

“AU” MOUNTAIN IN OREGON

The typical mind set of the average Oregonian is the settlement of Oregon was the heroic effort of dauntless men, women, and children marching to the anthem of manifest destiny behind covered wagons lumbering over the Oregon Trail. These hearty folks risked their all to move westward from places like Missouri, Illinois, Ohio, and Indiana in the “Far East” (as it was then known in popular parlance). Everything they owned was in a covered wagon which typically measured 4' x 12', or the size of a modern day compact car. From 1843 through 1867, approximately 50,000 people made this 2,000 mile trek from Independence, Missouri to Oregon City, Oregon. Today, that trail is marked by over 30 historic markers and interpretation centers. The history books are crammed with stories and accounts of these rugged and resourceful people and their contributions to the development of Oregon and the American West. From Frances Parkman to Frederick Jackson Turner, American historians have lauded the triumphant conquest of the American frontier by these pioneers, *i.e.* white men. Today there are 31 historic sites on the trail commemorating the hardships endured by these people, including three in Oregon.

But there was another group of settlers who came from the Far East, but from an entirely different direction, whose history is little known or most often simply ignored. These were the 300,000+ Chinese who came first to California and, then Oregon during approximately the same time period, that is 1850-1882. Unlike their white brethren, their historic trail remains unmarked and their history is largely unrecorded – particularly here in Oregon.

Who were these people and what was their attraction to this country? Almost without exception these Chinese immigrants were young males from Kwang Tung Province in Southwestern China. Their starting point was Canton. Their destination, Gold Mountain, *i.e.* San Francisco, and later Portland and Seattle. They came from rural China where farming and mining had been the mainstays of the economy until famine struck in the 1840s. The result was severe economic depression, and political upheaval. In 1850, Kwang Tung became the center of the Taiping rebellion of 1850, which over the next 14 years caused an estimated 20 million deaths. Thus, as victims of war, natural disasters and political and economic oppression, the Chinese sought opportunity beyond China's shores. California was the perfect destination with the promise of gold and prosperity. Most were laborers and farmers, but their numbers included merchants, craftsmen, artists, and students, all in search of opportunity in the land that became known to the Chinese as “Gum Shan” or “Gold Mountain.” But the focus of this paper is not the story of California's Gold Mountain. Instead, California's Gold Mountain was the prelude to the Chinese entry into Oregon.

Unlike most immigrants to the United States, the early Chinese arrivals were sojourners, people interested in making their fortune in this country, but with intent to return to their homeland. In fact, the Chinese word for emigrant means sojourner. But their plans upon arrival in this country and Oregon changed radically and abruptly. The greatest threat to the Chinese immigrant was not the harsh frontier of California or Oregon, but the endemic racism and cruelty of the American settlers who had joined the Chinese in the race for riches.

Chinese immigration started at a trickle with some 500 Chinese immigrants listed in the year 1850. Soon afterward, their numbers accelerated so that by 1852 some 20,000 Chinese immigrants – almost exclusively male – had entered California. By 1853, the first influx of Chinese immigrants was noted in Southern Oregon with the discovery of gold in Jackson and Josephine Counties.

Of the estimated 300,000 Chinese who immigrated into the United States between the 33-year period of 1850 and 1882, some 10% resided in Oregon at one time or another. There was however never a constant total of 300,000 Chinese in the United States during the 19th Century. In some years their return to China often exceeded the number of new Chinese arrivals. And, as will be discussed later, with the advent of the anti-Chinese movement and the adoption of the Exclusionary Laws in 1882, Chinese immigration slowed to a trickle and for all practical purposes ceased after 1882. During this period the actual number of Chinese residents within the United States probably never exceeded 105,000 at any one time. And throughout this same period approximately 10% of the Chinese resided within the State of Oregon.

What impact did the Chinese immigrants have in Oregon?

In 1860 the U.S. census did not list any Chinese residing in Oregon, although some 1,500 were reported working the gold mines in Jackson and Josephine Counties. Perhaps more persuasive evidence of the Chinese presence in Oregon were the virulent newspaper accounts and editorials appearing in the southern Oregon paper in the mid 1850s. A 1859 editorial published in the Sentinel, a Jacksonville newspaper, described the fact that “. . . thousands of Chinamen are mining in Southern Oregon . . .” and urged the territorial legislature to adopt a mining tax on “John Chinaman.” In an 1858 article in the same paper, the newspaper carried an account where a Chinese laundryman responded to a drunken white minor attempting to batter down the wash house door using a log as a battering ram. When the Chinaman responded, wrestled the log away, and in turn beat the minor about the back and shoulders, he was arrested and lodged in the local jail. The white minor was taken to a local saloon for treatment.

By 1870, Oregon’s population had grown to almost 91,000 people of which some 3,300 were Chinese, or 3.6% of the state’s population. Of Oregon’s then 28 existing counties, Chinese resided in 25 of them. Over half the Chinese population (1,620) was in Baker and Grant Counties where gold mining was the dominant occupation. Another 850 Chinese were mining gold in Jackson and Josephine Counties. Multnomah County registered over 500 Chinese working mostly in the service industries.

In 1880 the Chinese population in Oregon had tripled to over 9,500 Chinese and then comprising 5.5% of the state’s population. Given that they were almost exclusively adult males, the Chinese doubtlessly constituted a much larger percentage of the work force. By that time, some 25% of the population of Portland was comprised of Chinese immigrants. Thirty-six percent of the population of Astoria, then Oregon’s fourth largest city, was made up of Chinese immigrants. During the 1880s, Henry Villard, who was aggressively constructing railroads throughout Oregon and the Northwest, employed a work force of almost 25,000 people, 15,000 of whom were comprised of Chinese immigrant workers. Wasco County’s Chinese population jumped from 27 in 1870 to almost 1,200 in 1880 with Villard’s construction of the Oregon Railway along the Columbia River.

The miners in the gold fields of John Day and Baker, Oregon, were overwhelmingly Chinese. Similarly, the cannery industries in Clatsop and Columbia Counties and the Oregon coast were almost exclusively the Chinese. In fact, the Chinese population in Clatsop County had exploded from 13 residents to over 2,300, almost all working in the salmon canneries in Astoria.

In 1880, over half the work force in Oregon City's woolen mills was made up of Chinese workers. In Marshfield, the labor force in its saw mills were heavily Chinese. While the myth exists that Chinese served primarily as laundry men, cooks, and house servants, the hard evidence is that the Chinese in Oregon were principally involved in building the original economic structure of Oregon, in mining, lumber, clearing land, canneries, railroad construction, and woolen mills. Some Chinese did hold down basic service occupations – cooking, washing/laundry, and domestic work. However, these were mostly the Chinese workers employed in the urban environs of Multnomah County.

Ten years later in 1890 the Chinese population in Oregon increased to slightly over 9,540 and topped out at 10,400 at the turn of the century. By that time Portland had the second largest Chinatown in the country. Thirty years later, in 1930, less than 3,100 Chinese remained in the state of Oregon, principally in Multnomah County. They represented an aging, predominantly male population of some 61,700 still residing in the United States. The gender ratio among the Chinese in Oregon was 18-1 male. Ten Chinese children existed.

Little history has been written about the achievements and contributions of the Chinese in 19th Century Oregon and there are few vestiges of their presence left throughout the state. In large part, and particularly in Oregon, the history of a people, who for almost two decades made up over 5% of its population, has been ignored. So too, their accomplishments. How did this come to pass, you might ask? Well, the answer lies in a dark and sordid chapter of Oregon's racial history which also remains largely unwritten.

Although the first significant numbers of Chinese did not arrive in Oregon until the early 1850s, Oregon's racist and nativist attitude was in place well before the Chinese arrived and before it became a state. Oregon's early white settlers were in general anti-slavery, but not because of sympathy for Blacks but rather their antipathy towards Blacks. Many of these settlers were white southerners and border state immigrants. They were not slave holders. Rather they sought to avoid the racial problems they had known in their home states by simply excluding them. And toward this goal Oregon was and has been imminently successful.

After becoming a territory in 1844, the legislature adopted the "Lash laws", which excluded free Blacks from the territory. Any free Black who entered the territory was subject to flogging and expulsion. Although this legislature was repealed it was immediately followed by a second bill which allowed free Blacks already in the territory to remain, but prohibited any more from entering. And the few Blacks who remained were barred from voting and filing land claims.

In the fall of 1857, the Oregon territorial government convened to adopt a constitution necessary for admission into the Union. In the wake of the Dred Scott decision the issue of slavery was alive and well. Thus, central to the adoption of the constitution was whether or not Blacks

should be allowed to immigrate into the state. Ultimately a provision excluding free Blacks from the state was adopted by the Oregon legislature and approved by the United States Congress.

In the process of adopting the exclusionary clause in the state Constitution delegates from southern Oregon had proposed Chinamen ought to be excluded as well. Delegates from Josephine County who proposed Chinese exclusion argued that it was necessary because “the Chinese worked for a \$1.50 to \$2.00 a day and white men can’t compete at that wage rate.”

Southern Oregon had been at the forefront of imposing restrictions on the newly arrived Chinese. They were the first to legislate local mining district taxes on Chinese miners; prohibit them from making mining claims and restricting them from working claims in preferred areas. On the flip side of the argument, a Portland delegate said he could not vote for Chinese exclusion because he wanted more of them – after all, they made good cooks, washers, and servants.

The Chinese escaped inclusion in the exclusionary clause, but the convention made sure the Chinese would not be allowed to vote. Furthermore, they were prohibited from holding real estate, mining claims, or even working mining claims within the state.

The bias and prejudice shown against both Chinese and Blacks was not just a legislative bias, it was embraced by the voters throughout the state. When the exclusionary clause was submitted to the Oregon public as part of the proposed constitution, it passed by an overwhelming margin of 8,640 to 1,081 votes. The Oregon Constitution was thoroughly a “white man’s document.”

In 1859 Oregon joined the Union as the only state ever admitted with an Exclusion any clause in its constitution. A year later, on the eve of Civil War, Oregon’s own Joseph Lane, an active and vociferous pro-slavery proponent joined with John Breckinridge on the Democratic ticket as the vice-presidential candidate in the 1860 election. In a three-way race Lincoln narrowly beat the Breckinridge/Lane ticket in Oregon with 34% of the vote versus 33%. (Stephen Douglas, on a Northern Democratic ticket, siphoned off the remaining vote.) Even after defeat, and throughout the Civil War, Lane continued to be an active, vocal supporter of the Confederacy. With the North’s victory in the Civil War it might have been expected that the pre-war racial prejudice in Oregon would have greatly abated. Not so! Nativistic hatred and organized prejudice against racial, ethnic, and religious groups manifested itself in political and mob form, continued to prevail openly in Oregon well into the 20th Century.

No better evidence of this is Oregon’s legislative record on the three major post Civil War amendments to the U.S. Constitution: the 13th, 14th and 15th amendments, sometimes referred to as the Reconstruction Amendments.

The 13th Amendment, which abolished slavery, was proposed by Congress during the Civil War. Its ratification began immediately after the Civil War and made effective on December 6, 1865. Oregon did not ratify the Amendment until two days later, and only after some serious legislative opposition.

The 14th Amendment was a different story. It declared all persons born in the United States to be citizens and no state could deny them their privileges and immunities; i.e. right to vote, or due process of law and equal protection of the law. But, the 14th Amendment proved troublesome to

Oregon's legislature and its leading newspapers. The Oregonian observed in 1865 that anyone seeking to extend voting rights to Blacks is "reckless" because the "same privileges would have to be extended to Indians and Mongolians." The Oregon Statesman suggested that giving voting rights to Blacks would possibly lead to a "war of races." Lane County's Senator H.C. Huston argued that the amendment would place inferior races, i.e. Negroes and "greasy Chinamen" in equal balance with superior races, i.e. Caucasian.

On September 19, 1866, Oregon ratified the 14th Amendment with a close vote including a 3 vote margin in the House. Three days later, the two House delegates from Grant County who had voted for the ratification were declared fraudulently elected and ejected from office. On October 15, 1868, the Oregon legislature declared its ratification to have been secured by fraud and rescinded its approval of the amendment.

When the 15th Amendment, prohibiting states from abridging a person's right to vote on account of race, was up for ratification it was vehemently opposed by the people and the legislature of Oregon. One newspaper, the Albany Democrat, opined that "the mountains would fall before the 15th Amendment would become the law of the land." It was in this rancorous political atmosphere that Oregon refused to ratify. It did though extend its miscegenation laws making it a criminal offense for whites to marry a Chinese or Hawaiians.

Why all of the political rancor over either Blacks or Chinese at this time? There were few, if any, Blacks within the territory. When the first census of Oregon was taken in 1850, there were only 45 Chinese listed. Most likely the racial bias shown against Blacks stemmed from the origins of the general population of the Oregon immigrants. Most had moved to Oregon from slave or border states sympathetic to slavery. However, the bias shown against the Chinese is most likely attributed to the brief experience the convention delegates from Southern Oregon had with the early gold strikes in the Jacksonville and the Rogue River areas. Gold had been discovered there in 1851-1852 and many of the miners who flocked to the area to prospect were veterans from the California gold fields. And it was in California where anti-Chinese sentiment got its start.

The first Chinese, approximately 500, arrived in California in 1850, shortly after the discovery of gold. But this was enough to send news back to China that California was rich in gold, silver, land, and timber.

Most of the early Chinese immigrants to California were brought to mining districts by mining companies that hired them through labor contractors. Their passage cost \$50.00 and they sailed on clipper ships operated by American merchants. By 1860 some 33,000 Chinese were residing in the U.S. It grew to some 59,000 in 1870 and reached 100,000 in 1880. Despite the fact that history accounts refer to some 300,000 Chinese immigrants during the 1850 to 1882 period, the Chinese was a sojourner. His intent was to make his fortune and return home. In 1880 more Chinese returned to China than arrived as immigrants.

The arrival of the Chinese in the early 1850s was initially welcomed by the white community; due in large part that at the time California had an insatiable appetite for services and labor at the peak of the gold rush. But this was the perspective of the large California employers, *i.e.* mining companies. Clearly, the white working class immigrants to California did not see the quiet

industrious Chinese as welcome competition and set about finding ways to eliminate them. With the arrival of 20,000 more Chinese in 1852, white miners in California organized to demand that the Chinese be expelled from the mining regions. The newly elected Democratic governor of California formed with them in seeking to check the tide. His first effort was a foreign miner's license tax law requiring a monthly fee of \$3.00 per miner. For the next 20 years that law was applied to generate between 25-50% of all state revenue before it was invalidated.

In 1854 the California Supreme Court added to the woes of the Chinese immigrant. In the infamous decision entitled *People v. Hall*, Hall had been found guilty of murdering a Chinese man. The evidence against him was the testimony of three Chinese witnesses and one white person. On appeal the testimony of the Chinese witnesses was rejected on grounds by California statute that "no Black or Mulatto person or Indian shall be allowed to give evidence in favor of or against a white man." The California court ruled that Chinese fell into this same category and thus excluded their testimony and reversed the death sentence. For several years in the 1870-80s Oregon courts relied on *Hall* to exclude Chinese testimony.

By the late 1850s the decline in mining deposits in California resulted in a general decline in Chinese immigration to California. Thus, the Chinese miners began to look for greener pastures. By 1863 some 20,000 Chinese miners had left California for Oregon and states farther north. By the time of their arrival in Oregon, the Chinese had been hardened by the 10 years of bias, violence, and racial treatment they had received in California. Their first entry was into the gold mining operations in Josephine County in the mid to late 1850s. Although Chinese continued to immigrate into other parts of Oregon in small numbers at that time, it was not until gold was discovered in eastern Oregon in June, 1862 that the Chinese immigration surge occurred in Oregon. Hundreds of Chinese immigrated to the John Day/Grant County area to work the mines and then on to the great riches struck in Baker County. At the height of the Eastern Oregon gold rush, 75% of the miners in the Eastern Oregon gold fields were Chinese.

The Chinese work force in Oregon would likely have been substantially higher, at least in the decade of 1860, were it not for the decision of the federal government to construct the Transcontinental Railroad in 1862. Construction began in 1863 with simultaneous starts in Omaha, Nebraska in the East and Sacramento, California in the West. The Western portion of the railroad, known as the Central Pacific, was clearly the most difficult portion to be built. It not only had to cut through the Sierra Nevadas but cross the deserts in Utah and Nevada. Adding to the problem was the difficulty of recruiting a work force in the West, particularly after the discovery of silver in Nevada. What white workers were available demanded high wages and were generally unreliable.

By 1865, the Central Pacific Railroad was way behind its schedule and facing the ascent over the Sierras. The newly discovered gold mines in the Pacific Northwest and the silver mines in Nevada had drawn away most of the available labor in California. The drain of the Civil War restricted any meaningful labor from the East. So, it was only in desperation that James Strobridge, Central Pacific superintendent, agreed to hire a small number of Chinese on a trial basis. And then it was only after a showdown with Charles Crocker, one of the Big Four investors in the Central Pacific. In response to Crocker's proposal to consider Chinese laborers Strobridge snapped, "They're too short, don't weigh more than 120 pounds and what did they know about construction."

Crocker's reply became legendary, "They built the Great Wall of China, didn't they?" Strobridge hired 50 on a trial basis and by the summer of 1866 was aggressively advertising and recruiting more Chinese workers from China. The results were spectacular. By year's end the Central Pacific was aggressively recruiting in China for more immigrant labor.

Starting as unskilled graders they quickly became skilled labor and were the persons responsible for drilling tunnels through the High Sierra mountains. It was dangerous work, but the Chinese were paid approximately 25% less than their white co-workers. On May 10, 1869, the Union Pacific and Central Pacific met at Promontory Point, Utah. Gathered there were the Central Pacific's 17,000 railroad workers, 15,000 of whom were Chinese. But in the famous photo memorializing the joining of the two railroads, not a single Chinaman is present. He was purposefully excluded from the photo. It was the release of these 15,000 Chinese railway workers by the Central Pacific which provided the next large surge of Chinese immigrants to Oregon.

The completion of the Transcontinental Railroad Chinese labor in the 1870s provided an ironic twist to the fortunes of the Chinese in the West for it accelerated the growth of the white migration. With it came the assumption of white superiority – that a Caucasian had an actual right to displace or expel any heathen foreigner from a job they wanted. It was inevitable that big business and labor would clash on the issue of Chinese labor. The Chinese had two characteristics which were highly desirable by the business community. One, they were disciplined but subordinated. They were not welcomed, and, in fact, loathed by white labor unions. Second, state laws had rendered the Chinese politically powerless to contest either the terms or conditions of their employment. The result: railroads and mining companies hired them in droves and the friction was immediate.

As a result of the conflict between labor and the Chinese, anti-Chinese riots broke out all over the West Coast, including Oregon. While some of the more publicized riots occurred in places like Los Angeles, Denver, Rock Springs, Wyoming, and Tacoma, Washington, Oregon was not without its own lengthy list of violence against the Chinese. In Canyon City, Oregon the Chinese were forcibly ejected after they were accused of being responsible for a fire which destroyed much of the town. In August of 1873, a fire in a Chinese laundry in Portland was attributed to white incendiaries intent on driving out the Chinese. In 1886, workers in East Portland forcibly expelled 100-200 Chinese workers across the Willamette River. A similar incident resulted in the expulsion of the Chinese residents of Portland's Albina district. The Oregon & California Railroad which was constructed in the early 1870s between Portland and Roseburg had used many of the original Chinese workers from the Central Pacific. Vicious anti-Chinese activity occurred in almost every town along the O&C line from Portland to Roseburg. The hatred and violence which accompanied the anti-Chinese movement was fanned by the vicious editorial comments of Oregon's newspapers.

Up until the mid 1870s the anti-Chinese movement was primarily based on economic grounds: they were taking good jobs that rightfully belonged to the white man. This claim easily translated to political party platform planks. Thus Democrats, still suffering the aftermath of the Civil War, attempted to gain grass roots support in the West, began advocating legislation to restrict Chinese immigration. In 1876 they attacked the Republican party on grounds it had failed the white race on the Pacific Coast who were being exposed to "incursions of a race not sprung from the same great parent stock."

The message resonated in the ears of Republican politicians. The presidential election of 1876 gave birth to the Tilden scandal. In order to secure the disputed electoral votes in Florida, Louisiana, and South Carolina were thrown to Rutherford Hayes. The result was the end of Reconstruction and the “Negro problem” as a backroom deal was cut by the Republicans to withdraw federal troops from the southern states in exchange for the disputed votes.

With the “Negro problem” solved, political attention turned to the Chinese problem, i.e. unrestricted immigration in the Western states. By 1880, the Republicans had added the issue into their national political platform. And by this time the impetus was not economic as much as it was an indictment on racial and cultural grounds: Chinese were heathen; they were not Christian; they could not be assimilated into the white man’s world; they were morally depraved and licentious; they were evil; and by the way, they deprived the white working man of a livelihood.

The national press joined in the hunt. The New York Tribune offered: “Can we afford to permit the transfusion into the national views of blood more debased than any we have known?” The AMA had issued a report in 1862 claiming to list Chinese hereditary diseases such as consumption, scrofula, syphilis, mental alienation and epidemic diseases. On the basis of this report, the president of the AMA then asserted in 1876 that “Chinese slaves” bred “moral and physical pestilence” and that 8 to 10 year old boys had been “syphilized by these degraded wretches.” The following year the featured speaker at the Social Science Association of America insisted that the Chinese were “only fit to be coolies because of the size of their brain.”

The support of the medical, genetic and ethnological communities, it was inevitable that political nativism would ultimately ruled the day. And on May 6, 1882, President Arthur signed the Chinese Exclusionary Act into law. Senator James Blaine had advised Arthur, who had previously vetoed an earlier version of the Act, that the role of government was “. . . to preserve order, not justice.” The Republican party needed the western vote and the Act would mollify the leaders of the labor movement who had spurred on violence and riots in the effort to expel the Chinese.

The widespread hatred of the Chinese among the Western States, was propelled by Washington, Oregon, and California as leading proponents of the anti-Chinese movement, and led to the passage of the Chinese Exclusionary Act of 1882. The Act sought to ban Chinese immigration for ten years and would allow those who have arrived to leave and return if they carried a certificate proving their status and right to re-enter the country. But, in the eyes of the white labor community the 1882 Exclusionary Act was not adequate to deal with the Chinese problem as their goal was to expel the Chinese from the country completely. Thus subsequent legislation known as the Scott Act was passed in 1888 which voided all of the return certificates.

Four years later, again at the urging of the West Coast states, the Geary Act in 1892 extended the original Exclusionary Act for another ten-year period. The Geary Act added another draconian restriction requiring Chinese residents to carry at all times an internal passport, the lack of which would result in deportation. The Act also denied Chinese the right to bail in any *habeas corpus* proceeding. In a less than historic proud moment the United States Supreme Court upheld the constitutionality of both the Scott and Geary Acts. By 1904 the Exclusionary Act, as amended, was “re-enacted, extended and continued, without modification, limitation or condition.” In short, the Act was made indefinite.

The 1882 Exclusionary Act was the first major piece of legislation in the United States restricting immigration to a single group: Asians and primarily Chinese – the only people ever entirely excluded from United States immigration. Until the early 1950s Asians remained the only restricted group who could not become United States citizens.

What was the impact of the Chinese Exclusionary Act in Oregon? Did it curb the growth of the state's Chinese population? Did it lead to a lessening of violence and exclusion of Chinese in Oregon? Well, surprisingly the answer to these questions is no, it did not.

The rate of Chinese population growth in Oregon lessened over the next two decades, but actually increased overall from 9,500 in 1880 to some 10,400 in 1900. In the meantime the U.S. Chinese population in the same period dropped from a 105,000 to less than 46,000. One result is the distribution of the Chinese population throughout Oregon became skewed as widespread violence and expulsions drove the Chinese from the small towns into the quasi-sanctuaries of Portland's Chinatown.

Following passage of the Exclusionary Act the anti-Chinese violence factor rose precipitously in both Oregon and the United States. In fact the worst and most widespread anti-Chinese rioting and violence occurred after the passage of the Act. The first major riot occurred in Rock Springs, Wyoming in September, 1885 when at least 28 Chinese were hung and killed in a murderous rampage of white coal miners against Chinese miners working for the Union Pacific. The Chinese population of some 6-700 was driven away and effectively evicted. Although a grand jury "investigated" the massacre it would find no cause for legal action.

Within a matter of days a group of white men and two Indians conducted a midnight ambush into a sleeping camp of 37 Chinese hop pickers in Issaquah, Washington. Three Chinese were murdered and another three were seriously wounded. The remaining Chinese left the next day. Although indictments were issued, no one was ever convicted.

Immediately after the Issaquah murders, the Knights of Labor began a campaign for the expulsion of all Chinese in the Puget Sound area. On November 3, 1885, a mob of 300 drove 700 Chinese out of Tacoma forcing them to board morning trains to Portland. Shortly thereafter, the Chinese in Seattle were forced out by a mob so violent President Grover Cleveland had to dispatch federal troops to quell the riot.

By 1887 the anti-Chinese violence reached Oregon in the worst case of recorded violence against the Chinese in the 19th Century. The Snake River Massacre. Thirty one Chinese gold miners were robbed, murdered and mutilated in Wallowa County over a two day period. The massacre was discovered when their body parts were found floating down the Snake River. Although the names of all of the perpetrators were well-known in the community, only three were brought to trial. None were ever convicted.

The murderous episodes of violence against the Chinese I have described are only those known and recorded in history. What is little known are the murders and expulsions of Chinese which regularly occurred through the West and Oregon during this period and well into the 20th Century. Historians have yet to investigate and document the forced expulsion of the Chinese and

other Asians from numerous towns in Oregon; the 1891 expulsions from Milton-Freewater; the 1893 expulsion of the Chinese community in La Grande; the eviction of the Chinese from Albina and their later expulsion from East Portland; their eviction from Oregon City; the similar violent removal of the Chinese from Cove; or the forced removal of the Chinese community in Heppner. Even as late as 1925, the city of Toledo forcefully evicted all of its Japanese lumber workers. And in many more Oregon towns expulsion was not necessary as Sundown laws prevailed.

With the passage of the Exclusionary Acts, their subsequent amendments and extensions, the die was cast which was to lead to the inevitable decline of Oregon's Chinese population. Granted, Oregon's Chinese population, principally Portland, did not substantially change from 1882 to 1900, but only because it was absorbing the evicted Chinese from neighboring states in the West. Within Oregon wide scale expulsions from the smaller Oregon towns and the enforcement of Sundown laws continued to sustain Portland's Chinese growth until shortly after the turn of the century. By that time the long term impact of the Exclusionary Act and the fact of an aging male population, triggered a dramatic drop in the Chinese population throughout the state. From the high water mark of 10,400 Chinese in Oregon in 1900, their numbers fell to less than 2,100 in 1930.

During this period, and into the 1930s, there was little or no evidence that Oregon's treatment and bitter, nativist attitude toward the diminishing number of Chinese within the state had changed. For instance, Oregon businesses, particularly restaurants, continued to express pride in their advertisements that they did not employ any Chinese help. Or that despite repeated proposals in 1917 and 1923, the Oregon legislature refused to repeal its Civil War miscegenation laws until May, 1951.

Equally telling about the state's racial attitude was the Oregon legislature's record on the 14th and 15th Amendments which they had refused to ratify in the aftermath of the Civil War. As one commentator observed, Oregon suffers from "selective amnesia when it comes to the matter of race relations." It was only after the repeal of its miscegenation laws in 1951, which marked an effort to distance itself from systemic racism, the state legislature finally ratified the 15th Amendment in 1959, its centennial year of statehood.

Unnoticed in the publicly attendant to the ratification of the 15th Amendment was the fact that Oregon still remained on record as having failed to ratify the 14th Amendment. That only came about 14 years later after William McCoy, Oregon's first Black legislator, asked his fellow legislators to ratify the amendment, if for no other reason than to have Oregon on record supporting full citizenship for Black people. On May 21, 1973, the Oregon legislature quietly ratified the 14th Amendment. Sensitive to its embarrassing oversight there was little fanfare about the ratification some 105 years after the 14th Amendment was already the law of the land. Only a 12 line news brief appeared on page 30 of the Oregonian.

During the 19th and 20th Centuries the history of Oregon reflected a statewide practice directed at minorities, principally Chinese, who were deliberately excluded and publicly hated and despised as a matter of social attitude and public policy. And while Oregon's recent public persona is that of a modern and progressive Ecotopia, much remains to suggest this is still a surface identity.

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