

The Traveling Archivist

Archival Documents



Curious about the archival documents I used to research this story?

In the following pages you will find:

- **Historical newspaper articles about the massacre of Chinese miners and the related trial**
- **Handwritten and typed documents submitted to the Portland City Council with dates ranging from 1859 to 1908**
- **Two modern newspaper articles from the Oregonian detailing the story of the massacre, the found trial documents and search for information.**

(CHINESE MURDERED).

Nex Perce News, June 16.

A party of Chinese arrived in Lawiston Sunday afternoon in batteau from up Snake river, bending the particulars of a ghastly murder. The facts as we were able to get them were substantially as follows: About 100 miles above here, on the Snake, this party of Chinamen were engaged in mining; about six miles below them was another outfit comprising ten more. About the 8th of June the upper camp paid the lower one a visit, and to their horror found no one around. The camp was destroyed, blankets, bedding, clothing and tents scattered around, tools broken and the "rockers" and other implements demolished.

Upon reaching a point six miles below the scene, the boat used by the mining Chinamen was found on the shore, with two holes chopped in the bottom. The Chinamen then came on to Lawiston. The conclusion to be arrived at is that these Chinamen were murdered either by whites or Indians. There were no white men mining in the vicinity, but frequently both whites and Indians passed along the trail close by. The affair undoubtedly took place about sixteen days ago, since which time several dead Chinamen have been seen floating in the water at different points along the Snake, and on one of which Coroner Simpson held an inquest last week. These miners had more or less money that they had saved up, and those acquainted with the affair entertain the idea that robbery was the intent of the murderers.

WASHINGTON TERRITORY.

The wool clip of Pierce county was upwards of 25,000 pounds. It brought an average of 21¾ cents a pound.

Near Walla Walla James Shaw became totally blind while pulling wild sunflowers in his wheat field a few days ago.

Peaches are ripe and plentiful on Snake river. Blackberries will be ready to pick in about five days says the Colfax *Commoner*.

Olympia Transcript: It is reported that Maj. Hyden is to be succeeded, as receiver, by Mr. Shields, special agent of the government.

Vancouver Independent: Only one and a half inches of rain fell in this vicinity during June. The regular summer dry spell is on hand.

The harvest has commenced about Walla Walla, and from reports so far received the yield will average to exceed thirty bushels per acre.

Palouse Gazette: Harvest has commenced on Eureka flat and in the Walla Walla valley, both of which are much more forward than the country this side of Snake river.

The ground is getting very dry, and a good shower of rain would be a great blessing. The country roads are very disagreeable on account of the dust. So says a Cheney paper.

Cheney Sentinel: Wild hay is getting scarcer every year in this section, and soon will be entirely exhausted. But tame grasses will come in time to prevent any dearth in that line.

The cherry crop is scarce, and the shipments have been very light this season, says a Vancouver paper. There will be no pears for shipment, and hardly enough for the home market.

At an election held a few evenings ago W. L. Young was chosen to be N. G. and J. G. Lewis to be secretary of Aberdeen Lodge, No. 35, I. O. O. F., as will be noticed by reference to the card of that society.

The *Palouse Gazette* is responsible for the following statement: Whitman county has the smallest woman living. She resides three miles from Pine city, is 27 years old, 20 inches high and weighs 38 pounds.

Two white men and a Chinaman have gone on a tour up Snake river in search of a clue to the murderers of the Chinese miners. The party will proceed to the camp, which is about 150 miles above Lewiston.

MURDERERS ARRESTED.

History of a Wholesale Crime On Snake River.

How a Band of Eight Cowboys Brutally Murdered a Camp of Chinamen for Their Money.

Several days ago THE OREGONIAN mentioned the fact that H. K. Hughes, H. Maynard and Robert McMillan had been arrested in Wallowa county on suspicion of being implicated in the murder of several Chinese miners. These Chinese were murdered on Snake river, about seventy miles northeast of Joseph. Mention was also made in this paper a few weeks since of the finding of undoubted traces of the fearful crime. Since the arrest of Hughes, Maynard and McMillan, the Wallowa *Chief* of April 19, publishes a long account of the tragedy. The following has been culled from that paper:

Some time last May Bruce Evans, Homer LaRue, Tigh Canfield, Robert McMillan, H. Maynard and H. K. Hughes were camped at what is known as the "Douglas cabin," about three miles west of the Chinese camp. Evans and Canfield were there, with LaRue and McMillan in their employ, rounding up their horses preparatory to taking them across the river. Maynard and Hughes were there looking after their own stock, and the cabin seemed to be a common camp for the stockmen of that range. On the day that the murder was done, Frank Vaughan also came to the cabin in his search for stock, and determined to remain until the next day. Early in the afternoon Evans, LaRue, Canfield and McMillan started for the river, giving for their purpose the hiring of a boat to take their horses across. After the four had gone some distance from the cabin, they called to Vaughan, requesting him to accompany them, and he complied.

So far as anyone knows there were no plans to do the murder, or any talk about it, until a small creek near the Chinese camp was reached, when Evans, Canfield and LaRue mentioned the matter. But it is not disputed that on reaching the locality of the camp, Canfield and LaRue went above and began shooting, while Evans remained below to do his part of the dirty work. Vaughan and McMillan (a lad only 15 years old) were near Evans, but he did none of the firing. After the Chinese, ten in number, were supposed to be killed, the bodies were thrown in the river. As night was approaching the five individuals who were present at this unlawful and unnatural scene went back to the cabin.

The next morning Maynard and Hughes were told that the parties absent the day previous had killed some deer, and that they would go to bring them in. But as the killing of game was only a myth, Evans, Canfield and LaRue went again to the scene of murder, either for the purpose of removing all traces of their work, or for the gold dust the Chinese were supposed to have at their camp. We have not learned anything definite about the action of the parties on the second day, but one rumor, which has some substantial support, is to the effect that one poor Chinaman that had not been killed, but severely wounded, had got into a boat and was working his way across the river as best he could. Shortly after the murderers arrived, a wind blew the boat toward the shore where they were standing, and the Chinaman was dispatched without further ceremony.

Another rumor has it that a party of Chinese, eight in number, came up the river a few days after, and LaRue murdered them. There are also various rumors in circulation about the amount of money secured by the murderers at the Chinese camp, but no one can make a definite estimate of the plunder. It is tolerably well established, however, that there was some gold, probably from one to two thousand dollars secured.

The above is the best report that we can obtain of one of the most cowardly and brutal murders on record. Whether the perpetrators of the deed acted for love of gold, or merely to satisfy their evil inclinations is not for us to say. But it is certain that our authorities should not rest until the men who would be guilty of such work suffer the full penalty of their atrocious deeds.

Most of our readers are familiar with the career of Evans and Canfield since the time of this murder. The precious pair have been arrested and indicted for stealing stock and defacing brands. Evans escaped from the authorities after he had been bound over and before he had given bail, and Canfield left the county, forfeiting the amount of his bonds. Where they are now no one knows. LaRue left the country some time in July last year.

Vanhoe & Smith have been engaged to defend Hughes, Maynard and McMillan, and an application will be made to have them admitted to bail for appearance at next term of court. Vaughan was brought before Squire Whitacre, of Enterprise, Tuesday and held to answer before the grand jury on the charge of murder in the same case, in the sum of \$1000. The bond was given and Vaughan released from custody.



Back road to Imnaha, Oregon circa 2018
Image by author

[Eth-C]
[Women]

To the Common Council of the City of Portland (2)

Report of the Committee on "Eth & Women"

Your Committee would respectfully report to your Hon Body upon the petition referred to them for their immediate action and report, which said petition, from its unique, and novel character with which it is constructed, and executed, your Committee have deemed it essential to embody the same herein.

" G. Hon S. L. McCornick Mayor for

" The undersigned Chinese Resident of Portland
" would represent that there are now residents
" in this city some Chinese women of bad repute
" and believing that their continued residence
" here, will injure the Respectable Chinese pop
" -ulation they respectfully ask that you
" will take such measures as are within
" your power for their removal."

Having always believed
and considered, that this Honable Body had
its creation from political considerations,
and ~~that~~ the necessity of society, for some
guardian to protect them in their Legal
and Political rights; and when its action
had reached that end, it had fulfilled its
whole duty. we are at a loss to determine
from what source it can derive a power of
Censor of Morals, which you are asked to
exercise in this case,

That women, and especially "Chinese women",
may have a bad reputation is true, but
that we have any power, by coercion or
otherwise to remove them from our midst (3)

(2)

is not so clear to our minds - After long, and patient research of our State laws, and the higher, and more profound ones of your Honorable Body, we have been unable to find a single Statute, or Ordinance which makes "Bad Reputation" a crime, rendering the one so unfortunate as to be so cursed, amenable to penalty; that such is not the case, we are led to believe by the perfect unanimity of this entire Community, judging by its impressive silence on this subject in all the past; for had society believed such to have been ~~the~~ a crime here - then, your Honorable Body would have learned of its existence long ere this, or else we should have been impressed with the belief that the people of the city of Pottamot, until this case was presented, were all Bayard² and Bayardesses "Sans peur Sans reproche" - or that the ignorance of our Cornighted people was so great, that it required an importation from Celestial lands to give us a proper construction of our civil, and political duties, Commencing the work of enlightenment in your Honorable Body!

Another stumbling Block in the way of your Committee coming to a full determination upon this important

(3)

question is, that the petitioners in this instance have declared "Bad Repute" to be a "nuisance"! Now, your Committee submit with due deference, that they have hitherto held and believed a "nuisance" to be a something which effectually prevented their peaceful and quiet enjoyment of the good things of this life through the avenue of the senses, as seeing - feeling - feeling - smelling and tasting, and as "Bad Reputation" can neither be seen - felt - smelt or tested it can have no influence upon the enjoyment of this community had the same acuteness of sense, been given us, as has been displayed by your Eminent petitioners - penetrating discernment in fathoming the essence and omnipotence of our law - and the enlarged minds and enlightened understanding of your honorable body - we might have been able to have ~~been able to have~~ solved this knotty, and vexed question; yet by proceeding further, we may be able to find some light which will perhaps dispel some of the darkness, and gloom, which now seems to surround this dark subject.

The petitioners further ~~also~~ declare that this "nuisance" will injure the respectable "Chinese population"! This

(4)

involves the very intricate point for the
solution of Your Committee - is "bad reputation"
infectious, or in other words, is it catching? Now
Your Committee, with an limited knowledge, believe
that it can neither be seen - tasted - handled
or smelt - and that by these approaches
all disease of this character - (infectious) or
ergendum, Now is "Bad Reputation" a disease
of a higher sublimated character, known
only to those of Celestial origin - and have
we senses of such attenuated ethereality as
to have escaped the research of ^{our} physiologists
- which these Chimes know, and recognize?

But, upon the the investigation of this,
Your Committee have not ventured, as being
without the pale of our duty, and beyond
the reach of our requirements, but deeming
it of great importance, Your Committee
by its reference to the Committee upon -
"Health and Police" whose eminent Chairman
will no doubt take great pleasure in
investigating, and reporting, the result of
his labors to your honorable body. This
~~is~~ immense field, now open to survey, is
worthy of his genius and thought: his past
experience will aid him, and an honorable
ambition prompt the efforts that will
result in its solution. (33)

This unexplored region

rich with Celestial lore, with the help of
the "respectable Chinese population" May
lead to the investigation of that Cornerstone
treasure insalable, some of those great
thoughts which made Confucius matchless
while living, and despised him when dead -

Results so great, will win a fame-
Commensurate with their importance and
crown the discourse with an unfading laurel

But while ^{we} ~~conced~~ the glory of this
achievement to others, we shall reserve the
fame, and honor, of having pointed out
the way which others have successfully trod
to greatness!

Your Committee beg the indulgence
of your honorable body for the great length
of this Report, but the magnitude of the
subject, and the names of an ~~English~~
"respectable Chinese population" signed to the
petition, impressed us with the importance
of giving it a full & ~~thorough~~ ^{thorough} examination
Among the names of those signed - discarding
the hieroglyphics which we do not understand
and adopting the free translation thereof -
appended, we find ~~and find~~ the substantial
names of Ma Ching - H. M. Black-
Mung Sing - Wm. Stata Ogden - Shuck
Yow - John K. Foster - Shum Hing

— L. M. Starr — Hung Sing — C^d
Boston and others.

With all due deference
to the above named "Respectable Chinese -
Residents," Your Committee are compelled
to report, that we find nothing in the
said petition of which your honorable
body can take cognizance and that the
prayer of the petitioners be denied.

All of which is respectfully submitted
In Council
Wm. Langyoke Chairman

J. D.

Your Committee would beg leave to report
further, that the above mentioned Chinese residents
of "bad repute" have removed themselves, from
our city, but whether they have taken their
"Bad Reputation" with them or not; Your Committee
cannot say, or whether the said "Bad Reputation"
if left behind, will endanger the health
- peace and quiet, of the "Respectable Chinese pop-
ulation" (your petitioners) they have not been able
to determine. This will be a matter for this
Committee a "Health and Police" to investigate
In Council
Wm. Langyoke Chairman

Portland Oregon Sept 7th 1859

Langyoke (37)

W. L. Higgins

Referred to Committee
Fire & Water
Nov 15 1882
Chief Engineer

[Eth. C.]

To the Honorable Common
Council of the City
Portland

Portland Nov 15th 1882

To the Honorable Mayor and
Common Council of the City
of Portland

Sir,

I would respectfully ask
your Honorable Body to call
the attention of the Chief Engineer
of the fire department to a

Building occupied by Chinese
as a wash house on Chest Street
between front and first they
have a cooking place in the
rear of the Building with no
vent for smoke and also
a pipe through the roof that
is contrary to the ordinance

Yours Most Respectfully
W. L. Higgins

[Eth-C]

Portland Jan 17, 1882

To the New Committee

of the Common Council

City of Portland

We whose

names are undersigned hereby
ask respectfully that leave
may be had by us during
the Chinese holidays of
the New Year Commencing on
the 16 day of February 1882 and
continuing eight days to
explode fire crackers in the street
opposite our respective places of
business at such hours of each
day as your honorable body may
designate

Long Duck Chung & Co
Chung Yuen

Kwong Tai leo
Wing mow Lung la
Yuen Wa ce
Hep Chong

Dwong Yeh Yuen
Yee Yean Chung bo

Petition of
Tong. Duck Chung

Filed Jan'y. 18th 1882
B B Dunham
Auditor & Clerk

[Eth-C]

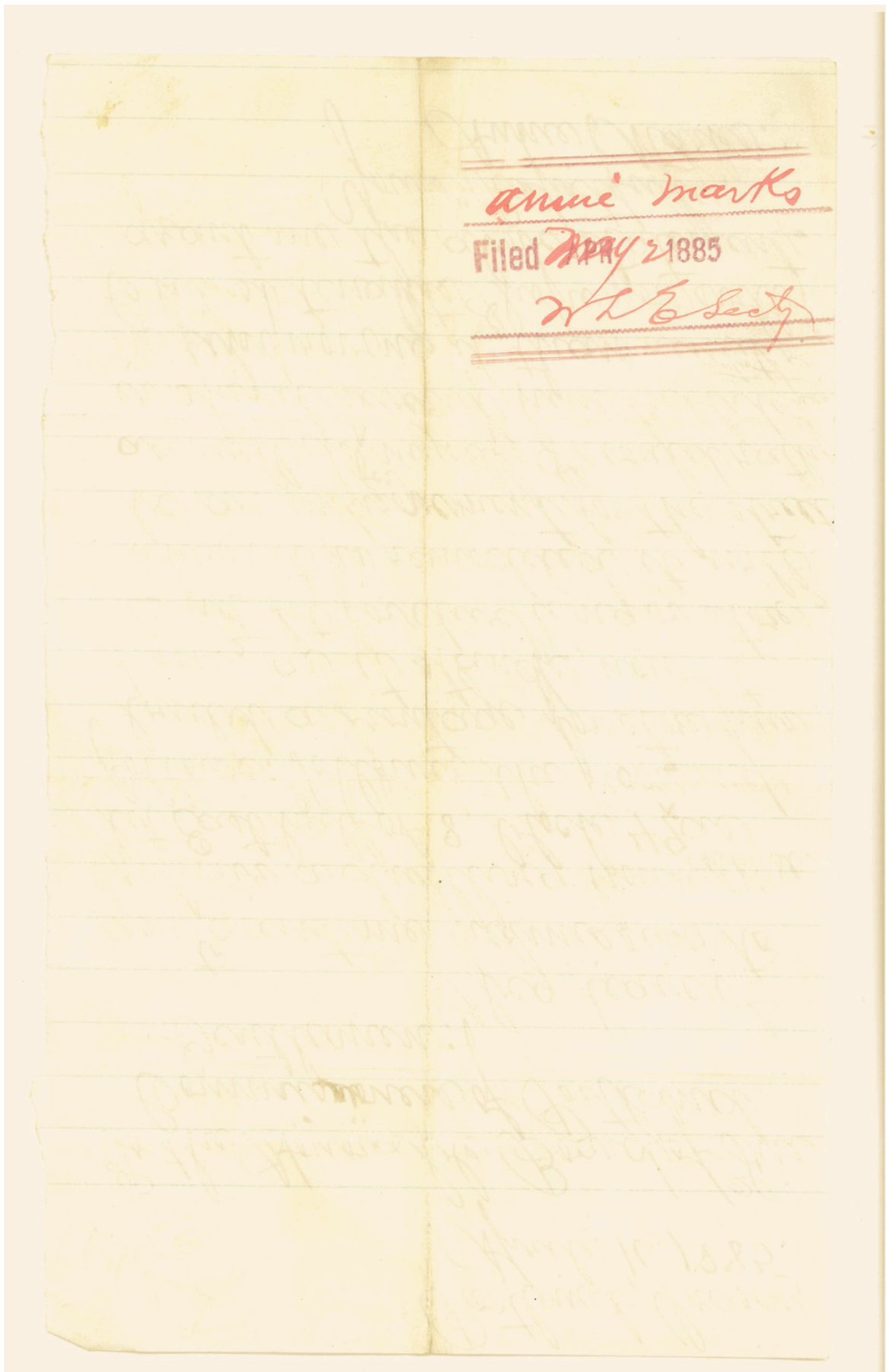
Portland, Oregon,
April, 16, 1885.

To the Honorable Board of Fire
Commissioners of Portland.

Gentlemen:

I beg leave of
you to grant me permission to
repair a dwelling house on
lot East half of 8, block 49 ^{Adler St.}
follows: To lower the floor and
build a frontage for store pur-
poses, as it stands now it
is not fit for dwelling or store,
when it is remodeled it will
be an improvement for the street
as well as ^{for} myself. I would rather
spend several hundred dollars
in improving it, than rent it to
business tenants. I hope you will
grant me the above statement.

Yours Respectfully,
Annie Marks.



City of Portland Archives, Council Documents - Permits - Building -
Correspondence from Annie Marks regarding building improvements and
not renting to Chinese tenants, 1885

WHEREAS, As appears by the public press of the City of Portland, and other information obtained from those who were present at a meeting of the common council of the City of Portland, on the 15th day of November, 1893, that L. M. Davis a member of said common council, used and made the following statement in relation to letting out the street-cleaning work by contract, to wit: If the contract were let to a rich corporation, they would employ Scandinavians, negroes and Chinese. It would be better to leave the matter as it was till spring, and let white men have the benefit of the work.'

WHEREAS, Said statement is a gross insult to the citizens of Portland of Scandinavian birth, and must be attributed either to malice on the part of said L. M. Davis against such citizens, or to dense ignorance, in either of which cases he is unfit and unworthy to occupy the said position as a member of the common council of said city.

WHEREAS, The said statement and declaration of said Councilman Davis, so made at said meeting of the common council as aforesaid, constitutes such misconduct on the part of said councilman as should require his expulsion as a member of said common council. THEREFORE,

RESOLVED, That the citizens and tax-payers of the city of Portland of Scandinavian birth do hereby, in mass-meeting assembled, arraign the said Councilman Davis for being guilty of misconduct in office, and call upon the said common council of the city of Portland to expel said Councilman Davis as a member of said common council for misconduct in office and because unworthy and unfit to occupy such a position.

RESOLVED, That a committee of five be appointed by the chairman to present these resolutions ~~to~~ the common council of the city of Portland, and to take the proper steps to bring before said body a resolution expelling said Councilman Davis from said common council as a member thereof, and that we do hereby invite the citizens of Portland generally, irrespective of race, color or nationality, to use their influence in assisting us to secure the expulsion of said councilman.

Notary Public

	YEAS	NAYS
Dalgleish . . .	/	---
Davis . . .	/	---
Malone . . .	/	---
McInnis . . .	/	---
Merrick . . .	/	---
Mock . . .	---	---
Monks . . .	/	---
Richardson . . .	/	---
Scoggin . . .	/	---
Shelby . . .	/	---
Terwilliger . . .	/	---
Total . . .	---	---

Dec 6/93
Special Com.
Dalgleish
Merrick
Mock

Dec 6 1893
Albert N. Campbell
Notary Public
W. H. Conner

To the Hon. Mayor and Council
of the City Portland:

The Special Committee to which was referred the matter of the resolutions adopted at the recent public meeting of citizens of Scandinavian birth, and the communication accompanying the same, respectfully submits the following as its report:

Your committee finds the charge to be true that Councilman L. M. Davis made use of the following language during a meeting of the City Council and while he was engaged in the discharge of his official duties, viz:
"If the contract were let to a rich corporation, they would employ
"Scandinavians, negroes and chinese. It would be better to leave the
"matter as it is till spring and let white men have the benefit of the
"work."

While recognizing the unrestricted right of every person and class of persons to entertain objectionable, extravagant and strained opinions with reference to every other class of persons, your Committee denies the right of any member of this body while the Council is in Session and he is participating in its deliberations, to make such statements as are contained in the foregoing quotation, and we regard the utterance of such statements at such a time and place not only as a breach of the privileges of the Council, deserving of severe condemnation and censure but an offense of an aggravated character against the classes of persons toward whom the language was directed. The Scandinavian people already number quite a percentage of the population of the United States. These people are neighbors and friends with whom we are in daily intercourse both socially and in business affairs. They are in every community regarded with favor as among the best of this country's foreign born population. To classify such a people, a people noted for its uniform good conduct, thrift, energy and enterprise with a heathen, debased and degraded race, and in

effect say they are not worthy to do the most menial work of the city is an offense against the members of the body before whom the objectionable language was used as well as a grievous wrong and injury to the nationality assailed. Though they have not made formal complaint to this Council there is another class of persons who feel hurt and have cause to, at the use of the language above quoted. That class is the negro. When as the result of the late war the black people of this country were made free and had the duties and obligations of citizenship thrust upon them they became the wards of the people of the United States upon whom, thereafter, rested the pressing duty of caring for, educating and maintaining the race and especially to keep open to them as many of the avenues for gaining a livelihood as they were capable of pursuing. The rapid strides toward a higher civilization, made by this people in the last quarter of a century, is a source of pride to all thinking persons, and now to deny the black man the right to compete, on merit, for places on the public works of the city, would work a great injustice to him and besides be a violation of our implied promise to foster and care for him.

But while your Committee is of opinion that the intemperate language complained of was unjust, uncalled for and deserving of severe rebuke, in the judgment of your Committee the offense is not of that character which would fairly warrant the Council in exercising the discretion vested in it of removing a member from office. Had the other objectionable language made use of on the same occasion and directed to the members of the Council personally, been submitted to the Committee, its action might have been different, but in the absence of such submission your Committee make no suggestion.

In conclusion your Committee would respectfully recommend as the sense of this Council the following resolution;

Resolved, ⁱⁿ that, the use of the language above quoted, Councilman L. M.

Davis was guilty of an offense against the the proprieties and decencies of the body of which he is a member as councilman from the Tenth Ward, as well as against the classes of persons toward whom his remarks were directed.

Resolved, further, that the members of this Council are not in sympathy with the sentiments expressed by councilman Davis and think the same deserving of censure and condemnation.

Respectfully Submitted

John Mock
W. D. Dwyer
D. D. Dwyer

Committee

R.W.WILBUR
S.C.SPENCER
A.M.DIBBLE
W.E.FARRELL

WILBUR & SPENCER
ATTORNEYS AT LAW
BOARD OF TRADE BUILDING
PORTLAND, OREGON

Nov. 6th 1908.

Hon. Harry Lane,
Mayor,
Portland, Oregon.

Dear Sir:

We represent some of the Chinese firms doing business at 4th and Flanders Streets in Portland, Oregon. It has become a part of every night's program for certain of the police officers to enter the Chinese building at 4th and Flanders Streets and go through the building generally, smashing every door that is locked. Last night certain officers, headed by Thomas Kay, went into certain of the stores of the building and smashed doors and without giving any explanation for their outrageous proceeding, left the building. I have made a demand upon Chief Gritzmacher to have the damages suffered on account of the acts of these officers made good at once or suits will be immediately begun against all persons responsible for such proceedings.

Why this tremendous effort should be made against a few Chinamen, irrespective of whether there is anything to lead the officers to believe that they are gambling, when gambling is allowed in a number of public places in the the City of Portland, which places are well known, is more than we can understand. There ought to be the same law for the Chinamen that there is for the white man and we would like to enlist your efforts in seeing that the Chinamen are dealt fairly with and that all people are

2 H. L.

treated alike and a damage committed by officers when they have no reason to suspect that a wrong is being done, is made good.

We would dislike very much to commence suits against the various police officers, but unless something is done to cause the rights of the Chinamen to be respected it will be necessary for us to proceed immediately.

Trusting that you will investigate the matter spoken of herein, we are,

Yours very truly,

Wilbur Spencer

RWW/K

R.W. WILBUR
S.C. SPENCER
A.M. DIBBLE
W.E. FARRELL

WILBUR & SPENCER
ATTORNEYS AT LAW
BOARD OF TRADE BUILDING
PORTLAND, OREGON

Nov. 9th 1908.

Hon. Harry Lane,
Mayor,

File
Portland, Oregon.

Dear Sir:

Your letter of the 7th inst. received relative to Chinese matters. I am busy at the present time in Court but will call upon you in a day or so with a representative of the Chinamen to see if some adjustment of discriminations between the whites and the Mongolians can be made.

Yours very truly,

Wilbur & Spencer

November 7, 1908.

Messrs. Wilbur & Spencer,
Portland, Oregon.

Dear Sirs-

I am in receipt of your letter of the 6th inst. calling my attention to the action of the police force in inspecting the chinese building at Fourth and Flanders Street. I do not know what the facts are in regard to this place, although the police have been ordered to stop gambling wherever they find it and I presume that must be the reason they are making so many visits to these particular premises. I will take the matter up with the Chief of Police and ask him to request that your clients be treated in the matter with the fairness which is due them.

Very respectfully,

Mayor.



View of Hells Canyon circa 2018
Image by Author



THE TERRIBLE SECRET OF HELLS CANYON - Oregonian, The (Portland, OR) - August 15, 1995 - page A01
August 15, 1995 | Oregonian, The (Portland, OR) | R. GREGORY NOKES - of the Oregonian Staff | Oregon | Page A01

Summary: A brutal ambush in which 31 **Chinese miners** were killed for their gold has been hidden for 108 years

It's been Wallowa County's secret for 108 years: 31 **Chinese miners** ambushed and killed for their gold in remote **Hells Canyon** in 1887 by a band of horse thieves aided by a schoolboy and local ranch hands.

In what one historian says was the worst massacre of **Chinese** by whites ever in this country, the horribly mutilated bodies were dumped into the Snake River, washing up as far away as Lewiston, Idaho, weeks later. All were shot; some had ax wounds.

Six Wallowa County men were charged with murder. Three, including a 15-year-old, were tried and acquitted. Three others fled the county and never were caught. In a deathbed confession, the 15-year-old later admitted he had a hand in some of the slayings.

Newly discovered files, hidden away in a courthouse safe for decades, give the clearest picture yet of what happened, when combined with other accounts. The record suggests the early inhabitants of Wallowa County were more interested in protecting reputations than in justice for the **Chinese** victims.

"I guess if they had killed 31 white men, something would have been done about it, but none of the jury knew the Chinamen or cared much about it, so they turned the men loose," the late George S. Craig, who attended the trial, told an interviewer years later. Craig owned a cabin used by the gang and knew some of them.

David H. Stratton, a retired Washington State University professor, has done more than anyone else to keep the story alive. It doesn't show up in Oregon history books. There's no historical plaque where the massacre occurred. The Oregon Historical Society Quarterly hasn't published an article on it. The Oregonian never had the full story, although it printed a partial account in 1888.

Even now, there's a feeling by some longtime residents that the story is best forgotten. An editorial in the Wallowa County Chieftain calling for the community to erect a memorial or "make amends in some fashion" has met with little response, says Editor Rick Swart.

Bev Hayward, owner of the Eagle Cap Chalet in Joseph, says of the editorial: "It didn't create any big stir. It was more of a curiosity than anything else."

One county resident who doesn't mind talking is Vern Russell, whose great-uncle, Frank E. Vaughn, then a teen-ager, was present at the killings but wasn't charged, in exchange for his grand jury testimony.

"Father told me old Frank was guilty as sin," recalls Russell, 75, who recently retired as the

county's public works director. Vaughn's deposition at an 1888 bail hearing is the most revealing account in the uncovered court files.

- -

Hells Canyon is deeper in places than the Grand **Canyon**. Even today, the area of the murders is accessible only by boat, horseback or a 2 1/2 -hour hike from the nearest road. It's near where the Imnaha River joins the Snake, about 35 miles northeast of Enterprise in extreme northeastern Oregon.

Some facts are known. Others are in dispute and clouded by time, including whether the murders occurred at Robinson Gulch or Deep Creek, or both. Remains of rock walls that could have been the **miners'** camp are visible at Deep Creek.

What's not in dispute is that the crime was never solved.

Among the known facts is that a group of men suddenly appeared on a steep hillside in **Hells Canyon** about May 27, 1887, and opened fire with high-powered rifles on 10 unsuspecting **Chinese miners**, killing them all.

Trapped on a rocky beach between high **canyon** walls and the river, they would have had no escape. The echo of the gunshots along the **canyon** surely added to the terror. Some accounts said that the shooting went on all afternoon until the killers ran out of ammunition and that one wounded miner was beaten to death with rocks.

The files list the dead: Ah Jim, Ye Lee, Wy See, Hop Sing, Hee Lee, La Bate, Heim Lim, Hee Yee, Sing Heim, Heop Gee. Nothing more is known about them. They apparently had gone into the **canyon** from Lewiston six weeks earlier, pulling their provision-laden boats with ropes through the surging rapids.

The orgy of killing continued the next day, Stratton wrote. Eight **miners**, who happened along by boat, were slain at Robinson Gulch, and 13 more at a second camp nearby.

While accounts vary on the number of dead, Stratton settled on 31 after reading diplomatic exchanges between the State Department and the **Chinese** government, which demanded an investigation.

Frustrated that the murders weren't being investigated, the **Chinese** consulate in San Francisco sent its own agent to Lewiston, where he hired a local investigator. But the break in the case came nearly a year later in 1888 when some of the men were arrested for stealing horses. One talked.

Six men were charged with the first 10 murders. The three tried and found innocent were: Robert McMillan, 15, Hiram Maynard, 38, and Hezekiah Hughes. The rest fled the county: Bruce Evans, J.T. Canfield and Homer LaRue. These three did the killing, Vaughn said in his deposition.

Evans escaped from jail after tricking the sheriff into a trip to the outhouse, where friends had hidden a revolver. ``He came to the door and presented a six-shooter, and told me to take a walk

and this I was obliged to do," Sheriff Thomas H. Humphreys told the court.

The killers got some gold. The 1888 account in The Oregonian said it was probably worth from \$1,000 to \$2,000, but later estimates moved the total up wildly to as much as \$50,000. Stratton believes the lesser amount. He said the Chinese had been in the area only a short time, and it wasn't prime gold country.

Gold was worth about \$20 an ounce at the time. At today's prices, about \$380 an ounce, the estimates would range from \$19,000 to nearly \$1 million.

One of the miners' bodies that floated 60 miles to Lewiston was found with a severed head and arm wrapped in a coat tied to its belt, Stratton wrote. Another account said some of the wounded were tortured in an effort to make them disclose where the gold was, even though they didn't speak English.

"The brutality of the Snake River atrocity was probably unexcelled, whether by whites or Indians, in all the anti-Chinese violence of the American West," Stratton wrote in a 1983 essay. The essay is regarded as the most authoritative account of the crime, although he didn't have the benefit of court records.

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Evans, Canfield and LaRue were notorious horse and cattle thieves operating out of Hells Canyon. McMillan was a schoolboy at Imnaha, a small ranching town near Hells Canyon, and some of the others may also have been in school there. Hughes operated a ranch in the county; Vaughn was a member of a well-known ranching family; and Maynard was apparently connected to ranching.

In his deposition, Vaughn said that on the day of the murders he and the others were together at a cabin about three miles from the Chinese camp.

He said Evans and Canfield wanted to rent a boat from the Chinese to ferry some stolen livestock across the Snake River to Idaho. Five of the group set out for the camp, leaving Maynard and Hughes to fix dinner.

"I didn't understand from this talk that there was any killing to be done," recalled Vaughn, then 17 or 18. "All the talk was done by Bruce Evans, J.T. Canfield and Homer LaRue."

Under questioning by Judge Peter O'Sullivan, he changed his story. "I knew it was about the killing but do not remember the words."

Vaughn said he and McMillan witnessed the killings from a distance of 200 to 300 yards and later went to the camp and saw "four or five dead Chinamen." But he maintained throughout that he, Maynard, Hughes and McMillan did not join in the shooting, blaming it on the three who escaped.

"Knowing that the parties who did the killing were desperate men, I hesitated about making the matter known before," Vaughn said.

The judge asked why Vaughn had implicated the others before the grand jury ``and not now," but Vaughn denied implicating them.

The bail hearing was held on April 16, 1888, after 30 ``citizens and taxpayers" contended the evidence was insufficient -- records don't say why -- to hold the three. They were released on \$800 bail.

Maynard, Hughes and McMillan were found innocent on Sept. 1, 1888, after a two-day trial in Wallowa County Circuit Court in Enterprise. Records of the trial testimony, if they existed, are still missing.

It's unlikely the jury wanted a guilty verdict because the accused were apparently well-known and because **Chinese** were held in such low regard at the time, Stratton says. Discrimination against **Chinese** partly stemmed from their customs -- mainly the food they ate and their dress -- and a belief they took mining and railroad jobs from whites, he says.

``This kind of attitude was not uncommon all across the country, but it was much more pronounced on the West Coast because that was where most of the **Chinese** were," he said from his office in Pullman, Wash. ``You had this virulent anti-**Chinese** sentiment, the `yellow peril' and all that."

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Russell, the descendant of gang member Vaughn and now an ostrich farmer near Joseph, says Vaughn's exploits weren't exactly dinner table conversation when he was growing up.

``I can't remember my mother ever discussing it," he says. ``It doesn't bother me any, but apparently it wasn't too well-received by the rest of the Vaughn family."

He doesn't understand the reluctance of others to talk about the murders, especially now. ``I don't know anybody who would take offense now," he says. ``There's hardly anyone left. . . . It's just part of history."

Charlotte McIver, the Wallowa County clerk who discovered the files, can only guess how they got into the safe. She found them while going through the contents of a safe that was being donated to the county museum.

Was there a cover-up? Ben Boswell, a judge of the Wallowa County court, thinks so.

``The records were more than just lost," Boswell says. ``They seem to have been hidden. Somebody intentionally tried to keep this story from happening. Somebody intentionally caused people to forget."

There has long been the perception that some of Wallowa County's early settlers ``were on the run from somewhere else" and less than law-abiding, Boswell says. ``Around the turn of the century, the morals kind of changed" and people became more concerned about their conduct.

``That's probably when the cover-up occurred."

That kind of talk distresses Grace Bartlett, 85, the volunteer director of the Wallowa County Museum who has written extensively about county history, but not the **Chinese** massacre.

``I have no interest in that story," says Bartlett, even as she helps a reporter find old photos and documents. ``People in the early days came to make homes. . . . These are the kind of people I'm talking about, the ones who came and settled, a fine bunch of people."

Someone in a position to know where the records were is Marjorie Martin, now in her 80s. She was Wallowa County's clerk for 43 years.

``I absolutely never did see those," Martin says. ``I can't help but think wherever they were found, they were moved."

Martin acknowledged knowing descendants of some of the accused, but she won't disclose them. ``I think people have a right to know there was a **Chinese** massacre, but I think it's just as well to go on and forget it. It's a sad story."

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McMillan died soon after the trial, of diphtheria at age 16. There's an 1891 newspaper account of a deathbed confession, made to his father, Hugh McMillan, saying that he and Vaughn were among those ``armed with repeating rifles and revolvers" and that the group fired on the **Chinese** from two sides.

Vaughn apparently stayed away from trouble after the massacre. The county museum contains old photographs of him with his brother, Harry, in front of a livery stable in 1898, and also at functions of a social group called the ``Bachelor's Club."

Russell doesn't know what happened to Vaughn. He says Harry Vaughn lived in the Russell home for a time. It didn't surprise him to learn that Frank turned state's evidence. ``That was typical of Frank and Harry, to get themselves out of a jam."

No one can say what happened to Hughes and Maynard.

Stratton knows only rumors about the others: Evans lost himself in the Big Hole area of Montana, leaving a wife and family behind; LaRue was killed in a poker game in California; and Canfield went to Kansas, where he spent time in prison and later operated a blacksmith shop at Glens Ferry, Idaho.

The years have also hidden the whereabouts of the bodies of the **Chinese**, although an 1898 newspaper account said at least one was buried in a **Chinese** cemetery in Lewiston. Stratton says the **Chinese** typically returned the ashes of their dead to China, but he doesn't know if that happened.

There aren't any residents of **Chinese** descent who could provide information; apparently none

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Drawn to Oregon by job opportunities in gold-mining and railroad construction, **Chinese** immigrants became the dominant minority in Portland during the latter decades of the 19th century, accounting for one of every 10 Portland residents.

The U.S. Census for 1890 listed 5,184 **Chinese** in Portland -- second only to San Francisco -- in a total city population of 46,385. Statewide, the **Chinese** population in 1890 was 9,540.

The immigrants, largely from the crowded and impoverished Guangdong province in southeastern China, received a mixed welcome. Employers wanted them to fill a labor shortage, especially to build the railroads. But they were also subject to discriminatory legislation, prejudice and occasional violence.

Chinese frequently worked for half the wages of white workers, as little as a dollar a day, and their reputation as hard workers gave them a leg up in many hiring decisions, which led to resentment among whites. The **Chinese** immigrants also were overwhelmingly men.

Writing of **Chinese** workers in 1876 in the Western Observer, a Portland publication, David Newsom said, "And these **Chinese** will work at every sort of labor we wish them to perform. And they will stick to their jobs! I have never yet seen a Chinaman drunk, and I cannot say that of our white folks."

In Portland, a Chinatown emerged along the waterfront south of West Burnside and today's Chinatown in Northwest Portland. The **Chinese** worked at a range of jobs, including domestics, gardeners, laborers, and restaurant and laundry workers.

Scattered across the state

Chinese communities also were scattered throughout Oregon, especially in the gold mining areas of northeastern Oregon, in Baker and Grant counties, and in Southern Oregon in Jackson and Josephine counties. Large numbers of **Chinese** also were employed in seafood canneries in Astoria and elsewhere.

Chinese began filtering into Oregon from California in the 1850s, lured by the discovery of gold in Southern Oregon and later moved on to northeastern Oregon gold strikes. A second, and larger, group began arriving in the late 1860s to work on the railroads being built across the Pacific Northwest.

Ships brought thousands of **Chinese** laborers to Portland docks direct from Hong Kong, including 5,000 in 1882 before Congress closed the nation's doors to additional **Chinese** laborers.

Though Portland has retained a significant **Chinese** heritage, scant evidence survives of the

communities that once existed in many smaller Oregon communities. The **Chinese** left little written record, and white residents, focused on preserving their own pioneer and immigrant origins, didn't concern themselves with the **Chinese** experience.

"They were taken for granted a lot," researcher Priscilla Wegars said. "In more recent times, there has been a greater appreciation of what has been lost now that the **Chinese** are gone from communities where they once lived." Wegars is curator of the University of Idaho's Asian American Comparative Collection in Moscow and has played a lead role in researching and preserving the **Chinese** history in Idaho and Eastern Oregon.

Wegars said that although nearly every Oregon town has a **Chinese** restaurant today, the owners and workers seldom have any connection to the earlier immigrants, most of whom moved to cities, or returned to China.

Baker City and John Day each counted several hundred **Chinese** involved with gold-mining, who established vibrant **Chinese** communities that included Daoist temples.

But virtually all that remains in Baker City is the **Chinese** cemetery on the outskirts of town near what once was a garbage dump. The cemetery has in recent years been restored by the Baker County Historical Society and the **Chinese** Consolidated Benevolent Association in Portland, which sent **Chinese** American students to help clear the site. A new pavilion, brought from China with donated funds, was dedicated last year.

John Day preserves store

Chinese history has fared somewhat better in John Day where a large store operated well into the 20th century by a **Chinese** doctor, Ing Hay, known locally as Doc Hay, and his partner, Lung On, has survived and is now impressively preserved as the Kam Wah Chung Museum. Maintained in its original condition, the museum is a significant repository of the **Chinese** experience.

In Pendleton, a Chamber of Commerce Web site touts tours of underground tunnels said to have been used by the **Chinese** for dwellings and businesses. But Wegars said she believes the tunnels are probably basements and sidewalk vaults used for loading and storage, with no connection to the **Chinese**.

Some of the Eastern Oregon mining towns where **Chinese** lived and worked have disappeared, among them Auburn, once the county seat in Baker County. Others include Bonanza, Bourne, Greenhorn and Marysville, each with its own Chinatown during mining days.

Growing hostility

The **Chinese** faced hostility in many communities, partly because of cultural differences and partly because they were seen as taking jobs from white workers. White **miners** formed associations that initially barred the **Chinese** from owning claims, although they later relented. The 1857 Legislature imposed a \$2 monthly mining tax on the **Chinese**.

Chinese also were prohibited from owning property, although the prohibition was overlooked

when whites wanted to sell their claims to the **Chinese** after extracting the best gold.

The rapid growth in population was smothered by the **Chinese** Exclusion Act of 1882, enacted by Congress to bar any more **Chinese** laborers, while allowing those already in the United State to remain. The impact in Oregon was dramatic. From a near-peak of 9,540 in 1890, the number of **Chinese** fell to 7,363 in 1910, and 3,090 in 1920.

Wegars said one effect of the exclusion act was to deprive **Chinese** laborers of the opportunity to have families and, over time, those who remained "died out because they were not able to bring their wives and children over here."

Most of today's **Chinese** American families immigrated later, or are descendants of merchants, students and professionals who were exempted from the exclusion act, which wasn't lifted until 1943.

Though the **Chinese** encountered prejudice and occasional violence in Portland, it wasn't as bad as in other cities, said Rebecca Liu, principal of a **Chinese** language school in Old Town-Chinatown and owner of the Lung Fung **Chinese** Restaurant on Portland's North Lombard Street.

"Incidents probably happened, but generally they considered Portland a safe haven," she said. "There was always a defense for the **Chinese** in the Portland area, so it wasn't hatred or discrimination."

Portland becomes a refuge

The same point was made in a 1978 study of Chinatown written for the Portland Bureau of Planning by Nelson Chia-Chi Ho, with input from leading members of Portland's **Chinese** community. "Portland, in fact the whole State of Oregon, became a refuge for the persecuted **Chinese** who were looking for less volatile environs," the study said.

Indeed, when a mob in Tacoma, encouraged by the city's mayor, expelled the **Chinese** population of several hundred in November 1885, many sought refuge in Portland. When anti-**Chinese** disturbances also broke out in Seattle the same year, President Cleveland dispatched troops to restore order.

Violence threatened to spread to Portland in 1886. But when mobs sought to oust Portland's **Chinese** community, the outcome was different. Mayor John Gates called out the city's militia, doubled the police force and armed 700 citizen volunteers, who confronted the mob and prevented serious violence.

Harper's Weekly in 1886 quoted Gates as saying, "It seems to be high time for all good people to come out and show the disreputable outlaws that the local authorities will be sustained by the people and that law and order will be maintained in Portland."

The worst violence committed by whites in Oregon was the massacre of as many as 34 **Chinese** gold miners in Hells Canyon by a group of rustlers in 1887. No one was ever convicted of the crime, but a group of historians are leading an effort to observe "this horrible piece of history" with

a monument at the massacre site along the Snake River in Wallowa County.

A community center

Liu, who was raised in Taiwan and is a board member of the Chinese Consolidated Benevolent Association, said a plat of Portland's original Chinatown showed nearly 200 Chinese businesses along Southwest Second Avenue from Pine Street to Taylor Street, with the center at the intersection of Second and Alder.

The Chinese operated businesses on the first floors of buildings, with living quarters on the upper floors where "some 20 persons could sleep in a 12-by-20 foot room in bunks stacked from floor to ceiling," said Ho's 1978 study. There were three Chinese theaters on Second Avenue until 1904.

Portland's Chinese community gradually moved to Northwest Portland during the early 20th century, as the Southwest location was developed into the city's major commercial center. Liu said the Chinese had little choice because they didn't own the buildings where they lived and worked.

R. Gregory Nokes is a retired reporter and former assistant managing editor for The Oregonian.

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