

UC Merced

The Undergraduate Historical Journal at UC Merced

Title

An Anti-Chinese Agenda: The Acceptance of a Selected Few, 1870 to 1942

Permalink

<https://escholarship.org/uc/item/1vr6p33j>

Journal

The Undergraduate Historical Journal at UC Merced, 8(1)

Author

Bravo-Zamora, Cynthia

Publication Date

2021

DOI

10.5070/H38155641

Copyright Information

Copyright 2021 by the author(s). This work is made available under the terms of a Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-NoDerivatives License, available at <https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/4.0/>

Peer reviewed|Undergraduate

An Anti-Chinese Agenda: The Acceptance of a Selected Few, 1870 to 1942

By Cynthia Bravo Zamora

During the mid-19th century, China was relatively wealthy, yet it was marked by foreign invaders, Chinese rebellions, and rulers trying to resist foreign invasions.¹ These events made life in China, particularly in the province of Guangdong, formally known as Canton, extremely difficult. The country was left in economic distress and in order to pay for the wars, the people were ravaged by high taxes. These taxes were a heavy burden on the people of Guangdong who were facing natural disasters and famines caused by the Qing Government's destruction of the granary systems during the Taiping Rebellion. These hardships further impoverished the region of Guangdong to the point where it could no longer sustain its population.² As a result, many Chinese men from this province decided to migrate to America "in search of a better living, a better system, and a better shelter."³ Since opportunities for prosperity in China were virtually nonexistent, Chinese men felt their only option was to leave their country and seek employment opportunities elsewhere.⁴

As stated by historian Ko Ling Chan, the main driver for the Chinese migration was economic instability. As a result, thousands of impoverished Chinese men migrated in order to "earn more money and improve the quality of life for their families..."⁵ These Chinese men made the decision to leave their families in hopes of earning a living in America while working in the Gum Shan, "The Mountain of Gold" or in railroad construction. These Chinese men did

¹ Tamura et al., *China: Understanding Its Past*, (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1997), 75.

² Corinne K. Hoexter, *From Canton to California: The Epic of Chinese Immigration* (New York: Four Winds Press, 1976). Introduction, xii.

³ Chan, *Chinese Migration and Families-At-Risk*, xi.

⁴ John Robert Soennichsen, *The Chinese Exclusion ACT of 1882* (Westport, ABC-CLIO, LLC, 2011), ix.

⁵ Ko Ling Chan, *Chinese Migration and Families-At-Risk* (Newcastle-upon-Tyne, UNITED KINGDOM: Cambridge Scholars Publisher, 2015), 4.

not intend to settle permanently in California, instead, they were hoping to quickly amass wealth in order to return back to China to live with their families and start a business.

When the first wave of Chinese immigrants arrived in San Francisco in the 1850s, they were grudgingly accepted.⁶ These Chinese immigrants were partially welcomed for two reasons: there was a need for more laborers in major industries such as mining and railroad construction, and there was a need for more settlers to settle in the emerging towns of the newly formed state of California. These newcomers were hired in gold mines or railway construction sites throughout Western cities, however, in the 1860s as more Chinese men arrived, the competition for jobs surged leading to “mobs in California and Oregon organized to ‘run out of town’ the Chinese coolies...”⁷ It was then that hostility towards Chinese immigrants gained prominence . During the 1870s, there was a widespread economic depression in America and jobs became even more scarce. Since Chinese men were seen as cheap labor, companies began to hire them. This was seen as a threat by many white men who used hateful rhetoric and often turned to violence in what they perceived to be a way to protect their livelihoods.⁸

As a result of the backlash to the Chinese migration, the State of California adopted an anti-Chinese agenda pushed by the Workingmen’s Party of California founded by Denis Kearney. An anti-Chinese agenda was also adopted by Congress, which passed the Chinese Exclusion Act in 1882.⁹ Yet, despite the rampant anti-Chinese sentiment in California, two Chinese immigrants, Kam Ah See, a resident of Plainsburg and Le Grand and Ah You, a resident of Yosemite and Merced, were able to overcome the brutal aspects of the anti-Chinese racism in Merced County.

⁶ “Affidavit and Flyers from the Chinese Boycott Case.” *Educator Resources*. National Archives, 2017.

⁷ Chang, Gordon H., and Fishkin, Shelley Fisher, eds. *The Chinese and the Iron Road : Building the Transcontinental Railroad*. Redwood City: Stanford University Press, 2019.

⁸ “Affidavit and Flyers from the Chinese Boycott Case.”

⁹ John Robert Soennichsen, *The Chinese Exclusion ACT of 1882* (Westport, ABC-CLIO, LLC, 2011).

Ah See and Ah You were able to fully integrate themselves into their largely white communities. This paper will argue that, despite the strong anti-chinese movement in California, certain Chinese migrants were able to overcome racism and xenophobia in their communities in situations where the white population did not view them as a threat.

Gum Shan “The Mountain of Gold”

The first wave of migration from China to the United States occurred between 1849 and 1855. This corresponded with the California Gold Rush which began in 1848 when James Marshall found gold flakes in the American River.¹⁰ The news of gold soon reached the impoverished country side of China, alluring thousands of men who chose to risk their lives for a once in a lifetime opportunity to acquire wealth. The voyage across the Pacific to San Francisco typically took up to eight weeks. Many Chinese people called the city “Gum Shan” or the “Mountain of Gold.”¹¹ The prospect of mining for gold represented a newly kindled hope for better lives for themselves and their relatives in China.

During the first years of the Gold Rush, there were no laws governing the extraction of gold and ownership of mining fields. Since gold mining was fairly new and there was not yet an intense competition for resources and space, immigrants of all races were tolerated. The first Chinese immigrants to arrive typically worked downstream from white Americans, Mexicans, French, Irish, and Canadian miners.¹² Mining during these early years was essentially “a free-for-all occupation in which the Chinese had as much right as anyone to set up camp and work the same ground for gold.”¹³ But that soon changed as time went on and more miners

¹⁰ Steve Wilson, *The California Gold Rush : Chinese Laborers in America (1848-1882)* (New York, NY, UNITED STATES: Rosen Publishing Group, 2016), 6.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 13.

¹² Soennichsen, *The Chinese Exclusion ACT of 1882*. 12

¹³ *Ibid.*, 11.

arrived, creating mining camps which took up the workable land and increased competition for claims. This resulted in fights as men from the overcrowded camps began to intrude on each other's claimed land. This was bad for the Chinese who "by virtue of their non-Western appearance and a language so different from the English and European languages, were among the first to become victims of harassment by white miners."¹⁴ This harassment ranged from pranks to vindictive attacks such as cutting off Chinese men's queues. Queues were a traditional hairstyle imposed on Chinese men by the Qing dynasty as a sign of submission, and without their queues Chinese men could not return back to China.¹⁵ As expected most "American miners knew little of the tradition behind the queue, [as a result it became a] target for the white man's animosity, especially since the miners could see how upset the Chinese became over the cutting of queues."¹⁶ Without knowing or caring about the symbolic meaning surrounding the queues, the American miners were cutting them off the Chinese miners in order to display their dislike for them. The harassment did not stop there, white miners would also chase the Chinese out of camps that appeared to be producing a lot of gold in order to claim it for themselves.¹⁷

As more men showed up to mine gold, labor unions were created in order to protect miners, with the exception of Chinese miners. For example, The Knights of Labor accepted races other than white and was considered "a major force in enrolling 'Jew or Gentile, Christian or Infidel' into its ranks of labor union members [but they] drew the line at accepting the Chinese."

¹⁸ One of the biggest issues opposed by the labor unions was the use of dynamite because it was

¹⁴ Soennichsen, *The Chinese Exclusion ACT of 1882*, 11.

¹⁵ Khan, Bethany. "Pigtail of a Disgraced Chinese Man." Worcester City Museum Collection. 2016

¹⁶ Soennichsen, 13.

¹⁷ Ibid, 12.

¹⁸ Ibid, 15.

not safe and occasionally deadly. This created more animosity towards the Chinese since as they were not protected under labor unions, mine owners began hiring them to use dynamite. So in order to bypass the demands of labor unions, mine owners began contracting more Chinese workers who would work in deadly conditions and for a much lesser wage compared to white miners or other union men. This was seen as a threat by white miners who feared they would be replaced with Chinese miners. This forced the white mining unions “to accept the new technology [such as dynamite], along with lower wages” for their white members.¹⁹ The fact that white miners were now earning lower wages further increased the level of animosity against the Chinese. In order to appease its members, labor unions made it harder for Chinese to acquire work by boycotting businesses that hired them.²⁰

Railroad of the West:

As gold mining reached its height, new job opportunities emerged. The start of railroad construction began during the mid-1850s, a few years after gold was found. The purpose of these railroads was to link cities in Northern California to major gold processing areas. This created an abundance of new jobs. The transcontinental railroad provided work for the Chinese miners being pushed out of the industry and gave Chinese people still living in their home country more reasons to come to the United States.²¹ Although the work was incredibly difficult and the pay was minimal, to many Chinese workers it was seen as a way of escaping the violence and hatred they experienced in mining camps. But when the railroads were completed and job opportunities dried up, the merging of Chinese and white society became more noticeable. Since the Chinese were no longer secluded in mining or railroad camps and began forming Chinatowns in

¹⁹ Soennichsen, *The Chinese Exclusion ACT of 1882*, 14-15.

²⁰ Affidavit and Flyers from the Chinese Boycott Case.” *Educator Resources*. National Archives, 2017.

²¹ Soennichsen, *The Chinese Exclusion ACT of 1882*, x.

established cities, the animosity towards them intensified even further.²² As a result, new racial tensions surfaced which led local and state governments to exert control over Chinese migration and employment.

Racial Tension and Description of Chinese:



Working Men's Party in California *The Chinese Must Go*

As more Chinese immigrants began to arrive and jobs became more scarce, the inevitable clash of the two distinct societies began. This merging gave a new meaning to the Anti-Chinese rhetoric which spread across California. At this time, the Panic of 1873 occurred. During the Panic of 1873, America suffered a financial crisis that halted Westward expansion as unemployment rates surged, prompting increased aggression towards the Chinese. This panic “provided evidence that mild hostility toward a foreign people could escalate into outright violence when an economy soured, and people were in fear of losing their jobs.”²³ Anti-Chinese violence increased, in part, due to orator Denis Kearney and politician John Bigler who promoted hateful rhetoric. These men aroused the anger of unemployed white Americans by portraying the

²² Soennichsen, *The Chinese Exclusion ACT of 1882*, x.

²³ *Ibid.*, x.

Chinese as villains. Their usage of this kind of language ignited violence and hostilities towards Chinese people, which caused the destruction of many Chinatowns. As a result of the influence of anti-Chinese rhetoric, local and state governments created laws and facilitated the creation of anti-Chinese movements in order to lessen Chinese participation in white American society.²⁴ This ultimately led to a ban on Chinese immigration. Anti-Chinese legislation continued to strengthen the Exclusion Act through amendments that supported an effective ban on the “immigration of Chinese women, and a series of laws that complicated everyday life for Chinese residents of the United States.”²⁵ The marginalization created by these policies was intended to prevent integration, keep Chinese people isolated from white communities, and eventually eliminate the Chinese from America altogether.

Merced:

Although Merced County had many Chinatowns, this paper will focus on three in particular, the Chinatowns of Merced, Plainsburg, and Le Grand. The City of Merced along with its Chinatown experienced rapid growth in the late 1800s and by 1872 Merced achieved incorporated status. Hundreds of Chinese people gained employment in the construction of the San Joaquin Valley Railroad and in order to accommodate these workers, Chinese stores started appearing, forming Merced’s Chinatown.²⁶ Despite the Chinatowns bringing in settlers to the rapidly growing Merced, officials facilitated the hostility experienced by the majority of the Chinese. Chinese laundrymen and working-class families often suffered discrimination and violence at the hands of white supremacy. This type of discrimination was seen as a response to

²⁴ “Chinese Immigration and the Chinese Exclusion Acts.” *Office of the Historian, Milestones* 1866-1896. Foreign Service Institute.

²⁵ Soennichsen, *The Chinese Exclusion ACT of 1882*, xi.

²⁶ Sarah Lim, “Remembering The Merced Chinese: The Builders Of The Great Central Valley, 1860-1960” (California State University, Stanislaus, n.d.). 85

Chinese sojourners who would send all their money back to China. The white population in Merced viewed Chinese laundrymen responsible for the economic recession because they would send their earnings back to China rather than investing it back into the economy.²⁷ As a result of this, the main targets of the anti-Chinese agenda in Merced was the removal of all Chinese laundries.

The anti-Chinese agenda took root in Merced County as early as the 1860s with legislation protecting white people in the mining industry and agricultural business. In Merced during the years of 1884 and 1885, the town conducted a series of roundups and purged the Chinese community. The town officials allowed its white citizens to form anti-Chinese organizations with the purpose of drafting bylaws and constitutions in order to withdraw ‘patronage’ and displace the Chinese residents.²⁸ In accordance with these newly formed laws Merced’s board of supervisors declared Chinese laundries a nuisance and gave them 90 days to move beyond the town limits. These events ultimately led to the event of December 25, 1885 where Chinese categorized as vagrants, prostitutes, and opium dealers were driven out of Merced.²⁹

Plainsburg and Le Grand:

Although not much is known about the history of Plainsburg or its Chinatown, its location, between mining and farming fields, made it the center of a flourishing settlement.³⁰ Before adopting the name Plainsburg in 1869, the town was known as Welch’s Store on Mariposa Creek. By late 1869 and early 1870’s the town had well established ranches, farms, a

²⁷ Lim “Remembering The Merced Chinese,” 107.

²⁸ Jean Pfaelzer, *Driven Out: The Forgotten War Against Chinese Americans* (New York: Random House, 2007), 261-62.

²⁹ Pfaelzer, “*Driven Out*,” 261.

³⁰ Lim, “Remembering The Merced Chinese,” 47.

jail, a newspaper publisher as well as “two hotels, two blacksmith shops, mercantile stores, a large billiard saloon, a barber shop, and a good doctor.”³¹ Plainsburg also had a thriving commercial center with a Chinatown accounting for four hundred Chinese people.³² This Chinese community worked in ranches, farming fields, and mining. As mentioned by the historian Sarah Lim “there was a trail in Plainsburg known as ‘Chinese Trail’ leading to Southern mines where Chinese miners worked the leftover claims.”³³ A resident of the area, Emmett Cunningham, described seeing long lines of Chinese wearing straw hats jogging up the trail carrying baskets of supplies suspended from a pole.³⁴ Although around this time the gold fever had subsided, the Chinese of Plainsburg still had hopes of finding gold. Since they faced no competition in these abandoned mines, the Chinese experienced less harassment from the white society.

With all the commercialization accruing in Plainsburg, the town was predicted to be ‘the’ town in Merced County. Unfortunately, that did not happen. Plainsburg was bypassed by two railroad systems, in 1871-72 with the Central Pacific along what is now Highway 99 and in 1896 by the Santa Fe railroad in Le Grand. The farmers of the area did not want the railroad to cross their lands and as a result the town’s status as a commercial center began to disappear. By the late 1890s and early 1900s, Plainsburg lost its population and was replaced by the neighboring railroad town of Le Grand. Most of the businesses were moved to Le Grand or were torn down and used as lumber. The Chinatown faced destruction and turned into farming fields. Thus, the once thriving town became a ghost town.

³¹ “Plainsburg,” n.d., Court House Museum.

³² Ibid.

³³ Lim, “Remembering The Merced Chinese.” 47.

³⁴ Ibid.. 47-48.

By the 1900s Chinese settlers relocated to the town of Le Grand which was described as a railroad town and the center of the Eastern Merced County. Although much of the history of Le Grand has yet to be uncovered, the town was described as having “one large two story hotel with meals, saloon, and gambling tables -two saloons- two or three blacksmith shops- two or three Chinese laundries- one doctor and drug store-...[and] a weekly newspaper.”³⁵ Between the years 1910-1912, the town of Le Grand had made the transition from grain and cattle farming to producing more diversified crops which brought more jobs into the town. The only orchard in this time belonged to Kam Ah See, a Chinese immigrant.³⁶

Kam Ah See



Kam Ah See (Courtesy of Merced County Historical Society, Merced)

Despite the racial tensions in Merced County, Kam Ah was well known and loved by the white community. Many described him as a “colorful and interesting pioneer citizen of

³⁵ Elizabeth Kahl Miller and Donna GilletteHall, “Early Days in Le Grand,” in *Le Grand History: Memories of Le Grand History Club*, 2007. Merced County Courthouse Museum.

³⁶ Ibid.

Plainsburg and early Le Grand.”³⁷ Ah See was born on April 14, 1842 in Hong Kong, Guangdong, China.³⁸ Ah See came to California as a bachelor, the term bachelor was given to single or married Chinese men who left their wives and children in China, and settled in Plainsburg’s Chinatown in May 1872. He made the decision to leave his wife and two sons in China in order to come to America and provide for them. From his arrival to his departure back to China in 1884, not much is known about his life other than he was a cotton picker for Henry McClure and Thomas Wilcox.³⁹ Ah See briefly returned to China in 1884 to visit his family and in 1885 he returned back to Plainsburg. In a 12-year span he worked as a cook for C.T. Dooley and John Price, herded sheep for Sam Strawby, and conducted a Chinese laundry in Minturn near the town of Le Grand.⁴⁰ Although laundry was traditionally considered to be a woman’s job, the fact that Chinese men could not afford to bring their wives to America encouraged them to open up laundries to accommodate the Chinese community, as a result “this created an opportunity for the Chinese to have successful laundry businesses.”⁴¹ Yet during this time, white communities targeted Chinese laundries and labeled them a nuisance since they believed the laundries were a disruption to their society. As seen in an editorial piece about Chinese washhouses, the editor of the *San Joaquin Valley Argus* called on the local government to use “lawful means” to eradicate what she thought to be a nuisance.⁴² Ah See sold his laundry and moved to Le Grand in 1897.

Although Ah See worked hard, it was not until he permanently moved to Le Grand that he fully integrated into the white community. Between the years of 1897 to 1903, Ah See

³⁷ Elizabeth Kahl Miller and Donna GilletteHall, “Kam Ah See,” in *Le Grand History: Memories of Le Grand History Club*, 2007. Court House Museum.

³⁸ “California Death Index: Kam See,” n.d.

³⁹ Kahl Miller and GilletteHall, “Kam Ah See.” 26.

⁴⁰ “Kam Ah See, 1920s,” *Le Grand Community Day*, May 1, 1932.

⁴¹ Wilson, *The California Gold Rush : Chinese Laborers in America (1848-1882)*.16

⁴² *San Joaquin Valley Argus*. 1879-1890, Merced County Courthouse Museum.

reinvented the agricultural life in Le Grand. He introduced the first windmill irrigation system and produced the first commercial orchard in addition to the first orange grove in the county.⁴³ Ah See also became the first pioneer in the commercial alfalfa industry and installed water pumping around the year 1910. From 1903 to the day of his death, Ah See invested his earnings back into Le Grand and bought and sold land to the white community members. Ah See fully integrated into his community when he cut off his queue signaling that all ties to his old life were now gone.

Kam Ah See became ill in late December of 1927 and a few weeks later at the age of 86, he died on January 14, 1928 in Le Grand, California.⁴⁴ His death was classified as complications from pneumonia. At the time of his death, he was surrounded by his close friends; Mrs. Tosh, Jim Smith, John Barker, and William Louely. His funeral service was held at the local Methodist Church in Le Grand and was officiated by Reverend D.C. Williams, who was also a close friend.⁴⁵ At the news of his death, the community came together to commemorate his life and all the schools and business houses were closed during the funeral which preceded a large procession to his grave.⁴⁶ He was buried in the Plainsburg's cemetery. The process of Ah See's burial is rare and the fact that he was buried in a cemetery that had no distinction site between white and chinese demonstrates his importance to the town of Le Grand.

Ah You

⁴³ Kahl Miller and GilletteHall, "Kam Ah See." 26.

⁴⁴ Ibid., 26.

⁴⁵ Ibid., 28.

⁴⁶ Ibid., 28.



Ah You (Courtesy of Merced Courthouse Museum, Merced)

Ah You was born on April 16, 1847 in Sun Ning County Village, Canton, China.⁴⁷ He arrived in San Francisco in 1867 as a bachelor with no known family other than his parents. While living there he worked as a cook for a restaurant.⁴⁸ A few years later he left San Francisco for the San Joaquin Valley where he worked for various hotels and camps. In 1876 he moved to Mariposa and tried his luck mining gold at John C. Fremont's old Spanish grant. It is not clear why he left his mining job, but soon after he began working as a cook at Leidig's Hotel in Yosemite Valley. While working at the Leidig's Hotel, the Washburn Brothers (owners of the Wawona Hotel in Yosemite Valley) heard of Ah You's cooking skills, and Henry Washburn, senior partner of Wawona, hired Ah You as a cook for his hotel.⁴⁹ Ah You cooked at the Wawona Hotel and spent the winters in Merced. While at the Wawona, Ah You cooked for many noted visitors; in 1890 President Benjamin Harrison praised Ah You's Chinese-style fried chicken, in

⁴⁷ "Famed Chef of Wawona Hotel Dies in Merced," *Fresno Bee Republican*, July 3, 1942, Merced Courthouse Museum.

⁴⁸ Rad's Ramblings, Ah You's Interview with Rad's Ramblings, n.d., Merced Courthouse Museum.

⁴⁹ "Famed Chef of Wawona Hotel Dies in Merced." Merced Courthouse Museum.

1903 President Theodore Roosevelt praised Ah You for his apple pies, and in 1909 President William H. Taft complimented the dinner Ah You prepared him.⁵⁰ Ah You dedicated 47 years of his life working at Wawona bringing prestige to his workplace. In 1927 Ah You retired and decided to permanently move to Merced. Although Ah You was elderly, he was described by his friends as an expert in pastry and a master at making wildcat soup.



Ah You with Mr, and Mrs. Joseph McInerny (Courtesy of Merced Courthouse Museum, Merced)

Ah You died on July 1, 1942 in Merced, California at the age of 95. He was hospitalized at Merced General Hospital and succumbed to an unknown illness.⁵¹ At the time of his death his biggest fear was that he would not have a decent “Chinese burial”, but his closest white American friend, Postmaster Joseph T. McInerny took it upon himself and decided to bury Ah You in a Chinese Manner according to ancient rites of the Chinese.⁵² Ah You’s funeral was held

⁵⁰ Rad’s Ramblings, Ah You’s Interview with Rad’s Ramblings. Merced Courthouse Museum.

⁵¹ “You, Ah: Taken by Death,” *Merced Express*, July 2, 1942, Merced Courthouse Museum.

⁵² “Ah You Is Dead: Ah You, Elderly Chinese Resident of Merced Dies During Night at Age of 95,” *Merced Sun Star*, July 2, 1942, Court House Museum.

in Welch-Nelson Mortuary and he was buried in the Merced Chinese Cemetery. At the time of his death, he had no children and was described by Postmaster J.T. McNerny as a “smiling little Chinese... [who] was undoubtedly one of the most loveable characters... Everyone who knew him liked him.”⁵³ Although Ah You did not directly contribute to the expansion of his town like Ah See, his renowned cooking skills brought in clientele, economically contributing to the town.

Conclusion:

Although the Chinese migration was needed and welcomed, yet it came at a high price. California greatly benefited from this migration in terms of cheap labor in industries such as mining and railroad construction, yet with each wave of migrants that came into the United States, the Chinese became targets of hatred and persecution. The fear that the Chinese were trying to encroach on white communities and compete for jobs led to the physical danger and climate crises around Chinese communities throughout Merced County. Although the stories of these Chinese migrants have been forgotten or erased in many cases, their lives in America were tinted with stereotypes and a history of racial tension. The Chinese who arrived in America did not expect to stay, rather they wanted to acquire wealth and return home. During their stay they formed Chinatowns in the midst of hostility by the white community.

Considering the anti-Chinese agenda in Merced county, how were Kam Ah See and Ah You able to create personal and economic relationships with their white community? What differentiated these two men from other Chinese immigrants? The stories of Kam Ah See and Ah You are unusual during this time period yet possible. In their respective towns, both men earned the respect of their white neighbors through their hard work and kind personality. In addition, both men did not compete with the dominant white society for jobs. As a result, they were not

⁵³ Ibid.

categorized as a threat nor did they pose any danger to the white communities. Although at one point in their lives they did compete for jobs, Kam Ah See owned a laundry which was seen as a women's job and Ah You mined gold at John C. Fremont's old Spanish grant in Mariposa, they switched professions which allowed them to overcome racial barriers such as discrimination, anti-Chinese violence and stereotypes attributed to Chinese sojourners who would send their earnings back to China. Ah See's and Ah You's professions directly contributed to the economic growth of the towns.

In addition to contributing to the economic growth and prosperity of their towns, (Ah See's innovative skills which made agriculture easier for the community of Le Grand, and Ah You's cooking skills which brought recognition and more business to his workplace), both men were classified as law-abiding citizens and bachelors. Both men died at an old age without producing children in the United States. This was appealing to the dominant white society since it contributed to the logic behind the Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882. This act prevented Chinese women from immigrating to the United States in efforts to stop Chinese from reproducing and lowering the 'integrity of America.' The fact that both men did not have children while living in the United States made them exemplary residents because they were not contributing to the growth of the Chinese population. This appeased the hysterics of the white society. Despite living during a period of strong racial tension and through the anti-Chinese movements of Merced County, these men were accepted into white communities and were allowed to live freely among their white neighbors.

Bibliography

- “Affidavit and Flyers from the Chinese Boycott Case.” *Educator Resources*. National Archives, 2017.
<https://www.archives.gov/education/lessons/chinese-boycott>
- “Ah You Is Dead: Ah You, Elderly Chinese Resident of Merced Dies During Night at Age of 95.” *Merced Sun Star*, July 2, 1942. Merced Court House Museum.
- “California Death Index: Kam See,” n.d. Merced Court House Museum.
- Chan, Ko Ling. *Chinese Migration and Families-At-Risk*. Newcastle-upon-Tyne, UNITED KINGDOM: Cambridge Scholars Publisher, 2015.
- Chang, Gordon H., and Fishkin, Shelley Fisher, eds. *The Chinese and the Iron Road : Building the Transcontinental Railroad*. Redwood City: Stanford University Press, 2019.
- “Chinese Immigration and the Chinese Exclusion Acts.” *Office of the Historian*, MilestonesL 1866-1896. Foreign Service Institute.
- “Famed Chef of Wawona Hotel Dies in Merced.” *Fresno Bee Republican*, July 3, 1942. Merced Court House Museum.
- Hoexter, Corinne K. *From Canton to California: The Epic of Chinese Immigration*. New York: Four Winds Press, 1976.
- Kahl Miller, Elizabeth, and Donna GilletteHall. “Early Days in Le Grand.” In *Le Grand History: Memories of Le Grand History Club*, 2007.
- . “Kam Ah See.” In *Le Grand History: Memories of Le Grand History Club*, 2007.
- “Kam Ah See, 1920s.” *Le Grand Community Day*, May 1, 1932. Merced Court House Museum.
- Khan, Bethany. “Pigtail of a Disgraced Chinese Man.” Worcester City Museum Collection. 2016. <https://researchworcestershire.wordpress.com/2016/07/20/pigtail-of-a-disgraced-chinese-man/>
- Lim, Sarah. “Remembering The Merced Chinese: The Builders Of The Great Central Valley, 1860-1960.” California State University, Stanislaus, n.d.
- Pfaelzer, Jean. *Driven Out: The Forgotten War Against Chinese Americans*. New York: Random House, 2007.
- “Plainsburg,” n.d. Merced Court House Museum.
- Rad’s Ramblings. Ah You’s Interview with Rad’s Ramblings, n.d. Merced Court House Museum.
- “San Joaquin Valley Argus,” 1890 1879. Merced Court House Museum.
- Soennichsen, John Robert. *The Chinese Exclusion ACT of 1882*. Westport, UNITED STATES: ABC-CLIO, LLC, 2011.
- Tamura, Eileen H., Eileen Tamura, Linda K. Menton, Noren W. Lush, Francis K. S. Tsui, Warren Cohen, and Francis K. C. Tsui. *China : Understanding Its Past*. Honolulu, UNITED STATES: University of Hawaii Press, 1997.
- Wilson, Steve. *The California Gold Rush : Chinese Laborers in America (1848-1882)*. New York, NY, UNITED STATES: Rosen Publishing Group, 2016.
- Working Men’s Party in California, *The Chinese Must Go Political cartoon of the Workingman's Party of Guerneville. 1879*. Sonoma County Library Photograph Collection.
<https://calisphere.org/item/b44b5a084ce628369fd1b844b696f3aa/>
- “You, Ah: Taken by Death.” *Merced Express*, July 2, 1942. Merced Court House Museum.