, which was the equivalent of a church, lodge hall, and community center.

The first mention of a Joss House in Winnemucca appeared in *The Silver State* in August, 1878. The article stated that the Chinese had fitted up a building to serve them as a Joss House. They raised a flagstaff in front of it and ran up a large banner bearing "cabalistic" figures. Not understanding what the figures on the banner meant, the editor felt that somehow they represented heathenism.

In 1885 the Chinese began flying a triangular flag emblazoned with a dragon from the flag pole in front of the Joss House, and this flag would be unfurled there on special occasions for many years after this.

A new Joss House was built in 1886 and survived until it was destroyed by fire in August, 1889. By December, 1889, another Joss House was completed. This new building was one story and made of wood. It soon proved to be small for the purposes at hand, and in 1892 a two-story wooden Joss House was erected. This Joss House was in use for ten years. At that time the Chinese decided it was time for a more substantial and imposing structure.

In September, 1902, it was announced in *The Silver State* that the Chinese were going to build a new brick Joss House in the Mongolian quarter. They planned to build it near the top of the hill and build a long stairway from what would become Baud Street to reach it.

Construction went smoothly and by the first of December the new Joss House was completed.

One of the unusual things about the new Joss House was that it was built by white contractors. John Schmidt and L. H. Babcock built the

Chinese community a fire-proof brick building 72 x 20 feet, with a handsomely finished interior, at a cost of between \$2,500 and \$3,000.

"The building will be known as the Temple of Worship and will be used as a fraternity hall for the Chinese Free Masons, an organization said to be 2,200 years old. There are over 100 of these "Free Masons" in Winnemucca and vicinity."

The open house for the new place of worship took place on December 11th, 1902, and was well attended by the white members of the community. The Silver State provides us with a description of the dedication: "The Chinese "Free Masons" had all kinds of a good time in their new hall last evening. Their selections by the Flowery Kingdom band, "What The Old Cow Died Of, and "We Won't Go Home Till Morning", were rendered with the greatest of em bon point. One of the features of the music was its close harmony. Happily the crowd was good-natured and none of the musicians were lynched.

"The pigs died while they were being barbecued and the two dozen spring pullets will never crow again.

"A number of Winnemucca ladies sampled the China gin that was free for all and they say, in confidence, that it has the happy faculty of making dingy things look roseate.

"The repast was a huge one and the delicacies consisted of lights, liver, gizzards, blood and tripe, washed down with rice gin and brimstone water.

"The celebration was postponed two days by the non-arrival of Joss, he being 2,000 years old and somewhat stiff in the knees.

"The greatest of eclat characterized the affair and some of the guests enjoyed it so that they walked home in a circle and failed to report for duty this morning."

The Joss House built in 1902 was the most substantial building ever built in Winnemucca's Chinatown. The favored building material of the Chinese was adobe brick and plain wood. This Structure remained standing until it was torn down in the early 1950's.

CHINESE FUNERALS & DEATH CUSTOMS.

A Chinese funeral was far different than its American counterpart. The Chinese believed that a person could not be buried until several days after they died. This was in a time when immediate interment was important for health reasons.

On the day of the funeral the body, in its coffin, was placed outside, usually on the hill behind Chinatown. Around it were placed many flags and insignia of the orders to which the dead person belonged. On a stand behind the coffin was placed a roasted pig and chickens, rice and other food stuffs. An altar was erected at the site and those mourners who wanted could sprinkle tea on the ground and pray to the gods to give the departing soul eternal rest.

During this whole process a band, consisting of a rawhide drum, a metal drum, and a pair of large brass cymbals, played. After several hours the coffin was loaded on a hearse and the procession was started for the Chinese cemetery across the river. The hearse was preceded by 40 Chinese men, dressed in white, carrying corpse banners and emblems, marching in pairs.

After the body was interred, the obligation of the mourners to the deceased did not end. Two days after the funeral the food supply at the grave was replenished. A guard of honor carried the food to the cemetery. They took chicken and roast pig, wine and gin. The food supply would again be replenished seven days after the funeral. After the seven-day replenishment the Chinese believed that the soul had departed and had no need for further provisions.

In the early days the funeral was not the end of the obligation to those that had passed from among the living. The Chinese felt that they could not rest peacefully until their bones had been returned to their native land, most commonly referred to as The Flowery Kingdom.

The Humboldt Register in 1870 printed the following: "It appears that coolie importing companies, the most enterprising and opulent of which are said to be controlled by white men, specifically agree to return alive or dead the bodies or bones of those bought, hired, or forced to leave their

native land and work among the white barbarians in a foreign clime. To fulfill this agreement, which undoubtedly arose from political motives alone, the said companies do to the letter, the remains of all Chinamen, no matter from what cause death ensued, are carefully collected at stated periods and shipped to the land of their origin, where they again flourish in the vegetable kingdom in the shape of huge onions and cabbages."

A large number of Chinese had died along the line of the Central Pacific Railroad during its construction. The Railroad Company provided special cars, manned by Chinese, specifically engaged for the purpose, to prepare the bones of the deceased for shipment back to their native lands.

"The bones of those who died early in the fight, and from which all the flesh has decayed, are broken into suitable lengths and deposited in small size boxes, while the skeletons of those recently deceased are carefully prepared, the flesh being all scraped off, and placed in correspondingly large boxes. The localities where the scraping operations are performed are marked by numerous wax tapers or joss lights, and bowls of boiled rice on which the departure of the Celestials, the Piutes and the hogs, if there are any in the vicinity feed with avidity."

In March, 1870, the Chinese funeral car was working in Winnemucca on a siding near the present Bridge Street grade crossing preparing the deceased for their final trip home. Two car loads of bones, prepared and boxed in the most approved manner, and labeled with the appropriate Chinese characters, which gave the name, date of death, and tong to which they belonged, were shipped from Winnemucca to San Francisco at that time.

From San Francisco the remains were shipped to China by boat. Several great shipping fortunes were made by hauling silk and spices from the Orient to San Francisco and hauling the bones of the departed Chinese home.

Nothing remains of the old Chinese cemetery which was located near where the Northern Nevada Historical Society Museum now stands. When the cemetery was moved in the 1960's there were still bodies of departed Chinese in it. If the belief they held about their spirits not resting unless the bones were shipped home is based on any fact then those left behind still must be waiting in that general area for their final ride home.

The Chinese dealt with death differently than most other races. When a Chinese man was accidentally drowned in a whirlpool in the river the other Chinese believed that he had been dragged to his death by the spirit of someone who had drowned there before. No Chinese would enter the river in that place again.

A dead Chinese man was found along the railroad tracks between Winnemucca and Tule siding, east of town. The Sheriff and Coroner investigated and came to the conclusion that the man, who was a trackwalker, had been killed by a train. The track gangs, who were all Chinese, refused to believe that a train had hit the man. They felt that he had been murdered, and refused to work on that section of track. The Railroad Company fired them, and hired white men to do the job. The Chinese were thrown out of their living quarters and they moved out into the desert along the tracks. Shortly after the Railroad Company fired the Chinese they found that the white men they hired couldn't do the job, and they were forced to rehire the Chinese.

CHINESE CUSTOMS.

The Chinese brought with them their own beliefs and customs and did not allow the majority population of European descent to sway them from their way of life. Until well into the early part of the 20th Century they had their own customs and their own celebrations that they observed among themselves.

Chinese marriage customs were unique. Firecrackers were fired off by the thousands to drive away the evil spirits that the Chinese felt lurked everywhere. These evil spirits were reported to be afraid of loud noises. Bright Chinese lanterns were hung in front of the Joss House, and in the days before electric street lights, the glow was visible from all over town. Music was provided by an orchestra that consisted of drums and cymbals, flutes, and an instrument called a flageolet. Some of the musical selections lasted as long as an hour. The Joss House was hung with streamers, costing as much as \$25 each, on which were printed in Chinese the donations of friends. When the wedding guests and the groom had assembled at the Joss House the bride was brought in and presented to the group, after which she served tea to the assembled guests. The guests in turn presented the bride with gifts. The groom was not allowed to see the bride until twelve hours

after the ceremony. In the early days the bride was required to live on only one meal a day for a month to prepare herself for the marriage.

Other than the Chinese, very few people were allowed to witness these ceremonies.

When the Chinese were called into the white man's court system the oath that they required was far different from swearing on a bible. They required that a rooster's head be cut off, and they swore by the blood that spurted forth. The officers of the court, including the judge and the sheriff, would then fight over who got the carcass. The bill for chickens in one murder trial which involved the Chinese ran over \$50 in the early 1870's.

CHINESE NEW YEARS.

In the early days, and up to the time of the Chinese revolution at the turn of the century, the Chinese used a different calendar than the rest of the world. Their calendar was based on a month that ran from full moon to full moon and was 29 *Vi* days long. Every third year contained 13 months, with the extra time being another month of May. This calendar was kept for 6,000 years before it was replaced by the revolution in China. Even after the revolution, though, the older Chinese still used this calendar to determine when their New Year would fall.

The Chinese New Years celebration was both a time for feasting and a time of religious significance that governed the prosperity of the year to follow. Fire crackers and bombs were set off in an attempt to drive the devils and demons away from the proceedings and there were many ceremonies held in the Joss House. The Humboldt Register in 1873 stated: "The Chinese say the last year has been a prosperous one for them in this vicinity, and they attribute such prosperity to their Herculean efforts to keep the "devil" and "demons" at a respectful distance."

As in almost all the Chinese celebrations, they did not forget their ancestors during the New Year celebration. Several days before the onset of the formal celebration "they set roast pig and other Chinese delicacies on a table in the open air for the spirits of departed Celestials to feast on, and they exploded innumerable fire crackers in the afternoon."

In 1886 The Silver State published an article explaining the Chinese New Years customs for the benefit of its readers. "The San Francisco Report says the Chinese New Year is a great occasion to the superstitious people who observe it, and upon the omens which it gives out is supposed to depend good or ill fortune of the celebrants through the coming year. From the blooming of the Sue Sing Fa, or Good Luck Flower, also known as the Chinese lily, to the position of the shadow, incidents are remarked and depended upon with religious simplicity. Why the Chinese New Year is celebrated is not definitely settled. It is alleged by some that the Chinese accept the time as we do our Sunday, as an anniversary of religious significance. Others believe that it is merely a social holiday. Whatever originated it, it is now a season of both social revelry and of praying to the josses. All work is given up for a week, if possible, and trading and other business is also suspended. Feasting is the principle occupation of the Chinese during the New Year season; making presents to friends being secondary to it. It is also a time for social calls."

During the celebration the Chinese would fasten strips of red paper to the doors of their friends with words written on them saying such things as "Not mun tai kat" which translates as "May good luck attend you when you open this door" or "Took ye yat tau mo shui; kam chiu nun chung fling" which says "Last night all fog and flurry; this morning full of happiness."

Everything was cleaned and spotless at the onset of the New Years celebration as all the brooms and brushes had to be hidden during the celebration. If a Chinese man saw a broom on New Years Day he believed that it would sweep away all his joss for the coming year. This could also happen to a friend who visited someone at this time and did not leave a gift or of his gift was refused.

The Chinese New Years celebration was important to all residents of Winnemucca and not just the Chinese. The Silver State reported that "No sooner do the youngsters of this town hear the report of a firecracker than they are off at breakneck speed for Chinatown, thinking that the Mongolian New Year has arrived."

In 1896 hard times had fallen on the country and this was felt in the New Years celebrations. It was stated that "About 60 people were taking in the sights of Chinatown night before last night. There is not much difference in the celebration of the event than in previous years. The present

hard times are felt by the Chinese as well as by the white people, and they are not so extravagant and lavish with their white visitors as they were in past years. Chinese candy, oranges and nuts in consequence are only given to a chosen few. The Joss House as usual is the center of attraction. Here the gong, symbols, drum, banjo and flageolet are played. These Chinese instruments send forth music that is Greek to us, but which seems to be much appreciated by the grinning Mongolians, who sit around with the self-satisfied look on their faces, which if interpreted right might mean a great deal."

With the arrival of the 20th Century Chinese New Years celebrations in Winnemucca began to decline. The celebration in 1906 warranted only a few lines in *The Silver State*. "The Chinese in Winnemucca opened their New Year with a blaze of fire-crackers and bombs. They beat the tom-tom, drank more or less gin, ate chicken, and had a good time generally last night. Today they gave all the little folks who visited them candy, and at intervals fired off more crackers. It is a great season for the Chinese."

In 1913 *The Humboldt Star* announced that with the success of the Chinese Revolution the Chinese New Year was a thing of the past. They said that "The edict having gone forth from the republican government of China that henceforth the celebration of the New Year would take place on the first of January, in conformity with other civilized nations, instead of the time observed from a period extending further back than history records. And so it happens that today, for the first time since Winnemucca's Chinatown was founded about a half-century ago, the dawning Chinese New Year has come without display, without firecrackers, drums and cymbals, and the customs which have marked the observance of this event from the very birth of this old town have become a things of the past." A few of the old residents of Chinatown did set off some firecrackers but not in the multitude that they had before.

The desultory celebration by the old men of Chinatown continued until the late 1930's when at last the marking of the Chinese New Year ended in Winnemucca. Although the Chinese New Year is again celebrated in the Chinatowns of the large cities of the United States, this time of year in Winnemucca is quiet and the weeklong celebrations that once graced our thriving little Chinatown long forgotten. The modern way of life once again has laid waste to another colorful ancient custom.

CHINESE CRIME.

Much of the crime that occurred in Chinatown went unreported to the local law enforcement officers and was handled within the community by the various tongs. The crimes in Chinatown that most concerned the white authorities were opium use, prostitution and the illegal sale of alcohol to Indians. All else was unofficially left to the Chinese to take care of.

One other crime did bring the authorities into Chinatown, and that was murder. There were several of these in Chinatown, one of which led to the murderer being executed across the street.

This case occurred in 1881. A Chinese man named Charley Hing murdered one of his countrymen, a man named Ah Lick in Chinatown. He was duly tried in the white man's court and convicted of murder in the first degree.

Sentence was pronounced against Charley Hing on January 6th, 1882, in District Court in Winnemucca. The Judge sentenced him to be executed between 9 o'clock A.M. and 3 o'clock P. M. on February 9th, 1882. His only hope lay with the Nevada Board of Pardons, as all his appeals were soon exhausted. The Silver State reported that "The doomed Chinaman keeps aloof from the others, and stays in his cell nearly all the time. He knows there is no possibility of escaping the gallows, as he is quite intelligent and understands the fact that the Supreme Court and Board of Pardons have been appealed to in vain. He killed a member of his own company, and incurred the ill will of those who would have been his friends had his victim been a member of another company. They spent money in prosecuting him and none of them visit him or have anything to say to him. He is alone, without a friend in the world." There is the distinct chance that if the murdered man had been a member of another tong Charley Hing would have beat the rap.

On February 8th, the day before he was to be executed, Charley Hing made a public statement claiming he was innocent of the crime for which he was to be hanged, although he did not deny the fact that he had stabbed Ah Lick. He also said that he was 26 years old, "and had been in Winnemucca six years, during three of which he was in a wash house, and the rest of the time at the Lafayette Hotel. He is a member of the Hop Wah Company, but none of his countrymen here will have anything to do with him. He says

that \$600 was raised to procure false witnesses against him, and the interpreter did not translate the language of several of them correctly. Rev. Mr. McKelvy has been for some time past endeavoring to get him to understand the rudiments of Christianity, and to forgive his enemies. He did not hesitate to forgive everyone but the interpreter. He dreaded death very much, and set for days in his cell weeping. He now seems more resigned to his fate."

Charley Hing kept his date with the executioner. A large crowd gathered at the Courthouse and blocked up the hall leading to the rear of the building. The scaffold was erected inside an enclosure and over a hundred people were admitted to witness the execution.

"The Chinaman, who was quite intelligent, clung to Rev. Mr. McKelvey as he ascended the scaffold, he being the only person that could, or at least did, afford him any consolation. One of his countrymen, but a member of a different company, was admitted within the enclosure, but several others who sought admission were kept outside by the officers, at request of the prisoner. Hing made a few half-intelligible remarks on the scaffold, alleging that he acted in self-defense when he stabbed Ah Lick, and that \$600 had been used to secure false testimony against him. He was attired in a silken blouse of the usual Chinese pattern, furnished by the woman in whose wash house the row which ended in the death of Ah Lick originated. The garment was ordered by her from San Francisco. She now resides in Salt Lake City, having left here after the conviction of Charley Hing. At the conclusion of Hing's remarks, which were uttered while he sat in a chair, Mr. McKelvey arose and made an impressive prayer, which was listened to with uncovered heads by those present. During this time the prisoner stretched his neck and twitched his limbs convulsively. He had a horror of death, and had not eaten anything for two or three days. He was led to the drop by Sheriff Burns and Deputy Fellows, where he stood unsupported while his arms and legs were pinioned. The noose was placed over his head and inside his cue, a black cap was drawn over his head, the trap sprang and he fell six feet, dislocating his neck and ending his existence. ... In six minutes Dr. Hanson, who was in attendance, pronounced him lifeless, and in twelve minutes he was cut down and placed in a coffin, which was at once taken across the river and buried."

From the time that the execution was started until the body was placed in the grave took twenty-five minutes.

Charley Hing had traveled thousands of miles to die on the gallows in Winnemucca. He died alone, and the only god offered him to make his peace with was not his own. For some reason, a reason that had been lost in the convolutions of time, his own people had turned against him and hastened along his execution. There is a distinct possibility that he was the victim of a plot against him; that he had acted in self defense; and that the white man's law, usually abhorred by the Chinese, was used as a tool to remove someone from their midst forever. The gallows ground at the rear of the Courthouse knows as much of the truth as there us to know, but will never reveal its secrets.

CHINESE SLAVERY

In 1880, long after slavery had been outlawed in the United States, it still existed in the West. Chinese women were a rare commodity and those that appeared in most of the western Chinatowns were purchased in China and then used for the most unsavory purposes when they arrived in the United States. On occasion, when the abuses became too much for the woman, she would run away, and the Chinese owners would use the American law enforcement and judicial system to return her to their custody.

One such case occurred in Winnemucca in December, 1879. A Chinese woman named Lin Cue arrived in Winnemucca and was married to Ah Qoy by Judge Bonnifield. They immediately left for the Cortez Mining District in Eureka County.

Shortly after the happy newlyweds had departed, another Chinaman arrived in Winnemucca by the name of Bow Ling. He was described as a high-toned Celestial who spoke English. He immediately appeared before Justice Osborn and made complaint charging Lin Cue with the crime of grand larceny. "The charge was specific and accused the defendant of stealing fifteen \$20 gold pieces, 160 pieces of silver, valued at \$80; one set of gold earrings, valued at \$15; one set of gold bracelets valued at \$65, all the property of Tong Dow. It was alleged that the crime was committed in Winnemucca in December."

Justice Osborn issued a complaint for the arrest of Lin Cue and Constable Ruse immediately left for Cortez to serve it.

After Ruse had returned to Winnemucca with his prisoner the case took several strange but obvious twists, letting all who were following the case know that the purpose of the complaint had been to return Lin Cue to the man who felt that he owned her, one Tong Dow of Carson City.

When she was brought before Justice Osborn, "J. H. Windle, representing the prosecution, moved to dismiss the case. Friends of the defendant had, meantime, secured services of counsel, and the defendant demanded an examination of the charge, but no one appeared to prosecute the case, and the Justice dismissed it. Immediately afterwards Constable Ruse again arrested the woman upon the sworn complaint of Bow Ling, who swore that the crime had been committed at Carson, he feloniously stating the articles alleged in the first complaint to have been stolen in Winnemucca. The defendant sued out a writ of *habeas corpus* before the District Judge, charging that she was illegally detained in the County Jail by Andrew Davidson and S. W. Ruse, and alleging a conspiracy on the part of Bow Ling and others to take the defendant to Carson, to be held as a slave, for the purpose of prostitution."

Things were beginning to get a little stickier for the legal system in Winnemucca.

Both Ruse and Davidson immediately set forth their answers to the write of *habeas corpus*. Ruse cited the complaint and warrant for her arrest as his authority and Davidson stated that he had only held her in the jail for an hour as a favor to Ruse, and then returned her to him stating that he had no legal right to hold her in jail.

When the matter came up before Judge Bonfield in District Court the defendant claimed that the warrant carried by Ruse to arrest her was invalid because Justice Osborn failed to take a deposition from the prosecuting witness prior to the issuance of the warrant, and in fact did not bother to take a deposition at all. "For further answer to said return, and in addition to allegations in the petition, defendant alleged that one Bow Ling, as prosecutor, and S. W. Ruse, as Constable, conspired and confederated together and instituted said prosecution without reasonable proof of probable cause, to aid Bow Ling in getting unlawful possession of the defendant for the purpose of enslaving her, and that said officers refused to act or serve the warrant until their fees were paid by the prosecuting witness, all of which is contrary to the law."

Justice Osborn claimed that he accepted the advanced fees from Bow Ling only in the interest of saving the county money.

"Bow Ling, the prosecuting witness, was placed on the stand and examined as to the alleged offense. He admitted that he never saw the defendant until he saw her here in Winnemucca, and that he never saw the articles which he swore in the complaint were stolen from Tong Dow. The Judge and counsel for the defendant put him on the rack and tortured him with questions until he was thoroughly confounded, and by his contradictory answers, which were given in English, everybody present was satisfied that the whole case against the defendant was trumped up for the purpose of getting her back to Carson, where she had been held as a slave for the purpose of prostitution."

When the hearing continued Lin Cue was called upon to testify against Bow Ling and Tong Dow but she refused to tell the court anything. It was soon revealed that the Chinese in Winnemucca, who belong to the same company as Tong Dow, had threatened her with her life if she testified against either of the two men.

The stalemate was broken when a Chinese man from Cortez arrived along with an interpreter to testify for the couple. This caused the veil of fear around Lin Cue to lift and she revealed all the sordid details of her problems to the Court.

After the testimony of Lin Cue was finished, Bow Ling was held for the Grand Jury of a charge of perjury, with Judge Bonnifield stating that he wanted to see this form of slavery end in Humboldt County. Bow Ling posted bail and returned to Carson City. Lin Cue and Ah Qoy were released on their own recognizance but ordered to appear as material witnesses.

Bow Ling's date of arraignment arrived but he failed to appear. He notified the Court by telegraph that he was ill. He finally arrived in Winnemucca with a lawyer on January 21st, 1880, and was examined in Justice Osborn's Court. He was arrested on the 22nd and lodged in jail. There was another strange twist of fate yet to occur in this case.

After being lodged in jail Bow Ling became quite sick and Dr. Hanson was called to the jail to examine him. The Doctor announced after

his examination that Bow Ling was suffering from leprosy in his lower extremities.

At the time Bow Ling was diagnosed with leprosy he had three indictments against him; one for perjury, one for extortion and one for kidnapping. He made bail on these charges and moved over to Chinatown where he died on February 9th, 1880. Justice had been served.

By bringing Bow Ling to trial Judge Bonnifield had served notice on all the Chinamen that the chasing of Chinese women and using the American legal system to bring them in was at an end in Humboldt County.

Justice Osborn and Constable Ruse, who were knowing participants in the abduction, and were paid for their services by Bow Ling, of course, were never charged because they were white and the crime was against a Chinese woman. They were allowed to keep their positions without any official censure by the Court. Fate, being always the hunter, brought Constable Ruse to a violent end several years later, when he was shot and killed in the Champion Saloon on Bridge Street, by a small man he bullied over a period of time.

There were many other cases of Chinese slavery. In February, 1910, a young Chinese woman went to authorities with a tale of being threatened with abduction. The woman was an American citizen and still was afraid that she was going to be kidnapped.

A high-toned Chinese man from San Francisco, a total stranger to her, approached her on the street in Chinatown and told her he was going to sell her for \$600. This woman was aware of the custom in China of selling female children, and this man telling her he was going to sell her upset her very much.

The local authorities assured her that the stranger could not take her to San Francisco and sell her. This seemed to put her mind at ease.

Another example of Chinese slavery occurred in Winnemucca in 1876. A Chinese woman escaped from her master and ran to the Courthouse. She offered to go to jail for five years on condition that she be freed from her owner when the five years was served. Rumor had it that she was the mother of the baby whose skeletal remains had been found in the old

Humboldt Canal She was turned away from the protection of the law and her fate was lost to history.

In 1880 a Chinese woman escaped from her owner and made her way to Winnemucca accompanied by her lover. Her owner valued her at \$600, and was making haste to have her returned. The woman and her main squeeze rented a buggy at Winnemucca and went twelve miles north to the Toll House, where they secured passage on the Idaho bound stage. The woman's owner was right behind them and was reported being at the Toll House just after the stage departed, then at Willow Creek and Fort McDermitt looking for them. The couple made it to Boise City where he companions tong was in power and they could find safety from their pursuer.

To show how valuable a commodity a woman was in the Chinese world in the United States we have the figures from the Chinese Census of 1904. This census indicated that in the district comprising Utah, Wyoming and Nevada there were 2,046 Chinese. Nevada had the largest Chinese population with 1,143; Utah had 540; and Wyoming 363. In Nevada there were 1,052 Chinese men, 62 women, 19 male children and 10 female children.

EPILOGUE.

This chapter does not represent the true history of the Chinese in Winnemucca. It does give us a glimpse of this colorful aspect of the past. It is probable that the true history of the Chinese in Winnemucca will never be known because those that lived in Chinatown left no history of their own for us to compare with the information that we have been able to gather.

Central Pacific Railroad Photographic History Museum

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