The Once-Bustling Basin:
A Historical Archaeology of Chinese Mining Networks in Southern Idaho

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ABSTRACT

In the nineteenth century, gold rushes reshaped much of the American West, attracting fortune seekers from around the globe to rural areas that turned to metropolises seemingly overnight. From the start, Chinese migrants were a part of these rushes and the unique communities they gave rise to among constantly shifting manifestations of opportunity and risk. This dissertation is about one such place, southern Idaho's Boise Basin. In it, I use historical and archaeological methods to reconstruct the experiences of multiple individuals connected to Chinese mining networks through occupation, land title, market network, or skilled trade. Progressing through vantage points along these networks, I explore the varied ways that Chinese merchants in Idaho City, Chinese miners outside of "Old Boston," and Chinese specialists employed at the Reid Placer Mine built lives and cultivated livelihoods during the Basin's peak gold rush years of 1860 through 1915. Drawing on multiple lines of evidence, including 16 legacy archaeological collections and a spate of archival materials, I use an agency-based network perspective to examine rural Chinese mining experiences in the context of racial exclusion, transnational connections, local dynamics, and individual positionality. From the carefully curated market networks of Chinese merchants to the informally traded skills of Chinese blacksmiths, this study highlights ways that Chinese mining network members used material culture and overlapping webs of interpersonal ties to navigate the shifting exclusions and uncertainties of the Boise Basin's gold rush industry, often influencing local practices in the process.

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LANGUAGE NOTE

Both the terms Chinese American and Chinese migrant are used to describe individuals and groups throughout this dissertation. In general, Chinese American is used to describe someone with Chinese ancestry who became a citizen of the United States, while Chinese migrant is used to describe someone with Chinese ancestry who lived, for a time, in the United States or elsewhere outside of their birth region. These terms should not be mistaken as fixed states nor should they be understood to suggest self-selected identities, however, since during the time period covered by this study, most Chinese migrants were denied the ability to become an American citizen under US law.

Individual names are reproduced to the accuracy possible given the nature of the records, which vary widely with respect to Chinese individuals. Census takers, for instance, were notorious for inverting family and given names (surname first is the usual order for Chinese names) and for mistaking the term "Ah" for given names. Where full translations of names are known, these are presented first in Chinese characters and then, parenthetically, in Cantonese *jyutping* and Mandarin *pinyin* transliterations. Finally, in most cases I attempt to avoid reproducing inaccurate, offensive, or harmful language used in the sources I cite. This is not done to hide or to minimize the racism or sexism of the past, which is likely obvious enough from the context being described, but out of respect for modern readers for whom this language can be hurtful and to discourage the perpetuation of these untruths and the damage they inflict in the present.

CHAPTER 1. INTRODUCTION

> *It is rather enchanting to step out after dark and view the light of a hundred fires that shine on every side to light the miner in [their] search for gold. Scenes like these at this season of the year are enjoyed every night throughout the Boise Mines.*[1]

The Light of a Hundred Fires

Today most of the roughly 250 square miles of hills, gulches, and creeks that define southern Idaho's Boise Basin are National Forest land. In the late nineteenth century, however, the Basin was a bustling, cosmopolitan place. Each spring, when the high mountain snow melted and water was briefly plentiful, placer mines operated around the clock and claims throughout the Basin filled with gold seekers from across the globe. On any given evening during this season, miners stepping out of their canvas tents and into the darkened Ponderosa pine forest would have been met with the clamor of metal tools, the smell of campfires, and the glow of lanterns in every direction lighting the anxious search for gold (Teeter 1932:93–94). Depending on the acoustics of the location, one or many voices might also have been audible in the night as miners called to one another in Portuguese, German, English, and Cantonese.[2]

Some sources suggest that Cantonese speakers may have, in fact, been the first non-native people to identify gold in the Boise Basin's mountains and streams. In 1931, Idaho City resident Wong Ying told a newspaper reporter that he had been among a group of Chinese miners who entered the Basin in 1856 (Parker 1931:2). According to his account, Wong Ying had immigrated to California from the Xinhui District of China's Guangdong Province in 1855. The following year, he joined a Chinese prospecting party that ventured inland from California to what was then Washington Territory. There, indigenous residents directed his party to rich placer deposits along rivers in what would later become known as the Boise Basin (Figure 1.1) (Parker 1931:2; Zhu 1997:27–29). If this version of events is true, Wong Ying and his fellow gold seekers guarded their lucrative secret well, enacting the first of a long line of carefully crafted strategies that secured Chinese miners' enduring role in the Boise Basin's nineteenth- and twentieth-century history.

Mass migration did not occur until seven years after Wong Ying's account places him in the Boise Basin. The group of men most frequently credited with "discovering" gold in the Basin included members of three prospecting parties who united to form what is often referred to as

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[1] Teeter 1932:93–94.

[2] Though many other languages were historically spoken in the Boise Basin, country-of-origin data gathered by U.S. Census takers indicates that these were statistically the four most likely to have been overheard (Hart 2002:12; U.S. Census Bureau 1870).

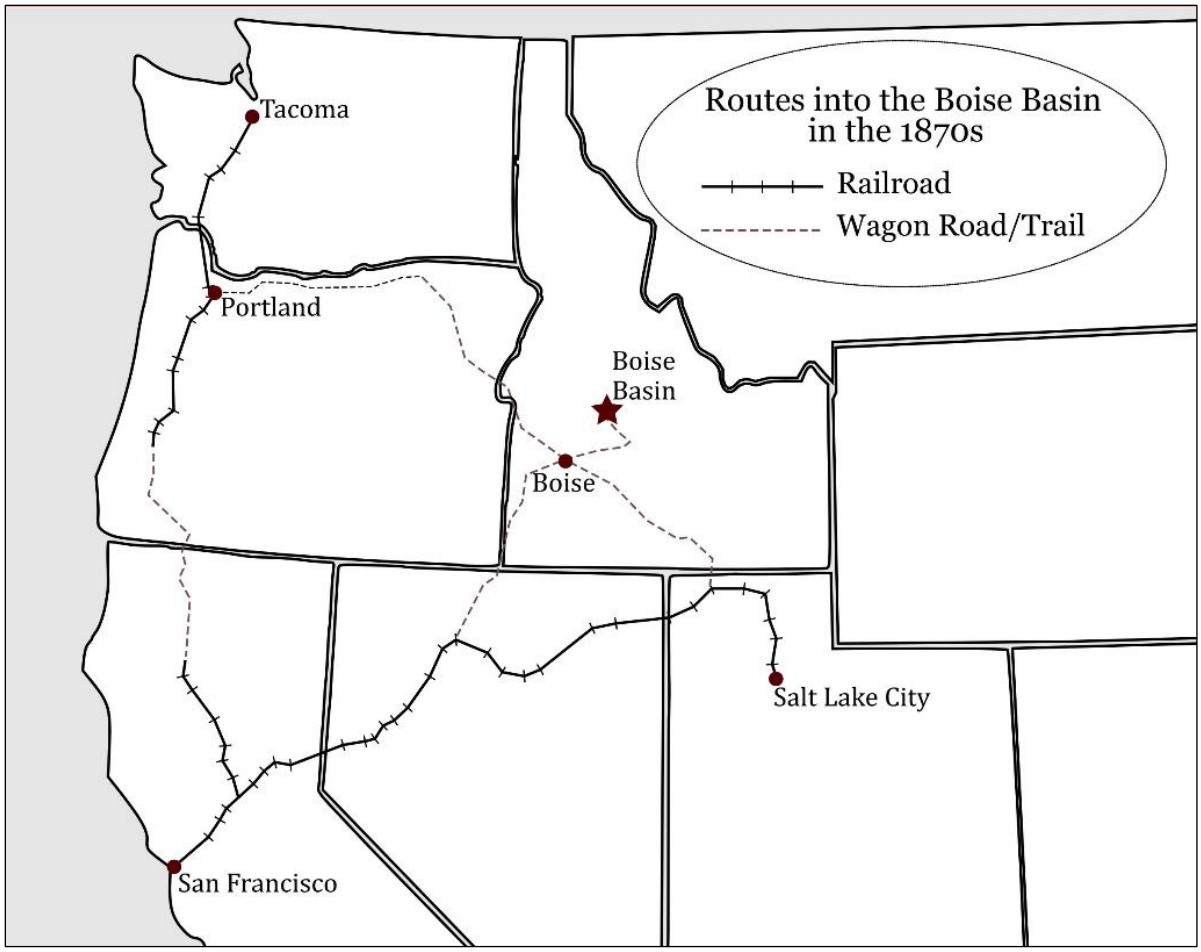

Figure 1.1. Map of the Western United States, showing routes into the Boise Basin (Zhu 1997:29).

the Grimes Party.[3] Led by Moses Splawn, D. H. Fogus, and George Grimes, these prospectors entered the Basin in 1862 and located gold along what would come to be known as Grimes Creek. Partially because of the gold they had found, and partially due to the untimely death of the party's namesake shortly thereafter, news of the expedition spread quickly (Hart 2002:2). Within a year, mining camps and towns had sprung up along Basin drainages, many with names that alluded to their primary industry, for example, Placerville, Gold Hill, Quartzburg, and Granite Creek (Wegars 2001:1). Other early towns included Bannock, later renamed Idaho City; Pioneerville; Centerville; and Boston, founded near the site of the Grimes Party's discovery (Hart 2002:2) (Figure 1.2).

[3] In the historical literature, there is some disagreement about whether this consolidated party should be called the Grimes Party, the Grimes-Splawn Party, or referred to as the Moses Splawn, D. H. Fogus, and George Grimes parties. Grimes Party is the designation most frequently seen, though this may simply be because the creek where the party members found gold now bears his name. George Grimes was killed shortly after the discovery and "hastily buried in a prospect hole" along this same creek – thus the name. Although the remaining party members reported that Bannock or Shoshone Indians shot Grimes, some historians have questioned this popularly accepted version of the story (e.g., Hart 2002:2).

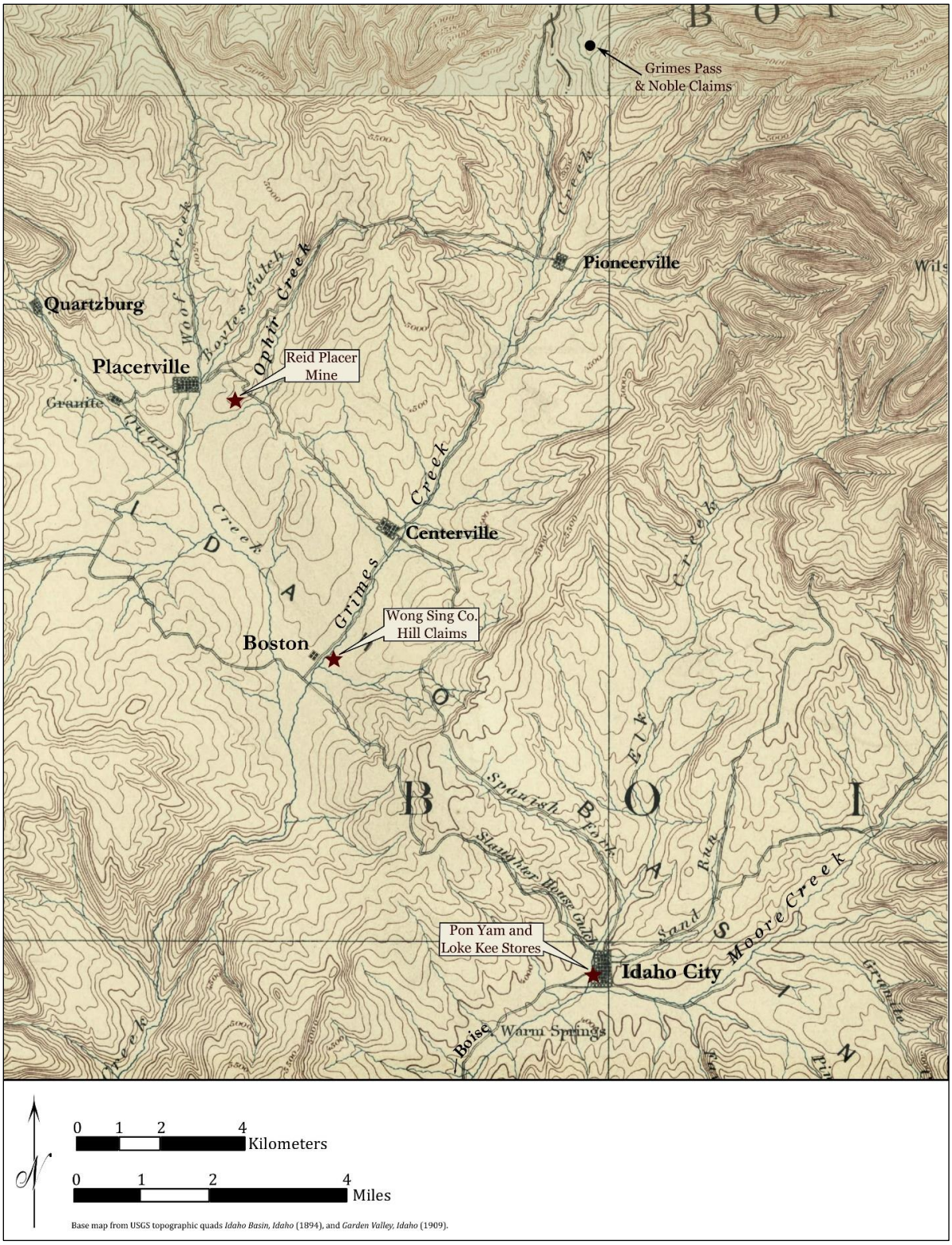

Figure 1.2. Map of the late-nineteenth-century Boise Basin showing early townsites and the locations that will be discussed in further detail in Chapters 2 through 4.

By September, the Basin contained one of the largest population centers in the Pacific Northwest, with over 14,000 residents as compared to nearby Boise, Idaho's, meager 725 inhabitants (Hart 2002:8; Wegars 2001:1). Despite initially being barred from newly established mining districts, Chinese gold seekers joined the global mix of migrants living and working in the Basin just in time to help the community weather the first of many fits of economic volatility that began to set in by the end of the decade (Wegars 1995:8–9; Zhu 1997:45, 121). Though more long-lasting than many, the gold industry in the Basin was nonetheless subject to cycles of boom and bust; uncertainty; and frequent, unexpected challenges that often played out in social as well as economic spheres. For no one was this perhaps truer than for the Basin's Chinese residents who, by 1870, made up nearly half the local population[4] (US Bureau of the Census 1870; Zhu 1997:97). Subject to a series of discriminatory laws and faced with anti-Asian racism, Chinese miners necessarily relied on many different tactics to increase their chances of economic success and personal well-being within this tenuous landscape. These strategies reveal much about the daily life of the people who used them and about the individual contexts in which they were deployed. As such, they are a central focus of this dissertation, which uses historical archaeology to explore the ways that Chinese miners established lives and livelihoods in Southern Idaho's Boise Basin during the peak gold rush years of 1860 through 1915. Rather than focusing solely on the experiences of Chinese miners, however, this study examines their larger mining network, defined here as the group of individuals who collectively supported the mining industry through material goods, labor, or other services.

Shifting the analysis scale away from that of the discrete site or the community-as-a-whole differentiates this work from many previous archaeological studies, which have tended to focus on the material signatures of single mining sites or on conglomerate assemblages from urban Chinatowns (e.g., Ellis 2011; Greenwood 1976, 1980; Hattori et al. 1979; James 1995; Lister and Lister 1989; Olsen 1978, 1983; Pastron 1981; Praetzellis and Praetzellis 1982; Valentine 1999). It also allows for an exploration of the range of identities, experiences, and relationships among the Basin's Chinese residents. Gold rush communities like the Boise Basin may have been built around a single industry, but they functioned through the construction of myriad economic and social networks rife with inequality, competition, cooperation, and mutual dependency. Especially amidst so much variability, the snapshot of daily life apparent in a single

[4] Given the difficulty of enumerating miners dispersed across claims in the forest, this percentage may have actually been even higher.

archaeological site or historical document can sample, but fails to fully cover, the true diversity of lived experiences and the complex relations on which they were built. Exposing aspects of this diversity not only gets closer to a more accurate understanding of the past, but also carries added significance for populations whose history has frequently been overlooked or homogenized.

With this in mind, this dissertation proceeds through three vantage points along the Basin's Chinese mining networks. These three vignettes examine the archaeological and historical record of Chinese merchants, miners, and "specialists" – members of mining companies who performed skilled tasks other than mining – to ask how differently situated Basin residents negotiated the uncertain conditions of their Western gold rush community in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Although far from comprehensive, this approach foregrounds a spectrum of individual experiences in hopes that collectively they, much like the light of a hundred miners' fires, might illuminate the historical pursuit of gold in the Boise Basin.

Project Background

Coincidentally, the area near Boston that first alerted gold-rush hordes to the mineral resources within Idaho's Boise Basin is also where the work at the heart of this dissertation began. The first time that I hiked across the undulating hills, scattered tailings piles, and remnant ditches of the Boise National Forest (BNF) to relocate a Chinese mining site, it was to a small terrace along the east bank of Grimes Creek. Directly across the silt-filled waterway from that terrace, a remnant of the alluvial fan where the town of Boston once stood was just visible. Though I didn't know it at the time, that former townsite would be significant not just for its association with the ill-fated Grimes Party, but also as the headquarters of the Wong Sing Company whose miners had lived and worked at the site that I was then revisiting with BNF personnel. The cultural resources around us, most of which would also turn out to be part of Wong Sing Company operations, had been documented in the 1980s, which is also when several had been the subject of archaeological excavations. Because funding limitations permitted only a summary report to be prepared at the time, the artifact assemblage became one of a handful of large legacy collections managed by the Forest Service in the subsequent decades.

Those archaeological collections form the basis not just for this dissertation, but also for a larger, ongoing partnership between the BNF and the University of Idaho (UI). With the goal to complete documentation, analyses, background research, and outreach for BNF legacy collections while also providing training opportunities for historical archaeology students, this partnership has so far supported analysis of 15 collections from archaeological sites related to

historical Chinese mining on what is now BNF land. In 2019, I was also granted permission from the Idaho City Historical Foundation to transfer an additional collection related to Idaho City merchants Pon Yam and Wong Chong to UI for cataloging and analysis.

These 16 assemblages, and the archaeological sites that they come from, vary considerably in size, condition, and methods of collection (Table 1.1). Yet, they all provide valuable information that, particularly when examined in relation to one another, begin to capture what life was like in the Basin's busy gold rush years. Additional details about each site, and about its occupants' participation in the Boise Basin's mining industry, come from hours spent pouring over property records in the Boise County Recorder's Office; from ledgers and other documents preserved in the Idaho City Museum and in the Idaho State Archives; from historical newspaper archives; and from government documents like census schedules, birth and death records, and immigration files created under the auspices of the 1882 Chinese Exclusion Act. In many of these efforts, especially artifact cataloging and document transcription, I was joined by undergraduate and graduate students whose labors have been essential to project outcomes, including this dissertation. Throughout this process, I have also benefited greatly from information shared as part of conversations and interviews with Chinese American stakeholders, some who have ancestral ties to the Boise Basin, and with archaeologists and historians who initiated this research nearly 40 years ago.

The rich history of the late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century Boise Basin has been the subject of several previous historical and archaeological publications. Most notable of these is Liping Zhu's (1997) pioneering work, *A Chinaman's Chance: The Chinese on the Rocky Mountain Frontier*, which used Chinese experiences in the Basin to challenge both the long-standing dearth of Chinese American representation in Western history and the subsequent adoption of conquest narratives in which they were primarily cast as non-agentive victims. Other primary source scholarship on the Basin includes Priscilla Wegars' (2001) *Uncovering a Chinese Legacy: Historical Archaeology at Centerville Idaho, Once the "Handsomest Town in the Basin"* and Arthur Hart's (2002a) *Basin of Gold: Life in the Boise Basin, 1862–1890*. Both provide overviews of life in the Basin, but Wegars' longer monograph is more tightly focused on the former location of Centerville – one of the Basin's original towns – and on archaeological data gathered from excavations there. The Boise Basin is also featured in the final chapter of Sue Fawn Chung's (2011:175–176) *In Pursuit of Gold: Chinese American Miners and Merchants in the American West*, where it, along with Pierce, Idaho, serve as examples of the divergent experiences Chinese miners encountered across the inland West.

Table 1.1. Overview of Sites and Collections Examined in this Dissertation.

Site Number	Location	Site Type	Ownership[a]	Artifact Count
BS-1865 (10BO817)	Idaho City	Wong Chong/Pon Yam Store	ICF	26,233[b]
BS-767 (10BO344)	Grimes Creek	Wong Sing Co. Mining Site	BNF	363
BS-770 (10BO347)	Grimes Creek	Wong Sing Co. Mining Site	BNF	8
BS-771 (10BO348)	Grimes Creek	Wong Sing Co. Mining Site	BNF	2
BS-772 (10BO349)	Grimes Creek	Wong Sing Co. Mining Site	BNF	9
BS-773 (10BO350)	Grimes Creek	Wong Sing Co. Mining Site	BNF	3
BS-775 (10BO352)	Grimes Creek	Wong Sing Co. Mining Site	BNF	5
BS-776 (10BO353)	Grimes Creek	Wong Sing Co. Mining Site	BNF	10
BS-777 (10BO354)	Grimes Creek	Wong Sing Co. Mining Site	BNF	7
BS-779 (10BO356)	Grimes Creek	Wong Sing Co. Mining Site	BNF	27
BS-780 (10BO357)	Grimes Creek	Wong Sing Co. Mining Site	BNF	5,299
BS-781 (10BO358)	Grimes Creek	Wong Sing Co. Mining Site	BNF	78
BS-782 (10BO359)	Grimes Creek	Wong Sing Co. Mining Site	BNF	44
BS-783 (10BO360)	Grimes Creek	Wong Sing Co. Mining Site	BNF	495
BS-855 (10BO779)	Ophir Creek	Wo Hop Co./Lee & Lee Mining Infrastructure Site	BNF	16,209
BS-193 (10BO78)[c]	Ophir Creek	Wo Hop Co./Lee & Lee Mining Blacksmith Site	BNF	9,402
			Total	58,194

[a] ICF = Idaho City Foundation; BNF = Boise National Forest

[b] Artifacts from this collection are being processed in two phases. The total given here represents the first phase of analysis which included artifacts collected from within the building's footprint, from under porch supports, and from excavation units. A second phase of analysis is currently underway by Juniper Harvey-Marose.

[c] This collection was cataloged by Heather Sargent-Gross rather than by the author.

In company with these prior scholars, this study also examines the unique context and broader significance of the Boise Basin's gold rush years, often with an eye toward dislodging some of the inaccurate assumptions lingering within the fields of Chinese American history and archaeology. It does so by building on the foundation provided by previous work with new or under-examined data, by occasionally reframing existing sources, and by placing the historical archaeology of the Basin's Chinese mining networks in dialog with more recent scholarship in Western history and Chinese diaspora archaeology. Drawing together this multidisciplinary literature and multiple lines of evidence from the 16 archaeological sites examined herein, this dissertation contributes additional perspectives on the origins, experiences, and interconnected lives of the Boise Basin's historical Chinese mining population.

From the Pearl River Delta to the Boise Basin

South China *Qiaoxiang*

For many of the Basin's Chinese miners, elements of the strategies and skills that they would use to navigate life in the American West began in *qiaoxiang*, or home villages, in the

Pearl River Delta region of southern China. Along with the majority of the roughly 400,000 Chinese migrants who traveled to North America in the nineteenth century, most probably hailed from counties within Guangdong Province, particularly Taishan County in the Siyi District,[5] or from the Siyi District's Kaiping, Enping, and Xinhui counties; the Sanyi District's Nanhai, Panyu, and Shundu counties; or from parts of Zhongshan County. Although an ethnically and linguistically diverse region populated by Cantonese-, Chaozhou-, and Hakka-speaking Han Chinese, as well as Tai and Yao ethnic minorities, migrants from these areas shared long traditions of mining, migration, and international commerce (Hsu 2000:17–21; Ng 2021:52; Yu 2018:179).

Centuries before the promise of gold began attracting Chinese miners to the Boise Basin, various metals had been extracted from placer deposits within China. The work was often seasonal and part of a cyclical migration pattern wherein miners could return to family villages in the off-season to farm, which was the primary occupation in Guangdong. Putting to use what were by then well-practiced skills, farmers used many of the same water management techniques common in placer gold and tin mining to irrigate fields dispersed across the hilly terrain of the inland Pearl River Delta (Chung 2011:7–8; Valentine 2002:40–44). During the eighteenth century, Chinese miners began traveling abroad to work in gold, silver, and tin mines in Southeast Asia. There they formed cooperative business organizations called *kongsi* in which company members organized into various leadership and skilled positions worked for a share of joint profits rather than wages (Bronson and Ho 2015:1; Hann 2021:334–341; Zhu 1999:46). The majority of these transnational miners came from southern China's Fujian or Guangdong provinces, regions where out-migration had been a facet of life since as early as the seventh century. Though miners from both provinces initially participated in mineral rushes in Thailand, Malaysia, and Indonesia, nineteenth century gold rushes in Australia and North America redirected many migrants from Guangdong across the Pacific (Bronson and Ho 2015:1; Rose and Kennedy 2020:3).

News of the California Gold Rush reached southern China at a time of acute political and social upheaval brought on by British colonial and forced trade campaigns that sparked the Opium Wars (1839–1842, 1856–1860) and destabilized the Qing government.[6] Within

[5] Scholars have estimated that approximately eighty percent of Chinese migrants to North America in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries came from the Siyi District, and that most of these individuals came from villages within Taishan County (Kennedy and Rose 2020:3).

[6] Strife within the Qing dynasty government lasted until the early twentieth century and erupted into the Taiping Rebellion of 1851 to 1864. More locally, migration from Guangdong was also influenced by the Punti-Hakka Clan Wars between 1855 and 1867; increased taxation; banditry; population expansion and movement; the limited availability of land and other resources; and a series of floods, typhoons, earthquakes, droughts, and famines

southern China, this instability was compounded by population growth, ethnic conflict, arable land shortages, and a string of environmental catastrophes, all of which further encouraged migration as an economic strategy (Hsu 2000:21–29; Kennedy and Rose 2020:3–5). With generational knowledge of both mining and migration as well as an economy growing evermore "complex, commercialized, and outward-looking" (McKeown 1999:313), residents of Guangdong were both uniquely motivated and well-positioned to join both the burgeoning Pacific trade and the North American gold rush.

Migration was supported by families, extended clan relationships, and cultural organizations that pooled resources to cover passage fees on one side of the Pacific and on the other provided new arrivals with jobs, housing, and additional resources (Kennedy and Rose 2020:6). Since *qiaoxiang* were largely populated by extended members of the same clan whose daily life revolved around overlapping business and social ties, migration protracted these relationships across greater distances. As migration increased in the late nineteenth century, so too did the scope and complexity of diasporic networks (Ng 2021:52).

In the early 1860s, amid several unequal treaties that intensified Western encroachment, foreign employers were also officially granted permission to recruit laborers directly from home villages in China (Venit Shelton 2019:58–59). Much of this labor, like the commerce that preceded and continued alongside it, flowed through the city of Guangzhou, the only port officially sanctioned for international trade between 1760 and 1842, and then through Hong Kong, which was ceded to the British Empire in 1842. Especially in Hong Kong, import-export businesses specializing in transpacific trade sprung up and proliferated with alacrity. Established as early as 1850 and known as *jinshanzhuang*, or "gold mountain firms," these companies supplied an immense amount of goods to merchants operating in North America, Australia, and Mexico, and filled returning ships with imports like flour or dried fish that were popular among Chinese consumers. Because of the close kinship or native-place ties between *jinshanzhuang* and Chinese merchants, the networks they built easily grew to incorporate the movement of people, products, and information back and forth across the Pacific (Hsu 2000:34, 2006:26–27, 29). The result was far-reaching webs of social, economic, and familial ties that connected Chinese migrants in even the most remote locations to products and news from home, to opportunities in other locations, and to localized knowledge passed on by the migrants who preceded them (Hsu 2000:11, 61; Kennedy and Rose 2020:11; McKeown 1999:319–322).

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between 1851 and 1908. For a more detailed discussion see Hsu (2000:21–29), Kennedy and Rose (2020:3–5), Lawton (1987:159), and Ma (2003:3).

Both in Hong Kong and in the American West, Chinese migrants used these resources to navigate rapidly expanding economies on the peripheries of empires where hierarchies of power were not yet entirely entrenched and where social structures were still relatively fluid. Entering or traveling through Hong Kong, they confronted a colonial rule that advantaged British interests and citizens, but that also created what historian Elisabeth Sinn (2013:302) has described as a comparatively "unprecedented space" for economic and social mobility. Especially for merchants associated with *jinshanzhuang*, Hong Kong's ballooning global marketplace provided opportunities not just to amass exceptional wealth, but also to negotiate new social roles and status. For others, the linkages forged between Guangdong and emergent North American markets offered another type of prospect – that of joining the tens of thousands of people caught up in the California Gold Rush.

Gold Rush West

To those involved in one or more of the mineral rushes unfolding on the other side of the Pacific, the American West might have seemed like yet another unprecedented space of intricately intertwined opportunity and constraint. Initiated on territory only recently seized in the Mexican–American War and already populated by a diverse set of people, nineteenth-century gold rushes set off a chain of mass migrations that drew a staggeringly large and polyglot group of fortune seekers, sometimes called "rushers," to the edge of America's colonialist and capitalist endeavors (Herbert 2018:3–4, 47). The result was a context that Western historians have struggled to define as a frontier, borderland, meeting ground, or site of conquest and contestation.[7] Along with the "unruly history" of more recent Western scholarship, this dissertation envisions the Gold Rush West as a place where various social,

[7] From the introduction of the "frontier" concept by Fredrick Jackson Turner in 1893, historians have attempted to reckon with the particular character and historical influence of the American West. Although Turner's Frontier Thesis relied heavily on the mythic ideas of rugged individualism and European American exceptionalism (Turner 2015:10, 20), more recent histories have challenged and complicated this monolithic narrative. New Western historians of the 1980s and 1990s, for example, sought to reconceptualized the American West as a place (or, more accurately, places) of conquest defined by the displacement of indigenous populations, racial and ethnic diversity, environmental destruction, geographic distance, and boom and bust economies (e.g., Limerick 1987; White 1991; Worster et al. 1989). More recently still, cultural historians, Ethnic Studies scholars, and proponents of borderlands or transnationalism perspectives, have shifted this frame to emphasize fluid social structure, malleable and strategic identities, and contestations of power (e.g., Azuma 2005; Johnson 2000; Reséndez 2004). All of these perspectives have had explicit impacts on the telling of Western history, and of Chinese America. It is no coincidence, for example, that Turner introduced his Frontier Thesis a mere decade after the Chinese Exclusion Act first passed through Congress. Paralleling the Chinese Exclusion Act's attempt to bar legal entry to the United States, this broadly accepted thesis also largely excluded historical actors like the Chinese from Western narratives (e.g., Slotkin 1992; Smith 1950). While New Western historians addressed Chinese Americans in their scholarship, the canon's focus on conflict and conquest often cast them as victims and outsiders (Zhu 2006:4). Largely due to the influence of Asian American Studies, narratives of agency, resistance, and resilience have begun to percolate through modern examinations of the complex and contingent cultural encounters of the nineteenth-century American West (Chan 1996:370–371).

economic, and political aspirations were inextricably linked in the daily lives of "diverse peoples [who] competed over resources, notions of social order, and definitions and distributions of wealth and power" (Johnson 2000:26, 316).

Characterized as places where settler colonialism dramatically disrupted indigenous lives; where shifts in population and prosperity could be extreme; and where people with divergent worldviews came into repeated, often intimate contact with one another, such spaces were simultaneously full of possibility and inequality (Herbert 2018:47; Naum 2010:126–127). Far from the seat of federal government and the influence of established institutions, daily practice and interpersonal interactions often became the primary site in which the boundaries of both were tested. Thus, gold rushes were not only settings where fast fortunes or failures could upend conventional patterns of wealth, but also where an array of identities and alliances could be forged, defended, or continually reinterpreted (Arata 2020:5; Johnson 2000:100; Parker 2006:87; Silliman 2018:287).

As some of the first and longest sustained participants in North American gold rushes, Chinese miners joined this heterogeneous milieu, creating livelihoods, establishing homes, and honing strategies as they did so. By 1870, Chinese migrants accounted for more than 25 percent of all miners in Western goldfields and were an ubiquitous presence in the industry as it spread from California and into the inland West (Herbert 2018:3-4; Zhu 2006:3). That same year, Idaho topped the nation with the largest percentage of Chinese residents per capita – nearly 30 percent territory-wide and as much as 80 percent in some northern Idaho mining districts (Stapp 1990:60; Zhu 2001:323). In the Boise Basin, records show that many of the first Chinese residents relocated from other Western gold rush communities, particularly from California. Although some later arrivals passed through ports in Washington or Oregon and entered the Basin without amassing experience elsewhere first, the primacy of California as an entrepôt to the American West's mineral extraction industries often meant that the reverberations of its influence could be felt in the Basin throughout the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

As the American West entered the late nineteenth century's "Gilded Age,"[8] aggressive capitalist accumulation and links to national infrastructure reshaped the region yet again. Stricter divisions of labor and class and more rigid constructions of race and gender began to take hold across the West but did so unevenly and were always contested (Paynter 2012:776;

[8] Also sometimes included within the Victorian Era, the period in American history following initial gold rush booms and the American Civil War was popularly known as the "Gilded Age." Although historians debate the exact duration of the Gilded Age, they generally place it between the 1870s and the 1890s (Paynter 2012:776; White 2017:2).

Sunseri 2020a:2). Within mining locales, the exhaustion of easily accessible gold often signaled the end of the "rush." When and how this happened, and the degree to which larger corporations employing wage labor dominated what minerals remained, profoundly impacted existing social and economic structures (Hardesty 1991:31; Herbert 2018:47). What all this meant was that rural places like the Boise Basin often functioned quite differently from urban centers and even from one another. Subject to national trends but still largely defined by local context, rural mining communities remained places where categories of difference and barriers to entry were pliable enough to allow for varying degrees of manipulation but that, especially for Chinese residents, were also potentially dangerous sites of conflict that required constant vigilance to navigate (Arata 2020:5; Chung 2011:43–44; Zhu 1997:131–133).

One poignant example of this was the virulent anti-Chinese movement that took hold in many of the same places that less than a decade earlier had so eagerly welcomed and recruited Chinese miners. By the time of the first rush on the Basin in the early 1860s, increasingly hostile laws, taxes, and rhetoric began to target Chinese communities in California. In the following years, anti-Chinese racism spread, escalated, and erupted into physical violence across the West. In numerous incidents throughout California, Idaho, Oregon, Washington, Montana, and Wyoming, Chinese miners were attacked, robbed, chased out of town, or killed.[9] During this period, entire Chinese communities were forcefully driven out of many Western cities. Regionally, some of the worst violence included lynchings in Pierce, Idaho, and the massacre of 34 Chinese miners on the Oregon side of the Snake River (Bronson and Ho 2015:48–67). Serious incidents also occurred in the Basin. In 1865, for example, Hiram Kurtz murdered a Chinese laundryman in Idaho City. One year later, three European American men fatally shot a Chinese woman in Pioneer City through the door of her own home. Although all four assailants were arrested, Kurtz was later pardoned (*Idaho World* 1865:2, 1866a:3).

Other less violent but widely felt effects of this movement were a series of legal codes enacted on local, state, and national levels (Table 1.2). These included laws prohibiting Chinese from staking mining claims, from mining within certain districts, from buying or selling property, and that selectively taxed Chinese residents. Routine resistance and legal challenges

[9] A partial list of violent events outside of California between 1870 and 1890 compiled by Bronson and Ho (2015:48–67), includes the following incidents: in 1873, Chinese residents were violently expelled from Silver City, ID, and, in 1875, a group of Chinese miners were attacked and robbed in Jackson County, OR. In 1885, a Chinese laundry was dynamited in Anaconda, MT; twenty-eight Chinese residents were massacred in Rock Springs, WY; a group of Chinese hop pickers were killed in Squak and Coal Creeks, WA; and Chinese residents of Tacoma, WA, were forced from the city. In 1886, an anti-Chinese riot erupted in Seattle, WA; Portland, OR, attempted to forcibly expel its Chinese residents; and thirty-four Chinese gold miners were massacred along the Snake River, OR. In 1886, several Chinese miners were lynched at Pierce, ID.

Table 1.2. Major Federal, State, and Local Exclusion Laws Affecting Boise Basin Chinese Residents from 1860 to 1910.

Year	Jurisdiction	Title (Abbreviated)	Description
1863	Local	Bannock (Idaho City) Mining District Laws, Article 2	Prohibited Chinese immigrants from working in the district. Repealed around 1867.
1864	Local	Moore's Creek (Idaho City) Third Mining District Laws, Article 2	Prohibited Chinese immigrants and African Americans from working in the district. Repealed around 1867. Note that incorporation laws for other Basin districts have not been located.
1864	State	An Act to Provide for the Taxing of Foreign Miners	Required non-citizens to pay $4/month for a license to mine within the Territory of Idaho. The law specified that Asian non-citizens, in particular, would be subject to the tax when living in mining districts, regardless of their occupation.
1866	State	An Act to Provide for the Taxing of Foreign Miners	Amended license fee to $5/month and imposed a $50/month licensing fee on Chinese proprietors of gambling houses or brothels.
1872	Federal	General Mining Act of 1872	Except where restricted by local laws, made all public land open to mineral exploration, purchase, and occupation by individuals who were or who had declared an intent to become US citizens.
1875	Federal	Page Law	Prohibited entry of East Asian "coolies" and "prostitutes" to the US. In practice, this law created significant barriers to the legal entry and immigration of Chinese women by requiring them to prove, in often convoluted and demeaning ways, that they were not sex workers.
1882	Federal	Chinese Exclusion Act	Barred all Chinese laborers from entering the US for a period of ten years (merchants, teachers, students, diplomats, and travelers were exempt) and prohibited all Chinese immigrants from becoming naturalized citizens. Rights granted to citizens were thus expressly denied to anyone with Chinese heritage not born in the US.
1887	Federal	24 Stat. 476 (1887)	Prohibited the purchase of federal public land by non-citizens who had not declared, or could not declare, their intent to naturalize.
1888	Federal	The Scott Act	Prohibited resident Chinese laborers from returning to the US after travel abroad, thus abolishing one of the exempt statuses of the 1882 Chinese Exclusion Act.
1890	State	Idaho Constitution, Article VI, § 3	Prohibited Asians not born in the United States and Native Americans who had not severed tribal relations from voting, serving as jurors, and holding any civil office. Repealed in 1951.
1891	State	An Act to Authorize Aliens to Take, Hold, and Dispose of Mining Property	Prohibited people of Asian descent not born in the United States from acquiring ownership of any mining-related properties like claims, mills, or water rights.
1892	Federal	The Geary Law	Renewed the Chinese Exclusion Act for another ten years and required Chinese immigrants already living in the US to prove they had entered the country legally, to register for and then carry a Certificate of Residence, and made those caught without such documents subject to detention and deportation.
1899	State	House Bill 34, § 3	Prohibited the government and private corporations from knowingly employing non-citizens or people ineligible for citizenship.
1904	Federal	Chinese Exclusion Act Extension	Extended the Chinese Exclusion Act and its amendments in perpetuity. These were not repealed until 1943.
1908	State	IDAHO CODE § 1-2609	Prohibited anyone who was not a citizen from acquiring any land except for mining claims.

Note: Data summarized in table are from Chin (2020:1290, 1293, 1296, 1300), Johnson (2022:46-47), Lee (2003:13), Peffer (1999:8), Tirres (2013:51), Wegars (2001:8), and Zhu (1997:47, 101, 189).

from Chinese Americans were often effective at striking down local ordinances but more sweeping federal legislation soon followed. Most notable of these were the 1870 Page Law that created significant barriers to immigration for Chinese women and the 1882 Chinese Exclusion Act that prohibited all further labor immigration and declared Chinese migrants ineligible for naturalization and citizenship (Chung 2011:34–44). Marking the first time in American history that the entry and citizenship of a group of immigrants were denied based on race and class, the Chinese Exclusion Act had cascading effects. Blanket ineligibility for citizenship meant that Chinese immigrants could no longer meet naturalization provisions in laws like the General Mining Act of 1872, a fact that was exploited in subsequent legislation as a way to explicitly target Chinese residents within various jurisdictions (Chin 2020:1296; Lee 2003:13).

Ushering in what historian Beth Lew-Williams (2018:8–9) has characterized as Restriction (1882–1888) and then Exclusion (1888–1943) periods, the Chinese Exclusion Act was followed by a series of extensions, amendments, and regulatory enforcement that steadily eroded exemptions made in the original act for non-laborers (e.g., merchants, teachers, students, diplomats, travelers and, later, families of merchants and native-born citizens of the United States). These created a constantly shifting and increasingly precarious legal landscape for anyone with Chinese heritage living in the United States (Lee 2003:13; Lew-Williams 2018:8–9). The 1892 Geary Act, for example, required anyone with Chinese ancestry to prove either their legal immigration status or birthright citizenship and to register for a Certificate of Residence. Despite wide-spread legal challenges and resistance, by the early twentieth century, the Certificate of Residence system instigated the first large-scale deportation of an immigrant group. Anyone found not in possession of the appropriate documents could legally be detained, sentenced to hard labor, and deported (Johnson 2022:46–47). The increasing use of the Geary Act against Idaho's Chinese residents, regardless of their citizenship or legal status, can be seen in the dozens of deportation court cases filed in Boise during the first few years of 1900 alone (Hart 2002b:95).

The Boise Basin

Subject to an everchanging landscape of exclusion as well as the rapidly reorganizing social and highly volatile economic context of the nineteenth and early twentieth century West, Chinese miners entering the Boise Basin likely shared many experiences with their counterparts in other western gold rush communities. Yet, life in the Basin was also uniquely defined by its time and place – and by the collectivity of people who comprised and would ultimately define its historical significance. For one thing, the Boise Basin's gold rush was both later and longer

sustained than its more widely known and thoroughly studied California correlates. Ignited in the mid-1860s, the Basin's first mineral rush also took place after many other Pacific Northwest gold strikes had been made and even after some had played out (Bronson and Ho 2015:37). Thus, it attracted serial rushers along with slew of eager newcomers who sometimes reproduced familiar scripts and other times improvised new ones.

In gold rush communities, political and martial action often followed closely on the heels of miners. In the Basin, it did so rapidly. Correctly predicting the speed at which settlers would arrive, legislation creating Boise County and the Territory of Idaho passed within months of the first publicized gold strikes (Arata 2020:17). Simultaneously, incoming gold rushers organized a volunteer calvary company to violently expel the area's original inhabitants, who included members of Shoshone, Bannock, and Paiute bands of peoples, and drafted incorporation laws for mining districts forbidding competition from Chinese immigrants and African Americans (Elliot & Co. 1884:70–71; Wegars 1995:8; Zhu 1997:44–45; see Table 1.2). Meanwhile, a truly global mix of migrants continued to flood into the Basin. Americans from eastern states, some still in the midst of the Civil War, along with migrants from other Western territories and free Black and indigenous people all joined the rush on the Basin; as did an equally diverse conglomerate of recent immigrants from countries like Ireland, Germany, Portugal, Mexico, Sweden, and Russia (Hart 2002:29; Zhu 1997:130). Among this latter group were many Chinese, who soon outnumbered all other foreign-born residents combined and accounted for nearly half of the local population (Hart 2002:12).

Within a few years the Basin reproduced yet another gold rush cliché as its economy took a turn for the worse and local districts began repealing exclusionary mining laws (Stapp 1990:57–58). An influx of Chinese miners, most historians agree, helped mitigate the resulting financial slump and those that would follow (Wegars 1995:8–9; Zhu 1997:121). In spite of the territorial, state, and federal legislation that continued to place restrictions on them (see Table 1.2), by 1870 more than 90 percent of Chinese Basinites earned their living in the industry. Even through the financial swings that followed, Chinese miners persisted into the second decade of the twentieth century (Zhu 1997:97). The Basin's gold industry thus came to rely on a kind of uneven interdependency in which multiethnic miners remained essential for sustaining what turned out to be, in gold rush terms, a relatively long productive period of nearly half a century.

For most of this timeframe, placer mining far outpaced hard rock (lode) mining in the Basin (Spence 2016:196; Zhu 1997:185–187).[10] Because it involved extracting gold from secondary gravel deposits known as placers, rather than blasting it free from source veins in rock, placer mining was a more dispersed activity. Miners working along the waterways and historical drainage patterns that had transported gold particles over geologic time used a variety of techniques, all dependent on water and gravity, to separate the precious metal from surrounding sediments. When alluvial gold was near the surface and water was abundant, relatively simple placer mining methods like panning or using a rocker were enough for a miner to turn a tidy profit (Boericke 1936:26, 36) (Figure 1.3). As near-surface deposits were depleted, or as water became scarce, however, other more complicated water management systems were required.

Hydraulicking, invented in the gold fields of California, was one very popular method put to use in the Basin. It relied on highly pressurized water shot through a nozzle, sometimes called a water cannon or monitor, to break up gravel deposits and wash them into wooden sluices or excavated channels that drained the work area and tumbled gold free from the ensuing slurry (Figure 1.4). Extremely effective at moving earth, hydraulic mining dramatically increased the amount of material that could be processed in a season[11] but also required the construction and oversight of conveyance systems to bring water to unmined ground further and further from its source (California Department of Transportation 2008:50; Wilson 1905:41–46). In some places, the large expenditure and labor requirements intensified reliance on outside investors. In the Basin these needs were generally met through local cost-sharing partnerships and small-scale companies.

As miners across the West adopted hydraulic mining techniques, so too did Chinese companies,[12] who often excelled at managing the elaborate systems of reservoirs, flumes, and ditches associated with the practice (Rohe 1994:89). Research by archaeologists and historians points to ways that Chinese miners incorporated transnational technology and knowledge into emergent hydraulic mining techniques. Dam and ditch construction using traditional tamped-

[10] The highest producing gold region in the state, the Boise Basin is thought to have generated somewhere between $50,000,000 and $100,000,000 worth of gold within its first 35 years. Most came from placer deposits, earning it the local moniker of "the greatest placer country outside of California" (Spence 2016:196).

[11] While two to four placer miners could reasonably be expected to process up to six yards of gravel in a single ten-hour work day, in the same amount of time, a crew of six or seven miners might process as much as 5,000 yards of gravel using hydraulic mining techniques (California Department of Transportation 2008:50).

[12] Some earlier authors claimed that Chinese miners did not participate in hydraulic mining and instead retained "simpler" techniques even as the industry progressed. This runs contrary to documentary evidence from mining districts in California, Colorado, Idaho, Montana, Oregon, and British Columbia and, thus, has been categorically disproven (Rohe 1994:84, 89).

Figure 1.3. Two Chinese placer miners using rockers near Slate Creek, Idaho. The stacked rock behind the miner in the foreground is a tailings pile. Idaho State Archives photo no. 1268-A.

Figure 1.4. Hydraulic operations at the Plowman Mine in Idaho City. Two monitors can be seen on the far right. Their erosive power is evident in the volume of material stripped from East Hill behind them, which has become a receding scarp slope. The waterfall is a ground sluice delivering water from a ditch network to the wash pit below, which is then drained by the sluice box in the foreground. Idaho State Archives photo no. D 97-A.

earth methods have been noted in Oregon and Nevada, for example, and innovations like the undershot waterwheel and the Chinese pump, both modified from Chinese irrigation technology, were widely adopted within the American mining industry (Chung 2011:7–8; Steeves 1984:35, 141–143; Valentine 2002:45–46; 49; Zhu 1999:51–52).

Comments from State Mine Inspector Robert Bell (1932:11), impressed with the "ingenious bucket, belt, elevator, and pumping devices for low-lying, wet ground and deep stripping operations handled by wheelbarrow" that he noted among Chinese miners in the late 1880s, allude to some of these practices being used in Idaho. Primary sources, including mineral records still held in the county offices of Idaho City, and the archaeological evidence explored in later chapters, also make clear Chinese miners' broad participation in evolving placer and hydraulic mining systems. Moreover, these sources begin to illuminate how, from various positions within the industry, Chinese Basinites' strategies for inclusion, innovation, and resilience came to shape local mining practice throughout the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

Yet, even as prospectors expanded operations further from watercourses and deeper into slopes, the industry continued to contract. By the first decade of the twentieth century, large mechanical dredges that could operate through Idaho winters started to appear in major tributaries and even placer claims began to attract outside interest (Spence 2016:197, 212). Both changes served to consolidate what mineral resources were left into new ownership and extraction structures. Just as urban capitalists were getting a foothold in the Basin, the Idaho state legislature passed a new law forbidding corporations from hiring workers who were not (or who had been barred from becoming) American citizens (Chin 2020:1300; Zhu 1997:189). Though it is unclear if this law was ever enforced locally, by the second decade of the twentieth century, a majority of the remaining Chinese residents had joined the steady flow of miners exiting the once-bustling Basin.

Notwithstanding this final chapter in pre-Depression era mining,[13] the Boise Basin largely eluded the corporate formations and company towns that came to dominate many forms of mining during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Like other areas where this was the case, the wealth and influence within the Basin's industry remained more pluralistic and flexible but also less secure (Cowie 2011:14–16; Hardesty 1991:31; 2011:29). With few outside investors, local relationships were essential for raising the capital, securing the

[13] During the Depression, mining activity in the Basin briefly picked up again. At a much smaller scale, it continues today (Wegars 2001:13–14).

resources, and otherwise meeting the myriad challenges of placer mining. For Chinese miners, these relationships also became powerful sites for contesting their industry exclusion.

Connected as it was to international markets and transnational flows, the Basin was also never particularly easy to access. The first rushers to the area arrived on foot over long-distance trails. In time, wagon roads and rail lines made the journey less time consuming, but the latter never reached further than Boise. Well into the twentieth century, a full day might still be required to traverse the last 40 or so miles up from Boise on wagon roads that became impassable in deep mud or snow (Hart 2002:14–20). This, too, likely incentivized investment in local relations and the creative use of these and other resources. A recurrent theme in the archaeologies of mining and of the rural West (e.g., Hardesty 2011:25–26; Purser and Warner 2017:xx; Rose 2020:164; White 2017:67), the juxtaposition seen in the Basin between global connectivity and geographic isolation, is also one known to foster distinct forms of material adaption, economic organization, and social interaction. Especially in periods of economic decline, however, concerns for community survival could either overshadow or accentuate categories of difference among its members (Arata 2020:116, 121; Purser 2017:26–27).

As will be explored in later chapters, merchants, miners, and skilled tradespersons like blacksmiths all cultivated access to knowledge and goods sourced from around the globe. Just as often as not, however, these same resources and skills served to further embed Chinese Basinites into local communities and the industry on which they all relied. By the 1870s, Chinese districts appeared in many of the small towns that comprised the Basin. These encompassed the densest concentrations of Chinese homes and businesses (Zhu 1997:67). As social centers and retail hubs, they played an important role in providing Chinese residents relatively safe places to congregate with acquaintances or attend to errands, yet they did not have hard boundaries.[14] People – including Chinese women and children – regularly lived, socialized, and worked outside of them. In Idaho City, for instance, Chinese students were not segregated into separate institutions[15] and at least some Chinese women regularly attended local social events (Idaho World 1876a:2; 1877b:3; 1887a:1; 1888:1; Zhu 1997:174). Business and personal relationships, too, crisscrossed the pluralistic community and took a multitude of

[14] Though the Basin's Chinese district, much like districts in other rural Western towns, was less demographically concentrated than urban Chinatowns, even these, recent scholarship suggests, were historically far more heterogeneous and permeable than commonly thought and typically supported a range of interethnic and interracial interactions (Fong et al. 2022:241).

[15] In California, Chinese (along with African, Mexican, and Indian) American children were not allowed to attend the same public schools as European American children. Elsewhere across the West, segregation varied and often depended on the ability and willingness of local jurisdictions to pay for separate institutions (Paddison 2012:180; Zhu 1997:174).

forms. While sometimes these encounters resulted in exploitation or violence, others established long-lasting friendships and secured powerful allies (Zhu 1997:165; 2001:232). Many more fell somewhere in between. Navigating these relationships against a backdrop of racism and a rural gold-rush economy, Chinese residents pursued different types of individual and collective aims, leaving indelible signatures on the Basin in the process.

Thinking Through Networks

In this dissertation, I borrow select concepts and methods from network theory to understand how these complex webs of social and economic ties shaped, and were shaped by, individuals engaged in the mining economy of the Boise Basin. At the fundamental level, network theories are relational frameworks that examine an open-ended number of connections between entities. Conceptualized as *nodes* or *actors*, these entities can include people (as individuals or as collectivities) places, or material objects (Mills 2017:380). Connections between entities are termed *links* and are sometimes further categorized as similarities, social relations, interactions, or flows (Borgatti et al. 2009:893). Links are not static, however, and can arise from things such as kinship, shared labor, organizational associations, economic strategy, friendship, shared identity, or positions of power. Groups of nodes and links together in various configurations create the overlapping and multiscalar social webs or *networks* that any one individual navigates over time (Orser 2005:78–79; 86).

Network concepts have spawned a wide range of applications in archaeology (and many other fields including cultural anthropology, geography, computer science, and physics), from formal theories requiring complex mathematical models to more qualitative types of "network thinking" (Knappett 2011:51). The latter approach, more appropriately described as a paradigm than as a prescribed theory, incorporates network concepts, terms, and perspectives into a flexible framework that may also include several other theoretical orientations and perspectives (Mills 2017:383). While all network thinking considers both social structure and agency, a general distinction can be made between those that forefront interrogation of one or the other. In the chapters that follow, I use an agency-based network paradigm to investigate the strategies people deployed (Schortman 2014:168) within the Boise Basin's Chinese mining networks in pursuit of both individual and collective well-being.

Critical to this conception of networks is that social relationships in assorted forms are products of daily life. Through repeated interaction across various spheres, individuals build webs of connections that circulate knowledge, goods, and other resources. Both the network structure and an individual's position within it impact the degree to which these things can be

accessed and manipulated to serve different ends (Mills 2017:390). Creating both opportunity and constraint, therefore, routine social interactions become sites where agency, or the ability to define and achieve goals, is flexibly and strategically enacted. As individual actors participate in networks over varying lengths of time, the strategies they deploy reconfigure subsequent interactions and experiences. Collectively, these strategies can reshape entire webs of interpersonal dealings, and provide an avenue through which to challenge or uphold existing social structures (Schortman 2014:167–168). Networks are thus both the outcome of the tactics of daily life and the means by which they are carried out (Lazzari 2005:205).

Arising from myriad and sometimes conflicting individual actions, strategies and interactions expressed through networks are both fluid and contingent. Webs of interactions, initiated by actors who are neither always rational nor frozen in time, can therefore accommodate cooperation one moment and competition the next (Adkins 2005:196–197; Schortman 2014:175). Over time, social webs can be used to forge friendships, pursue common goals, share resources, or provide support for whole communities dispersed across geographic space. They can just as easily be manipulated for personal gain or to disenfranchise others, however, and, because all networks are bounded, will inevitably exclude some outsiders (Purser 2017:9; Schortman 2014:175–176). Constantly reworked as actors create and respond to shifting obligations, aspirations, and circumstances, networks are necessarily a highly situational landscape.

Network-based studies use various means to reconstruct social webs that individuals navigated in the past. There are, however, two overarching approaches to defining analysis scope: ego network and whole network analysis. Ego network analysis begins with one node and then seeks to map all its ties to other nodes. Whole network analysis, by contrast, attempts to uncover all the nodes, connected or not, within a previously defined criterion, like a geographic area or cultural practice (Mills 2014:383). In this study, I rely on both material and historical evidence to informally (without mathematical models) trace ego networks outwards from the archaeological sites and historical individuals at the heart of this dissertation. In doing so, I attempt to follow Latour (2005:29) by letting historical "actors' own ways" inform my analysis scales and categories of inquiry rather than imposing a priori assumptions of social units. This stands in contrast to the way that many past histories of Chinese Americans have been written, in which units of social analysis were often delineated around what were assumed to be bounded ethnic groups and so both reinforced assumptions of difference and severed Chinese Americans from larger cultural and historical contexts (Voss 2008:42; Zhu 2006:3).

The risk of reifying categories of inequality in the present is a potent example of why network paradigms – like any study of social groups – must be richly informed by an actor's context and positionality (Blair 2016:97).

One of these contexts, which network thinking is especially well-suited for exploring, is the role of transnationalism and diaspora in Asian American lives (Ma 2003:3–7; Yu 2020:335–340). Frameworks for theorizing the dispersal of people from a homeland and the resulting ties that transcend nation-states, both diaspora and transnationalism are terms whose precise meanings are debated[16] but that are fundamentally related to the creation and maintenance of connections across time and space. For scholars who forefront social networks, transnationalism is a fluid space in which individuals take actions and create identities in relationship to webs of interpersonal ties that extend across multiple place-based contexts (Ma 2003:5). Though still a somewhat nascent approach within archaeology (Ng 2021:36), scholarship within anthropology, history, and Asian American studies (e.g., Chan 2007; González-Tennant 2011; Hsu 2000; Lee and Shibusawa 2005; McKeown 2001; Rose and Kennedy 2020; Ross 2012; Sinn 2011; Yu 2011; Yu and Chan 2017; Voss 2016; Voss et al. 2018) have demonstrated the analytic potential of transnationalism for considering the complexity of Chinese migrant lives.

Envisioning members of diasporas as engaged in multisited networks begins to capture this complexity (González-Tennant 2011:509–510). Historians Elisabeth Sinn (2011) and Henry Yu (2011, 2020), for example, use the concept of networks to complicate unilinear models of transnationalism that privilege the influence of single origins or destinations. Reimagining diasporas as multisited networks composed of multiple geographical nodes in homelands, migration points, and "in-between" places like ports or successive destinations, reveals the many forms and shapes that they can take. Critically, this implies that transnational networks are also formed by the resources and experiences that members accumulate during migration and by links between migration points like urban centers, small towns, and labor camps dispersed across North America (Sinn 213:306–307; Yu 2011:401; 2020:336–337).

One of the ways that Chinese migrants maintained connections among transnational networks' many nodes was through social organizations established in migration destinations. Research by Bennet Bronson and Chuimei Ho (2015:118–121) has identified at least seven principal types of mutual-aid organizations that were present across the American and

[16] For a more in-depth discussion of how these terms have been defined within archaeology and adjacent fields, see Ng (2021:14–36) and Ross (2013:29–61).

Canadian West by 1910: fraternal societies referred to as tongs,[17] county- or district-of-origin groups (*huiguan* or *shantang*) made up of members from the same region who spoke the same dialect, merchant/civic leader associations like the Chinese Consolidated Benevolent Association, clan or surname associations, temples and shrines, progressive political organizations, and missionary churches. Specific functions varied according to the type of organization but were generally intended to help meet migrants' daily needs and to support their collective long-term interests. Researchers have documented, for example, that such groups often took the lead in facilitating the flow of transnational resources into communities, dispersing individual aid, advocating for miners' rights, organizing boycotts, challenging discriminatory legal codes, and waging political campaigns (Bronson and Ho 2015:117; Chung 2011:24; Hsu 200:205; Johnson 2022:105–122; Lee 2020b:93–94; Mar 2010:4; Merritt 2017:198–203). The number of Chinese mutual-aid organizations increased steadily in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century but were always most extensive in larger cities and in California. In smaller settlements and rural areas, single tong associations or prosperous merchant firms relied on links to parallel organizations in other diasporic settlements to provide similar services (Bronson and Ho 2015:119; 120–140).

The presence of various organizational subgroups within larger transnational networks illustrates another important component of social webs. That is, in addition to being multisited, social networks are also understood to be overlapping (Mills 2014:382). The specific layering, intersections, and tensions between overlapping networks reveal ways that social webs inform one another and act in the collective to configure daily experiences in particular situations. Within nineteenth-century Chinese American communities, this can be seen in the range of collectivities, both within and across ethnic boundaries, that formed alongside transnational networks. At multiple scales and across separate spheres, these overlapping social webs facilitated different individual and group strategies for confronting an array of circumstances (Voss 2008:48–49). Previous research, for example, has demonstrated that transnational, regional, and local networks acted as a means for building inroads into Western economies, riding out boom-and-bust cycles, eluding the regulations of nation-states, and responding to racism (Hsu 2000:56–57; Lee 2003:18; Ng 2021:31; Purser 2017:10; Young 2014:17; Yu 2018:190–191).

[17] The term tong was often unfairly associated with negative connotations and illegal activities in the nineteenth century press, leading some authors to prefer other terms like "fraternal organization," "secret society," or "Chinese Masons" (Wegars 2002:34–35). Tong (堂 *tong*/*tang*), however, was the word that most historical Chinese migrants would have used themselves and, although there is no clear consensus, seems to be among the preferred terminology choices for modern Chinese Americans and Chinese Canadians (Bronson and Ho 2015:121).

As socially constructed and relationally defined, categories of difference like race are another especially pertinent aspect of Chinese American experiences that network paradigms might contribute to understanding (Orser 2005:57). Repeated encounters with the types of exclusionary legislation and anti-Chinese racism described earlier in this chapter impacted Chinese Americans in no uncertain terms that also frequently deviated along lines of class and gender. While some archaeologists have joined historians and ethnic studies scholars in examining the historical implications that racism and racialization had for Chinese Americans (e.g. Fong 2013; 2020; Lee 2020b; Ng 2021; Orser 2004; 2007; Sunseri 2015; 2020b), these issues have received surprisingly little attention within Chinese diaspora archaeologies, in part because of a lingering emphasis on ethnicity and assimilation-based interpretations of material culture (Fong et al. 2022:234–235; Mullins 2008:153–154).[18] What a handful of foundational studies have shown, however, is that social networks at various scales were frequently sites where racialization took place but were also an important component of tactics for confronting structural and interpersonal racism.[19] Since both processes generally differed according to local context and in concert with individual positionality, some scholars have pushed for methodologies that "explore interactions as much as exclusions" (Mar 2019:14). Mapping these intersecting interactions and exclusions thus has the potential to begin to reveal the long-overshadowed diversity within Chinese American communities that also patterned the way racism, gender, and class were individually experienced, contested, or leveraged.

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[18] *Race* is a mutable social construct that is based on real or imagined difference imposed by others in a process called *racialization* and used to justify power discrepancies in a particular context (Omi and Winant 1994). *Ethnicity*, by contrast, is a social unit of people with some degree of cultural commonality – perhaps language, ancestry, practices, or ideas – who believe that they constitute a group. Though sometimes conflated, race and ethnicity are very different lived experiences with different associations to power (Orser 2007:6–8). Early archeological studies on Chinese Americans largely focused on identifying the presence of Chinese artifacts, cultural practices, and other "ethnic markers." Building on this initial focus as well as broader anthropological and sociological trends that emphasized ethnic persistence and boundary maintenance, many subsequent analyses embraced assimilation models that equated Chinese consumer goods with discernable patterns of cultural continuity and change (Praetzellis et al. 1987:47; Voss 2005:427–428). As will be discussed shortly, ignoring the broader conditions in which Chinese Americans lived their everyday lives, these ethnicity- and assimilation-based analyses often masked the impact of racism while upholding inaccurate and harmful stereotypes (Fong 2020:67).

[19] Robust transnational networks and mutual aid associations, for instance, have been shown to have been important resources for challenging legal discrimination, circumventing immigration restrictions, and for negotiating material and social worlds amid local racist practices (e.g., Chung 2011:24; Fong 2013; Gleason and Cheung 2020: 5–6; Hsu 2000:56–57; Lee 2020:88; Ng 2021:31). Relationships formed at smaller scales, often in local, and sometimes multiethnic, occupational or economic spheres offer other examples of sociality being leveraged to help Chinese migrants survive and thrive within racist and classist structures (e.g., Kennedy et al. 2019; Orser 2001; Sunseri 2015, 2020a). The divergent ways that individual communities chose to enforce national or state-mandated discriminatory laws (e.g., Lee 2020:90; Orser 2007:177), the extent of local anti-Chinese violence (e.g., Bronson and Ho 2015:59–67), and the impact of intersecting identities (e.g., Fong 2013:142–144; Mar 2010; Ngai 2010; Praetzellis and Praetzellis 2001; Shah 2001; Williams 2008; Williams and Camp 2007) offer but a few examples of the local, temporal, and interpersonal variation in experiences of race and racialization noted by authors.

Material Culture in Networks and Network Materialities

Within archaeological network paradigms, material culture has special prominence as a means by which to infer links between nodes. Put simply, artifacts or attributes of artifacts observed within an archaeological assemblage can be seen as the material remnants of some sort of interaction between the creators of that assemblage and another entity. For larger sample sizes, statistical frequencies are sometimes used to interrogate the strength or extent of connections represented by artifacts, but simple presence/absence data is better suited for single sites and smaller scale analyses (Mills 2014:387). This is the approach that I take in the chapters that follow, with the caveat that, while presence of specific material culture types may indicate likely connections, their absence does not necessarily signal a disjuncture. The absence of items in an assemblage may point to meaningful social, logistical, or economic restriction points, but it may also be driven by nuanced consumer desire.

As this suggests, both presence and absence are useful for illuminating consumption practices, wherein people are understood to consume what is meaningful to them from the spectrum of what is available within their own lives (Orser 2007:13). This insight does not arise from observations of presence and absence alone, however, but from subsequent interpretation of the nature and meaning of the social links revealed by material culture patterning (Blair 2021:99). As decades of archaeological scholarship have shown, material culture can be used to express, signal, or perform a wide array of social configurations including participation in commodity chains, shared identities, established or contested power dynamics, transmission of technological innovation, and expressions of personhood (Mills 2014:387).[20] Which and how many of these formations might account for the presence or absence of material culture is highly dependent on the particular contexts in which it was acquired, used, and manipulated (Hodder and Hutson 2003:187–188; Orser 2009:263).

Viewed this way, the meaning and significance of material exchange within networks is not dictated by social totalities or adherence to static identities but arises from a shifting constellation of small-scale encounters—like those examined in this dissertation—between heterogenous members of various cultural groups (Cornell and Fahlander 2007:3). Importantly, interpretation of the materialities at the heart of these encounters runs counter to the assimilationist paradigms and search for "ethnic markers" that have long dominated artifact analysis within Chinese diaspora archaeology (Fong et al. 2022:235). Though artifacts are seen

[20] A few overviews of this very large volume of literature can be found in Carroll (2002), Little (2007:42–70); Miller (1995); Mullins (2011a, 2011b), Scarlett (2002); and White and Beaudry (2009).

to play a crucial role in establishing or maintaining social ties, they do not dictate individual identities or cement them in place (Orser 2009:263). Artifacts are traces left behind in the continual forming and dismantling of groups as actors contend with their changing circumstances (Latour 2005:29).

Networks in Historical Archaeology

Archaeologists habitually use network concepts as metaphors for describing things like market systems, social interactions, and interrelated sites (Schortman 2014:168). The explicit use of network theories is far less common, however. This is particularly true among historical archaeologists who work less often with large statistical models and more frequently at the intersection of multiple lines of evidence. Charles Orser (1996, 2005, 2007, 2009) has probably been the most sustained advocate for incorporating network theories into historical archaeology as a means to understand both global modernity and social inequalities. Still, with few exceptions (e.g., Kamp-Whittaker 2021), previous literature within the subdiscipline using formal network theories is rare. More often, instances of network paradigms or general "network thinking" can be found scattered throughout literature examining social relations, materiality, and the tactics of everyday life.

An early example of this is Margaret Purser's (1991) examination of women's gender strategies in the early industrial West which, Purser shows, relied heavily on social networks for stability amid mobility and economic flocculation. Paul Shackel's (1998:98) exploration of "maintenance relationships" among African American homeowners in Annapolis offers another example in which social networks based on reciprocal labor were used for mutual support. Other loose applications of network concepts appearing within African diaspora archaeology include Mark Warner's (1998:201) interpretation of tea ware as a means for establishing distinct social circles among wealthy African American families. Elsewhere, both Warner (2015) and Paul Mullins (1999:170–171) also describe the withdrawing from or creating specific market networks as ways for African American consumer to minimize their exposure to racism.

Within Chinese diaspora archaeology, network concepts are regularly integrated into analyses of racialization and racism (e.g, Lee 2020b), interethnic cooperation (e.g., Lydon 2001; Rains 2003), and resource access through market negotiations (e.g., Kennedy 2015; Sunseri 2020b). There is considerable overlap among these topics, however, as demonstrated in the work of several recent MA theses. Alexis Ryan Knee (2012:172–178), for example, used a network paradigm to interpret multiple classes of artifacts that she argued demonstrated the

simultaneous, active participation of Chinese laundry workers in intimate, effective, and extended social webs crosscutting the community of Ouray, Colorado. More recently, Jocelyn Lee (2020b) compared store ledgers with archaeological collections from mining towns across Oregon to reveal the nuanced ways that racism and network participation shaped consumption choices for rural Chinese miners. Lee's (2020b:83, 93–94) research shows, for instance, that while Chinese merchants played an important role in suppling goods to non-urban outposts, Chinese miners themselves may have circulated other important items like *mín yáo* (folk ware) porcelain within regional migration networks.

Lastly, since transnationalism, diaspora, and network paradigms are conceptually linked, almost any archaeological investigation of multisited transnational networks (e.g., González-Tennant 2011; Merritt 2020; Ng 2020; 2021; Voss 2016; Voss et al. 2018) necessarily also incorporates network thinking. As research in this area expands, authors have initiated research that illuminates a host of overlapping social linkages. Some examples include the bonds maintained between home villages in Taishan and Asian American communities in Southern California that shaped material practices on both sides of the Pacific (Ng 2020:235–246), and the role of network intermediaries like merchants or railroad contractors in funneling specific resources into far-flung diasporic sites (Merritt 2017:198–203; Voss et al. 2018:411). In many recent studies, social interactions feature prominently in the range of practices associated with attempts to foster measures of well-being like physical health, personal satisfaction, or happiness that might be associated with access to Chinese medicinal products, consumption of fresh and locally procured foods, or commensality and other shared experiences that strengthen community bonds (Kennedy et al. 2019:146).

Boise Basin Networks

As these examples show, there can be considerable overlap between network paradigms and other theoretical or conceptual frameworks. While this slippage may at times be messy, it can also be useful for linking interdisciplinary perspectives and, as used here, for acknowledging the overlapping contexts in which the Boise Basin's Chinese mining networks operated. Meaningfully tied to people, products, and information that flowed across the Pacific, Chinese Basinites also found themselves embedded in the mining endeavors underlain by American capitalism and colonial policies (White 2017:54). Living and working amid the uncertain enterprise (Hardesty 1991:31) of gold mining in the multiethnic and rural intermountain West, Chinese miners curated ties to outward-reaching networks and to ones that undergirded much of their local community. By using an agency-based network paradigm, I

intend to illuminate this complex and ever-shifting space along with the individual strategies that mining network members used to establish lives and livelihoods within the Boise Basin.

In this study, I also use a network paradigm for its methodological emphasis on general relationality rather than strict comparison and for its ability to delineate social units based on material and social interaction instead of predefined categories. The data on which this dissertation is based comes from a number of archaeological assemblages that not only vary in size but also in collection methods and levels of initial reporting. These legacy collections, therefore, do not lend themselves to the type of tightly controlled comparisons that archaeologists strive for or to the kind of computational models required for formal network analyses. What they offer instead are three different perspectives from within the Boise Basin's mining industry. Viewing these collections relationally offers a unique chance to investigate how individual experiences differed across Chinese mining networks while also informing one another.

To reconstruct what these experiences looked like, I start each chapter with a close examination of the individual actors linked to particular archaeological sites and then follow material and historical evidence to identify the dynamic social webs and contexts in which they were engaged. Situating those actors within the resulting constellation of relationships, I next examine the strategies they used in pursuit of economic and social well-being. The result is a collection of three interrelated case studies in which differently situated merchants, miners, and specialists can be seen to navigate various social units and the shifting contexts of their mining community to exert their own agency, influence one another, and ultimately help define the Basin as a whole.

Chapter Outline

Chapter 2 begins at the southern entrance to the Boise Basin in Idaho City (see Figure 1.2). In this chapter I examine the historical and archaeological record of two prominent merchant families headed by Pon Yam and Loke Kee. As central hubs in the Boise Basin's mining networks, both families operated stores that supplied miners and other locals with a wide range of goods and services from the early 1870s through 1906. They also directly participated in mining and in the social life of their multiethnic community in ways that reveal the surprising scope and complexity of Boise Basin mining networks. Examining strategies related to their unique community positions shows members of the Pon Yam and Loke Kee households to be market and mining network makers in ways that often crossed gender and racial lines and that relied on various forms of agency and interdependence.

Chapter 3 moves northwest from Idaho City to a large collection of mining claims near the former townsite of Boston where Stephen Dempsey and the Wong Sing Company operated between 1875 and 1903. That chapter explores how Chinese miners' strategies for circumventing exclusionary laws and the multiethnic relationships that resulted from them shaped industry practices in the Basin. Moreover, it begins to elucidate some of the tactics used to establish degrees of autonomy and stability by way of mining company provisioning practices, which are examined through historical business ledgers and company artifact assemblages. As a large and long-running operation, the Wong Sing Company also offers an example of the type of multifaceted organization needed to run post-boom mining properties in the Basin.

In Chapter 4, I consider Boise Basin mining networks from the relatively understudied perspective of specialist support networks. Focusing on two archaeological sites along Ophir Creek that were part of the operations for the Reid Placer Mine, I illustrate the importance of infrastructure sites and blacksmiths in mining company operations. Short-term occupations between 1889 and 1904 by the Wo Hop Company and by two partners, Charley Sing Lee and Chow Yuen Lee, demonstrate how mining companies created strategies for self-sufficiency and innovation through participation in regional networks and material culture modification. The significance of these strategies is made apparent within the particularly challenging conditions of the Reid Placer Mine and the impending decline of the local mining industry.

Chapter 5 discusses each of these unique case studies in relation to one another. Surveying the range of experiences and strategies within Boise Basin Chinese mining networks, this chapter attempts to map some of the many ways that Chinese residents engaged in the local mining industry and curated networks that fundamentally shaped life and work in the late-nineteenth and early twentieth-century Basin. Returning to this study's central research question, this synthesis offers observations on how, from different positions within the mining industry, Chinese miners worked to establish lives and livelihoods in Southern Idaho's Boise Basin during the peak gold rush years of 1860 through 1915. Following the network approach taken throughout the preceding pages, this final chapter also highlights ways that Chinese mining networks both shaped and were shaped by the entire Basin community of which they were a part.

CHAPTER 2.
IDAHO CITY, CHINESE MERCHANTS, AND THE PON YAM STORE

Into the Basin

Today most visitors approach the Basin from nearby Boise, following a winding highway east of the urban area boundary and climbing into a Ponderosa pine forest to enter the Boise Basin at Idaho City. As first an overland footpath and then a bumpy wagon road, this same approximate route was also the one that led most Chinese entrepreneurs into to the area in the late nineteenth century (Zhu 1997:30, 52).[1] Idaho City, initially called Bannock after the inhabitants whose territory had been seized to create the mining town, sits at the southern end of the Basin (see Figure 1.2). Its location adjacent to Mores Creek afforded early residents promising mining prospects, and a slightly lower elevation than other Basin towns meant somewhat milder winters. It was, however, the completion of the transcontinental railroad that cemented Idaho City as the main entry point to the area after 1869. Although railroads would never reach all the way into the mountain-ringed Basin, the completion of cross-country railroads that included a line to Boise consolidated shipping and travel routes, previously split between the north and the south, through Idaho City (Hart 1986:14-20; Zhu 1997:30).

Home to the local newspaper office, county seat, and around half of the area's population,[2] Idaho City played a significant role in vicinity mining networks and in the establishment of the Basin's Chinese community. By the mid-1860s, nearly 100 Chinese-owned businesses and residences were scattered among the blacksmiths, breweries, and general stores setting up shop along Idaho City's newly platted streets. Chinese residents lived throughout town but were particularly concentrated on the west side of Idaho City in a district anchored by several long running stores on Montgomery Street (Zhu 1997:67) (Figure 2.1).

Operated by notable community figures Wong Chong, Pon Yam, Pong Seng, and the multi-generational Loke Kee family, these businesses catered to the many needs of local residents. Much like Idaho City itself, they often served as entry points for the goods, services, and people flowing into the Basin's gold-driven economy in the late nineteenth and early twentieth

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[1] According to Zhu (1997:30, 52), most Chinese migrants traveled the overland trail from California and thus encountered Idaho City first when entering the Basin. An alternative route, popular until the late 1860s, involved booking passage on a boat from San Francisco to Portland, then an additional boat up the Columbia River to Umatilla. There, pack trains waited to convey passengers south through Horseshoe Bend to approach the Basin from the north. Rushers like Stephen Dempsey (see Chapter 3) who opted for the latter, would have seen Placerville first among the Basin's towns.

[2] In 1863 Idaho City was home to 6,275 (42%) of the Basin's 14, 910 residents. By 1870 it housed 1,769 (53%) of the Basin's then 3,347 inhabitants (Hart 1986:8; Zhu 1997:45).

Figure 2.1. Idaho City's downtown district as it appeared at the turn of the twentieth century, showing the locations of several long-running businesses, including those run by Pon Yam and the Loke Kee family, as indicated by property records on file at the Boise County Recorder's Office.

centuries. Over time, however, both these establishments and their proprietors took on increasingly diverse roles within their pluralistic community, acting as mediators, anchors, and at times even gatekeepers. These Chinese merchant families thus afford an ideal place to begin surveying the complexities of the Boise Basin's Chinese mining networks and the overlapping livelihoods of their diverse members. Examining the especially well-preserved archaeological and historical record of these particular network participants also reveals how members of Chinese merchant families actively structured a range of community ties, resource chains, and material strategies in ways that not only reflected their own unique positions but that also fundamentally shaped life in the Basin.

Historical Overview of the Pon Yam and Loke Kee Family Stores

The Pon Yam/Wong Chong Store, 1873–1904

Following a precedent established in California's gold fields, newly formed mining districts in the Boise Basin initially adopted laws forbidding the participation of Chinese immigrants (Wegars 2001:8) (see Table 1.2). For this reason, many of the first Chinese rushers to enter the Basin did so not as miners but as members of other professions whose essential services knit them into the burgeoning community. Chinese Basinites quickly dominated local laundry and fresh produce markets, but also took up jobs as blacksmiths, butchers, cooks, woodcutters, porters, merchants, and doctors (Zhu 1997:111–114). Arriving in the 1860s, Pon Yam (Figure 2.2) was likely among this initial wave of Chinese entrepreneurs who first established themselves in fields other than mining.

Information on Pon Yam's early life is scant but indicates that, like the majority of nineteenth-century Chinese transmigrants, he had been born in southern China's Guangdong Province (*Idaho World* 1906a:3). Pon Yam began traveling to the American West in the 1850s, making his way to the Boise Basin after about ten years of residence (US Bureau of the Census 1900:4; *Idaho World* 1906a:3; *Zhu* 1997:116–117). The first definitive records of his presence in the Basin date to the late 1860s. These show him buying commercial/residential property in Idaho City and paying the $100 tax required of "lottery ticket dealers,"[3] both of which suggest that he entered the retail trade soon after his arrival (Boise County, ID, Deed Records, Book 8:569–570, Book 11:396–397, 402–403; US Internal Revenue Service [IRS] 1869:224). By 1870, Pon Yam appears to have established himself as a member of Idaho City's small but

[3] For more on what this designation might mean, see the discussion of domestic, personal, and activity-related artifacts later in this chapter.

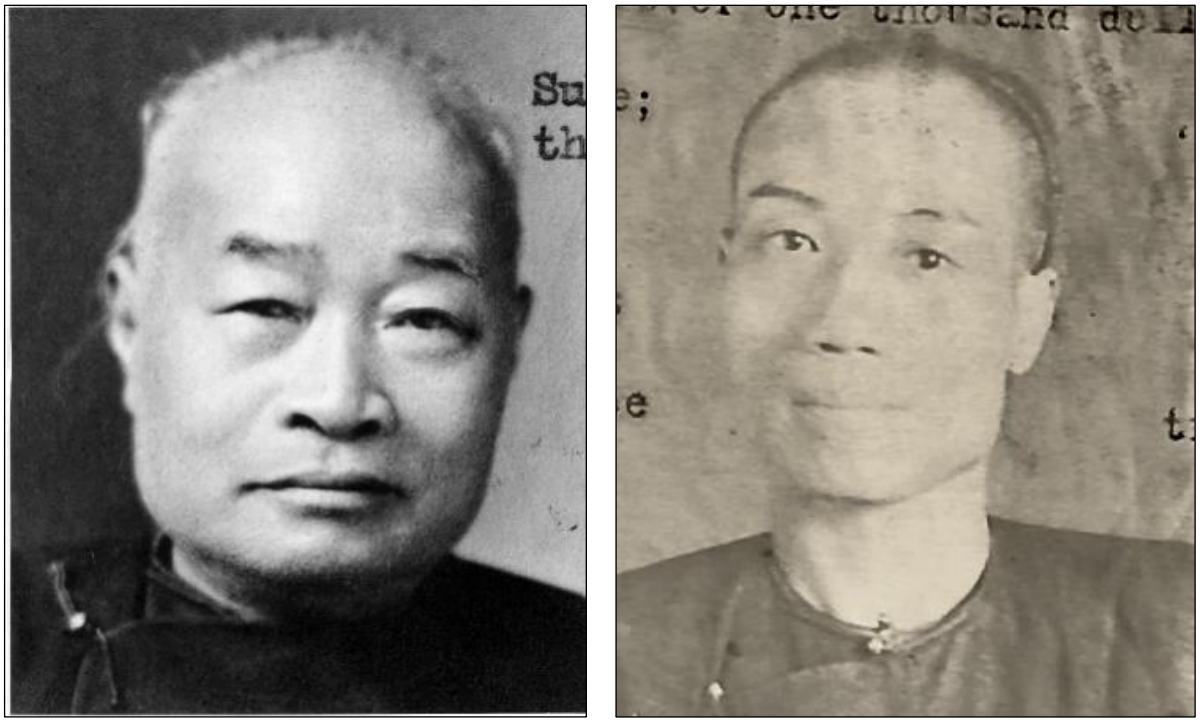

Figure 2.2. Photograph of Pon Yam (left) at the approximate age of 60 and of his nephew Pon Seng (right) at the approximate age of 40 (Department of Commerce and Labor 1904; National Archives and Records Administration [NARA] 1901).

growing merchant class. That year, he reported making $1,000 from restaurant and retail sales. Certainly not as extravagant as some of the profits generated by the Basin's top-earning miners, this annual income was nonetheless above the national average of about $880 and on par with many business owners in Idaho City (US IRS 1870:283, 312; Wright and Weaver 1898:670).[4]

The locations of Pon Yam's first businesses aren't apparent from property or census records, but the site of his subsequent enterprise is well documented. On June 3rd, 1873, James K. and Emmaline Reed sold two lots, a house, and a brick building on the corner of Montgomery and Commercial streets in Idaho City to a group of men identified as "Wong Chong & Co." for $1,500 (Boise County, ID, Deed Records, Book13:351–352) (see Figure 2.1). The brick building, which had been built in 1865 after a devastating fire swept through town, initially housed several establishments including a newspaper and the French Poujade Restaurant but at the time of the sale was already being used as a general store by the purchasing party (Boise County, ID, Deed Records, Book 8:761–762, Book 12:578–579; Planmakers 1996:7–8). Although his signature does not appear on the deed, later records (e.g., *Idaho World* 1875a:3; 1875c:3; 1877a:3; Department of Commerce and Labor 1904) make it clear that Pon Yam was at

[4] William Noble (mentioned later in this chapter), for example, made $2,343 from his mining claims in 1870; other Idaho City merchants, by contrast, reported incomes from around $600 to $1,500 (US IRS 1870:283).

least an early partner in the Wong Chong & Co. store and potentially involved in the acquisition of the property itself.[5] The eponymous Wong Chong, however, would lend his name to the firm for just three years.

Wong Chong sold his portion of the business to Pon Yam in 1875, shortly after repainting the store (*Idaho World* 1875a:3; 1875c:3). A miner with an accumulated $5,000 worth of claims, Wong Chong appears to have returned to these pursuits after divesting from the firm (Elk Creek District, ID, Deed Records, Book 6:224; Boise County, ID, Deed Records, Book 13:109–111). Records from the late 1870s place him on Mores Creek, operating as "Wong Chong and Company, a Chinese mining company" (Planmakers 1996:9). Pon Yam, meanwhile, became the proprietor of the restaurant and retail businesses that would collectively become known as Pon Yam's store for the next 29 years.

In addition to Wong Chong and Pon Yam, sources suggest that at least four men sharing the Pon surname may have also played a role in Pon Yam's long running store: Pon Yep (relation unknown), Pon Seng (a nephew), Pon Bon (a brother) and Pon Chihong (an unspecified relative). Of these individuals, Pon Yep is the first to appear in records. His name is listed next to those of Wong Chong and Pon Yam in dissolution notices that ran in the *Idaho World* (e.g., 1875c:3; 1876b:1) for several months after Pon Yam bought Wong Chong out of the three-way partnership. Since these notices only mention the departure of Wong Chong, Pon Yep may have remained in the firm for some period of time after 1875 and is perhaps the similarly named "Pon Yet" listed in the 1900 census boarding with Pon Yam (*Idaho World* 1875c:3; US Bureau of the Census 1900:4).

By 1877, a nephew named Pon Seng (see Figure 2.2) had joined the firm and begun participating in community events hosted at the store (*Idaho World* 1877a:3; NARA 1901). According to the 1880 census, Pon Seng lived with Pon Yam on Montgomery Street, along with two other family members. Enumerators identified the first as Ah Hough and described her as Pon Yam's wife (US Bureau of the Census 1880:7). Because Pon Yam also had a wife and sons living in China, it may have been that Ah Hough was his second wife (Hall 1958:35). Under Chinese customs prevalent at the time, wealthy men who could afford to do so often married more than wife. Although lower in status than the first wife, second wives were legally recognized family members and legitimate parts of family lineages. They might be more likely

[5] Since the convention "& Co." was generally used in historical property deeds to signify parties of three or more, it is likely that Wong Chong & Co. had at least three investors when purchasing the property that housed their store. Pon Yam may have been one of these unnamed partners; other likely candidates include Pon Yep and Pon Seng (see further discussion below).

to accompany their husbands to the American West, or to establish unions while there, however, since they were often free from the domestic and family duties that could contribute to a first wife staying in home villages while their husband traveled abroad (Wegars 2020b:291). Whether this describes their relationship or not, Ah Hough continued to live with Pon Yam until 1887 when she is reported to have died at 49 years old (*Idaho World* 1887d:1).

The fourth family member listed in Pon Yam's household in 1880 was Pon Bon who was identified as being just 12 years old and Pon Yam's brother (US Bureau of the Census 1880:7). Documentation of Pon Bon's connection to the Pon Yam store ends there, but Pon Seng's continues for more than two decades, most notably in paperwork filed with immigration officials when he traveled between China and the Basin in 1897 and 1901. These documents show that Pon Seng owned an approximate one-third interest in Pon Yam's store, had resided in the Boise Basin for more than 20 years, and, like Pon Yam, had become a widely recognized member of its community (NARA 1901). In 1906 when Pon Yam's store next changed hands, it was Pon Seng who signed the property over to new owners. Before he did, however, a final relative and potential investor, Pon Chihong, was identified as an alternative heir to Pon Yam's successful store in local papers (*Idaho World* 1906a:3).

While he conducted business with these extended family members, Pon Yam's own sons remained in China with their mother in an example of what Asian diaspora studies scholars have described as a split-household family. Defined by the periodic absence of an adult household head who worked and lived abroad, scholars emphasize that families such as Pon Yam's often remained an interdependent and cooperative unit—pooling resources but splitting labor across geographically distant homes when necessary and shifting between configurations as members left or rejoined family units (Glenn 1983:38–39; Hsu 2000:108). Guangdong's split-household families also frequently collaborated to support paternal and fraternal relatives' migration. Thus, Pon Yam's incorporation of male extended family members into his store was one version of a strategy played out in various businesses and homes across the Chinese diaspora (Glenn 1983:36–39; Ng 2020:112–114, 233–234). When successful, such strategies could maintain important economic and familial ties over long distances and periods of time. For Pon Yam, they also ensured the endurance of his store, which would remain a fixture of Idaho City's business district and Chinese community for nearly three decades.

The Loke Kee Family Store, 1876–1906

One block south of Pon Yam's store, another Chinese merchant named Low Loke Kee (commonly called Loke Kee) purchased a brick and adobe building in 1876 (Boise County, ID,

Deed Records, Book 14:233). Like Pon Yam, Loke Kee would use the building as a general store and home, in the process establishing another important landmark in Idaho City's downtown neighborhood. Operating mere blocks apart along Montgomery Street for decades, Pon Yam and Loke Kee family members' lives likely overlapped in many ways, but their experiences also reveal important ways that their individual strategies and personal circumstances shaped the businesses they built and the mining communities they served.

Loke Kee arrived in the Basin in 1871 or 1872,[6] several years after Pon Yam and also after anti-Chinese clauses had been struck from mining district laws. Most scholars agree that economic motivations were behind the relatively quick repeal of these provisions, which granted Chinese miners entry to the industry in the wake of a financial downturn exacerbated by water shortages and by two particularly destructive local fires (Wegars 2001:3; Zhu 1997:48–51). Though district-wide prohibitions on Chinese miners were replaced with a territorial foreign miner's tax of $4 (passed in 1864) and then $5 (passed in 1865) per month, Chinese miners nonetheless entered the industry in large numbers in the second half of the 1860s (Zhu 2018:145–146).[7] By the end of the decade, 92 percent of the 2,000 Chinese living in the Boise Basin were making their living from mining gold (Zhu 1997:97).

As the number of Chinese miners in the Basin rose, so too did the number of Chinese residents engaged in other professions, which reached a peak of 28 different occupations by 1880 (Zhu 1997:120). Entering the Basin in the early 1870s, Loke Kee likely found himself on the cusp of this change. According to census takers, the number of Chinese merchants operating in the Basin tripled from just six in 1870 to eighteen by 1880. While Pon Yam would have been included in the former category, Loke Kee appears not to have been considered in either count. He did, by then, own the building that would become his family's store, but the 1880 census recorded him as one of an additional eight "hucksters" and peddlers assumed to be operating on a smaller scale than merchants (US Bureau of the Census 1880:7; Zhu 1997:114). It is possible that Loke Kee's store had not yet been fully established, or that census takers simply misrepresented his occupation.

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[6] Some sources say that Loke Kee's first child, Di Ti, was born in the Boise Basin in 1871, while others say she was born in San Francisco the same year. All sources agree that the Loke Kee family was living in Idaho City by the time their second child was born in 1872, however (Lok 2007:12–13).

[7] As articulated by Liping Zhu (1997:47; 2018:145–146), Idaho's foreign miners' tax was $1 less than California's in 1864 and equivalent to it by 1865. As such, it was not entirely disincentivizing for most California migrants. Additionally, miners often successfully resisted these taxes by eluding tax collectors and challenging their legal standing in courts.

Like Pon Yam, Loke Kee's first destination in the United States was not the Boise Basin. Born in 1827 somewhere near Canton (modern Guangzhou), Loke Kee first traveled to the American West in 1854 at the age of 27. After twelve years abroad, he returned to Guangzhou and married. The couple reentered the United States together in 1869, staying first in San Francisco before moving to Idaho City. In the Basin, Loke Kee joined over a thousand other Chinese men trying to get ahead in the decade-old mining economy. His 16-year-old wife, Leong Shee,[8] by contrast, joined a much smaller demographic of around 55 Chinese women and, in 1871, their first child, Di Ti Loke Kee, [9] became one of only about 10 other local Chinese children (Lok 2007:6; US Bureau of the Census 1870, 1900:4).

Arriving in the United States six years before the Paige Law's targeted barriers to Chinese female migration and thirteen years before the sweeping restrictions of the Chinese Exclusion Act, Leong Shee faced fewer legal obstacles than the Chinese women who attempted entry after her. As the small number of women and children then in the Basin suggests, however, accompanying one's husband to a gold rush town was fairly unusual for women of all backgrounds in the late nineteenth century, and was especially so for Chinese women. Historians have long debated the relative impact that a host of social and legal factors had on individual Chinese women's mobility, but generally agree that some combination of US immigration restrictions, Guangzhou's established pattern of male out-migration for work, and the importance of women's labor to maintaining households in home villages all contributed to the unequal gender ratios seen in the nineteenth-century American West (Ling 1998:1; Mazumdar 2003:64–67; Peffer 1999:4–6, 27; Yung 1995:16–24; Yung et al. 2006:1–2). This last category of factors is particularly diverse and, as elucidated by Sucheta Mazumdar (2003:69), depended on each woman's class, home village, and unique family situation. In the late nineteenth century it was not uncommon, for instance, for women in southern China to bear sole responsibility for certain types of religious observances, for caretaking parents-in-law and other family members, and for domestic maintenance; nor was it unusual for women to perform agricultural work; to raise poultry and other livestock; to spin silk and cotton for market; or, particularly within transnational families, to emerge as the acting household head (Mazumdar 2003:64–67; Sin 2013:225).

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[8] Low Loke Kee's wife appears in Basin and family records only by her married name of Leong Shee. In this usage, the word "Shee" can be roughly translated to "a married woman from the family/clan of" and "Leong" can be read as the name of her birth family or clan.

[9] Di Ti's name has been spelled various ways in different sources, most commonly as DiTi (no space) in Zhu 1997 and Lok 2007. Because documents written in her own hand (Amos Di Sang letterbook 1886-1895) include a space between Di and Ti, I have chosen to add the space here and throughout this dissertation in hopes that it reproduces her preferred spelling.

On this side of the Pacific, the presence and labor of Chinese women was often no less critical or strategic than in their home villages. While some authors have suggested that a combination of traditional gender expectations and racism severely limited Chinese women's involvement in the social and economic life of the American West, other studies indicate that their experiences were far from homogeneous in this way. Studies demonstrate that Chinese American women were frequently expected to contribute to family incomes, even when it meant breaking traditional gender norms by assuming some degree of authority over business matters, performing manual labor, or in rare instances, "wield[ing] a pick and shovel" (Johnson 2000:302) to hunt gold alongside a spouse (Ling 1998:50, 85; Yu 2001:78; Yung 1995:7). Because the Chinese Exclusion Act denied family immigration to laborers, however, Chinese women's contributions to family and economic endeavors became an increasingly rare privilege of the merchant class over time (Lee 2003:13).[10]

In the Boise Basin, Chinese women were part of households that made a living through mining; peddling goods; or by operating stores, restaurants, groceries, and laundries (US Bureau of the Census 1870, 1880). Not all shared these responsibilities with a male partner; however, over half lived alone or with other Chinese women. Census data from the 1870s and 1880s describe most single Chinese women in the Basin as prostitutes or, intriguingly, as placer miners, though both of these designations are suspect. As will be discussed later, evidence for women in the mining industry in the late nineteenth century is rare and the tendency of American enumerators to inflate the number of Chinese prostitutes on census rolls has been well-documented (e.g., Chen 2000:83; Chung 1998:208; Peffer 1999:89–100). Research on Chinese women in the Comstock mining district by historian Sue Fawn Chung (1998:208), for example, found that European American enumerators consistently misidentified Chinese women living with men as prostitutes, even when the women themselves reported being married and/or had the same surname as male household members. At the other end of this apparent double bind, Yong Chen (2000:83) discovered that the pressure to identify any Chinese residence with exclusively female occupants as houses of prostitution led San Francisco officials to label even a five-year-old girl as a prostitute in the 1870 census.

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[10] The Page Act, which specifically limited admittance of Chinese women under the guise of prostitution fears, ended what was a largely unrestricted period of family migration from China in 1875 (Peffer 1999:xi). Further limitations were instituted by the 1882 Chinese Exclusion Act, which barred all but Chinese merchants, teachers, students, diplomats, and travelers from entering the country for ten years and prohibited Chinese immigrants from becoming naturalized citizens. Though court cases later added merchants' family members to those exempt from its provisions, the effect of the Chinese Exclusion Act various extensions and amendments was a severe limitation on Chinese women's migration until its repeal in 1943 (Lee 2003:13) (see Chapter 1).

In contrast to this paucity of accurate information about nineteenth century Chinese American women's economic activities, surviving documents make explicit the role that female family members played in Loke Kee's store and business endeavors. As Loke Kee slowly grew his retail business, Leong Shee gave birth to seven children: Di Ti, Fook Lung, Con Ling, Lung Ying, Lung Sang, Gum Fee, and Yoke Hin (Lok 2007:46) (Figure 2.3). While all of their children contributed to the family economy, it was their daughters, Di Ti and Lung Ying, in particular, who ensured the success of their Montgomery Street store. From a young age, the family hired Di Ti an English and Lung Ying a Cantonese tutor so that together they could conduct business with and serve their store's diverse customers (Lok 2007:18). Education through private tutors was a common practice among wealthy families in China but was almost always reserved for sons. In contemporaneous North American households, boys, on average, still received more formal education, but it was not entirely unusual for Chinese girls to attend school, nor for children of either gender to help support family enterprises (Glenn 1983:41; Zhu 1997:174). Against this backdrop, the training that Di Ti and Lung Ying received, as well as their outsized role in the family store, appear to have been fairly distinctive, but still within the well-documented spectrum of family- and kin-based strategies that Chinese merchants used to establish footholds across the American West.

Figure 2.3. Photo of Low Loke Kee and Leong Shee (seated in second row) with their extended family, likely taken around 1896. Di Ti Di Sang (née Loke Kee) is standing at the right end of the second row. Image courtesy of the Idaho City Historical Foundation, Idaho.

Merchants and Multifaceted Networks

Operating just blocks apart, each for over a quarter of a century, Pon Yam and the Loke Kee family successfully navigated the Basin's ebbs and flows of mineral extraction, amassing sizable customer bases and fortunes along the way. As two of the area's best known Chinese entrepreneurs, speculation about each man's wealth occasionally made it into the papers. Pon Yam, for example, was reported to have owned the largest diamond ring in the Basin, while an editorial in the *Idaho Statesman* claimed that Loke Kee had saved between $60 and $90 thousand dollars throughout his time in Idaho City (Hall 1968:23; Zhu 1997:117). To a large degree, the scope of each family's success was reliant on the extent of their network connections, though they often navigated them in different ways.

Networks were, of course, how both store owners acquired the goods that were their stock-in-trade. Like Chinese merchants throughout the American West, Pon Yam and Loke Kee tapped into Western markets and into the extensive transnational exchange being conducted across the Pacific to maintain the "heavy stocks of staple goods" that local correspondents found particularly abundant in the Basin's Chinese stores (Hsu 2006:28; *Owyhee Avalanche* 1876; Zhu 1997:116). Especially early on, getting these goods to Idaho City was often the weakest link in an otherwise well-established supply chain. Even after railroads arrived in Boise, supplies still had to be carried the last roughly 30 miles uphill to the Basin on what could be unpredictable roads. In this context, Chinese merchants like Loke Kee and Pon Yam used every means available to put merchandise on their shelves (Zhu 1997:116). In 1876, for instance, the *Idaho World* (1876c:3) reported on a packtrain leaving the transcontinental railroad section station in Kelton, Utah, that was carrying, among other things, 115 packages of goods for Pon Yam. Records from the Loke Kee store show that family members regularly ordered items from wholesalers in San Francisco, from Boise establishments, and from the Montgomery Ward catalog; Pon Yam, on occasion, appears to have made the trip to Boise himself to procure items for his store (Amos Di Sang letterbook 1886–1895:3–4, 8, 10, 14–16, 29; *Idaho Statesman* 1890a:4, 1890b:4).

Sourcing products from multiple consumer networks, the Pon Yam and Loke Kee family stores boasted an impressive inventory of global goods, groceries, and other staples. Various records suggest that items regularly found on hand included beans, rice, peanut oil, oysters, crackers, lychees, coconut candy, cookies, coffee, tea, whiskey, cigars, tobacco, wine, champagne, handkerchiefs, rubber boots, oil lamps, cloth, toys, firecrackers, and baskets (Amos Di Sang letterbook 1886–1895:2–30; Zhu 1997:163). Beyond these essentials, both stores occasionally

received specialties extravagant enough to be deemed newsworthy. This was case when, for example, Pon Yam received baby guinea pigs or German carp, the latter of which made the trip up from Boise wrapped in clover so that they would arrive alive (*Idaho World* 1886a:3, 1887c:1). Reporters also took note when members of the Loke Kee family gifted an elaborate Japanese tortoise shell cabinet, jewel case, and tea service to a local young couple as a wedding present (*Idaho World* 1888:1).

Importing goods to their rural community only scratched the surface of the services offered by Chinese merchants like Pon Yam and Loke Kee, however. As summarized by historian Elizabeth Sinn (2013:185), firms like theirs were "not only a commercial concern but a one-stop shop that served as a bank, post office, travel agency, emigration consultancy, and hostel." Because of their far-reaching connections, Chinese merchants frequently played an outsized role in the day-to-day necessities, economic prospects, and social lives of fellow Chinese migrants and in larger community-wide structures (Chung 2011:xviii; Young 2014:267). According to research by historians Bennet Bronson and Chuimei Ho (2015:140–141), this was especially true of rural locations in the Pacific Northwest region which, before 1880, had few if any Chinese mutual-aid groups like tongs. In the absence of these organizations, many community services fell chiefly to merchants.

In addition to serving as a mercantile, restaurant, and source of lottery tickets, Pon Yam's store was also known to have offered Chinese Basinites a place to deposit gold for safekeeping, to send and receive mail from home, and, in the case of an unexpected death, the option to have one's remains repatriated to family members in home villages through a practice known as *jianyun* (Davis and Osgood 2017:5; *Idaho World* 1875b:3; Ng 2021:51). The Loke Kee family store almost certainly boasted a similarly broad array of services, many of which took advantage of the same transnational connections used to acquire goods. Letters to family members or business associates overseas, for instance, some of which contained remittances and were known as *qiaopi* or *yinxin*, piggy-backed on the trade routes maintained by *jinshanzhuang* (gold mountain firms) (Young 2014:267). Shipping through *jinshanzhuang* networks kept costs well below that of government postal services and assured accountability by way of shared kinship and native-place ties (Benton and Liu 2018:159; Hsu 2020:36–37). At the far reaches of these linkages, many Chinese merchants in the American West sent and received letters for fellow residents, displaying those ready for collection in their store windows (Benton and Liu 2018:9), and saving senders from having to navigate "the unfamiliar language and rules of banks and post offices in foreign places" (Hsu 2000:36–37). Some also offered transcription services in

Chinese and English (Benton and Liu 2018:9). Loke Kee's daughter Di Ti seems to have occasionally done the latter, sending correspondence to American firms on behalf of individuals both within and outside of her immediate family (Amos Di Sang letterbook 1886–1895:8–19). It is possible that her sister, Lung Ying, offered similar services in Chinese.

People, too, frequently traveled the same routes traversed by goods and correspondence, resulting in social networks that were equally fundamental to a merchant's prospects in any given community. Family and clan relationships were at the core of many entrepreneurial strategies (Benton and Liu 2018:89), though the exact configuration might vary — as they did between Pon Yam and Loke Kee, who relied on direct descendants and on extended male relatives, respectively.[11] Broader kinship and native-place ties could expand a merchant's potential business partners, customer bases, and circles of influence and so also often formed the basis for other services offered. Both "profiting from and sustaining the lives of Chinese migrants" (Voss 2018:292), merchants were frequently the front line of help for recent arrivals seeking jobs, housing, and the resources needed to generally get along in new places (Hsu 2020:60–61; Young 2014:192–193).

Like his counterparts in Montana (Merritt 2017:199) and elsewhere in the American West, Pon Yam dealt not just in goods, but also in access to other essential services. His mining and lumber contracts employed crews of up to 100 workers throughout the Basin who drew their paychecks from Pon Yam and were also provisioned from his store (*Idaho World* 1881b:3; *Idaho World* 1882b:3). Other local Chinese found their livelihoods fixed to the Pon Yam or Loke Kee families through, for instance, the residential or commercial real estate that they each rented (Boise County, ID, Deed Records, Book 11:437; *Idaho World* 1881a:3; 1893:1), or by way of credit extended in local shops, whose account books specify that companies like the Hop Lee Tong and Ah Sin & Co. were backed by the "security"[12] of Pon Yam (McDevitt 1875–1887:26, 33, 129, 212, 254, 278, 286). While many of these relationships increased the social and economic capital of Pon Yam or Loke Kee, merchants were not the only ones who derived benefits from

[11] Though male relatives seem likely to have been the most involved in Pon Yam's business enterprises, his household cannot be seen as exclusively reliant on male labor. Between at least 1880 and 1887, Ah Hough, a wife or possible concubine, lived with Pon Yam and undoubtedly contributed to the economy and wellbeing of the household (*Idaho World* 1887d:1; U.S. Census 1800:7).

[12] The designation "security of Pon Yam," which appears on several accounts within ledgers from the McDevitt Meat Market has been interpreted elsewhere to mean that account holders may have worked as security guards for Pon Yam's assets. Records throughout the ledger, however, show those described as "security" picking up portions of the debt accrued by associated accounts, suggesting that the security being offered was actually financial backing. Mrs. Ann French, mentioned later in this chapter, for instance, is listed as security for Ah Dick and later had his debt transferred to her account (McDevitt 1875–1887:235). Similarly, Pon Yam is noted as settling an unpaid portion of the Ah Sin and Co.'s bill (McDevitt 1875–1887:286).

their own wide influence. In 1872, Pon Yam was enlisted by European American Basinites to help mediate a dispute between two Chinese mining companies that had erupted into violence. Part of the resolution required Pon Yam and another merchant, Lee Pow, to pay damages on behalf of the combatants (*Idaho World* 1872a:3). Another time, a group of Chinese cooks in Boise used the threat of accepting work with Pon Yam on what was later revealed to be a phony lumber contract to force higher wages from their domestic employers (*Idaho Statesman* 1881:3).

As these last few examples indicate, although Chinese merchants played an especially important role within diasporic networks, the personal and business relationships maintained by Chinese migrants were not limited to one another or to individual communities. They built connections across the American West, directed commerce and goods into their region, and immersed themselves in local affairs. Loke Kee's family members and Pon Yam regularly patronized local establishments (e.g., McDevitt 1876:190; Unidentified Haberdashery 1892-1897: 239), served non-Chinese customers in their stores (Zhu 1997:116, 165), signed contracts with European Americans (e.g., Boise County, ID, Lease Records, Book 1:264–266, Book 2:27), donated to civic causes (e.g., *Idaho World* 1886d:3; 1891:1), borrowed money from white neighbors (e.g., Boise County, ID, Mortgage Records, Book 5:406–407), maintained interethnic friendships (e.g. Lok 2007:20; Zhu 1997:165), engaged in politics (Blackwell 1900:1), hosted public events (e.g., *Idaho World* 1886b:3; 1887a:1), and wrote letters to the editor of the local paper when they disagreed with what was printed in its pages (*Idaho World* 1886e:3). Entangled as they were in the fabric of the Basin, it is perhaps unsurprising that Pon Yam and the Loke Kee family also found themselves immersed in its dominant industry.

Participation in the Mining Industry

Pon Yam, Wong Chong, and the Loke Kee family members all supplied markets created by mining while also engaging more directly in the search for gold. Wong Chong's involvement appears to have been the most sustained but only by a matter of degree. In the nineteenth century Boise Basin, nearly every economic strategy looped back to the mining industry in one way or another and the fortunes of Chinese merchants were no exception. In the late 1860s and early 1870s, in between the repeal of district-based exclusion laws and the Chinese Exclusion Act's instatement of sweeping, national property ownership restrictions, Wong Chong purchased several mining properties in and around Idaho City (Deed Records, Elk Creek District, ID, Book 6:224). To the $5,000 worth of claims he owned before his stint as a merchant with Pon Yam, Wong Chung added another $6,000 of claims in Siskiyou, Henry, and Trail gulches

along the lower portion of Grimes Creek in 1871 (Boise County, ID, Deed Records, Book 13:109–111).[13]

Like Wong Chong, Pon Yam may also have taken advantage of the more favorable legal landscape in the late 1860s to buy and sell mining claims, though, if he did, the county recorder seems to have had trouble getting his name exactly right. The designation "Pon Yim" appears on a deed transfer in 1866 and "Ah Yam" is listed on the sale of the same mining claims in 1872 (Boise County, ID, Deed Records, Book 8:569–570, Book 13:188). By the mid-1890s, however, Pon Yam had definitely entered the industry. Between 1895 and 1898, Pon Yam signed three different mining leases for properties across the Basin, each within a different mining district and with a different partner. The first of these, filed July 3, 1895, granted occupancy rights for a mile-long stretch of bar claims in the Mores Creek Mining District to Pon Yam and members of the Gum Lee Tong Company for a period of up to 50 years (Boise County, ID, Lease Records, Book 1:264–266). Well to the east in the Beaver Mining District, Pon Yam signed a second 50-year lease for the 80-acre "Upper Hurdy" placer claims just two years later, this time with Tong Jan and the Wing Lee Tong Company (Boise County, ID, Lease Records, Book 2:17–18). It is nearly certain that Pon Yam, who would enter yet another, even larger mining contract within the year, never personally mined either property. His role in their daily operation more likely approximated the one he had assumed while overseeing large crews on lumber contracts in prior decades (*Idaho Statesman* 1891b:5; *Idaho World* 1882b:3).[14]

Records indicate that it was Pon Yam who requested each of his three mining leases be recorded at the county court house; in the case of the Gum Lee Tong Company, he also seems to have been the only representative present to sign the resulting indenture (Boise County, ID, Lease Records, Book 1:264–266, Book 2:17–18, 27–28). This probably made him responsible for the small filing fee for each lease, but none of his contracts required a large rent payment upfront. The first, in fact, requested no money down at all, only 20 percent of future profits made above $2 per day. The second allowed for the $300 due to be paid in installments over the term of the lease. Suggestions that Pon Yam's involvement was more consistent with operational oversight than on-the-ground participation occur in the latter, which requested regular payments be remitted to the lessor's wife, Nellie Gibbs. Nellie, like Pon Yam, lived in

[13] Located southeast of the town of Boston, some of these claims likely abutted those worked by the Wong Sing Company at the turn of the twentieth century (see Chapter 3).

[14] In 1882, Pon Yam was awarded a contract to cut railroad ties for the Oregon Shortline Railroad and, according to local papers, had crews of up to 100 loggers at work along the Crooked River; in 1891, Pon Yam's crews were also reported to be cutting firewood for Boise along the Crooked River (*Idaho Statesman* 1891b:5; *Idaho World* 1882b:3).

Idaho City. Her husband William, by contrast, spent most of the year working well out of town in the isolated Beaver Mining District, as, presumably, the miners signing the indenture would also do (Boise County, ID, Lease Records, Book 1:264–266, Book 2:17–18). Mostly, though, it is the atypical clause requiring Pon Yam and his associates "to furnish all the men they can to work said claims" among the otherwise relatively standard language of both contracts that suggests Pon Yam's role in these efforts was tied to his uniquely situated position within Basin networks that gave him access to large pools of labor.

The ability to mobilize large groups of laborers would have been especially valuable as Pon Yam entered his third concurrent lease in April of 1898. As in prior contracts, Pon Yam leased the Noble Placer Mine in the Pioneer Mining District with a partner and arranged payment from the profits realized – in this case, 25 percent of any recovered gold. Located near the summit of Grimes Pass, the Noble Placer Mine consisted of a large and valuable conglomerate of claims along the east side of Grimes Creek that extended into Charlotte Gulch (Figure 2.4) (Boise County, ID, Lease Records, Book 1:283–285). Substantial enough to have an on-site sawmill supplying the some 40,000 board feet of lumber needed each season to construct flumes, sluice boxes, and other mining equipment, the Noble Placer Mine required a significant labor force (Wallace W. Elliot & Co. 1884:211). Under the agreement signed by Pon Yam and Chin Choy for the 1898 mining season, this labor force would consist of Pon Yam's "employees," who would work under a foreman paid by Pon Yam but approved in advance by the leasing party (Boise County, ID, Deed Records, Book 2:27).

Illustrating one way that Pon Yam's connections as a Chinese merchant were an advantage within local industries, the Noble contract is also an example of a relatively unique type of working relationship forged between some Basinites and Chinese miners. Contrary to what might be expected, the eponym of the Noble claims, William B. Noble, was not the one to sign them over to Pon Yam, nor to negotiate contract terms or to approve selection of a foreman. Those tasks fell to his ex-wife, Hattie F. Noble, who had recently filed to divorce her husband and won not only her separation, but also sole custody of their four children and full legal title to all of William's properties and mining assets (Boise County, ID, Judgement Records, Book 2:667–669, 706–711) (Figure 2.5). Although the circumstances under which Hattie came to possess William's claims are unusual (as will be explained in more detail below) it is significant that once charged with overseeing these vast investments, she turned first to the Dong Sing Company of Centerville and next to Pon Yam to keep her ex-husband's claims productive (Boise County, ID, Lease Records, Book 1:283–285, Book 2:27).

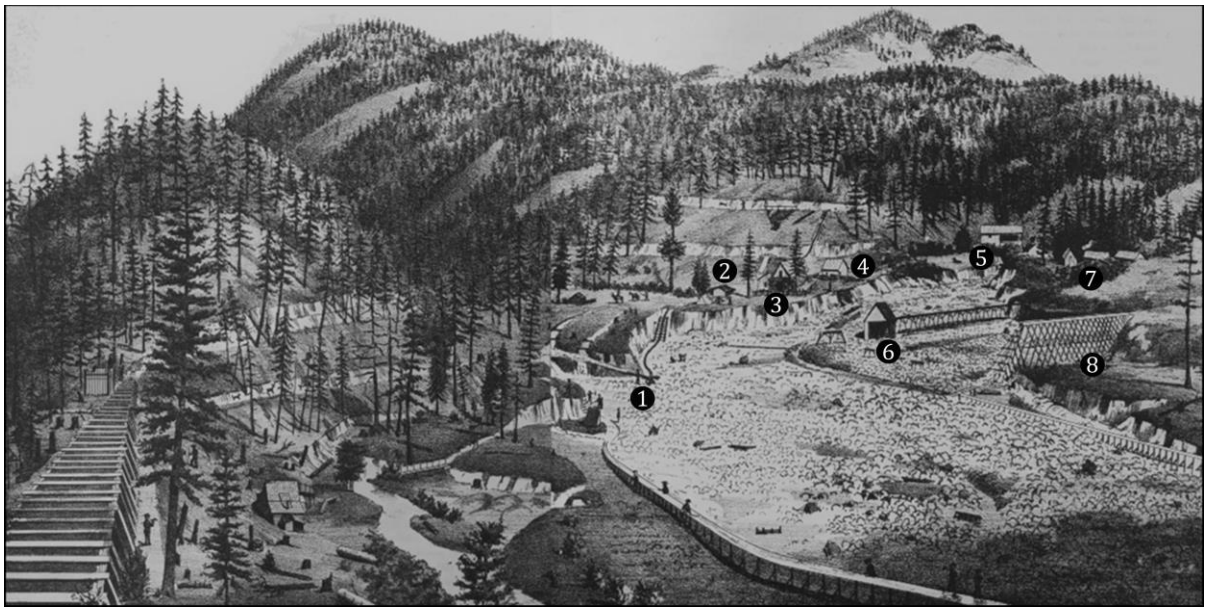

Figure 2.4. Depiction of the Noble Placer Claims on Grimes Pass in 1884; image from Wallace W. Elliot & Co. 1884:64 with more visible numbers added by author. The original is labeled as follows: (1) Giant, (2) Stable, (3) Boarding House, (4) Blacksmith Shop, (5) Sawmill, (6) Water Wheel, (7) Chinese Boarding House, (8) Penstock.

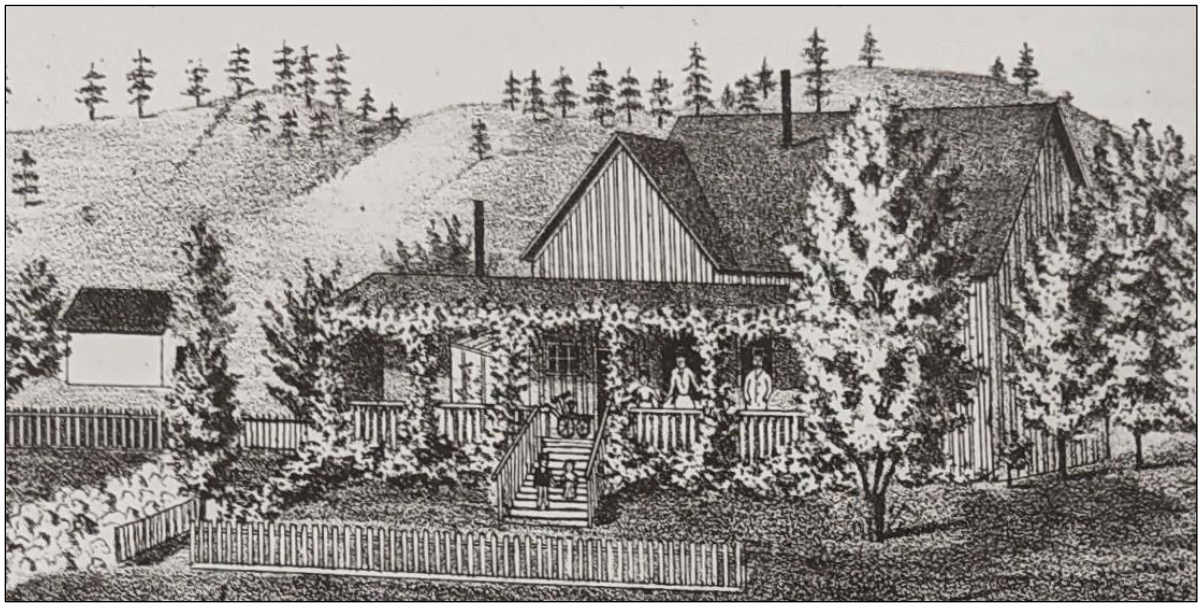

Figure 2.5. William B. Noble (far right), Hattie F. Noble, and three children standing outside their Idaho City home; image from Wallace W. Elliot & Co. 1884:106.

Hattie was not the only woman in the Basin to find herself suddenly in charge of mining claims and to lease them to Chinese miners. In the decades before her leases with the Dong Sing Company and Pon Yam, two other Basin women also signed contracts with Chinese mining companies (Boise County, ID, Lease Records, Book 1:92–97, Book 2:59–60). Aggregating lease data reveals just how rare instances of female mine ownership like these were: out of 86

mineral leases signed between 1865 and 1900, only four involved a woman property owner.[15] In every single instance of female ownership, however, the other party was a Chinese mining company. Representing a significant diversion from the pattern set by their male counterparts who contracted with Chinese miners just 64 percent of the time (Table 2.1), these transactions seem to capture a distinctive set of negotiations between Chinese miners and mine-holding women in the Basin.

Table 2.1. Summary of Boise Basin Mining Leases for the Years 1865–1900 Lessor and Lessee Category.

	Chinese Lessee	Non-Chinese Lessee	Total
Male Lessor	53	29	82
Female Lessor	4	0	4
Total	57	29	86

Note: data represent existing records on file at the Boise County Recorder's Office, Idaho City, which begin in 1865.

For their part, all three female mine owners appear to have entered these working relationships in an attempt to manage different forms of tragedy and necessity. Hattie Noble's ascension to sole owner of one of the largest mining operations in the Basin, for example, began with a family buggy accident on the road outside of Idaho City. Newspaper articles recount that, of those onboard, William sustained the most serious injury when he landed head-first among the rocks of a miner's tailings pile. Initially expected to die, William recovered physically but had to be temporarily institutionalized for memory loss at an asylum in Blackfoot, Idaho. Regular updates on his condition at first appeared in the *Idaho World* (1889a:1, 1889b:1, 1889c:1, 1889d:1,1889e:1), but eventually disappeared from the papers. Court documents pick up the saga four years later when both Hattie and William, then back in the Basin, filed conflicting divorce suits. In a series of legal battles fought over several years, William was assigned a *guardian ad litem*, indicating that he had been determined legally incompetent to represent himself, as he repeatedly tried to challenge Hattie's right to a divorce, to his former property, and to his children. In each instance, the court made what can only be described as a highly unusual decision for the time and sided with his ex-wife (Boise County, ID, Judgement Records, Book 2:667–669, 691, 706–711).

[15] As will be discussed shortly, in addition to leases, there are some deed records that show women buying and selling mining claims. These records are harder to aggregate because they are spread across a much larger number of ledgers. Deeds, therefore, are not included in this figure.

While embroiled in legal battles with William and for several years afterward, Hattie turned to Chinese companies to run the mining properties that remained sometimes tenuously in her possession. By the time of her lease with Pon Yam, Hattie's ownership was fairly secure. In her previous contract, however, she had been uncertain enough to file an addendum specifying the process for vacating the property should adjudication restore William's ownership. This, of course, also put the lessors, the Dong Sing Company, in a position of uncertainty, since they faced the possibility of having just 10 days to "clean up"[16] and cease operations should Hattie lose legal title (Boise County, ID, Lease Records, Book 2:1).

Like Hattie Noble, Ann French seems to have taken over management of her husband's mining claims out of necessity – though the two remained married and he likely remained in possession of his full mental, if not physical, faculties. According to census records, sometime between 1870 and 1880, Ann French's husband, a former miner, began to suffer from rheumatism so debilitating that he was no longer able to work (US Bureau of the Census 1870:5, 1880:2). During this decade, Ann began attempting to generate the income needed to support her husband and three children, taking in work as a seamstress and bidding on a county contract to house sick residents (*Idaho World* 1874b:3). That her role as financial provider included taking over management of her husband's mining properties can be seen in her lease with the Ah Hoy Company, which was filed in her name alone, and which she signed twice – once on her own behalf and once for her absent husband (Boise County, ID, Lease Records, Book 1:92–97).

The final woman to lease her claims to a local Chinese mining company was Mary Haug, wife and then widow of Nicolas Haug. Nicolas was best known as head brewer and owner of the Miners' Brewery in Idaho City (see Figure 2.1), where he is reported to have made "a splendid quality of beer" (Filby 2012:34).[17] Like so many other Basinites, Nicolas Haug invested in mining properties although it was not his primary occupation. In the late 1880s, Nicolas began transferring these and other assets to his wife, as reported in property documents, "in appreciation of the love and affection" that he bore for her (Boise County, ID, Deed Records, Book 16:1). When his death notice appeared in the local paper in 1887, it lamented that he had been in poor health for many years (Filby 2012:50). The mining investments that Mary initially

[16] The term "clean up" was used in the placer mining industry to describe the final phase of gold recovery, in which sluices and other equipment were shut down and "cleaned" one more time of gold, usually with liquid mercury (Boericke 1936:95).

[17] A 25-cent token for the Miner's Brewery and Bakery was found during the Pon Yam House excavations, perhaps indicating that Pon Yam had patronized Nicolas' establishment. The Miner's Brewery would also later sell an adjacent building to Di Ti Di Sang, who, along with her husband Amos, used it to operate the City Restaurant (see Figure 2.1).

inherited from her husband appear to have all been shares in larger companies and therefore not under her direct administration. In 1895, however, a lawsuit awarded her sole ownership of a collection of mining claims along Grimes Creek as repayment of a debt (Boise County, ID, Deed Records, Book 18:471–472). Presumably still trying to recover her financial loss, Mary leased the claims the very next day to the Lee Sue Tong Company of Centerville for a $100 annual fee (Boise County, ID, Lease Records, Book 2:59–60).

However they came to it, taking up positions as mine owners thrust Hattie, Ann, and Mary into what was a majority-male industry. It is perhaps telling that as each woman negotiated her newly appointed status, none rehired the same European American men who had been employed by their husbands or by previous property owners. William Noble, for example, retained G. T. Keys as superintendent of the Noble Claims in the years before his accident (e.g., *Idaho World* 1890a:1; 1892a:4). Keys' experience and successful track record might seem like reason enough to keep him on the payroll, yet neither a desire for consistency nor an enduring sense of loyalty seem to have permeated the relationships Hattie, Ann, and Mary shared with their husband's former contractors.

Lease records also suggest that, despite having recently lost a wage-earning partner, cost of labor was not the dominant motivation for any of the women's new contracts. In contrast to the stereotype that Chinese labor was cheaper than its competition, the contracts that Hattie, Ann, and Mary negotiated with Chinese mining companies set both rent payments and worker wages at levels comparable to those found in other Basin leases for the same decades – no matter the ethnicity or gender of the parties involved (e.g., Boise County, ID, Lease Records, Book 1:125–128, 137–140, 223–224, 246–248, 267–268, Book 2:23–24). This finding is also consistent with one of the few surviving documents related to Pon Yam's lumber contracts. A bid list preserved in The Boise Mining Company's 1894 meeting notes shows Pon Yam's name midway down a list of potential contractors. His is the only bid submitted by a Chinese company; it is also higher than those from two of his three competitors (Boise Mining Company 1893–1895:19).

If continuity and cost can be discounted as leading influences on their actions, other motivations must have encouraged women mine owners to seek out business ties with Chinese miners. Elsewhere authors have noted that in the late-nineteenth-century gold mining was popularly understood to be a masculine, and largely white, domain, even when local demographics like those in the Basin complicated this narrative (Herbert 2018:4–6, 164; Johnson 2000:27). Already transgressing social norms by merely entering the industry, Basin women may have in part preferred contracts with Chinese miners because they offered a more

socially acceptable type of interaction or because of their potential for mutual gain. Relationships with Chinese miners occupied a very different intersection of contemporary ideas about race, class, and gender than ones with their husbands' former contractors would have and white women were no strangers to interactions with Chinese Americans in the late nineteenth century. Middle- and upper-class European American women, for example, frequently employed Chinese domestic servants in their homes (e.g., Abraham 2007; Pariser 2015), and formed an outsized portion of the patients treated by Chinese medical practitioners well into the twentieth century (e.g., Venit Shelton 2019). Elsewhere, archaeologist Barb Voss (2020:126, 135) has described enduring personal relationships formed between missionary women and Chinatown households in nineteenth-century San Jose, California, and research by Cecilia Tsu documents occupational strategies that closely correlate with those in the Basin. Surveying the role that Asian Americans have played in California's nineteenth- and twentieth-century agricultural industry, Tsu (2013:31) uncovered a "marked frequency on the part of white women in hiring Asian tenants and sharecroppers."

As the other parties to mining partnerships with white women, Chinese merchant-miners like Pon Yam may have been drawn to these contracts as opportunities to navigate an industry increasingly structured to limit their participation. By 1898 when Pon Yam took possession of the Noble claims, federal and state legislation made it illegal for Chinese residents born outside of the United States to become naturalized citizens, to purchase or claim public land, or to take possession of any private mining property (Lee 2003: 13; Tirres 2013:51; Zhu 1997:101, 189). As was so often the case, however, local negotiations offered avenues through which to contest this mounting tide of exclusion (Tsu 2018:7). Despite having faced attempts to limit their possession of mining properties since the 1860s, Chinese miners in the Basin continued to establish and retain livelihoods in their community's most important industry by exploiting windows of opportunity when available, seeking out specialized niches and labor needs, and by turning to relationships of interdependence within their wide range of network connections. Mobilizing a temporary but experienced workforce of the size required to run the Noble Placer Mine was an ability that well-connected merchants like Pon Yam had honed over several decades. In many ways, Pon Yam happened to have the exact set of specialized skills that women like Hattie Noble would end up needing. The result was not only a way around social and legal prohibitions aimed at both women and Chinese miners, but also a point of convergence across categories of race and gender in which both groups could make space for

themselves in what has been a largely overlooked corner of the Basin's nineteenth-century placer mining industry.[18]

Relying on a different set of relationships and strategies for success, the Loke Kee family also established a presence in the Boise Basin's mining industry in the late nineteenth century. About a decade after buying his family's home and store on Montgomery Street, Loke Kee began leasing mining claims in the Basin. Between 1885 and 1889, he signed four different contracts for mineral and water rights on Buena Vista Bar, an area along Mores Creek just outside of Idaho City. Many of these documents identify Loke Kee as a "Chinese merchant in Idaho City," making explicit his dual income streams. In contrast to Pon Yam, Loke Kee's early transactions do not include co-signers or named partners, though his lease from an Irish immigrant named John J. Elliott does reference "company employees," suggesting that, even before his children joined him, Loke Kee was not mining alone (Boise County, ID, Lease Records, Book 1:180–182, 200–201, 215–218).

Family histories recount that while Loke Kee's two daughters helped manage the store, his five sons were expected to join the Basin's gold mining industry (Lok 2007:18–19). Historical records confirm that each boy did take up mining in turn, and indicate that at least Fook Ling, Con Ling, and Yoke Him did so in partnership with their father (Boise County, ID, Lease Records, Book 1:244–246, 255–256, Book 2:25–26; Hall 1968:23; US Bureau of the Census 1900:4).[19] Their names are not the only ones to regularly appear among the family's mining records, however. In 1891, Loke Kee's eldest daughter, Di Ti, bought the claims her father had previously leased from John Elliot on Buena Vista Bar (Boise County, ID, Deed Records, Book 17:157–158). This acquisition made Di Ti one of only a very few women in the Basin who, like Hattie Noble or Mary Haug, owned mining claims outright.[20]

Twenty years old at the time of the transaction and identified as Mrs. Di Sang, Di Ti was by then married to Amos Di Sang. An Idaho City local who had entered the Basin at a young age with his uncle, Man Chong, Amos worked as a bookkeeper and buyer for the Man Chong & Co.

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[18] Though this particular aspect of the Basin's mining industry had been largely unrecognized, instances of other marginalized groups forming alliances to challenge social or economic exclusion are well documented in a variety of other contexts. Sunseri (2020a) and White (2023) offer but a few examples.

[19] Fook Ling, Lung Ying, and Lung Sang are all identified as gold miners on the 1900 census. The two remaining sons, Con Ling, who is listed as a "teamster" in the same census, and Yoke Hin, who was just 7 years old in 1900, both appear at different times in mining deeds associated with the Fook Kee Company (Boise County, ID, Lease Records, Book 1:244–246, 255–256, Book 2:25–26).

[20] Women's names occasionally appear on contemporary mining documents as investors, buying, for example, a 1/4 interest in the Reid Placer Mine (see Chapter 5), but usually along with a husband. In the sample of mining documents examined for this study, which included all leases between 1865 and 1900 and hundreds of deeds, location notices, and other records well into the 20th century, Hattie Noble, Mary Haug, and Di Ti Di Sang (née Loke Kee) were the only women who owned mining claims independently.

store, located just around the corner from Di Ti's own family mercantile (*Idaho World* 1890b:1; *The Ketchum Keystone* 1887:2) (see Figure 2.1). As a young wife and mother, records show that Di Ti continued to support the Loke Kee family store (Amos Di Sang letterbook 1886–1895:5–30) and her brothers' mining ventures on Buena Vista Bar. The mining claims Di Ti owned were at the center of operations for Fook Kee and Company, a mining partnership that at various times included Fook Ling, Con Ling, and Yoke Him (Boise County, ID, Lease Records, Book 1:244–246, 255–256, Book 2:25–26).

In 1895, Loke Kee's oldest son, Fook Ling, dissolved his partnership in Fook Kee and Company, transferring majority ownership to two non-family members, Lin Sue and Yin Choy, who retained the firm's name (Boise County, ID, Lease Records, Book 1:255–256; Boise County, ID, Miscellaneous Records, Book 3:17). Throughout this period Di Ti remained present in the company's records. Although never officially named as a partner, Di Ti witnessed a lease after her oldest brother's departure and, in the last recorded transaction of the Fook Kee and Company, she purchased lease rights back from Lin Sue and Yin Choy, reconsolidating the firm's holdings under her sole ownership in 1899 (Boise County, ID, Lease Records, Book 2:23–24 and Miscellaneous Records, Book 3:505).

Clearly integral to many of the Loke Kee family's economic strategies, Di Ti was nonetheless a somewhat unusual and largely unrecognized member of the Basin's Chinese mining networks. Like her Idaho-born siblings, Di Ti's birthright citizenship accorded her the legal standing to own property that was denied her parents and the majority of other Chinese Basinities. Also like her siblings, Di Ti's public-school attendance in Idaho City, afforded her a familiarity with the English language that could be put to use reading documents and contracts, negotiating with associates, and translating records (Glenn 1983:41). Even beyond this, however, the specialized business and language training that Di Ti received seems to have uniquely qualified her to contribute to family endeavors. Although her brothers leased other mining properties, it is notable that Di Ti alone secured the title to the family's claims on Buena Vista Bar. It was also Di Ti, and not her husband Amos, who purchased the couple's home in Idaho City and the building where they opened the City Restaurant in 1899 (Boise County, ID, Deed Records, Book 17:157–158, 458–460, Book 23:567–569; *Idaho Statesman* 1902:5; Lok 2007:17-18).

An example of the unique set of opportunities and constraints present within each node of the Boise Basin's Chinese mining networks, Di Ti's experiences within the industry are also ones that would remain invisible without examining the various connections that bound merchants to mining networks and to their less recognized participants. Exposing these connections helps

to recover the delicate ways in which Chinese Basinites continually leveraged their changing positions within mining and broader community networks to make the most of the options available to them. While Di Ti's involvement in the mining industry seems not to have attracted much attention, some of her other actions did. Local papers, for example, regularly remarked on her scholastic achievements, calling her an "an extraordinarily smart Chinese girl" (*Idaho World* 1882a:3; Zhu 1997:174). In 1886, when Di Ti, then fifteen years old, wrote a letter to the editor disputing a story about Chinese miners, the *Idaho World* (1886e:3) ran both the letter and a correction, commenting on the rarity of receiving a letter "so well worded."

With Idaho's early adoption of women's suffrage, Di Ti later became one of the first Chinese American women to vote in a US presidential election. Her unique status attracted the attention of the *National Woman's Column*, which quipped that her foreign-born husband would have to "stay at home and take care of the large family of children, while she goes forth to the polling booth" but also observed that it was "no small thing to have [Di Ti] enlisted politically on one side or the other" (Blackwell 1900:1). Di Ti's interest in politics was well-known in the Basin, where her opinions often held sway over the small voting block of Chinese Americans who participated in local elections (Blackwell 1900:1; Zhu 1997:174-175). Exhibiting some of the ways that Di Ti's status as a well-educated Chinese American woman shifted over time and along with the legal context around her, these examples also provide evidence of Di Ti leveraging her many positions to remain a powerful force in her community and in her family's livelihood, including even their search for gold.

Closing Up Shop

In the early 1900s, both Pon Yam and the Loke Kee family shuttered their long-running stores in Idaho City as they prepared for trips to China. By the turn of the twentieth century, the population in the Basin had dropped precipitously and the mineral extraction industry had shifted to one increasingly composed of dredge and lode mining (Zhu 1997:186–187). Despite what surely were dwindling customer bases and profit margins, it seems that neither merchant family initially intended to leave the Basin for good. In 1904, Pon Yam secured a series of documents, including a notarized letter from the department of commerce and affidavits from two European American community members, that were intended to prove his eligibility to re-enter the US under the strict terms of the Chinese Exclusion Act's extensions (Department of Commerce and Labor 1904). As it turned out, Pon Yam would never get the chance to use these documents. He died June 2, 1905, while visiting the wife and sons who had remained in China during his extended tenure in the American West. In November of that year, Pon Seng briefly

tried to revive the Pon Yam store in its old location but was challenged by Pon Yam's widow, who sent a notarized letter from Guangzhou disputing the ownership claim (*Idaho World* 1905:3, 1906a:3, 1906b:1). Nonetheless, in 1906, Pon Seng, still acting as an agent for the firm, sold the store on Montgomery and Commercial streets for $1 to J. A. Lippincott and William Warner, who used it as a warehouse for their own general store across the street. The building later served as a residence before being purchased for restoration by the Idaho City Historical Foundation in 1996 (Boise County, ID, Deed Records, Book 26:135; *Idaho Statesman* 1957:19; Planmaker 1996:8–10).

Within a month of the Pon Yam store's sale, Loke Kee's family also liquidated their property and departed the Basin. Motivated by Loke Kee's wish to retire in China, all three generations of the family set sail in 1906, except for Di Ti who had died in childbirth in 1903 and Yoke Hin who had died of an illness in 1905 (*Idaho Statesman* 1905:7; *Idaho World*. 1903:1). Amos Di Sang initially intended to spend just one year abroad with his children, who had all born in Idaho City, but family tragedy, political revolution in China, and the "restrictionist mind-set" of the US immigration system all interceded (Lee 2003:77; *Idaho Statesman* 1906a:7, 1906b:5). Loke Kee died either enroute to or shortly after arriving in Hong Kong; within a year, two-thirds of the remaining family had died of smallpox. Struggling to reenter the country of their birth under the extensions of the Chinese Exclusion Act,[21] only two of Loke Kee and Leong Shee's extended family members made it back to the US. While they would establish families and lives elsewhere, neither resettled in the Boise Basin (*Idaho Statesman* 1907:3; Lok 2007:28–30).

Remembered in later years for the wealth and status they achieved, stories about Pon Yam's three-carat diamond ring and the fortune amassed by Loke Kee "in company with his four sons" continued to run in local papers into the late twentieth century (Hall 1958:35; 1968:23). While these narratives have kept Pon Yam and the Loke Kee family alive in the Basin's gold mining lore, they also dramatically oversimplify the extent of both family's roles within the community, their numerous crosscutting alliances and partnerships, and the continual strategic negotiations undergirding their successes. As seen here through the historical record and in the next section through material culture, these critical details elucidate not just Pon Yam and Loke Kee family's experiences in the Boise Basin but also the marked influence they held within it.

[21] Increased surveillance, raids, and deportations under the provisions of the 1892 Geary Act coincided with the 1888 Scott Act and a series of extensions to the Chinese Exclusion Act in the early twentieth century that made it ever more difficult for people with Chinese ancestry, even those who had been born in the United States, to legally enter, reenter, or travel through the American West (Johnson 2022:94–99; Lew-Williams 2018:8–9) (see Chapter 1).

The Material Culture of the Pon Yam and Loke Kee Family Stores

Archaeological Collections from the Pon Yam House

In 1996, the non-profit Idaho City Historical Foundation (ICHF) acquired the property used by Wong Chong, Pon Seng, and, most memorably, by Pon Yam as a home and business. Ninety years after transferring out of Wong Chong Company hands, the brick building best known as Pon Yam's store had been converted into a summer residence but still retained much of its historical character (Planmakers 1996:9, 18). Projects over the next two years stabilized the building, restored some of its prior features, and adapted the structure for use as a museum (Figure 2.6). As part of these efforts, the ICHF partnered with the Boise National Forest (BNF) to coordinate archaeological investigations in and around the building in 1997 and 1998. These projects produced artifacts from six trenches excavated alongside exterior walls, from sediments exposed when floorboards within the house and on the porch were removed, and from nine 1 x 1- or 1 x 2-meter excavation units. The resulting assemblage was initially inventoried by volunteers for the BNF's Passport in Time program and remained on site until 2020, when the collection was transferred to the University of Idaho (UI) for analysis.

Because of the size and complexity of the Pon Yam House archaeological collection, documentation and analysis has proceeded in two phases. The first artifacts processed were those collected from within the building's footprint, from under porch supports, and from excavation units. This group included many organic or fragile items that were preserved due to their protected positions under floorboards or other structural elements but that were in greater need of stabilization. Now fully cataloged and prepared for long-term curation, these are the artifacts discussed below. The remainder of the Pon Yam House collection was recovered from trenches placed to the north, east, and west of the building. Those artifacts are being processed in an second phase of analysis led by UI master's student Juniper Harvey-Marose. Once both phases of analysis are complete, the entire Pon Yam House collection will be returned to the ICHF for incorporation into museum exhibits and long-term curation.

Together, both groups of artifacts reveal information about the businesses operated by Pon Yam and Wong Chong and about the broader Idaho City townsite, which was listed on the National Register of Historic Places in 1975 (Osgood and Munch 1998:[1-3]). Because many were collected from within the Pon Yam House and protected by the structure for nearly a century, the artifacts discussed in this chapter, in particular, offer some of the most direct evidence of Pon Yam's merchandise, his relationship to the mining industry, and daily life in the only remaining structure associated with the town's once thriving Chinese community.

Figure 2.6. The exterior of the Pon Yam House in 2022, after restoration and archaeological investigation. View is east from the intersection of Montgomery and Commercial streets.

The portion of the Pon Yam House assemblage analyzed here consists of 26,233 artifacts (Table 2.2, Table 2.3). As can be seen in Table 2.2, fully half of this is composed of organic materials, which include things like seeds, nut shells, fruit pits, wooden incense sticks, and paper remnants of firecrackers. Rarely preserved in large quantities at Chinese American and Chinese diaspora sites, these delicate items are an uncommon opportunity to examine the variety of foods and goods that once filled Pon Yam's stockroom, kitchen, and private residence. Metal artifacts are also relatively common in the collection. Many, including more than 3,200 nails, can be tied to construction and maintenance of property structures, while the remaining glass, ceramic, and other materials relate to a cross section of activities that invoke the multiple functions and connections held by Pon Yam's popular store.

Table 2.2. Pon Yam House Assemblage by Material Type.

Material Type	Count	Percent[a]
Organics	13,105	50
Metal	7,042	27
Glass	2,939	11
Fauna	1,550	6
Ceramic	1,053	4
Synthetic	471	2
Unknown	23	<0
Mineral	21	<0
Multiple	21	<0
Stone	8	<0
Total	26,233	100

[a] Percent values have been rounded to nearest whole number.

Table 2.3. Summary of Pon Yam House Assemblage by Functional Group and Category.

Functional Group Artifact Category (Artifact Name)		**Count**	**Percent of Total**[a]
Food/food storage	**Subtotal**	**12,399**	**47**
Bottle (baby*, condiment, food, juice, milk, soda*, Worcestershire sauce)		61	<1
Chinese brown-glazed stoneware (globular/barrel jar, spouted jar, wide-mouth jar, lid, unknown)		139	<1
Fauna (chicken, cow, duck, fish, pig, sheep/goat, turkey, turtle, unidentified)		1,550	6
Jar (canning, condiment, pickle, Euroamerican stoneware, lid, unknown)		22	<1
Seed/nut/pit (olive, dracontomelon, fruit pit, melon seed, nut/peanut, bean, water caltrop)		10,602	40
Other (can, cork, crown cap, glass stopper, unknown)		25	<1
Misc. Container	**Subtotal**	**2,030**	**8**
Bottle		706	3
Can		754	3
Other (barrel hoop, jar, jug*, stopper/closure, unknown)		570	2
Architectural/construction	**Subtotal**	**4,594**	**18**
Construction material (brick, lumber, mortar, paint, plaster, tile, window glass)		1,093	4
Construction fastener (bolt, nail, screw, spike, staple, tack)		3,327	13
Hardware (brace/bracket, chain, door fixture, ring, hinge, knob/pull, rivet, spring, valve, washer)		40	<1
Wire, rope, or twine		122	<1
Other/unknown		12	<1
Religious/Celebratory	**Subtotal**	**1,644**	**6**
Firecracker		79	<1
Incense stick		1,547	6
Matchstick		18	<1
Food prep/consumption	**Subtotal**	**842**	**3**
Tableware (bowl, cup, dish, glass/tumbler, flatware, plate, platter, pitcher, teapot, holloware)		465	2
Utensil (chopstick, serving/table spoon, fork, handle)		41	<1
Cooking implement (grater, pan, other)		10	<1
Other/unknown		326	1
Personal	**Subtotal**	**327**	**1**
Clothing & hardware (belt, button, collar link, grommet, rivet, strap adjuster)		90	<1
Footwear (boot, shoe, hardware)		177	<1
Grooming/toiletry (perfume bottle*, comb, makeup case, toothbrush)		7	<1
Opium (can, lamp)		25	<1
Personal adornment (bead, chain, hair accessory, ring)		15	<1
Pharmaceutical/medical (eye glass lens, pharmacy bottle, Chinese medicine bottle)		13	<1
Other	**Subtotal**	**323**	**1**
Alcohol (absinthe, beer*, whiskey, wine/champagne bottle)		69	<1
Animal/livestock (horse tack, horse bit, horse shoe, agricultural machine part)		12	<1
Currency (coin, token)		8	<1
Entertainment (tile/domino, glass game piece, lottery ticket, newspaper)		24	<1
Firearms (bullet, cartridge, case, shot, primer cap, shell case)		42	<1
Mining (axe, file, handle, liquid mercury, pick, punch, shovel, wedge)		14	<1
Sewing (safety pin, sewing bird, straight pin)		20	<1
Tobacco (cigar*, cigarette, pipe, tin, tobacco tin tag)		44	<1
Toy (doll, marble, truck*)		11	<1
Waste (charcoal, coke, scrap wood, slag)		39	<1
Writing/printing/recording (abacus bead, calligraphy brush, ink-grinding dish, pencil, printing type*)		40	<1
Household furnishing and fixtures	**Subtotal**	**136**	**1**
Electrical/lighting (candle stick, fuse*, insulator, oil lamp chimney, lamp dish, lamp wick, light bulb*)		70	<1
Household furnishing (carpet, figurine/statue, furniture coaster*, picture frame, vase, other)		46	<1
Pest control (mouse*, mouse trap)		2	<1
Plumbing (pump handle)		1	<1
Security (key, lock)		2	<1
Stove/heating (coke, lid lifter, stove part)		15	<1
Unknown (bark, handle, foil*, lid, lumber, unknown)	**Subtotal**	**3,925**	**15**
Sample (sediment, rock, beetle)	**Subtotal**	**7**	**<1**
Prehistoric (lithic debitage*)	**Subtotal**	**6**	**<1**
	Total	**26,233**	**100**

* Indicates an item determined to pre- or postdate Pon Yam's use of the structure.

[a] Percent values have been rounded to the nearest whole number.

Business Records from the Loke Kee Family Store

One block south, the site where the Loke Kee family store and home once stood, has not been examined archaeologically. Even so, a small but significant piece of material culture related to the family has been preserved. Cataloged as the Amos Di Sang letterbook in the Idaho State Archives, this item is a Stylograph Rapid Letter Copying Book[22] manufactured by the J. S. McDonald Company of Chicago. The 30 pages within it contain carbon duplicates of business correspondence, unfinished or unsent letters, penmanship practice, and the occasional doodle from a period of approximately nine years between 1887 and 1895. Most notable within the Stylograph are eighteen drafts of letters, all of which are related to orders for goods and, despite the name given to the document, seem to have been authored primarily, if not exclusively, by Di Ti Di Sang (Table 2.4, Figure 2.7).

Table 2.4. Summary of Correspondence in the Amos Di Sang Letterbook.

Pg.	Sender	Recipient	Subject	Date
3–4	Di Ti	R. Fenkhousen, San Francisco	Order for misc. goods	None given
5	Loke Kee, per Di Ti	Porter Shlesinger and Co.	Acknowledgment of letter	04-18-1887
6	Loke Kee, per Di Ti	Woonsocket Rubber Co.	Catalog request	04-18-1887
8	Wong Sing Chong and Co.	A. Fenkhousen, San Francisco	Order for misc. goods	12-08-1887
10	Man Chong & Co., Loke Kee	Mr. N. F. Kimball, Boise	Order for rice and peanut oil	02-23-1888
12	Fook Ling	Unknown	Order for boots (incomplete)	12-28-1889
14	Mrs. Di Sang	The White House, Boise	Order for cloth (incomplete)	12-10-1892
15	Mrs. Di Sang	The White House, Boise	Order for cloth	12-10-1892
17	Loke Kee	Unknown	Order for cloth	12-23-1892
18	Loke Kee	The White House, Boise	Order for cloth	12-23-1892
19	Man Chong & Co	Falk-Bloch Merc. Co., Boise	Payment on account	12-26-1892
20	Mrs. Di Sang	Weinstock, Lubin & Co., Sacramento	Order for lamp chimneys	12-29-1892
21	Loke Kee	Spencer and Lynch, Boise	Payment on account	10-26-1893
22	Loke Kee	Shamwald Bros. Co., Boise	Order for tobacco	10-26-1893
25–27	Amos Di Sang	U.P.R.R., Boise	Shipping inquiry	11-19-1895
28	Amos Di Sang	Mr. F. A. Nourse, Boise	Shipment from U.P.R.R.	11-19-1895
29	Mrs. Di Sang	Montgomery Ward & Co., Chicago	Order for rubber ball	11-19-1895
30	Unknown (page missing)	Columbia Cash Grocery, Boise	Order for canned oysters	11-19-1895

[22] Stylograph books were a type of reprography patented by Ralph Wedgwood in 1806 and were popularly sold as “copy books” throughout the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. The books created duplicates of hand- or type-written documents using carbon paper coated with pigment and wax. Placing the carbon paper behind the document being drafted created a simultaneous copy by transferring the pigment to a second sheet of paper through the pressure of pen or typewriter (Preservation Self-Assessment Program [PSAP] 2023).

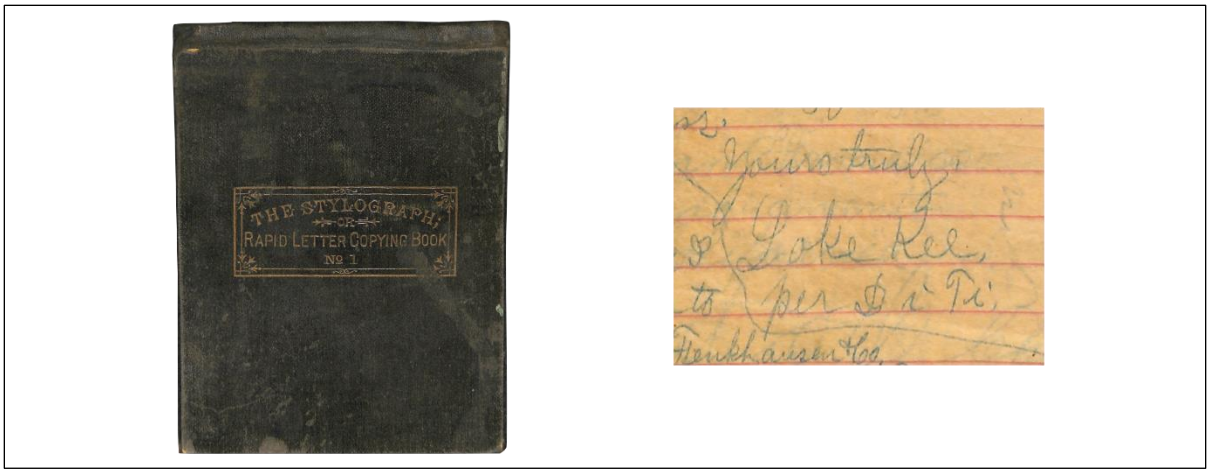


Figure 2.7. Photo of the cover (left) of MS 2/0056, the "Amos Di Sang letterbook," from the Idaho State Archives Manuscript Collections and Di Ti Loke Kee's signature on page 6 (right).

Versions of Di Ti's married and maiden name appear in the byline of seven letters, including two signed "Loke Kee, per Di Ti" that clearly reference merchandise intended for the family's store. These letters illustrate Di Ti assisting her parents, who could not write in English, purchase goods for their family business. Six more orders identifying Mr. or Mrs. Loke Kee as senders are also likely examples of this, as might be an incomplete letter on which her brother Fook Ling's name appears. The consistency of the handwriting across these pages and the remaining correspondence which references purchases made by her husband, her uncle-in-law, and a group of men including Wong Sing Chong (see Chapter 3) also point to Di Ti as the probable author of some or all of these additional letters. Addressed to representatives of territorial and national companies, the pages within the so-called Amos Di Sang letterbook complement the archaeological collection from the Pon Yam House by exposing some of the specific pathways through which items entered the Boise Basin's commercial networks.

The Many Routes to Storeroom and Pantry: Food, Food Storage, and Alcohol-Related Artifacts

Probably the most distinctive aspect of the Pon Yam House archaeological collection is the abundance of plant and plant food remains, which account for 40 percent of the entire analyzed assemblage. Among these more than 10,600 seeds, nuts, and pits are a variety of native and imported flora that include over 7,000 pieces rice or grass chaff; nearly 2,000 cucurbit seeds; more than 400 peanut shells; an excess of 200 Chinese olive pits; and examples of lychee, ginkgo, walnut, chestnut, or hazelnut shells; cherry, plum, peach, apricot, almond or Chinese date/jujube pits; multiple bean varieties; dracontomelon, cantaloupe, watermelon, sunflower

and squash seeds; and horned water caltrop pods[23] (Figure 2.8). Along with a relatively robust faunal collection, a wide array of storage and commercial food containers, and various alcohol bottles, these materials provide a robust sample of the types of food and drink regularly consumed by Pon Yam, served in his restaurant, or sold in his store.

Many of these remains are from common Chinese American snack or "between-meal foods" (Popper 2019:353). Plums, peaches, and cherries, for example, were not routine ingredients in late-nineteenth- or early-twentieth-century Cantonese cooking. Then, as now, dried or raw fruits were most frequently consumed separate from meals. Likewise, Chinese olives, watermelon seeds, and peanuts were some of the most popular snack foods in nineteenth-century urban Chinese American communities and have been recovered in quantity from archaeological projects in places like the Los Angeles, Riverside, and Market Street Chinatowns in California (Greenwood 1996:127; Kent, Dendy, and Whalen 1987:146, 147; Popper 2019:353), but infrequently from rural, inland sites (Wegars 1989:105–106). As such, the Pon Yam House macrobotanical remains are some of the best archaeological evidence to date of the full spectrum of snack foods reaching non-urban communities outside of California.

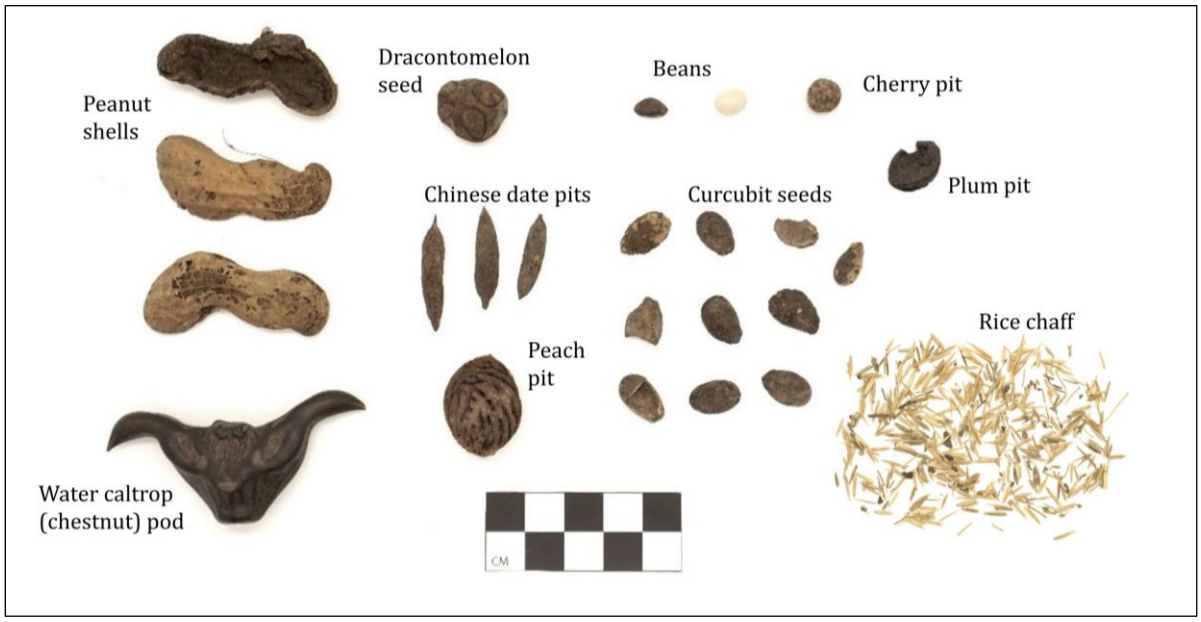


Figure 2.8. Selection of plant remains from the Pon Yam House including, from top left, peanut shells (10BO817/1998/1344/01), dracontomelon seed (10BO817/1998/1425/01), beans (10BO817/1998/1451/01), cherry and plum pits (10BO817/1998/1418/01), water caltrop pod (10BO817/1998/1792/01), Chinese date pits (10BO817/1998/1456/01), melon/ cucurbit seeds (10BO817/1998/1406/01), peach pit (10BO817/1998/1354/01), and rice chaff (10BO817/1998/1595/01).

[23] This represents preliminary identification of these materials. Specialized macrobotanical analyses by Virginia S. Popper of the Fiske Center for Archaeological Research, University of Massachusetts, Boston, are ongoing.

Because these plant remains were collected in the greatest quantities from the west side of the building where Pon Yam is thought to have stored and sold his merchandise (Davis and Osgood 2017:6), it is also highly probable that these same types of snack foods also were regular parts of the diet consumed by Boise Basin residents beyond the Pon Yam household. This is notable since archaeological collections from the mining sites discussed in later chapters also contain examples of fruit pits, but none of the other more delicate botanical specimens so well-preserved within the Pon Yam House assemblage.

Other plant food remains within the assemblage offer examples of ingredients used in the types of dishes that Pon Yam, Loke Kee, and many of their fellow Chinese Basinites had likely grown up with in Guangdong. Generally composed of two basic elements known as *fan* (rice or grain) and *tsai* (meat or vegetables), both of which may be present in the Pon Yam House collection, nineteenth-century Cantonese foodways comprised a regionally distinctive but well-established cuisine. Starches like rice, wheat, and sweet potatoes were paired with proteins like fish, pork, chicken, or beans; vegetables like cabbage, mustard greens, or radishes; and, beginning in the sixteenth century, non-indigenous foods like coconuts, tomatoes, and peanuts. The selection of specific ingredients was often based on maintaining nutritional balance between *fan* and *tsai* and in consideration of the "heating" or "cooling" properties of ingredients as related to concepts of health. Consequentially, many foods were understood to have specific healthful or healing properties that provided additional individualized motivations for consuming particular items (Popper 2020:308). Though variations exist, archaeological studies have shown that many nineteenth-century Chinese migrants successfully adapted aspects of their Cantonese culinary traditions to the combination of local and globally sourced foods available in locations across the American West to maintain a diverse and healthful diet (e.g. Costello et al. 2010; Fee 1993; Kennedy 2015, 2016; Popper 2019, 2020; Sunseri 2020b; Theil et al. 1997; Warner et al. 2014).

In the Basin, research by Liping Zhu (1997:74) indicates most Chinese residents had access to ingredients that made for a nutritious "high-protein diet with large quantities of vitamin-rich vegetables." While some of these, like pork, chicken, and Chinese cabbage, represent components of Cantonese cuisine being sourced locally, evidence of variable cooking styles, including the mastery of non-Chinese cuisine, are also apparent among the Basin's Chinese community. On Main Street, approximately two blocks northeast Pon Yam's store, for instance, Di Ti and Amos Di Sang opened the City Restaurant in 1899 (see Figure 2.1), which served

exclusively European American dishes and advertised pies, baked goods, and bread made to order (*Idaho Statesman* 1902:5; Lok 2007:17–18).

Food remains from the Pon Yam House collection suggest that the food products sold onsite may have fit into such broad patterns. Serving a large customer base in his own restaurant and store, Pon Yam appears to have tapped many sources to cater to the variable flavor profiles and dietary health properties desired by his customers. Fruit pits from plums, cherries, or other related species, for example, could have been harvested from regional trees. In Southern China stone fruits like peaches were also eaten as dried or pickled snack foods and in these forms could have traveled long distances (Popper 2020:314). The dracontomelon and Chinese olive remnants in the collection, by contrast, are from fruits with decisively non-local origins. Both are from tropical trees and could not have been grown in the arid and mountainous conditions of the Basin. Their fruits, like peaches and Chinese olives, have both culinary and medicinal uses (Davis and Osgood 2017:6; Wegars 1989:104).

Water caltrops of the species *Trapa bicornis*, sometimes also called water chestnuts, and the many cucurbit/melon seeds in the collection have slightly more ambiguous origins. Water caltrops, which are the floating seed of an aquatic plant, must be cooked before eating but can be prepared in a variety of ways. Modern recipes frequently call for them to be boiled or roasted (e.g., Ross 1996:103–105), but they can also be incorporated into vegetable and rice dishes and stir-fries made in large-diameter woks like those found at Chinese mining sites throughout the Basin (see Chapters 3 and 4). Historically, various types of water chestnuts were grown in flooded fields or marshy areas in Guangdong and later in ponds by Chinese gardeners in California (Costello 2022:8:14; Popper 2020:309). Chinese fruits and vegetables in the Cucurbitaceae family, which include things like melons, gourds, zucchini, and cucumber, have an even more extensive history of cultivation in China and transport to the American West. According to Madeline Hsu (2000:21), late-nineteenth-century Taishanese farmers grew 12 different kinds of melons alone, and a study by Virginia Popper (2020:310) concluded that the "common and abundant" winter melon, hairy gourd, and bitter melon seeds in the Market Street Chinatown botanical assemblage were most likely the result of residents cultivating these imported crops in local vegetable gardens. Winter melon, bitter melon, and hairy gourd are key ingredients in soups and stir-fries, can be boiled whole and stuffed, and the dried seeds are a popular between-meal snack. The fruits and seeds of hairy gourd also have medicinal properties; as do all parts of the bitter melon plant (Popper 2019:352, 2020:310). Other foods from the Cucurbitaceae family include watermelon seeds, which show up in store ledgers as

transpacific imports and were cultivated by Chinese gardeners in the American West along with cucumbers, cantaloupes and a variety of non-cucurbit vegetables whose small or fibrous seeds rarely make it into the archaeological record (Popper 2019:350; Thiel et al. 1997:115).

Evidence of these kinds of vegetables has yet to be identified in the collections recovered from the Pon Yam House but were surely a component of historical activities within the building. Drawing on Guangdong's longstanding agricultural tradition, Chinese migrants developed a range of strategies to grow crops among the West's variable environmental conditions and became major suppliers of fruits and vegetables to gold rush communities (Chan 1986:84). Archaeological and historical studies mention, for example, Chinese agriculturalists raising figs, blackberries, raspberries, strawberries, grapes, melons, tomatoes, sweet potatoes, cucumbers, beans, beets, cabbage, carrots, peas, potatoes, radishes, pumpkins, spinach, turnips, and other mustard family plants (Chan 1986:84–86; Costello et al. 2010: 6.90–6.91; Kutenai West Consulting 1995:63; Popper 2019:350; Thiel et al. 1997:115). Terraced Chinese gardens in the mountainous mining districts of central Idaho are thought to have produced strawberries, apples, grapes, rhubarb, and "hardy vegetables" (Fee 1993:79, 85), while diary entries written by a neighbor mention more than 30 crops including currants, gooseberries, muskmelon, corn, parsnips, peppers, rutabaga, and tobacco grown by Polly Bemis in large gardens at the base of the Salmon River Canyon. Chinese farmers in the Boise Basin were reported to have managed as many as six crops a year despite the short growing season (Zhu 1999:49).

Members of the Pon Yam household and those who dined in his restaurant undoubtedly enjoyed locally grown produce from agriculturalists like the well-known Ah Foo (Figure 2.9) who tended a garden mere blocks away at the northern end of Montgomery Street (see Figure 2.1) (Hiler 1976:3–4; Planmakers 1996:5; Thorne 1976:40). Pon Yam's connections to Basin gardeners may not have stopped there, however. Chinese merchants also sometimes imported the seeds that gardeners like Ah Foo used to introduce Chinese crops into their vegetable plots—and into the fresh produce they supplied to so many multiethnic Western markets (Popper 2020:312).

Remnants of other fresh foods in the collection indicate additional ways that Pon Yam engaged with local markets. Faunal specimens point to consistent consumption of domestic animals including chicken, turkey, cow, pig, and sheep, along with occasional use of duck, fish, and turtle probably from wild game (see Table 2.3). Within this diverse assemblage, measures of quantity and weight identify pork, beef, and chicken as the meats most likely to have appeared in household or restaurant meals with regularity. At least two of these proteins

Figure 2.9. Ah Foo outside his home on Montgomery Street. Ah Foo maintained a garden in Idaho City into the early twentieth century. Image Courtesy of the Idaho City Historical Foundation, Idaho.

can be sourced to local butchers. A ledger from Idaho City records Pon Yam spending just over $150 on a total of 246 meat products between October of 1875 and August of 1887. Within this period, Pon Yam paid $99.82 for at least 323 pounds of pork; $46.58 for more than 256 pounds of beef; and $3.76 for 10 ounces of lard, veal, and other products (McDevitt 1875–1887:33, 129, 212, 278).[24] These data largely confirm the findings suggested by the faunal assemblage, namely that pork products including rib, feet, and head cuts, along with beef cuts like steak were consistent components not just of household diets but, based on quantity represented, likely also of restaurant offerings.

While both pork and chicken were among the most important meat sources in traditional Cantonese foodways, beef was generally not a preferred protein. Despite the rarity of beef in nineteenth-century Chinese diets, studies have shown that it was consumed with some regularity by members of the Chinese diaspora living in the American West whose access to perishable meat products was often highly dependent on negotiation of local markets (Coe 2009:67–81; Sunseri 2020b:252, 268–270). For this reason, the large amount of beef seen both in archaeological collections and in ledgers related to Pon Yam, may indicate ways that he adapted to local conditions or to the assorted preferences of his restaurant customers. That he habitually purchased more pork than beef from McDevitt's Meat Market, and also paid a higher

[24] Although prices are given for every purchase, weights are recorded for only 183 of the 247 entries, or about 75 percent of the time. Thus, the weights reported here underrepresent the actual volume of meat sold, which, if 25 percent greater than what is recorded, may actually be closer to 404 pounds of pork and 320 pounds of beef. This would be the equivalent of more than a pound of meat per day over the 23-month period.

price for it by weight (McDevitt 1875–1887:33, 129, 212, 278), however, suggests that while beef products might have been flexibly incorporated into dishes prepared in the Pon Yam House, pork and other meats remained important components of on-site meals.

Beyond beef and pork, faunal remains from the Pon Yam house also indicate reliance on other species not represented in existing butcher shop records. By far, fowl is the largest animal class present in the archaeological assemblage but absent from ledgers. The light and numerous bones from chicken, duck, turkey, and other birds, make up a potentially significant portion of faunal specimens – somewhere between 5 and 35 percent of the analyzed collection according to weight and quantity respectively. Chicken, the most frequently identified bird species, was probably raised locally, but duck and turkey may also have been procured from wild sources. Depending on the species represented, fish and turtle, too, could have been gathered locally or had transnational origins (Kennedy 2016:182, 188). Excavations in Sandpoint, Idaho, for example, recovered elements of turtle plastron and carapace tentatively identified as *Chrysemys spp*., a genus of turtle common in Idaho (Swords et al. 2014:70). Much like fruit, nut, and vegetable remains found in the Pon Yam House, cumulative faunal data show that Pon Yam engaged with a number of regional and transnational markets to put food on the table and product on his shelves that reflected aspects of familiar Cantonese foodways as well as local availability.

Other foodstuffs represented in the Pon Yam House archaeological collection include possible grains, legumes, and packaged foods. While a large quantity of as-of-yet unidentified grass seeds occur in the Pon Yam House collection, even these probably underrepresent the true magnitude of rice, wheat, or barley that passed through Pon Yam's store inventory and/or kitchen. Analyses of cookbooks and macroremains by Virginia Popper (2019:439), for example, indicate that rice and other carbohydrates are consistently under-represented in archaeological collections relative to other ingredients. Local support for this assumption can be seen in an order placed by the Loke Kee family that demonstrates of the volume of rice being purchased by Boise Basin merchants in the late nineteenth century.

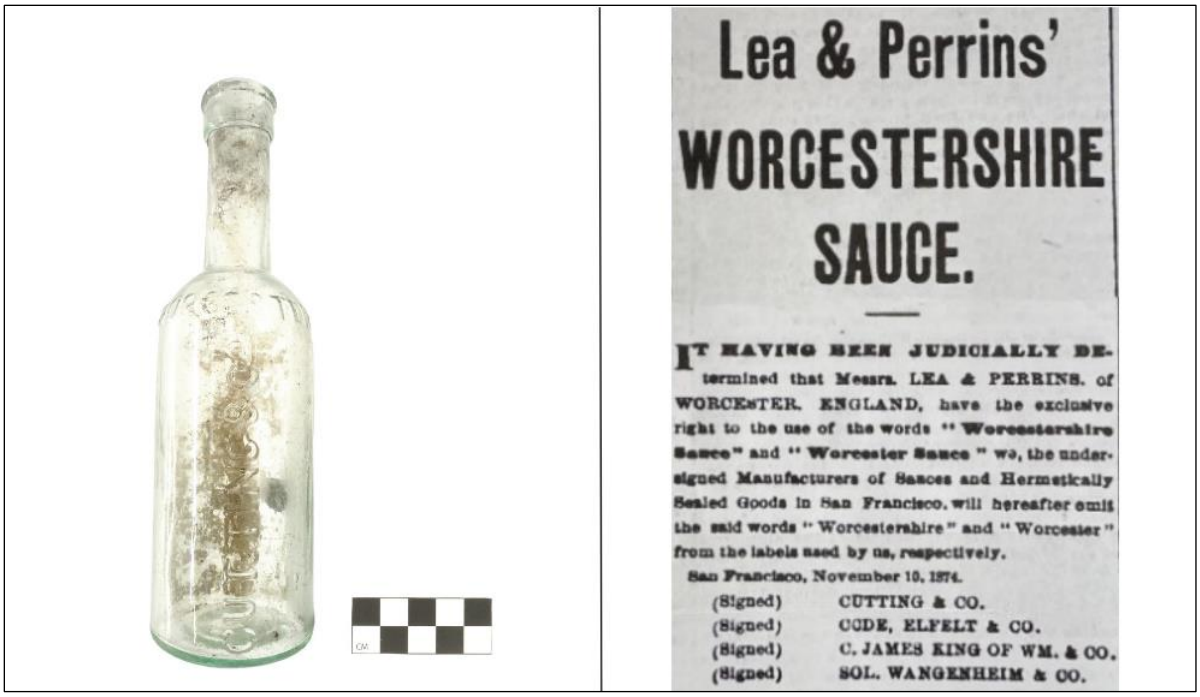
The request, which was sent to a Mr. Kimball in Boise, asks for $100 worth of rice on behalf of the Man Chong & Co. Store along with other items for Loke Kee (Amos Di Sang letterbook 1886–1895:10). Because rice was not cultivated in the United States in the nineteenth century, it cost more than other grains like wheat. In California, Sucheng Chan (1986:82–84) found that rice was four times as expensive as flour in 1865. Ledgers and newspaper advertisements from the Boise Basin reveal a similar cost disparity in the 1870s: throughout the decade, the price

charged for 10 pounds of rice fluctuated between about $1.40 and $2.00 and was consistently 4 to 5 times higher than the price of wheat (Boise Basin Mercantile Ledger, 1875–1876:3, 6, 7; *Idaho World* 1879:2). At the rates specified, Wong Chong & Co.'s 100-dollar rice order would have purchased between 500 and 714 pounds of rice, even without a wholesale discount. Presumably, demand for rice was such that Chinese merchants could reliably sell these large quantities, despite its relative expense.

Other orders in the same book suggest that the two varieties of beans found during excavations could have also been for sale in Pon Yam's store, alongside items like peanut oil, canned oysters, and crackers (Amos Di Sang letterbook 1886–1895:8, 10, 30). Foodstuffs like the latter, though not preserved themselves, may nonetheless be represented by the large quantity of archaeologically recovered food containers. Peanut oil, soy sauce, vinegar, preserved tofu, pickled vegetables, and seasonings like shrimp paste and sheet sugar, for example, could have arrived and been sold in the variety of Chinese brown-glazed stoneware jars represented in the collection (see Table 2.3) (Choy 2014:15; Yang and Hellman 2013:218–223). Domestically canned meats, pickles, and European American condiments in Pon Yam's inventory, by contrast, may be inferred from the archaeological assemblage's more than 1,500 bottle, jar, and can fragments. While the fragmentary nature of many of these containers precludes identifying specific products, at least two items seem to have been expressly popular within the Pon Yam home and business complex.

The first of these is Worcestershire sauce, a condiment introduced to North America in the 1840s by Wheeley Lea and William Perrins of Worcester, England, that became so widely popular it was later bottled (1870s) and then manufactured (1900+) in the United States in order to be closer to large customer bases there (Lunn 1981:6). As numerous historical and archaeological sources attest, many Chinese Americans counted themselves among this broad base throughout the nineteenth and twentieth centuries (e.g., Swords et al. 2014:85; Rose 2020:178; Wegars 1995). An article in the *Idaho Statesman* (1908b:6), for instance, mentions bottles of festively decorated Worcestershire sauce being "taken to the Chinese laundries and vegetable gardens [of Boise] where they will be consumed during the New Year's holidays." Perhaps because its flavor profile resembled that of Chinese sauces (Chung 2011:66) or perhaps because it was a favored acquired taste, Worcestershire sauce found pervasive use in Chinese Americans' food practices, including those of the Pon Yam House.

Fifteen bottles and nine glass stoppers within the collection contain parts of Worcestershire sauce labels (Figure 2.10). Most can be associated with the authentic Lea &



Lea & Perrins'

WORCESTERSHIRE

SAUCE.

IT HAVING BEEN JUDICIALLY DETERMINED that Messrs. LEA & PERRINS, of WORCESTER, ENGLAND, have the exclusive right to the use of the words "Worcestershire Sauce" and "Worcester Sauce," we, the undersigned Manufacturers of Sauces and Hermetically Sealed Goods in San Francisco, will hereafter omit the said words "Worcestershire" and "Worcester" from the labels used by us, respectively.

San Francisco, November 10, 1874.

(Signed) CUTTING & CO.
(Signed) CODE, ELFELT & CO.
(Signed) C. JAMES KING OF WM. & CO.
(Signed) SOL. WANGENHEIM & CO.

Figure 2.10. Complete Cutting and Co. Worcestershire sauce bottle (left), catalog no. 10BO817/1998/2034/01, and a notice run in the *Daily Alta California*, November 16, 1874, announcing Cutting and Company's immediate cessation of use of the term "Worcestershire" (McGuire 2019).

Perrins brand name, but one bottle is embossed "Cutting & Co. / Worcestershire Sauce." This California-based company used the Worcestershire sauce name only until 1874, when a lawsuit found the company guilty of trademark infringement (McGuire 2019). Since Wong Chong and Pon Yam had only just purchased their brick store at the time, the bottle within this collection was either acquired in the last year of its manufacture or was left behind by previous tenants. Either way, the legal dispute surrounding it speaks to the product's general desirability.

Another product that seems to have enjoyed a period of popularity, though one that straddles the other end of Pon Yam's occupation, is represented by sixteen sun-colored amethyst bottle bases. Embossed with portions of the phrase, "Armour's / *top-notch brand* / Chicago," these bottles formerly contained grape juice marketed under the meat-packing giant's beverage department. Advertisements in hotel and druggist journals from the 1910s describe Armour and Company's grape juice as a "thirst-quenching" and "health-conferring" beverage, while other sources indicate that it was manufactured from 1897 until the mid-twentieth century (Schatz et al. 2016:239; National Association of Retail Druggists 1914:2; Willy 1916:IV). The examples in the Pon Yam collection, however, date no later than 1918 when US bottle makers stopped using manganese, the element responsible for turning the colorless glass in

which it was present an amethyst-tinted color with prolonged exposure to sunlight (Lindsey 2023).

Other types of bottles – those for alcohol – offer a final class of artifact through which to view the spectrum of food and drink items that once passed through Pon Yam's store, restaurant, and household. Comprised of just 69 glass fragments that represent a minimum of 17 bottles (see Table 2.3),[25] the collection of alcohol-related artifacts from the Pon Yam House is relatively small but still composed of wide-ranging products. The most unusual of these appear in the collection as two olive glass blob seals stamped with the word "COUVET." Both have since broken free from their original vessels but were formerly affixed to the shoulders of absinthe bottles made by Edouard Pernod in Couvet, Switzerland. First distilled as a Swiss medicinal product, absinthe was helped onto the global market in the mid-nineteenth century by the Pernod family, one of its largest producers, and by Australasian and North American gold rushes. Edouard Pernod began distilling absinthe in 1827 in his family's third facility. Since his was the only one in Couvet, we can be sure that the bottles in the Pon Yam collection were manufactured under his name and made before Couvet operations ceased in 1897 (Minchinton 2021:175, 179).

As absinthe spread from Switzerland to other parts of the globe, it became more closely associated with liquor than with medicine, but many consumers still inferred healthful qualities from the drink's bright green color and bitter flavor. Citing advertisements that describe absinthe as a "favorite German tonic… suitable for diggers," Barbara Minchinton (2021:179), suggests that this perception may have actually helped increase demand among hard-living New Zealand gold rush communities. Still, absinthe remained far less popular than other types of alcohol throughout the nineteenth century. For those who did imbibe, an elaborate "la louche" ritual involving the addition of sugar and water by way of distinctive accoutrements like absinthe glasses, decanters, and spoons, emerged to mitigate the unpalatably bitter taste and unusually high alcohol percentage of absinthe (Minchinton 2021:180–181). These idiosyncratic qualities make it a distinctive presence among the rest of the relatively common alcohol-related materials in the Pon Yam House collection, which are mostly turn-molded wine/champagne bottles, a few whiskey bottle fragments, and several modern beer bottles from later use of the building. Considered alongside other recovered artifacts like seeds, animal bone, and product

[25] This collection contains no identifiable fragments of Chinese brown-glazed stoneware liquor bottles. Unlike other assemblages discussed in this dissertation, the entire Pon Yam House alcohol assemblage is composed of glass.

containers, these Swiss imports suggest some of the many routes traveled by foodstuffs destined for Pon Yam's storeroom and pantry.

The Personal and Public in a Merchant-Miner's Home: Domestic, Activity-Related, and Occupational Artifacts

Occurring in smaller quantities than food/food storage materials, many of the remaining artifacts in the Pon Yam House collection consist of wide-ranging items that represent the various goings-on of a merchant's household. Whereas artifacts described in the previous section can be seen as evidence of the many networks through which products were acquired, artifacts from the domestic, occupational, and activity-related categories more particularly demonstrate how these products then entered the lives of household or community members. As with previously discussed materials, some of these artifacts fall neatly into the Pon Yam House's documented categories of use. Still more hover at the periphery of multiple, overlapping functions, or point to multifaceted relationships and connections. Certain household goods, for instance, cannot entirely be ruled out as store merchandise, nor can the use of particular religious items be discretely traced to individuals in or outside of the home. As a result, interpretation of these artifacts often blurs the boundaries between strategies for economic, personal, or community well-being. Decidedly untidy from a typological perspective, this type of ambiguity is not entirely uninformative (Voss 2008:44, 48), however, since many elements of Pon Yam's daily routine were equally unlikely to have been so abruptly segregated between work and home or social and individual endeavors. In fact, the spate of functions and community ties indicated by these permeable categories are probably closer representations of the many ways that merchants like Pon Yam were entangled within Basin mining networks.

As the collection name suggests, the Pon Yam House was not merely a place of business. Artifacts recovered from interior areas affirm that it was also a home where picture frames hung on walls, porcelain vases and figurines sat on display, and oil lamps lit tables set with chopsticks, glass tumblers, and dishes personalized with marks made by their users. Among these furnishings, categories with more than a few dozen artifacts begin to display a tendency toward the eclectic. Some items in the lighting category, like the electric fuse and interior cleat insulator, for instance, demonstrate the long history of the building into the twentieth century, but even the artifacts dating to Pon Yam's occupancy include at least two different types of oil lamps. Thin and delicate glass shards, some etched with lines and star-shaped embellishments, and the rim of a small porcelain dish glazed only on the inside indicate that residents had access to both European American- and Chinese-style oil burning lamps. Both styles relied on flame to

produce illumination, but European American iterations usually consisted of a metal burner topped with a glass chimney, while the Chinese versions held oil and rush wicks in small dishes atop stands made of ceramic or other materials. Artifacts from Chinese American sites demonstrate that both were used regularly in households across the West[26] (e.g., Allen et al. 2002:131; Greenwood 1996:125; Weisz 2014:74–91; Yang 1999:65, 69). Just down the street, Di Ti Di Sang purchased glass chimneys made by the Edward Miller Company of Boston for their handheld "Nobby Night" lamp (Amos Di Sang letterbook 1886–1895:20; Edward Miller & Co. 1904:4).

Tablewares in the Pon Yam House collection exhibit an even greater diversity. Serving wares include Four Seasons Flowers-pattern serving bowls, a whiteware platter, nickel-plated serving spoons, an ironstone pitcher, and a Chinese porcelain teapot. Double Happiness- and Bamboo-pattern rice bowls, edge-molded and undecorated supper and twiffler[27] plates, small dishes, glass tumblers, enamelware drinking cups, Attributes of the Eight Immortals-pattern teacups, metal forks, porcelain spoons, and wooden chopsticks fill out the collection of more than 800 artifacts (see Table 2.3). Among this plethora of table settings, which by volume alone suggests use in more than one of the property's contexts, two vessels, more than any others, indicate a direct personal connection to Pon Yam's household members. These are a whiteware plate made by the Staffordshire pottery company Close & Co.[28] and a Four Seasons Flowers-pattern serving bowl, each of which has a peck mark on the interior surface (Figure 2.11).

Close & Company was a manufacturer of mostly undecorated earthenwares operating out of Stoke-on-Trent, Staffordshire, a major center of export ceramic production in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries (Blacker 1912:59). Four Seasons Flowers is a type of everyday porcelain ware known as *min yao*, or folk ware, that was manufactured in kilns at Jingdezhen, in China's northeast Jiangxi Province. Along with other types of *min yao*, especially those with Bamboo and Double Happiness patterns or Winter Green glazes, it was exported in large quantities to North America in the nineteenth century where it generally comprises a high percentage of the ceramics found on Chinese diaspora sites (Choy 2014:2, 6). In South

[26] In addition to domestic lighting, Chinese oil lamps were also regularly incorporated into home altars (Voss 2018:294), a use that will be discussed in later paragraphs.

[27] A plate about 9.5 inches in diameter that is between the size of a dinner and a side plate.

[28] This is evident from a maker's mark on the base. Within the analyzed assemblage there are five such Close & Co. marks, used in their Stoke-on-Trent, Staffordshire pottery after 1863. Other whiteware marks include three James Edwards & Son or John Edwards & Co. marks (1847–1900, Burslem, Staffordshire), two marks from Knowles, Taylor and Knowles (1870–1929, East Liverpool, Ohio); one mark from W. Davenport and Co. (1793–1887, Longport, Staffordshire); and one T. & R. Boote mark (1842–1906, Burslem, Staffordshire) (Blacker 1912:59; Godden 1964:84, 189, 230–231; Kovel and Kovel 1986:183).

Figure 2.11. Peck-marked ceramics from the Pon Yam House collection: a whiteware plate (left) made by Close & Co. featuring the character 美 and a Four Seasons Flowers-pattern serving bowl (right) featuring the character 錦. Catalog numbers 10BO817/1998/ 1150/06 and 10BO817/1998/2070/11.

China, these same wares were used in migrants' home villages alongside a greater diversity of Chinese-manufactured wares (Voss et al. 2018:414–419) that were occasionally modified by their owners with the addition of marks pecked through the glaze on the vessel's surface.

In various contexts, peck marks take the form of names or identifiers, wishes for things like prosperity or luck, or abstract symbols (Michaels 2005:123, 131). Frequently interpreted as individualized ownership marks, research conducted by Laura Ng (2021:181–183) further suggests that their presence in archaeological collections on both sides of the Pacific might reflect commensal eating practices in which marking vessels makes them easier to retrieve after a shared meal. The two peck marks within the Pon Yam House collection are美 (*mei*/*mei*), or beautiful, and 錦 (*gam*/*jin*),[29] which, as a noun, refers to a tapestry or brocade but when used as an adjective can also mean bright or beautiful (Lee 2020a:1; Tsai 2022:1). Since neither are common Cantonese surnames, nor are they particularly similar to the names of known residents[30] (My China Roots 2022), it is perhaps the shared meaning of beauty that was significant to Pon Yam or his household members.

Poignantly personal, these inscriptions are significant as manifestations of transnational place making practices that may also be indicative of social events within the Basin's Chinese

[29] Although the transliterations of 錦 are similar to those for 金, which means "gold," these two characters have different meanings and are pronounced with different tones. In Cantonese, 錦 is pronounced *gám* and 金 is pronounced *gām*. In Mandarin, 錦 and 金 are pronounced *jǐn* and *jīn*, respectively.

[30] As per the previous sections, this included Pong Seng, Pon Bon, Ah Hough, Pon Yet/Pon Yep, and several boarders. Wong Chong may also have lived in the building for a time.

American community. In this sense it is noteworthy that the pecked characters occur both among the hand-painted floral designs of a *min yao* serving bowl and on an otherwise undecorated English whiteware plate. Examples of peck-marked Chinese and European American ceramics, including another plate manufactured by the Staffordshire firm Close & Company that was recovered from San Jose's Market Street Chinatown, illustrate one way in which Chinese consumers habitually recontextualized European American items to suit their needs (Market Street Chinatown Archaeological Project Blog 2003; Michaels 2005; Praetzellis and Praetzellis 2001:649). Explicitly expressing ownership over these non-Chinese tablewares, peck marking creatively transformed "what may have been a foreign ceramic style and form into a tangible material reminder of cultural practices associated with luck and good fortune" (Voss 2008:47). Using these dishes to serve food in shared social settings made this reminder available to other members of local communities who might see in the chipped glaze a reflection of their own connections to home villages, positions as global consumers, or hopes for the future. In the company cosmopolitan furnishings and tablewares, these artifacts reflect not just the range of products available to well-connected merchants but also how these commodities could be used to facilitate sociality along with aspects of personal and communal well-being.

Other artifacts in the collection that may reveal Pon Yam's personal and public practices include religious and celebratory artifacts, gaming-related items, and materials for writing and record keeping. The most plentiful of these are the more than 1,500 incense sticks that make up just over six percent of the analyzed assemblage (see Table 2.3) (Figure 2.12). Kept dry under the floorboards in the same conditions that preserved the large macrobotanical component of the Pon Yam House collection, these artifacts are another item that is rarely recovered from Chinese diaspora sites[31] despite what was likely very widespread use. Made of thin strips of bamboo to which aromatic compounds were adhered, the examples in the Pon Yam House assemblage are primarily fragments from the lower portions of incense sticks that frequently feature charred ends. A few, however, are more complete specimens that have retained coatings of the fragrant incense powders that would have filled the Pon Yam House with their ambient odor during religious observations.

[31] Although ceramic incense burners and other objects that might be associated with home altars occur in numerous archaeological collections (e.g., Greenwood 1996:3, 55; Voss 2012:158), incense sticks are almost non-existent in the published literature. This may be due to preservation issues, but it is also possible that some are in collections and remain unidentified or unreported. For example, at least five incense sticks were recovered as part of archaeological projects in Yreka, California, but do not appear in recent analytical reports (Chinese Material Culture Collection 2017; Heffner 2019:70–101). An entry for "Incense (?)" also appears in a summary artifact table for materials excavated from Chinese miner's cabin in Shoshone Wells, Nevada. Confusingly, though, the entry is placed in the opium artifact group (Hardesty 1998:98).

Figure 2.12. Selection of incense stick fragments recovered from Pon Yam House archaeological units. Catalog numbers 10BO817/1998/507/01 and 10BO817/1998/1627/01.

Incense has long been a crucial part of varied religious practices in China, and since the Ming Dynasty (1368–1644) has been produced in stick form by applying gum and powdered herbs to bamboo fragments (Habkirk and Chang 2017:158). Within the set of customs and beliefs associated with traditional religions as practiced by members of the Chinese diaspora, incense continued to serve an important role in both individual and communal rituals (Habkirk and Chang 2017:158–161, 169). In private homes and businesses, for example, incense was regularly burned on small altars to honor deities, ghosts, and ancestors (Culin 1887:4–5; Ng 1993:42, 48, 60–61). Habkirk and Chang (2017:168–169) note that incense, through its fragrant smell and ascending smoke, opened lines of contact with deities and ancestors. Most commonly employed to convey respect to such entities, it could also be used to repel evil spirits, to attract good fortune, or to enhance health through the incorporation of traditional Chinese medicine ingredients into aromatic coatings. Since many of the incense sticks in the Pon Yam House collection show signs of burning, they were used on site, perhaps by one or more household members in rituals designed to care for both spiritual and physical health.

Given its importance in spiritual and physical well-being, many nineteenth-century Chinese American households and businesses lit incense daily; others did so less frequently for special occasions or events. At the home altar, worshipers burned paper offerings, lamps, or candles and served food and drink to help provide for the needs of ancestors, ghosts, or deities (Culin

1887:5–6). Most also regularly visited community-maintained temples; in Idaho City the Chinese temple was located on the southern end of town, several blocks southeast of Pon Yam's store. Here, larger and more elaborate altars were likely erected, but a typical domestic altar assemblage might simply consist of a ceramic burner to hold ignited incense, candlesticks, and/or oil lamps (Greenwood 1996:pl. 14; Voss 2012:158; Wegars 2000:16–17). Fragments of these last two items are also present in the Pon Yam House collection, and may have, in addition to home illumination, been used in the personal spiritual practices of household members.[32]

Beyond the domestic sphere, incense may also have played a role in at least two other activities that more closely align with the Pon Yam House's use as a business and social center. Gaming artifacts provide the context for the first of these. A Chinese lottery ticket fragment (Figure 2.13), two glass gaming pieces, and 20 *kwat pai* tiles or dominoes[33] (see Table 2.3) indicate that games of chance were at least a minor component of social and/or business life within the building. Pon Yam's designation as a "lottery ticket dealer" in Basin tax records (US IRS 1869:224) provides additional evidence to this effect. The Chinese lottery game *pak kop piu* was popular in nineteenth-century Chinatowns across the American West and among both Chinese and non-Chinese players (Costello et al. 2008: 148).[34]

To play, tickets were purchased from lottery houses or from their agents. Each ticket was printed with the first 80 characters of the *Tsintsz man*, or "Thousand Character Classic," a famous reading primer poem that contains no repeating characters. Selecting at least five characters from the ticket that matched those randomly drawn by lottery houses won players prize money scaled to the number of matching characters they had selected. Lottery games were popular enough among larger communities that daily drawings took place at multiple lottery houses operated out of gambling establishments or smaller offices, often conveniently located within restaurants and merchant shops where any winnings could be spent (Culin 1891:7–8; Ma 2000:52).

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[32] Sources related to domestic Chinese spiritual practices like burning incense and maintaining home altars suggests that it was women who regularly performed these tasks. Although more research on diasporic sites is needed, at least one study has questioned whether certain altar artifacts might correlate with the presence of women in Chinese American households (Kane 2007:21). As the only known female member of Pon Yam's household, Ah Hough may have contributed to domestic worship.

[33] Chinese tiles, or *kwat pai,* are distinguished from dominoes, their derivative, by the absence of a "zero" or blank and by the total number in a set (Costello et al. 2008:141–142). The remnants in the Pon Yam House collection are too few and fragmentary to make this distinction.

[34] According to Ma (2000:52), "Many Chinese in the 19th and even the 20th century did not consider playing the lotteries to be gambling." While the modern game of Keno, which is based on *pak kop piu*, is widely identified as gambling, historically many players viewed *pak kop piu* simply as a game of chance.

Figure 2.13. *Pak kop piu* ticket fragment from the Pon Yam House assemblage (left) as compared with a complete example from the Asian American Comparative Collection (AACC). The fragment found in the Pon Yam House is from the lower left portion of the ticket and includes the character 皇 (*wong/huang*). Catalog numbers 10BO817/1998/1630/01 and AACC-2004-185. Comparative photos courtesy of the AACC, University of Idaho, Moscow.

As a ticket dealer, Pon Yam may have housed a small lottery office within his establishment, or he may have only acted as an agent for a larger operation. Either way, combining this service with retail goods could have had the additional benefit of encouraging further purchases. According to ethnographic research done by Stewart Culin (1887:9), "before making a hazard in the *pak kop piu*…the player frequently buys a bundle consisting of two small candles, a package of incense, and several sheets of joss paper [paper money for religious offerings]." These "bundles" could be purchased at most shops and were burned to induce good fortune at altars constructed near lottery houses for this purpose.

Celebrations were another time when incense was used as part of observances and social events involving large swaths of the Boise Basin's community. Local newspapers recount both Pon Yam and Pon Seng taking part in communal celebrations, most notably those associated with the Lunar New Year holiday (e.g., *Idaho World* 1877a:3, 1886b:3). Celebrated over 15 consecutive days, Lunar New Year in the Basin drew together various events and participation from Chinese and non-Chinese residents alike. Evidence for some of these occasions appears in the Pon Yam House collection as 78 rolled paper tubes from the shells of red or brown firecrackers and from two pieces of bamboo tied with a string that resemble examples of

firecracker propellers curated in the Asian American Comparative Collection (see Table 2.3) (Figure 2.14) (Dotz et al. 2000:12–15, 123). As in other Chinese American communities, firecrackers were an indispensable aspect of Lunar New Year celebrations that drew a large crowd and were especially popular with children, who sometimes acquired them from Basin Chinese residents (Thorn 1976:22; Zhu 1997:163).

For merchants, Lunar New Year was also a time to decorate shops, host guests, and give gifts to business associates and friends. In 1886 the *Idaho World* (1886b:3) reported attending New Year's Day festivities at Pon Yam's store, which was adorned with "specimens of Pon Yam's handiwork," "paintings," and "decorative" items—likely hand-painted banners, garlands or cloth drapes, food, drink, candles, and incense (Wegars 2000:23). Research by historian Liping Zhu (1997:163) identifies lychee fruits, coconut candy, cookies, cigars, champagne, and wine among the refreshments offered on such occasions by merchants including Pon Yam. A similar display, described by Priscilla Wegars (2000:23) in Lewiston, Idaho's, Beuk Aie Temple, also featured Lunar New Year snacks, including cookies, red candies, oranges/tangerines, Chinese olives, and cucurbit seeds from watermelon and candied melon. Incense burned on these occasions served both a personal purpose and a social one. In addition to its spiritual function, incense invited friends and neighbors into stores for celebrations that helped build relationships, community ties, and business networks, all of which could be valuable resources for navigating life in a turn-of-the-century gold rush town.

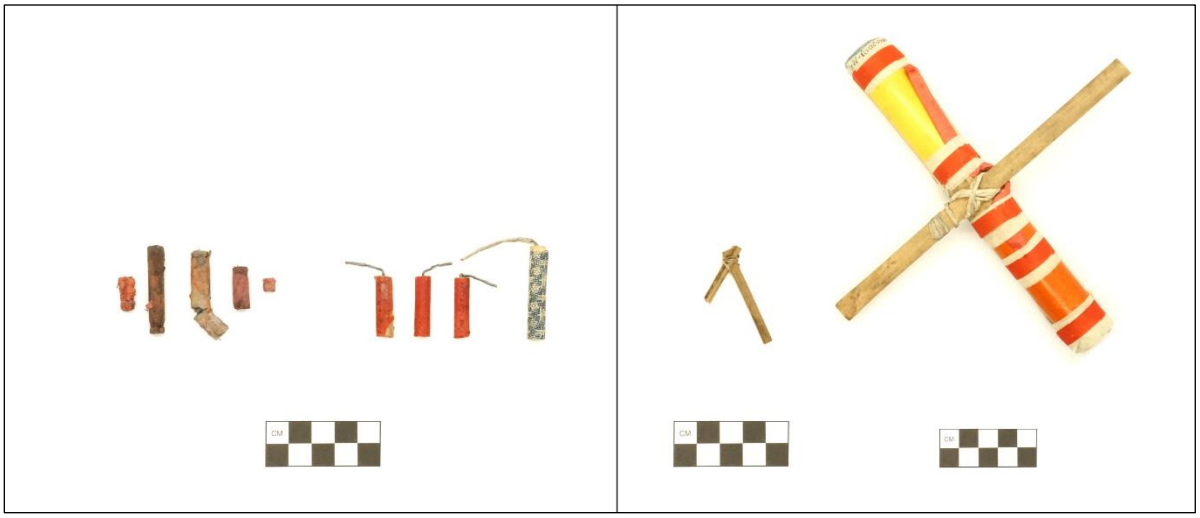

Figure 2.14. Firecracker shells (left) and possible firecracker propeller fragment (right) from the Pon Yam House collection as compared with complete examples from the Asian American Comparative Collection. Catalog numbers left to right: 10BO817/1998/2029/01 (four firecracker fragments), AACC-2003-94 (three red firecrackers), AACC-98-13, 10BO817/1998/1623/01, and AACC-2003-104. Comparative photos courtesy of the AACC, University of Idaho, Moscow.

Community connections can also be inferred from a fragment of an 1894 newspaper describing local election results; a 25-cent token for the Miner's Brewery and Bakery on Main Street (see Figure 2.1), which was at one point operated by Mary Haug's husband Nicolas (Filby 2012:34); and recordkeeping and occupational artifacts. Forty artifacts in the Pon Yam House archaeological collection can be associated with writing/printing or record keeping. Of these, calligraphy brush handles and bristles are the most numerous, but an ink-grinding dish, an abacus bead, pencil fragments, and several pieces of printing type also occur in the assemblage. These last items are almost certainly left over from the building's prior use as a newspaper office, but others are consistent with the recordkeeping requirements of running several businesses. Pon Yam undoubtedly maintained inventory lists, counted money, ran calculations, kept ledgers, or tracked purchases and expenditures in other ways. With calligraphy brushes and black ink prepared in a small stoneware grinding dish with a green-glazed rim, he may have also written correspondence and painted the banners that adorned his store for Lunar New Year. As other transnational merchants did, Pon Yam may have further used his calligraphy brushes to write remittance letters for members of the local Chinese community and then used his connections to *jinshanzhuang* networks to ensure that they were delivered to family members in Guangdong (Benton and Liu 2018:9, 159).

Other sources have described the Pon Yam House as an unofficial community center (Davis and Osgood 2017:5). Certainly, with options to purchase familiar snack foods, a bundle of incense, or a "health-conferring" grape beverage; to eat a hot meal, play a game of chance, send a letter home, or celebrate a holiday, it had much to offer locals. In a community founded on the allure and then tenacious pursuit of gold, however, perhaps no offerings were as fundamental to its local success as those related to mining. While partaking in the other services of the Pon Yam House, artifacts suggest that patrons could also restock essential mining gear like axes, files, picks, shovels, and rubberized footwear. They could perhaps even purchase liquid mercury[35] (see Table 2.3), which was recovered from sediments in the same southwest corner of the building where Pon Yam's products are thought to have been displayed for sale. Moreover, since Pon Yam is known to have supplied crews of loggers and miners working at distant sites with items "furnished from his store" (*Idaho World* 1881b:3), the ten pieces of horse tack and one

[35] In addition to being for sale, liquid mercury could have also been used in assaying (Davis and Osgood 2017:5).

horseshoe[36] included in the collection may have occasionally been put to use delivering items or when overseeing the contracts he maintained with various associates throughout the Basin.

From origin to delivery point, then, these artifacts trace the many networks, both commercial and social, that merchants like Pon Yam used to create and maintain livelihoods within gold rush communities. Central to strategies for economic success, networks were a means to build professional circles, cater to expansive or occasionally idiosyncratic tastes, import the comforts of home, and attend to personal and social needs of a pluralistic community. Yet as expansive as these networks were, they were not entirely open-ended. As market makers like Pon Yam and the Loke Kee family linked rural consumers to established transnational and domestic networks, they did so without a well-developed financial infrastructure to fall back on. Research from across historic contexts suggests that facing such risk, even without the added precarity of fluctuating economic conditions or racial discrimination, often manifested in "intensive cultivation" of trusted business partners (Ditz 1999:61). Forging dependable relationships within this context undoubtedly required circumventing certain exclusions while imposing others. While some of these complicated negotiations are suggested by the material goods that eventually made their way to Pon Yam's store, they are even more apparent in business records that capture aspects of the Loke Kee family's product and partner acquisition process.

Curating Consumer Networks: Loke Kee Family Letters

Mercantile culture historian Toby Ditz (1999:61) has argued that commercial letters are a "world-making" genre in which individualized micro-politics, relations of power, and strategic manipulation of markets are articulated. Although written by a teenager whose cursive practice and figural sketches appear between letters, business correspondence preserved in the Loke Kee family's Stylograph book embodies many of these characteristics. Reconstructing chains of correspondence from the remnants of letters written by Di Ti reveals not just which products were being obtained, but often also the motivations behind purchases and the careful negotiations of authority and interdependence behind the family's market-making labor. To this end, a series of letters written over eleven months in 1887 offer particular insight into the ways that merchants like Pon Yam and the Loke Kee family actively built and refined the consumer networks that shaped life in the Basin.

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[36] The stable depicted on Commercial Street in Figure 2.1 is reported to have been owned by Pon Yam (Planmakers 1996:5).

This chain of correspondence begins on the first remaining page of the so-called Amos Di Sang letterbook. It is torn near the top, partially obscuring the intended recipient and date, but appears to be a copy of a letter written on January 9, 1887, and addressed to A. Fenkhausen. This recipient was surely Amandus Fenkhausen, a liquor importer and whiskey manufacturer who, along with his son, Rudolph, owned the A. Fenkhausen Company of San Francisco (Sullivan 2014). In the letter, Di Ti reports that Mr. R. Fenkhausen arrived from San Francisco to solicit business from the Boise Basin and received a "large order" from the Loke Kee family store in Idaho City. From there, Di Ti writes, Rudolph Fenkhausen had hoped to travel to additional Basin towns but was blocked by winter road conditions, and so instead requested that Loke Kee negotiate the sale of five barrels of whiskey to the Pioneerville-based Wong Sing Chong[37] the following July. The letter closes by saying that Loke Kee and Leong Shee gave Mr. R. Fenkhausen four red silk handkerchiefs to distribute among A. Fenkhausen Company partners (Amos Di Sang letterbook 1886–1895:[3–4]).

As a copying mechanism for letters sent, the Stylograph book contains only one side of the Loke Kee family's correspondence. Thus, no reply from Amadeus or Rudolph Fenkhausen is recorded, but the meeting described appears to have been a successful introduction, since references to A. Fenkhausen appear in several later entries. The next recorded communication, however, is with representatives of the New Jersey Rubber Shoe Company and this time is signed from "Loke Kee per Di Ti" (see Figure 2.7). Dated April 18, 1887, it thanks the New Jersey Rubber Shoe Company agents for their letter, "received a few days ago," but denies their request to order any of their brand boots. In polite but no uncertain terms, the letter explains that Loke Kee himself had experience with their product, having once purchased a pair in a local "white man's store" and found their quality lacking. "I am sorry to say," the letter states, "they are not good […] the best boots [I've] bought here [are] Woonsocket Rubber Co. […] I don't carry that company now" (Amos Di Sang letterbook 1886–1895:[5]).

As if motivated by the previous correspondence, Di Ti penned a second letter on behalf of her father later the same day. Addressed to the Woonsocket Rubber Company's San Francisco office, it requests a price list for long-legged "Gum Boots first & second quality," and includes the postscript, "For reference I refer you to Messrs. A. Fenkhausen and Co. 414 Front Street, S.F." (Amos Di Sang letterbook 1886–1895:[6]). After a page of penmanship practice, a final letter for the year of 1887 is dated December 14. Still in Di Ti's handwriting, it requests a large

[37] Sometimes also spelled Wing Sing Chong; see Chapter 3 for one possible identity of this individual.

shipment of goods including four barrels of whiskey from A. Fenkhausen on behalf of Wong Sing Chong and two other men (Amos Di Sang letterbook 1886–1895:[8]).

These letters reveal much about the multiethnic commodity chains curated by Chinese merchants, beginning with the fact that American manufacturers and wholesalers enthusiastically courted these merchants' customer bases by soliciting business owners like Loke Kee to carry their products. Rather than passively acquiescing to each of these requests, however, Di Ti's correspondence demonstrates that her family strategically pursued only select items and business associations from those available to them. Aspects of this discerning process can be seen in letters describing the gifts that Loke Kee and Leong Shee presented to Rudolph Fenkhausen and their agreement to facilitate orders with other Basin companies on his behalf. It can also be seen in Loke Kee's refusal to order boots from the New Jersey Rubber Shoe Company even though he did not have any from the alternative brand he hoped to carry on hand at the time. Loke Kee's unwillingness to settle for a substandard product found among the inventory of his Basin competitors counters narratives that propose frugality or a willingness to make do with less as the sole explanations for Chinese entrepreneurial successes. It instead points to Loke Kee's confidence that supplies of higher-quality boots could be attained and would be more desirable to his customers. This, in turn, reflects calculations about market differentiation and customer demand that go well beyond cost or limited options. It is also notable that Loke Kee's side occupation as a miner was among the dynamic calculations influencing his decisions as a merchant, since this demonstrates how the accumulation of individual experiences might shape market and consumption tactics over time.

Moreover, business correspondence from the Loke Kee family offers a rare inside perspective on how Chinese merchants attempted to manage the reciprocal interactions and economic dependence at the heart of their market making endeavors. At the same time that various European American wholesalers tried to initiate business dealings with Loke Kee, letters also show that Loke Kee actively sought relationships with preferred suppliers like the Woonsocket Rubber Company. The reference to Amandus Fenkhausen in Di Ti's introductory letter to the company's San Francisco office illustrates one way that the family targeted new connections and the leverage that already cultivated partnerships could lend to these negotiations. Given the racist climate of the nineteenth-century West, referrals may have been a particularly important strategy for Chinese merchants hoping to expand their business. Still, even at the other end of their multiethnic partnership, Amandus Fenkhausen also appears to

have been hoping the Loke Kee family would similarly help build his business connections by recruiting additional Chinese mining company customers.

The degree to which Wong Sing Chong and his associates welcomed the opportunity to order whiskey and other products from the A. Fenkhausen Company isn't captured in the Loke Kee family correspondence. This aspect of market building surely also involved negotiation, however. Operating at the center of the many diasporic and local community ties described earlier in this chapter put merchants like the Loke Kee family and Pon Yam into positions of relative power that could be exploited for their own advantage or used in pursuit of goals that may not have aligned with those of some fellow migrants (Mar 2010:1–4; Merritt 2017:203). As described by other authors, the actions of Chinese merchants thus played a critical role in the expansion or constriction of resource flows into local settlements, especially those in rural areas where, in the absence of other supply chains, individual actors could potentially exert "quasi-monopolistic control" of trade (Voss et al. 2018:412). Yet within these same contexts, networks supported by shared kinship and native-place ties and by frequently overlapping joint economic ventures (Hsu 2020:36–37; Sin 2003:6, 158–159, 299; Yu 2018:190–191) might also be strong incentives for prominent merchants, labor contractors, and community organizers like Pon Yam or Loke Kee "to behave charitably and to coordinate their efforts" (Bronson and Ho 2015:140). Whatever the specifics of these negotiations, orchestrating orders from mining companies through favored suppliers increased both the purchasing power and the market making capabilities of Chinese merchants.

Built on successive referrals and hinging, to various degrees, on each member's influence and participation, the market chains created by the Loke Kee family reflect many of the complex interdependencies and unequal power structures present within gold rush economies (e.g., Arata 2020:116; Hardesty 2011:29; Lee 2020b:27–33; White 2017:52–55). As sites where multifaceted negotiations took place between Chinese merchants, miners, and European American suppliers, Di Ti's letters offer a rare view of the tactics needed to navigate such complex relations. Far from passive participants in supply networks, the Loke Kee family can be seen through their correspondence to have strategically curated available market ties and to have leveraged complex interdependencies and obligations. In doing so, merchants like the Loke Kee family also engaged in a kind of local "world-making" (Ditz 1999:61) since they were often directly responsible for the array of day-to-day resources available in merchant's stores, among mining camps the in forest, and dispersed throughout the Basin.

Merchants, Miners, and the Making of Boise Basin Networks

It may seem counterintuitive to begin surveying historical mining networks in the Boise Basin from the vantage point of its Chinese merchants. For the thirty years or more that Pon Yam and the Loke Kee family ran stores in Idaho City, however, their actions and experiences intersected with the Basin's mining industry in countless ways. Mere blocks apart on Montgomery Street, members of the Pon Yam and Loke Kee families forged paths into the local economy that positioned them at the hub of extensive, overlapping networks. Through these networks, each built long-running businesses that funneled resources into their mining community, including home-cooked meals, specialty beverages, snack foods, mining tools, letter writing services, religious paraphernalia, games of chance, and places to socialize. Beyond the walls of their mercantiles, Pon Yam and Loke Kee frequently served as access points to other resources as well, offering, for example, employment and housing prospects, logistical oversight of mining contracts, and the references needed to carry credit lines with other local establishments. As such, both merchant families influenced the livelihoods of Basin miners in various subtle and not so subtle ways.

As central figures in so many aspects of local life, it is not surprising that Pon Yam, Wong Chong, and members of the Loke Kee family also engaged more directly in their area's dominant industry or that their various mining endeavors offer significant insight into nineteenth-century gold extraction practices in the Boise Basin. Cumulatively, their experiences demonstrate that, despite shifting policies of discrimination and exclusion, an array of Chinese entrepreneurs continuously sought out and negotiated opportunities for themselves within the Basin's mining economy. Whether by leveraging small windows of legal leeway in property law, the support of family members, or alliances formed across categories of race and gender, their attempts to navigate increasingly restrictive policies illustrate some of the complex negotiations and diverse participants integral to the Boise Basin's mining industry but often overlooked in historical accounts.

Situated at the heart of this complexity, the archaeological and historical records of Pon Yam and the Loke Kee family thus offers a view of mining that encompasses more than a merely technological or economic perspective. Chinese merchants' experiences expose ways that mining ventures in the Basin were also inexorably tied to social networks, community dynamics, and the perpetual management of risk. Artifacts from Pon Yam's store and correspondence from the Loke Kee family attest to their curation of numerous but selective relationships. These infused the Basin with goods and commerce but also with aspects of less tangible strategies for

managing well-being among potentially uncertain and sometimes explicitly hostile circumstances. From a small bundle of incense to five barrels of whiskey, historical and archaeological sources show the careful calculations Chinese Basinites made with each business deal or purchase and the often intersecting personal and communal motivations underlying each. Religious observances, quality boots, and gestures made to establish trusted contacts were part of mining in the Basin. All were also approaches to well-being and economic security made visible through elements of material culture. Similarly, setting off firecrackers, supplying seeds to local gardeners (Popper 2020:312), and gifting Worcestershire sauce bottles festively decorated for the New Year's holiday (*Idaho Statesman* 1908b:6) might be considered subtle material manifestations of personal or community care.

Authors have elsewhere characterized Chinese merchants as mediators, market manipulators, community anchors, gatekeepers, philanthropists, and power brokers (Bronson and Ho 2015:140; Hsu 2020:36–37; Mar 2010:1–4; Merritt 2017:203; Ngai 2010: 223–225; Praetzellis and Praetzellis 2001:649; Rose et al. 2021:411; Sin 2003:6; Voss 2018:292; Voss et al. 2018:412). All of these roles likely describe aspects of Pon Yam and the Loke Kee family's impact on the Basin. Viewed from the perspective of the networks in which they engaged, they might also be seen as linchpins in many of the interpersonal webs undergirding mining and daily life in the Basin. Clearly, as other Chinese merchants did across the West, both families exerted great influence within their rural diasporic community (Bronson and Ho 2015:140–141). Yet, examples throughout this chapter also illustrate that their influence was often intertwined with or contingent upon complex negotiations with both Chinese and European American actors.

As seen through Pon Yam's contract with Hattie Noble or Di Ti's letters to A. Fenkhausen, multidimensional negotiations occurred throughout the Basin's mining economy and often hinged on alliances forged through mutual assurances or economic interdependencies. Amid fluctuating local markets and clear structures of racial inequality, such relationships were rarely equal. Yet, within them, Chinese merchants and miners each found room to express different strategies. Material culture recovered from the Pon Yam House and the business records left by the Loke Kee family capture some of these strategies, which in turn offer initial examples of ways that the Basin's Chinese residents navigated their rural mining industry to create homes and livelihoods in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

In several instances, this perspective also highlights distinct contradictions between Chinese Basinite's experiences and stereotypes that have come to characterize Chinese miners

in the American West. The wide variety of products stocked in Pon Yam's and Loke Kee's stores, the business ties that they maintained, and the mining contracts in which they engaged all demonstrate that neither Chinese merchants nor Chinese miners in the Basin could be considered insular groups isolated from their larger pluralistic community. These same documentary and material sources also signify that simplistic explanations of cheap labor, inferior products, worked out claims, or the passive acceptance of lower living standards do not adequately capture either the challenges or the successes of Chinese miners in the Basin. To begin this dissertation from the vantage point of merchant networks, therefore, offers a place from which to begin repopulating the varied experiences of the Basin's Chinese mining networks.

Significantly, however, much of Pon Yam and Loke Kee's material record suggest ways in which the relative privileges of merchants—community standing, the chance to migrate as families, and access to a greater variety of resources—could be leveraged to create opportunity. While these merchants shared occupational networks with the Basin's non-merchant miners in ways that influenced both parties' experiences of the industry, the strategies available to each participant clearly differed. The following chapters explore some of this variability by presenting perspectives from different groups of archaeological sites where Chinese miners labored to extract gold and to maintain the complex webs of resources required to do so. Sampling some of what were once many interconnected network nodes, they indicate additional ways that individuals, both in merchant's stores and among mining camps across the forest, lived and worked within the entanglements of the Boise Basin's Chinese mining networks.

CHAPTER 3.
GRIMES CREEK, THE WONG SING (黃勝) MINING COMPANY, AND "OLD BOSTON"

When Old Boston Was in the Basin

In 1862, as the Grimes Party collected the first few nuggets of gold from the expedition that would ignite the Boise Basin's gold rush, it was from a landform later known as Boston Bar. Unsurprisingly, claims near this spot were some of the first to be snatched up (Hart 2002:6–7) by the rushers who followed, and soon a small community of miners formed that residents named "Boston" (see Figure 1.2). Initially described somewhat jovially as "the famous metropolis…on the Western Coast of Grimes Creek" and as "a rich little mining camp" by local reporters (*Idaho World* 1873b:3), Boston quickly cycled from boom to bust as its creek and bar claims were picked clean of gold. By the late 1870s, the tone of newspaper articles changed considerably, referencing the town as "a place of faded grandeur" with a "lonely appearance" and mining documents began using the designation "Old Boston" for the dwindling community (*Idaho World* 1877c:3; Boise County, ID, Deed Records, Book 24:231; Boise County, ID, Mortgage Records, Book 4:455).

Nonetheless, a handful of prospectors, developers, and Chinese mining companies continued to operate out of Boston well into the first decade of the twentieth century, primarily by transferring their extraction efforts to the hill claims running along the opposite side of Grimes Creek (Campbell et al. 2019:8–13). It is thanks to this shift in focus that anything more substantial than a paper trail now exists for one of the oldest mining camps in the Basin. The townsite of Old Boston, along with its associated creek and bar claims, was extensively dredge mined after the turn of the twentieth century, destroying the last physical remains of the community (Hart 2002:80; Spence 2016:198, 227). Across the creek, however, many higher elevation claims escaped this destruction. Scattered among them are a dozen archaeological sites formerly leased, along with a headquarters in Boston, by the Wong Sing Company between 1891 and 1903. The history and rich archaeological record tied to these claims provides an example of evolving multiethnic mining practices in the Basin and of how one Chinese mining outfit in particular, the Wong Sing Company, managed a large and complex placer operation amid their changing circumstances.

Historical Overview of the Wong Sing Company Claims

Consolidation by Moses Biddy, late 1860s–early 1870s

Drawn by reports of the Grimes Party's successful prospecting in the area, a number of individual miners initially staked claim to mineral rights that would eventually comprise the Wong Sing Company's cumulative holdings. One of these early arrivals was Moses J. Biddy. A rusher born in Georgia, Biddy first entered the Basin in 1863, settling in Centerville for a time before moving downstream. By 1870, Biddy lived in Boston, where he shared a house with two mining partners, and owned $4,000 worth of real estate. Over the next few years, Biddy acquired additional creek, gulch, and hill claims along both sides of Grimes Creek, and purchased a toll house on the road from Idaho City to Boston (Curtis 1943–1944:61; Boise County, ID, Deed Records, Book 12:159, 425, Book 13:284, 287, Book 14:54; US Bureau of the Census 1870:3). Like his Boston neighbors, Biddy initially focused his mining efforts on the stream banks and gulches where water was most abundant, and gold was thus most easily recovered. Water rights purchased from Grimes Creek and the Willow Creek tributary to the south supplied much of this stream-adjacent placer mining (Boise County, ID, Deed Records, Book 13:284). As returns on these deposits dwindled, however, Biddy turned his attention to the waterless "dry diggings" on the slopes to the east of Grimes Creek.

The Grimes Creek Ditch Company, 1875–1879

In 1876, *Idaho Statesman* correspondent W. A. Goulder toured the Basin's mining districts, capturing a snapshot of local activity just as Biddy and his neighbors began transitioning their operations to higher ground. Reporting that a decade of mining activity had all but exhausted Grimes Creek's "richer and more easily worked placers," Goulder expressed optimism that several new partnerships might open to production a "large area of excellent mining ground as yet untouched" in the hills bordering Grimes Creek. According to property deeds, just one month before Goulder's visit Moses Biddy sold a two-thirds interest in his mining properties to Patrick M. Doyle and Stephen Dempsey (Boise County, ID, Deed Records, Book 14:167). In exchange, Doyle and Dempsey sold Biddy a corresponding one-third interest in their Grimes Creek Ditch Company, which had just finished constructing a ditch from Pioneerville to Trail Creek. Snaking through the hills approximately one mile east of Grimes Creek, this ditch passed directly above Biddy's "rich and extensive" holdings, bringing with it the water needed to begin mining these and the other previously inaccessible claims within its extent (Goulder 1876:2; Boise County, ID, Lis Pendens Records, Book 1:18–20).

The Grimes Creek Ditch was not the only major construction effort near Boston as mining activity shifted from creek bottoms to the surrounding hills in the mid-1870s. In April of 1877, the *Idaho Statesman* reported:

> *Doyle & Co. own the ditch on the east side, opposite the town [of Centerville]. This ditch is about eight miles long, and cost about $76,000. Besides this, there is an annual cost of from $3,000 to $4,000 for tending and repairs. On the west side there are two ditches; the lower one belonging to S. K. Goldtrap, Esq., of about equal length with that of Doyle & Co.; and the other belonging to Ben Willson (sic, for Wilson) Esq., of Pioneerville, which is several miles longer than either of the others. The aggregate cost of those ditches, for construction and repairs, would amount to $300,000. ... The fact that these long ditches are kept in repair and cared for at so great an expense is sufficient evidence of the extent and value of the placers which they cover.*

Much like the Grimes Creek Ditch, those constructed by Goldtrap and Wilson supplied many more placers along their routes than just those run by their owners, likely at a significant profit. Particularly near Centerville, this appears to have included a number of properties being worked by Chinese companies. Descriptions of the Biddy claims on the east side of the creek, by contrast, make no mention of Chinese miners among the "large force" employed there (Goulder 1876:2; *Idaho Statesman* 1877:2).

Despite what was, by all accounts, a profitable undertaking, three years after buying into the Grimes Creek Ditch Company, Moses Biddy filed suit to dissolve the partnership (Boise County, ID, Lis Pendens Records, Book 1:18–20). Returning from an over-winter trip to Ireland, Stephen Dempsey purchased Biddy's one-third interest in the company's collective holdings for $4,750 in April of 1879 (Curtis 1943–1944:64; Boise County, ID, Deed Records, Book 14:521; *Idaho Statesman* 1879:3). At the time of the sale, Biddy was still living in the shrinking community of Boston but by the following June appears to have left town to join the gold rush beginning in the Wood River-Hailey area. Biddy would later relocate to California and died there in 1892 (*Idaho Statesman* 1892a:12; US Bureau of the Census 1880).

Stephen Dempsey as Majority Owner, 1879–1891

With Moses Biddy's departure, majority interest in the Grimes Creek Ditch and mining properties fell to Stephen Dempsey, an Irish immigrant who, like Biddy, was among the first settlers in Centerville. Arriving in the Basin one year after Biddy, Dempsey joined a relative, John Dempsey, already living there. Both Dempseys had formerly resided in Nevada. From there, Stephen traveled to the Basin via San Francisco and Portland, reaching Centerville in the spring of 1864 (*Idaho Statesman* 1892b:2; US Bureau of the Census 1870:4). He and John prospected together for a time, and appear to have been living together when, in 1870, Stephen

applied for US citizenship (Boise County, ID, Certificates of Citizenship, Book 1:22; US Bureau of the Census 1870:4).

Six months after the district court in Idaho City granted him citizenship, Stephen Dempsey began purchasing interest in Basin properties. Between 1870 and 1872, he successively bought out the owners of Centerville's Henkel and Braun Livery Stable to become its sole proprietor (Deed Records, Boise County, ID, Book 12:501, Book 13:88). Under Idaho territorial law, Dempsey's US citizenship was not a prerequisite for ownership of private property like the livery stable that would eventually bear his name, but it was necessary to claim public lands and the minerals they contained.[1] As a former miner who would soon return to the profession, Dempsey would surely have been aware of the 1872 General Mining Act's stipulation that only individuals who had begun or completed the naturalization process were eligible to claim mineral deposits on land belonging to the United States – land that, in the Basin, encompassed any property not already owned by someone else (Chin 2020:1296).

Citizenship in hand, Dempsey began investing in mining claims along Grimes Creek in 1875. Along with Patrick Doyle, a fellow Irish immigrant who had also recently been granted US citizenship, Dempsey first purchased interest in the Grimes Creek Ditch Company from B. F. Channel and William Sharr of Centerville. Although he also lived in Centerville at the time of the purchase, Dempsey would move to Boston after exchanging claim and ditch investments with Moses Biddy the following year (Boise County, ID, Deed Records, Book 14:34–37; Boise County, ID, Naturalization Records, Book 1:40). If his partner Patrick Doyle ever joined him there, Doyle either did not stay long enough to be recorded or was missed by census takers enumerating Boston's residents in 1880 (US Bureau of the Census 1880:19). By then, however, Dempsey had already purchased Biddy's interest in the company and, over the next two years also bought out Doyle and the remaining Grimes Creek Ditch Company investors (Boise County, ID, Deed Records, Book 15:294; Boise County, ID, Mortgage Records, Book 4:455).

From the beginning of his majority ownership in the Grimes Creek Ditch Company, Dempsey relied on Chinese miners in a variety of capacities to make his mining ventures profitable. Although census takers did not find Patrick Doyle in Boston in 1880, they did record

[1] As first a portion of Oregon Territory and later as a part of the Territory of Idaho, much of the land in the Boise Basin fell under United States ownership. Laws intended to encourage settlement and western expansion like the Donation Land Claim Act of 1850 and the General Mining Act of 1872 offered up portions of this federal land free of cost to claimants who met certain qualifications – notably U.S. citizenship or the intent to naturalize (Chin 2020:1296; Tirres 2013:51). After statehood, authority over state lands fell to Idaho lawmakers who quickly passed the 1891 "Act to Authorize Aliens to Take, Hold, and Dispose of Mining Property" which specifically excluded "persons of Asian descent not born in the United States" from purchasing mining-related property like claims, water rights, or mills (Zhu 1997:189).

seven miners living adjacent Stephen and his wife Mary on the "Dempsey Claims." These seven miners, all listed as Dempsey's "hands," or employees, consisted of James Morley and Andrew McGuire, both born in Ireland; Edward Heald and James Farris, both born in the eastern United States; and Ah Man, Ah San, and Ah Kee, all born in China (US Bureau of the Census 1880:19–20). Since only one dwelling number is recorded for the group, this multinational crew of men appear to have been living together, perhaps in a bunkhouse or other large structure.

In addition to employing Chinese miners among his workforce, by 1883 Dempsey had begun leasing water rights from the ditches he owned to Chinese companies working along Grimes Creek. At the start of the 1883 mining season, Dempsey told a reporter from the *Idaho World* (1883a:3) that he was overseeing work on two mining claims near Boston while also suppling two more placer operations, each run by a Chinese company, with water from his ditches. As was the case in so many contemporary English-language newspapers (Arata 2020:81), no names were given for the Chinese miners mentioned in the article, though the *Idaho World* did publish Dempsey's prediction that, thanks to Grimes Creek's generous water flow, each would have "a working head of water until late in the fall."

Around 1890, Stephen and Mary Dempsey moved to Emmett, Idaho, where Dempsey switched careers yet again, taking up a position as postmaster and operating a store (Curtis 1943–1944:64). Although no longer a miner, he retained his Boise Basin mining claims for another decade or more. In his absence, Dempsey leased all of his mining properties to the Wong Sing Company of Centerville, who, in 1891, became the first company to singlehandedly manage mining operations across the entirety of Dempsey's accumulated claims (Boise County, ID, Lease Records, Book 1:232–235).

The Wong Sing (黃勝) Mining Company, 1891–1903

The Wong Sing Company appears to have been a partnership named after one of its principal members, who, along with How Sing, is described in property records as one of the company's "managers" (Boise County, ID, Lease Records, Book 2:78–79). Wong Sing may have been the more senior of the two men, since he alone signed the initial lease for Dempsey's mining properties in 1891 (Figure 3.1). On this document, his signature appears as 黃勝, *Wong Sing* in Cantonese. Since Wong was and is a common surname in the provinces of Guangdong and Fujian, it is probable that Wong Sing came from Southern China and may have shared ancestral ties with other Wongs in the Basin, including the merchant Wong Chong, who helped purchase the Pon Yam store in Idaho City (see Chapter 2). Beyond these basic observations, however, almost nothing about Wong Sing or How Sing appears in historical records, making

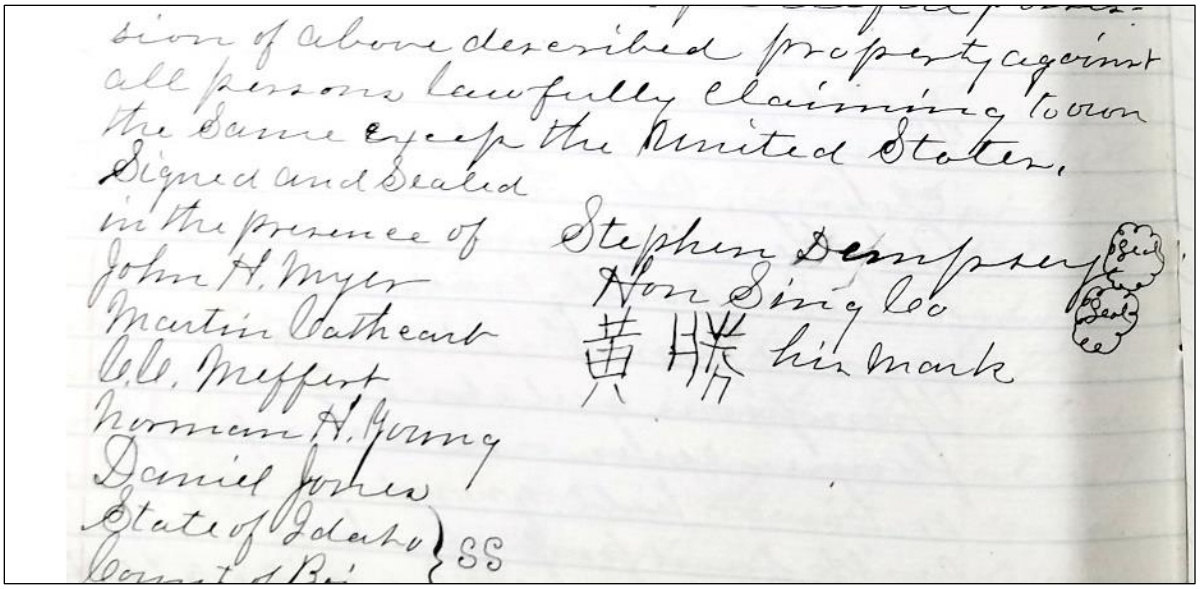


Figure 3.1. Lease between Stephen Dempsey and the "Hon Sing Co," which is also referred to as the Wong Sing Co. elsewhere in this same document. The signature on this page, 黃勝 (*Wong Sing* / *Huang Sheng*) is likely that of the company's namesake partner (Lease Records, Boise County, ID, Book 1:235).

much of their lives and the particulars of the company they ran together hard to reconstruct from documents alone. Reading between the lines of the records that do exist, however, reveals at least some of the context in which they operated their long-lasting mining company.

Based on the size and scope of the properties they managed, the Wong Sing Company must have been a relatively large and well-organized mining operation. According to their lease from Dempsey, company members took exclusive control of mining claims that stretched into the hills along both sides of Grimes Creek for a linear distance of more than six miles. Other transfers mentioned in their lease provide a sense of the techniques and oversight needed to work this large mining complex. Along with Dempsey's former claims, Wong Sing Company members received two "chiefs" (hydraulic monitors or water cannons); two reservoirs; 300 feet of pipe; extensive dumping grounds; an unspecified number of hoses, picks, and shovels; and a cluster of structures in Boston (Boise County, ID, Lease Records, Book 1:232–235).

Like both Dempsey and Biddy before them, the Wong Sing Company almost certainly used Boston as the headquarters for their operations. This would have at least consisted of the two blacksmith shops, house, and stable mentioned in their lease but may also have included three bunkhouses and a warehouse depicted on later maps of the area (Stevenson 1913). If present during the Wong Sing Company's tenancy, these surely would have housed a portion of the company's workforce. However, archaeological evidence indicates that, at least during peak seasons, many other members of the Wong Sing Company resided on hill claims and ditch

networks opposite the town of Boston. Perhaps most importantly, the company also acquired at least five major ditches, each connected to a network of transportation and holding features essential for supplying the water hydraulic mining required. These included the Grimes Creek Ditch, reported in prior years to have cost between $3,000 and $4,000 in annual upkeep, the equally extensive Lewis Ditch, and three ditches stemming from Willow and Trail creeks to the south (Boise County, ID, Lease Records, Book 1:232–235; *Idaho Statesman* 1877:2).

Although none of the available records specify the structure of Wong Sing Company, contemporary accounts of Chinese mining elsewhere in the West and in prior mineral rushes in southeast Asia offer examples of how they likely organized their members. In both instances, two kinds of mining company structure prevailed. Each was composed of labor forces who filled a number of specialized positions from managers and shift supervisors to ditch tenders, blacksmiths, woodworkers, cooks, and general mining laborers. In larger operations, wage laborers were more commonly employed in all but the top managerial roles, while more modest operations tended to be composed of around 10 to 50 full partners who shared company expenses and profits and might even rotate through leadership positions (Crawfurd 1820:474–475; Hann 2021:344–367). References to Wong Sing and How Sing's managerial positions and the complex infrastructure on their holdings all clearly indicate that such divisions of labor and specialization occurred within Wong Sing Company, although whether members drew their income from the company payroll or from shares of profits isn't documented.

Historical sources do indicate that the Wong Sing Company was a relatively long-lived mining venture, however, operating the placers, ditches, and infrastructure located on Dempsey's property until 1903 (*Idaho Statesman* 1901b:6; Boise County, ID, Lease Records, Book 2:78–79). Persisting for twelve years within a notoriously volatile industry and amid increasingly restrictive anti-Chinese legislation suggests several other things about the Wong Sing Company. Their continued occupancy indicates at least a moderate level of success and sustained company profit. According to the terms of their lease, the Wong Sing Company agreed to pay Dempsey $3,096 in installments at agreed-upon intervals. The first of these installments was a payment of $1,000 made as the lease was signed. An additional $1,000 was due at the beginning of the mining season for each of the next two years, followed by a $1 annual fee each year thereafter for the term of the lease (Boise County, ID, Lease Records, Book 1:232–235). Since a failure to remit any of these payments would have cancelled the lease, the Wong Sing Company's continued occupancy can be seen as evidence that the company's returns were enough to cover their large initial payments and then to justify subsequent year's labor and

supply costs. Had the Wong Sing Company wished to cancel their lease, they would only have needed to forego paying their annual fee.

The terms of their lease and the Wong Sing Company's decade-long occupancy also make clear that, from its inception, both parties intended the lease to be an extended agreement. As specified in the document, unless the terms were broken by either party, the Wong Sing Company would retain full use of Dempsey's properties for 99 years. Century-long leases of mining properties were not uncommon in the Boise Basin, at least on paper. While the actual length of occupancy rarely, if ever, lasted as long in practice, transfers preserved in the Boise County Recorder's Office contain more than a half-dozen leases, among a total of 86 such transactions, for 99 or 100 years that were executed between 1867 and 1900. Significantly, all of these extended agreements were made with Chinese miners, who were also more likely to engage in lengthy leases in general. Records show that 89 percent of contracts with Chinese lessees were for periods of 10 years or longer. Exactly the opposite was true for all other leases, in which transfers 10 years or longer occurred just 14 percent of the time.

Tracking these contracts over time reveal important differences in the way that leases functioned in the Boise Basin's mining industry for Chinese and other miners. As can be seen in Table 3.1, until 1870, just three leases were recorded. All were for terms of one to two years and none of these contracts included Chinese lessees, who were barred from participating in the industry by local mining district laws until at least 1867 (Wegars 2001:8). In the following decade, the number of leases grew slightly and for the first time included two long-term contracts, each for more than 20 years and signed by Chinese miners. It was not until the 1880s, however, that Chinese miners started to lease property in significant numbers. This influx occurred just as census records indicate that the proportion of Basin residents with Chinese ancestry began to decline (US Bureau of the Census 1870, 1880, 1900) but also alongside the retraction of property rights under newly passed Chinese exclusion laws (Chin 2020:1290; Lee 2003:13; Zhu 1997:82, 101).

Rather than simply reflecting growth in the Basin's mining industry or in its Chinese mining population, therefore, this sharp increase can be traced to a widely adopted shift in the tactics used to access mining properties. As exclusionary laws made it harder for Chinese miners to purchase mining claims in the 1880s and 1890s, both Chinese and non-Chinese miners turned to leases as a means to maintain the industry. During these decades, a small number of Basinites of all ethnicities continued to sign leases that lasted a couple of seasons, or even just a

Table 3.1. Summary of Boise Basin Mining Leases for the Years 1865–1900 by Date and Lessee.

Decade	Lessee		Total
	Chinese	Non-Chinese	
1865–1870		3	3
1871–1880	6	4	10
1881–1890	29	1	30
1891–1900	22	21	43
Total	57	29	86

Note: data represent existing records on file at the Boise County Recorder's Office, Idaho City, which begin in 1865.

few months, but the overwhelming majority of Chinese mining companies began to negotiate long-term leases. That these extended leases were intended to mimic aspects of the purchase agreements they replaced can be seen in the terms they included.

Whereas the majority of short-term leases were paid through a percentage of the profits realized each season, leases granted for ten years or longer were done so in exchange for a lump sum, frequently in the range of several hundred to several thousand dollars. The Hop Sing Company, for example, paid $12,499 for a 99-year lease in 1880 (Boise County, ID, Lease Records, Book 1:117–120). One year later, Hong Lee Tong and Co. spent the even more sizable sum of $15,000 to lease the Chris Constance Mining Claims for 20 years (Boise County, ID, Lease Records, Book 1:137–140). With this significant investment of capital came a degree of autonomy. Leases paid through profit shares frequently included stipulations allowing landowners to dictate the minimum number of employees working claims, set wage scales, and select labor supervisors or "agents" to independently verify the amount of gold collected (e.g., Boise County, ID, Lease Records, Book 1:283–288). Most long-term leases, by contrast, directed lessees to mine "as they may see proper" so long as possession was "quietly and peaceably" yielded at the end of the lease term (Boise County, ID, Lease Records, Book 1:180–182).

The somewhat murky distinction between purchases and long-term leases may be why, in June of 1891, the *Idaho Statesman* (1891a:5) mistakenly reported that Stephen Dempsey had sold his "placer mines and ditches" to an unnamed Chinese company for $3,000. Property records indicate that this transaction was actually a long-term lease signed by the Wong Sing Company. Since Dempsey was well on his way to leaving the Basin around the time of the transfer, he too may have thought of the transaction as akin to a sale. The Wong Sing Company lease did not include any of the stipulations seen in seasonal leases, suggesting that neither party preferred close oversight, which would have been difficult for the no-longer local Dempsey anyway. With a track record of doing business with Chinese miners, Dempsey may

have found it easier to lease his extensive holdings than to sell them in what was, by 1890, a slumping local mining economy (Zhu 1997:59–60). Maintaining ownership also offered the possibility that, in addition to receiving annual payments from the Wong Sing Company, Dempsey could retain his claims as an investment and hope to net further profit from their eventual sale.

In 1901, Stephen Dempsey did just this, selling his Grimes Creek mining properties to Robert Nye and E. F. Blain for $500 (Boise County, ID, Deed Records, Book 24:231–232). In many cases, property ownership changes also spelled the end of long-term lease agreements. The Wong Sing Company, however, appears to have avoided vacating Dempsey's former property right away. An article in the *Idaho Statesman* (1901b:6) published after the sale mentions the Wong Sing Company's continued operations during the 1901 season. An official transfer of lease was not recorded until two years later in May of 1903 (Boise County, ID, Lease Records, Book 2:78). In exchange for transferring their remaining 87 years of lease rights to Nye and Blain, Wong Sing and How Sing received the equivalent of their annual fee: $1 (Boise County, ID, Lease Records, Book 2:78). Whether the Wong Sing Company's co-managers considered this fair compensation or not, the disparity between the $1 they received and the $500 paid to Dempsey highlights one important way that long-term leases did not function like property ownership. Along with the insecurity of not knowing when a landowner might sell their claims or find cause to cancel a lease, extended rental agreements meant that, no matter how many improvements lessees made to things like ditch systems or how well they maintained a property, there were no returns for these actions waiting at the end of their contract.

Using long-term leases as means to circumvent the exclusionary laws that denied Chinese migrants (but not other recent immigrants like Stephen Dempsey) access to naturalization and property ownership was undoubtedly an important strategy for Chinese miners seeking opportunities within the Basin's extraction economy but was also one that remained within a structure that privileged non-Chinese miners. Under this lopsided system, very few miners without Chinese ancestry found reason to lease mining properties until the 1890s (see Table 2.1). Towards the end of this decade, property owners began offering one- to three-year contracts that included an option to purchase the specified property during the term of the lease. This was likely in response to the diminishing returns of many claims and to increased investment from outside capital. For instance, in 1889, The Permanent Investment Company of Boston, Massachusetts, and the New Jersey-based Boise Corporation each paid $1 or less to enter into short-term leases that included an agreed-upon purchase price should the

corporation decide to buy while under contract (Boise County, ID, Lease Records, Book 2:29–31, 33–34). Although not all lessees negotiating arrangements with purchase options during this decade were corporations, only one of the eight was a Chinese American mining company (Boise County, ID, Lease Records, Book 2:39–40), a fact that further illustrates the racial divide exclusion laws created in the Boise Basin's mining industry.

Records show that occasionally Chinese American miners whose birthright citizenship should have made them eligible to purchase property engaged in leasing[2] but that, in the preponderance of instances, this practice arose as a deliberate strategy to circumvent legal discrimination aimed at non-citizen Chinese miners. Wong Sing and How Sing's long-term lease suggests that they were among the majority of Chinese Basinites whose ancestry barred them from property ownership under US law. Along with so many other Chinese miners in the Basin, they appear to have adopted the practice of leasing, becoming part of a movement that restructured but maintained their livelihoods in the industry. In doing so, they embraced a strategy that was not without potential pitfalls like a prematurely canceled lease, an unexpected property sale, or the inevitability of unrealized investment returns, all of which hung on the actions of landowners and increased the weightiness of these relationships. Yet, as the record of the Wong Sing Company shows, despite the structural dependence on property owners like Stephen Dempsey, Wong Sing and How Sing fashioned a degree of relative autonomy in which to operate as they saw fit for twelve years. And while most of the buildings and headquarters where many of these operational decisions were likely made are now gone, physical remains of the sites where company miners labored for over a decade are still present along the east bank of Grimes Creek. Archaeological data from these sites pick up where the historical record leaves off, providing insight into the recurrent negotiations, strategic decisions, and tactful practices the Wong Sing Company used as they worked the hills around "Old Boston."

The Archaeology of the Wong Sing (黃勝) Company

In the mid-1980s, a proposed Forest Service land exchange spurred archaeological documentation efforts near the former town of Boston. Though, ultimately, the transfer was never completed and the property remined within Boise National Forest jurisdiction, Forest

[2] The Chinese American company mentioned above whose lease came with a purchase clause may have included a member whose citizenship would have made such a purchase possible. Other examples include Charley Sing Lee, discussed in Chapter 4, who was born in the Basin and would eventually purchase a home there while simultaneously leasing mining properties with his partner Chow Yuen Lee. The rapidly changing laws around property ownership also meant that some Chinese immigrants, like Chow Yuen Lee, were initially able to purchase Basin mining claims but found themselves relegated to leasing any additional claims they wished to occupy by the 1870s (see Chapter 4).

Service personnel hurried to record over a dozen sites along the roughly two-mile stretch of Grimes Creek slated to pass into private hands (Table 3.2). From these, they selected three sites for subsurface testing and performed cursory surface collection at ten more, gathering diagnostic items and artifacts deemed especially vulnerable to looting. Unbeknownst to their recorders, thirteen of the late-nineteenth- and early-twentieth-century placer mining sites and the 6,352 artifacts they yielded would eventually be connected to the Wong Sing Company through documentary research, making them one of the richest sources of information about the company's tenancy along Grimes Creek.

Table 3.2. Grimes Creek Collections Related to the Wong Sing Company.

Site Number[a]	Description	Work Performed[b]	Artifact Count
BS-767 (10BO344)	Former structures and placer mining site located adjacent the Grimes Creek Ditch and a reservoir	Excavation (9 test units)	363
BS-770 (10BO347)	Former placer mining site located between the Grimes Creek and Lewis Gulch ditches	Selective surface collection	8
BS-771 (10BO348)	Former structure and placer mining site located downslope from the Grimes Creek Ditch	Selective surface collection	2
BS-772 (10BO349)	Former structure and placer mining site located downslope from the Grimes Creek Ditch	Selective surface collection	9
BS-773 (10BO350)	Former placer mining site located downslope from the Grimes Creek Ditch	Selective surface collection	3
BS-775 (10BO352)	Former structure and placer mining site located downslope from the Grimes Creek Ditch	Selective surface collection	5
BS-776 (10BO353)	Former structure and placer mining site located along Grimes Creek	Selective surface collection	10
BS-777 (10BO354)	Former Chinese-occupied cabin (mapped in 1902) located along a reservoir for the Grimes Creek Ditch	Selective surface collection	7
BS-779 (10BO356)	Former placer mining site adjacent to the Grimes Creek Ditch	Selective surface collection	27
BS-780 (10BO357)	Former structure and placer mining site located downslope from the Grimes Creek Ditch	Excavation (29 test units)	5,299
BS-781 (10BO358)	Former structure and placer mining site south of Boston	Selective surface collection	78
BS-782 (10BO359)	Former placer mining site south of Boston	Selective surface collection	44
BS-783 (10BO360)	Former structure and placer mining site in Boston Gulch	Excavation (1 test unit)	495
		Total	6,350

[a] Forest Service number (Smithsonian Trinomial).

[b] Excavation unit size varies; as practiced by Forest Service personnel, selective surface collection involved collecting only diagnostic artifacts or those most likely to be looted from a site.

Cumulatively, these resources provide a broad, and at times intimate, picture of what daily operations looked like for the company members whose workplaces once sprawled across claims to the north and south of Boston. Covering only about one-sixth of the company's former holdings, the dense array of artifacts and features found at sites along ditches, reservoirs, wash pits, sluice channels, and tailings piles nonetheless indicates the scope of mining activity that historically defined the area – especially the east bank of Grimes Creek where a dozen sites punctuate the rolling hills adjacent to the company's two major ditch networks.

On this side of the creek, the spatial distribution of sites and features (Figure 3.2) confirm that the Wong Sing Company used both the Grimes Creek and Lewis Gulch ditches to power hydraulic equipment like the monitors and pipe mentioned in the company's lease (Boise County, ID, Lease Records, Book 1:232–235). The importance of the Grimes Creek Ditch, in particular, to these operations can be seen in several sites that sit along its former alignment or on the margins of associated reservoirs. Spatially segregated from the concentrated mining features at lower elevations, these sites bespeak the constant maintenance, adjustment, and regulation needed along primary ditches, known as laterals, without which dry diggings like those surrounding Grimes Creek would remain dry.

Site BS-775, for example, occupies a small terrace just above the course of the Grimes Creek Ditch. The remains of a stacked rock foundation, cast iron stove parts, and a scatter of domestic and structural artifacts indicate that one or more Wong Sing Company members resided here, where they could oversee the flow of water through the Grimes Creek Ditch and a deeply incised channel that descends from the lateral and then branches as it enters the placer-mined landscape below. Along with numerous others around it, which show up as dendritic scars in LiDAR[3] images of the area, this channel likely diverted water to carefully selected locations. There, hydraulic monitors using pressurized water would blast gold-bearing sediment free from the surrounding hills and wash the resulting slurry into sluices and drains designed to separate out precious metal particles as they swept toward emptying points along Grimes Creek.

Because the timing and volume of water delivered was so critical to this process, other members of the Wong Sing Company appear to have maintained small reservoirs along the Grimes Creek Ditch, like the those identified at BS-767, a large site encompassing the remains of multiple structures (Corn et al. 2000:[4–8]), and at BS-777, which contains features that correspond to an earthen berm and "Chinese cabin" mapped on a 1902 claim survey (Darlington

[3] LiDAR, which stands for Light Detection and Ranging, is a type of remote sensing system that uses light emitted from a laser to measure distance and height. It can be used to create high resolution elevation data across wide areas in which even small features on the Earth's surface are readily visible.

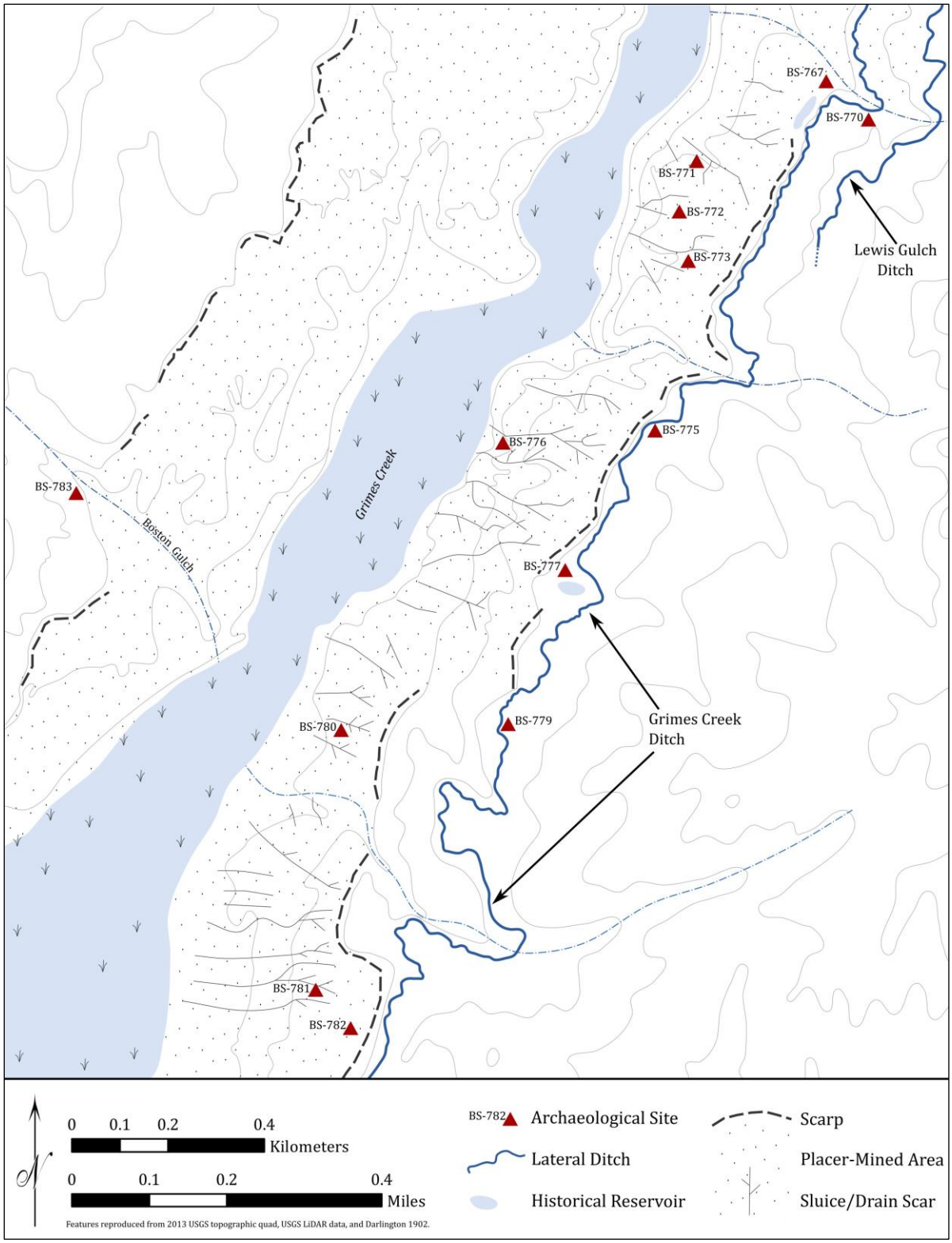


Figure 3.2. Map of archaeological sites examined in this chapter in relation to mining features from the Wong Sing Company's operations along Grimes Creek.

1902; Vrem and Corn 2000:[5]). With these reservoirs, Wong Sing Company members stationed nearby could collect and then strategically release water to prolong production at the downhill claims where many of their fellow miners worked (California Department of Transportation 2008:88; LaLande 1985:40).

Downslope from the Grimes Creek and Lewis Gulch ditches, numerous Wong Sing Company mining sites occur among a seeming endless array of tailings piles, wash pits rimmed by steep scarps, and numerous incised channels advancing towards the silt-filled floodplain of Grimes Creek. Within this near-continuous mining landscape, recorded archaeological sites consist of larger artifact concentrations that, for the most part, are associated with structural remains. The most well documented example of this is BS-780, a habitation and mining site that sits on a high terrace overlooking Grimes Creek (Figure 3.3).

Among the tailing piles that characterize much of the site's surface are a stacked rock feature and a square depression. Window glass, cut nails, and a ceramic doorknob mark the depression as the location of a former structure that once housed miners and the variety of goods that they used in their work and downtime. Though lacking associated artifacts, the stacked rocks may have once been a U-shaped hearth, similar to those found at other Chinese diaspora mining and railroad worker camps in the western United States (e.g., Furnis and Maniery 2015:72; Withee 2021:368). Excavation units placed on top of an excavated channel yielded the highest concentration of artifacts from the site. Here, archaeologists recovered about 30 percent of the total site assemblage from what they determined to be a trash deposit backfilled into the mining feature. Midway between the structure and the hearth, this particular channel may have been a convenient place to dispose of refuse once mining operations advanced higher into the surrounding hills and it was no longer needed (Campbell et al. 2019:4–6, 20; Geer et al. 1985:1, 17). Similar trash disposal patterns have been observed at other Chinese mining sites in the Basin (see, for example, Chapter 4), and are a reminder of how work and daily life quite literally overlayed one another at sites where continuous 24-hour operations tethered miners to claims throughout the spring and summer months.

Across the creek from BS-780, Forest Service archaeologists recorded just one site in Boston Gulch, the drainage whose confluence with Grimes Creek marks the location of the former townsite. Though no other company remains were located west of Grimes Creek, this single mining site within Boston Gulch suggests that Wong Sing Company mining activity proceeded in much the same fashion on both sides of the creek. Similar to BS-780, site BS-783

Figure 3.3. Overview of Site BS-780, facing the location of the former structure. Cut channels appear in the foreground and to the right of the photo.

is a habitation and mining site along the edge of a small terrace. Unlike BS-780, no structure footprint remains visible on the surface, which has been heavily disturbed by looting, but door hardware and window glass make it clear that one existed, while artifacts including suspender buckles, patent medicine bottles, and fragments of rubber boots offer lingering traces of daily life at the site where Wong Sing Company miners sheltered between shifts and may have helped tend ditches running along the hillside.

In 1984, recorders observed water still flowing through one such mining ditch near the southern edge of the site (Geer 1985:3; Roberts 1984:[1, 4]). Outside of Forest Service jurisdiction, and potentially as much as four miles distant, this ditch almost certainly connected BS-783 to a network of Wong Sing Company sites, like those across Grimes Greek, where members orchestrated the distribution of water, washed sediment from hills, and extracted gold at a scale unmatched by previous owners who had either never fully consolidated or worked the entirety of the property. Even without a complete record, traces of what it was like to work these distant yet interconnected claims, and of how the Wong Sing Company managed mining operations across such a large and complex landscape can be seen in the materials company members left behind at sites recorded on their former holdings. It is from the artifacts collected from these sites that much of the Wong Sing Company's experiences and operational strategies emerge.

A total of 6,350 artifacts have been collected from mining sites formerly worked by the Wong Sing Company (Table 3.3, Table 3.4). Some of these artifacts are the result of full-scale excavation, like at BS-780 where Forest Service personnel opened a total of 29 1x1-meter units, while others are composed of individual surface finds collected during intermittent site visits. Consequently, site assemblages vary in both size and composition. The diagnostic potential of ceramic and glass materials, for example, seems to have increased their presence among surface-only collections. Conversely, the cumulative assemblage's smaller amounts of bone, synthetic, and organic materials come almost exclusively from excavated sites. Despite these intra-site variations in quantity, the assemblages as a whole illuminate broad patterns across the Wong Sing Company's holdings.

Table 3.3. Wong Sing Company Site Assemblages by Material Type.

Site Number	Metal		Ceramic		Glass		Fauna		Synthetic		Organic		Unknown		Total
	Count	%	Count	%	Count	%	Count	%	Count	%	Count	%	Count	%	Count
BS-767 (10BO344)*	151	42	78	21	65	18	29	8	39	11	1	<1	-	-	363
BS-770 (10BO347)	1	13	2	25	5	62	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	8
BS-771 (10BO348)	-	-	2	100	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	2
BS-772 (10BO349)	1	11	2	22	6	70	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	9
BS-773 (10BO350)	1	33	-	-	2	70	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	3
BS-775 (10BO352)	-	-	5	10	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	5
BS-776 (10BO353)	1	10	7	70	2	20	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	10
BS-777 (10BO354)	-	-	6	86	1	14	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	7
BS-779 (10BO356)	2	7	8	30	6	22	11	41	-	-	-	-	-	-	27
BS-780 (10BO357)*	2,002	38	1,744	33	995	19	424	8	108	2	24	<1	2	<1	5,299
BS-781 (10BO358)	6	8	71	91	1	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	78
BS-782 (10BO359)	-	-	43	98	1	2	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	44
BS-783 (10BO360)*	101	20	161	33	180	36	37	7	15	3	1	<1	-	-	495
Total	2,266	36	2,129	34	1,264	20	501	8	162	2	26	<1	2	<1	6,350

Note: Percent values are based on site assemblages and are rounded to nearest whole number.

* = Excavated.

Table 3.4. Wong Sing Company Site Assemblages by Functional Group and Category.

Functional Group Artifact Category (Artifact Name)		**Count**	**Percent of Total**[a]
Architectural, Construction, and Hardware	**Subtotal**	**2,168**	**34**
Door hardware (knob, lock plate)		4	<1
Construction material (window glass, lumber)		356	6
Fastener (nut & bolt, rivet, screw, spike, tack)		16	3
Misc. hardware (brace/bracket, hinge, latch, washer, wire)		10	2
Nail		1,779	28
Unknown		3	<1
Food/food storage	**Subtotal**	**2,114**	**33**
Chinese stoneware (brown-glazed jar, ginger jar, lid, hollowware)		1,549	24
Redware pot		44	1
Cans (ham, baking powder)		4	<1
Bottle (milk, soda, Worcestershire sauce)		14	<1
Pit		2	<1
Fauna		501	8
Misc. containers	**Subtotal**	**810**	**13**
Bottle		446	7
Can		45	1
Personal	**Subtotal**	**424**	**7**
Bead		1	<1
Clothing hardware (button, rivet, suspender, buckle)		115	2
Grooming (comb, mirror, toothbrush)		5	<1
Pharmaceutical/medical (eye glass lens, patent medicine/pharmacy bottle, syringe)		22	<1
Opium (opium can, opium lamp, opium pipe bowl, modified needle)		275	4
Tobacco (pipe, tobacco tin tag)		6	<1
Food prep/consumption	**Subtotal**	**332**	**5**
Cooking or eating utensil (cleaver, knife, meat hook, pan, spoon, wok)		25	<1
Flatware (plate, saucer, unknown)		34	<1
Hollowware (bowl, cup, dish, glass/tumbler, unknown)		257	4
Unknown		16	<1
Occupational	**Subtotal**	**130**	**2**
Tool (drill, file, handle, hoe, pitchfork, saw, wedge)		11	<1
Footwear (shoe/boot, nail, stamp)		119	2
Alcohol	**Subtotal**	**91**	**1**
Chinese liquor		61	1
Beer		7	<1
Wine/champagne		18	<1
Other/indeterminate		5	<1
Other	**Subtotal**	**39**	**1**
Currency (Chinese coin)		1	<1
Entertainment (gaming piece)		5	<1
Firearms (ammunition, gun part, powder flask)		22	<1
Lighting (lamp chimney glass)		6	<1
Soil sample		1	<1
Heating/cooking (stove part)		1	<1
Waste (scrap metal, slag)		3	<1
Unknown	**Subtotal**	**242**	**4**
	Total	**6,350**	**100**

[a] Percent values are rounded to the nearest whole number.

The Material Culture of Miners' Work Site Homes: Architectural, Domestic, and Personal Artifacts

Seen through landscape features alone, the Wong Sing Company's archaeological record is one of intensive and sustained labor. Artifact collections, however, reveal that far more than just work took place on the Wong Sing Company's claims. When organized according to function, as in Table 3.4, occupational materials like rubber boots and pick tips repurposed into wedges account for just two percent of the cumulative assemblage. When considered alongside the assortment of uncollected shovels, gold pans, and other non-diagnostic mining implements that remain on the Wong Sing Company's former claims, these items leave little doubt about the occupation of site residents. Yet, overall, tools of the mining trade occur with relative infrequency in assemblages otherwise composed of construction materials, food items, and the miscellaneous trappings of daily life. More than just a record of mining labor, this combination of artifacts designates most Wong Sing Company sites as places where members took up residence and established day-to-day routines.

Throughout the Basin, miners resided near seasonal work areas in bunkhouses, cabins, dugouts, and tents (e.g., Boise County, ID, Deed Records, Book 17:157; Boise County, ID, Lease Records, Book 1:232; Boise County, ID, Mortgage Records, Book 6:627–630; Teeter 1932:93–94). Some Wong Sing Company members may have lived in temporary structures that left few archaeological traces,[4] but architectural hardware and construction materials recovered from nine of the thirteen assemblages indicate most Wong Sing lodging sites featured relatively substantial buildings made of lumber, fitted with glass windowpanes, and finished with locking door hardware. Inside these structures, at least some company members had access to cast iron cookstoves and to illumination from oil lamps whose flames burned behind thin glass chimneys. Though evidence of other furnishings is scarce, the activities that took place around them are abundantly represented in the array of foods, commercial products, and personal items present in the Wong Sing Company's assemblages.

Clothing artifacts (Figure 3.4) indicate that Wong Sing Company members often donned aspects of what gold rushers came to call the "miner's costume" (Herbert 2018:137–139), including jeans, overalls, rubber boots, and the occasional weapon. Metal rivets marked with the iconic Levi-Strauss brand name suggest that jeans were standard attire, while a "pure gum"

[4] Tent platforms and depressions from dugouts have been recorded at other Chinese mining sites in the Basin (see Chapter 4), but none of these features have been documented on the Wong Sing Company's former claims. The only historical document to make mention of worker housing within what was then Wong Sing Company property is the previously mentioned 1902 map that illustrates a "Chinese cabin" (Darlington 1902).

Figure 3.4. A selection of metal clothing hardware, including Levi-Strauss rivets, four-hole and Chinese-style buttons, and suspender buckles. Catalog numbers 10BO357/1985/215/01, 10BO357/1985/2001/01, 10BO357/1985/239/03, 10BO357/1985/239/02, 10BO357/1985/506/01, 10BO357/1985/608/01.

shoe stamp denotes that at least some members invested in boots made from this "first quality" rubber to help combat their unyieldingly wet work conditions (Sears, Roebuck and Company 2007:204). Additional artifacts signify that Wong Sing Company members combined these wardrobe staples with shirts, vests, or coats adorned with decorative glass and Chinese bell-shaped buttons; that some likely wore suspenders; and that others carried revolvers, as so many members of gold rush communities did (Campbell et al. 2019:38–40; Zhu 1997:130–135).

Outside of work hours, Wong Sing Company holdings were likely sites of entertainment, relaxation, and self-care. Some company members may have used this time to challenge one another to games of chance or strategy, such as the popular *Fán T'án*, using glass gaming pieces as counters (Culin 1891:1–2), or to smoke tobacco or opium pipes. Many appear to have attended to grooming or to their health, as indicated by recovered mirror, toothbrush, and comb fragments (Figure 3.5). Patent medicine and pharmaceutical bottles show that members sometimes also treated their own health conditions, using, for example, Hall's Balsam for the Lungs, Jamaica Ginger, and Stomach Bitters, patent medicines that claimed to cure coughs, colds, headaches, and stomach upset (Fike 1987:36, 128–129; Jayaraman 2012; Munsey 2005:7). A bottled pain killer, cod liver oil, and prepared opium could all have been used to treat the aching joints, stiff muscles, and injuries likely to result from the hard physical labor of mining (Fike 1987:36, 128–129; Heffner 2015:139).

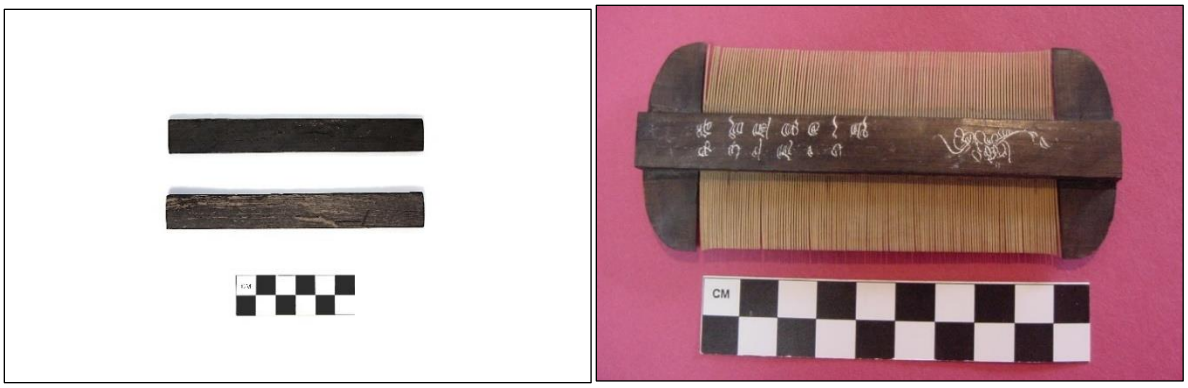


Figure 3.5. Wooden connectors from a Chinese-style comb (left). Catalog numbers 10BO357/1985/635/01 and 10BO357/1985/635/02. Very faint characters on the bottom artifact form part of a classical poem and match those found on a complete comb in the Asian American Comparative Collection (AACC) (right). Photograph courtesy of the AACC, University of Idaho, Moscow, catalog number CCC-84-089.

Recovery of cans marked with Fook Lung and Lai Yuen, two of the highest quality and most expensive opium brands (Sin 2013:200), perhaps support the importance of this last class of treatments to Wong Sing Company laborers. Historical opium smoking by members of Chinese American communities has been documented across the West as a practice that largely coincided with a period of legal use and with widespread application of opiates in American patent medicines. Along with other Western and Chinese healthcare practices, opium use has been shown to have been a critical aspect of pain management for Chinese laborers (Heffner 2015:139; Ng 2021:187–193; Sin 2013:200).

Though no examples of Chinese medicine containers appear in the curated Wong Sing Company collection, excavation notes from BS-780 mention two fragments of small glass medicine vials, similar to examples found at other Basin sites (see Chapter 4) (Campbell et al. 2019:17; Geer et al. 1985:31). Studies of nineteenth-century Chinese American sites (e.g., Heffner 2012; Kennedy et al. 2019) have uncovered regular use of Chinese medicines, including many single-dose treatments sold in small glass vials, alongside Western commercial products like those described above. In the Basin, property records document merchants selling Chinese "drugs" (medicines) both in Placerville and Idaho City,[5] and it is almost certain that Wong Sing miners would have incorporated such treatments into selfcare regimens that could have also included religious observances and dietary health practices (Boise County, ID, Deed Records, Book 14:402, Book 18:379; see also Chapter 2).

[5] In 1895, the Dong Sing Company, mentioned in Chapter 2, purchased an adobe building in Placerville that had been a store and that still contained a stock of Chinese medicines (Boise County, ID, Deed Records, Book 18:379). In Idaho City in 1878, Haug Wo Chung purchased a building along Granite Creek that was "used as a drug store and gambling house, together with all the medicines, cook stove, bar room stove and fixtures" (Boise County, ID, Deed Records, Book 14:402).

More than anything else, artifacts in the Wong Sing Company collections reflect the preparation and consumption of meals. These artifacts indicate that meals were regularly heated in woks and served with metal table knives; ceramic spoons; plates from Staffordshire, England; and Four Seasons Flowers, Winter Green, and Bamboo-pattern dishes made in China (see Table 2.3). At site BS-775, at least one Wong Sing Company miner or ditch tender used their downtime to peck a series of small holes into the glaze of a Four Seasons Flowers dish, replicating a procedure used on two vessels in the Pon Yam House collection and in Guangdong *qiaoxiang* (home villages) (Michaels 2005:127–128, 131; Ng 2021:181–183; also see Chapter 2). From their worksite home across the Pacific, this Wong Sing Company member perpetuated what was by then a transnational practice, pecking the character 来 (*Loi*/*Lai*) into their small dish (Figure 3.6). In Cantonese, 来 can mean "come" or can reference the future but may also have been part of the inscriber's name since Loi is a common surname among people from the provinces of Guangdong and Fujian (My China Roots 2022; Tsai 2022).

Food and drink remains from Wong Sing Company sites are nearly as varied as the clothes members wore and the personal products they used. As the largest component of the cumulative assemblage, food-related artifacts provide evidence of members dining on items like beef, canned pork, and stone fruits, accompanied by Worcestershire sauce, Chinese liquor, and European beer (see Table 2.3). Some of these items can be traced to specific manufacturing centers; the imported beers, for example, were made in Hamburg, Germany, and Fifeshire, Scotland, in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries (Lockhart et al. 2017:233; Lockhart et al. 2008). A Chinese brown-glazed stoneware liquor bottle is marked with the two characters 興源 (*hing yoon* / *xing yuan*), which translate to "flourishing source" and, suggestively, are also the name of a village in China's Fujian province (Alexander Akin 2018, elec. comm.; Campbell et al. 2019:34–35). Further examining the range of possible sources for products within this large category points to strategies for provisioning the diverse tastes and needs of Wong Sing members residing along Grimes Creek.

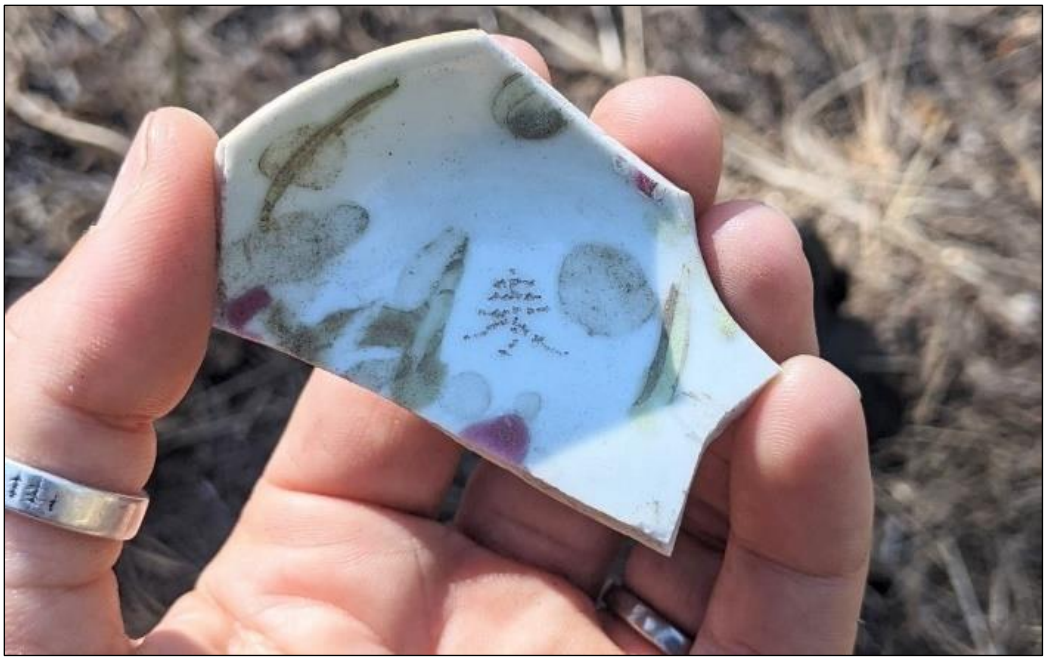


Figure 3.6. Four Seasons Flowers dish with the character 来 pecked into the glaze. Catalog number 10BO352/1984/002/01.

Resource Networks and Strategic Provisioning: Food and Food Storage Artifacts

Providing for the daily needs of a labor force dispersed along miles of riverbank was undoubtedly a complex task. To judge from their frequency, Chinese brown-glazed stoneware (CBGS) containers, which account for nearly a quarter of all collected artifacts from Wong Sing Company sites (see Table 2.3), were a major aspect of this undertaking. CBGS vessels have long been made at kilns throughout southern China and used as versatile containers for storing and transporting food and alcohol (Choy 2014:11–12). Though the contents of these containers were highly variable, jar types within the assemblage suggest some of the foods they might have originally contained. Wide-mouthed jars, for example, could have come filled with preserved tofu, beans, pickled turnips, or shrimp paste and spouted jars may have carried liquor, soy sauce, vinegar, or oil to food preparation sites across Wong Sing claims (Choy 2014:15; Yang and Hellman 2013:218–223). Small green- or blue-and-white-glazed jars found at two sites almost certainly held preserved ginger, a product that captured the attention of epicurean markets around the globe in the early nineteenth century and that was exported in distinctively decorated round or hexagonal stoneware jars (Morrow 2010:91). Much larger barrel and globular jars (Figure 3.7) would have supplied company cooks with generous quantities of frequently used ingredients such as oil, sheet sugar, or vinegar (Choy 2014:13–14; Yang and Hellman 2013:221).

Figure 3.7. Fragments of a Chinese brown-glazed stoneware globular jar (left) as compared with those from a small spouted jar (right). Both were recovered from site BS-780. Catalog numbers 10BO357/1985/ 642/07 and 10BO357/1985/077/01.

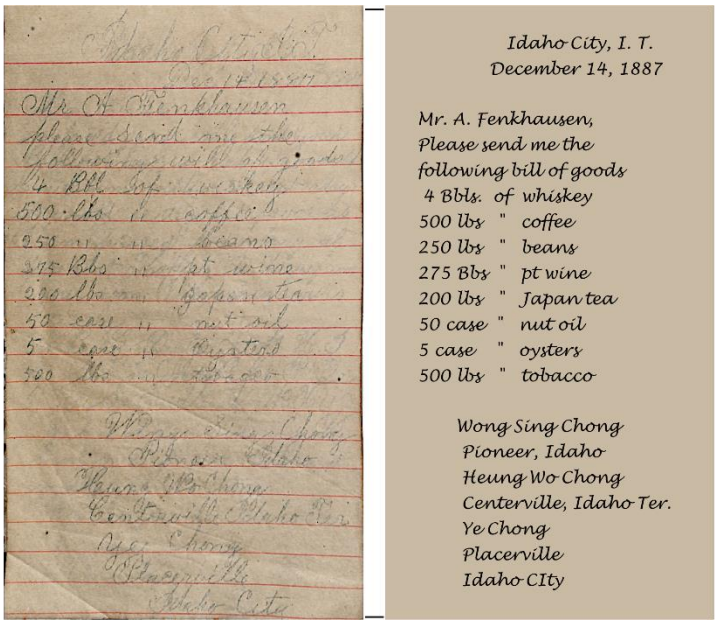
By the late-nineteenth century, vessels made of CBGS were among a tremendous array of international goods[6] being shipped across the Pacific by Hong Kong-based *jinshanzhuang*, or "gold mountain firms," through what historian Elizabeth Sinn (2013:297) has characterized as a virtual "superhighway between south China and the West Coast of North America." Connecting to this flow of products would have been fundamental to feeding and otherwise supplying work crews throughout the busy mining season. To do so, the Wong Sing Company surely turned to local Chinese merchants who, as in so many other remote parts of the American West, provided access to *jinshanzhuang* commercial networks and to a variety of other individually curated commodity chains (Hsu 2006:28; see also Chapter 2). Indeed, some of the records from the Loke Kee family store discussed in Chapter 2 indicate that Idaho City merchants regularly facilitated purchase orders for Chinese miners or companies operating out of less accessible Basin locales.

Intriguingly, the Loke Kee store records contain several references to an associate named Wong Sing Chong whose orders overlap with the duration of the Wong Sing Company's lease on

[6] Hsu (2006:26–27) provides a partial list of the truly staggering variety of products available from *jinshanzhuang* that includes Chinese books and magazines; herbal medicines; fruits like lychees, pineapples, and pears; cooking ingredients such as ginger, water chestnuts, and water lily roots; sweets; seafood like flower fish, shrimps, cuttlefish, eels, and oysters; as well as live ducks; quail; mushrooms; dried bean curd; bamboo shoots; sweetmeats; duck liver and kidneys; and water chestnut flour. To this list, Sinn (2013:2–6) adds building materials, beverages, clothing, hats, shoes, tea, prepared opium, joss paper, silk handkerchiefs, bandannas, embroidered shawls, vases, fans, velvet slippers, and rhubarb, noting that additional items, like German linseed oil, coffee, gin, champagne, and wine were often purchased from Europe before being re-exported across the Pacific.

Grimes Creek and who lived about five miles north of Boston in the town of Pioneerville. Orders made by Wong Sing Chong and his associates provide examples of the scale and schedule of goods being purchased through the Loke Kee family's commercial networks. In letters sent between December and February of 1888, individual bills of goods request 500 pounds of coffee, 500 pounds of tobacco, 250 pounds of beans, 200 pounds of tea, and 500 to 750 pounds of rice (Amos Di Sang letterbook 1886–1895:[8–10]; *Idaho World* 1879:2) (Figure 3.8). Placed in the late winter or very early spring, these orders would have ensured that plenty of supplies were on hand by the time snowmelt started flowing through Basin streams and miners began reoccupying claims.

Though Wong Sing Chong and his orders cannot definitively be associated with the Wong Sing Company, the quantity and types of CBGS jars present within Wong Sing Company collections are consistent with the practice of ordering bulk goods from local Chinese merchants, as are a host of other artifacts like Chinese-manufactured tablewares, personal items, and American-made boots. As seen in Chapter 2, Chinese merchants sold a variety of domestic products but their European American competitors, by contrast, rarely offered a similar variety of Chinese goods. As access points to the quantities and types of products that Wong Sing Company members used on a daily basis, Chinese merchants like Loke Kee formed a crucial, though not exclusive, aspect of the company's operational network.



Idaho City, I. T.
December 14, 1887

Mr. A. Fenkhausen,
Please send me the
following bill of goods
4 Bbls. of whiskey
500 lbs " coffee
250 lbs " beans
275 Bbs " pt wine
200 lbs " Japan tea
50 case " nut oil
5 case " oysters
500 lbs " tobacco

Wong Sing Chong
Pioneer, Idaho
Heung Wo Chong
Centerville, Idaho Ter.
Ye Chong
Placerville
Idaho CIty

Figure 3.8. Letter and its transcription written on behalf of Wong Sing Chong and his associates requesting a large order of goods from A. [Amandus] Fenkhausen, a wholesale whiskey dealer and importer based in San Francisco, who is referenced in other letters. Original courtesy of Idaho State Archives, Boise, Manuscripts Collection, Identifier MS 2/0056.

A handful of historical ledgers preserved in the collections of the Boise Basin Museum offer other possible sources for some of the products seen in Wong Sing assemblages. An 1875–1876 ledger from the Boise Basin Mercantile in Idaho City, for example, itemizes purchases made by Stephen Dempsey and several of his partners in the Grimes Creek Ditch Company while working the same claims later leased to Wong Sing and How Sing. Comparing these records to those from the Loke Kee family store show that members of the Grimes Creek Ditch Company were buying many of the same products as Wong Sing Chong and his partners, though at decidedly different quantities and intervals. Whereas Wong Sing Chong's single bill of sale includes 4 barrels of whiskey, 500 pounds of coffee, 500 pounds of tobacco, and 200 pounds of tea, ledger entries for Stephen Dempsey and his partners record periodic acquisitions of half-gallon bottles of whiskey, 10 to 15 pounds of coffee, and 1-pound packages of tobacco and tea, the latter at a rate of about once a month (Amos Di Sang letterbook 1886–1895:[8–10]; Boise Basin Mercantile 1875–1876:3, 122, 196, 176, 216, 253).

Many Boise Basin Mercantile purchases also parallel items found on Wong Sing Company sites. Entries for stone fruit, assorted canned goods, oil lamps, buttons, pain killers, and various spirits along with mining staples like shovels, ax handles, and rubber boots charged to accounts associated with members of the Grimes Creek Ditch Company[7] all have correlates within Wong Sing artifact collections (see Table 2.3), as do several specific products sold to other Basin customers (Boise Basin Mercantile 1875–1876:3, 45, 68, 122, 164, 176, 196, 199, 216, 253). These include bottles of Dr. William Hall's Balsam for the Lungs, Lea & Perrins-brand Worcestershire Sauce, and Jamaica Ginger extract, all of which frequently appear on Boise Basin Mercantile customer accounts (e.g., Boise Basin Mercantile 1875–1876:7, 16, 40, 49, 53, 90, 113, 238, 253, 259).

The significant overlap between archaeological materials and items enumerated in the Boise Basin Mercantile ledger might insinuate that Wong Sing Company members, on occasion, patronized the store. If they did so, the prevailing pattern of purchases within the ledger denote that it would likely have been for smaller quantities of specific items, perhaps in supplement to larger orders from local Chinese merchants like Loke Kee. Yet, not a single Chinese name appears among the more than 200 Boise Basin Mercantile customer accounts active between 1875 and 1876—a time when around 40 percent of Basinites had Chinese ancestry. Whether Chinese residents were recorded in a separate ledger that has not survived, were specifically

[7] These consist of both personal and company accounts listed in the ledger under the headings, "Steve Dempsey;" "P. M. Doyle;" "M. J. Biddy;" the "Doyle and Dempsey Ditch Co.;" and "Doyle, Dempsey, and Biddy."

excluded from shopping at the Boise Basin Mercantile, or chose not to do so isn't clear from the available records. As authors have observed elsewhere, social and economic conditions in small gold rush communities often persuaded store owners to serve customers "of all colors and creeds" (Arata 2020:55) but did not eliminate proprietor behaviors like overcharging certain groups or other acts of outward racism that would have discouraged Chinese Americans from patronizing their stores (e.g., Lee 2020b:90–91; Mullins 1999:170; Orser 2007:171; Zhu 1997:58).

Whatever its cause, the omission of Chinese customers from Boise Basin Mercantile customer lists stands in contrast not just to population demographics, but also to three other business ledgers from local European American owned stores. In one, Loke Kee himself can be seen to have kept an account between 1889 and 1897, potentially on behalf of female family members since the entries are comprised of flannel, gingham, calico, and muslin purchased by the yard. A "Handy Day Book," maintained by an unidentified Basin store between 1917 and 1918, also records repeated sales of general merchandise like gloves, canned oysters, and 5-pound sacks of rice and to Chinese American residents who included Ah Suey, "China Annie," and a local ditch-tender known as Doc Lee[8] (Unidentified Mercantile 1917–1918:233, 310, 314–315, 364; Unidentified Haberdashery 1889–1897:239; Zhu 1997:191–193).

A final ledger in the Boise Basin Museum collection documents purchases from the McDevitt Meat Market in Idaho City. Customer account entries, which begin the same year as those from the Boise Basin Mercantile, consist almost exclusively of Chinese names, unequivocally expressing the outsized role Chinese customers played in the business. Though no Wong Sing, How Sing, or even Wong Sing Chong appear among the pages of the ledger, meat types and cuts frequently resemble faunal specimens collected from Wong Sing Company sites. Composed primarily of cow, pig, and chicken bones, identifiable meat cuts in the Wong Sing Company's sizable (see Table 2.3) faunal assemblage include head, foot, rib, shoulder, and shank cuts (Campbell et al. 2019:50–52), all of which were also recorded among the inventory sold by McDevitt's Meat Market, along with numerous generic entries for beef, pork, and fowl (e.g., McDevitt 1875–1887:4, 5, 10, 29, 35, 39–41, 99, 128, 199, 202, 209, 212, 215, 219).

The presence of these notably diverse cuts—especially those from pig and cattle, the two most commonly represented animals within the Wong Sing Company assemblage by bone count and bone weight respectively (Campbell et al. 2019:48)—in both sources demonstrate Wong Sing Company members' active engagement with the local fresh food market. From Basin

[8] Possibly also the Dock Lee Hong recorded in McDevitt 1875–1887:275.

butchers, they appear to have purchased a variety of staple foods, including a selection of ingredients common in Cantonese cuisine, like cuts of pig feet or cheek, alongside beef products, like loin or rib cuts, endemic to diets seen across the nineteenth century American West (Campbell et al. 2019:50–51; Sunseri 2020b:252). Notably, these meat cuts also span a wide range of price points as recorded in local ledgers and include broad skeletal representation that points to use of large potions of both pig and cow carcasses (Campbell et al. 2019:52; McDevitt 1875–1887).

Specimens from wild game add yet another dimension of diversity to Wong Sing Company diets and procurement strategies. Ten large mammal bones within the faunal assemblage are probably bison (Figure 3.9), a species not represented in local meat market ledgers or commonly sold as part of business inventories. Private, rather than commercial, procurement and processing are supported by butchery marks on these specimens. Multiple cut marks can be seen on an astragalus and a fairly atypical marrow extraction technique appears on a radius that gives the impression of having been made by a non-professional. Though they represent a small portion of the overall assemblage, the ten bison specimens were collected from three different sites that span both sides of Grimes Creek (BS-779, BS-780, and BS-783), pointing to a company-wide rather than an individual practice. Cleavers, a meat hook, and the wide array of body parts from other large mammals in the company's assemblages, are also consistent with some degree of private butchering. Together, these artifacts add on-site processing of whole animals, resource sharing across company holdings, and supplemental acquisition of wild game to the Wong Sing Company's operational and provisioning strategies.

Comparing existing Basin ledgers to the array of artifacts found at Wong Sing Company sites thus exposes some of the avenues through which company members supplied daily necessities to a workforce sprawled across miles of mining claims. Most likely, company representatives placed large orders with local Chinese merchants like the Pon Yam, Wong Chung, or the Loke Kee family in the early spring; purchased perishable meat cuts and occasional whole animals from butchers like James McDevitt; and supplemented these staples with wild game hunted by company members and smaller quantities of goods acquired from Basin stores that welcomed the income that Chinese miners infused into their small businesses. Viewed in isolation, some of these strategies, like supplemental hunting and buying in bulk from Chinese merchants, may invoke simplistic explanations of frugality or self-ascribed ethnic insularity. However, to interpret these materials as such would ignore the far more dynamic set

Figure 3.9. Radius with chop marks (indicated by arrow) recovered from site BS-780. These two specimens are among ten tentatively identified bison bones found on Wong Sing Company holdings. Catalog numbers 10BO357/1985/498/01 and 10BO357/1985/498/02.

of motivations insinuated by the cumulative record of the Wong Sing Company and their evolving circumstances within the Boise Basin's mining networks.

Many artifacts within Wong Sing Company collections, for example, are from notably expensive or high-quality items. In purchasing boots, jeans, opium, and pickled ginger, for instance, company members seem to have been willing to pay more for quality, brand-name, or popular products (Morrow 2010:30, 91; Sears, Roebuck and Company 2007:204; Sinn 2013:200), and were not particularly unique in this respect. Decades of archaeological scholarship have shown that even amid contexts of economic marginalization or precarity, commodity selection and consumption practices rarely reflect financial considerations alone (e.g., Barton 2022:97; Beaudry et al. 1991; Mullins 1999, 2011b; Silliman 2001; Voss 2018, 2019; Wurst and McGuire 1999). While this complexity has not always been recognized by archaeologists examining Chinese diaspora sites (Fong et al. 2022:234–235), more recent work has begun to acknowledge Chinese American material practices as more than the product of than any single, monolithic motivation.

Across the West, these studies have linked specific materials to an array of situationally distinct factors and attribute prioritization. In rural Oregon, for example, research by Jocelyn Lee (2020b:97) found durability to be among the most important criteria for Chinese miners' selection of workwear. Elsewhere, furnishings like photograph frames or bird feeders have been interpreted as "traces of place-making" (Rose 2020:166) and "small symbols of home"

(Warner et al. 2015:68) within non-urban households. Preferences for individual food products have been linked to a range of factors, from the comfort of familiar tastes (Chung 2011:66) to occupational exposure to new products and the experiences of structural racism (Fong 2013:135). Larger surveys of medicinal items and artifacts associated with food preparation or consumption from railroad labor sites have also revealed a surprisingly diverse array of products used in pursuit of well-being, including those intended to foster physical health, sociality, and self-expression (Kennedy et al. 2019:139; Voss 2019:119, 122–123). Along the same lines, a recent comparison of meat intake and economic choice across urban and rural Chinese American sites detected "no clear pattern of selection" (Sunseri 2020b:267) among disparate consumers. Noting generally flexible use of high-cost and low-cost meat cuts from domestic species and locally available wild game—characteristics that also describe the Wong Sing Company's faunal collection—Sunseri (2020b:270) attributed meat selection not to financial means but to changing constraints and opportunities manifest through market availability, experiences of racism or exclusion, and "relationships that controlled access to domestic butchered faunas and to wild game."

Suggesting just some of many possible complex motivations behind each of the Wong Sing Company's consumption decisions, these studies support evidence that the company's provisioning strategies were necessarily broad, involved multiple sources, and likely also shifted over time. Within this framework, it is notable that the same bulk orders and self-provisioning behaviors that on the one hand might look like frugality are also practices that would have served to strengthen the Wong Sing Company's ties to various local merchants and to increase company autonomy in the face of racial exclusion. Maintaining connections to multiple supply chains would have created a flexible set of options as legal, social, and economic contexts shifted for members of Basin mining networks. At the same time, building relationships with merchants attentive to the Wong Sing Company's diverse needs likely also increased the livability of temporary worksite homes by providing after-hours recreation, sustenance from a wide range of food and drink, and the materials needed for self-care and self-expression in the form of hopes for the future or a name pecked into a favorite dish.

Uncertainty, Autonomy, and Network Interdependencies

As one of the largest and longest-running companies to work the section of Grimes Creek that first attracted rushers to the Basin, the Wong Sing Company's historical and archaeological records provide important insights into the local mining industry and the ways that Chinese miners in particular navigated its complex operations, restrictions, and interdependencies.

From the initial prominence of Boston, through its days of "faded grandeur," and final, unmomentous disappearance, miners working claims along the lower stretches of Grimes Creek exerted considerable effort and expense pursuing mineral deposits in the area. Persisting through cycles of boom and bust, miners first washed gold from the banks and bars of the river, then set their sights on the surrounding slopes. In 1876, the eight-mile $76,000 Grimes Creek Ditch opened these hill claims to intensive and sustained hydraulic mining (*Idaho Statesman* 1877:2).

As Stephen Dempsey began buying out his partners in the Grimes Creek Ditch Company in the late 1870s, Chinese miners grew increasingly integral to mining operations near Boston. By 1880, three men identified by census takers as Ah Man, Ah San, and Ah Kee worked with Dempsey as part of a multiethnic crew. In 1891, Wong Sing and How Sing became the first company of miners to singlehandedly take on Dempsey's consolidated claims, operating ditch networks, placering away hillsides, and overseeing a large labor force for more than a decade (Lease Records, Boise County, ID, Book 1:235; US Bureau of the Census 1880:19–20). In many ways emblematic of the challenges and opportunities embraced by Basin miners on the whole, the experiences of Stephen Dempsey and the Wong Sing Company are even more pertinent when viewed side-by-side.

Though they worked the same claims, Stephen Dempsey, Wong Sing, and How Sing did so under different circumstances. As he began purchasing mining claims along Grimes Creek, Dempsey applied for and was granted US citizenship. Unable to naturalize because of their Chinese ancestry, Wong Sing and How Sing faced a radically different and constantly changing legal landscape in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Initially barred from participating in newly established Basin districts, Chinese miners began purchasing mining claims in the 1870s, only to have this right eroded by the 1882 Chinese Exclusion Act's explicit denial or naturalization rights and by citizenship clauses written into property ownerships laws, which together culminated in a full prohibition against Chinese immigrants possessing mining claims, water rights, or mills (Chin 2020:1290, 1300; Lee 2003:13; Wegars 1995:8; Zhu 1997:189). In 1891, as the Wong Sing Company began mining along Grimes Creek, buying into claims was likely not an option for its managing partners. Property records show that, like most local Chinese mining outfits, the Wong Sing Company turned to leasing as a workaround for the ownership restrictions that singled them out from other immigrant miners like Dempsey.

In doing so, partners Wong Sing and How Sing were part of a larger restructuring of Basin mining practices that increasingly relied on leases as a means to sustain the industry and to

support the livelihoods of those involved. For claim owners like Dempsey and the few Chinese Americans who were able to claim birthright citizenship (see Chapter 2, Chapter 4), these practices kept mining properties productive – and thus valuable – investments that could be retained while pursuing other ventures or even after leaving the area. For most miners with Chinese ancestry, however, it created just two legal tracks through which to enter the Basin's most lucrative industry: short-term leases, often conducted under the close oversight of claim owners who collected an annual percentage of profits, or long-term leases in which a lump sum generally granted free use of properties and full retention of profits for a defined period of time. While a portion of Chinese miners managed to make each kind of transaction profitable, their success in both almost always relied on terms dictated in part by land owners. Negotiating a sphere of relative autonomy in which to operate the large and promising mining properties around Boston, Wong Sing and How Sing's twelve-year contract with Stephen Dempsey attests to their skill in navigating this evolving system of exclusion and enforced interdependency.

Once occupying Dempsey's claims, archaeological features and collections point to some of the ways that Wong Sing Company members continued to manage uncertainty while orchestrating the dispersed operations of a specialized workforce. Comparing archaeological materials with surviving Idaho City merchant records reveals that Wong Sing Company members likely bought large quantities of goods from Chinese merchants like the Loke Kee family or Pon Yam. These purchases served to connect company members to extensive *jinshanzhuang* import-export networks and to a variety of regional products that made their way to miners' seasonal homes. As discussed in Chapter 2, the business records on the other end of these transactions demonstrate that mining companies' large orders were a necessary component of Chinese merchants' market-making abilities. The carefully curated supply chains that resulted simultaneously depended on miners and dictated much of the material resources available to them (Amos Di Sang letterbook 1886–1895:[3–4]). Even so, Chinese merchants appear not to have been the exclusive source of Wong Sing Company provisions, nor the only local businesses catering specifically to Chinese miners. Though their purchasing power is most acute in the McDevitt Meat Market customer lists, historical ledgers and archaeological collections establish that Chinese Basinites frequented a variety of local shops and, on occasion, procured their own provisions like wild game.

Spreading their patronage across multiple establishments may have helped the Wong Sing Company to meet the varied wants and needs that would have arisen and evolved over their twelve years of operation. And while determining a singular motivation behind any iteration in

this series of choices may be misguided, this strategy – along with others like long-term leasing, ordering foods in bulk, and equipping miners with durable, long-lasting items – would have contributed to the Wong Sing Company's operational autonomy in what was, on many fronts, an uncertain landscape of exclusion and enforced interdependency. Flexible sourcing could also reflect an intentional deconsolidation of risk that helped guard against supply disruptions should exclusionary or exploitative practices restrict access to any one commodity chain. Practitioners of both Chinese and African diaspora archaeology have elsewhere noted examples of "proactively structure[ing] market access through relationships" (Sunseri 2020b:251) that involved shifting alliances, withdrawing patronage, or building alternate supply networks (Mullins 1999:170–171; Warner 2015:119–124). Cultivating trusted relationships with local suppliers who were responsive to the Wong Sing Company's varied needs could both help insulate Chinese miners from racism while also increasing their access to high-quality products like boots or fresh foods.

In this way, connecting to varied and flexible supply networks functioned not just to mitigate uncertainty but also to maintain flows of goods to workers dispersed across claims who, at the end of their shifts, sought shelter; sustenance; the entertainment of a shared game; or treatment for aches, pains, and other afflictions in the places that had become their worksite homes. Though they undoubtedly experienced both uncertainty and autonomy, relying on strategies like leasing, ordering in bulk, and maintaining varied and flexible resource networks contributed not just to the Wong Sing Company's financial success in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, but also to the well-being of company members scattered about the hills surrounding what was, by then, "Old Boston."

CHAPTER 4.
OPHIR CREEK, THE REID PLACER MINE, WO HOP (和合) COMPANY, AND PARTNERS CHOW YUEN LEE AND CHARLEY SING LEE

Making a Go of It along Ophir Creek

Located north and just over a hilly divide from Grimes Creek, Ophir Creek is a tributary to the larger Granite Creek that passes through the Basin town of Placerville (Figure 1.2). Although it was a nexus of mining into the twentieth century, gold recovery from Ophir Creek was never as extensive as along Grimes or Mores creeks, in part because the drainage is smaller and carries less water. Lower flow rates meant Ophir Creek miners often worked shorter seasons than their counterparts along other Basin waterways (Filby and Myers 2012:50, 27). Extensive ditch, flume, and reservoir systems helped manage the situation by directing what water was available to particularly rich placer deposits, but these took time and expertise to construct, operate, and maintain. Performing these tasks often fell to members of mining companies with the skills to carry out important support functions like water management or equipment repair, for example. Adding extra labor and infrastructure to an already shorter mining season ran the risk of cutting into revenues, particularly in later years as miners chased deposits further back into hill and gulch claims. None of these factors stopped miners, or a long string of investors, from making a go of it along Ophir Creek, however.

One of the largest, and longest-lasting, placer operations to do so appears on modern maps as the Reid Placer Mine. Operational from the 1860s until 1920s, its active years span nearly the entire duration of pre-Depression-era placer mining in the Basin. Among the many individuals who tied their fortunes to the mine, a few would profit enormously, a few would die trying, and many others would simply break even. As such, its story captures both the evolving challenges of the industry and the ways that miners attempted to manage them. Through its ups and downs, the Reid Placer Mine is also an example of the highly specific conditions that impacted mining in particular places so that, even within the Basin, miners along different drainages or claims faced unique challenges that shifted over time. The records they left, both in documents and archaeological remains, speak to aspects of Chinese mining networks not captured in the preceding chapters, and to the importance of specialists, artifact modification, and networks of support.

Historical Overview of the Reid Placer Mine

Original Claimants, early 1860s

The collection of claims that would come to be known as the Reid Placer Mine were first located along Ophir Creek in the early 1860s. Though the original notice has since been lost or destroyed, subsequent land-transaction documents suggest the claim was filed in the Placerville Mining District for property along the west side of Ophir Creek in the unfortunately named "Ladies Crevice" (hereafter Crevice) Gulch. The most likely locators were a man named David C. Updyke and several partners referred to only by the surnames McKnight, Walker, and Jenkins (Campbell et al. 2022:10–14; Boise County, ID, Deed Records, Book 3:316–319, Book 8:61–63 and Placer Records, Book 9:52–86). As early as 1863, however, this group of investors began selling off interest in their property and, to judge from local newspaper articles, had moved on to more controversial pursuits.

In 1865, David C. Updyke was elected as the first sheriff of neighboring Ada County, home to Boise, Idaho. It was not a position he would hold long. Six months into his term, Updyke was arrested and detained in his own jail. Charged with embezzling the taxes he was entrusted to collect, Updyke resigned in October, but scandal followed him even after leaving public office (*Idaho Statesman* 1865:2; Stapilus 2008:36–37). In April of 1866 news broke that he had been hanged by vigilantes who, in a note left attached to his body, accused him of robbing stage lines, horse theft, murder, and "aiding and assisting West Jenkins, the murderer, to escape, while […] sheriff of Ada county" (*sic*) (*Idaho World* 1887b:4). Newspaper stories, written by the democratic-leaning *Idaho Statesman* and the republican-leaning *Idaho World*, debated the veracity of these allegations, asserting that Updyke had either been the victim of vigilante justice or of a partisan assassination, neither of which were entirely uncommon in the politically divided Basin at the time (Hart 1993:74–77; 2018; *Idaho World* 1866b:2).

Although his highly public death would make Updyke notorious in Basin lore (e.g., Stapilus 2008:31–38), he also left a more mundane legacy. Shortly before selling off the last of his interest in the Crevice holdings, Updyke constructed two ditches to supply water to the mine. Completed in 1864, these ditches stretched 2.5 miles up the west bank of Ophir Creek from the Crevice claims and would be referred to as the Updyke & Co. ditches in subsequent deeds (Campbell et al. 2022:14–15; Boise County, ID, Deed Records, Book 3:292, 412–417). Because no first name is given for the Jenkins who appears with David Updyke in property deeds, West Jenkins, "the murderer," may or may not have also been an early investor in the Crevice mine.

Investors and Holdings Expand, 1864–1882

In the two decades that followed Updyke's murder, interest in the Crevice claims bounced between a spate of men, and one woman,[1] who bought and sold additional water rights and adjacent claims that slowly expanded the size and scope of the mine. Curtis A. Pattridge, John Eisler, and A. B. Anderson each emerged as majority shareholders during this time but were never without financial backing from other investors whose rapid buying and selling of "$^{1}/_{20}$" or even "$^{1}/_{5}$ of $^{13}/_{16}$ interest" made for a complicated chain of ownership (Campbell et al. 2022:10–15; Boise County, ID, Deed Records, Book 3:316–319, Book 14:46). In one instance, the distribution of interest was apparently so perplexing even to its investors that they filed a Clarification of Records, which cost them a small recording fee but helped clear up the "confusion" in mine ownership (Boise County, ID, Miscellaneous Records, Book 1:36–37).

By 1875, A. B. Anderson and B. B. Hughes owned the majority of the Crevice mine, which was then changing hands along with "tools, flumes, and hydraulics" and drawing water from at least four ditches (Boise County, ID, Deed Records, Book 13:2–3, Book 14: 84–85). The longest of these was built by Updyke & Co. that had been extended to reach 3.5 miles up Ophir Creek (Boise County, ID, Deed Records, Book 12:497–498). That same year, two other men, Neil Doyle and Henry Reid, purchased mining claims to the south of the Crevice mine (Boise County, ID, Deed Records, Book 14:61). Both Doyle and Reid would later become owners of the Crevice Mine and the properties that are the subject of this chapter.

Shortly before this development, however, W. A. Goulder, a traveling correspondent for the Boise-based *Idaho Tri-Weekly Statesman* visited Ophir Creek, providing an overview of mining activity along the drainage. According to Goulder (1876:2), Reid and Doyle's claims "had payed first rate" (*sic*) but, by 1876, were "largely worked [out]." The two largest operations were those of partners B. R. Hughes and A. B. Anderson, who were working the "Crevice diggings" and maintaining a ditch "bringing water from Ophir Creek which supplies many claims besides their own," and "a large Chinese company [who] own a claim for which they payed $8,000 three years ago" (*sic*) (Goulder 1876:2).

[1] In 1879, Rebecca Elizabeth Anderson purchased interest in the Crevice mine. Rebecca's husband, A. B. Anderson was already a majority partner at the time of her purchase, and it would be sale of their combined shares in 1882 that would make Henry Reid the next majority owner of the mine. Rebecca and her husband later moved to Payette, where Rebecca died in 1884. Four years later, A. B. Anderson would become a distant successor of David C. Updyke when he was elected as Ada County sheriff in 1886 (Boise County, ID, Deed Records, Book 14:603, Book 15:341; *Idaho World* 1884:3, 1886:3c). One other female investor, Sadie E. Wood, appears in the long history of the Reid Placer Mine, but not until the 1910s (see pg. 128 of this chapter). Identified in mining records as Mrs. R. G. Wood, Sadie Wood was widowed in 1908 when her husband, R. Gordon, died unexpectedly while prospecting in Butte, Montana. In 1912, she was identified as the only local, and only female, co-owner of the Boise Basin Hydraulic and Power Company (Bell 1912:35; *Idaho Statesman* 1908a:5; US Bureau of the Census 1900).

This Chinese company is almost certainly Man Lee and Co., who paid Peter Conner and his partners $8,200 for mining claims downstream from the Crevice Mine in 1873.[2] The size of their property can be inferred from the deed, which details multiple creek, hill, bar, and gulch claims on both sides of Ophir Creek, along with two ditches, a 3,307-foot drain race, houses and outbuildings, a blacksmith shop and tools, 200 flume boxes, 102 yards of canvas hose, 1 pipe, 6 wheeling planks, 4 shovels, 1 sluice fork, 1 axe, 1 hatchet, 2 steel wedges, 1 saw, 5 wheelbarrows, and 4 picks (Boise County, ID, Deed Records, Book 13:536–537 and Miscellaneous Records, Book 1:478–480). Under the management of Man Lee and Co., these claims became so profitable that when Goulder (1876:2) reported on them two years later, he estimated that "the same property could not now be bought for $20,000." Described in other newspaper articles as a company of about 30 Chinese men, the Man Lee and Co. appear to have operated on lower Ophir Creek until at least 1898, and was likely the only group of Chinese miners to work the drainage until the Crevice mine changed hands yet again and acquired a new name (Boise County, ID, Auditor's Records of Delinquent Tax Sales:31; Campbell et al. 2022:17; *Idaho World* 1873a:2; 1883b:3).

Henry Reid, with Help, 1882–1903

In 1882, A. B. Anderson sold his majority interest in the Crevice mine to Henry Reid, who changed the name to what is seen on modern maps: the Reid Placer Mine (Boise County, ID, Deed Records, Book 15:341). An Irish immigrant and one of the first residents of Placerville, Reid already knew Anderson by the time of the sale. In fact, he knew Anderson even before the two took up adjacent claims along Ophir Creek (Goulder 1876:2; *Idaho Statesman* 1903:5; US Bureau of the Census 1900:6). Anderson, Reid, and his future business partner, Patrick Dempsey, had served as democratic party delegates for Placerville ten years prior to the transaction and probably all knew each other quite well (*Idaho World* 1872b:3). Unlike most of the men that he did business with, however, Reid remained a miner throughout his time in the Basin and engaged in very few other financial pursuits, focusing instead on his largest holding, the Reid Placer Mine (US Bureau of the Census 1870:4, 1880:5, 1900:6).

[2] Though Peter Conner sold his mining claims to Man Lee and Co. on August 29, 1873, the deed included a clause that Man Lee and Co. would make additional payments on September 8, 1873; June 1, 1874; and September 1, 1874. This clause appears to have been satisfied, since the deed transfer was recorded August 31, 1874. On this record Frank Fitzsimmons, Robert Baker, Peter Denning, and Valentine Grant are listed as Peter Conner's partners. The location of these claims is unclear from property records, but the article in the *Idaho World* (1873a:2) places them between the Maxwell and Co. claims and the Maher Ditch, two features that deeds record south of the Crevice mine (Boise County, ID, Deed Records, Book 12:329–330, 526).

As purchased in 1882, this extensive placer operation included multiple claims, water rights from at least three ditches, along with "all houses, iron pipe, hose, tools, [and] flumes, in any way belonging to said claims and ditches," and cost Reid $10,000 (Boise County, ID, Deed Records, Book 15:341). Reid may have moved into one of the houses transferred along with the sale, since newspaper articles later indicate that he lived along Ophir Creek (*Idaho World* 1890c:1). He would remain majority or sole owner of the mine for the next 21 years, the longest tenure of any individual, but seems to have occasionally needed help to do so. Assistance came from fellow Placerville resident and Irish immigrant, Patrick Dempsey,[3] with whom Reid formed a long-standing business relationship that included mutual investments, financial assistance, and property exchanges (Campbell et al. 2022:10–14, 18–20; Boise County, ID, Deed Records, Book 18:120, Miscellaneous Records, Book 2:470, and Mortgage Records, Book 5:456–457, Book 6:627–630).

Like Henry Reid, Patrick Dempsey began mining along Ophir Creek in the 1860s, but he also regularly bought and sold property in the town of Placerville (Boise County, ID, Deed Records, Book 15:636, Book 18:120, 215–218; *Idaho World* 1872c:3). By 1900, he had accumulated enough assets to be described as a "capitalist" in the US Census, a designation reserved for individuals whose primary income came from investments or from interest on loans (US Bureau of the Census 1900:6; US Census Office 1900:ccl). As one of the few forms of financial support available, private loans were a regular feature of the Basin's economy in the late nineteenth century[4] and would have net so-called capitalists like Dempsey a healthy profit, at least to judge from those he negotiated with Reid. Each for an excess of $10,000, these loans required Reid to pay interest at a rate of 10 percent per year and to put up his mining properties as collateral. Presumably they provided Reid with the cash he needed to expand or maintain operations, but they also put the Reid Placer Mine at risk of public auction in case of default (Boise County, ID, Mortgage Records, Book 5:456–457, Book 6:627–630).

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[3] Although they share a last name, there is no known relation between Stephen Dempsey of Grimes Creek (or his relative John Dempsey with whom he lived in Centerville) and Patrick Dempsey of Placerville. The two men never appear in land transactions, census records, or newspaper articles together. To further confuse matters, each Dempsey also had a partner with the surname Doyle but, again, there is no known relationship between the Patrick Doyle, partner to Stephen Dempsey, mentioned in Chapter 3 and the Neil Doyle, partner to Patrick Dempsey, who appears in this chapter. Dempsey and Doyle are fairly common Irish names, so it may be a coincidence that two of the sites surveyed in this dissertation were under the joint ownership of men with those surnames; there could, however, also be a shared familial or other kind of connection that has yet to be uncovered in the historical documents.

[4] Mortgage records preserved in the Boise County Recorder's Office provide many more examples of these private loans with similar terms. Dora Strauss, for example, was a well-known "money broker" in Idaho City who loaned money to the Loke Kee family and Hattie Noble (both mentioned in Chapter 2), along with numerous others (Boise County, ID, Mortgage Records, Book 5:406–410, 757; U.S. Bureau of the Census 1900).

In addition to loaning Henry Reid money to operate his mine, Dempsey also invested in commercial property with Reid, sold him mining claims, and may have held a controlling interest in the Reid Placer Mine (Boise County, ID, Deed Records, Book 18:120; and Miscellaneous Records, Book 2:470, Book 3:497). Though no legal document attesting to Dempsey's partnership in the Reid Placer Mine survives, several property records suggest he became a partner in the mine sometime in the 1880s. The first is an agreement allowing the Granite Creek Ditch Company to build a flume across the Reid Placer Mine that is signed by both Reid and Dempsey (Boise County, ID, Deed Records, Book 18:120 and Miscellaneous Records, Book 2:470, Book 3:497). This would seem to indicate their mutual legal authority over the mine, and may also explain why, on October 14, 1889, when the Wo Hop Company signed a lease for claims that appear to have been part of the Reid Placer Mine,[5] Patrick Dempsey was listed as the lessor. Henry Reid's name also appears on the document, but only as one of the witnesses to the transaction (Figure 4.1) (Boise County, ID, Lease Records, Book 1:219–220).

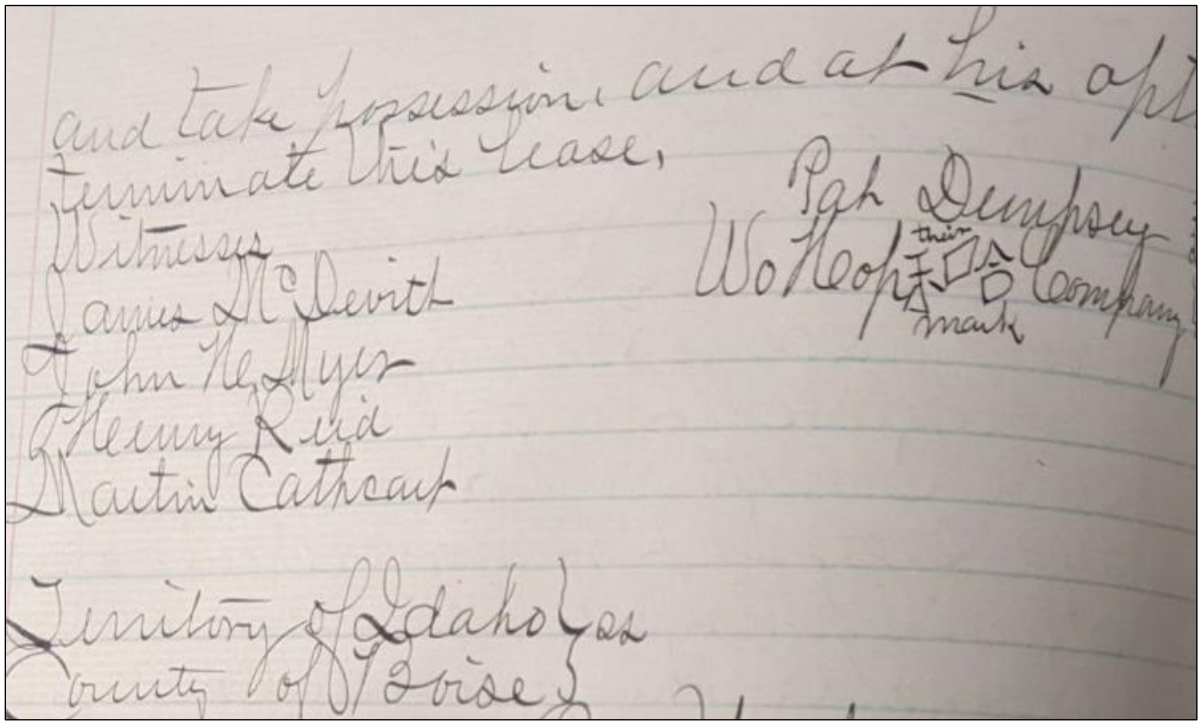

Figure 4.1. Lease signed by the Wo Hop (和合) Company and Pat (Patrick) Dempsey for mining claims and water rights along Ophir Creek. Note that Henry Reid and James McDevitt are among the witnesses to this document (Boise County, ID, Lease Records, Book 1:220).

[5] As described in the lease, these claims extended along the west bank of Ophir Creek from a point 600 ft. above the Placerville-Centerville Road to the mouth of Young's Gulch (Boise County, ID, Lease Records, Book 1:219–220). Though Young's Gulch does not appear on any known maps of the area, it is consistently referenced in other deeds as part of the Crevice/Reid Placer Mine (Boise County, ID, Deed Records, Book 14:61, 74, 317).

Despite not having been filed under Reid's name, this lease placed "2,000 feet or more" of creek claims either within, or immediately adjacent to, the Reid Placer Mine into the hands of the Wo Hop Company. It also granted them use of up to 600 miners' inches[6] of water from Ophir Creek for a little over $2,000. According to the agreement, the Wo Hop Company paid $1,000 at the time of the recording and pledged to pay an additional $1,000 one year later. Each year thereafter, for the next 99 years, the Wo Hop Company needed only to pay $1 for continued use of the property (Boise County, ID, Lease Records, Book 1:219–220). Successive documents show, however, that rather than the 99-year term promised by the lease, the Wo Hop Company probably only occupied the claims until the early 1900s, and certainly not past 1906 when Dempsey sold the Reid Placer Mine (Boise County, ID, Deed Records, Book 31:212–214).

As a result, it is possible that Wo Hop Company employees worked and lived on claims associated with the Reid Placer Mine for a decade or more. Yet, no other references to the Wo Hop Company appear in the County Recorder's Office, local business ledgers, contemporary newspapers, or archival documents. With only a name and signature recorded on the lease, very few details are available about members of the Wo Hop Company. The Chinese signature, which appears as 和合 (*Wo Hap/He He*) on the lease document, is likely the company, rather than an individual's name, and translates as "together in harmony" (Tsai 2022:3). Because 和 (*Wo*) is also a common Cantonese surname with links to both Guangdong and Fujian provinces (My China Roots 2022), it is possible that the Wo Hap Company name alludes to members with shared ancestral or familial ties. Beyond these suggestive details, the archaeological record remains one of the only sources of information about the company's tenure on Ophir Creek.

In 1901, Henry Reid took out his second, and largest, loan from Patrick Dempsey (Boise County, ID, Mortgage Records, Book 6:627–630). The $19,541 amount of this loan, for which Reid offered as security his cumulative mining holdings, indicates that the Reid Placer Mine had nearly doubled in value under his ownership but also, potentially, that Reid was finding it harder to fund the venture. Two years later, at the age of 75 and after more than two decades of ownership, Henry Reid sold the mine. Though it was then worth $20,000 or more,[7] Reid deeded the entire 200-acre mine, along with associated water rights and hydraulic mining equipment,

[6] A miner's inch is a unit of measurement that describes the water volume flowing through a specific waterway and is generally around 1.5 cubic feet per minute.

[7] This price estimate is based on Reid's 1901 loan for $19,541 for which the property was offered as collateral, and on the 1906 sale of the Reid Placer Mine for $30,000 (Boise County, ID, Deed Records, Book 31:212–214; Boise County, ID, Mortgage Records, Book 6:627–630).

to Patrick Dempsey, Joseph Penrod, and James McDevitt for the sum of $1 (Boise County, ID, Deed Records, Book 24:271–272).

Exactly why Reid would sell such a large and valuable property for less than the cost of the transaction's recording fee is unknown, but historical documents offer two possible motivations. Reid's 1901 mortgage to Dempsey was about nine months from expiring at the time of the sale (Boise County, ID, Mortgage Records, Book 6:627–630). If Reid had been unable to repay this debt, he may have worked out a deal to transfer his property to his former partner rather than let it go to public auction. It is also possible that Reid was in poor health or knew that he was dying. According to an obituary in the *Idaho Statesman*, Henry Reid died of paralysis[8] on April 27, 1903, just 10 days after the sale (*Idaho Statesman* 1903:5).

Post-Reid Occupants and Decline, 1904–1920s

The three new owners may have been familiar with the Reid Placer Mine and its former owner—Patrick Dempsey had been involved in the mine throughout the previous decades and local butcher James McDevitt shared interest with both men in Placerville properties that included his own meat market (Boise County, ID, Deed Records, Book 15:636, Book 18:120)—but they were apparently unprepared to take over daily operations themselves. In March of 1904, Dempsey, Joseph Penrod, and McDevitt leased the entire property to partners Charley Sing Lee and Chow Yuen Lee.

Though the two men shared a surname, they were more likely from the same extended clan than immediate family members, since they lived in separate Basin towns—Chow Yuen Lee in Centerville and Charley Sing Lee in Placerville—and never appeared on census documents together. The details of their lease, which included the temporary transfer of "all of the iron pipe, chiefs, nozzles, tools now on hand, quicksilver," and a "dwelling house," make it clear that Charley Sing Lee and Chow Yuen Lee would be responsible for hydraulic operations at the Reid Placer Mine as well as the upkeep and repair of "all ditches, flumes, etc." (Boise County, ID, Lease Records, Book 2:84). In language that more closely resembled the type of short-term contracts undertaken by Pon Yam than the extended occupancy of the Wong Sing Company, Dempsey and his partners reserved the right to select both the day- and nightwatchman, agreeing to supply the full wage of the former and half the wages of the latter. As payment for the use of these

[8] Historical medical texts suggest that paralysis as cause of death usually referred to victims of stroke, but was occasionally used as a euphemism for syphilis, or in reference to mental disease, muscular disorders, or traumatic injury (Hooper 1860:154).

properties, Charley Sing Lee and Chow Yuen Lee were required to surrender half of their profits for the one-season duration of the lease (Boise County, ID, Lease Records, Book 2:84–85).

Clearly, running the Reid Placer Mine for even a single season would have been a massive endeavor, and one that posed financial risk to both parties of the lease should something go wrong. Still, the new owners had several good reasons to entrust the mine to Chow Yuen Lee and Charley Sing Lee. Chow Yuen Lee was a seasoned miner by the time he took control of the substantial Reid Placer Mine. Sometime prior to 1895, he either purchased or leased mining claims along Clay Creek, a tributary of Grimes Creek north of the original Centerville townsite. Chow Yuen Lee then leased the adjacent claims from Charles Stone for three years until 1898 (Boise County, ID, Auditor's Record of Delinquent Tax Sales:12 and Lease Records, Book 2:28–29). In 1901, he secured a second lease for Stone's claims along Clay Creek, this time from their new owner, James McDevitt, for a period of 99 years. Though the lease does not so specify, Chow Yuen Lee was almost certainly using hydraulic methods to mine these claims, based on the transfer of ditches, reservoirs, and other infrastructure. Chow Yuen Lee retained use of the Stone claims until 1916 when he transferred the lease to S. K. Atkinson and J. B. Terry (Boise County, ID, Lease Records, Book 2:68 and Miscellaneous Records, Book 6:59). This means that by the time he and Charley Sing Lee leased the Reid Placer Mine, Chow Yuen Lee had a decade or more of experience, much of which had been on claims owned by the same James McDevitt who now owned the Reid Placer Mine.

Despite being the younger of the two partners, 34-year-old Charley Sing Lee was also an experienced miner by 1904. He owned a house in Placerville and worked both as a miner and as an occasional interpreter for Boise County, likely because, having been born in Idaho, he could read, write, and speak fluent English (*Idaho World* 1899:1; US Bureau of the Census 1900:6, 1905:34, 1910:2). Charley Sing Lee's Idaho birth also granted him US citizenship and with it, rights to property ownership and a degree of indemnity from exclusion laws.

By 1904 when Charley Sing Lee and Chow Yuen Lee leased the Reid Placer Mine, a variety of circumstances had contributed to a significant decline in the number of Chinese miners in the Basin. Between 1880 and 1900, the number of Boise Basin residents with Chinese ancestry fell from 1,225 to 305. Another 217 would leave by 1910 (Zhu 1997:188–191). Dwindling returns on claims, increased emphasis on dredge and lode mining, and employment opportunities elsewhere certainly played a role in this decline, but so did renewed anti-Chinese violence in neighboring areas of the inland West, decades of Chinese Exclusion Act legislation, and two laws passed by the Idaho state legislature (Bronson and Ho 2015:64–65; Zhu 1997:188–191). In

1891 the State of Idaho passed a law specifically prohibiting Chinese non-citizens from acquiring any mining-related properties like claims, mills, or water rights. This was followed by an 1897 act that made it illegal for government or private corporations to knowingly employ non-citizens (Zhu 1997:189). Though, in theory, the second act applied to groups other than the Chinese, both were clearly targeted at Chinese miners. Passed during an era of increased outside investment, the 1897 act made it illegal for large companies to hire Chinese miners just as these companies began entering the Basin.

Charley Sing Lee and Chow Yuen Lee's persistence as miners in the Boise Basin after 1900 required careful navigation of these increasingly complex webs of exclusion. Chow Yuen Lee appears to have registered as a Centerville merchant in 1894 and may have developed ties to businesses in the Boise area to maintain this status (US Bureau of Immigration 1905:32). Designation as a merchant would have exempted him from some of the harsher constraints of the Chinese Exclusion Act and its amendments, which successively tightened travel restrictions while also easing deportation requirements for laborers and "Chinese employed in mining" (Maupin 1899:24). Under these evolving legal codes, Chow Yuen Lee's lease of the Reid Placer Mine and other properties would have been a liability, yet records indicate that he remained in possession of mining properties until at least 1916 (Lee 2003:13; Boise County, ID, Miscellaneous Records, Book 6:59).

One reason for this might have been that, while dealing in merchandise had clear benefits under exclusion laws, it was rarely as lucrative as other occupations, especially in rural locations (Rose et al. 2021:414). That this was true in the Basin can be seen in Chapter 2, wherein even the wealthiest merchants in the Basin participated in the mining industry at one time or another. In seeking a solution to this tension, Chow Yuen Lee may have adopted a hazy, and largely strategic, merchant status. Other studies have suggested that partnership in Chinese stores, particularly those run by family members, could be obtained for a small amount of money or labor. Because they were not expected to participate in the day-to-day business of the store, partners were able to spend their time in more profitable occupations such as mining. So long as the real source of their income was not uncovered by officials, they remained merchants on paper and in the eyes of the law (Gleason and Cheung 2020:5; Rose et al. 2021:420–421).

For Charley Sing Lee, birthright citizenship meant that regulations aimed at Chinese immigrants unable to naturalize under US law would not have technically been applicable. While this enabled him to purchase property, like his home in Placerville, and may have removed other legal barriers to mining, it would not have entirely protected him from the anti-

Chinese prejudice and the violence that sometimes served as informal enforcements to these laws. Charley Sing Lee would eventually give up mining and leave the Basin, but he remained in Idaho. Records suggest that he spent the last decade of his life working as one of the many Chinese truck gardeners who supplied Boise with fresh produce in the early twentieth century. He died of a stroke at the age of 53 in Boise's St. Luke's Hospital (State of Idaho 1923).

Dempsey, McDevitt, and Penrod would also leave the mining industry in the early twentieth century. Two years after leasing the property to Charley Sing Lee and Chow Yuen Lee, they sold what was then described as the 200-acre Reid Placer Mine "together with all water rights, ditches, flumes, pipes, machinery, improvements, easements, [and] reservoirs" to the Boise Basin Hydraulic and Power Company at an enormous profit. In 1906, Dempsey, McDevitt, and Penrod received $30,000 for the mine they had paid just $1 for three years earlier (Boise County, ID, Deed Records, Book 31:212–214).

Typical of later mining efforts in the Basin, the Boise Basin Hydraulic and Power Company was comprised of mostly non-local investors who planned to sink a great deal of money into recovering gold that had proved harder to access through traditional placer-mining methods (Zhu 1997:186–187). Owned by Albert Birch of San Francisco, J. Kennedy Hanley and A. M. Folsom of Spokane, D. W. Ross of Boise, and Sadie E. Wood of Placerville, the company planned to solve the perpetual problem of Ophir Creek's low stream flow by diverting water from Grimes Creek to the mine (Bell 1912:35; US Bureau of the Census 1900:1). Annual reports on the Idaho mining industry initially described the Boise Basin Hydraulic and Power Company's prospects enthusiastically, despite the fact that bringing water across the divide between Grimes and Ophir creeks required the construction and repair of over 30 miles of ditches (Bell 1907:24, 1912:34–35). By 1910, debts owed by Boise Basin Hydraulic and Power resulted in a Decree of Foreclosure against the company. On May 10, 1910, this was followed by a court order to sell the Reid Placer Mine at auction (Boise County, ID, Execution Records, Book 2:178–183 and Judgment Records, Book 3:377–381).

Surprisingly, the Boise Basin Hydraulic and Power Company seems to have survived this legal trouble. Idaho State Inspector of Mines reports continued to mention the company operating along Ophir Creek, though at a very small scale, until 1926. These annual reports document that superintendent E. S. Robinson owned a single 3-inch diameter hydraulic monitor and employed seven men in 1921, employed just three men in 1922, and was doing assessment only by 1924 (Bell 1912; Campbell 1921, 1922, 1924, 1925, 1926). In the years before the Great

Depression, mining across the Basin slowed to a trickle and, after 60 years of continuous operation, the spring runoff in Ophir Creek finally bypassed the Reid Placer Mine.

The Archaeology of the Reid Placer Mine

Along Ophir Creek today, the sudden, undercut cliffs that leave tree roots reaching overhead into air for the hillside gone missing are perhaps the most dramatic lingering evidence of the Reid Placer Mine (Figure 4.2). While the volume of sediment washed from the surrounding gulch speaks to the power of hydraulic equipment and human labor, it does little to tell us about the day-to-day lives of the people who operated the mine. For that, two less-dramatic archaeological sites situated upstream from the former mine on Boise National Forest property do a much better job. From their location along Ophir Creek and from the on-site artifacts and features, both can be tied to Chinese miners and to the workings of the Reid Placer Mine. Unlike the Wong Sing Company claims discussed in Chapter 3, however, these sites represent a less discussed aspect of Chinese mining networks: that of the specialists and infrastructure that supported mining laborers.

Figure 4.2. Cut banks of the former Reid Placer Mine, evidence of the extent of historical hydraulic mining at the site.

BS-193: The "Ophir Creek Brewery" Site

What is known as the Ophir Creek Brewery site (BS-193/10BO78) occupies a small terrace formed on either side of a seasonal drainage that empties into a broad and marshy section of Ophir Creek. Located along the west bank of the creek, this terrace is just one-half mile upstream from the entrance to the gulch that contains the Reid Placer Mine. The most obvious on-site feature, and the likely source of the brewery rumor, is a rectangular building foundation. Made of stacked rock cobbles and measuring approximately 22 by 35 feet, it abuts a leveled area to the north that may have once been an attached porch or shed. A few small depressions encircle the foundation, likely made by bottle hunters digging through the large artifact scatter that surrounds the feature (Osgood and Flatter 1992:[2–7]).

If the location once functioned as a brewery, however, no evidence of this use remains. Instead, research conducted at BS-193 since the 1970s points to late nineteenth and early twentieth century mining-related activities, habitation, and the possible storage of goods as the primary purposes of the site (Sargent-Gross et al. 2022:64–65). Numerous ditches, segmented by roads and bulldozer scars, traverse the area. Those upslope from the foundation connect to a larger water transportation system that follows the contours of the hillside paralleling Ophir Creek (Osgood and Flatter 1992:[8]). Well within the reach of both the Caruthers & Benton and the Updyke & Co. ditches that are described as conveying water 0.5 and 3.5 miles down the west bank of Ophir Creek to the Reid Placer Mine (Boise County, ID, Deed Records, Book 3:316–319, Book 3:415–417, Book 13:2–3), these segments could have been part of either water transportation system and the surrounding property part of mine holdings.

Connection to the nearby Reid Placer Mine may help explain some of the other features at BS-193 as well. Though no structures from the reported second phase of use as a camp for Chinese miners were observed when the site was first documented, Forest Service personnel revisiting the site in 1992 noted a small log footbridge along the seasonal drainage that bisects the site. Across the footbridge, they recorded two large, shallow depressions and a stacked rock feature. The notes from this visit describe the depressions as reminiscent of tent or dugout foundations, but provide no additional details about the rock feature (Osgood and Flatter 1992:[2–7]; Sargent-Gross et al. 2021:5–6).

To judge from what changed hands in property records, the infrastructure of the Reid Placer Mine included multiple buildings to house the tools and labor needed to maintain its extensive mining and water transportation systems (Campbell 2022:11–14). Along with the possible habitation area east of the seasonal drainage, the stone foundation at BS-193 may have

either been built or repurposed to serve this function. In 2002 and 2003, Boise National Forest archaeologists led two Passport in Time (PIT) projects at BS-193 that focused on the foundation. Over two seasons, volunteers and Forest Service personnel inventoried the artifact scatter surrounding the feature and excavated four 2 x 2-meter units into its footprint, along with two additional 1 x 2-meter units near the hypothesized "porch." More recently, University of Idaho master's student Heather Sargent-Gross (Sargent-Gross et al. 2021:64) analyzed the assemblage collected from these projects and proposed that the former structure may have been a bunkhouse. The large quantities and types of artifacts within the collection could also be the result of on-site storage of the various goods needed by mine workers each season. Among these artifacts, other clues arise about the long use of the so-called Ophir Creek Brewery site, the activities of those who lived there, and its place within the network of the Reid Placer mine.

As reported in Sargent-Gross et al. (2021:4, 29–31), the Ophir Creek Brewery assemblage consists of more 16,000 than artifacts (Table 4.1). Over two-thirds of these artifacts are made of metal or glass, material classes that are dominated by architectural items—3,775 nails, 1,152 shards of window glass, and 11 door hinges, for example—and by mass-produced containers like 1,264 bottle and 4,342 can fragments (Table 4.2). Recovered in the highest concentrations from the southwest corner of the foundation's interior (Sargent-Gross et al. 2021:57–58), these materials indicate both the construction of the building and the volume of materials that it once held. A lesser number of ceramic cooking and serving artifacts, organic and synthetic footwear fragments, and a small faunal collection composed primarily of pig and large mammal (likely cow) remains account for much of the rest of the assemblage and support the inference that the site was not merely a storage facility but, like many Wong Sing Company mining sites, also sometimes a home (Sargent-Gross et al. 2021:29–31, 39, 41, 54).

Table 4.1. BS-193 Assemblage by Material Type.

Material Type	Count	Percent[a]
Metal	9,624	59
Glass	2,910	18
Ceramic	1,551	10
Multiple	969	6
Organic	890	5.5
Synthetic	217	1.3
Faunal	36	<1
Mineral	6	<1
Stone	3	<1
Unknown	3	<1
Total	16,209	100

[a] Percentage of total count; rounded to nearest whole number.

Table 4.2. Summary of the BS-193 Assemblage by Functional Group and Category.

Functional Group Artifact Category (Artifact Name)	**Count**	**Percent of Total**[a]
Architectural/Construction	**1,191**	**7**
Construction materials (milled lumber, linoleum, sheet metal, window glass)	1,178	7
Door hardware	13	<1
Hardware	**4,313**	**27**
Fastener (bracket, nut, bolt, screw, washer, spike, staple)	212	1
Machine part	7	<1
Misc. hardware (mesh, strapping, rod, wire, spring, cable, O-ring)	277	2
Nail	3,775	23
Tool (file, saw, handle, shaper, crank handle, wedge, axe, hoe, hook)	42	<1
Miscellaneous Containers	**3,886**	**24**
Bottle	727	4
Can	2,927	18
Closure (bottle cap, can key, lid/cork)	29	<1
Hollowware	102	<1
Other (barrel hoop, jar, pail/pail bail, spout)	101	<1
Food/Food Storage	**2,314**	**15**
Can (ham, baking powder, sardine, fruit, coffee, tea, tomato juice, evap. milk)	1,410	9
Chinese stoneware (jar, lid, hollowware)	745	5
Fauna (pig, large mammal, unidentified)	36	<1
Jar (unknown, canning)	46	1
Bottle (soda, pickle)	102	<1
Other (aluminum foil, thermos)	11	<1
Food Prep/consumption	**224**	**1**
Cooking or eating utensil (wok, pan, pot, spoon, noodle maker, knife)	68	<1
Tableware (bowl, cup, plate, saucer, teapot)	155	<1
Unknown	1	<1
Personal	**2,351**	**15**
Accoutrement (suitcase, eyeglass lens)	4	<1
Clothing/clothing hardware (belt, button, lining, rivet, suspender)	143	<1
Footwear (boot, sole, heel, shoelace, soling nail, uppers, unknown)	1,575	10
Opium (chimney, base, wick support, reservoir, opium can, spoon, pipe bowl)	543	3
Pharmaceutical/medical (Chinese medicine bottle, patent medicine, eye dropper)	85	1
Tobacco (pipe stem)	1	<1
Alcohol	**1,130**	**7**
Beer	218	1
Chinese liquor	595	4
Distilled alcohol	5	<1
Wine/champagne	312	2
Other	**117**	**<1**
Cleaning/chemical (clothespin)	4	<1
Currency (Chinese coin)	1	<1
Electrical/lighting (lamp chimney, lantern)	56	<1
Entertainment (gaming piece, firecracker)	4	<1
Firearms (bullet, buckshot, shell casing, percussion cap, bullet mold, lead sheet)	25	<1
Seed	1	<1
Sewing (thimble, sewing needle)	4	<1
Stove/heating (burner, frame, burner handle, fuel)	15	<1
Writing/printing (ink bottle, pencil graphite)	7	<1
Prehistoric	**3**	<1
Obsidian flake	3	<1
Unknown	**602**	**4**
(Leather, fabric, metal, melted glass, stone)	602	4
Total	**16,209**	**100**

[a] Percent values are rounded to the nearest whole number.

Evidence of Mining, Lodging, and Provisioning as Part of the Reid Placer Mine

Evidence that BS-193 was not a brewery comes as much from the materials present as from those that are not. The archaeological collection does include items associated with occupational activities, but these are not brewing kettles or mash tuns. They are, instead, tools frequently used in mining: 18 file fragments, an axe, a hoe, and two pick tips that show signs of having been repurposed as wedges[9] (Sargent-Gross et al. 2021:32). Fragments of rubber boots, many embedded with hobnails, also indicate the presence of miners and mining labor, though these artifacts do not dominate material signatures at BS-193.

A number of personal, domestic, and pastime-related artifacts in the BS-193 collection support the inference that mining company employees lived at the site. Some of these artifacts are clothing-related: Chinese and European American-style buttons and rivets now separated from the garments they once fastened, and portions of a leather belt with a metal buckle. Others reference pastimes other than mining. A thimble and thread, for example, indicate that someone on site may have been mending clothes or perhaps attempting to replace lost buttons. Eyeglass lenses and shards of an ink bottle evoke other downtime activities, as do three glass gaming pieces and portions of a paper firecracker similar to those found in the Pon Yam House (Sargent-Gross et al. 2021:30, 48, 53).

Much like other mining sites in the Basin, it appears that BS-193 was at least a part-time home, a unsurprising conclusion given that lodging would have been a necessary part of the infrastructure for any large mine. Exactly how many people stayed at the site is more of an open question. Only one house is mentioned in property records for the Reid Placer mine, but cabins and bunkhouses are frequently mentioned in other mining claim transfers in the Basin (Boise County, ID, Mortgage Records, Book 6:627–630; e.g., Boise County, ID, Deed Records, Book 17:157 and Lease Records, Book 1:232) and historical records also refer to miners living in tents and dugouts (e. g. Teeter 1932:93–94). Based on the features observed at BS-193, one or more types of lodging may have been located there.

The most numerous artifacts, which account for more than 45 percent of the BS-193 collection, are glass, metal, and ceramic containers. Those for which the original contents can be identified include bottles from soda, sauces, beer, wine, and over 100 shards of gothic-style pickle bottles that were manufactured sometime between 1870 and 1890. Embossed labels and chemical analyses conducted by the University of Idaho's Chemistry department, reveal that other bottles contained medicinal treatments like eyedrops, liniment oil for afflictions such as

[9] See discussion of BS-844 Occupational Materials later in this chapter for more about this practice.

sprains and insect bites, a wild grape root bitters marketed as a digestion aid, and "stone drugs"[10] used in traditional Chinese medicine to improve skin issues, wound healing, and immune system function (Sargent-Gross et al. 2021:54). Along with cans that, according to Sargent-Gross and her colleagues (2021:35–37), contained baking powder, ham, sardines, fruit, coffee, tea, tomato juice, and evaporated milk, and Chinese brown-glazed stoneware jars known to have held pickled vegetables, Chinese olives, peanut oil, vinegar, dried fruits, and shrimp paste, among many other items, these artifacts attest to a well-provisioned camp and to multiple market networks.

Compared with even the largest of the Wong Sing Company mining sites examined in Chapter 3, the container assemblage at BS-193 is notable for its size and diversity. Though the number of domestic items like tablewares or clothing hardware are roughly equivalent at both sites, metal and glass containers make up only around 7 percent of BS-193 but over 35 percent of BS-780 among the Wong Sing Company's claims.[11] The different dates of excavation, research agendas, and collection strategies used at each site undoubtedly account for some of this variation, but such a significant discrepancy likely also suggests fundamental differences in site use between BS-193 and BS-844, to be discussed shortly.

As seen in Chapter 2, it was not uncommon for Chinese mining companies to place large food orders at the start of a mining season, likely to reduce the need to leave their claims once peak water flow arrived in Basin streams. Since even unattended mining tools were subject to theft in the Basin (*Idaho World* 1875d:3), this strategy would have necessitated finding secure places, preferably under the watchful eye of mining company employees, to store the "500 pounds of coffee," "250 pounds of beans," or "4 barrels of whiskey" intended to get a company through a season (Amos Di Sang letterbook 1887:8-10). Conveniently located along the Reid Placer Mine ditch network and featuring a substantial building, BS-193 may have been just such a place. Despite collecting 52 barrel hoops during excavation (Sargent-Gross et al. 2021:30), several piles of strapping from these large containers can still be found scattered around the former building at the site (Figure 4.3).

[10] Stone drugs are a class of traditional Chinese medical treatments with primarily non-organic, mineral-based ingredients such as cinnabar (red mercuric sulfide), magnetite, or calcium (von Wandruszka and Warner 2021:598–603).

[11] For example, the BS-790 assemblage contains 219 tablewares and 101 pieces of clothing hardware vs. the 156 tablewares and 132 clothing hardware items found at BS-193.

Figure 4.3. Accumulation of barrel hoops and metal outside the foundation at BS-193.

Dissimilarities between the Wong Sing Company and the Reid Placer mining sites underscore the fact that not all Chinese mining sites, in the Basin or elsewhere, can be expected to produce the same material signatures. Differences in conditions, company strategies, and place in mining company networks all are likely to manifest in the archaeological record in ways that can be best observed by examining the network as a whole. In the case of the Wong Sing Company, Wo Hop Company, and partners Chow Yuen Lee and Charley Sing Lee, comparisons between multiple sites also help fill gaps left in the historical and archaeological record. While the majority of the Wong Sing Company's headquarters was probably lost when dredging removed any traces of the two blacksmith shops, house, and stable that the company leased in the town of Boston (Hart 2002:80; Boise County, ID, Lease Records, Book 1:233), sites associated with the Reid Placer Mine suggest one way this infrastructure might have looked and how it would have supported company operations. Additional clues about roles that different types of sites played within Chinese mining networks and the unique strategies they embraced are especially apparent at what is known as the Ophir Creek Chinese Camp site.

BS-844: The "Ophir Creek Chinese Camp" Site

Half a mile or so north of BS-193, a second archaeological site, assigned Forest Service number BS-844 (and trinomial 10BO779) is tucked into the tree line at the base of steep slope, which levels out only briefly before intersecting two small reservoirs along the west bank of Ophir Creek (Figure 4.4). Known as the Ophir Creek Chinese Camp, the site is a little over a mile

Figure 4.4. Overview of site BS-844, facing east towards the pair of reservoirs that bound the site and, just beyond these, the west bank of Ophir Creek. The slightly raised landform between the two mature Ponderosa Pines in the center left is where Polk and Polk (1987) placed their excavation grid.

distant from the Reid Placer Mine, too far north to intersect the course of the historical Caruthers & Benton ditch but still well within the extent of the longer Updyke & Co. ditches (Boise County, ID, Deed Records Book 3:316–319, 415–417, Book 13:2–3). Though no remnants of these, nor of any ditches, are apparent within the heavily disturbed site boundaries, the small holding ponds at the site's eastern boundary may once have been part of their network. Two reservoirs are consistently mentioned as components of the water conveyance system for the Reid Placer Mine beginning in 1895 (Campbell et al. 2022:10–14, 17–20; Boise County, ID, Mortgage Records, Book 5:456–457).

In striking contrast to the Ophir Creek Brewery Site, the surface of site BS-844 contains almost no archaeological features other than these reservoirs to indicate its former significance. In fact, at the time that the site was first fully documented and subject to archaeological testing, it was thought to have been almost, if not entirely, destroyed. In 1986, heavy equipment, which had been illegally using the site to access a mining claim on an adjacent parcel, scraped up large swaths of near-surface sediment and artifacts and redeposited them in push-piles along the margins of roads crisscrossing the landform. When archaeologists from Sagebrush Archaeological Consultants arrived to conduct a damage assessment in 1987, they estimated that over 90 percent of the site's surface had been significantly disturbed (Polk and Polk

1987:2). Evidence of looting was also noted, leaving only one small, potentially intact area among several mature pines at the center of the site.

In total, Sagebrush Archaeological Consultants excavated five 2 x 2-meter grid units, one 1 x 1-meter test unit, eight 50 x 50-centimeter (cm) test pits, and seven shovel test probes across the site. Most excavations revealed soil profiles that were either inverted or completely mixed, confirming that large-scale earth moving had occurred throughout the site. Two units, however, contained small samples of what the site might have formerly looked like. Within Test Unit 11, placed near an earthen berm bounding one of the reservoirs, excavators recorded what they believed to be a portion of the original site surface, buried at a depth of 40 cm. This exposure provided a glimpse of the dense artifact scatter that likely once covered large portions of the site. Between 40 and 45 cm below surface, excavators encountered a concentration of "ceramics, shovels, bone, shoe fragments, nails, and miscellaneous metal" that produced 160 artifacts (Polk and Polk 1987a:4).

Even more significant was a large subsurface feature exposed between 50 and 200 cm below surface in grid unit N. Designated Feature 1, field notes describe this feature as composed of alternating layers of sterile sand and a dark brown, artifact-rich matrix, all of which sloped downhill to the west (Polk and Polk 1987a:5), leading Polk and Polk (1987b:5) to hypothesize that the feature was a natural stream bed, descending from the hills to the east of the site, that had been used for trash disposal. Another strong possibility is that the feature was a placer cut or sluice channel which was filled with trash upon abandonment. Similar features have been excavated at other Chinese mining sites within the Boise National Forest (e.g. Campbell 2019:4; Geer 1985:1–3; Susie Osgood 2021, pers. comm.), suggesting that this may have been a common practice.

Despite excavating only a portion of Feature 1, Polk and Polk recovered just over 3,000 artifacts from the deposit. These account for nearly one third of the entire BS-844 assemblage as collected by Polk and Polk and reanalyzed for this dissertation project. Though recovered from a largely destroyed site, and in many cases lacking original depositional context, these artifacts remain an important source of information about the site and its occupants.

As curated today, the artifact assemblage from BS-844 consists of 9,402 artifacts. Sorting the assemblage by material class reveals metal artifacts to be the most numerous in the collection (Table 4.3). Like the synthetic materials (primarily rubber boot fragments[12]) that,

[12] Although rubber boots from this time period were, in fact, made of natural latex, the UI software used to catalog these early rubber materials groups them into the "synthetic" material class along with their later, non-natural counterparts for the sake of consistency across nineteenth- and twentieth-century assemblages.

Table 4.3. BS-844 Assemblage by Material Type.

Material Class	Count	Percent [a]
Metal	4,123	44
Synthetic	2,178	23
Faunal	2,057	22
Ceramic	540	6
Glass	292	3
Organics	201	2
Stone	10	<1
Unknown	1	<1
Grand total	9,402	100

[a] Percentage of total count; rounded to nearest whole number.

second to metal, make up the next largest proportion of the assemblage, the majority of these artifacts represent occupational pursuits (Table 4.4). In addition to the mining tools that might be expected given the location and historical association of the site, a number of occupational artifacts also evidence blacksmithing, an activity not noted in previous analyses. The remaining material types in the BS-844 collection are primarily items related to use of the site as a residence. These include a large faunal collection comprised of food bones from diverse sources; ceramic and glass containers and tablewares; and a small number of organic materials such as leather, wood, and stone.

Since just over two-thirds of the assemblage was recovered from heavily disturbed contexts, almost no patterning can be seen in the distribution of materials across the site, save for the concentrations recovered from the buried surface in Test Unit 11 and the trash deposit discovered in Grid Unit N. While these two units produced a higher density of artifacts, an analysis of the types and relative proportions of materials recovered from these contexts found almost no difference from those recovered from other portions of the site (Campbell 2022:30–31). As a result, the total assemblage cannot be used to discern separate activity areas or chronological events, yet they do provide strong evidence for the overall use of the site, and a sense of its importance to larger strategies employed by Chinese mining networks at work along Ophir Creek.

Table 4.4. Summary of the BS-844 Assemblage by Functional Group and Category.

Functional Group Artifact Category (Artifact Name)		**Count**	**Percent of Total** [a]
Occupational	**Subtotal**	**955**	**10**
Footwear (shoe/boot, nail)		880	9
Mining pan (gold pan, gold-blowing pan)		6	<1
Other tool (chisel, file, pickaxe, pitchfork, shovel, unknown)		46	<1
Waste (scrap metal, slag)		23	1
Miscellaneous containers	**Subtotal**	**529**	**6**
Barrel hoop		16	<1
Bottle		85	1
Bucket		4	<1
Can		314	3
Unknown		110	2
Hardware	**Subtotal**	**411**	**4**
Fastener (rivet, screw, spike)		10	<1
Misc. hardware (handle, hinge, knob/pull, ring, wire)		8	<1
Nail (common construction, crate, finishing)		393	4
Personal	**Subtotal**	**374**	**4**
Clothing hardware (button, suspender)		12	<1
Grooming (toothbrush)		3	<1
Pharmaceutical/medical (Chinese medicine bottle, pharmacy bottle)		2	<1
Opium (opium can, opium lamp, opium pipe bowl)		357	3
Food preparation/consumption	**Subtotal**	**245**	**3**
Cooking utensil (cleaver, pan)		3	<1
Flatware (dish, unknown)		35	<1
Hollowware (bowl, cup, glass/tumbler, unknown)		109	1
Unknown		98	1
Food/food storage	**Subtotal**	**2,272**	**24**
Chinese stoneware (jar, lid, hollowware)		210	1
Can (cooking oil, tea)		5	<1
Fauna		2,057	22
Architectural/construction	**Subtotal**	**40**	**<1**
Window glass		40	<1
Alcohol	**Subtotal**	**32**	**<1**
Chinese liquor		22	<1
Wine/champagne		10	<1
Other	**Subtotal**	**26**	**<1**
Ammunition (shell casing)		9	<1
Entertainment (game piece)		3	<1
Heating (stove part)		1	<1
Lamp chimney glass		2	<1
Rock (non-cultural)		6	<1
Soil sample		5	<1
Unknown	**Subtotal**	**4,518**	**48**
Unknown (charcoal, handle, lumber, metal, unknown)		4,518	48
	Total	**9,402**	**100**

[a] Percent values are rounded to the nearest whole number.

The Overlapping Signatures of Miners, Blacksmiths, and Communities of Practice: Occupational Artifacts

Among the most striking aspects of the BS-844 collection is the large proportion of what can be broadly defined as occupational artifacts: items that indicate the site's connection to work and workers. Many of these are what would be expected from a placer mining assemblage, and parallel items found among the Wong Sing assemblages (see Chapter 3), which also included artifacts like shovels, gold pans, and pick tips repurposed into wedges. The much greater number of hand-forged and repurposed metal items in the BS-844 assemblage, however, suggests that more than just placer mining may have been taking place at the site. Along with slag, a biproduct of metal working; a large volume of iron, including some piled metal fragments, and an unfinished pick, these artifacts signal the presence of a blacksmith or blacksmiths.

With the ability to repair, maintain, and even create components of essential mining equipment, blacksmiths played a crucial role in the Basin's placer industry in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. As early as 1863, Idaho City had seven different blacksmith shops that offered services to miners at rates that reflected both their importance and the initial paucity of transportation networks reaching the Basin (Jones, Davis, and Ling 1979:8). Although prices would drop in the following decades, early Basinites could expect to pay a blacksmith as much as $16 to repair a pick, the equivalent of room and board for one week in Idaho City (Bird 1934:138–141). Many mining companies employed blacksmiths directly, saving themselves this cost and the trip to town for the repair (Johnson 2000:67). In addition to being more cost- and time-effective, this practice also guaranteed that blacksmiths were available when needed to keep operations running—particularly during peak water season or in remote locations. As such, blacksmiths could be an important component of company autonomy and flexibility.

As elsewhere in the American West, Chinese mining companies in the Basin regularly incorporated blacksmiths into their organizations (Johnson 2000:67–68; Ostrogorsky 1983:79–83; Rohe 2002:50; Zhu 1997:99). This is evident from census records documenting the presence of Chinese blacksmiths and from the frequent mention of blacksmith shops transferring ownership along with properties leased or purchased by Chinese companies (US Bureau of the Census 1870). On Grimes Creek, for example, Stephen Dempsey's lease to the Wong Sing Company included not just one, but two blacksmith shops. Further south along Ophir Creek, the extensive claims purchased by the Man Lee Company included a blacksmith shop and the tools within it (Boise County, ID, Deed Records, Book 13:536–536; Boise County,

ID, Lease Records, Book 1:232–235). Yet, despite the prevalence of blacksmith shops on property records and the consistent recovery of blacksmith-modified tools from Chinese mining sites, very few archaeological studies have explicitly examined the signatures of Chinese blacksmiths within mining networks.[13]

The artifacts in the BS-844 collection suggest at least one possible reason for this oversight: the trouble with untangling the signatures of blacksmiths tasked with maintaining and repairing mining infrastructure from the those of the miners who operated it. Tools that might easily be associated with mining in other contexts have other potential interpretations when considered in the context of repair or reuse. The four fragments of a gold pan identified in the collection, for example, certainly began as a tool used for mining but may have ended up in a blacksmith's scrap metal pile once broken. The gold-blowing tray, by contrast, is largely complete and could have served a purpose in mining operations. Sometimes also called a blow pan or blow box, gold-blowing trays were often used as a final check for gold among sediment that had already been passed through rocker screens or sluice boxes. Miners placed samples of this already processed sediment into the tray then tapped the side while blowing gently across the side without a rim. This motion would lift fine sand or silt and blow it away, leaving behind any fine gold particles that may have been missed by more efficient mining methods (Boericke 1936:44–45).

Other tools in the BS-844 assemblage that can be associated, to varying degrees of certainty, with either mining or blacksmithing consist of a chisel, a pitchfork tine, a small fragment of a file, 25 shovel blade and collar fragments, 15 pick parts, and 3 fragments of unidentifiable tools. The chisel in this collection is 22 cm long and was hand-forged. Its head shows clear signs of having been hit repeatedly with a hammer, causing it to flatten and curl. Though certainly created in a blacksmith shop, it could have been used in mining to break up rocks and compact sediment or as cutting tool by blacksmiths, since chisel-cut artifacts also appear in the BS-844 assemblage. A singular tine, broken or cut from a pitchfork, may also have served as a blacksmithing or mining tool. Like the chisel, the end opposite the point has been flattened and flared through impact, suggesting that it could have been used as a punch for a blacksmith or as a probe for a miner.

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[13] While the literature on Chinese mining in the American West regularly includes passing references to blacksmiths (see, for example, Brott 1982:41, 65–66; Hann 2021: 334–367; Ostrogorsky 1983:79–83; Rohe 2002:50; Stapp et al. 1986:50, 88; Zhu 1997:99), only a few delve any deeper into the subject. Probably the most in-depth study to date is a master's thesis by Erika Johnson (2000) that examines a Chinese blacksmith shop in Pierce, Idaho. Several recent seasons of fieldwork for the Oregon Chinese Diaspora Project have also uncovered evidence of Chinese blacksmiths working at mining sites (Rose and Johnson 2022:78–83).

Once no longer functional, other tool fragments in the collection may have served as a source of raw material for a blacksmith. A complete metal file, for example, would have been useful to sharpen shovels or other mining tools, or could have been used by a blacksmith to shape and smooth iron (Johnson 2000:105). The file fragment in the BS-844 collection is less than 3 cm long, far too short to have still been functional as a file and thus was likely scrap. Similarly, the 25 shovel blades and collars in the collection show signs of having been broken, intentionally cut with shears, or modified in other ways (Figure 4.5). Smaller shovel blade fragments may have been convenient sources of flat metal for other projects or may have been kept as a source of iron that could be melted down as needed. It is also possible that some of the shovels may have been salvaged for conversion into other tools. A cache of shovels at a Chinese blacksmith shop in Oregon, for instance, included blades that had been cut into the rectangular shape of a hoe and then further worn down by use, perhaps as excavation tools or in the movement of material through narrow diameter sluice boxes (Rose and Johnson 2022:81–83; 92–93).

While many of the prior artifacts indicate reuse by blacksmiths, pick fragments in the collection clearly demonstrate repair. At least fourteen severed pick tips occur in the BS-844 assemblage.[14] None show any indications of having been struck with hammers, as would have been the case if they were reused as mining wedges or blacksmithing punches/chisels. In many cases, this has preserved evidence of the blacksmith's method of removal. Most appear to have been cut with a hot chisel, but one was clearly punched and then broken (see Figure 4.5).

Cutting through metal with a chisel usually requires two cuts, made in opposite directions, so that the chisel does not make direct contact with the anvil and dull the blade. This cutting method leaves an artifact with overlapping cut marks, usually at slightly different angles. Punching, by contrast, involves hammering a round punch through a heated metal object. This process alone sometimes splits the metal on either side of the punch and, if not, the weak point created by the void is easily snapped with pliers (Johnson 2000:102).

Some of the strongest evidence for blacksmithing at BS-844 comes from a hand-forged tool that appears to be an unfinished pick. This artifact is made of iron that has been hammered into the slightly curved shape of a pick head, with an eye for a handle on one end (Figure 4.6). The opposite end has been split down the middle, likely in preparation to attach a steel bit. In the

[14] Though 14 metal artifacts are clearly identifiable as pick tips, there may be more in the collection that are simply too fragmentary to identify. This includes one small blade fragment cataloged as an unknown tool that could either be the very end of a pick tip or of a chisel (see Campbell 2022:44, Figure 20).

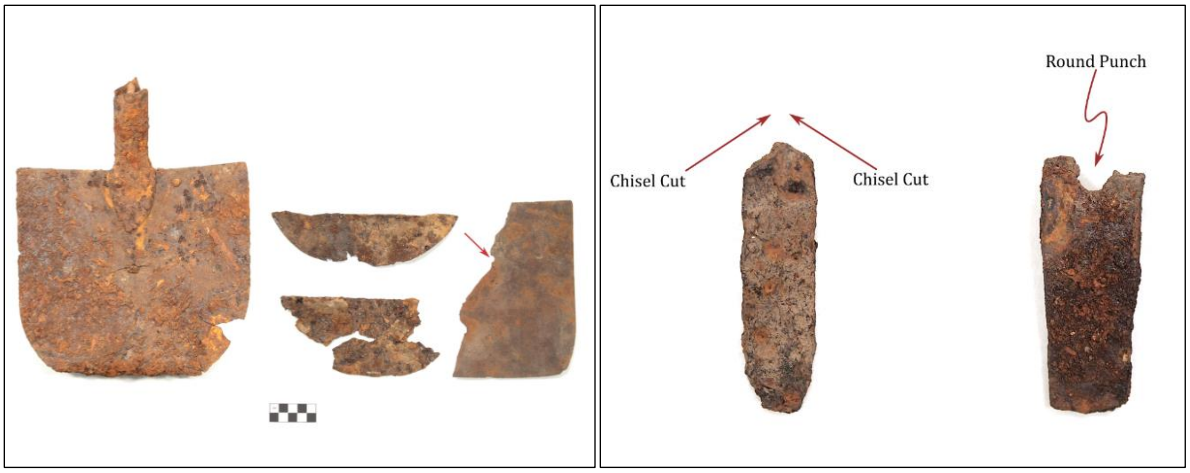

Figure 4.5. Examples of shovel blade fragments from the BS-844 collection (left) and pick tips showing evidence of removal methods (right). The shovel tips in the left photo appear to have been cut with shears and the arrow indicates a circular punch through a shovel blade. The pick tip to the left of the right photo was likely cut with a hot chisel, while the artifact to the right appears to have been punched and then snapped off. Catalog numbers 10BO779/1987/454/01, 10BO779/1987/019/01, 10BO779/1987/019/02, 10BO779/1987/330/01, 10BO779/1987/332/12, and 10BO779/1987/599/01.

Figure 4.6. Side view of artifact 10BO779/1987/456/01, a hand-forged tool that may be an in-progress pick (left), and the top view of the same artifact as compared with two pick bits from the BS-844 collection (right).

nineteenth century, most pick heads were made of wrought iron but had tips, called bits, that were made of steel. The steel bit added a strong working surface to what was otherwise a more cost-effective and easily repaired wrought iron head. When the steel bits at the ends of the pick became dull or chipped, blacksmiths would cut them off, then split the iron left exposed at the end of the pick with a chisel. A new steel bit was inserted into the split and joined to the iron shaft using a tongue weld (Johnson 2000:159).

As can be seen in Figure 4.6, were they not already damaged, several of the pick tips from the BS-844 collection appear to be the right size to weld into the split on the unfinished tool

head. This method of repair offers an explanation for the both the shape of the tool and for the number of bits in the BS-844 collection, since pick tips were a common waste item for blacksmiths tasked with maintaining mining tools. In Pierce, Idaho, one of the few archaeological excavations at a Chinese blacksmith shop to date recovered at least 23 severed pick bits along with a partially complete, hand-forged pickaxe head that appeared to have been abandoned when the eye failed (Johnson 2000:159–161). Though there is no obvious flaw in the pick head from BS-844, it may have been abandoned for other reasons. It is possible that the blacksmith was unhappy with the construction or had to attend to more pressing repairs. It is also conceivable that the pick head, along with some of the other artifacts in the collection, were projects undertaken to hone the skills of the blacksmith. Evidence of experimentation and practice with different techniques were noted by Erika Johnson (2000:154, 183–186) in the blacksmith assemblage from Pierce. Both would have been extremely beneficial for company blacksmiths, especially if required to work with scavenged materials or unfamiliar tools.

Since blacksmith shops, and occasionally the tools within, appear to have transferred along with mining claims, the Chinese companies who leased these properties for relatively short periods of time may have been forced to adapt to whatever equipment and supplies were on hand. Certainly, this would have been challenging for even experienced Chinese blacksmiths, like the individual who identified as a member of the profession in the 1870 Idaho City census (Zhu 1997:99). Blacksmiths who acquired their skills in China would also have been trained with slightly different tools, like the more efficient Chinese box bellows and an alternately shaped anvil (Johnson 2000:108). Though the tools found in the American West during the same period functioned similarly to those used China, their mastery would have required a degree of adaptation on the part of the blacksmith, and likely some experimentation to perfect.

Given the importance of blacksmiths to the self-sufficiency and continuous operation of mining companies, it is also likely that many blacksmiths picked up the trade from fellow Chinese migrants while employed in mining networks. In this context, experimenting with the equipment and materials on hand would not only allow blacksmiths to gain familiarity with the variable resources available at each new site, but would also have encouraged personal innovation, and could have helped to train new blacksmiths from within the company's ranks. Scholars of Chinese transnationalism have documented similar instances of "training" within diasporic networks, whereby newer arrivals, through mutual participation in joint enterprises with migrants from the same home village or clan, could acquire occupational skills and adapt them to the unique and ever-changing circumstances of each new location (Yu 2018:186).

Within situated learning theory, groups of practitioners who share and hone skills in relationship to one another in this way are called *communities of practice* (Wenger 1998:4–5, 72–73). A similar concept, introduced by educational theorist Etienne Wenger (1998:126–121) and termed *constellations of practice* describes the larger and more diffuse networks in which multiple localized communities of practice operate and interact. In these *constellations of practice*, individual members may be dispersed across long physical distances or have few face-to-face interactions but still create and maintain mutually constitutive shared repertoires of knowledge.

That the blacksmith or blacksmiths at BS-844 were likely engaging in communities of practice, or at least sharing skills and techniques with other mining networks in the region, can be seen in another unique pick fragment within the collection. This hand-forged item, shown in Figure 4.7, is part of a brace from a pickaxe. Inserted through the eye of the pick head on one end and riveted to the wooden handle on the other, braces such as these seem intended to prevent slippage of the head on the handle, thereby creating a more durable tool. This distinctive style of pick attachment does not appear to have been mass-produced, as no examples from historical catalogs, advertisements, or literature have been identified to date. A limited number of other hand-forged examples, however, have been identified in museum and archaeological collections from eastern Oregon and southern and central Idaho (Campbell and Rose 2023:3).

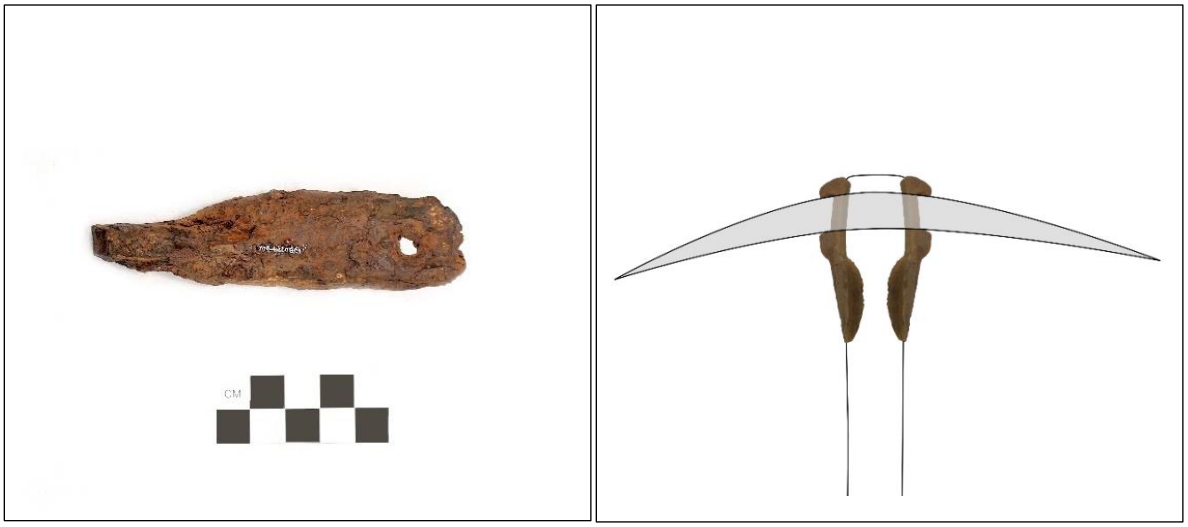

Figure 4.7. Fragment of a hand-forged pick brace from BS-844 (left), catalog number 10BO779-1987-607-01 and an illustration of similar braces as they would have appeared on a complete pick (right), image not to scale.

Several complete miner's picks featuring this unique brace are among the materials in a Chinese mining exhibit at the Grant County Historical Museum in Canyon City, Oregon. Although these museum examples lack specific provenience information, archaeological investigations in Oregon's Malheur National Forest have identified at least nine similar braces from two nearby mining complexes worked by Chinese miners. Many of the braces were recovered from a late nineteenth century blacksmith shop located among the holdings of the Ah Heng (亞慶) mining company (Rose and Johnson 2022:93–94, 134).

Excavations at the Chinese blacksmith shop in Pierce, Idaho, also recovered fragments of hand-forged pick braces like those from BS-844 and the Ah Heng blacksmith shop (Figure 4.8). These fragments are not illustrated in the report, but yet another complete brace from the Clearwater Historical Museum in Orofino, Idaho, is included in one image, presumably as a comparative example (Stapp et al. 1986:50). Documentation on file at the Clearwater Historical Museum indicates that two such braces and a hand-forged pick head were collected from the short-lived and remote mining town of Moose City, located near the Idaho–Montana border. Thus, traced to just a handful of mining sites dispersed across Oregon and Idaho, these braces provide clear evidence of a regionally shared material culture that, since all known examples are hand forged, can be tied specifically to the skillset and practice of blacksmiths.

Figure 4.8. Fragments of pick braces from the Ah Heng I archaeological site in Oregon (left); photo courtesy of Southern Oregon University Laboratory of Anthropology, specimen numbers 2019.07-0045, 2019.07-0362, and 2019.07-0261; and from the Pierce archaeological site in Idaho (right); photo courtesy of the University of Idaho Alfred W. Bowers Laboratory of Anthropology, catalog numbers 20.4.8 and 39.2.5.

Other occupational artifacts from BS-844 also connect the practices of Chinese miners along Ophir Creek to those of their contemporaries in the region. These can be found among the 665 fragments of footwear and footwear hardware in the assemblage. Most of these artifacts are made of rubber or a combination of rubber and other materials like fabric, felt, or metal. A smaller number are composed primarily of leather. Though waterproof boots were clearly the norm at site BS-844, rubber is a material that becomes brittle with time and exposure to the elements. As a result, it breaks easily, which inflates fragment counts while also making individual characteristics hard to distinguish. Of the 621 rubber footwear fragments in the collection, a minimum of five unique boot pairs could be identified. Leather, by contrast, produced one unique sole within the 43 individual specimens.

Similar in style and composition to footwear found at other mining sites in the Basin, boots in this collection speak to the conditions placer miners faced as they scoured the muddy hillsides and stream bottoms for gold. The single identifiable pair of leather boots, for example feature portions of a felt insole liner, probably for added warmth, and sections of a stacked leather heel embedded with two courses of evenly spaced hobnails. Rubber boots, by contrast, tended to exhibit square toes, texturized rubber on the outsole (to help with traction), and "heavy rolled edges" similar to those advertised in the 1897 Sears, Roebuck & Co. catalog (2007:219) (Figure 4.9). At least three pairs have all-rubber heels, an innovation introduced in 1895, in between the two Reid Placer Mine leases signed by Chinese mining companies (Anderson 1968:59, 64).

Like the outsoles pictured in Figure 4.9, nearly all the recovered toe and heel portions are embedded with hobnails. Hobnailed mining shoes occasionally appear in late nineteenth century catalogs. The 1897 Sears, Roebuck & Co catalog (2007:219) lists a pair of "Men's Whole Stock Kip Mining Shoes" with "both heels and soles […] thoroughly hob-nailed" (*sic*) for $1.98 per pair. Short iron nails with thick heads, hobnails were also sold separately from footwear and could be embedded after market by boot owners wanting additional traction. The 213 hobnails not attached to remnants of leather or rubber in the BS-844 collection are probably evidence of this practice. Some of these had corroded in clusters, as if they had been disposed of as a group, rather than evenly spaced across the sole of a boot at the time of deposition.

Figure 4.9. Fragments of rubber boot soles in the BS-844 collection representing at least five unique pairs of boots, catalog numbers 10BO779/1987/614/01, 10BO779/1987/333/01, 10BO779/1987/618/01, 10BO779/1987/471/01, 10BO779/1987/619/01, 10BO779/1987/611/01, 10BO779/1987/074/01, 10 BO779/1987/615/01, 10BO779/1987/613/01, 10BO779/1987/249/01, and 10BO779/1987/094/01.

Hobnailed boot soles are not unique to BS-844 and are, in fact, frequently referenced as part of Chinese mining artifact assemblages. In an early study from Oregon, Laban Steeves (1984:141) found hobnailed boots so ubiquitous that he suggested they might represent a unique archaeological signature differentiating Chinese mining sites from those associated with other groups. While no other analyses have attempted to confirm this particular finding,[15] archaeological collections offer ample evidence that adding after-market hobnails to boots was a practice shared by Chinese miners dispersed across the Pacific and Inland Northwest. In addition to being found throughout Oregon (see also Lee 2020b:77–78; Mead 1996:9–3), hand-hobnailed boot fragments have also been recorded in at least three counties in Northern California (Tordoff and Maniery 1986:1-25, 1989:15; Tordoff et al. 1986:J-2) and on sites in Southern and Central Idaho (Campbell et al. 2019:38–40; Kingsbury 1989:22; Park 2009:113; Sprague et al. 1991:34; Stapp 1990:231). In Montana, too, excavations at the German Gulch

[15] Steeves' (1984:141) claim that Chinese miners were more likely to add hobnails to boots is regularly cited in other studies of Chinese mining sites, leading authors to speculate whether the rubber boots mentioned in artifact inventories had hobnails embedded before or after being purchased. Unfortunately, studies examining artifacts recovered from sites occupied by non-Chinese miners rarely make this distinction, so a review of the literature alone cannot be used to evaluate how common this practice was by anyone other than Chinese miners.

Historic Mining District in Montana recovered 12 rubber and 11 leather boots, all of which had hobnails embedded in their heels (Fredlund et al. 1991:155).

Even farther afield, Neville Ritchie (1986:554) noted "extra nails" added to the soles of rubber boots at multiple sites in his seminal study on Chinese miners in Southern New Zealand. Given the well-established connections maintained by Chinese migrants and the similarity of placer mining conditions throughout the Pacific world, useful workarounds like adding traction to already waterproof boots could easily have spread among these external nodes of migrant networks. Notably, techniques perfected by blacksmiths and modifications consistently made to mass-produced material culture offer a way to track skills and strategies passed not only through communities engaged in shared occupational enterprises, but also through larger networks spanning greater geographic distances.

Making Do and Making Better among Constellations of Practice: Modified, Repurposed, and Reused Artifacts

If mining and blacksmithing artifacts offer evidence of the types of expertise passed among specific occupational communities of practice within the Chinese diaspora, modified and repurposed items in the BS-844 collection provide examples of innovations shared by more numerous and diffuse networks. Not always specific to Chinese mining sites, these artifacts situate Basin residents within what could be described as overlapping constellations of practice in which the reuse and repurposing of materials arose as recurrent strategies across different types of networks. Plentiful across archaeologies of mining, of the American West, and of economically or socially marginalized groups, repurposed artifacts have often been interpreted as evidence of the perceived scarcity, financial insecurity, or need for self-reliance experienced by individuals within these contexts.[16] Viewed this way, modified and reused artifacts at BS-844 and BS-193 suggest some of the challenges that Chinese American miners in the Basin shared with members of diverse networks whose collective experiences gave rise to a broad but informal repertoire of strategies and skills that could be put to use in a variety of contexts. Drawing from this larger constellation of practices, members of Chinese mining companies can be seen to have creatively adapted specific types of material modification, repurposing, and reuse to their own particular needs and skill sets as they labored to meet the many demands of running the Reid Placer Mine.

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[16] For just a few examples of studies associating reuse or modification with conditions like transience, scarcity, financial insecurity, or social inequality, see Adams (2002:50–57), Barna (2008), Barton (2022:69–80), Greenwood and Slawson (2008), Furnis and Maniery (2015:78–80), Hardesty (1991:31, 2011:215), Purser (2017:13), Reilly (2016), and Walker (2017:98–101).

Metal, the most frequently modified material type at BS-844, is also among the most commonly modified materials noted at archaeological sites across the West. Metal cans, in particular, seem to have offered Westerners a wide variety of potential uses beyond the conveyance of mass-produced products. Emptied of their original contents, metal cans often lived second lives as architectural materials or stand-ins for household items. Flattened or disassembled cans, several of which were found downstream at site BS-193, for example, were regularly converted into roofing shingles, wall cladding, or stove flashing. These practices were pervasive enough in Western towns that in 1880, a Chinese resident of Bodie, Nevada, is reported to have made $2,000 selling cans repurposed into roofing shingles to his neighbors (Dale 2016:345). Representing a readily available solution to the recurrent need for building materials in rapidly developing, cash-strapped, or isolated communities, cans turned architectural elements show up in the archaeological record of mining communities into the depression era and as far away as New Zealand (e.g. Barna 2008:156–157; Crebbin 2020:70, 83–84; Dale 2016:345; Hardesty 1988:86; Ritchie 1986:340; Stapp et al. 1986:47).

Examples of cans modified into other types of containers (e.g., Dale 2016:346; Fee 1993:86–87; Furnis and Maniery 2015:78–80; James 1995:49; Kingsbury 1989:17; Ritter and Neel 2021:35; Rogers 1997:73; Stapp et al. 1986:36), cooking implements (e.g., Kingsbury 1989:17; Maniery et al. 2016:89; Mead 1996:7-42–7-46; Lindström et al. 1993:53; Markley 1992:34–35; Obermayr and McQueen 2016:96; Park 2009:105; Parnett and Frye 2002:[4]; Wegars 1995:5), or tablewares (e.g., Obermayr and McQueen 2016:96) are even more abundant across the archaeologies of mining and of the Chinese diaspora. Though some repurposed materials take easily identifiable forms—large lidless cans affixed with handmade wire handles are commonly interpreted as buckets (e.g., Barna 2008:110; Kingsbury 1989:17), for example—other modifications inspire more conjecture. As noted in a recent survey by Tatiana Watkins (2021:195–196), cans with holes punched into their ends or lids are consistently recorded at Chinese labor sites as possible strainers but, depending on the configuration and context, have also been suggested as repurposed shakers (James 1995:49; Park 2009:105;), graters (Fredlund et al. 1991:118–119; Mead 1996:7-46), sprinklers (Stapp et al. 1986:88), noodle makers (Fredlund et al. 1991:118–119; Sargent-Gross et al. 2021:40–41) or as bean sprout germinators (Hann et al. 2021; Voss 2019:118; Wegars 1995:5).

Cans with these same modifications also show up in Boise Basin Chinese mining sites. At least four instances of external friction can lids punctured by square cut nails occur in collections from Ophir and Grimes Creek (Figure 4.10). The assemblage of artifacts from the

Figure 4.10. External friction can lids from the Ophir Creek Brewery site (BS-193) that have been modified with the addition of numerous holes made from square cut nails (left); catalog numbers 10BO78-90, 10BO78-611, and 10BO78-103; and can pieces from the Wong Sing Co. holdings (site BS-780) featuring post-manufacture punched holes (right), catalog numbers 10BO357/1985/205/01 and 10BO357/1985/ 216/01.

Wong Sing holdings along lower Grimes Creek also includes a section of a can body that has been flattened and riddled with very small holes, forming what many researchers suggest might be a hand-made grater (see Figure 4.10). A similar artifact (ACC-86-051), made from the lid of an opium can, is curated at the University of Idaho's Asian American Comparative Collection (AACC) and was reportedly also found along Grimes Creek, near the original Centerville townsite.

A hand-made hinge within the BS-844 collection provides an additional, albeit more unique example of can repurposing. This hinge is constructed from wire and sheet metal likely cut from square or rectangular cans. Portions of at least three tea cans, which appear to be of a similar size and thickness to the metal used in the hinge, offer one possible source for the metal. Like the other, plentiful metal fragments associated with site BS-844, these cans may have been purposefully saved for reuse, either by miners familiar with some of the more wide-spread forms commonly made from empty cans, or by blacksmiths for whom, regardless of ethnicity, "every scrap of metal that came into camp" represented a possible source of stock (Johnson 2000:106).

Though most obvious in the metal assemblage, modification and repurposing is also apparent in a small number of glass artifacts from BS-844. Six bottles exhibit signs of having been cut horizontally (Figure 4.11) and at least three of these seem intended to create drinking glasses (see Figure 4.11, left, bottom row). Made from roughly the bottom third of each bottle, the cut surfaces of these modified artifacts have been ground or sanded to create a visibly smooth rim where the "cup" would presumably be raised to the lips. The most complete of

Figure 4.11. Modified bottles in the BS-844 collection. These artifacts have been cut, and in some cases flaked or ground down, to create objects like an opium lamp chimney (left image, top right) and drinking glasses (left image, bottom right, and right image). Catalog numbers 10BO779/1987/449/01, 10BO779/1987/239/01, 10BO779/ 1987/280/01, 10BO779/1987/015/01, 10BO779/1987/038/01, and 10BO779/1987/151/01.

these repurposed cups features an eight-pointed star embossed onto its base that was used as a maker's mark by the San Francisco and Pacific Glass Works Company on bottles manufactured between 1876 and 1890, a period that overlaps with the Wo Hop Company's lease of claims associated with the Reid Placer Mine (Figure 4.11) (Lindsey 2023). Since periods of reuse can extend well beyond manufacture dates, however, creation during the tenure of Charley Sing Lee and Chow Yuen Lee cannot be excluded as a possibility.

Descriptions of bottles converted into drinking glasses rarely appear in comparative literature, though other artifacts described in these sources indicate that the skills required to make them circulated among members of the Chinese diaspora. One frequently illustrated artifact, which appears in both collector and archaeological literature, is an opium lamp chimney composed of the upper body, shoulder, and neck portion of a bottle. *The Ghost Town Bottle Price Guide* (Bressie and Bressie 1972:104), for example, includes a photo of a homemade opium lamp with a repurposed can for an oil reservoir and a portion of a bottle for the chimney. Archaeological excavations in the Tucson, Arizona, Chinatown (Lister and Lister 1989:82), at a remote habitation along the Snake River Canyon in Idaho (James 1995:50), and within claims associated with large-scale placer operations in German Gulch Montana (Fredlund et al. 1991:149), have also recovered similar artifacts made from brandy, gin, and beer bottles.

Especially in the first several decades of archaeological studies on Chinese American communities, artifacts related to opium use emerged as a point of fixation both as supposed "ethnic markers" and as exoticized material culture that received a disproportional amount of attention in the pages of reports and academic publications (Fong 2013:29–30, 2020:71). One

of the legacies of this practice is that opium-related objects are more frequently described when they occur within collections. References to bottles modified into opium paraphernalia may therefore simply be easier to find than examples of cups, since the techniques used to make both repurposed forms are essentially the same. Within the BS-844 collection, an aqua bottle midsection repurposed as an opium lamp chimney (see Figure 4.11, left, top right) exhibits the same cutting and grinding marks seen on aqua bottle bases refashioned into cups, with the addition of a few pressure flakes used to shape the top rim. Like many of the previously mentioned modified artifacts, nearly identical forms have also been observed at Chinese mining sites in New Zealand (Ritchie 1986:392), demonstrating the extent to which knowledge and repurposing skills were shared across transpacific networks and the occupational constellations of practice that formed within and alongside them.

Indications of reuse within the BS-844 collection are less definitive than examples of modification or repurposing. Reuse, using an artifact repeatedly for the same purpose without modification (Barna 2008:23; Watkins 2021:192), is often less observable in the archaeological record since, unlike repurposing through modification, the practice usually leaves little or no trace on the item itself. Absent other contextual or material clues or manufacturing dates that lag significantly behind those of a known site occupation, identification of reuse is often speculative (Barna 2008:23; Busch 1987:77–78).

At BS-844, suggestions for reuse come from a handful of items that can be dated to the period just before the Wo Hop Company (1889) and Chow Yuen Lee and Charley Sing Lee (1904) leases. They consist primarily of whiteware ceramics manufactured by Powell & Bishop (1876–1878), Richard Alcock (1870–1881), and Edward Clarke & Company (1865–1887) in Staffordshire, England (Godden 1964:147, 509; White Ironstone China Association 2008:4, 9), but also include a Novelty Rubber Company button with a maker's mark used between 1850 and 1872 (Hall 2016:20). While the earlier dates of these artifacts might be easy to explain as purchases made by the series of investors who owned the Reid Placer Mine before it was leased to either Chinese mining company, their depositional context indicates that many were still in use at the time the site was abandoned. Both the Edward Clarke & Company vessel and the Novelty Rubber Company button were recovered from the upper levels of the trash deposit designated as Feature 1 by site excavators. These items, which include the oldest artifact in the group, dated before 1872, were found above six all-rubber boot heels, produced only after 1895, yet deposited at the lowest levels of the 200-cm deep feature. The trash deposit in Feature 1, therefore, was not filled slowly over time, which would result in the oldest artifacts being at the

bottom of the feature and the newest at the top but was instead probably filled in a single episode sometime after 1895.

If these older materials are still on site after 1895, it raises the possibility that successive occupants were reusing both plates and clothing hardware for several decades rather than reprovisioning each spring as the mining season began. Buildings like the one downstream at BS-193 may have stored some of these items in between seasons that, like the mining tools and mining supplies mentioned in property records, could have transferred hands with each successive sale or lease (Boise County, ID, Lease Records, Book 2:84–85). Historical records clearly indicate that the Reid Placer Mine often operated on a tight budget and changed hands frequently. Especially for Chinese American miners like Charley Sing Lee and Chow Yuen Lee who leased the site only for a season, this thin profit margin, along with large labor and supply requirements of the mine, likely encouraged "making do" (e.g., Barna 2008:11) with the materials available, from picks and empty bottles to table settings. Making do as a strategy for confronting the particular financial risk and transitory ownership dictated by national and local discriminatory laws is also undoubtedly manifest in examples of repurposing at the site—such as the conversion of readily available materials like empty bottles and cans into tools and domestic wares. Importantly, however, the skills honed through communities of practice also made possible modifications that improved upon existing materials. Practices like adding hobnails to boot soles for increased traction and bolstering picks with hand-forged attachments, show how Chinese mining networks facilitated strategies aimed at making better as well as those aimed at making do. More than simply managing hardship, modification practices also represent innovation and the curation of highly specialized skill sets that could give Chinese American miners competitive advantages in a largely unfavorable context.

Evidence of Non-Laboring Lives: Domestic, Personal, and Other Artifacts

Not all of the artifacts from BS-844 are indicative of time spent mining, at the blacksmith's anvil, or repurposing materials into more useful forms. Like the all of the previously discussed sites, BS-844 appears to have been a place where, for a portion of the year, mining company personnel lived as well as worked. The suite of material culture attesting to various personal, domestic, and other activities that took place on site in many cases resembles artifact types recovered from the Wong Sing Company mining claims and the Pon Yam House. Items like suspender clasps, rivets, and buttons give us a sense of what site residents wore; Chinese cleavers, brown-glazed stoneware pans, and Staffordshire dishes evoke ways they cooked and set their tables; bone toothbrush handles and shards of a Chinese medicine vial suggest ways

they attended to their health; and spent small-caliber ammunition and glass gaming pieces allude to activities that might have filled whatever free time residents found when not working. Also, like previously discussed sites, artifacts in the BS-844 assemblage were sourced from a variety of global, national, and local commodity chains that, notably, linked many of the same locations with shared signatures of occupational skills and repurposing strategies that also circulated among the Boise Basin's Chinese American mining networks.

Kiln and makers' marks on opium pipe bowls in the BS-844 collection, for example, can be traced not only to a likely manufacture location but also to distribution points across the American West and Asia-Pacific region (Figure 4.12). Four unique opium pipe bowls within the assemblage feature stamped marks associated with one of two known workshops in Shuidong, a production center located in eastern Guangdong Province (Wu et al. 2020:7). Each example in the collection is partial but includes one or more characters from the phrases 水東鳳山 (*seoi dung fung saan/shuǐ dōng fèng shān*), which specifies manufacture in Shuidong; 趙造 (*seoi dung/zhào zào*), "made by Seoi/Zhao;" and the character 行 (*hang* or *zing*), possibly the name of a business or firm (Lister and Lister 1989:119). According to geochemical and stylistic analyses performed by Peihua Wu and colleagues (2020:10), opium pipe bowls from Shuidong workshops, all of which are made of orange earthenware and feature stamps similar to those in the BS-844 collection, have been recovered from archaeological sites in Boise, Idaho; Laurence, New Zealand; and Queensland, Australia. Lister and Lister (1989:119) also record a partial version of this mark on opium pipe bowls from Tucson, Arizona.

Other international goods in the BS-844 collection show that residents of BS-844 were connected to commodity chains that extended across both the Pacific and Atlantic and that found their way to the Boise Basin through the efforts of regional distributors and local merchants. These include Bamboo-pattern rice bowls and Chinese brown-glazed stoneware containers from kilns in Guangdong Province (Choy 2014:4, 12), cans of top-quality opium manufactured in Hong Kong (CINARC 2018; Sinn 2013:200), European American wine or champagne bottles, and Perfection tea cans that were a truly global product. Initially patented in the United States, Great Britain, Germany, and France they were marketed as a healthier alternative to tea cans sealed with lead (*Los Angeles Daily Herald* 1884:1*; Safford Springs Press* 1887:3). Sometime in the late 1880s, the multiple companies of the Japan Tea Syndicate secured the patent for both the Perfection tea can and the associated Perfection curing process.

Figure 4.12. Opium pipe bowls with partial kiln and makers' marks in the BS-844 collection. All likely originate from the same workshop in Shuidong, China. Catalog numbers 10BO779/1987/373/01, 10BO779/ 1987/536/01, 10BO779/1987/167/01, and 10BO779/1987/372/01.

Thereafter, "varieties of teas […] of every class," shipped under the Perfection label from Yokohama and Kobe to international distributors like Schilling and Co. or directly to regional merchants across North America (Ellis and Co. 1891:95; *Owosso Weekly Press* 1885:7). Notably, fourteen Chinese shipping crate nails, an artifact not observed in the other collections examined as part of this research, indicate that even the containers conveying international items from their original points of distribution occasionally made their way up Ophir Creek to site BS-844, as they did to other remote mining sites in California and Oregon (Lindström et al. 1993:31; Wegars 1995:104).

Links to other, equally dynamic transpacific commercial networks occur within BS-844's faunal assemblage in the form of skeletal elements from a California sheepshead (Figure 4.13). The California sheepshead is a white-fleshed fish endemic, as the name suggests, to parts of southern California. In the nineteenth century, it was among a number of species targeted by California's newly developing but extensive Chinese fishing industry. Chinese fishers in San Diego and Los Angeles "intensively collected" the California sheepshead and exported it preserved in salt to China and to Chinese communities throughout the American West (Kennedy 2016:208–209, 216, 225; Kennedy et al. 2019:154).

Figure 4.13. Left premaxilla (upper jaw) and teeth from a California sheepshead (*Semicossyphus pulcher*); catalog number 10BO779/1987/515/01.

While diverse, and globally sourced, food and drink clearly graced the tables of Chinese mining company employees, most of the meat consumed at BS-844 is indicative of engagement with the local economy. Based on the prevalence of pig, cow, and the medium and large mammal bones that could not be identified to species but undoubtedly include additional examples of these two animals, pork and beef were staple ingredients in meals for mining company employees. Various cuts of pork and beef, along with small amounts of "mutton" (sheep), "dog beef," and "cat meat," were all available from local butcher shops owned by the same James McDevitt who leased the Reid Placer Claim to Charley Sing Lee and Chow Yuen Lee in 1904. That butchered bones from these animals mirror ledger entries for meat products sold from McDevitt's Idaho City meat market between 1875 and 1887 (e.g., McDevitt 1875–1887:41, 59, 185, 206, 266) are significant for two reasons.

First, as part of the highly charged anti-Chinese rhetoric that arose in the nineteenth century, consumption of cat or dog meat has been extensively criticized, othered, and exoticized in European American media into the modern era (Fong 2007:115–116). The consistent, though infrequent, entry of these purchases in the McDevitt ledger show, however, that they were regularly being procured and sold by at least some European American butchers. That James McDevitt included both cat and dog meat among his inventory contradicts the narrative

that virulent condemnation of these foods was universal among multiethnic communities and suggests instead that they may have been a relatively mundane part of marketing strategies and of daily life for Chinese and non-Chinese Westerners alike.

The similarity of meat types found in the trash feature at BS-844 and in McDevitt's Idaho City Meat Market ledger is also significant in that it suggests a possible second business relationship between the Reid Placer Mine's owners and its occupants. In addition to their meat market in Idaho City, McDevitt and his wife Minnie ran another butcher shop, a slaughterhouse, and animal pens on the Placerville Plaza. In 1885, four years before signing a lease to the Wo Hop Company for claims associated with the Reid Placer Mine, Patrick Dempsey purchased a ½ interest in these properties (Boise County, ID, Deed Records, Book 15:636). Catering to Chinese customers in one of their joint ventures while contracting with Chinese miners in their other, McDevitt and Dempsey's financial strategies exemplify the pervasive economic interdependence of Basin mining networks. On the other end of these business relationships, Chinese miners' overlapping connections to men like McDevitt and Dempsey are also illustrative. While strategies formed around skills passed through communities of practice and materials sourced from diasporic networks could be critical sources of support for Chinese mining companies, access to mining claims and perishable provisions still had to be negotiated at a local scale. Forging trusted relationships, even those predicated on unequal access to resources, offered one way for Chinese miners to meet these needs while also influencing the configuration of local economies.

Specialists, Artifact Modification, and Networks of Support

The long history of the Reid Placer Mine and the archaeological record left by members of the Chinese American mining companies involved in various aspects of its operation offer examples of the risk characteristic of the early Western mining industry as well as the unique ways that such risks manifested and were met along Ophir Creek. Throughout its active years in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, numerous investors, proprietors, and lessors deemed the mine worthy of a gamble despite recurrent water shortages and infrastructure requirements. Except for Henry Reid, and possibly the Wo Hop Company, most miners cycled through relatively short periods of involvement with the venture, setting their experiences, and thus aspects of their material record, apart from those associated with the extended occupancy of the Wong Sing Company along Grimes Creek.

In addition to reflecting the specific challenges of running the Reid Placer Mine, however, the unique combinations of material goods found in artifact assemblages from BS-193 and BS-

844 also express differences in site function relative to other types of company holdings. Importantly, these differences allow for the examination of aspects of Chinese mining networks not seen in previous chapters, nor in the majority of the literature, namely the critical support role played by infrastructure sites like worker housing and storage facilities and of skilled tradespersons like blacksmiths. Artifacts cached in storehouses; created or maintained by blacksmiths; and modified, repurposed, and reused by residents of both Ophir Creek sites all highlight the diversity of networks with which Chinese mining company members engaged and the types of strategies they adapted as they did so.

During its productive years, securing provisions from theft and enlisting the services of a blacksmith during busy mining seasons would have been logical components of any mining company's operation of the Reid Placer Mine. Under the tenancy of the Wo Hop Company and partners Chow Yuen Lee and Charley Sing Lee, however, these aspects of company operations probably took on added significance. Purchasing large volumes of goods, and also potentially at increased risk of racialized crime, Chinese mining companies may have had more reason to centralize provisions at designated infrastructure sites where they would remain under the watchful eye of rotating shift workers. Meanwhile, anti-Chinese ownership laws are likely to have shaped the operation of other infrastructure sites, like those where blacksmiths worked, since both they and company miners appear to have relied, at least in part, on tools transferred with their short-term leases of the Reid Placer Mine. Faced with such circumstances, evidence suggests that the Wo Hop Company and partners Chow Yuen Lee and Charley Sing Lee turned to strategies for "making do" along with others that drew support from social networks and that leveraged personal ingenuity.

One place where all of these tactics are visible is in the material signatures of mining company blacksmiths. Salvaging and stockpiling metal in order to make repairs or create new tools offer easy examples of making use of materials on hand or selecting "the best resources" from the context of what was available (Barton 2022:80). Yet, since many of these vernacular techniques mirrored those of contemporary blacksmiths working across variable scales – from a handful of sites within the Inland Northwest to broadly dispersed transpacific gold rushes – blacksmith-made or modified artifacts also reveal participation in networks of specialized occupational knowledge. Similar to the "social economic technologies" reproduced in other Chinese American diasporic networks (Yu 2020:344), this informal learning contributed to Chinese mining company success in at least two ways. In an immediate sense, the knowledge passed through these occupational networks offered replicable techniques, like the unique style

of pick brace seen in the BS-844 collection, that could improve company mining practice, profit margins, or even worker safety. Over time, however, sustained interactions and personal innovation also contributed to an evolving repertoire of specialized practices that could be drawn upon or adapted as needed.

Conceptualizing the occupational networks where blacksmiths learned these techniques as intimate communities of practice or, depending on scale, as dispersed constellations of practice (Lave and Wenger 1991:30–31) emphasizes the active role of practitioners whose ingenuity in a variety of situations and encounters with overlapping social, economic, and occupational networks shape daily practice for themselves and others. Additionally, since skills learned through social interaction often have material outcomes, communities and constellations of practice offer a way to trace practices archaeologically "in a manner that avoids reifying normative notions of social identity" (Blair 2016:98)—or false distinctions between "Chinese" or "European" material culture use.

Much like items made by blacksmiths, modified, repurposed, and reused materials in the Ophir Creek collections evidence examples of strategic practices employed throughout the course of daily life, but in contexts beyond the workplace. Some of these modifications—the construction of a hinge from tea cans and wire, for example—appear as resourceful inventions distinct to the abilities and needs of site residents. Others follow patterns of reuse embraced by much larger groups. The practice of flattening cans to turn them into building materials, for example, was so widely shared that Chinese residents of Bodie, Nevada, crafted entire economic strategies around supplying their multiethnic community with these repurposed products (Dale 2016:345). As articulated by Margaret Purser (2017:16–19, 26), the repurposing strategies adopted by so many Westerners were facilitated by the sameness of mass-produced goods, available in even the most remote mining camps, and by social networks that extended beyond an individual location. Because global markets ensured that essentially the same suite of goods arrived along with mining booms in locations across the Pacific, extended kinship, migration, and occupational networks could also generally reproduce bottle and can modification practices at vast geographic scale.

Yet, while the mass-produced materials at the heart of repurposing strategies were largely the same, each unique community of practice developed its own specific repertoire of skills based on the evolving experiences of its members. Interaction with more than one community of practice thus carried advantages. Along Ophir Creek, the modified items within Chinese American mining companies' artifact collections correlate to others found at Chinese diaspora

sites, in mining assemblages, and among the broadly defined archaeologies of the American West. Drawing skills and knowledge from diverse sources, these participants not only "made do" with the materials on hand but also found ways to improve upon their material conditions and occupational practice. Boots and picks "made better" through shared innovation demonstrate the advantages of situated learning fostered among broad constellations of practice. Communities and constellations of practice may have also been an important means of expanding the spectrum of resources available to Chinese miners, whose options were otherwise threatened by economic instability and curtailed through race-based exclusion.

Ultimately, the community-sourced strategies that traveled through regional and transpacific constellations of practice shed light on the ways that members of the Wo Hop Company or of the partnership lead by Chow Yuen Lee and Charley Sing Lee confronted the specific challenges of running the Reid Placer Mine. Like the other contexts in which similar strategies have been observed, this undertaking undoubtedly involved risks associated with financial insecurity, short-term occupancy, and the reoccurring scarcity of resources needed to fill ditches and operate the mine. Unlike many other miners in the American West, however, turn of the twentieth century Chinese miners along Ophir Creek also had to contend with an ever shifting and increasingly hostile landscape of exclusion laws and racial prejudice that, while targeted primarily at Chinese migrants made ineligible for citizenship like Chow Yuen Lee, also had consequences for American-born citizens like Charley Sing Lee and for entire extended networks of the Boise Basin's Chinese miners. Ironically, through their exclusion, these laws and restrictions bound individuals such as Chow Yuen Lee and Charley Sing Lee to local relationships with men like Patrick Dempsey and James McDevitt who could provide access to the European American networks through which mining claim tenancy and non-mass-produced items could be sourced.

Examining the material and historical record of each of these linkages in turn, from the local to transnational, reveals the nuanced ways that Chinese mining networks functioned and the varied ways that their members lived their lives. Along Ophir Creek, these members swung hand-forged picks, directed water into hydraulic giants, ate meals from British and Chinese tablewares, drank from cups made from repurposed bottles, set off fireworks in celebration, problem-solved access to claims, and honed blacksmithing techniques. They did so by drawing on diverse networks of support in which artifact modification and the skills of specialists like blacksmiths circulated, adapted, and increased participants' well-being and chances for success.

CHAPTER 5.
A HISTORICAL ARCHAEOLOGY OF CHINESE MINING NETWORKS IN THE BOISE BASIN

Drawing together the historical and archaeological records of individual merchants, miners, and trade specialists, this dissertation has used multiple perspectives and multiple lines of evidence to examine Chinese mining networks once operating within Southern Idaho's Boise Basin. Seen through an agency-based network paradigm (Schortman 2014:168), these webs of relations expose ways that Chinese entrepreneurs repeatedly established lives and livelihoods during the Basin's peak gold rush years of 1860 through 1915. From what may have been the first prospecting party to venture into the area in 1856 to the decline of the placer mining industry more than five decades later, Chinese migrants and Chinese Americans were significant components of daily life in the Basin, at times accounting for as much as half of the local population (Parker 1931:13; U.S. Bureau of the Census 1870; Zhu 1997:2, 55). Despite racial discrimination and exclusionary laws that often targeted their participation in gold mining endeavors specifically, more than 90 percent of Chinese Basinites entered the placer industry (Zhu 1997:97). Even more negotiated opportunities for themselves throughout the mining economy as members of intricate webs of mining partnerships, supply chains, and support services that crosscut much of their local community. Within these multifaceted mining networks, Chinese entrepreneurs established a resilient presence in the Basin's most lucrative but also most notoriously uncertain industry.

Proceeding through three different vantage points along Chinese mining networks, previous chapters illustrate some of the complex negotiations that diverse actors used to retain this presence in an industry that simultaneously depended on and disadvantaged their participation. Historical sources and archaeological collections related to merchant families living in Idaho City, miners working the hills around "Old Boston," and blacksmiths supporting operation of the Reid Placer Mine reveal that mining network members were far from homogenous and their experiences often highly situational. Yet, their actions became part of an evolving suite of interrelated tactics that both Chinese Basinites and their network associates used to maximize their chances for inclusion and financial gain throughout the Basin's relatively long-lasting placer mining period.

This chapter summarizes and then brings together findings from each of the proceeding ones to more fully examine this suite of tactics and how their expression within Chinese mining networks influenced life in the Basin. Viewing these results cumulatively, I propose that mining

networks were significant sites in which Chinese Basinites confronted and contested manifestations of racial exclusion and economic instability, often through locally defined practice, connections to outside resources, and distinctive types of working relationships shared with pluralistic community members. Reconstructing Chinese mining networks over time, I also survey how Chinese Basinites came to influence not just their own livelihoods but also various occupational, material, and social aspects of daily life in the Boise Basin for more than 50 years.

Reconstructing Chinese Mining Networks

Borrowing select concepts and methods from network theory, this dissertation has used network thinking (Knappett 2011:51) as a flexible framework to bring the historical archaeology of Chinese miners in Southern Idaho's Boise Basin into dialog with Western histories that investigate gold rush communities as arenas of unsettled social and economic relations (e.g., Arata 2020; Herbert 2018; Johnson 2000) and emergent transnational and anti-racist frameworks within Chinese diaspora archaeology (e.g., Lee 2020b; Fong 2020; Fong et al. 2022; Ng 2020, 2021; Voss et al. 2018). Inherently relational and multiscalar, network approaches are especially well-suited for interrogating what other authors have described as the shifting constellations of small-scale encounters through which actors navigate their daily lives. Within agency-based perspectives, these routine social interactions take on special significance as instances where individuals or groups express and flexibly adapt strategies that are based on opportunities and constraints created by local conditions, larger circulations of resources, and structures of inequality (Cornell and Fahlander 2007:3–4; Mills 2017:383, 390; Schortman 2014:168). Because they are constantly reworked as actors respond to changing circumstances, networks create a highly situational landscape in which accumulated actions can reconfigure subsequent interactions and even entire webs of interpersonal dealings (Schortman 2014:167–168). Throughout this study, an agency-based network paradigm has been used to survey webs of relations conceptualized as Chinese mining networks to reveal ways that their many participants both shaped, and were shaped by, their rural gold rush community.

Network thinking has also guided this study's scope and methods. At groups of sites related to Chinese merchants, miners, and industry specialists, I have drawn from ego network analysis methods to follow clues about each individual's disparate connections through an archaeological record of more than 58,000 artifacts and through historical sources like property documents, business records, and Chinese Exclusion Act case files (Latour 2005:29; Mills 2014:383). In doing so, I have not limited my analyses to tightly bounded or strictly defined

mining sites. Rather, I offer a more inclusive exploration of the actors whose interactions helped define Chinese mining practice in the Basin over time. Summarized briefly below, the resulting vignettes sample the strategies and network connections that differently situated mining network members leveraged to increase financial success or aspects of well-being.

The Situated Strategies of Merchants, Miners, and Specialists

Most members of the three generations of Loke Kee family members to call Idaho City home and of the business enterprise known colloquially as the Pon Yam store identified primarily as merchants. Both parties nonetheless played critical roles within Chinese mining networks for more than 30 years. As access points to a variety of resources, the market-making and community-brokering efforts of these merchant families extended flows of people, products, and information through *jinshanzhuang* ("gold mountain firms") into the Basin where, along with strategically sourced European- and American-made products, they formed the material basis for much of daily life (Amos Di Sang letterbook 1886–1895; Hsu 2006:26–27). Pon Yam and the Loke Kee family also both drew income from the mining industry directly, often using their relative privilege and distinctive positions as merchants to do so. These actions shaped mining networks as family members bought and sold mining leases from Chinese companies, employed workers in their own mining ventures, furnished goods for mining contracts, and formed unique partnerships that challenged the mining industry's explicit and implicit exclusions (*Idaho World* 1881b:3; Boise County, ID, Lease Records, Book 1:283–285, Book 2:23–24).

Beyond these overtly economic exchanges, however, members of the Pon Yam and Loke Kee families also provide examples of some of the more subtle or fluid strategies upon which Chinese Basinites relied. Their many engagements expose ways that mining ventures in the Basin were inexorably linked with social networks, community dynamics, and attempts to manage adverse and unpredictable circumstances. Archaeological materials recovered from Pon Yam's store, for example, provide evidence not just of his own business strategies but also of sociality, religious practices, nutritionally and culturally diverse foods, and recreational pursuits that facilitated important aspects of their patrons' personal and communal well-being. In much the same way that these materials illustrate the interdependencies between merchants and mining community members, business records from Loke Kee's family store demonstrate that Chinese merchants' influence was not absolute. It frequently hinged on the purchasing power of Chinese mining customers, tactful negotiations with European American suppliers,

and a persistent attentiveness to each family member's changing status under the Chinese Exclusion Act and other US laws.

Several miles further into the Basin, Wong Sing (黃勝) Company managers Wong Sing and How Sing navigated an equally complex social and economic landscape to establish a long-lasting mining operation along Grimes Creek. Leasing property from the recently naturalized Stephen Dempsey that their own immigrant status barred them from purchasing, overseeing complicated water conveyance and hydraulic mining operations, and obtaining company provisions from a variety of suppliers, the Wong Sing Company occupied the hillslopes surrounding the former town of Boston for more than a decade (Campbell et al. 2019). Analyses of artifacts and historical ledgers suggests members sourced many company provisions through wholesale orders placed by Chinese merchants. Other items likely came from select European American markets and from some degree of supplemental self-provisioning by company members (Amos Di Sang letterbook 1886–1895; Campbell et al. 2019:50–52; McDevitt 1875–1887; Unidentified Mercantile 1917–1918). Spreading their patronage across several supply chains may have helped the Wong Sing Company to meet the varied and evolving needs of their sustained operation, but notably could also be interpreted as ways to proactively manage risk and pursue operational independence. The latter is also reflected in Wong Sing and How Sing's 12-year contract with Stephen Dempsey. Part of a larger Basin trend that reconfigured leasing practices in the wake of the Chinese Exclusion Act, the Wong Sing Company's working relationship with Dempsey exemplifies an evolving strategy for maintaining degrees of autonomy within the enforced dependencies created by citizenship clauses in property ownership laws (Boise County, ID, Lease Records, Book 1:232–235, Book 2:78–79).

Along Ophir Creek, Chinese mining companies' successive occupations of the Reid Placer Mine capture another type of leasing in the Basin and yet another set of network-sourced strategies for occupational survival. Here, sites associated with a bunk- or storehouse and with company blacksmiths encompass aspects of Chinese mining operations not preserved in the archaeological record of the Wong Sing Company. Material culture from these sites, which includes an array of hand-forged and modified artifacts, highlights the importance of trade specialists, support infrastructure, and knowledge passed through communities of practice (Wenger 1998:4–5) to Chinese mining ventures. Related to tenures by the Wo Hop Company and/or mining partners Charley Sing Lee and Chow Yuen Lee, the skillful manipulation of material culture seen in these assemblages might have been especially important in the context of the short-term contract the latter partners held for the Reid Placer Mine (Boise County, ID,

Lease Records, Book 1:219–220, Book 2:84–85). Working with infrastructure and tools inherited through their lease and a property whose profit margins frequently required its former owner to take out loans, Charley Sing Lee and Chow Yuen Lee's single season lease also illustrates the narrowing array of opportunities that increased exclusion efforts and the Basin's declining industry created for Chinese miners in the first decades of the twentieth century.

Multi-sited Networks and the Accumulated Tactics of Daily Life

Considered together these three case studies begin to reconstruct the far-reaching, complex, and enduring networks maintained by Chinese miners within the Boise Basin. Previous chapters admittedly capture only a very small percentage of the historical actors who once populated all the major towns and waterways of the Basin and held positions throughout its placer industry. Even so, they illustrate that Chinese Basinites continued to find ways to engage in the mining industry in spite of unrelenting restriction, exclusion, and uncertainty. They also highlight actors whose diverse support, supply, or land-owning roles fall outside narrow definitions of miners but were no less essential to mining operations. Chinese mining network's occupational ties extended, for instance, to Chinese merchants and trade specialists whose multiscalar connections supplied Basin miners with aspects of selfcare routines, the food and goods that furnished their seasonal worksite homes, and occupational skills circulated through regional specialists like blacksmiths.

In the Basin, Chinese mining networks also incorporated many European American property owners, including white women whose largely unrecognized participation in the industry is documented in leases negotiated exclusively with Chinese mining companies. Ties to property owners took both long-standing and temporary forms, but frequently featured unequal citizenship rights, as poignantly illustrated by the handful of examples in this study in which Irish[1] but not Chinese immigrants were granted naturalization rights. European American businesses, too, often interacted with Chinese mining networks to the extent that, in certain instances, multiple, overlapping economic connections existed between individuals like butcher James McDevitt and merchant-miner Chow Yuen Lee. Illustrating some of the complicated entanglements contained within the Basin's mining industry, these ties highlight the considerable role Chinese mining networks played in pluralistic business ventures and local

[1] Though naturalization rights were shared by other "white" immigrants, with the exception of Pon Yam's leases, each of the parties leasing to Chinese mining companies in the previous chapters were first-generation Irish immigrants who acquired citizenship before purchasing mining properties. These include: Stephen Dempsey, Patrick Dempsey, Patrick Doyle, Neil Doyle, James McDevitt, Henry Reid, and possibly also John J. Elliott (Boise County, ID, Certificates of Citizenship, Book 1:22 and Records of Naturalization, Book 1:40; U.S. Census Bureau 1900:3, 6).

communities until the end of the placer mining boom. Viewing this dissertation's case studies in the aggregate thus exposes some of the intricate connections that bound Chinese mining networks together. Examining how these relations varied over time also reveals their evolving influence on the Boise Basin's mining practices, material worlds, and social dynamics.

Mining Industry Practice

Spanning nearly all of the Basin's relatively long placer mining era, previous chapters capture how diverse actors managed to persist, and sometimes even thrive, despite persistent attempts at Chinese exclusion. From its inception, the mining industry in the Boise Basin presented Chinese residents with a specific set of barriers to entry that changed forms in accordance with local economic prospects, territorial or state laws, and nationally imposed exclusion policies (see Table 1.2). Until about 1867, incorporation laws for local mining districts forbade Chinese participation entirely (Wegars 2001:8). Early arrivals like Pon Yam, who relocated to Idaho City in the early 1860s, thus indirectly drew income from the industry by providing goods or services to mining towns. Establishing himself in the retail and restaurant trades in these initial years, Pon Yam, like his fellow merchants Wong Chong and Loke Kee, nonetheless entered the mining industry once local districts began repealing exclusionary mining laws. Taking advantage of the short-lived ownership opportunities that followed, Wong Chong, and perhaps also Pon Yam, bought and sold mining claims in the 1870s. This was also the period when the Loke Kee family and merchants affiliated with Pon Yam purchased the buildings that would house their Idaho City businesses and serve as community anchors in the decades that followed.

As anti-Chinese violence spread across the American West, the passage of the 1882 Chinese Exclusion Act and subsequent laws stripped most Chinese Basinites of naturalization rights and, by extension, the ownership privileges afforded to their European counterparts (Lee 2003:13). In the wake of this dispossession, Boise Basin property records show a marked increase in leasing. These new contracts were disproportionately made out to Chinese companies that, in an effort to continue accessing mining claims, turned to this imperfect alternative to property ownership. The Wong Sing Company was among the majority of Chinese Basinites to adopt this strategy, negotiating an extended lease for miles of mining claims and ditch networks near the faded town of Boston. Although their arrangement had clear disadvantages as compared to outright ownership, through it the Wong Sing Company secured mostly independent oversight of hydraulic operations in the hills surrounding Boston for what turned out to be a twelve-year period (Boise County, ID, Lease Records, Book 1:235, Book 2:78–79).

At the same time, other Chinese miners like Pon Yam, Chow Yuen Lee, and Charley Sing Lee turned to short-term contracts, typically lasting only a season or two. Working properties like the Noble or Reid placer mines required more frequent interactions with landowners or their agents who often set wage scales, appointed or reserved the right to approve on-site supervisors, and were present to verify and collect a percentage of profits at predetermined intervals (Boise County, ID, Lease Records, Book 1:283–285, Book 2:84). It is possible that short term leases' more intensive interaction requirements were among the reasons that claim owners like Hattie Noble preferred to work with Chinese miners or that already established business associates like Chow Yuen Lee and James McDevitt might have preferred signing multiple contracts with one another to initiating new relationships (Boise County, ID, Lease Records, Book 2:68). Although they were less autonomous than their longer-term counterparts, the two short-term leases detailed in this study both conferred access to established mines that, despite their uncertain ownership futures, were known to have high yields and infrastructure standing ready for use. Developing specific tactics to make the most of these circumstances, some Chinese miners like Pon Yam managed to turn short-term leases into profitable enterprises and even to corner this emergent sector of the mining industry.

In addition to the barriers it erected to accessing mining claims, the Chinese Exclusion Act and its amendments also created a marked divide between first-generation Chinese migrants and the smaller number of Chinese Americans like Di Ti Di Sang who, by virtue of their birthright citizenship, could own mining and other properties. Di Ti's purchases of the claims that her father and brothers mined along Buena Vista Bar as well as the properties that housed her conjugal family and their restaurant, demonstrate the advantage that this relatively uncommon position conferred (Boise County, ID, Deed Records, Book 17:157–158, 458–460, Book 23:567–569). As Di Ti's legal status transformed in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, both her American citizenship and her family's merchant status afforded a degree of protection from structural anti-Chinese racism that many other Basinites lacked. Ironically, even as policies spurred by Exclusion Act amendments required Di Ti and other residents with Chinese ancestry to "prove" their legal standing through an arduous and invasive registration process, Idaho became one of the first states in the nation to adopt women's suffrage. Thus, Di Ti became eligible to vote (Blackwell 1900:1; Hart 2002b:95; Johnson 2022:46–47). Evidence suggests that, adapting to these changes, Di Ti repeatedly used her voting rights, as she had her property ownership rights, to support her family's and community's standing (Blackwell 1900:1; Zhu 1997:174-175).

For other players in the mining industry, however, changes to the definitions of *merchant* and *laborer* classes that explicitly grouped miners with the latter's lessening rights led to further precarity. Prohibitions on leaving and reentering the country, registration requirements, and deportation threats likely impacted all Chinese Basinites but were more serious for miners than for their merchant neighbors (Lee 2003:86-88; Maupin 1899:24; Rose et al. 2021:415 – 419). At the same time, the Idaho legislature passed a state-wide law prohibiting large companies from employing non-citizens like Chinese migrants (Zhu 1997:188–191). Timed to take effect just as the Basin's placer industry began to garnish sustained interest from outside investors, the combined impact on Basin mining practice can be seen in lease records, which show a decrease in Chinese lessors beginning in the late 1890s but a significant uptick in European American contracts, many with out-of-state parties, that included purchase options (e.g., Boise County, ID, Lease Records, Book 2:29–31, 33–34; see Table 3.1).

It is in this period that Chow Yuen Lee and Charley Sing Lee signed their short-term lease for the Reid Placer Mine. A special census of residents with Chinese ancestry conducted in Idaho and Montana in 1905 reveals that as they did so; both men claimed statuses that offered some protection from cascading exclusionist policies. The then 34-year-old Charley Sing Lee had been born in Idaho, and so was able to claim US citizenship—a standing that gave him the ability to buy property like a home in Placerville, but that probably also helped him navigate exclusion policies to continue mining in the Basin until the early twentieth century (State of Idaho 1923; US Bureau of the Census 1900:6, 1905:34, 1910:2). Persisting in the Basin's mining industry the longest of any of the individuals detailed in this dissertation, Centerville resident Chow Yuen Lee registered as a merchant under the Geary Act in 1894 citing ties to Boise-area businesses as evidence of his position (US Bureau of Immigration 1905:32). Despite claiming this exempted and supposedly exclusive status, Chow Yuen Lee remained in possession of his Clay Creek claims even after his tenure at the Reid Placer Mine, mining, perhaps clandestinely, until at least 1916 (Boise County, ID, Miscellaneous Records, Book 6:59; US Bureau of Immigration 1905:32). Highlighting the acute resiliency Chinese Basinites needed to survive in the twentieth century mining industry, Chow Yuen Lee's experience may also reflect one of the more veiled affronts of evolving Chinese Exclusion legislation. As other authors have noted, although merchant status became increasingly essential for legal residency over time, its income alone was often far less substantial than what could be earned in other "restricted" occupations like mining (Rose et al. 2021:420).

Throughout the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth century, the anti-Chinese movement's restrictions and exclusions, along with less codified forms of racial prejudice, meant that the Boise Basin's Chinese mining networks had to remain vigilantly adaptive as the statuses of both Chinese migrants and Chinese Americans shifted. Enduring this fluctuating context for more than 50 years, the Chinese entrepreneurs featured in this dissertation pursued industry inclusion through an array of individual and communal tactics. Within the interconnected networks of the Basin, these accumulated strategies can be seen to have affected not just their own livelihoods and survivance but also aspects of the industry itself over time. Other authors have documented, for example, that an influx of Chinese miners in the late 1860s helped stave off the Basin's first major economic downturn and that continued infusions of Chinese mine operators, laborers, and specialists critically propped up the industry over subsequent decades (Wegars 1995:8–9; Zhu 1997:45, 121).

The case studies examined here suggest additional ways that Chinese miners' practices and participation impacted the composition and long-term survival of the industry. Leasing tactics embraced by Chinese miners, for example, fostered unique relationships that supported the entrance of white women like Hattie Noble, Ann French, or Mary Haug into the industry as landowners. At the same time, the idiosyncrasies of anti-Chinese exclusion laws encouraged Di Ti Di Sang's relatively unique participation in the Basin's pluralistic mining practices. In other instances, exclusionary measures were so sweeping that Chinese miners' responses can be seen to have reconfigured practices in the Basin as a whole. Records demonstrate that this was the case when the Chinese Exclusion Act forced Chinese miners to find less favorable alternatives to claim ownership. In the decade following 1882, an industry-wide shift took place as leases for mining property in the Basin increased three-fold. Although leases were used by even exclusively European American parties, the importance of Chinese miners to sustaining this practice can be seen in the subsequent move away from extended leases and towards lease-to-purchase agreements as most Chinese miners left the Basin in the early twentieth century (see Table 3.1).

Material Worlds

Chinese miners' attempts to contest occupational exclusion were not the only tactics to play out in Chinese mining networks. Additional network axes highlight how strategies articulated in the market making actions of merchants, the purchasing power of mining companies, and the artifact modifications shared by communities of practice came to shape many aspects of Basinites' material and social worlds. Previous discussions demonstrate, for example, that as

merchants like Pon Yam and Loke Kee curated connections to a global array of goods, their negotiations structured the range of options available in the Basin. Newspapers and oral histories recount that Chinese stores in the Basin were especially well-stocked with items that appealed to an array of customers (*Owyhee Avalanche* 1876; Thorne 1976:22–24; Zhu 1997:116). For Chinese patrons, these establishments took on additional significance. Archaeological collections indicate that Pon Yam's store was a place for Chinese residents to find unique products from around the globe, to share a meal, or test their luck in a game of chance (Davis and Osgood 2017:5; Sinn 2013:185; US IRS 1869:224; 1870:283, 312). Moreover, offering spaces to socialize amid a sometimes-hostile environment, Chinese stores were places where material practices intended to foster physical, spiritual, or communal well-being—like lighting incense sticks or pecking an auspicious character into a plate—could be enacted and shared. Chinese merchants played a similarly prominent role in holidays, providing many of the items like firecrackers or candied melon seeds traditionally used to celebrate occasions like Lunar New Year, along with an array of European American specialties like cigars, champagne, and perhaps even absinthe. During these festivities, shops also hosted their multiethnic neighbors and gave gifts to community members that might include silk handkerchiefs or ornate bottles of Worcestershire sauce (*Idaho Statesman* 1908b:6; Wegars 2000:23; Zhu 1997:163).

Further afield, along drainages throughout the Basin, material remnants of Chinese merchants' market connections are also abundant on mining sites. Miners who cooked in large iron woks with ingredients shipped in a variety of Chinese brown-glazed stoneware containers, tended to tired muscles with patent remedies and traditional Chinese medicines, and donned aspects of the typical "miner's costume" (e.g., Herbert 2018:137–139) complete with small caliber handguns, likely sourced many of their products through Chinese merchants. Ledgers and archaeological collections from the Wong Sing Company's operations along Grimes Creek indicate that Chinese merchants, in particular, may have also supported mining companies' bulk provisioning strategies (Amos Di Sang letterbook 1886–1895:[8–10]). Bolstering efficiency and autonomy as mining companies began their around-the-clock operations in the spring, these large orders notably also appear to have carried benefits for merchants who could leverage the additional purchasing power to build relationships with favored business contacts like Amandus Fenkhausen who, even from far outside of the Basin, actively pursued Chinese mining markets through merchants like Loke Kee (Amos Di Sang letterbook 1886–1895:[3–4]).

As primary links to the supply chains circulating resources through the Basin, records indicate that Chinese merchants like Loke Kee strategically selected the companies with whom

they did business and the products they admitted into their inventories (e.g., Amos Di Sang letterbook 1886–1895:[5]). In many instances, they acted as the intermediaries through which American wholesalers like the New Jersey Rubber Shoe Company courted Chinese customers and were also the main access points to the vast array of international goods being shipped across the Pacific by *jinshanzhuang.* This afforded merchants considerable authority over the material worlds of their fellow Chinese Basinites and over the flow of capital and other resources into their multiethnic community. Yet, even as merchants like Loke Kee leveraged their expansive network connections to grow their own influence and fortunes, business records suggest ways that they were also beholden to these same relationships (Amos Di Sang letterbook 1886–1895:[3–8]). Especially as racialized actors within an uncertain economy, some of the market-making power exercised by the Basin's Chinese merchants hinged on degrees of economic interdependency between European American business associates and Chinese mining network customers. Further tied to the latter through shared and potentially overlapping mutual aid, employment, kinship, or home place associations, Chinese merchants negotiated these interdependencies along nonexclusive lines of personal gain and reciprocity (Bronson and Ho 2015:140–141; Boise County, ID, Deed Records, Book 11:437; *Idaho World* 1875b:3; 1881a:3; 1881b:3; 1882b:3;1893:1; Sinn 2003; Voss et al. 2018:412; Young 2014:267). By navigating their contingent power skillfully, Pon Yam and the Loke Kee family each positioned themselves as linchpins connecting the Basin's miners to local, regional, and global markets that shaped much of their material, social, and economic worlds.

Molding local markets was not the exclusive territory of Chinese merchants, however. Business records raise the possibility that some Basin stores did not serve Chinese customers. At those that did, however, transaction records show Chinese Basinites purchasing things like rice and canned oysters from general stores, fabric and sewing items from an Idaho City haberdashery, and large quantities of meat from butcher shops (McDevitt 1875–1887; Unidentified Mercantile 1917–1918:233, 310, 314–315, 364; Unidentified Haberdashery 1889–1897:239). Elsewhere, historical ledgers indicate that European American merchants sometimes carried Chinese-manufactured items as a means of attracting customers from local mining populations (LaLande 1981:27). While equivalent inventories from the Basin don't reference these same imported goods, they do include items consistently seen on Chinese mining sites (see Chapter 3), and oral histories suggest that Chinese customers were not afraid to make their preferences for certain products, like a particular flavor of jelly, for instance,

known to the European American proprietors who were willing to take their business (Hiler 1976:13).

The most explicit evidence of merchants adjusting their inventories according to the preferences of their Chinese or Chinese American patrons appears in account books from the McDevitt Meat Market. James McDevitt oversaw two Basin butcher shops, a slaughterhouse, and animal pens along with several other European American partners who served a clientele largely made up of Chinese miners (Boise County, ID, Deed Records, Book 15:636; McDevitt 1873–1877). Itemized entries from his Idaho City establishment demonstrate that the McDevitt Meat Market sold products favored by Chinese patrons, including pig feet or cheek cuts, along with cat and dog meat (e.g., McDevitt 1875–1887:41, 59, 185, 206, 266). These last two products have been highly exoticized in anti-Chinese rhetoric and even some contemporary archaeological literature but appear with mundane regularity among the McDevitt Meat Market's inventory. Their recurrent procurement, preparation, and sale by the Basin's most well-known butcher illustrate a concerted attempt to appeal to Chinese customers but also that European American prohibitions against the consumption of either species may not have been as universal as is commonly assumed.

The preferences of Chinese mining company members likely also contributed to the careful product selections seen in the Loke Kee family's business records. Loke Kee's refusal to carry New Jersey Rubber Boot Company footwear, for instance, is explained in correspondence as a desire to offer a more durable product than what he knew to be available from his European American competitors (Amos Di Sang letterbook 1886–1895:[5]). While this might simply be seen as an attempt at market differentiation, archaeological evidence insinuates that it could also have been predicated on the desires of Loke Kee's customer base. That at least some Basin miners were willing and able to pay for long-lasting boots can be inferred from an intact "pure gum" shoe stamp recovered from the Wong Sing Company's mining sites. According to contemporary Sears and Roebuck catalogs, this shoe stamp could have adorned any number of "first quality" rubber boots, including several sold under Loke Kee's preferred Woonsocket Rubber Company brand (Amos Di Sang letterbook 1886–1895:[5]; Sears, Roebuck and Company 2007:204). Analyses conducted elsewhere also support a tendency for rural Chinese miners to purchase outerwear items based on their durability (Lee 2020b:97). Together these examples suggest sourcing quality footwear was a concern that many Chinese miners shared. As such, it was also likely a concern that weighed into the calculations of Chinese merchants like Loke Kee who could redirect the Basin's supply chains towards quality manufacturers.

A ubiquitous reminder of the dynamic influence both miners and merchants exerted over Basin market networks, rubber boot fragments occur in every archaeological collection discussed in this dissertation. At mining sites along Grimes and Ophir creeks, however, many of these fragments take on additional significance as part of a suite of artifacts modified by Chinese miners and blacksmiths. Along with a range of other repurposed, reused, and hand-crafted items, boot soles embedded with after-market hobnails offer yet another example of the day-to-day tactics that successively reshaped Chinese miners' material worlds. As they refashioned cans into roofing shingles, door latches, or bean sprout germinators and bottles into drinking glasses or opium lamp chimneys, Chinese mining company members actively redefined the products around them to generate what they needed at worksites and homes dispersed throughout the Basin.

Frequently interpreted as "making do" (e.g., Barna 2008:11) with the limited options on hand, many of these artifact modifications reflect common forms seen at sites associated with miners, Chinese migrants, rural locations, or socially disadvantaged communities (e.g., Barton 2022: 69–80; Furnis and Maniery 2015: 78–80; Hardesty 1991:31, 2011:215; Purser 2017:13; Ritchie 1986: 340, 392, 554; Watkins 2021). In the Basin these techniques were part of a larger repertoire of strategies that, in addition to saving money or increasing material options in the face of discrimination, could foster multiple and flexible ends, from the advancement of occupational skills to self-expression. Adding hobnails to shoes, for example, was not exclusive from strategies aimed at securing top-tier products, since even high-quality rubber boots were embedded with hobnails to increase their traction. Similarly, techniques honed by blacksmiths could both extend the functionality of mining tools passed through property leases and give rise to newly improved forms like the distinctive braced pick style identified at Chinese mining sites in eastern Oregon and parts of Idaho (Campbell and Rose 2023:3). Even at an individual level, modifying a ceramic plate or a dish with a personalized peck mark might simultaneously assert ownership over a recontextualized item, express hopes for the future, and recreate a familiar communal practice (Voss 2008:47).

Visible only in the archaeological record, these and other modifications reveal sophisticated repertoires of informal practice and knowledge curated within Chinese mining networks. As they accumulated, the adaptable skills and specialized technologies circulating through these networks formed constellations of practice (Wenger 1998:126–121) that connected Chinese Basinites with miners as far away as New Zealand, kin networks extending back to home villages in southern China, and blacksmiths working at mining sites in Oregon and Idaho

(Campbell and Rose 2023:3; Ng 2021:181–183; Ritchie 1986:340, 392, 554). With these constellations of practice, Chinese miners sometimes bypassed, but more often supplemented, primary market chains like those linked to Loke Kee, Pon Yam, or James McDevitt to further augment the distinctive material signatures of Boise Basin Chinese mining sites.

Social Relations

Chinese mining network members' many strategies frequently arose from or were enacted through social interactions at various scales. Commonly examined in archaeological studies of mining labor and in histories of the Gold Rush West, social interactions have been shown to be dynamic sites where existing power structures could be enforced, redefined, or contested (e.g., Arata 2020; Hardesty 2011:215; Herbert 2018; Johnson 2000; Sunseri 2020a). In agency-based network paradigms, social interactions are also explicitly acknowledged as spheres where the tactics of daily life shape, and are shaped by, the opportunities and constraints of their participants (Lazzari 2005:205; Schortman 2014:167–168). Seen through this paradigm, the expansive social webs reconstructed here reveal ways that Chinese mining network members leveraged different types of relationships to navigate, and occasionally contour, the unique social landscape of the Boise Basin.

The Basin's Chinese mining networks frequently involved working relationships forged across class, gender, racial, and ethnic lines. Additionally, although most Chinese miners held jobs replete with hard, physical labor, not all miners were unskilled nor were they homogeneous in other ways. Records surveyed in this research describe contractors, shift supervisors, skilled ditch-tenders, and trained blacksmiths among the many positions held by Chinese mining company members (e.g., Boise County, ID, Lease Records, Book 1:283–285, Book 2:84). Individuals performing these various tasks hailed from across the Basin's socioeconomic spectrum, ranging from entry-level laborers to members of the wealthiest merchant families (Hall 1968:23; Lok 2007:18–19). Additionally, on occasion both Chinese and European American women participated in Basin's Chinese mining networks, most often by leasing claims to merchant-miners like Pon Yam (e.g., Boise County, ID, Deed Records, Book 17:157–158 and Lease Records, Book 1:283–285).

Many other white landowners also pursued working relationships with Chinese miners. In the Basin's relatively long placer mining period, these relationships sometimes lasted for more than a decade and led to additional business dealings. Members of the Wong Sing Company, for example, maintained their lease with Stephen Dempsey for twelve years (Boise County, ID, Lease Records, Book 1:235). Chow Yuen Lee's prolonged association with butcher James

McDevitt involved multiple mining contracts negotiated over a 15-year period and may also have included patronage of the McDevitt Meat Market (Boise County, ID, Lease Records, Book 2:68 and Miscellaneous Records, Book 6:59). Compelled, in most cases, by manifestations of racism that denied Chinese Basinites equal access to property ownership and economic mobility, relations such as these enmeshed diverse Chinese miners, European American landowners, women, and wealthy merchants into the same occupational networks. As these pluralistic individuals engaged with one another, their interactions sometimes upheld established inequalities. At other times, however, these strategic working relationships provided avenues for challenging the boundaries of social categories or industry exclusions.

In other types of business relationships, too, Chinese mining network members diligently sought ways to assert their autonomy or build alliances in uniquely defined social spaces. As Pon Yam and Loke Kee navigated markets for labor and goods, evidence suggests that they often exploited the mutual, albeit uneven, dependencies of their gold rush economy to secure choice items for their shops or fair terms for their contracts. The commercial letters described above, for instance, document the Loke Kee family turning down unfavorable business dealings and maneuvering market chains towards preferred products (Amos Di Sang letterbook 1886–1895:[3–8]). Similarly, surviving mining and lumber contracts all indicate that Pon Yam negotiated wage scales and lease payments comparable with his non-Chinese competitors (Boise Mining Company 1893–1895:19; Boise County, ID, Lease Records, Book 2:27). Widely recognized for his ability to mobilize a large and skilled workforce along with the provisions they required, Pon Yam's competitive wages were, in fact, common-enough knowledge that even a fabricated lumber contract could elicit raises for Chinese cooks one county over in Boise (*Idaho Statesman* 1881:3).

As they worked to create regional business ties and local market spheres that might lessen their experiences of exclusion or discrimination, Chinese mining network members simultaneously maintained links to transnational and diasporic resources that further supported their community. In cities and towns throughout the American West, Chinese migrants created an array of interconnected social organizations and mutual-aid groups. In the Basin, sources suggest that merchants Pon Yam and Loke Kee took leading roles in directing the services offered through these diasporic organizations into the local community (Bronson and Ho 2015:116–140; *Idaho World* 1875b:3). Other Chinese diaspora network members likely provided occupational training (Yu 2019:190). Archaeological materials suggest that proficiencies in blacksmithing techniques, emergent placer mining technology, and material

modifications may all have been informally transmitted and refined through potentially overlapping multiscalar networks. Crafting support networks through a constellation of individual relationships, Chinese mining network members thus adopted various strategies for survival and inclusion that also asserted sway over the occupational, material, and social dynamics of their rural mining community for more than five decades.

Establishing Lives, Livelihoods, and Resilience in a Rural Gold Rush Economy

Southern Idaho's Boise Basin is home to a rich historical and archaeological record. Comprised of functionally and temporally distinct sites that span both the geographic extent and the relatively long placer-mining period of the Boise Basin, it is a record that invites multiple scales of analysis. From still-standing buildings to mining features distributed throughout the forest, individual sites express ways that differently situated Chinese merchants, miners, and trade specialists created livelihoods within the area's nineteenth and twentieth-century gold industry. Considered together, these sites also begin to reveal a host of complex interactions between Chinese mining network members and their sometimes-far-reaching consequences. It is this broader view that highlights Chinese mining networks themselves as significant sites in which to examine local manifestations of racial exclusion and economic instability, as well as the evolving suite of tactics that Chinese miners used confront these forces in their daily lives.

Surveying these networks, for example, exposes ways that the Basin's mining industry changed over time, most notably in response to federal exclusion legislation that impacted Chinese miners across the American West. These expanding restrictions, which often dovetailed with state laws and less codified forms of racial prejudice, meant that Chinese Basinites had to remain vigilantly adaptive. From different sites and different positions within the industry, miners like Pon Yam, the Loke Kee family, the Wong Sing Company, the Wo Hop Company, Charley Sing Lee, and Chow Yuen Lee did exactly this, often shaping industry-wide practices in the progress. As miners like Pon Yam and Wong Sing, for instance, negotiated leases with mostly European American property owners, they forged unique working relationships and created spaces within the industry's forced dependency to operate in relative autonomy. By the twentieth-century, Chow Yuen Lee and Charley Sing Lee faced an increasingly narrow set of exclusion law exemptions. Claiming merchant and birthright citizenship statuses in order satisfy or elude these ever more arduous restrictions, each man continued mining until the very end of the Basin's peak gold rush period.

Both as miners and merchants, Chinese Basinites also left an indelible mark on the material culture and resources that circulated through the Basin. Together, the market-making actions of Pon Yam and Loke Kee's well-connected merchant family tapped into the flows of *jinshanzhuang* networks and curated regional supply chains to procure products that appealed to Chinese miners and that could provision large workforces dispersed across distant mining claims (Amos Di Sang letterbook 1886–1895:[3–8]; Hsu 2000:34, 2006:26–27, 29). As ecumenical consumers, Chinese Basinites also patronized European American butchers, haberdasheries, and general stores. While some Basin shops may not have welcomed Chinese customers, others specifically sought their patronage and occasionally adjusted store inventories to do so (Hiler 1976:13; McDevitt 1875–1887:41, 59, 185). At times, Chinese miners and blacksmiths supplemented these formal market chains by modifying the products already around them to create more useful or even entirely new items. Cumulatively, these tactics provided the material basis for forms of occupational and communal well-being across mining networks that included burning incense to honor gods and ancestors, wearing boots that performed in wet or muddy conditions, swinging picks reinforced against breakage, and celebrating holidays with traditional Chinese snack foods or, perhaps on occasion, the elaborate "la louche" ritual associated with absinthe (Habkirk and Chang 2017:168–169; Minchinton 2021:180–181; Sears, Roebuck and Company 2007:204).

As the Basin's diverse Chinese mining network members interacted with one another, they also contributed to the distinctive social landscape in their rural mining town. In mining practice, market economies, and social exchanges, encounters between Chinese network members provided opportunities for strategic maneuvering that could either challenge or enforce the boundaries of exclusion and inequality. Though predicated on uneven distributions of power, Chinese miners, merchants, and blacksmiths all forged distinct types of relationships in which they could pursue individual or collective goals that often included creating inroads into their community's primary industry. During the long period of placer mining in the Basin, some of these relationships grew into routine, though occasionally uncommon, forms in which, for example, women and Chinese miners repeatedly forged alliances or mining companies who were barred from property ownership brokered long-standing lease agreements. Through business ties, mutual aid organizations, and communities of practice, Chinese Basinites also found ways to leverage interdependencies, assert autonomy, and contest discrimination at various scales. In so doing, Chinese Basinites curated webs of interactions where merchants like Pon Yam could negotiate reasonable wages, Loke Kee could source preferred products, and

blacksmiths could refine skillsets that helped them to survive and, ultimately, to cultivate community resilience amid the cascading effects of codified exclusion, racial discrimination, and economic uncertainty.

CHAPTER 6. CONCLUSION

Chinese Mining Networks, Historical Archaeology, and the Legacy of the Once-Bustling Basin

In the early twentieth century a coalescence of factors led to precipitous population declines in rural areas like the Boise Basin that included most, if not all, of their Chinese American residents. In the Basin, decades of hydraulic mining had exhausted much of the placer gold by this time, leaving what remained difficult to access and hard to make profitable. Although lode mining, dredge mining, and the occasional outside investor perpetuated small-scale extraction operations up to the present day, by 1915 the Basin's gold rush era was effectively over (Zhu 1997:186–187). As the Basin emptied out, even long-time residents like the extended Loke Kee family and Charley Sing Lee left along with their neighbors. Some, like Loke Kee, took the opportunity to return to China and retire. For others, decisions about returning to or remaining in China were dictated by the hardened "restrictionist mind-set" of early twentieth-century US immigration and deportation policies (Johnson 2022:95–98; Lee 2003:77). This was the case for most of Loke Kee's American-born children and grandchildren who, after accompanying him on his return trip to China, were repeatedly denied reentry to the United States despite their American citizenship (Lok 2007:28–30).

Chinese Basinites who did remain in the American West primarily abandoned rural areas. Demographic data gathered by Bronson and Ho (2015:63–65) indicates that by the turn of the twentieth century, Chinese Americans were rapidly resetting into urban areas that offered better economic opportunities and relative safety from a spate of renewed anti-Chinese violence sweeping through the Inland Northwest. While some undoubtedly moved west of the Cascades, many former Basinites took up residence in Boise. Charley Sing Lee, for example, gave up mining and the home he owned in Placerville to relocate to Boise sometime in the 1910s (*Idaho Statesman* 1917a:10, 1921:1, 1922b:10; State of Idaho 1923; US Bureau of the Census 1910:2). Living in Chinatown and working as one of the many Chinese truck gardeners who supplied Boise with fresh produce in the early twentieth century, it is likely that Charley Sing Lee frequently crossed paths with other former Basin miners. Obituaries for elderly Idaho residents Yung Teao and Song Lee, for example, attributed each man with three decades of rural mining experience before moving to Boise to become gardeners (*Idaho Statesman* 1901a:5, 1908c:2). Another Boise Basin miner turned agriculturalist, Louie Ah Su, established a career as a truck gardener that was later taken up by his descendants. Operating the Louie Gee Garden in the

Boise vicinity until 1964, members of the Louie family became one of a handful of pioneering Chinese American families like the Fongs, Quongs, and Yees, to defy decades of exclusion and set down multigenerational roots in southern Idaho (Hart 2002:47–53; 66–79).

Charley Sing Lee also remained in Idaho throughout his life, though he left a slightly more complicated legacy. In the 1910s, he became president of Boise's Hop Sing Tong just in time for its members to be drawn into a national rivalry with Boise's other main Chinese social organization, the Hip Sing Tong. In 1917, Charley Sing Lee's cousin, a launderer named Wong Bock Sing, was murdered by two Hip Sing Tong members. Charley Sing Lee testified in the trials that followed and the perpetrators were each sentenced to life in prison (*Idaho Statesman* 1917a:10, 1917b:7).

In 1921, Charley Sing Lee, himself, was arrested by federal agents. Along with Mr. and Mrs. Zimmerman, J. Bell, Jess Helm, and Eddie McGinley, he was accused of selling narcotics that included cocaine, morphine, and "yenshe," an opium derivative. Charley fought these charges in court but was sentenced to a $1,000 fine and 10 months in the Ada County jail (*Idaho Statesman* 1921:1, 1922a:3). There, staff described him as a "model prisoner" and put him in charge of maintaining the furnaces that heated the county court house until a stroke abruptly ended both his prison sentence and his life (*Idaho Statesman* 1923:2; State of Idaho 1923).

As former Basin miners like Louie Ah Su and Charley Sing Lee took up lives in Boise, the Boise Basin's population continued to dwindle. In the following century, most of what were once vigorously sought-after mining claims became public lands. As the gold rush faded, so too did the history of the Boise Basin's Chinese miners lose its rich definition in popular memory. Interviews conducted as part of the ongoing partnership between the Boise National Forest and the University of Idaho, for instance, describe numerous ways in which the Basin's Chinese mining history has been overlooked, mythologized, or reduced to binary clichés of bootstrap success or victimhood and tragedy. Even in near-by Boise, Chinese Americans, some of whom descended from the Basin's nineteenth-century miners, recall Chinese mining populations being absent from the state history included in public school curriculum. Others remember the substitution of vague stereotypes like "Chinese sojourners" and myths like "Chinese tunnels" for accurate and nuanced descriptions of Idaho's historical populations.[1] Although these oral histories describe local phenomena, they reflect a critique that is not unique to Boise Basin history. In recent years, scholars of Chinese America and of the Gold Rush West have renewed

[1] For oral histories that express these sentiments, see Hui 2022 and Yu 2022; for more on the persistent and unsubstantiated claims to so-called Chinese tunnels across the American West see Campbell and Wegars 2021; Lai 1991:36–39; Manning 2015:19–23; Wegars 2020a:92–103; Williams and Camp 2007:212–213.

calls to divorce their fields from harmful and inaccurate stereotypes that minimize the complex, heterogeneous, and agentive experiences of marginalized populations and their formative role in Western histories (e.g., Arata 2020:1; Fong et al. 2022:244; Johnson 2000:11; Zhu 2006:4).

The historical archaeology of Chinese mining networks in the Boise Basin illustrates ways that multiple perspectives and multiple lines of evidence can help restore aspects of this lived complexity to the history of Chinese miners in the rural nineteenth and twentieth-century West. Relying on material remnants of Chinese mining networks that were, in many cases, preserved by the same forces that emptied the Basin and paved the way for public ownership, the data at the center of this dissertation come from legacy archaeological collections now nearly four decades old. Much like the Chinese entrepreneurs who created them, however, they remain rich and diverse sources whose stories can contribute to our understanding of the past and its relevance to the present.

In drawing together data from these assorted collections, the research presented here builds on the efforts of other archaeologists, historians, and preservationists (e.g., Davis and Osgood 2017; Geer 1985; Planmakers 1996; Polk and Polk 1987a; Wegars 2001; Zhu 1997) but shifts the unit of analysis from that of many previous studies to an agency-based network paradigm that follows Chinese Basinites through the multi-sited webs of experiences and relations that defined their day-to-day lives. Engaging, under this flexible framework, with the fields of history and archaeology, this study explores aspects of Chinese mining history sometimes unnoticed by one or both disciplines. This research, for example, uses largely untapped archival material from the Boise County Recorder's Office and the Boise Basin Museum, along with correspondence written by Di Ti Loke Kee but archived as the Amos Di Sang letterbook to trace connections through property and business records that unveil the frequently "hidden" labor of women and numerous overlapping relationships between Chinese miners, European American landowners, skilled tradespersons, and wealthy merchants.

Through archaeology, this research also offers ways to track actors and activities left out of documentary sources. Modified and hand-forged materials, for instance, provide evidence of informal support networks and the unwritten transmission of skills. Through what I propose are best conceptualized as communities or constellations of practice, they point to the development of regionally distinctive Chinese blacksmith practices and the diffusion of ideas across pluralistic occupational networks. Comparing the uniquely preserved materials from the Pon Yam House to mining collections from distant drainages, by contrast, illuminates intersections between the Basin's mining economy and some of the personal and communal

tactics that Chinese network members used to secure their well-being within it. Together, remnants of both local and transnational goods underscore how material and social practices like burning incense, giving gifts, and sharing meals were inexorably linked to larger economic strategies of survival in the Gold Rush West.

Cumulatively, these results speak to the sometimes mundane and sometimes exceptional ways that Chinese entrepreneurs crafted lives and livelihoods in the Boise Basin, together establishing a resilient community that endured throughout the peak gold rush years of 1860 through 1915. For more than fifty years, Chinese Basinites labored in one of the West's most fickle industries and amid virulent anti-Chinese racism that found expression in state and national law, targeted industry discrimination, and sometimes even interpersonal violence. Forging spheres of alliance and autonomy within this context, Chinese Basinites honed tactics to navigate the shifting opportunities and constraints of their daily lives and developed strategies for well-being and inclusion that also asserted sway over the occupational, material, and social dynamics of their rural mining community. Although most Chinese mining network members eventually emptied out of the Basin, their legacy did not end with the gold rush. As Chinese residents moved on, they shifted but did not sever the multi-sited networks of which they were a part. Both in the American West and across the Pacific, most continued to live multifaceted lives significantly entangled in the ongoing history of the American West.

In many ways, however, the broader significance of this work lies not just in understanding the various means by which so many Chinese miners made the Basin their home and persisted amid its uncertain and unequal industry, but also that the answers to these research questions complicate popular, and sometimes academic, assessments of the nineteenth-century gold mining, Chinese migrant or Chinese American communities, and the rural American West. The scope of mining networks and the diversity of their many participants mapped in this dissertation, for example, suggest ways in which popular definitions of gold miners have winnowed actors like women and merchants from the workings of the industry while homogenizing and deskilling Chinese actors like blacksmiths. Similarly, imagining that all Chinese miners were confined to worked-out claims or ethnic enclaves runs counter to evidence of the many multiscalar connections to people, goods, and knowledge that once animated the Basin's pluralistic Chinese mining networks. As Pon Yam painted holiday banners to hang in his store, the Wong Sing Company placed bulk orders in anticipation of spring, blacksmiths at the Reid Placer Mine fortified picks, and company members of all kinds lit fires in the darkened forest to labor through the night, their actions continually shaped, and were shaped by, the

overlapping networks of which they were a part. Repeatedly confronted by the racial exclusion and financial instability of the Basin's mining industry, they leveraged different resource access, status, and strategies as they sought to establish homes and businesses in their rural gold rush community. Examining even a subset of those strategies helps to restore some of the lived complexities to historical communities and the significance of once-bustling places in broader Western and Chinese American history.

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