

# Searching for Salem's Early Chinese Community

KIMBERLI FITZGERALD, KIRSTEN STRAUS, AND KYLIE PINE

**DID SALEM, OREGON,** have a Chinatown during the late 1800s? The Salem Historic Landmarks Commission (HLC) posed this question to city staff in 2017 as part of its larger effort to document and present the history of Salem's diverse, marginalized populations. The *Oregon Statesman* published an article in 1963 that provided the first clue: "Shrine Uncovered in Pioneer Cemetery."<sup>1</sup> In an accompanying photograph, Charles Gale, former City of Salem Parks and Recreation Director, kneels in the Salem Pioneer Cemetery (formerly the Independent Order of the Odd Fellows Rural Cemetery) near a stone engraved with Chinese characters. The newspaper provided little useful information about the slab but hinted at a much larger story. What followed was a three-year investigation that uncovered Salem's substantial late-nineteenth and early-twentieth-century Chinese community, which was concentrated in a few downtown blocks, and answered questions about what had happened to obscure the history of Salem's Chinatown. The project's researchers — including the authors of this article — concluded that Salem's sizable Chinese community persisted in the downtown core between 1880 and 1925 despite significant social and political challenges.

For the project, the HLC established an advisory committee comprising local historians and key stakeholders from the local Chinese community. This fifteen-person committee included representatives from the Portland branch of the Chinese Consolidated Benevolent Association (CCBA), Portland's Hoy Yin Association, Willamette University, the Willamette Heritage Center, Friends of the Salem Pioneer Cemetery, and members of Salem's Chinese community. This committee developed and utilized a research framework based on community engagement and feedback, which guided work on the project. Through in-person interviews as well as reviews of census records, newspapers, immigration records at the National Archives and Records Administration (NARA), and historical maps, we learned that



**IN THE 1870s,** Salem, Oregon's, earliest Chinese residents settled downtown along State Street between Liberty and High Streets. George Lai Sun is pictured here in 1890 with his two children, Woo Lai Sun (left), and Mary Lai Sun (right). Sun was an early Chinese business owner in Salem and served as a community leader — sometimes referred to as the Mayor of Chinatown.

members of this community ran successful agricultural operations, stores, and restaurants, and that they were strengthened by leaders such as George Lai Sun, who fostered community support and leadership. Salem's Chinese community persevered in the face of discrimination, and it relocated several times before being forced out of Salem's downtown.<sup>2</sup>

Based on the evidence provided by the 1963 newspaper article, the HLC's committee completed a collaborative public archaeology project that uncovered this funerary table, one of the only tangible reminders of the early Chinese community in Salem. Salem's larger community, including many members of the current Chinese population, are again using the funerary table to honor the Chinese people still buried in Salem's Pioneer Cemetery and the traditional cultural practices for which it was built. The HLC's work also led one of the authors, Kimberli Fitzgerald, to visit several Salem residents' *qiaoxiang* (home villages) in China. While there, Fitzgerald visited four villages and learned about offering tables like the one in Salem's cemetery and their significance to Chinese communities. The similarity between the offering tables in China and the one constructed in Salem demonstrated that Salem's Chinese residents had built a structure with the same form, design, and material for their use here in the Willamette Valley. As noted on an interpretive panel in Jiangmen at the Wuyi Overseas Chinese Museum:

*After the difficult years of the exclusion of Chinese, the Overseas Chinese gradually became citizens in their adopted countries . . . and their mentality changed from that of sojourning to taking roots. They strove in their adopted countries and built Chinatowns with traditional Chinese culture. . . . They formed various community organizations, fought for their rights, founded newspapers and schools. They carried on traditional Chinese cultures, such as performing Chinese operas and practicing dragon boat festival. They made unique contributions to their adopted countries.*<sup>3</sup>

The discovery of the funerary table in Salem and its comparison to those in China offer clear evidence that Salem's Chinese residents were not temporary sojourners, but instead, members of the community who established cultural traditions and made unique contributions to Salem.

Salem's research advisory committee first looked to the historiography of Asian Americans to find written histories about Chinese immigrants to the United States. The committee referred to Sucheng Chan's 1996 review of four main periods of scholarship prior to the 1990s, which included a helpful overview of historiography of Chinese immigrants as part of her larger study of the writings about Asians in America.<sup>4</sup> The first studies, published from the 1870s to the early 1920s, were political and written not by historians but by missionaries and diplomats who were trying to calm American fears about the Chinese. In contrast, anti-Chinese leaders and politicians crafted contemporary publications about the need for exclusionary laws. The historiographical period from 1920 to 1960 was characterized by books written mainly by social scientists who focused on the assimilation of Asian Americans and the social organization within their communities. The most notable works were

by sociologists, such as Robert E. Park from the University of Chicago, as well as psychologists from Stanford University. Sociologists from this period hypothesized that all immigrants passed through a race-relations cycle consisting of four stages of interaction with the host society: contact, competition, accommodation, and assimilation.<sup>5</sup> During the modern period, the 1960s and 1970s, Asian American historians rejected this assimilationist paradigm, focusing their research on Asian Americans' reclaiming and establishing their own authentic history, based on primary-document sources. Him Mark Lai, Betty Lee Sung, and Thomas W. Chinn all contributed histories during this period.<sup>6</sup> In Lai's 1968 article, "Chinese Pioneers in the 19th Century," he tells personal stories of Chinese immigrants, such as the story of a merchant named Chum Ming who arrived in 1847 in San Francisco and was one of the first to discover gold in the nearby hills. Chum Ming wrote about his discovery to his friend Cheong Yum in China, who then told his family and friends, actions that Lai reports led to the flood of Chinese immigrants searching for gold.<sup>7</sup>

During the 1980s, the post-modern era, historians were asking if the decisions made by Chinese immigrants were determined by economic forces and social conditioning, or were the result of human agency and choice. In 1983, Shih-shan Henry Tsai published *China and the Overseas Chinese in the United States*, which relied primarily on Chinese-language sources to offer a study of Chinese people's efforts to defend their right to immigrate and earn a living in America.<sup>8</sup> Historians such as Ronald Takaki, Sandy Lyndon, Huping Ling, and Roger Daniels also published significant work during this period.<sup>9</sup> Chan has recently identified a fifth period, reflected in the writing that has emerged from the late 1990s through early 2000s, that focuses on understanding Chinese American history and agency within a larger transnational context — essentially addressing the question David Igler asked in a 2007 article: "Where should we look to find Asian American History?"<sup>10</sup>

While scholars from earlier periods limited examination of Chinese American history within U.S. cities and towns, the transnational approach refocuses the geographical framework across the Pacific Ocean.<sup>11</sup> In *Sweet Cakes, Long Journey*, for example, Marie Rose Wong investigates the social history and urban patterns created by Portland's Chinese immigrants. As part of her analysis, Wong presents immigration documents from the Portland customs office, including coaching letters written on tissue paper and concealed inside peanut shells.<sup>12</sup> This is evidence of the extreme lengths Chinese immigrants went through before leaving China so they could successfully immigrate to Oregon after passage of the 1882 Chinese Exclusion Act and its strict enforcement in the United States. Chelsea Rose and J. Ryan Kennedy's 2020 volume, *Chinese Diaspora Archaeology in North America*, also frames Chinese immigration as a transnational experience.<sup>13</sup> Their volume demonstrates that Chinese peo-

ple migrating to the United States retained strong emotional and economic connections with their home villages. The HLC and the research advisory committee found this approach compelling and consciously tried to understand Salem's Chinese immigrants through a transnational perspective. The history of the Chinese community in Salem provides an illuminating example of how the community adapted to the international influences in their lives.

In 1848, miners discovered gold at Sutter's Mill in California, kicking off the gold rush that spread north to Oregon after 1850 and that brought many of the first Chinese immigrants to the West Coast of the United States. At that time, China was not able to provide enough food to feed its people, especially in the southern region of Guangdong Province (廣東 Kwangtung), due to natural disasters, political turmoil caused by local uprisings, as well as civil and foreign wars between 1840 and 1864, including the Opium Wars and the Taiping Rebellion. Guangzhou (廣州 Canton) was the province's capital and largest city and had been the center of trade during the previous century. In the face of these challenges, many men from this region continued the long-established tradition of out-migration, by going to the western United States (and also to other countries, such as Australia, Canada, and Mexico) for work.<sup>14</sup> Beginning in the mid nineteenth century, the United States negotiated a number of treaties with China to improve relations and trade, and those provided additional incentives for Chinese individuals to immigrate to the United States.<sup>15</sup> Salem was not the first place that many Chinese immigrants landed, but it became appealing as the heat of the gold rush cooled and people started looking for work in other venues.

As one of Oregon's largest cities and its center of government, Salem offered economic opportunities, primarily in the fields of laundry and cooking. The U.S. federal census of 1860 identifies 421 Chinese-born immigrants in Oregon, most of whom were miners in southern Oregon. Only two Chinese men, both working as washers or ironers, are identified as residents in Salem in 1860.<sup>16</sup> Oregon officials forcibly relocated many arrested prisoners of Chinese ancestry from throughout the state to the Salem area, incarcerating them in the Oregon State Penitentiary and later the Oregon State Hospital (at the time called the Oregon State Insane Asylum). The 1870 federal census recorded just twenty-four people of Chinese heritage in Salem, with 64 percent listing their occupation as cook, and the majority of those working for (and living with) white families. Additionally, 20 percent identified as washers or laundry workers, and 16 percent were incarcerated at the Oregon State Penitentiary.<sup>17</sup>

Beginning in the 1870s, Salem's earliest Chinese residents settled downtown, primarily along State Street on the block between Liberty and High streets. By the late nineteenth century, newspapers and city documents



**SUNG LUNG LAUNDRY**, located on the corner of Liberty and Court streets, was one of Salem's earliest Chinese-run businesses. Sung Lung ran the laundry and stands outside the building wearing traditional Chinese clothing in about 1888.

described this area as Salem's Chinatown. The block became a physical community space for Chinese residents in Salem. George Lai Sun, Sung Lung, Kum Bow Wo, and Hop Lee were a few of Salem's earliest business owners.<sup>18</sup> Sun was originally the owner of City Laundry, located in the Bennett House on the northwest corner of State and High streets.<sup>19</sup> The Bennett House had been a hotel that hosted prominent Oregonians until 1880, when it became a boarding house for many of Salem's early Chinese immigrants. An 1887 fire destroyed the building, killing three Chinese residents, and Sun moved his business to another building in downtown Salem.<sup>20</sup> One of the earliest images of Salem's Chinese-run businesses was taken in 1888, showing a laundry building on the northwest corner of Liberty and Court streets. Sung Lung, who ran the business, is pictured in the photograph wearing traditional Chinese clothing.<sup>21</sup>

1870 U.S. CENSUS DATA: SALEM RESIDENTS OF CHINESE ANCESTRY			
NAME	HEAD OF HOUSEHOLD	AGE	OCCUPATION
Ach Baldi	E.N. Cooke (State Treasurer)	28	Cook
Sam Moy	E. Williams (Lawyer)	18	Cook
Wa-Gee John	John Wa-Gee (self)	32	Washing
Hop-Sing	Hop-Sing (self)	22	Washing
Hug-Juin	Hop-Sing	20	Cook
Hong Sam	Hop-Sing	20	Cook
Ah-Chee	Hop-Sing	30	Cook
Tai William	Hop-Sing	25	Cook
Ah-Wa	None	30	Convict
Ah-Sing	H. Hellenbrand (housekeeper)	26	Cook
Got-Loy	Got-Loy	22	Laundry
Shing	Got-Loy	21	Laundry
Ah-Sing	Got-Loy	25	Laundry
Moi-Ling	Got-Loy	20	Cook
Ah Hoy	T McFadden Patton	25	Cook
Lom Hoy	Myer Hirsch	20	Cook
Chow	Beriah Brown (Painter)	20	Cook
Hoy-Chow	R.W. Sayres (Baker)	21	Cook
Ming Hug	William Davies (Farmer)	20	Cook
Sam-Hoy	N. Rounds (Minister)	13	Cook
See.Lee.Yong	None	40	Convict
Tom	None	38	Convict
R. Suit	None	32	Convict
Wan-Kee	A.F. Waller (Minister)	12	Cook

Another successful Salem Chinese business owner was Kum Bow Wo, who practiced medicine in Salem from the late 1880s until his death in 1910. His practice was in Salem's Chinatown, first on the block fronting State and Liberty and then on High Street. His business was known as the "Dr. Kum Bow Wo Co.," and he operated a drugstore as well as his medical practice. In addition to advertising cures for over 500 different diseases, he advertised cures for opium addiction, promising the utmost secrecy.<sup>22</sup> Low Sun Fook, known to locals by his anglicized nickname "Hop Lee," established a laundry business on South Commercial Street across from the Marion Hotel. Low was born on December 12, 1858, in China, and came to the United States in 1877.<sup>23</sup> He was a laundryman, merchant, and hop grower in Salem for more than forty years.<sup>24</sup>

According to the federal census, Oregon's Chinese population grew from 3,300 in 1870 to 9,510 in 1880.<sup>25</sup> Census records from 1880 cataloged 35 percent of the foreign-born residents of Salem as Chinese; of those, about half identified as laborers and the other half as wood choppers, cooks, laundry workers, servants, or lumber mill workers. Salem's Chinese immigrant



**KUM BOW WO (LEFT)** practiced medicine in Salem in 1897 at his drugstore and medical practice, Dr. Kum Bow Wo Co. George Sun, also a business owner, is pictured on the right in this photograph taken in 1897 at Chinese New Year.

presence was significant, especially in the central downtown area. This was not unusual, as other cities on the West Coast had a similar proportion of Chinese-born immigrants.<sup>26</sup> Salem's ethnically Chinese population, including those born in the United States, began increasing in proportion to those born in China after the turn of the century.<sup>27</sup>

From the mid nineteenth century through the early twentieth century, the Chinese Consolidated Benevolent Association (CCBA) played an important role in supporting both Chinese immigrants and permanent settlers in Salem. The CCBA was originally established as an overseas *huiguan* organization, based on the historic Chinese *huiguan* system that had been operating in China since the sixteenth century.<sup>28</sup> Him Mark Lai defines the Chinese *huiguan* as a district association or "meeting hall," where membership is based on a common geographical origin in China.<sup>29</sup> The first *huiguan* comprised merchants whose primary purpose was to protect the group's economic interests and who therefore named their organizations as "companies." These earliest *huiguan* were established in San Francisco between 1851 and 1853 and brought together people generally from South China (Guangdong Province), with new companies splitting off by the mid 1860s.<sup>30</sup> Collectively, these associations became known as the Chinese Six Companies.

Persecution of Chinese immigrants increased in the United States during the late nineteenth century, and leaders believed it was essential to create an umbrella organization to protect their civil rights. They formed the San Francisco CCBA on November 19, 1882, but did not officially incorporate it until 1901.<sup>31</sup> Chinese merchants established chapters of the CCBA across the country, including in Portland, Oregon, in 1900. This chapter still exists in Oregon today and is known as the Oregon CCBA. The CCBA fought the U.S. government for legal rights for its members, provided support for new immigrants, and protected the poor and indigent.<sup>32</sup> Researchers have not found any incorporation papers for a separate Salem CCBA chapter or documentation of association with the Hoy Yin Association, a similar support organization active in Oregon and founded by immigrants from the same region as George Lai Sun, the area in the southwest of Taishan County (台山 Toisan or Toishan; prior to 1914 Xinning or 新寧 Sunning).<sup>33</sup>

U.S. businesses in need of laborers contracted with the Chinese Six Companies, which recruited men from China to work in the United States. In some cases, the companies charged a "departure fee," which ensured the workers' care in America as well as return of their remains to China for burial if they died while abroad.<sup>34</sup> Burial in China was the responsibility of the family, but for Chinese people away from their homelands, that responsibility often fell to

the local *huiguan* association.<sup>35</sup> As leaders in the Salem *huiguan* chapter, Sun and Kum were involved in organizing the disinterment of Chinese remains for return to China on behalf of the Six Companies — and perhaps were responsible for constructing the shrine unearthed in Pioneer Cemetery. In China, after a loved one's death, the remains would first be temporarily buried, typically on a hill outside their home village. After a period of time, the bones would be exhumed (disinterred), cleaned, and placed in a ceramic vessel within the family vault or tomb.<sup>36</sup> On a visit to China in 2018, author Fitzgerald was able to confirm this practice in person when she visited a temporary burial on a hill outside Shangdun Village (上墩村), where a relative of Sun was once buried.

Disinterment of remains and their return to China was an important practice for Chinese residents across the American West. Remains of many of Salem's Chinese were initially buried in the Pioneer Cemetery and then returned to China.<sup>37</sup> The remains of people who died in Salem from the late nineteenth century until 1949 were shipped to China via Hong Kong and processed through Tung Wah Hospital's coffin storage hall.<sup>38</sup> Historian Him Mark Lai notes: "Each *huiguan* maintained a cemetery, provided medicine and burial expenses for the poor, and donated passage money to China for the infirm and indigent elderly."<sup>39</sup> An article published in 1892 detailed the disinterment of fifteen Salem men whose remains "were prepared for shipment in dried tea leaves."<sup>40</sup> In 1902, the remains of nine individuals were disinterred and ceremonially placed in a special arrangement with a willow branch before being repatriated to their hometowns in China.<sup>41</sup> In 1913, the *Daily Capital Journal* reported that Sun took care of transporting home the remains of twenty-two Chinese residents who had been placed in the Oregon State Hospital, first by transporting them to Seattle, where they would board a ship for Hong Kong: "Through arrangements made by the Chinese Six Companies, they will be met there by relatives and taken care."<sup>42</sup>

Oregon State University's Oregon Chinese collection of disinterment documents identify several Salem disinterments that occurred in 1948.<sup>43</sup> The documents also include the original CCBA roster of the 1928 shipment of remains that verified the disinterment and repatriation of some of Salem's Chinese. According to the documents, 111 Chinese were buried in Pioneer Cemetery. Of those burials, 71 percent appear to have been disinterred and shipped to Portland or San Francisco for transit to China.<sup>44</sup> A majority of these were men; typically, women and children were not repatriated. Thirty-two people of Chinese descent appear to still be buried in the Pioneer Cemetery. Of these, ten have known headstones, and the remaining twenty-two have locations that are unknown within the cemetery.<sup>45</sup>

Salem's *huiguan* was built on a strong family network, especially based around Sun's extended family. In the spring of 2018, author Fitzgerald visited Sun's village, Namayang (那马洋村), in China as well as three villages nearby: Di Miao Village (土地庙村), Ishii Village (石井村), and Shangdun Village. Interviews there with descendants revealed that Sun's extended family all came from neighboring villages. It is possible that Salem's Chinese population had also developed ties through existing membership in their Chinese-village-based *huiguan* or *wooi-kun* (native place) before they arrived in Salem.<sup>46</sup> Interviews with residents in Sun's village and neighboring villages also confirmed that Salem's Chinese immigrants sent money back to their families in China.<sup>47</sup>

Many of Sun's extended family members from China settled in Salem and became leaders within the local community. Leong Hun, for example, was Sun's business partner and brother-in-law, and he came from Shangdun Village, which was close to Sun's village, in an area in the southwest of Taishan County in Guangdong Province. Lai Yick was Sun's cousin, who also came to Salem in the 1880s from a nearby village in China. Lai initially served as a clerk for Sun and became a doctor, operating the Yick So Herb Company, which was both a drugstore and a medical practice in Salem's Chinatown.<sup>48</sup> Like Sun, Lai fostered relationships between the Chinese and non-Chinese community in Salem. In 1908, Salem's *Daily Capitol Journal* reported that Lai facilitated Salem's Chinese community participation in the Cherry Fair parade and entered three floats and a full Chinese orchestra. Fifty members of the Chinese community also dressed in traditional clothing and marched in the parade.<sup>49</sup> Lai owned the Nomking Cafe (on Commercial Street and later known as the Shanghai Cafe), a noodle restaurant where he often hosted Salem's public leaders.<sup>50</sup>

The *Weekly Oregon Statesman* published an article in 1893 that attested to Sun's community leadership: "There are fully 250 Chinese residents in Salem and today will be a gala day for them. George Sun, the mayor of Chinatown, has filled his store with all sorts of knick-knacks, sweet meats, Chinese bon-bons etc."<sup>51</sup> Local historian and reporter Anne Lossner recorded a 1900 interview with George's son, Suie Lai Sun, and paraphrased his description of the importance of his father's store for Chinese people in Salem:

*George Sun's first store was located where the Ben Franklin Bank is now at State and High and later moved to the corner of Ferry and High. Sun sold coffee, tea, candy and tobacco. Behind the shop portion was a large room which was used by Chinese out-of-town visitors as a card room and dormitory. A favorite game was dominoes. George Sun also acted as a banker for the older Chinese*

*who didn't trust banks; he had a reputation for astuteness and absolute honesty.*<sup>52</sup>

Sun and his store were the heart of Salem's Chinatown, where residents could go to celebrate holidays, grieve for loved ones who had passed away, get loans, and obtain medical or legal help when they needed it. This store became increasingly important to Salem's Chinese community as a source of support and information during a time when anti-Chinese movements were increasing along the West Coast.

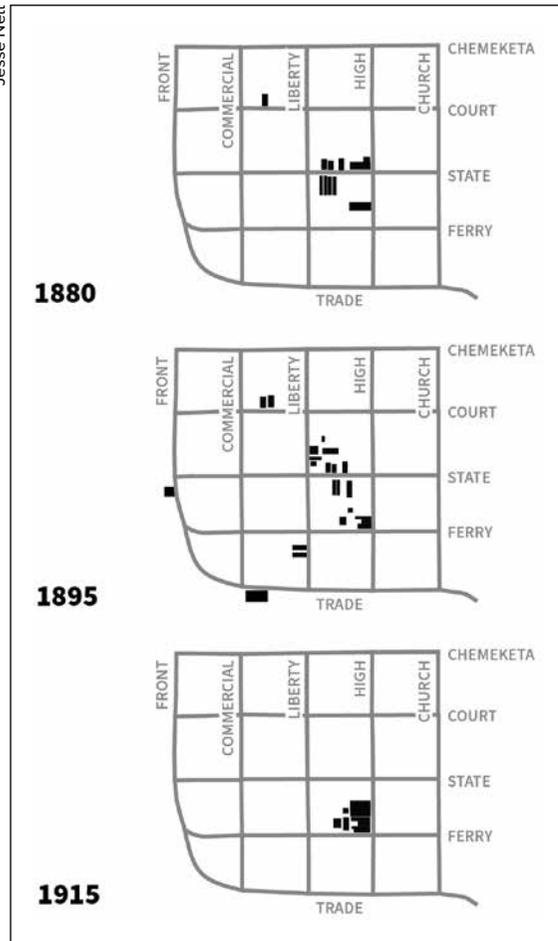
The federal government instituted several policies, including laws and international treaties, that governed Chinese immigration policy, mostly with a goal of exclusion of Chinese people. These resulted in the eventual reduction of Salem's Chinese population.<sup>53</sup> The most restrictive was the Chinese Exclusion Act, passed initially in 1882 and modified several times until it was repealed in 1943, which prohibited immigration of Chinese laborers to the United States. Chinese immigrants who could certify that they were merchants, not laborers, or other members of the privileged class could still enter the country.<sup>54</sup>

Sun fostered relationships within the Chinese community, and as the leader of Salem's local *huiguan*, he received direction from the Six Companies. He also acted as an intermediary to the larger Salem community, especially when fighting for the legal rights of Salem's Chinese residents.<sup>55</sup> Four years after the Chinese Exclusion Act became law in 1882, a reporter for Salem's *Weekly Oregon Statesman* interviewed Sun about the resulting difficulties that Salem's Chinese were facing, and he said: "Every Chinaman in Salem will stay here as



**SUIE LAI SUN**, pictured here in 1917, was the son of George Lai Sun, whose business in Salem was an important gathering place for the Chinese community.

OHQ Research Library: 01356011



**THIS MAP** documents Chinese-occupied buildings in downtown Salem, Oregon, between 1880 and 1915. The building footprints shown in black are based on buildings found on Sanborn fire insurance maps from the years 1880, 1895, and 1915.

occurred in the wake of the publication of the Geary Act. The Six Companies [CCBA] instructed all the Chinese who resided in the United States not to comply with this law.<sup>58</sup> The deputy collector of internal revenue, R.T. Chamberlain, came to Salem in April 1893 to register the city's Chinese residents. Sun directed Salem's Chinese residents not to comply, and the *Weekly Oregon Statesman* reported that the federal agent was unsuccessful:

long as he wants to stay and be protected in his rights. . . . Salem people do not go off halfcocked, and they have a well-earned reputation as cool-headed, law abiding citizens."<sup>56</sup> Here, Sun both resisted calls for Chinese people to leave Salem or the United States and appealed to the sensibilities of non-Chinese members of Salem's community to recognize that Salem's Chinese were also community members and had rights.

Sun and Kum used their political influence as leaders in Salem's Chinese community to help Chinese immigrants resist the 1892 Geary Act, an extension of the 1882 Exclusion Act that included allowing Chinese laborers to travel to China and re-enter the United States. The law required Chinese residents to register and secure certificates of residence as proof of their right to live in the United States.<sup>57</sup> As historian Lawrence Hansen explained, "the most notable defense by the Six Companies against U.S. discriminatory legislation

[Chamberlain] made two visits to George Sun, Mayor of Chinatown, and was told by that important personage that the Chinese had instructions from the Six Companies not to register "just yet," and the day's result shows their obedience.<sup>59</sup>

In a powerful act of local resistance, Salem's Chinese residents did not register until almost a year later, and when they did, it was at Sun's store.<sup>60</sup>

During the late 1890s, residents within Salem's non-Chinese community had mixed responses to those federal exclusion policies. Members of the Christian Women's Board of Missions were distraught about the effect of the laws on their efforts to convert Chinese people to Christianity. On May 12, 1896, the board's monthly meeting topic was "China and the Chinese," and as noted by a reporter for the *Oregon Statesman*: "The ladies regretted very much that our government is at this time enforcing laws to transport Chinese out of the country, when if allowed to remain here, they would be brought under the influence of Christian civilization and Christian thought, and would thus be immensely benefited."<sup>61</sup> Members of the local religious community had been focusing their conversion efforts on Chinese children, and in 1889, Rev. Holt, a missionary from Portland whose first name is unknown, had come to Salem to establish a Chinese Mission school in association with the Presbyterian church.<sup>62</sup> By 1896, the small school was well-established and well-known in Salem. The following year, it had twenty students and was hosting an annual Christmas concert for the community.<sup>63</sup>

It is possible that the Chinese parents who chose to send their children to Salem's Christian school did so out of a desire to assimilate into dominant American culture. Some Chinese immigrants chose to assimilate into the local community by changing their appearance. Prior to 1911, the Manchu dynasty required men to wear queues, or braids, as symbols of their subordination and loyalty to the government. Chinese immigrants were reluctant to cut off their queues in case they returned to China, but the hairstyle was often targeted in racist attacks, physical or rhetorical.<sup>64</sup> The front page of Salem's *Daily Capital Journal* reported as early as April 1910 that the Chinese government had issued an edict allowing loyal Chinese subjects to part with their queues.<sup>65</sup> George Lai Sun's son Suie later described being teased about wearing his hair in a queue when he started school and recounted that his "parents decided that in keeping with the times and local customs, they would permit all three boys to have their queues cut off."<sup>66</sup> George Lai Sun and his wife Leong Shee Sun raised eight children in Salem, and this decision also may have indicated that they had chosen to remain in the United States.<sup>67</sup>

After passage of the Exclusion Act in 1882 and its extension via the Geary Act in 1892, travel between China and America became much more difficult.



**THIS PHOTOGRAPH** of Lee Bing, a U.S. citizen, was attached to his 1904 petition to re-enter the United States after a trip to China. Immigration records such as this one emphasize the burden exclusion policies placed on Chinese Oregonians' lives.

the country. Registration required three photographs, which was very costly. Some of Salem's Chinese residents were unable to afford this cost and, as a result, could not register and were arrested. Ng Ah Foo was arrested in Portland on June 10, 1911, and charged with being an undocumented laborer. In his interview with the U.S. Immigration Service, he stated that he had been born in Salem to Chinese parents and had worked as a laborer in Salem since he was twelve. After his arrest and interview, the U.S. Immigration Service could not confirm that Ng Ah Foo was born in Salem, and he was investigated for entering the country illegally from Mexico.<sup>70</sup>

During this same period, federal restrictions also made it more difficult for family members or relatives to travel to the United States. In 1913, Sun's business partner and brother-in-law, Leong Hun, tried to welcome his son, Leong Toong Yook, to Salem. Portland immigration officials did not allow Leong Toong Yook to enter the United States, however, because they believed he had falsified documents and was not Leong Hun's real son. Leong Hun left China before his son was born, and they had never met. This made the

Policies required that all persons of Chinese descent, even U.S. citizens, were scrutinized by immigration officials and required to register for travel. Recently declassified immigration files from Portland, Oregon, between 1891 and 1943 document approximately fifty Salem residents of Chinese ethnicity who traveled to China and returned to Oregon during that period.<sup>68</sup>

Immigration records from this period emphasize the effect of these policies on Chinese Oregonians' lives. In 1897, for example, Portland immigration officials refused to allow Lee Bing to enter the country after he returned from a trip to China, although Lee had been born in Salem in 1881 and therefore was a U.S. citizen. His father, Lee Quong, a Chinese merchant in Salem, filed a petition in 1904 to allow him to re-enter the country, and officials finally granted him entry in 1911.<sup>69</sup> Compliance with the Geary Act required that all residents of Chinese descent must register or leave

officials suspicious. Seven people testified on Leong Toong Yook's behalf, including Sun and J.F. Hughes (owner of the land downtown where Salem's Chinatown existed).<sup>71</sup>

In 2018, interviews by author Fitzgerald with descendants of Leong Toong Yook confirmed that he was Leong Hun's son and that the documents had not been falsified.<sup>72</sup> Immigration officials had required Leong Toong Yook to describe his home village, Shangdun Village, and house in great detail.<sup>73</sup> Remarkably, those descriptions match what existed during the author's visit to this village, over 100 years after Leong Yook was questioned. Leong Toong Yook remained in Shangdun Village, where he married and raised a family. He was buried not far from his village, having never met his father. His story, along with others who faced similar obstacles, offer clear illustrations of how Salem's Chinese residents experienced the impacts of national exclusionary laws in the United States. These experiences were painful, and as in Leong Toong Yook's case, often resulted in separating family members from each other for a lifetime.

After the turn of the twentieth century, Salem residents who were not supportive of Chinese immigration pressured Salem's City Council to establish policies that restricted the local Chinese population; many of those policies related to the issue of "public health." The council began adopting such policies under the guise of protecting the general health of the community, in line with similar policies in larger cities, as detailed by historian Kimberly Jensen in *Oregon's Doctor to the World*. In Portland, city leaders blamed Chinese communities for the onset of disease and targeted their communities with legislation that was not enforced elsewhere in the city. In Honolulu, Hawaii,



**THE GEARY ACT** required everyone of Chinese descent to register with the federal government. Ng Ah Foo, pictured here in about 1911, was arrested for not having the proper documentation. He was investigated for entering the country illegally from Mexico.

the city conducted “controlled burns” that eventually burned out of control and destroyed much of Chinatown in 1900.<sup>74</sup> In Salem, a December 1902 fire started in one of the wooden structures that a Chinese merchant was renting on Liberty Street.<sup>75</sup> The fire called attention to the poor condition of the block’s wooden structures, which were rented primarily by Salem’s Chinese residents. Soon after, in 1903, the Salem City Council passed an ordinance to condemn and destroy the buildings on State Street between High and Liberty. The city’s Committee on Health and Police had determined that this block, known as Salem’s Chinatown, was a “menace” to the health and safety of the community. The *Daily Oregon Statesman* published a 1903 article supporting the city, titled “Chinatown Condemned: Council Has Declared That Old Eyesore Must Be Destroyed.”<sup>76</sup> Several years later, in 1910, the Salem City Council passed Ordinance No. 777, which specifically regulated Chinese and Japanese noodle restaurants. The Health and Police Committee was again involved, this time through producing a report stating, in part, that “the boxes or stalls in the Chinese restaurants of the city . . . were a nuisance.” The city ordinance prohibited minors from going to these restaurants after certain hours and required that all Chinese and Japanese noodle restaurants within Salem corporate city limits have clear glass windows or doors, so that there could be an unobstructed view into the interior from the street.<sup>77</sup>

Such policies did not bring about the complete destruction of Chinatown but, rather, its relocation a block south to High Street. A 1913 immigration officer’s interview with Salem downtown property owner J.F. Hughes includes a statement about the relocation of Chinese businesses: “I moved those houses along down there in that part of town [to the block south of State, between High and Liberty] and have forgotten just how they were located, but they have been on that lot for about ten years.”<sup>78</sup> Hughes also raised the rents by ten dollars a month.<sup>79</sup> By state law, Chinese residents were not allowed to own any property, including the land where their buildings and shops stood, and this rent increase was a significant hardship.<sup>80</sup> In 1911, the *Daily Capital Journal* published a story titled “Chinese May Go to Portland,” which detailed the concerns Chinese residents had about the raising rent prices and included the suggestion that some might move away entirely.<sup>81</sup> The next day, the newspaper ran another article, with local Chinese man Hen Foo denying the claim that people want to move away. The reporter emphasized Hen’s anger and quoted him as saying: “Salem Chinamen [don’t] want to live in Portland, but in Salem and you tell everybody who says [we] are going to Portland that [they] lie, and bring him to me and I [will] talk to him — I [will] tell him he is a liar, too.” Hen confirmed that the higher rent would most likely force people to look for a different

place to live and do business, but he stated they would search for new quarters in Salem.<sup>82</sup>

Salem’s Chinese population decreased from 97 in 1900 to 79 in 1920, and by this time, about half of the Chinese in the city were born in the United States.<sup>83</sup> Despite legal and financial pressures, they continued to live and work in Salem’s downtown, playing a notable role in the community.<sup>84</sup> In 1922, George Lai Sun and 125 other guests attended Hal D. Patton’s fiftieth “birthday anniversary,” which included “prominent men who have lived in the capital city during that time.”<sup>85</sup> (Patton was a prominent Salem businessman and legislator.) At this dinner, Sun gave a speech about his experiences coming to Salem in the late 1800s. His speech is significant not only for its description of early Salem, but also for illuminating the difficulties Sun faced being during this time period and his frustration about not being a citizen or able to vote:

*I am [very] glad to be here tonight to see all my friends. I look all over. I tell you when I first come from [‘China’] — come to Salem in 1868 — when I come to Salem, this was a small town, not many stores, but a good many empty and streets awful muddy. Then I stay here so long. I get acquainted with everybody. When I come here I know Cooke Patton. Hal but little child about that big (illustrates) but I know him [very] well. I have a store and he come to my place often and I like him and he like me and good friend. Then I been here in Salem so long; then I go back to [‘China’] twice and first time I been back to [‘China’] I get married. I not bring my wife over because I not have certificate. I have to go back over again. Then I make certificate before I go back home to bring my wife back over here. My wife come over here about thirty-five years. Then raise all my children in Salem. My children all go to school; all go through high school, some through college, and I like Salem because all people treat me nicely. Then my children all grow up. They [my children] can vote but I have been here so long, for fifty-four years next June, I ought to be citizen. I ought to be voting too. I see some country-man come over to this country; he stay not [very] long, three or four years; he can vote. Why I be here fifty-four years altogether, why I cannot vote. I ought to be citizen too. They must make mistake’ something wrong. Well excuse. (great applause).*<sup>86</sup>

In 1922, Lai Yick hosted a dinner for twenty-five Salem residents at his restaurant, including Patton, Gov. Ben Olcott, and Judge John McCourt.<sup>87</sup> In 1924, however, Hughes redeveloped (or “converted,” in the language of his 1944 obituary) much of what was once Chinatown — the block on the east side of High Street and north of Ferry Street — and constructed what is now known as the Hughes Building.<sup>88</sup> Restrictions on Chinese property ownership directly led to the loss of Salem’s Chinatown and pushed many Chinese families, including Sun’s, to farms in Salem’s outskirts. All physical



**LAI YICK** (seated on the center right) was George Lai Sun's cousin and arrived in Salem in the 1880s. Lai became a doctor and operated Yick So Herb Company, which was both a drugstore and a medical practice in Salem's Chinatown. He is pictured here with unnamed members of his family in 1917.

evidence of Salem's Chinatown in downtown Salem disappeared by 1925, and Salem's Chinese population was less than 1 percent — twenty-eight people — by 1930.<sup>89</sup>

After the loss and destruction, the city no longer had a significant and visible Chinese community who lived and worked downtown. Low Sun Fook "Hop Lee," who had run a business in downtown from 1885 to 1923, established a farm outside Salem.<sup>90</sup> In 1903, Low Sun Fook married an American-born woman, Ah Kee Hong, who was able to own land. The couple owned and operated a 612-acre hop farm (hence the name "Hop Lee"). He died on August 22, 1925, and was buried on his wife's land.<sup>91</sup> Other families who moved to farms outside Salem included those of Sid Beck, Lee Hing, Jing Sun, Jing Yee, Jing Guy, George Lai Sun, and his son Suie.<sup>92</sup> Sun rented farmland and operated a ranch and a successful hop farm.

The Sun family successfully farmed in Keizer for many years before moving to Portland. Local reporter Ann Lossner interviewed Suie about his first job as a farm laborer while Salem's Chinatown still existed:

*His first job was on the Krebs Bros. 225-acre hop ranch on Brooklake Road where Steamerland is now. About 20 young Chinese lived in a large house on the ranch. The Oregon Electric Railroad tracks had just been completed as far as Hopmere and on Saturday night the young Chinese would ride the train directly into Chinatown, visit with their families, and return on Sunday night. The fare was 10 cents each way.<sup>93</sup>*

The Suns later rented part of the McNary-Stoltz farm and grew cabbage and cucumbers for the Stoltz cannery's pickles, kraut, and vinegar. Suie described delivering produce to other stores in Salem during his teenage years and how the Suns expanded their farm by planting hops after renting fifty more acres in 1911 or 1912. Lossner reported: "Suie brought his wife to Salem [in 1918] and the young couple moved in with the Sun family, which was then living in the beautiful, large house at the west end of Union Street (now known as the Gilbert house) while they built a small house on the Janisch farm."<sup>94</sup>

George Lai Sun moved to Portland in 1925, and died there in 1932.<sup>95</sup> Lossner describes how Suie and his wife moved to Portland during World War II to work in the shipyards, where he was a mechanic and she was a riveter; he worked the farm on weekends. After the war, they returned to the Salem area and built a new home, where they retired.<sup>96</sup>

Researchers were not able to find any mention of Salem's local Chinese community in the local media from the early 1930s until 1953, when Ben Maxwell of Salem's *Daily Capital Journal* described city and county employees inadvertently uncovering a "Chinese altar" in Salem's Pioneer Cemetery and a number



Oregon State Library, photographer Howard Troer

**LOW SUN FOOK**, also known as "Hop Lee," ran a business in downtown Salem from 1885 to 1923 and later operated a farm outside of Salem.



**IN 1963**, Salem Parks Director Charles Gale stands next to a Chinese offering table in Salem's Pioneer Cemetery. The image accompanied a March 24, 1963, *Statesman Journal* article titled "Shrine Uncovered in Pioneer Cemetery," which eventually led to a recent three-year investigation that documented Salem's Chinese community in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

of funeral relics that "they promptly disposed of with finality."<sup>97</sup> The 1963 article featuring Charles Gale mentioned in the beginning of this article was one of the best clues, although its author did not include the location of the "shrine" within the cemetery. The last mention of Salem's Chinese community, as far as the researchers could find, was in a newspaper article published in the *Capital Journal* in October 1968.<sup>98</sup> After that, no public or publicized study of Salem's Chinese community was attempted until 2011, when Eagle Scout candidate Peter Anderson completed a project to study Chinese burials in the Pioneer Cemetery.<sup>99</sup>

The HLC's collaborative effort to locate and uncover the shrine in Pioneer Cemetery was aided by the clearer understanding of Chinese burials in the cemetery as well as small clues documented in historical newspaper articles and the memories of committee members and longtime Salem residents. At over seventeen acres, a physical search of the cemetery could have taken weeks. Original burial records from the Independent Order of the Odd Fellows Cemetery did not reference the specific location of a

Chinese lot or block, although a 1909 newspaper article mentioned a "little square reserved for the Chinese."<sup>100</sup> In a stroke of luck, committee member Rick Hilts, manager of the adjacent City View Cemetery, grew up across the street and remembered the general location of the structure from playing in the cemetery as a child. When researchers visited the cemetery with Hilts, the only visible remnant was a small L-shaped piece of concrete that was flush with the ground. At the time, it was unclear whether this was the structure from the 1963 article or just a portion of concrete curbing typical throughout the rest of the cemetery.

To determine the structure's true identity, researchers performed a careful, non-invasive archaeological survey, using ground penetrating radar and excavation utilizing professional methods. This investigation uncovered the shrine just below the surface. The most exciting moment of excavation came when archaeologists exposed a portion of the marble tablet with Chinese characters on the face, confirming that this remnant was in fact the structure shown next to Charles Gale in 1963. It was clear that, sometime after 1963, the shrine was covered and a portion of it destroyed, although it is unclear why or whether those actions were purposeful or accidental. The project committee benefited from representatives from the CCBA, the Hoy Yin Association, and Salem residents of Chinese descent who had completed their own ancestral research to help us better understand cultural practices associated with the offering table. The committee worked to translate the tablet and was able to determine that the shrine was likely a funerary or offering table related to the tradition of Qingming, a Chinese holiday about honoring ancestors.<sup>101</sup>

A 1990 Lossner interview with Suie Lai Sun confirmed that Chinese families in Salem used the structure during their celebration of Qingming, described here as "Chinese Memorial Day:"

*In the Chinese section there was a large slab, raised to make a table. At the back was a raised portion filled with dirt; next to it was an open oven. The Chinese candles, which were short and slim — about the size of a man's finger — were lighted, together with the sticks of punk, and set into the dirt. Then the men knelt and recited prayers for the dead. . . . When the ceremony was concluded, some bits of food were scattered around the cemetery to appease the devil or evil spirits. The food was now considered sacred. Those who wished could eat their portions there, but generally, they all returned to town to the store designated as headquarters for Memorial Day.<sup>102</sup>*

Qingming is a traditional holiday celebrated in many Asian countries during the month of April. The day is focused on honoring deceased ancestors,

cleaning their resting places, and leaving or ritually burning offerings for the dead. In addition to mausoleums or “bone houses,” which allowed for storage of remains before they were returned to China, many Chinese cemeteries in the Pacific Northwest included a funerary table or a “shrine or altar for ritual observances such as the offering of food after the funeral and during the Qingming or Chongyang festivals.”<sup>103</sup> Historian Paul G. Chace describes the funerary practices of the Chinese community in Marysville, California, where Chinese immigrants practiced rites that honored unknown “good brothers” and the “ghost-spirits of deceased ancestors.”<sup>104</sup> The Salem table was used during the Qingming festival, but it was likely used during funerals as well. Newspaper descriptions of early Chinese funerals in Salem’s Independent Order of the Odd Fellows Cemetery describe the customs with curious interest. In particular, a report on the funeral of Kum on August 5, 1910, describes a feast of chicken, pork, eggs, fruit, candies, and wine that were placed upon his grave. Even more compelling is the mention of burning his personal effects in a furnace, a common practice in Chinese culture today.<sup>105</sup>

The project committee theorized that the funerary table may have originally been three to four feet above the ground. In Chinese villages, the author observed community offering tables that were either flat on the ground or three to four feet in height, and all characterized by concrete knee walls in a U-shape and a central tablet with a Chinese inscription (a general community blessing). The offering tables were either concrete over a brick foundation or concrete flush on the ground, with a central urn utilized for both burned and food offerings. Suie Sun’s description of the “raised table” appears to confirm that, as originally constructed, Salem’s funerary table was more typical of the type seen in China built on a brick foundation. Additional excavations are necessary to confirm the base construction of this table. Regardless, it is clear that Salem’s early Chinese residents replicated the general design and form of their typical community offering table within Salem’s cemetery. The table is a clear example of how Salem’s Chinese immigrants adapted and maintained their cultural practices in Oregon.

After more fully understanding the table’s historical use, the HLC’s project committee decided to work with Salem’s Chinese community to reinstate the Qingming festival in 2018.<sup>106</sup> The committee member representing the CCBA recommended that the first celebration should include a blessing to heal some of the damage caused by the erasure of this history. The priest from a local Salem Chinese Buddhist Temple (Mia Chung Temple) performed a blessing over the funerary offering table on April 5, 2018. People from the CCBA, Portland’s Hoy Yin Association, Willamette University, the Willamette Heritage Center, Friends of the Salem Pioneer Cemetery, and members of Salem’s Chinese community were all essential attendees. The names of those



Courtesy of Kimberli Fitzgerald

**THIS COMMUNITY SHRINE** is located in Leong Toong Fook’s school village, Xikuo (西廓村). Author Kimberli Fitzgerald visited the shrine in March 2018 as part of a research visit to China to learn more about shrines and funerary tables similar to the one found in Salem’s Pioneer Cemetery.

Chinese still buried in the cemetery were read by elders from Salem’s Chinese community. Salem’s mayor attended and read to all those in attendance a proclamation and an acknowledgment of the destruction of the shrine and the mistreatment of Salem’s Chinese population. The festival was attended by over 100 people from the community, and the celebration of Qingming was held again in April 2019 and 2021, and it will continue to be an annual tradition.<sup>107</sup>

Slowly but surely, research has revealed the stories and lives of nineteenth-century Chinese immigrants in Salem, Oregon. Salem had a thriving Chinese community beginning in the late 1800s and lasting through the early 1900s. George Lai Sun provided leadership of Salem’s local *huiguan*, with the support of the CCBA, which allowed Salem’s Chinese community to maintain its independence within a larger context of exclusionary policies and laws. The city HLC’s collaborative public archaeological investigations uncovered the remains of a funerary table, which reflects the form and use of village community offering tables that one of the authors observed in China.

Through the outreach associated with this project and through our renewed celebration of the Qingming festival, many of Salem’s Chinese Americans have found a way to meaningfully connect to the history of Chinese people



**PI FEN LIN, SALEM MAYOR CHUCK BENNETT, AND ZHEN YUAN** stand in front of the recently recovered funerary table on April 5, 2018, in Salem's Pioneer Cemetery during Salem's Qingming festival. Zhen Yuan and Pi Fen Lin, from Salem's Buddhist Association, performed a blessing and a traditional memorial ceremony during which members of Salem's Chinese community read the names of all of those buried here in their original Chinese Toisan dialect.

in Salem. While Chinatown has been lost, its community funerary offering table remains in Salem's Pioneer Cemetery, a testament to those Chinese residents still buried there and evidence of the Chinese cultural traditions they once practiced.

## NOTES

1. "Shrine Uncovered in Pioneer Cemetery," *Oregon Statesman*, March 24, 1963, sec. I, 6.

2. Chinese naming conventions typically list the family name (or surname) first, then the given name, which is the reverse of the typical western naming conventions. Federal

Census records from 1880, 1900, 1910, 1920, and 1930 list Sun as the family name. George Lai Sun's children all have the common family "Lai Sun" name, so it is possible that Lai was part of their original surname and dropped here in Oregon. The name "George Lai Sun" is on his headstone, and for the purposes

of this manuscript, Sun is used as the family name.

3. "Hall No. 2—Pioneering Overseas," excerpt from interpretive panel, Wuyi Overseas Chinese Museum, Jiangmen, China, translated panel, photographed by Kimberli Fitzgerald March 2018.

4. Sucheng Chan, "Asian American Historiography," *Pacific Historical Review* 65:3 (August 1996): 363–99.

5. Robert E. Park, "A Race Relations Survey," *Journal of Applied Sociology* 8:4 (March–April 1924): 195–205.

6. Betty Lee Sung, *Mountain of Gold: The Story of the Chinese in America* (New York: MacMillan, 1967); Thomas W. Chinn, Him Mark Lai, and Philip P. Choy, *A History of the Chinese in California: A Syllabus* (San Francisco: Chinese Historical Society of America, 1969).

7. Him Mark Lai, "Chinese Pioneers in the 19th Century" *East/West, The Chinese American Journal* 2:1 (January 3, 1968).

8. Shih-shan Henry Tsai, *The Chinese Experience in America* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1986).

9. Ronald T. Takaki, *Strangers from a Different Shore: A History of Asian Americans* (Boston: Little, Brown, and Co., 1998); Sandy Lyndon, *Chinese gold: the Chinese in the Monterey Bay Region* (Capitola, Calif.: Capitola Book Co., 1985); Huping Ling, *Surviving on the Gold Mountain: A History of Chinese American Women and their Lives* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1998); Roger Daniels, *Asian America: Chinese and Japanese in the United States since 1850* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1998).

10. David Iglar, "Commentary: Re-Orienting Asian American History through Transnational and International Scales," *Pacific Historical Review* 76:4, (November 2007): 611–14, <https://doi.org/10.1525/phr.2007.76.4.611> (accessed September 27, 2021); Sucheng Chan, ed. *Chinese American Transnationalism* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2006).

11. Judy Yung, "A Bowlful of Tears' Revisited: The Full Story of Lee Puey You's Immigration Experience at Angel Island" *Frontiers: A Journal of Women Studies* 25:1 (2004):

1–22; Judy Yung, "Giving Voice to Chinese American Women-Problems and Perplexities in Women's Oral History" *Frontiers: A Journal of Women Studies* 19:3 (1998): 130–56; Albert Cheng, Him Mark Lai, "The 'In Search of Roots' Program: Constructing Identity through Family History Research and a Journey to the Ancestral Land" in *The Chinese in America: A History from Gold Mountain to the New Millennium*, ed. Susie Lan Cassel (Walnut Creek, Calif.: AltaMira Press, 2002), 293–307.

12. Marie Rose Wong, *Sweet Cakes, Long Journey: The Chinatowns of Portland, Oregon* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2004), 108–109.

13. Chelsea Rose and J. Ryan Kennedy, eds., *Chinese Diaspora Archaeology in North America* (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2020).

14. Pyau Ling, "Causes of Chinese Emigration," *The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 39:1 (January 1912): 74–82.

15. These treaties included the 1844 Treaty of Wanghia, the 1857–1859 Treaty of Tianjin, and the 1868 Burlingame Seward Treaty. These were a series of treaties with China intend to open markets to Western trade. U.S. Department of State, Office of the Historian, "The Opening to China Part II: the Second Opium War, the United States, and the Treaty of Tianjin, 1857–1859," Milestones: 1830–1860, <https://history.state.gov/milestones/1830-1860/china-2> (accessed December 4, 2020).

16. U.S. Census Bureau, RG 29, 1860 U.S. census, population schedules, microfilm publication M653, 1,438 rolls [hereafter 1860 U.S. census], National Archives and Records Administration, Washington, D.C. [hereafter NARA].

17. U.S. Census Bureau, RG 29, 1870 U.S. census, population schedules, microfilm publication M593, 1,761 rolls [hereafter 1870 U.S. census], NARA.

18. George Lai Sun states that he arrived in Salem in 1868, but he cannot be found in the 1870 Salem federal census. The 1900 Census records his immigration date as 1869. U.S. Census Bureau, 1900 U.S. census, micro-

film publication T623, 1854 rolls [hereafter 1900 U.S. census], NARA. Sun mentioned his arrival in a speech he gave in 1922, stating that he had been in Salem for fifty-four years. "George Sun's Comments on Salem, 1922," excerpt found in *Hal D. Patton's Fiftieth Anniversary: A Reunion of Old Friends and Schoolmates and Commemorating the Sixty Years of My Arrival in Salem* (Salem: N.D. Elliot, 1932), copy available in Willamette Heritage Center Research Room, Salem, Oregon.

19. "Into New Quarters," *Weekly Oregon Statesman*, March 15, 1887, p. 3.

20. "A Big Blaze: The Bennett House Burned to Ashes," *Weekly Oregon Statesman*, January 21, 1887, p. 3.

21. The Barrick Funeral Home reprinted an 1888 photo of Sung Lung standing in front of his laundry on the wooden boardwalk as part of a postcard series titled "Salem in the Past," *Oregon Statesman*, March, 28, 1951, p. 67. The Salem Public Library also holds this photograph in its Ben Maxwell Collection and notes that it is dated 1888.

22. "Are You Sick? Do you wish to get Cured?," *Daily Capital Journal*, October 6, 1908, p. 6.

23. Keni Sturgeon. "Chinese immigrant Hop Lee was an early Salem Success," *Statesman Journal*, November 3, 2012, available online at [https://www.willamette-heritage.org/assets/News\\_2012/Chinese\\_immigrant\\_Hop\\_Lee.pdf](https://www.willamette-heritage.org/assets/News_2012/Chinese_immigrant_Hop_Lee.pdf) (accessed November 5, 2021).

24. "Stroke Proves Fatal to Chinese Merchant: Hop Lee Called Early Saturday Afternoon," *Oregon Statesman*, August 23, 1925, p. 1.

25. P. Scott Corbett & Nancy Parker Corbett, "The Chinese in Oregon, 1870–1880," *Oregon Historical Quarterly* 78:1 (Spring 1977): 75.

26. U.S. Census Bureau, 1880 U.S. census, NARA.

27. Salem's population identified as ethnically Chinese by year: 2 (1860); 24 (1870); 89 (1880); 97 (1900); 125 (1910); 79 (1920); 28 (1930). By 1900, Salem's Chinese represented 18 percent of Salem's foreign-born

population, as compared to 35 percent of the foreign-born population in 1880, which is the first sign of a reduction in Salem's local Chinese population as compared to Salem's overall foreign-born population. The authors gathered and analyzed this information using the following U.S. Census Bureau records held in RG 29 at NARA: 1860 U.S. census; 1870 U.S. census; 1880 U.S. census, population schedules, microfilm publication T9, 1,454 rolls; 1900 U.S. census; 1910 U.S. census, microfilm publication T624, 1,178 rolls; 1920 U.S. census, microfilm publication T625, 2,076 rolls; 1930 U.S. census, microfilm publication T626, 2,667 rolls.

28. Lai, "Historical Development of the Chinese Consolidated Benevolent Association/Huiguan system," 13–51.

29. *Ibid.*, 13–14.

30. *Ibid.*, 16.

31. Lawrence Douglas Taylor Hansen, "The Chinese Six Companies of San Francisco and the Smuggling of Chinese Immigrants across the U.S. Mexico Border, 1882–1930," *Journal of the Southwest* 48:1 (Spring 2006): 41.

32. Oregon Chinese Consolidated Benevolent Association, "About; History of CCBA," <https://www.oregonccba.org/about/history-of-ccba> (accessed September 9, 2008).

33. Hoy Yin Association, "Centennial Association," <http://hoyyin.com> (accessed November 5, 2021).

34. Hansen, "The Chinese Six Companies of San Francisco," 41

35. Lai, "Historical Development of the Chinese Consolidated Benevolent Association/Huiguan system," 14.

36. Regarding Chinese cemeteries and funerary culture in the Pacific Northwest, see Terry Abraham and Priscilla Wegars, "Respecting the Dead: Chinese Cemeteries and Burial Practices in the Interior Pacific Northwest," in *Chinese American Death Rituals: Respecting the Ancestors*, eds. Sue Fawn Chung and Priscilla Wegars (Lanham, Md.: Alta Mira Press, 2005), 147–73; and Terry Abraham and Priscilla Wegars, "Urns, bones and burners:

overseas Chinese cemeteries" *Australasian Historical Archaeology* 21 (2003): 58–69.

37. Oregon Chinese Disinterment Documents, Oregon State University Libraries Special Collections and Archives Research Center [hereafter SCARC], Oregon Multicultural Archives [hereafter OMA], [https://oregondigital.org/sets/or-chinese-disinterment?f%5Bdesc\\_metadata\\_\\_set\\_label\\_sim%5D%5B%5D=Oregon+Chinese+Disinterment+Documents%24http%3A%2F%2Foregondigital.org%2Fresource%2Foregondigital%3Aor-chinese-disinterment](https://oregondigital.org/sets/or-chinese-disinterment?f%5Bdesc_metadata__set_label_sim%5D%5B%5D=Oregon+Chinese+Disinterment+Documents%24http%3A%2F%2Foregondigital.org%2Fresource%2Foregondigital%3Aor-chinese-disinterment) (accessed November 5, 2021).

38. B.D. Wilson, "Chinese Burial Customs in Hong Kong," *Journal of the Hong Kong Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society* 1 (1960–1961): 115–23.

39. Lai, "Historical Development of the Chinese Consolidated Benevolent Association/Huiguan system," 20.

40. "They Won't Come Back," *Oregon Statesman*, October 15, 1892, p. 4.

41. "True to their Religion," *Daily Capital Journal*, August 9, 1902, p. 5.

42. "Chinese From Insane Asylum are on Way to Native Land," *Daily Capital Journal*, December 29, 1913, p. 1.

43. Oregon Chinese Disinterment Documents, SCARC.

44. The authors arrived at this number by looking through a number of sources, including the register of burials at the Odd Fellows Cemetery, which were cross-referenced with the database created by the Friends of the Pioneer Cemetery. Our assessment could not be absolutely verified, because many listed were not named.

45. Peter Anderson, "Report to Friends of the Pioneer Cemetery on Chinese Burials," presented to the Friends of the Pioneer Cemetery in Salem, Oregon in 2012, available in Willamette Heritage Center Research Room. The data presented in this report was cross referenced by a number of other sources including the register of burials at the Odd Fellows Cemetery, the database created by the Friends of the Pioneer Cemetery, <https://www.salempioneer cemetery.org/records>.

php (accessed September 26, 2021); Friends of the Pioneer Cemetery, "Salem Pioneer Cemetery, Selected Views of Permanent Headstones and Documented Chinese Burial Locations," ed. Elisabeth Potter, handout during 2018 Qingming Event at Salem Pioneer Cemetery, copy available with City of Salem 2018 Qingming Digital files.

46. Interviews with author Kimberli Fitzgerald (see note 45); Douglas Lee, "Chinese Americans in Oregon (Essay)," *The Oregon Encyclopedia*, [http://www.oregonencyclopedia.org/articles/chinese\\_americans\\_in\\_oregon/#.V6NEmfkrJhE](http://www.oregonencyclopedia.org/articles/chinese_americans_in_oregon/#.V6NEmfkrJhE) (accessed December 17, 2020).

47. Chan family interview by Kimberli Fitzgerald, translated by Dina Shen, Di Miao Village, Taishan China, March 28–29, 2018; Leong family interview by Kimberli Fitzgerald, translated by Dina Shen, Shangdun Village, Taishan China, March 28–29, 2018; Su family interview by Kimberli Fitzgerald, translated by Dina Shen, Ishii Village, Taishan China, March 28–29, 2018; George Lai Sun family interview by Kimberli Fitzgerald, Namayang Village, Taishan China, March 28–29, 2018.

48. "Yick So Herb Co.," advertisement, *Capital Journal*, June 23, 1927, p. 12.

49. "Chinatown will Take Part in Cherry Fair," *Daily Capital Journal*, July 13, 1908, p. 7.

50. "Opened Chinese New Year: Lee Yick Served Bat Pie to Number of White Friends," *Daily Capital Journal*, February 13, 1907, p. 5; "Lai Yick to Have Party," *Oregon Statesman*, February 1, 1922, p. 5.

51. "Chinese New Year," *Weekly Oregon Statesman*, February 17, 1893, p. 11.

52. The Ben Franklin Bank is also known as the former Salem Masonic Temple building. The structure was built in 1912. See "Masonic Building," Historic Buildings, Photo Highlights, Willamette Heritage Center, <https://www.willametteheritage.org/masonic-building/> (accessed September 20, 2021); and Ann Lossner, *Looking Back: People and Places in the Early Keizer Area* (Keizer, Ore.: Self-published, 1990), 19.

53. These began with the Page Act (1875), and the Angell Treaty (1880), which restricted

both the immigration of laborers from China and opium trade but still allowed immigration of professionals including those verified as merchants. See U.S. Congress, Senate, Page Act, Chapter 141 Forty-Third Congress, Session 11, March 3, 1875; and, Martin Gold, "Appendix 4: Fifteen Passenger Bill (1879) and Veto Message of President Rutherford Hayes of the Fifteen Passenger Bill, March 1, 1879, 1879 Congressional Record-House 2275-77," *Forbidden Citizens: Chinese Exclusion and the US. Congress* (Alexandria, Va.: The Capital.net, 2012), [https://hobnobblog.com/wp-content/uploads/2013/06/Appendix4\\_Final.pdf](https://hobnobblog.com/wp-content/uploads/2013/06/Appendix4_Final.pdf) (accessed December 4, 2020).

54. Erika Lee, "The Chinese Exclusion Example: Race, Immigration, and American Gatekeeping, 1882-1924," *Journal of American Ethnic History* 21:3 (2002): 36-62.

55. No formal incorporation papers for a CCBA Chapter in Salem have been found. Portland's CCBA was not incorporated until 1900. Newspaper records, however, reflect the direction from the Six Companies to Sun and his subsequent communication to the Salem Chinese community in the late nineteenth century. See "Registering so slowly," *Capital Journal*, January 9, 1894, p. 1.

56. "They are Going: The Chinese are Being Frozen out of Salem by the Iceberg of Competition" *Daily Statesman Journal*, February 26, 1886, p. 3.

57. "Geary Act (1892) Immigration History," Immigration History: A Project of the Immigration and Ethnic History Society, 2019, [www.immigrationhistory.org/item/geary-act](http://www.immigrationhistory.org/item/geary-act) (accessed December 4, 2020).

58. Hansen, "The Chinese Six Companies of San Francisco," 46.

59. "The Chinese Must Register," *Oregon Statesman*, August 17, 1892, p.4; "Didn't Register," *Weekly Oregon Statesman*, April 21, 1893, p. 5.

60. "The Chinese Registration," *Oregon Statesman*, February 18, 1894, p. 8.

61. "Chinese Missions," *Oregon Statesman*, May 13, 1896, p. 4.

62. "Chinese School," *Oregon Statesman*, April 10, 1889, p. 4

63. "Chinese Mission Entertainment," *Daily Capital Journal*, January 2, 1897, p. 2.

64. Wendy Rouse Jorae, "The Limits of Dress: Chinese American Childhood, Fashion, and Race in the Exclusion Era," *Western Historical Quarterly* 41:4 (Winter 2010): 461; Myron L. Cohen, "Being Chinese: The Peripheralization of Traditional Identity," *Daedalus* 120:2 (Spring 1991): 123.

65. "Chinese May Now Cut Off Their Hair," *Daily Capitol Journal*, April 21, 1910, p. 1.

66. Lossner, *Looking Back*, 19.

67. "Sun, once head of Chinatown, is dead," *Oregon Stateman*, December 20, 1932, p. 8.

68. Chinese Exclusion Acts case files, 1891-1943, RG 85 [hereafter CEA case file], National Archives and Records Administration, Seattle, Washington [hereafter NARA-Seattle].

69. This record does not reflect where Lee Bing was during this period, nor why it took so long to file and grant the petition. Department of Commerce and Labor, Immigration Service, Habeus Corpus Petition, Lee Quong, 1904, CEA case file, Lee Bing, case 1017/12, Record 32ECFCA1-3858-4EAC-AEC5-865CEC19B889, NARA-Seattle.

70. J.H. Barbour, Inspector in Charge, Department of Commerce and Labor, Immigration Service, June 20, 1911 and June 23, 1911, CEA case file, Ng Ah Foo, case 2423, NARA-Seattle.

71. J.V. Stewart, Examining Inspector, Quan Foy, Chinese Interpreter and W. P. Callahan, Stenographer, "In the matter of the application of Leong Toong Yook for the admission to the United States, as the minor son of a domiciled merchant, Salem, Oregon," [hereafter Leong Toong Yook application for admission to the U.S.], May 10, 1913, CEA case file, case 30,587, no. 3, NARA-Seattle.

72. Leong family interview by Kimberli Fitzgerald, translated by Dina Shen, Shangdun Village, Taishan China, March 28-29, 2018.

73. Leong Toong Yook application for admission to the U.S., NARA-Seattle.

74. Kimberly Jensen, *Oregon's Doctor to the World: Esther Pohl Lovejoy and a Life in*

*Activism* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2012), 85-87.

75. "Fierce Fire in Chinatown," *Daily Oregon Statesman*, December 30, 1902, p. 2.

76. "Chinatown Condemned: Council has Declared that Old Eyesore Must Be Destroyed," *Daily Oregon Statesman*, Jan 21, 1903, p.3.

77. "Noodle Houses Cause Worry," *Capital Journal*, January, 20, 1916; "Council does raft of work," *Oregon Statesman*, February 8, 1910, p. 5; City of Salem, Ordinance 777, 1912.

78. Leong Toong Yook application for admission to the U.S., NARA-Seattle.

79. "Chinese May Go to Portland," *Daily Capital Journal*, March 29, 1911, p. 8.

80. Charles H. Carey, ed., *The Oregon Constitution and Proceedings and Debates of the Constitutional Convention of 1857* (Salem, Ore.: State Printing Department, 1926), 401.

81. "Chinese May Go to Portland," *Daily Capital Journal*, March 29, 1911, p. 8.

82. "Hen Foo is Emphatic in Denial," *Daily Capital Journal*, March 30, 1911, p.1.

83. U.S. Census Bureau, 1920 U.S. census, NARA.

84. *Ibid.*

85. "Memories of Salem," *Oregon Statesman* January 8, 1922, p. 10.

86. "George Sun's Comments on Salem, 1922," in Patton, *Fiftieth Anniversary*.

87. "Lai Yick to Have Party," *Oregon Statesman*, February 1, 1922, p. 5; "Lai Yick Host to His Friends: Salem Chinese Physician Celebrates Long Period in Business Here," *Oregon Statesman*, February 7, 1922, p. 6.

88. "J. Frank Hughes, Pioneer of Salem, dies at 76," *Daily Capital Journal*, April 4, 1944, p. 9.

89. U.S. Census Bureau, 1930 U.S. census, NARA.

90. "Stroke Proves Fatal to Chinese Merchant" *Oregon Statesman*, August 23, 1925, p.1.

91. Capi Lynn, "Chinese Immigrant Found Wealth in the early 1900s," *Statesman Journal*, June 12, 2015, p. A6; "Stroke Proves Fatal to Chinese Merchant" *Oregon Statesman*,

August 23, 1925, p. 1.

92. Lossner, *Looking Back*, 19.

93. *Ibid.*, 20.

94. *Ibid.*

95. *Ibid.*, 20; "Sun, Once head of Chinatown, is Dead," *Oregon Statesman*, December 20, 1932, p. 8.

96. Lossner, *Looking Back*, 20-21.

97. Ben Maxwell, "Clearing IOOF Cemetery Reveals Pagan Altar: Century-old Cemetery Improvement Starts," *Daily Capital Journal*, April 16, 1953.

98. "Pioneer Cemetery: A Forgotten Place?," *Capital Journal*, October 5, 1968, p. 28.

99. Anderson, "Report to Friends of the Pioneer Cemetery on Chinese Burials."

100. "Chinese Funeral is Marked by Customs," *Daily Oregon Statesman*, October 12, 1909, p. 6.

101. Abraham and Wegars, "Respecting the Dead," 147-173.

102. Lossner, *Looking Back*, 21.

103. Abraham and Wegars, "Respecting the Dead," 158.

104. Paul G. Chace, "On Dying American: Cantonese Rites for Death and Ghost-Spirits in an American City," in *Chinese American Death Rituals: Respecting the Ancestors*, ed. Chung and Wegars, 47-79.

105. "Chinese Funeral Held Yesterday," *Oregon Statesman*, August 5, 1910, p. 5.

106. 2019 population estimates suggest that 2.6 percent of Salem's population of 174,365 are Asian, of which only a portion are ethnically Chinese. See "Quick Facts, Salem, Oregon," U.S. Census Bureau, United State Federal Government, 2019, <https://www.census.gov/quickfacts/fact/table/salemcityoregon,US/PST045219> (accessed September 10, 2021). Oregon's Hoy Yin Association — an active *huiguan* association — was established in 1890 and currently has 10,000 members. See "About," Oregon Hoy Yin, <http://hoyyin.com/about/> (accessed April 20, 2021).

107. "Annual Chinese Qingming Festival," City of Salem, 2017, <https://www.cityofsalem.net/Pages/chinese-qingming-festival.aspx> (accessed September 13, 2021).