



*Finding a Path Forward*

**ASIAN AMERICAN PACIFIC ISLANDER  
NATIONAL HISTORIC LANDMARKS THEME STUDY**

*Edited by Franklin Odo*





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## Essay 3



# Archaeological Research on Asian Americans

**Douglas E. Ross**

*Albion Environmental*

**B**roadly speaking, historical archaeology is the archaeology of times and places for which written records are available but is more narrowly defined in North America (and elsewhere) as the archaeology of the modern world in the post-Columbian era of the past five centuries.<sup>1</sup> In the United States, historical archaeologists have studied a diverse range of sites spanning the 16th through 21st centuries in both urban and rural contexts and including upstanding, buried, and underwater resources. Such studies have been conducted at the individual, household, and community level in residential, commercial, industrial, military, mortuary, and other contexts and with close attention to behavioral patterns influenced by things like ethnicity, class, gender, and sexuality. Today, most historical archaeology in the U.S. is conducted in a resource management context in compliance with federal or state heritage legislation. However, there is

Archeological dig at the Riverside Chinatown, California. Great Basin Foundation's "Bonza" pit-primary trash pit. Photo by Kate Whitmore; courtesy of the National Register of Historic Places.





also a vibrant community of academic historical archaeologists at colleges and universities across the country, along with a series of regional and international professional organizations led by the Society for Historical Archaeology that serve the needs of academic and resource management archaeologists alike.

While some resources studied by historical archaeologists are visible, even prominent, on the landscape, most are easily overlooked by the casual observer because they have become buried over time and leave few if any traces on the surface. Consequently, in the absence of above-ground architecture and other historic features, resource managers and the public should not assume that a given parcel of land contains no heritage resources to be preserved or interpreted. The presence of subsurface archaeological deposits should be considered in any National Register of Historic Places (NRHP) evaluation and National Historic Landmarks (NHL) nomination. This is particularly true of short-lived, transient, disadvantaged, or erased communities for which such resources may be among the only surviving material remains.

#### ARCHAEOLOGY OF THE ASIAN DIASPORA

Archaeological research on Asian Americans focuses primarily on the Chinese diaspora, although in recent years increasing attention has been paid to the lives of those of Japanese and, to a much lesser degree, Filipino descent. The first formal archaeology on Chinese immigrants and Chinese Americans in the western United States began in the late 1960s and 1970s, coinciding with federal heritage legislation mandating the evaluation of historic sites, the emergence of historical archaeology as a formal discipline, and increased scholarly interest in ethnicity and social history.<sup>2</sup> Some early studies were university-based, but most were legally mandated resource management projects often completed in the context of urban redevelopment or in protected parks. However, it wasn't until the 1980s and 1990s that Overseas Chinese archaeology (as it is commonly known) coalesced into a distinct field of study, accompanied by a significant increase in the volume and diversity of academic and resource management studies, including an increasing number of graduate theses. These developments were accompanied by establishment of the Asian American Comparative Collection at the University of Idaho in

1982, an extensive reference library and comparative collection of Asian artifacts commonly found on North American sites, and publication in the early 1990s of an edited volume of papers about Chinese diaspora archaeology.<sup>3</sup> Outside the U.S., Chinese diaspora archaeology has also become established in Australia, New Zealand, and Canada, but to date, very little work has been done in other countries to which Chinese migrated in the late 19th and early 20th centuries.<sup>4</sup>

Over the years, researchers have excavated sites in a range of contexts in western North America, from urban Chinatowns to rural labor camps, although the largest studies have occurred in cities. Asian sites are typically identified through a combination of archival records and imported consumer goods distributed through far-reaching merchant networks extending from urban ports to the most remote labor camps. Archives and oral histories are also used to aid in archaeological interpretation, with all three sources of data used to complement, contradict, or contextualize one another. The most common Asian artifacts encountered archaeologically are ceramic tableware and food preparation and storage containers but also include glass beverage and pharmaceutical bottles, opium paraphernalia, coins, gaming pieces, butchered animal bones, and a number of other culturally diagnostic objects. Of these, in-depth studies have been done on Chinese ceramics, opium, coins, pharmaceuticals, architecture, and butchering practices and on Japanese ceramics and beverage bottles. However, a wide range of Euro-American artifacts have also been recovered from Asian sites and researchers must be cautious in equating artifacts and ethnicity.

Early research in the United States focused on identifying and describing Chinese archaeological sites and developing typologies of Chinese ceramics and other artifacts recovered archaeologically, although there were also attempts to explore and theorize patterns of cultural persistence and change. Much early theorizing drew on acculturation models, arguing that a predominance of imported Chinese consumer goods demonstrated that Chinese immigrants largely maintained traditional practices, resisted acculturation into Euro-American society, and segregated themselves in ethnic enclaves.<sup>5</sup> However, there were also early critiques of this approach that emphasized the heterogeneity of Chinese communities, highlighted ongoing relationships with Euro-Americans,





**Main Street in  
Chinatown, Riverside  
California, c.1898.**  
Photo courtesy of  
the Riverside  
Metropolitan Museum,  
Riverside, CA

and urged archaeologists to interpret archaeological sites as products of unique historical circumstances.<sup>6</sup> Beginning in the 1980s, and becoming increasingly prevalent throughout the 1990s and 2000s, many archaeologists have argued that, while Chinese maintained distinct ethnic identities and retained aspects of their traditional culture, they also adapted to elements of Euro-American culture out of necessity or to serve strategic interests.

Compared with the Chinese, relatively few sites associated with other Asian American communities have been the subject of archaeological research. The most common are sites connected to the removal and confinement of Japanese immigrants and Japanese Americans during World War II. Most of these studies have been resource management surveys and heritage inventories of former relocation centers conducted to evaluate potential significance for National Register eligibility or for site management and preservation, public interpretation, and commemoration. The most substantial work of this kind has been done by Jeffery Burton and Mary Farrell for the National Park Service, who have undertaken survey and testing on internment sites in Arizona, California, Idaho, and Hawai‘i, while other researchers have completed similar surveys on other relocation center sites. Within the last decade an increasing number of internment camps have been targeted for academic research as university field schools and graduate student research, including Manzanar in California, Amache in Colorado, Kooskia in Idaho, and Honouliuli in Hawai‘i.<sup>7</sup> Japanese internment is the subject of a previous NPS theme study and will not be dealt with in detail here,

although one case study is presented as an example of the information potential of internment archaeology.<sup>8</sup> Archaeological research has also been done on a small number of pre-war Japanese sites in urban and rural contexts in the western United States, the Pacific Islands, and Canada, including an urban Japantown, agricultural labor camps, a salmon cannery, and a fishing resort. There are also an increasing number of studies seeking to compare the lives of two or more Asian communities, including members of the Chinese, Japanese, and Filipino diasporas. These studies will be discussed or cited below.

The following overview will summarize recent thematic and theoretical trends in the discipline and present a series of case studies exemplifying the contributions archaeology can make to an understanding of the lives of Asian immigrants and Asian Americans. Select case studies were chosen over a laundry-list approach to capture some of the nuance and complexity of this research. An effort has been made to survey contributions from a range of site types and geographic locations, but there is a distinct emphasis on the Chinese diaspora and on California, which have been subjects of the most substantial archaeology over the past half century. Furthermore, only a sampling of site types, businesses, industries, and artifact categories are presented, but an effort has been made to cite other relevant studies where appropriate.

#### **CURRENT THEORETICAL AND DISCIPLINARY TRENDS**

Currently, there are no dominant theoretical frameworks or research paradigms in Asian diaspora archae-

ology, and the field is characterized by considerable diversity in subject matter and interpretive approach. However, there is a strong emphasis on interpreting patterns of cultural persistence and change within particular Asian American communities and exploring how material goods and practices aid in the maintenance of distinct ethnic identities. In the past couple of decades, there has been a gradual interpretive shift toward emphasizing cultural interaction and exchange among ethnic groups, multiple simultaneous identities that are fluid and dynamic, and patterns of cultural persistence and change that are strategic and dependent on local circumstances. Some of the diversity within the field of Chinese diaspora archaeology is captured in a 2008 thematic volume of the journal *Historical Archaeology*, addressing appropriate scales of analysis, gendered approaches to Chinese material culture, urban and rural Chinese cemeteries, and the lives of Chinese farm workers, urban Chinatown residents, and a solitary seaweed gatherer, accompanied by critical overviews and commentaries of the field and prospects for the future.<sup>9</sup>

One notable trend in Asian diaspora archaeology is a significant increase in the number of graduate theses, and this student research offers a useful gauge of developments at the cutting edge of the field. In the five years between 2009 and 2013, at least 15 Masters theses and Ph.D. dissertations were completed on Chinese diaspora archaeology in the United States and Canada. This research exhibits considerable thematic and geographic diversity, but centers on sites and collections in Nevada and California, with five of the 15 projects completed at the University of Nevada and the rest from universities in Wisconsin, Montana, California, Colorado, Ontario, and British Columbia. Sites are located in Nevada, California, South Dakota, Hawai'i, Montana, Colorado, and British Columbia. Topics exhibit a mix of urban and rural/industrial sites, with a notable skew towards Chinatown contexts, which themselves are nevertheless internally diverse, e.g., stores, cemeteries, boarding houses, laundries, and community organizations. The rural sites include a salmon cannery, fishing village, mining district, and ranching community.<sup>10</sup> In terms of interpretive frameworks, there is a strong emphasis on ethnicity and patterns of cultural persistence and change but with an increasing focus on comparisons between ethnic groups plus inter-ethnic interaction,

globalization, material consumption, cultural hybridity and ethnogenesis, social networks, structural racism, and models rooted in transnationalism and diaspora, recognizing that immigrants maintain multiple ongoing connections and identities linking them simultaneously to home and host societies. Students also draw on previously published data to identify patterns across multiple sites.

Recommendations for the future of Asian diaspora archaeology include increased collaboration with descendant communities, research drawing from a range of disciplines and involving interdisciplinary groups of scholars, greater use of Asian language sources and research resources overseas, more attention to the role of structural racism in the lives of Asian communities, and greater efforts to avoid perpetuating cultural stereotypes of Asian vs. Western culture.<sup>11</sup> In particular, Fong draws attention to the role that historic stereotypes of Chinese Americans have played in the development and current practice of Chinese diaspora archaeology.<sup>12</sup> Unfortunately, there is no tradition of 19th and 20th century historical archaeology in China and Japan to provide comparative data on life prior to emigration, but scholars are beginning to reach out to colleagues in Asia to develop research connections. Also needed are studies of Asian communities in eastern North America, studies of immigrant communities from other Asian countries, and additional comparative studies with other Asian and non-Asian diasporic communities in a range of contexts.

### ASIAN MATERIAL CULTURE IN THE CONTACT AND COLONIAL ERAS

Chinese and Japanese porcelain tableware has turned up on Euro-American archaeological sites across the United States since the contact and colonial eras, but it is predominantly export ware intended for Western consumers. Chinese porcelain, including domestic and export ware, has also been found along the Pacific coast and on 18th and 19th century Native American sites, and may have come from shipwrecks or arrived on European trading vessels.<sup>13</sup> The same sources may, along with aboriginal trade networks across the Bering Sea, have introduced Chinese coins into Native American sites from the same time period, although neither ceramics nor coins from pre-c. 1850 contexts have been linked to

a direct Chinese presence in the U.S.<sup>14</sup> In fact, the quantity and diversity of this material pales in comparison to the huge volumes of Chinese and other Asian consumer goods imported into western North America by Chinese merchants beginning shortly after the arrival of the first substantial numbers of Chinese labor migrants in 1849 in conjunction with the California Gold Rush. Similar networks were established by Japanese merchants after Japanese migrants began arriving in numbers in the 1880s.

## URBAN CHINATOWNS AND JAPANTOWNS

### Chinatowns

In terms of project scale, duration, and volume of material recovered, urban Chinatowns have been the subject of more archaeological attention than any other aspect of Chinese life in America. Since the 1970s, archaeology has been conducted in a number of cities in California mainly in the context of urban redevelopment and in Chinatowns, large and small, in other states including Arizona, Colorado, Idaho, Montana, Nevada, Oregon, South Dakota, Texas, and Wyoming. Focus has been

on a range of site types, including residential neighborhoods, laundries, temples, boarding houses, cemeteries, gardens, and others.<sup>15</sup>

A series of influential publications has resulted from resource management archaeology conducted in Sacramento, California, in the 1980s and 1990s by the Anthropological Studies Center at Sonoma State University.<sup>16</sup> Excavations centered on surviving remnants of the city's Chinese district on I Street between 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> streets, including remains of Chinese businesses and district association boarding houses dating to the 1850s Gold Rush era when Sacramento was a gateway to the Sierra Nevada goldfields. Analysis focused on the lives of Chinese merchants, who maintained elevated wealth and status above most Chinese immigrants and served as representatives or middlemen in relations between the Chinese community and local governments and other influential organizations. Researchers examined how merchants alternately advertised and downplayed their ethnic distinctiveness for business purposes and as a survival strategy and form of impression management



East Portal of Tunnel 1, Central Pacific Railroad, Placer County, California. Chinese workers made tremendous contributions to railroad construction, particularly tunnels. This tunnel was built in 1868. HAER photo by Ed Anderson, courtesy of the Library of Congress.



in an environment of strong anti-Asian sentiment. For example, they held an annual banquet attended by influential members of the Euro-American community, in a room decorated in Chinese style and including traditional foods. This overt display of Chinese ethnicity was combined with champagne and American-style table settings conveying the strategic message that, despite its alien appearance, Chinatown was in the hands of a people who understood and shared American customs and values.

Chinese merchants encouraged continued use of traditional goods among Sacramento's Chinatown residents because they profited from the import and distribution of things like porcelain tableware, reflected by a broken shipment of Double Happiness pattern bowls excavated from commercial deposits on I Street. In contrast, archaeological evidence from domestic contexts shows merchants themselves used a combination of Chinese and Euro-American ceramics and cuts of meat. Rather than acculturation, this pattern reflects merchants' access to a greater variety of goods and use of Euro-American objects as a visual display of their role as middlemen. Euro-American items were acquired by Chinese merchants and district associations through American agents as part of a system of reciprocal business relationships known in China as *guanxi*. Transient laborers living in district association boarding houses in the 1850s also used Euro-American ceramics and meat cuts, along with a heterogeneous assortment of Chinese tableware. The authors argue that this reflects the erratic nature of supply networks from China during the early years of immigration; by the late 1850s, these networks had stabilized and archaeological assemblages from the 1860s on are more homogeneous.

A particularly innovative research initiative is the Market Street Chinatown Archaeology Project established at Stanford University in 2002.<sup>17</sup> It is an interdisciplinary, collaborative, community-based research and education program involving archaeologists, museum personnel, cultural resource managers, and various community stakeholders focused on artifacts recovered from San José, California's first Chinatown. The Market Street Chinese community was established in the early 1860s but was destroyed by arson in 1887 during a period of heightened anti-Asian hostility in San José. During redevelopment of the city's downtown in the 1980s,

portions of the Market Street Chinatown were subject to salvage excavations, largely due to community pressure by local Chinese Americans. Funding was not available to properly curate, analyze, or publish the artifacts, and they were locked away in a warehouse. The 1887 fire, and other actions like it linked to anti-Asian movements in San José and elsewhere, along with ongoing neglect and discrimination in the 20th and 21st centuries, have played a major role in systematically eliminating Asian American communities from urban and rural landscape across the West. This is one reason why archaeological excavations, accompanied by robust analytical and interpretive programs are so important in preserving Asian American heritage.

In the late 1990s and early 2000s, the artifacts from Market Street were rediscovered and transferred to Stanford University as a research and teaching collection. Upon discovery of their research potential, the Market Street Chinatown Archaeology Project was initiated in 2002 through the combined efforts of the university, History San José, the Chinese Historical and Cultural Project of Santa Clara County, and Past Forward (now Environmental Science Associates).

Initial emphasis was on cataloguing the collection and preparing exhibits to raise public awareness about San José's early Chinatowns, accompanied by a website to share updates with stakeholders, other researchers, and the public and serve as a research archive. This was followed by an interdisciplinary scholarly symposium to develop research themes and priorities that could be addressed by the collection. Drawing on these themes and priorities, Stanford students conducted research projects on various classes of artifacts, focusing on topics like health and hygiene, childhood, consumption of recreational drugs like opium and alcohol, dining habits, and religion. For example, Michaels studied ceramic plates and bowls with Chinese characters pecked into their surface, denoting family names or blessings, identifying them as marks of ownership.<sup>18</sup> Emphasis was also placed on categories like animal bones, botanical remains, and soil samples that offered significant research potential, leading to partnerships with other research institutions with expertise in analyzing these materials.

Preliminary results indicate community members had a diverse and abundant diet incorporating local

and exotic fish, plus a range of animals that included preparations like pigs' feet, bear paws, and turtle soup that were common elements in Qing Dynasty imperial feasts, suggesting they were consuming foods people of their class would not have had access to in China.<sup>19</sup> Plant remains recovered from soil samples also indicate a diet rich in local and imported fruits, vegetables, and grains, including rice, corn, barley, wheat, and sorghum, which varied between household and perhaps class and occupation.<sup>20</sup> These and other studies contribute to our understanding of trade networks, dietary practices, and the local environment. Once cataloguing is completed, research can shift from small-scale projects to analysis of objects like ceramics and animal bones across the entire collection and systematic comparisons with other sites.

The public component of the Market Street Project includes a service learning course at Stanford combining classwork with collections-management activities and public archaeology events coordinated by History San José, including mock excavations to teach children about archaeology and Chinatown history. A website called "There Was a Chinatown Here" uses individual artifacts as accessible entry points into the history of San José's Chinese community. In 2011 to 2012, the project partnered with the San Jose Institute for Contemporary Art on an exhibit titled "The City Beneath the City," using artifacts from Market Street to bring the hidden history of the Chinese community to new audiences. Moving forward, participants seek to use the collection to address present-day issues, including developing greater public awareness of the nation's history of racism and anti-immigrant sentiment. One of their main achievements is to demonstrate the research and education potential of orphaned and understudied archaeological collections.<sup>21</sup> It also shows the value of drawing on collective expertise across multiple institutions, organizations, and disciplines.

Chinese also lived in small towns and cities, and a common business they operated in large and small communities was laundries, often run by groups of relatives, attracting Chinese and non-Chinese customers. Knee studied a collection of Chinese and Euro-American artifacts excavated in the 1970s and 80s from the rear of a Chinese laundry (c. 1890s to 1920s) located in the red light district of the small mining city of Ouray, Colorado, focusing on the nature of social interaction between

Chinese and non-Chinese members of the community.<sup>22</sup> She argues that focus on large Chinese communities results in a homogenization of urban Chinese experiences, and that more work is needed in areas with very small Chinese populations, like Ouray with a peak Chinese population of 19 at the turn of the century.

Knee draws on social network theory to explore the role of material objects in creation and maintenance of social relationships among community members. Network theory divides social relationships into their basic components, consisting of actors/nodes (individuals, groups, places, ideas) and links (relationships), with material things representing links between nodes or the physical remnants of social relationships. Because small communities like Ouray had few Chinese residents, they often lived and worked side-by-side and had daily interactions with Euro-Americans, developing a range of social and economic networks that included acquisition of non-Chinese goods. Archival evidence indicates Chinese residents experienced a combination of support and hostility (labor discrimination, vandalism, boycotts) from the Euro-American community, with Chinese inside and outside of the red light district perceived and treated differently. Although racism played a role in their experiences, a combination of occupation, place of business and residence, social status, personal relationships, and wealth appear to have been more significant in whether Chinese residents had positive or negative relationships with their neighbors.

Knee's reconstruction of social relationships involves identifying intimate (close friends and family), effective (friends and colleagues), or extended (friends of friends, associates of associates, or acquaintances) networks. Food-related artifacts from the laundry were dominated by Euro-American tableware, and bones exhibited signs of Euro-American butchering practices, suggesting regular interaction with Euro-American merchants as part of effective and extended networks in the local business community, which may have engendered sympathetic feelings among ethnic groups. In contrast, Asian tableware and food containers indicate relations with Chinese merchants and the preparation of Chinese-style meals key to maintenance of Chinese social networks because of the centrality of eating to the Chinese social world. Relations with Chinese merchants and dining companions (meals were often consumed



A street scene in Japantown, San Francisco, on Monday after the December 7, 1942, attack on Pearl Harbor. Fewer archeological studies have focused on Japantowns in the U.S., compared with Chinatowns. Photo by John Collier; courtesy of the Library of Congress.

communally, especially on weekends and holidays) reflect effective and intimate relationships within the ethnic community.

Chinese gaming pieces from the site reflect intimate and effective relationships within the Chinese community, as residents engaged in gaming with friends and colleagues in the laundry in the absence of formal Chinese gambling halls. Opium paraphernalia from the laundry and archival evidence that Euro-Americans in the red light district purchased opium suggest recreational use among Chinese in the laundry (intimate and effective relations) and social and economic relations with Euro-American patrons (intimate, effective, and extended). Intimate relations between Chinese and Euro-Americans in the red light district are suggested by negative attitudes among local residents towards opium, necessitating trust between merchant and customer. Together, all of these relationships suggest Chinese were active members of the Ouray community, rather than living in an isolated Chinatown.

## Japantowns

Compared with Chinatowns, few archaeological studies have focused on urban Japanese households and neighborhoods.<sup>23</sup> One recent exception is excavations conducted between 2008 and 2010 on a residential property in Oakland, California, occupied by a series of Japanese immigrant and Japanese American working-class families between the 1910s and early 1940s.<sup>24</sup> The neighborhood included a mix of Japanese and Euro-American families until the former were interned in 1942. Excavators recovered a range of Western style household items dating to the 1930s associated with the Ono and Orimoto families, plus objects of Japanese origin like porcelain tableware and a Japanese stoneware mortar bowl. Archaeological remains from this site reveal that the occupants maintained a dual Japanese and

American identity that included selective preservation of homeland traditions, especially foodways, alongside adoption of American habits and values. This is evident in the predominance of Japanese ceramics among food preparation and consumption artifacts, which, as part of regular mealtimes, played an important role in preserving Japanese family structure and ethnic identity. Nevertheless, the vast majority of artifacts recovered from this residence are Euro-American, including food and beverage containers (e.g., Coca-Cola bottles, a nursing bottle, a Disney Snow White glass tumbler), demonstrating a desire by immigrant parents to prepare children for a successful life in America. Adults also adapted to aspects of American culture, as evident in the prevalence of Ponds cold cream jars at this site and others occupied by Japanese Americans.

## RURAL AND INDUSTRIAL COMMUNITIES

Outside urban environments, Asian immigrants and Asian Americans lived in a range of rural contexts and participated in businesses and industries including railroad construction and maintenance, logging, mining, fishing and canning, and gardening, offering a range of goods and services to these communities. Such industries were also located in or adjacent to larger population centers. A common pattern was for Chinese



**A Farm Security Administration camp for Japanese American families forcibly removed from their homes as a result of Executive Order 9066. The Nyssa, Oregon, camp provided housing for Japanese Americans recruited for agricultural work. The tent camp site may have archeological interest. Photo by Russell Lee, July 1942; courtesy of the Library of Congress.**

and other Asian laborers to move between industries following seasonal cycles and from year to year as labor demands fluctuated, and so there were few strict divisions between individuals participating in any given sector of the economy.

### **Railroads**

Between 10 and 12 thousand Chinese men worked on construction of the first transcontinental railroad in the United States during the 1860s, and many continued in railroad construction and maintenance during succeeding decades.<sup>25</sup> Few documents survive describing the lives of Chinese railroad workers and none written by Chinese themselves, providing archaeology with an opportunity to fill this void. The Chinese Railroad Workers in North America Project, formed in 2012 at Stanford University, is a transnational, interdisciplinary

project involving researchers in the United States and China, whose goal is to recover archival, oral history, and archaeological evidence of this neglected history, including publication of an edited volume on the archaeology of Chinese railroad workers.<sup>26</sup> Relatively few substantial archaeological studies have been done on Chinese railroad sites, but this volume presents results of previous and ongoing research, and new field projects are planned in conjunction with the CRWNAP.<sup>27</sup> Research has tended to be descriptive and focused on large, long-term work camps, whereas most camps associated with the Chinese were small and occupied only briefly.<sup>28</sup>

Among the earliest investigations at a Chinese site in the United States was a brief surface survey in 1966 and 1967 by Chace and Evans at Summit Camp near Donner Pass in California's Tahoe National Forest, where Chinese railroad workers spent four years blasting tunnels through the Sierra Nevada.<sup>29</sup> The site, subjected to several subsequent surveys, is important because of its size and longevity, including substantial dwellings with stone foundations and hearths that help us understand how camps were organized. The pioneering work of Chace and Evans introduced the study of Chinese sites to the burgeoning field of historical archaeology, and their descriptions of Chinese artifacts from the site helped define the material signature of Chinese immigrant settlements and the degree to which they relied on imported consumer goods and maintained homeland practices. In 2008, Baxter and Allen recommended Summit Camp for eligibility to the National Register of Historic Places based on its age, size, physical integrity and setting, and its key role in the completion of the transcontinental railroad, and in 2009, the California



**A view of the Bayside Cannery and its adjacent Chinese dormitory in Alviso, Santa Clara County, California. Developed by Thomas Foon Chew, it became the third largest cannery in the U.S. and employed hundreds of people of various ethnicities. The archaeological potential at such industrial sites could have high research value. HABS photo by Sally Donovan, 1997; courtesy of the Library of Congress.**



State Historic Preservation Officer agreed.<sup>30</sup>

Briggs compared two 1882 railroad construction camps 16 miles apart along deserted sections of the Southern Pacific Railroad in Val Verde County, Texas, one occupied by Chinese workers and the other by Europeans, focusing on lifestyles, settlement patterns, and subsistence.<sup>31</sup> At the Chinese camp, artifacts were concentrated along the edges of the site, suggesting residents kept the main living area clean. Visible features, marked by rock outlines, indicate remains of nine tents and four or five double hearths housing an estimated population of 60 to 100 workers, plus a nearby blacksmithing area. The double hearths consist of two adjacent circular piles of stacked rocks, while similar rocks were used to hold down the edges of the tents, marking their former locations. Significant portions of the site have been destroyed by road work and the total population may have been much larger. Twin hearths were necessary in Chinese cooking, with one used to steam rice and the other to fry meat and vegetables. The blacksmithing area was identified by the presence of a horseshoe, horseshoe nails, bar and rod cuttings, and anthracite fragments. The European camp also bore remnants of tent outlines, as well as dugout shelters, a laundry, a blacksmith forge, and other structures, including a nearby habitation area perhaps for families; some distance away were remains of a possible restaurant/saloon, hotel, and general store.

Artifacts from the Chinese camp include objects of Chinese and Euro-American origin, including Chinese ceramic food containers and tableware, glass medicine and beverage bottles, cast iron woks, coins, and opium pipe bowls, along with Euro-American food cans and bottles, beverage and medicine bottles, ceramic tableware, cooking and eating utensils, carpet bags, clothing buttons, stoves, tent pegs, oil cans, lanterns, and firearm cartridges. Most of the ceramic tableware is Chinese, but most food containers were American, although the presence of woks and double hearths suggest preparation of Chinese-style meals. The European camp is dominated by food cans of American manufacture, containing beans and sardines, with food prepared over open fires or cast iron stoves and consumed on British ceramic tableware. Also present are Euro-American beverage bottles, tobacco tags, buttons and buckles, tent pegs, oil cans, lamps, and tool making hardware, and



**A man smokes a long pipe in Rag Pickers Alley in Chinatown, San Francisco. Ragpicking was the practice of collecting salvage material from street refuse and selling it. Photo courtesy of the Library of Congress, c. 1921.**

firearm cartridges, a similar range of objects as found at the Chinese camp.

According to Briggs, distinct clusters of tents and hearths indicate the Chinese camp was organized into domestic groups that pooled their resources to hire service staff and purchase communal supplies at bulk rates. Use of imported items from China permitted continuation of traditional habits in terms of diet, medicine, and drug use, but adoption of Euro-American goods like clothing, baggage, and some foods indicates some Anglicization. Conflict with European workers may have necessitated establishment of the camp a considerable distance from the railroad tracks and from fresh water. At the European camp, consisting of workers from several European ethnicities, clusters of tents may reflect settlement according to ethnic origin. The presence of nearby businesses suggests they purchased individual goods locally rather than in bulk from distant suppliers, perhaps at inflated prices, but the ready availability of European goods limited the degree of necessary culture change. Nevertheless, the two camps are very similar in

the range of good and activities represented, reflecting the nature of the work and the isolated living conditions.

### **Mining**

Outside Chinatown contexts, mining is the most intensively studied aspect of Chinese life in America from an archaeological perspective, with research focusing on mining towns, the industrial landscape, the layout, vernacular architecture and refuse deposits of mining camps, and market gardens serving mining communities. Industry-wise, Chinese were involved in mining of gold (placer and hard rock), borax, coal, and other materials across western North America.<sup>32</sup>

An important study of Chinese placer gold mining is LaLande's research on the Applegate River Valley of the Siskiyou Mountains in southwestern Oregon, c. 1860-1900.<sup>33</sup> Most Chinese operations were small, employing fewer than 15 men, and developed their own hydraulic mines or purchased existing claims from Euro-Americans. A prominent Chinese miner was Gin Lin, who formed partnerships with Euro-Americans and even hired some of them for his mining operation. Part of LaLande's study is based on excavations at three sites: a large hydraulic mining camp (c. 1875 to 1885) of long duration operated by Gin Lin; a small briefly-occupied ditch-diggers' camp from the late 1870s with remains of seven residential terraces excavated into a slope and evidence for separate eating and opium smoking areas; and a rectangular six-foot-deep privy in the Chinese section of the county seat of Jacksonville that produced a large quantity of Chinese and Euro-American objects dating from the late 1860s to early 1880s.

Research explored patterns of cultural stability and change among Chinese miners across the three sites, focusing on diet, dress and grooming habits, and recreational activities like drug use and gambling, supplemented by an 1864 to 1865 account book from the local Kubli Store, operated by a Swiss immigrant who obtained Chinese imports from San Francisco. Archaeology showed a predominance of Chinese ceramic tableware and pig bones among food remains, and store records document purchase of a wide range of Chinese-style foods, some imported and others produced locally. Purchase of baking powder, butter, and wheat flour in place of rice as the main starch staple, suggests modifications to the Chinese diet. Recovery of metal

food cans also confirms consumption of Euro-American products. LaLande argues that, rather than acculturation, non-Chinese items represent practical substitutions for expensive or unavailable items that fit within principles of Chinese cooking.

In contrast, archaeological and archival evidence shows Chinese miners chose Euro-American style clothes and footwear like jeans and leather boots, which were more appropriate to a mining environment, showing their willingness to adapt to job requirements. Recreation-wise, archaeology offers substantial evidence of opium smoking at all three sites, absent in Kubli Store records, indicating persistence of this tradition. Store records and excavated artifacts (e.g., pipes, tobacco cans) show substantial use of tobacco, a practice long established in China. All sites and the store indicate Chinese miners purchased a range of Euro-American alcohol (wine, ale, and liquor), often in large quantities, indicating a degree of acculturation, although patterns of consumption may have been consistent with Chinese customs. All told, evidence suggests little adaptation to Euro-American society in food and recreational behavior, but significant adoption of Euro-American clothing and footwear, and LaLande argues for relatively little acculturation among Chinese miners. Changes that did occur represent adaptation to limited aspects of Euro-American culture easily integrated into Chinese culture or necessary in adapting to new circumstances.

LaLande also focused on industrial activities of Chinese miners, including methods and tools used to extract gold from alluvial stream deposits.<sup>34</sup> Southern China had no tradition of placer mining, but archaeological evidence in Oregon shows Chinese miners capable of adapting to the unfamiliar Euro-American technology, including remains of water delivery ditches, hydraulically excavated channels and pits, and extensive piles of waste rock. Furthermore, archival data indicates Chinese miners used tools and methods similar to Euro-Americans, with local store records from the 1860s indicating Chinese miners purchased typical mining tools.

One debate among scholars is whether there are ethnically distinct patterns in remnant mining features useful in identifying mines worked by Chinese immigrants. Linear stacks of cobble tailings are often referred to as "Chinese walls," following the argument that

Chinese were more meticulous miners who arranged waste rock into neat piles. LaLande surveyed 13 hydraulic mines in the Applegate drainage and found that ethnic affiliation could only be determined through archival sources and campsites with diagnostic Chinese artifacts. Stacked tailings are a response to the need to maintain open channels for waste water and sediment to flow away from the mine and were used by both Chinese and Euro-American miners. As with clothing, LaLande argues that Chinese miners responded to the requirements of the job by adapting to Euro-American technology in order to achieve financial success.

### Logging

Among the industries employing Asian immigrants was logging, supplying wood for mining, construction, fuel, and other purposes, with workers living in both logging camps and sawmills across the west.<sup>35</sup> In 1998, archaeology students excavated remains of a Chinese bunkhouse at a 1870s coastal sawmill in Miller Gulch in Sonoma County, California.<sup>36</sup> Artifacts included Chinese ceramics, opium paraphernalia, medicine bottles, and gaming artifacts, along with Euro-American ceramics, beverage bottles, and other household and work-related artifacts. Among the faunal remains, excavators recovered a large quantity of abalone and mussel shell and, besides supplementing their diet with fresh seafood, bunkhouse residents may have sold dried abalone and abalone shells to augment their income. The abundance of Chinese goods recovered from the site may have had less to do with personal choice and more a product of *guanxi*—intricate networks in Chinese society of mutual obligation in social and business relations—between work crews and merchant labor contractors, whereby laborers felt obliged to purchase provisions from contractors in exchange for work. Douglass notes that very little is known historically about the lives of Chinese workers in the coastal redwood lumber industry, and projects like this help flesh out their role.

Regarding Japanese involvement in the logging industry, White et al. present archaeological, oral history, and archival data on the Japanese Gulch Site, a Japanese community (c. 1904-1930) associated with a lumber mill near Mukilteo, Washington, that employed both Euro-American and Japanese workers. Japanese workers lived in a separate settlement comprised of single men

and families and included individual residences, boarding houses, community hall, boys' club, playground, and store and, therefore, differed from rural work camps.<sup>37</sup> Oral history indicates the Japanese built their own houses with materials provided by the company and were free to adapt them to their needs, including construction of a large Japanese-style bathhouse. Although residents of Japanese gulch largely adapted to Western-style dress as indicated by clothing artifacts like buttons, shoes, and garters, recovery of a Japanese sandal (*geta*) indicates continuation of some traditional practices outside of work. Japanese cosmetic bottles also show that women continued using familiar beauty products, and the fact that nearly half of ceramic tableware was Japanese demonstrates substantial retention of traditional dining habits. However, recovery of American food, medicine, and beverage bottles, including a bottle of mercuric chloride used to treat syphilis, indicate consumption of national products and a combination of Japanese- and Western-style meals. Artifacts show women also used Western cosmetics, and thus combined elements of Japanese and American beauty regimes.

### Maritime Industries

Chinese Americans were involved in a range of maritime industries along the west coast, ranging from fishing, to salmon canning and the harvest of seaweed and abalone.<sup>38</sup> As part of their long-term study of the 13,000-year history of California's Channel Islands, Braje and colleagues gathered data from the 19th century Chinese abalone fishery on San Miguel Island.<sup>39</sup> Between the 1850s and 1880s when they were driven out of the industry by restrictive legislation, Chinese dominated the California abalone industry, drying the meat for sale locally and to ship to China and Japan, along with the shells used for cement and for ornamental purposes. Historical accounts are vague on harvesting techniques, sizes of abalone collected, and effects of the fishery on local ecology and abalone populations. The authors conducted a systematic survey of the island's shoreline and identified 17 historic abalone middens, dominated by black abalone shells with relatively few artifacts or features like hearths or shelters, except one large base camp at Adams Cove. It comprised two discrete activity areas and contained rock hearths used for rendering seal blubber and boiling abalone, areas paved in abalone

shell, and abundant artifacts spanning the mid-19th and early 20th centuries, including Chinese, Japanese, and Euro-American ceramics. Particularly notable, were 67 fragments of sawn sea-lion teeth testifying to the manufacture of finger rings and smoking pipe stems. The authors suggest the camp was used at different times by Chinese abalone harvesters, Japanese fishermen, and Euro-American sea mammal hunters.

Researchers collected detailed faunal data from six of the Chinese camps for comparison with prehistoric camps on the island going back nearly 10,000 years, including test excavations and measurements on hundreds of abalone shells. They found that the average size of black abalone harvested by Chinese fishermen was significantly larger than for prehistoric Native Americans, who harvested a wider range of sizes and were able to sustain their fishery for thousands of years. This contrasts with historic reports that Chinese were harvesting abalone without regard for size and suggests they had access to rebounding abalone populations following overhunting of sea otters and displacement of Native peoples from the islands in the early 19th century, their two main predators.

Most research on Asian American sites focuses on communities living and working together. Greenwood and Slawson explore the dwelling of a solitary Chinese immigrant in San Luis Obispo County, Wong How, who is thought to have been the last seaweed gatherer on California's central coast.<sup>40</sup> By the 1870s, seaweed was a major source of income for Chinese in the county, with seaweed harvest peaking between May and October when it was gathered and processed by hand before being shipped to Asia. The industry continued well into the 20th century before dying out by the mid-1970s. Wong How was the son of a Chinese American citizen who arrived in San Francisco in 1909 and lived and worked in the seaweed business with a cousin. In the off-season, they resided elsewhere for recreation and companionship, and Wong made several long trips back to China to get married and visit his family. Wong sometimes took work in ranching and shipping and obtained a visa for his wife in 1951, but she disliked the rural isolation and moved to San Francisco.

The house occupied by Wong and his cousin, and later Wong alone, is located on a steep bluff overlooking the Pacific Ocean. It was probably built in the 1890s. It is

a one-story structure comprising three rectangular sections built at different times, including a core dwelling, kitchen, and storage room. The building was constructed by amateur builders and incorporates a wide range of salvaged and recycled materials, but exhibits elements of turn-of-the-century American and Chinese vernacular building styles. Floor planks lay directly on the ground, shelves are made of packing crates, the sink is a homemade wooden box lined with tarred sheet metal with a tin can drainpipe, and there is no running water. Security is indicated by bolts, bars, and chains on the door and windows covered with wire mesh or padlocked metal shutters. Besides architectural recording, surface material was collected from an adjacent ravine, including Chinese ceramic tableware and food containers, medicine bottles, toothbrushes and toothpaste, matches and cigarette papers, tofu and soy sauce jars, etc., plus Euro-American ceramics, beverage bottles, boots, corn oil cans, and photo finishing supplies. Also recorded were bones of chickens, pigs, and abalone and other shellfish. Interestingly, no Euro-American food containers were found except several condiment bottles. From these remains, it is likely Wong's diet consisted largely of Chinese-style meals, including a large amount of stir-fried foods.

Wong's dwelling is in a remote spot in response to requirements of the seaweed industry. Despite this isolation, Wong acquired Chinese tableware and foods and sought out social support in local Chinese settlements. He developed cordial relationships with Euro-American neighbors and business connections with those who transported his seaweed crop. Studies like this are important because the Chinese were pioneers in California's maritime industry, and few documents and buildings have survived from this era. Wong's house has important elements of American and Chinese vernacular architecture, combined with a unique individual style, reflecting his limited economic resources. It tells a story of self-sufficiency, frugality, and responses to local environmental conditions and reveals how Chinese immigrants combined ethnic traditions with individual adaptations and ongoing relations with Euro-Americans.

### **Agriculture**

Chinese farmers worked in urban and rural contexts as independent entrepreneurs or as laborers on



Euro-American farms. For example, Van Bueren studied the lives of Chinese workers at a small Euro-American farm in Amador County, California, while Diehl et al. examined diet and acculturation in a turn-of-the-20th century Chinese gardeners' household on Spruce Street in Tucson, Arizona.<sup>41</sup> Analyzing plant and animal remains and ceramic fragments, Diehl and colleagues argue that the family adapted to local economic and environmental circumstances by preparing non-traditional foods using traditional cooking practices. There was a strong desire among Chinese immigrants to retain familiar cooking practices, in part because of the close relationship between food, health, and social and religious traditions. Chinese immigrants often maintained a healthier, more diverse diet than European workers. Historical records indicate Chinese in Tucson often kept substantial gardens for personal consumption and for sale to local groceries and restaurants. However, many familiar Chinese crops like rice, soybeans, and Chinese cabbage commonly grown in California were unavailable in Arizona because of unsuitable climate and poor transportation networks. Pork was the preferred meat in southern China during the 19th century, and archaeological evidence indicates it was the most common meat consumed among Chinese immigrants in the western U.S. However, in Arizona archaeology from multiple sites has shown that beef was more common than pork.

Plant remains suggest Chinese gardeners maintained a traditional cooking style, despite absence of Chinese vegetables, by substituting local crops like squash and wild plants like Miner's lettuce and cactus fruit. Animal bones indicate consumption of a diversity of domestic and wild animals, but support evidence from other Arizona sites indicate that beef was the primary meat source due to a local scarcity of pork. Saw, rather than cleaver, marks on many bones indicates use of Euro-American butchering practices, but recovery of Chinese food storage, preparation, and serving vessels suggests efforts to retain traditional dining practices. However, they combined these with Euro-American containers and a predominance of Euro-American alcoholic beverages. Diehl et al. argue that culture change is evident but is largely a product of economic constraints and supply issues, with local products acquired due to cost and availability, but mostly representing functionally equivalent substitutions. Historical data on the local

livestock industry confirms the limited availability and higher price of pork, in contrast to widespread availability of beef from local ranches.

Although archaeological research on pre-World War II Japanese life in America remains limited, many existing studies focus on agriculture.<sup>42</sup> Dixon reports on pre-World War II (1910s-1940s) Japanese sugar plantations on the island of Tinian, Commonwealth of Northern Mariana Islands, which employed Okinawan, Korean, Japanese, Chinese, and local Chamorro laborers.<sup>43</sup> Laborers and their families lived in barracks in the company town or on rural tenant farms similar in plan to contemporary Okinawan housing. Farmsteads are easily identifiable by their layout, resembling contemporary Okinawan residences and Japanese porcelain tableware and glass bottles (e.g., food, alcohol, pharmaceutical) on the surface. Rural habitations were often found near railroads and road intersections, indicating the importance of maximizing access to market networks across the island. To evaluate possible differences in class and ethnicity, Dixon compared the number and type of features found on 27 tenant farmsteads in four parts of the island, including houses, baths, privies, cisterns, cooking ovens, etc. and found that privies, ovens, and bathing facilities were restricted to larger sites. Furthermore, larger sites and sites with multiple cisterns were concentrated in certain areas. More work is necessary to clarify reasons for these differences, but Dixon suggests they may be associated with ethnicity (Japanese vs. Okinawan and Korean farmsteads), longevity, or family size. He notes that personal memories of the plantation system in oral histories emphasize an egalitarian spirit among workers, in contrast to the potential for ethnic and class differences suggested by archaeological surveys.

## **JAPANESE AND JAPANESE AMERICANS DURING THE SECOND WORLD WAR**

Archaeology of World War II Japanese internment has grown significantly since the 1990s, initially in the context of resource management, but now the subject of substantial academic research in California, Colorado, Idaho, and Hawai'i.<sup>44</sup> Resource management surveys have also been done on the remains of Japanese military installations in the Pacific Islands, but these are largely outside of U.S.-controlled territory and will not be addressed here. Japanese internment sites are the

subject of a previous NPS thematic study and will not be discussed in detail. However, one case study is presented to demonstrate the value of archaeology on sites of the recent past despite the presence of extensive archival sources.

One of the best studied camps is Granada Relocation Center (Camp Amache) in southeastern Colorado, operated by the War Relocation Authority between 1942 and 1945 and housing over 7,000 Japanese and Japanese American internees at its peak in 1943. Bonnie Clark at the University of Denver has been directing community-based archaeology and heritage research at Amache since 2005, and she and her students have studied several aspects of the camp, including gardens, ceramic tableware, saké consumption, and other traditional Japanese practices, modified objects, and the lives of women and children.<sup>45</sup> The case study presented here focuses on the latter, particularly children, who have been poorly studied archaeologically. Shew and Kamp-Whittaker (2013) participated in a 2008 surface survey across the remains of the camp and collected a range of artifacts, thus contributing to our understanding of Japanese families and how they coped with adversity and maintained traditional lifestyles and family structure.<sup>46</sup>

Traditional Japanese family structure placed emphasis on the household over the individual and had established roles for each member, with men serving as head of household with primary authority and responsibility and women expected to be good wives and mothers. Children were expected to be loyal and obedient and support their parents when they grew up. This structure bore many similarities with 1940s American family ideals, although its emphasis on individual sacrifice for the good of the family contrasted with American individualism. Both stressed the importance among children of proper education, manners, and discipline, with adults expected to provide an environment encouraging proper development that included playgrounds, educational toys, organized sports, and various classes and clubs.

Maintenance of traditional family structure faced two major challenges: influence of American culture, creating divisions between first-generation immigrants (Issei) and their second-generation children (Nisei), and life in confinement that upset family unity. For example, at Amache, families lived in tiny one-room apartments

in cramped barracks and were forced to undertake most domestic activities outside the home, including dining. In communal mess halls, children often chose to sit with peers rather than families, in contrast to traditional Japanese mealtimes that served to reinforce parental authority. This shift eroded family unity and led to increasing influence of peer groups at the expense of family. Archaeological evidence indicates ways internees sought to combat these problems. Ceramic and glass artifacts associated with food and cooking were found in unusual abundance in residential areas of the camp, suggesting some families were preparing meals in the barracks to keep families together. Some ceramics were government-issue dishes from the mess hall, but Asian ceramic were also recovered, and these may be evidence of Japanese-style meals prepared as a means of maintaining family traditions and a sense of cultural identity in a time of upheaval.

Toys found at Amache also provide information on consumer choices of internees, as they incorporated aspects of mainstream American society, including gender norms, into their lives and sought to give their children what society perceived as a normal childhood. These toys, including marbles, military toys, and glass tea sets, match merchandise available through contemporary mail order catalogues from which they were probably acquired. That toys were purchased at a time of financial hardship when most internees had limited income and were thus luxuries, indicating their importance to Japanese American families as an essential part of childhood and a means of adapting to camp life by maintaining continuities with prior lives. Such continuities included spaces where play occurred, as demonstrated by the distribution of marbles, the most common toy recovered archaeologically. Many internees came from urban environments and residential areas of internment camps resembled cities in layout and density. In cities, children play on streets, sidewalks, playgrounds, and in yards where they can be monitored by adults and in vacant lots where they can escape supervision. Marbles, as indicators of children's movements across the internment landscape, show they played around barracks and schools (supervised) and in low traffic areas along edges of residential blocks (unsupervised). Data like this help reveal how space was organized by the community.

## ASIAN CEMETERIES AND MORTUARY BEHAVIOUR

A growing number of researchers have focused on Chinese cemeteries and mortuary behaviour. Emphasis is on bioanthropological studies of skeletal remains, analysis of grave markers, the role of feng shui in cemetery design, and patterns of continuity and change in funerary ritual.<sup>47</sup> Using a transnational framework, Kraus-Friedberg studied ethnically segregated cemeteries associated with Chinese, Japanese, and Filipino sugar plantation workers at Pahala on the island of Hawai'i dating to the late 19th through mid-20th centuries. She examines how the global status of each Asian homeland affected expressions of ethnic/national identity abroad, as reflected in cemetery design and maintenance.<sup>48</sup> The Filipino cemetery has 162 graves, most marked by numbered cement markers or formal gravestones erected as replacements for the originals after a controlled burn in the 1990s, accompanied by eight surviving lava rock mounds. Because most grave markers lack dates and identifying information, few patterns are identifiable.

The Chinese cemetery consists of 34 graves, 13 marked by mounds of lava rock, some with food-related offerings, while the rest have formal marble or cement headstones engraved with epitaphs, most of them in Chinese. The mounds may reflect impermanent graves meant to be exhumed for the shipment of bones back to China. Native Hawaiians also practiced secondary burial and built lava rock mounds over graves, and Chinese plantation workers may have adapted elements of mor-

tuary behaviour from the host society while maintaining homeland practices. The presence of permanent burials with gravestones in later years may reflect an inability to ship bones back home due to political problems in China or hostile relations between China and the U.S. or the presence of family members able to look after the graves. By combining elements from both home and host countries, Chinese migrants contributed to constructing the multiethnic local identity characterizing Hawai'i today.

The Japanese cemetery, largest of the three with 411 graves, contains an equal number of lava rock mounds and cement gravestones. Kraus-Friedberg analyzed temporal patterning in epitaphs on these gravestones in terms of language, geographic information, and date format to gauge degree of continued identification with the homeland. In the late 19th century, when Japan and Hawai'i had strong diplomatic relations and Japan actively interceded on behalf of its citizens abroad, Japanese migrants felt encouraged to identify with the homeland. Gravestones from this period contain text and dates in Japanese characters with information on prefectural origins of the deceased. In the 1890s, when Hawaii's interests shifted toward the U.S. (with annexation in 1898) with its strong anti-Asian sentiment, gravestones continue to exhibit strong links to Japan, perhaps because of a continued need for Japanese labor on Hawaiian plantations that limited anti-Asian measures. Japan remained an emerging world power, perhaps encouraging migrants to react to anti-Asian sentiment with resistance rather than hiding their ethnic identity. When Japan restricted emigration in 1908 because of the Gentlemen's Agreement, many migrants probably prepared to remain in Hawai'i. Despite growing anti-Asian prejudice, Japan continued to be a global power and migrants may have felt protected, enough to continue expressing their ethnic identity on gravestones. During and after World War II, however, Japanese in Hawai'i felt strong pressure to appear patriotic and downplay their ethnic origins, and the number of gravestones inscribed in Japanese declined. This persistence suggests the continued importance of transnational identity linked to the homeland, and the gradual emergence of a sense of Hawaiian identity as multiethnic in nature.

A few Chinese cemeteries have been excavated in the U.S.; the most well-studied is the small railroad terminus town of Carlin, Nevada.<sup>49</sup> It was discovered on



Chinese Cemetery, Payette National Forest, Idaho County, Idaho. July 1993. Photo courtesy of the National Register of Historic Places.

private property in 1996, when a coffin and body were uncovered that included a queue, a carved smoking pipe, and Chinese clothing. Subsequent examination revealed the graves of thirteen men in a single row, ranging in age from early 20s to 50s or 60s, and dating between c. 1885 and 1923.

The cemetery was apparently laid out according to feng shui, with a creek in front and distant mountains in the rear and many graves oriented to the northwest. Variation in orientation may reflect presence or absence of Chinese burial personnel or a lack of adherence to feng shui. Other evidence of Chinese burial traditions include a cloth in one grave, perhaps from the practice of interring four blankets with the body reflecting the four seasons and two graves with silk scarves found over the face. Among the wooden coffins were two of higher quality placed inside wooden vaults, suggesting men of elevated wealth and status, and one crude wooden box with no hardware that probably marks a man of limited economic means. Hairstyles are suggestive of burial date and cultural tradition: one man had hair braided in a long queue and four others had short hair with false queues of braided cordage attached, suggesting they died prior the 1911 revolution in China when this practice was largely abandoned. Clothing and grave offerings suggest a gradual transition to Western habits, with the earliest seven burials containing more Chinese style dress (e.g., buttons, shoes) and more abundant grave goods (e.g., coins, food, utensils) linked to the Chinese belief that they were needed in the afterlife, while later graves had more Western style clothing like jeans, belts, and shirts with cufflinks.

All 13 men suffered skeletal fractures or other trauma sometime in their lives, while most showed signs of arthritis, poor oral health, and moderately or severely strenuous physical labor. Ten had more than one traumatic injury, and six had cranial and post-cranial trauma, suggesting repeated violent encounters. Two had injuries indicating violent deaths through occupational accidents or interpersonal violence. Harrod and coauthors argue this pattern of hard labor, trauma, and pathology is indicative of Chinese immigrants' low social status and the exploitation and institutionalized abuse inflicted on them. Using cranial measurements on skulls from Carlin and Alaska, Schmidt and colleagues confirmed Chinese immigrants comprise a relatively homogeneous biologi-

cal population originating in southern China, indicating most emigrants were also born there. Researchers found it difficult to identify individuals, although a few were identified by identification bricks and comparisons with coroners' reports. Chung and colleagues argue that by the early 20th century, many Chinese had adjusted to American society, including clothes, hairstyles, and grave goods, that there were status differences in grave treatment, but that physical trauma and limited health care remained a major part of many people's lives.

Gardner and colleagues documented Japanese graves and rock art in association with railroad section camps and coal mining towns in southwestern Wyoming.<sup>50</sup> The three examples of rock art documented consist of Japanese characters carved or pecked into sandstone. The first, at Gun, a coal mining town northeast of Rock Springs, is an undated inscription including an individual's name and place of origin. The second is located north of Thayer Junction and comprises the outline of a tombstone with the name of the deceased and the name of the carver and date the memorial was inscribed. The third panel, created in 1926 between Thayer Junction and Superior, consists of a naked Asian man and woman lying head-to-head carved by well-known Japanese American artist Paul Horiuchi, who worked for the Union Pacific Railroad for 16 years prior to World War II when anti-Asian sentiment led to his firing. In protest, he burned his pre-1941 paintings, and this rock art panel represents one of only a few examples of his pre-War work.

Among Japanese cemeteries in southwestern Wyoming are those at the coal mining towns of Rock Springs, Superior, and Hanna, dating to the early 20th century. Most tombstones were for men, and were inscribed in Japanese characters giving their names, dates of birth and death, and place of birth in Japan. Tombstones for children followed the American practice of including a carved lamb. Of the 18 tombstones at Hanna listing place of origin, half list Fukuoka Prefecture, whereas in Rock Springs the most common home prefecture is Hiroshima. This information is important because little archival data survives on the points of origin for many of these immigrants.

## GENDER AND SEXUALITY

Two underdeveloped themes are gender and sexuality. No existing studies have focused on the archaeology of



sexuality within the Chinese diaspora, but a few studies have addressed gender, mainly in the context of “finding women” in the archaeological record. Wegars summarizes the range of Chinese artifacts recovered from archaeological sites in the western U.S. once owned by women, including jewellery, cosmetics, hair ornaments, and pharmaceutical bottles.<sup>51</sup> Likewise, Gardner et al. focus on identifying material traces of Chinese women and children in late 19th century Evanston, Wyoming, where 14 percent of the Chinese population was women.<sup>52</sup> They describe earrings from a relatively high status Chinese household as the clearest indicators of women, and a ceramic doll fragment as the best example of a child’s toy. Such preliminary efforts at identifying gendered artifacts have rarely been followed by more substantial studies contributing to our understanding of gendered lives in the Asian diaspora.

One exception is Williams’ proposed framework for studying masculinity in Chinese communities, drawing on theoretical literature in archaeology, cultural anthropology, history, and Asian American Studies.<sup>53</sup> He adopts the concept of “hegemonic masculinities” to explore relationships between nineteenth century ideas about masculinity and everyday objects used by Chinese men. Hegemonic masculinities are dominant ideologies or discourses in a given society dictating how men should think, look, or behave. Since such masculinities are created and enacted in the performance of everyday life, objects studied by archaeologists can contribute to understanding how ideas about gender influenced the experiences of Chinese immigrant communities. Williams identifies two dominant discourses of Chinese masculinity: one rooted in Western colonialism and orientalism that views Chinese objects and individuals (including men) as feminine, and another linked to Chinese history and literature that perceives an ideal masculinity as embodying both literary and artistic skills (*wen*) and military strength and wisdom (*wu*). *Wen* is typically associated with the elite class and *wu* with the lower class. The feminized view of Chinese culture was prevalent in Western popular media and Chinese-style decorative items produced for Western consumption, including porcelain tableware. Most ceramics recovered from Market Street were Chinese porcelain, and Williams argues that to their non-Asian neighbors these items would have reinforced the orientalist view of

Chinese masculinity. Chinese users of these items would have perceived them differently, with tiny porcelain liquor cups, for example, reflecting a tolerance for alcohol that is a central part of *wu* masculinity.

## APPROACHES TO ASIAN MATERIAL CULTURE

Chinese consumer goods have been the focus of research since the late 1960s, emphasizing identification, classification, and dating, although more wide-ranging material culture studies have become increasingly common. Heffner (2012) analyzed medicinal artifacts excavated from seven mining communities in Nevada occupied by Chinese and Euro-American residents between c. 1860 and 1930 to determine what ailments were being treated by both groups and how and to explore the intersections between Chinese and Euro-American healthcare practices.<sup>54</sup> As part of her study, she created a visual guide to the identification of medicinal artifacts recovered from Chinese archaeological sites using data from museum collections, and includes a discussion of the material culture of Chinese medicine, including ingredients, preparation, application, packaging, and advertising, drawn from archival research and visits to Chinese medicine stores in Taiwan.

Medicinal artifacts reflect cultural beliefs regarding treatment of disease and the structure of the human body. Chinese medicine differs from Western medicine in its emphasis on functional rather than structural anatomy and its holistic approach to treatment. Chinese doctors set up practices across the western U.S., often using English signs and advertising in local papers to attract Euro-American customers. In 19th century America, they focused on internal medicine and prescribed herbal remedies like soups, pills, powders, teas, oils, and tonic wines made from plants, minerals, and animal parts. Euro-Americans both embraced and rejected Chinese medicine, some finding it an appealing alternative to invasive Western treatments and others perceiving it as fraudulent and ineffective.

A total of 212 medicinal artifacts were identified from Nevada: 113 associated with Chinese residents, 90 with Euro-Americans, and 9 unaffiliated. Most Euro-American artifacts were patent medicine bottles, whereas Chinese artifacts were mainly small single-dose medicine vials. These bottles contained pills or powders for treatment of things like venereal disease, eye diseas-



This portrait of a young Wisham woman shows the appropriation of hollow-centered Chinese coins by Native Americans for use in their headdresses, c. 1910. Photo by Edward S. Curtis; courtesy of the Library of Congress, Prints and Photographs Division.



**Moore Gulch  
Chinese Mining  
Site surface  
artifacts found by  
archeologist Karl  
Roenke, Clearwater  
National Forest,  
Pierce, Idaho,  
July 15, 1981.  
Photo by Kate  
Whitmore;  
courtesy of the  
National Register  
of Historic Places.**

es, stomach ache, depression, skin irritation, and a host of other afflictions. Also present were embossed Chinese bottles for kidney strengthening tonic, labeled paper packets containing treatments for things like coughing and menstrual pain, betel nuts, alum, turtle carapace, and mammal and fish bones, each with its own medicinal properties. These collections show that Chinese residents used a combination of Chinese and Western pharmaceuticals, but there is no archaeological evidence that Euro-Americans used Chinese medicines. In contrast, archival evidence indicates they used at least some Chinese remedies and this discrepancy may be a product of archaeological preservation or local historical factors in these communities.

Medicinal artifacts from Nevada show residents suffered from a range of ailments. Stomach ailments, in particular, are indicated by the range of Euro-American patent medicine bottles recovered, including Hostetter's Bitters and Fletcher's Castoria, a common phenomenon in frontier mining communities with poor sanitation and limited access to clean water. Heffner concludes that Euro-American medicines were adopted by Chinese immigrants out of necessity and practicality, including isolation from traditional health care options and discrimination by local healthcare providers that may have

led them to self-medicate using patent medicines. They may also have viewed Chinese and Western medicine as complementary, with Chinese medicines offering a sense of comfort and connection to the homeland.

Also subject to substantial research are animal bones, often studied for signs of ethnically diagnostic butchering patterns and evidence that Chinese retained or altered their traditional dining habits. Ellis et al. analyzed animal bones from the China Gulch site in the Cedar Creek Mining District of western Montana to identify possible evidence for starvation among Chinese gold miners in the 1870s.<sup>55</sup> Chinese miners appear to have established a temporary camp here c. 1870 with limited access to food and money, after being driven out of an adjacent area by white miners and before they could re-establish themselves elsewhere. Researchers found concentrations of small animal bone fragments adjacent to a series of hearths, showing signs of multiple episodes of butchering and cooking. Evidence indicates occupants were reprocessing these bones for grease extraction, a laborious process that yields only a modest amount of nutrients.

Bone fragments from China Gulch were compared with similar fragments recovered from an 1840s Donner Party campsite in California, whose occupants are



known historically to have suffered from starvation, and found strong similarities in terms of fragment size, types of processing, and multiple cooking events. Ellis and colleagues conclude that both groups dealt with a severe food shortage by reprocessing bones to extract additional nutrients from them, suggesting that responses to nutritional stress may transcend spatial, temporal, and cultural differences between communities faced with starvation. Besides confirming that this small group of Chinese miners suffered from nutritional stress, this study aids in developing a qualitative material signature of starvation that may be applicable in other archaeological contexts.

### **HOLISTIC STUDIES**

While most archaeologists draw on a range of sources in interpreting sites, some researchers have adopted an interdisciplinary approach that uses archaeology as just one of many sources of data in a holistic study of an entire community or region.<sup>56</sup> Stapp refers to this approach as historical ethnography that uses all available data to produce an in-depth descriptive and interpretive synthesis of a specific historical context.<sup>57</sup> As a case study of this method, he developed a historical ethnography of the Chinese placer gold mining community in and around Pierce, Idaho from the mid-1860s to the early 20th century, including census and county records, mining records, newspapers, oral histories, and archaeology. It comprises a historical overview of the area, descriptions of the environmental setting, and summaries of the major cultural groups (Nez Perce, Euro-Americans, and Chinese) living and interacting in the area. The core of this study consists of detailed examination of the economic orientation, demographic makeup, size, settlement patterns, domestic activities, architecture, and material culture of households of each of these groups and of their social structure, including political and economic systems and interethnic relations. It includes detailed descriptions of data from a series of Chinese mining camps explored in the 1980s.

The Pierce locality was primarily a bachelor community with few women or families, with the mining district occupied during spring and fall mining seasons and Pierce City occupied year round and offering a range of goods and services for miners. One thing that distinguished the Pierce locality from other mining

communities was that it had a majority Chinese population between the 1860s and 1890s. In Pierce, Chinese and Euro-Americans lived and worked side-by-side, although there were few inter-ethnic households. Little historical evidence exists on the internal structure of households, highlighting the importance of archaeological data. Evidence from rural mining camps indicates households could include discrete living, working, and refuse disposal areas. Buildings were typically log cabins, plank structures, or dugouts excavated into a bank with log walls and plank floors, many containing rock hearths. Artifact distributions suggest certain structures were used as residences, while others served for cooking and industrial activities like blacksmithing.

Archaeology and inventories from mine sales offer details on foods miners consumed. For example, Chinese miners consumed a range of Chinese and Euro-American style meals, including animals hunted locally, served using imported Chinese tableware with the addition of European plates, which lacked a functional equivalent in China. There is evidence they acquired some goods from Euro-American merchants. For recreation, archaeology shows they smoked opium and tobacco, for personal health they used a combination of Chinese remedies and Euro-American patent medicines, and for clothing they wore a combination of Chinese and Euro-American garments. Evidence of blacksmithing activities for tool manufacture and repair is demonstrated by discoveries of a quenching pit, broken and cannibalized tools, and scrap iron. Although no archaeology has been done on Chinese sites in Pierce City, archives document the presence of a variety of Chinese businesses, including gambling houses, blacksmiths, laundries, butchers, stores, etc., indicating significant economic diversification within the Chinese community.

In terms of community structure, Chinese miners worked for Chinese owners or managers of major mining operations, who often purchased working mines from Euro-Americans, although some worked for themselves and others for Euro-American operations. With respect to inter-ethnic relations, Chinese were initially excluded from the district but became increasingly welcome as Euro-Americans sold their depleted claims and left the area, leaving a gap in the market for goods and services that Chinese miners filled, providing



the new economic base for the county. For a time, they were accepted as part of the community, but resentment increased through the 1870s and 80s. Based on accumulated evidence, Stapp argues that the Chinese in Pierce were more entrepreneurial than previously thought and made major contributions to the local economy and that interethnic relations were for a time more cooperative than observed in other contemporary communities.

### **HISTORIC PRESERVATION, COMMEMORATION, AND HERITAGE TOURISM**

The Market Street Chinatown Project, described above, is one major effort at commemorating the material remains of Chinese American heritage in the U.S., emphasizing the interpretive potential of excavated artifacts. Other efforts seek to preserve intact remains of Chinese communities or landmarks themselves or foster appreciation for Asian American heritage and promote the local economy through heritage tourism. Among major Chinatown excavations in the 1970s and 1980s were those conducted on Riverside, California's second Chinatown in the mid-1980s.<sup>58</sup> This community was established in 1885 along Tequesquite Avenue after Chinese were forced out of downtown Riverside by rac-

ist local ordinances. It was occupied until the late 1930s but remained under the ownership of the last resident, George Wong (Wong Ho Leun) until 1974. As such, it is the only complete Chinese commercial and residential settlement in California that has not been subject to redevelopment. In the 1960s and 1970s, the site became a city and county historical landmark and was added to the National Register of Historic Places in 1990 for its physical integrity, the role of its residents in the development of citrus agriculture in the region, and its potential to yield additional information on patterns of Chinese American life.

In 1980, the property was acquired by the Riverside County Office of the Superintendent of Schools, which planned to lease it as a parking lot. This proposal led to a grass roots movement within the Chinese and Anglo American communities to halt construction until an archaeological assessment could be conducted. This work was completed between 1984 and 1985 and funded by the City and County of Riverside and by the Great Basin Foundation of San Diego, which undertook archaeological testing. Archaeologists, excavating only a portion of the site, recovered a massive quantity of artifacts and revealed that many building foundations



**Chinese men pass time in a San Francisco opium den. Fragments of opium pipes have been found archeologically at urban and rural Chinese sites throughout the west. Photo published by the Detroit Publishing Co., c. 1910; courtesy of the Library of Congress Prints and Photographs Division.**



The excavated fireplace at a Chinese mining camp near Warren, Idaho, at the Payette National Forest. Photo courtesy of the National Register of Historic Places.

and archaeological deposits were still intact. Results, including detailed studies of artifact categories, along with in-depth archival research and oral histories, were published in two large volumes in 1987 by the Great Basin Foundation.

In 1990, the City, County, and Board of Education of Riverside, with strong community support, endorsed the creation of a Chinatown Historic Park on the site. However, the Board of Education decided against the park and in 2008 approved a medical office building on the property. A court ruling in 2012, based on a lawsuit brought against the project by the Save our Chinatown Committee, halted the development, and in 2014, an alternate site was found for the medical building and efforts have resumed to establish a park on the remains of the former Riverside Chinatown.

Historic urban Chinatowns across the United States are popular tourist attractions, in large part for their refurbished heritage architecture and elaborate gateways often designed in an exoticized ethnic style. However, Chinese heritage tourism also incorporates museum exhibits, rural destinations, and archaeological sites, as outlined by Wegars for the state of Idaho.<sup>59</sup> For example, the Payette National Forest has developed interpretive displays, audio presentations, booklets, and recon-

structions of semi-subterranean dwellings to bring the experiences of Chinese miners to life. Likewise, the U.S. Forest Service's Passport in Time program has hosted volunteers on archaeological projects, including excavations beneath the floor of the 1860s Pon Yam House in Idaho City that recovered artifacts like firecrackers, incense, and seeds discarded by its Chinese occupants. Raft trips along the Salmon River include

stops like Chinese placer mining sites with rock-walled dwellings and the home of Polly Bemis, a female Chinese pioneer who married a Euro-American man. Wegars notes that such heritage tourism can be valuable in revitalizing local economies but cautions that it must be done in culturally sensitive ways and to avoid inaccurate myths and ethnic stereotypes.

#### ARCHAEOLOGY AND THE NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES

National Register of Historic Places criteria recognize the significance of properties at the local, state, or national level that maintain integrity of location, design, setting, materials, workmanship, feeling, and association, and are associated with significant events, people, or types of construction, or that possess significant information potential. A number of properties connected with Asian Americans are listed in the National Register, but the vast majority relate to standing architecture or other above-ground landscape features.<sup>60</sup> Among sites that are largely or entirely archaeological, many World War II Japanese relocation centers are listed in the National Register, including Manzanar, Minidoka, and Amache where substantial archaeology has been done in an academic or resource management context. Aside from these former camps, very few archaeological sites associated with Asian Americans are listed in the National Register. Exceptions include the following:

- 1) Moore Gulch Chinese Mining Site, Idaho (1983, Criteria A and D)
- 2) Chinatown Archaeological Site, Riverside, California (1990, Criteria A and D)
- 3) Chinese Sites in the Warren Mining District, Idaho (Multiple Property Listing, 1990), including the Chinese Mining Camp Archaeological Site (1994, Criterion D) and the Chinese Cemetery (1994, Criterion A)
- 4) Waldo Chinese Cemetery, Oregon (2001, Criteria A and D)
- 5) Japanese Jail Historic and Archaeological District, Northern Mariana Islands (2011, Criteria A, C, and D)<sup>61</sup>

The range of property types included here is narrow and emphasizes mining and cemeteries, plus one Chinatown and one Japanese administrative/military complex, and fails to capture the functional and geographic range of heritage resources explored archaeologically since the 1960s. Furthermore, the archaeological components of these listed sites were determined eligible for the National Register with reference to Criterion A (significant events) or D (information potential), with little attention paid to sites associated with significant persons (Criterion B) or with a distinctive type, period, method, or artistic achievement (Criterion C). This imbalance should be corrected in future nominations. For example, the Wyoming rock art created by Paul Horiuchi, discussed above, may qualify under Criterion B, and a number of 19th century mines like the ones studied by LaLande in Oregon and others in states like California and Nevada retain remains of industrial structures and features that may qualify under Criterion C.

Among properties or districts listed in (or nominated to) the National Register, including Chinatowns in Hawai'i, Portland, Seattle, and other locations highlighted on the National Park Service Asian-Pacific American Heritage Month webpage, it is probable that many contain intact archaeological deposits worthy of consideration and inclusion in the listing or nomination.<sup>62</sup> This is one way to increase the number of archaeological sites incorporated into the National Register, and the inclusion of known or potential archaeological resources could provide added support for National Register nominations, increase the public's appreciation for the

value of archaeology, and contribute to the preservation of archaeological resources.

Another way to increase the number of archaeological sites on the National Register is to nominate sites already deemed eligible through the Section 106 process. Many, if not most, archaeological studies of Asian American sites in the U.S. were initiated by public or private undertakings requiring evaluation of historic resource eligibility for the National Register under Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act or equivalent state legislation and associated heritage registers. Consequently, a large number of Asian American sites, including many cited in this chapter, have already been determined eligible for the National Register, primarily under Criterion D. Even many academic and other studies that have not gone through formal significance evaluations contain sufficient data within available reports and publications to assess eligibility and draft a formal nomination. Such was the case with Summit Camp discussed above.

The archaeology of Asian Americans, then, owes much of its origin and development over the past half century to the Section 106 process. However, this close connection has both helped and harmed the ultimate goal of heritage preservation for Asian American sites. Although preservation in place is the preferred option for archaeological sites determined eligible for the National Register, in practice data recovery through excavation is regularly deemed an acceptable mitigation measure for archaeological resources encountered in the process of urban development or other ground-altering activities. This has resulted in widespread destruction of Asian American heritage resources across the country, especially in the West. Resource management practitioners and government agencies should consider pursuing in situ preservation more aggressively, and a concerted effort to nominate a greater number of Asian American archaeological sites to the National Register, including representative examples of a range of site types, would be an important first step in transforming our preservation ethic into practice.

## CONCLUSIONS

As is evident in the foregoing case studies, archaeology, in conjunction with other sources of information, can provide valuable details on the everyday domestic and

working lives of Asian immigrants and Asian Americans and the role of material things in patterns of cultural persistence and change, diasporic ethnic and gender identities, relationships with Asian and non-Asian neighbors and business associates, social and religious customs, economic pursuits, child rearing practices, responses to structural racism, and a host of other questions. It is also clear that archaeology has a powerful role to play in community identity, heritage commemoration, and public education in the modern world. For these reasons, greater efforts should be made to preserve Asian American sites and nominate a wider range of these sites to the National Register. Hopefully ongoing efforts will be made to preserve and study tangible aspects of the Asian American past and that archaeological data and expertise are permitted a central role in dialogues regarding heritage preservation in the U.S.

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